Supana Onikage
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Lazy Dungeon Master


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Dungeon Core Number 89
HAKU
Dungeon Master
KEIMA MASUDA
Dog Loli
NIKU
Dungeon Core Number 695
ROKUKO
"PERHAPS I SHOULD CALL YOU BIG BROTHER NOW?"
I SHALL NAME THIS FORMATION THE LOLI TRIANGLE.


Haku's Cat Girl Subordinate
MISHA
WILL THIS BOOST MORALE?
SWIMSUITS AT THE BEACH!


Dungeon Core Number 666
AIDY
"CORE 695, THIS IS A DUEL BETWEEN YOU AND I."
TRIPLE THREAT DUNGEON BATTLE!

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Prologue

Heya, the name's Keima Masuda! I'm the Dungeon Master of this here [Cave of Greed]! But keep that a secret from everyone, okay? Dungeon Masters die if their Dungeon Cores get destroyed, and I sure don't want to die just yet. I just want to sleep and be lazy.

Thus, I need to build an impenetrable dungeon fully capable of protecting the Core. But that takes a lot of DP, or Dungeon Points. You need to lure people into your dungeon to get DP. And that's exactly what I did. I took the [Ordinary Cave], a single room dungeon infested with bandits, and expanded it in every way to safely attract visitors. While I was at it, I built an inn nearby to squeeze extra DP out of them. I got to sleep there too, of course. Two birds with one stone.

One thing led to another and I ended up getting involved with Haku, my dungeon's older sister, before accidentally breaking a hole into a neighboring dungeon... A lot happened, and for some reason, a town ended up being built around my inn. I ended up as its town chief and named it Goren Town. It wasn't really my style, but better that than letting some good-for-nothing force me into working. *And of course, I don't do any of the actual town chief work myself!*

A lot happened last winter too. Rin, a real pain in the butt Slime monster taking the form of a black wolf, took over part of my dungeon to hibernate, and on top of that, the High Priestess of the Holy Kingdom came to spread the teachings of the Church of Lux, also known as the Church of Fucking Destroy all Dungeons. *Well, I somehow managed to survive the both of them.*

The High Priestess didn't leave much behind except the contents of her wallet, but Rin gave us some very useful weapons known as Gravity Bombs. *But how strong are they, really? Not strong enough to destroy a whole dungeon, right...? I honestly don't know where to store them. They said the explosion would be "pretty big" or something, but...*

Anyway, yeah. A lot happened and I gotta wonder why. I never intended for the dungeon to get so big, but now there's a whole town around it with plenty

of people. It kind of feels like I'm walking down a road someone paved for me. Where is this road taking me?

...It's been about a whole year. I've gotten tired of counting the days since I was summoned to this world.

Suddenly, someone opened my door without knocking.

"Keima. Do you have a second to talk?" A beautiful young blonde girl walked into my room without an ounce of hesitation. She's the avatar of the Dungeon Core, or in other words, my partner.

...Let me explain something. As Dungeon Master, I'll die if the Core of my dungeon gets destroyed. But even if I die, the Core—this girl—will be just fine! Oh, and why am I working as a Dungeon Master at all if that's the case? 'Cause she summoned me. Me. As a monster. She summoned me as a monster. Through a gacha system, even. Some god or whatever talked to me on the way here and asked me to be a Hero, but those Heroes mainly just destroy Dungeon Cores. They're called Soldiers of God by the dungeons themselves. But I'm a Dungeon Master. Hahaha! As if I'd do all that. I just wanna sleep, anyway.

...Oh, right. Some Heroes did eventually come to our dungeon. I survived one... or rather, ripped him off and stole his money... and beat back the other... or rather, stuck him into a solid stone wall to live in partially suspended animation with full consciousness for the rest of his potentially eternal life. Given how I'm working as town chief just fine now, well, you could say it all ended well. I was fine as long as I could sleep peacefully. Just no eternal sleep, please.

I turned to look at Rokuko.

"So? What's up?"

"I wanted to ask about the dungeon. You built a lot of stuff while that annoying slime dog was hibernating here, right?"

"Ahhh, yeah, I made some big changes. Mainly deep inside the dungeon." Our dungeon started with a simple entrance complete with normal goblins. After that was a labyrinth, then a Puzzle Area (mostly destroyed by Rin), then a spiral staircase, then a storeroom area which split into four branches. One was the

magma area which Rokuko built, leading into the neighboring [Flame Caverns]. One was the plains area, which I built because I wanted to see what the dungeon's weather/atmosphere function looked like (the plains looked endless, but had invisible walls which would block progress). One was the coliseum area behind the original Core Room. And finally, one was the (half-finished) new Puzzle Area which I had built from the wreckage of the old Puzzle Area.

However, over the winter, I finished the new Puzzle Area, and built a second Core Room behind it. The other Core Room had a Dummy Core. This new Core Room at the bottom of our dungeon had two layers, with the main room having a Dummy Core and the hidden room having another Dummy Core. Why did I do something that seemingly pointless? Well, because I honestly didn't know where to put the real Core.

There were skills such as the High Priestess's {Trinity} that could prevent moving the Dungeon Core effectively, so I wanted to keep it in the safest place possible. But even with that in mind, it wasn't smart to just put the Dungeon Core in the deepest place possible. The adventurers of this world already know that there's a strong tendency for Dungeon Cores to be at the bottom of a dungeon. That's why I initially built the hidden layer of the room, to keep the real Dungeon Core... but changed my mind after considering the real possibility that someone might see through the trick.

In the end, I decided to hide the real Dungeon Core in one of the coliseum area's light fixtures. The Core was, ultimately, just a shiny ball on the outside. The best place to hide a shiny ball is in the middle of a bunch of Light magic tools – that is, equally shiny balls. *It seems kinda risky, but eh, it'll be fine for now. I'll need to make some changes if someone capable of smashing through the new puzzle area comes around, though.*

"Uh-huh, uh-huh. Our dungeon's a lot stronger now, huh? Ah... Right, Keima. I'm going to be leaving the dungeon for a bit, is that okay?"

"Leaving the dungeon? Uh, sure... Where are you going?" I had no idea where she might be wanting to go. Maybe she had some business in Tsia or Pavella?

"The yearly gathering of dungeon cores is coming up." *Oh yeah... I remember her mentioning that at some point.*

“You don’t need me to come with you?”

“Mmmm. I’ve never seen anyone bring their Master with them. I don’t think you can come. Don’t worry, I’ll be back in two or three days, probably. I couldn’t go last year because of the bandits.” *So basically, not much will be different.*

“Alright. So, when is it?”

“Oh, um, today.” Rokuko’s body began to shine gently.

“Er, is that...”

“Uh-huh. I’ve gotta go now, bye bye. Not that I really want too.” A magic circle briefly enveloped Rokuko, and then, with a pop, she was gone.

“Wait, by today you meant right freakin’ now?!” *C’mon, don’t wait until literally the last second to tell me.*

Chapter 1

Rokuko's Perspective

When the light blinding her vision vanished, Rokuko found herself in the middle of a buffet-styled party being held outside beneath the blue sky. The meeting must have already started, as a red wolf-man was stuffing his face with meat while a golden skeleton drank tea, cackling. In the distance a black dragon gulped beer out of a barrel as a nearby unicorn cheered. It looked like a peaceful party where all manner of species were enjoying themselves in harmony.

However, every single being there was a Dungeon Core. Many of them looked like humans, but the vast majority of them were merely shapeshifting to change appearance. Dungeon Cores like Rokuko and Haku who were human-type from the start were rare, just like Cores of any one particular species were rare.

"Okay..." Rokuko stealthily headed to a corner, as she did every year. She really didn't like that this year's meeting was held outside. It just didn't feel like she was hiding in a corner if there weren't walls on either side of her.

On her way there, three people (?) walked up to her: A human sized snake, a large frog, and a massive slug.

"Heh, what do we have here? It's little ol' Dungeon Core 695. What're you doing?"

"Geheheh! I'm surprised you're still alive, really."

"You didn't come last year and your DP score was 0. We thought for sure you had died."

Rokuko jerked and trembled after they called out to her.

"D-Dungeon Cores 650, 651, and 652... I-It's been a while."

"HUH?! You forgot the fucking Number!"

"Hiiih?!" Dungeon Core 650 slammed his snake tail against the ground, making a loud noise that made Rokuko stiffen up in fear.

Incidentally, addressing a Dungeon Core with “number”—as in Dungeon Core Number 650—was equivalent to using a respectful honorific. Rokuko would rather die than do that for those three.

“Wh-Why would I do that? We’re all in the 600s group, so yeah.”

“Ahhhh, I can’t hear yoooou. Heheh... Did anyone hear what 695 said from down at the bottom of the rankings?” Dungeon Core 651, the large frog, slid behind Rokuko to block off her escape route.

“You’re being real cocky, y’know?”

“A-Ah...” Dungeon Core 652, the giant slug, plopped a hand (?) on Rokuko’s shoulder. With that, it was done. Three versus one with the three surrounding her. Goosebumps of fear rose on Rokuko’s skin.

The snake brought his face close to Rokuko’s, tongue flitting between his teeth.

“Hssshhh... Heheh. Why don’t you come with us?”

“N-No way, let go!”

“Don’t worry, it won’t kill you. Geheheheh!”

“Alriiight, time for some squiiishy fun.” They were heading to the corner Rokuko had initially been aiming for, but there was a big difference between choosing to go there and being dragged there. She had wanted to go there so these three wouldn’t find her in the first place.

They were dragging her off, but nobody interfered or cared. It was just a bunch of low rank Dungeon Cores fighting among themselves. Just like you wouldn’t care about a piece of candy swarmed by ants on the ground, most Dungeon Cores didn’t care whatsoever about Rokuko or the three Dungeon Cores bullying her. They were all equally worthless to them.

“Hey, got a fuckin’ second?” Suddenly, a red Salamander appeared. It was Dungeon Core 112, Ittetsu. He was the Core of the fifty-one floor dungeon the [Flame Caverns], which comprised almost an entire volcano. Although he wasn’t a top class Dungeon Core, he was solidly in the upper ranks, using his large wealth of DP to live a slow life with his Master and wife Redra, a Red Dragon. As

a member of the 100s group, he even had a good deal of seniority backing him up.

“D-Dungeon Core Number 112?! Do you need us for something, sir?”

“Huh? Ah... Nah. Don’t give a fuck about any of you three. I’m here for Core 695. C’mere.”

“Eh? U-Um, her?”

“Yeah, got a fuckin’ problem with that? What’s your number?”

“C-Core 650! E-Er, I’m a big fan of yours, Dungeon Core Number 112!” As a snake, he couldn’t stick out a hand for a handshake, so he held out his tail instead. But Ittetsu ignored him and called out to Rokuko.

“Like I give a fuck. C’mon, 695.”

“Ummm... Okay.” Rokuko followed after Ittetsu and thereby escaped her three bullies. Dungeon Core 650 watched her go in a daze, his tail still held out.

...Rokuko, after casting {Purification} to get the slug’s slime off her, spoke to Ittetsu.

“U-Ummm, Dungeon Core..... Number 112?”

“Number?! Fuckin’ idiot, drop the polite act. The fuck you doing anyway, lettin’ those jerks boss you around?” Ittetsu turned around and barked right into Rokuko’s face, as if seconds away from biting it off. Given his age, Ittetsu was fairly well known among the Dungeon Cores and thus his loud growls drew attention upon them in stark contrast to how the three bullies had been ignored.

“I-I mean, I’m a super low rank dungeon... I couldn’t talk back with all three of them around me like that.”

“For fuckin’ real? You shittin’ me?” Ittetsu jabbed Rokuko with his flaming Salamander tail. He was obviously holding back, but it still hurt a fair amount. Plus, it was kinda hot. Not that she could complain to the Core that just saved her.

“Heheh. You gotta have a little more faith in yourself. ’Cause I mean, you did beat me!”

“...I only won because of Keima. It wasn’t really my win.”

“Bwahah! That ain’t wrong, and I like the honesty... But you still beat me, kiddo. A Core’s strength includes their Master, y’know? Basically, my strength is half Redra and half the power of love,” Ittetsu cackled.

A stir ran through the crowd. People whispered among themselves in disbelief that Dungeon Core 112 had lost to a low-ranking dungeon. It helped that Ittetsu had intentionally spoken in a loud voice. Rokuko heard a few people wondering out loud, “What kinda dirty tricks did she pull to win?”, but as she had in fact pulled dirty tricks to win, she couldn’t argue back. Though it was a specialized battle with unusual rules in the first place.

“...B-But Keima said the battle ended in a tie, remember?”

“Yeah? Wanna have a second go, then? You can be the fuckin’ defenders this time.”

“Sorry, but I’ll pass. Anyway. Thanks for helping me. See you later, 112.” Rokuko tried to walk away. But, before she could, Ittetsu stopped her.

“Hey, hold up now. Won’t be long before Father drops by. How ’bout we eat up in the meantime? Lotsa good meat here.”

“...But we Dungeon Cores don’t need to eat to survive, so...”

“Nobody’s gonna be mixing in poison or garbage on this table. Don’t sweat it. Or what, you still don’t believe me? Huh? Some gratitude you have.”

“...Ngh. O-Okay, I’ll have a little.” Rokuko timidly bit into the meat that Ittetsu held out. The moment her teeth sunk into it, juices spread through her mouth and a thick meaty flavor covered her tongue. She didn’t know what kind of meat it was, but she did know it tasted great. Niku would love it.

“Man, your face’s a mess. Here, {Purification}.”

“Nom, nom. Th-Thanks.”

“Gahaha! Don’t sweat it.”

Rokuko continued eating to her heart’s content, until eventually, a voice echoed throughout the gathering.

“Greetings, my lovely children. How is everyone doing?” Suddenly, a massive monitor appeared in the sky with a single man on screen. All of the Dungeon Cores looked up at it and the man on it together. That included Rokuko.

“Father... It’s been two years since I saw him.” It was a somewhat dark-skinned man with black hair and golden eyes, known to most Dungeon Cores as Father, though some chose to call him King or God. He wore a priestly blue robe. Half of his face, particularly his eyes, was covered by a mask. His still-visible lips formed a light smile.

Although all the Dungeon Cores knew Father, not a single one of them knew his true identity. The one thing they did know without any doubt was that he had created each of them. That was an unshakable truth. Some Cores suggested that he was Dungeon Core Number 0, the first Dungeon Core, and that all other Cores were merely his Dummy Cores. A surprising many number of them believed it, too. Most Dungeon Cores took human forms precisely because Father himself was a human-type being... or at least, he presented himself as one. For this reason, natural human-type dungeons such as Haku received much jealousy. And truth be told, Haku had intentionally kept Rokuko’s yearly Dungeon Core ranking low partially to shield her from this jealousy.

“Oh dear, there seem to be quite a few of you missing. How sad. Maybe it’s about time for me to make new children. What do you think, Core 1?”

“If you believe that is the right thing to do, Father, then surely it is.” Dungeon Core Number 1, who looked much like a human knight, responded to Father’s question. He was—excluding Father—the oldest, strongest, and most influential being at the Dungeon Core gathering. His status as a Single Number wasn’t for show.

“Mmm. Kind of a boring answer. Does anyone have a second opinion?” As if displeased with Dungeon Core Number 1’s answer, Father asked what the other Cores thought. But nobody answered. Or rather, nobody *could* answer. Giving a different answer would be equivalent to defying Dungeon Core Number 1. In the first place, few had the audacity to debate with Father, he who was practically a God to them.

“May I speak my thoughts, Father?” But there was one Core who rose their

hand. All eyes fell on them, everyone curious to see who valued their life so little.

“Oh? You’ll tell me what you think, Core 89?” Father’s voice beamed with joy. Dungeon Core Number 89... Haku smiled just as brightly.

“Around seventy percent of the 600 batch are still alive. I believe it may be a little too soon for you to make more brothers and sisters. Would it not be better to wait for more to leave us?” Upon hearing Haku’s recommendation, a Core in the ground spat out a sizable ball of black fire into the air.

“You would dare say that, traitor?!” A voice that sounded like a rumbling earthquake filled the air as Dungeon Core Number 5, a Black Dragon, interrupted Haku’s conversation with Father. But Father merely chastised him softly.

“Core 5. I’m talking to Core 89 right now. You can speak your piece next.”

“F-Forgive me, Father! But!”

“I told you to wait your turn, didn’t I? You’re a smart one, Core 5, so you’ll wait nice and quietly, won’t you?”

“A-As you wish...” If he continued to argue despite Father’s suggestion to keep quiet, Dungeon Core Number 5 would be disobeying an indirect order. He had no choice but to back down.

Father spoke to Haku again.

“In that case, Core 89, how many Cores do you think need to leave us before I make more children?”

“Perhaps when there are less than half of the 600 batch left. That is how long you’ve waited before gracing us with new brothers and sisters in the past, after all.”

“I see. That’s simple, clear, and concrete advice. That’ll be a big help, thank you.”

“Your praise honors me,” Haku said with a respectful bow.

“Okay, it’s your turn now, Core 5. What do you think?”

“Father! Core 89 over there is a traitor. She hunts her own kind. The majority of Cores that have died fell by her hand. That’s why she knows so much about how many Cores are still alive. I do not believe that you should heed the advice of a traitor like Core 89!”

“Hmm. Is that true, Core 89?”

“Indeed. It is true that I have taken the lives of other Cores in order to survive, Father. Have I done wrong?” Haku spoke without an ounce of fear in her voice.

“No, you haven’t. Sacrificing others for your own sake is a proper way of life. Hmm? For some reason, I feel like I’ve said that before.”

“We have this exchange every year, Father.”

“I see. Well, just remember that all these Cores are my cute little children. Try not to go too far.”

“Certainly, you have my word.” Haku gave a small smile. Indeed, she was disparaged as a traitor every year. And likewise, Father told her not to go too far every year.

“So, what do you think, Core 5? What are your thoughts on me making a new batch of children?”

“Th-That is... I believe that you should do what you think is best, Father.”

“Okay, thank you. I wonder if anyone else has any thoughts on this...” Father, after letting out a somewhat bored murmur, scanned the crowd of Cores for someone to talk to.

“Oh!” His gaze ended up in Rokuko’s direction. She trembled. No way. Was she about to be called on? Her eyes wavered.

“Core 112, what do you think? Do you maybe have some advice for me?” *Whew, not me. Thank goooooodness.* Rokuko let out a sigh of relief.

“Aaaah... I, er, I agree with, what Dungeon Core Number 5 said. You should, erm... I believe you should do what you think is best, Father. If I had to say, er, I think it’d be fun to have new kids runnin’ around? I’m not in a rush for’m, though.”

“Oooh. You’re looking forward to them, hm? That’s nice.” Father laughed to

himself after hearing Ittetsu's advice, who had spoken while stammering due to his lack of familiarity with speaking formally. Core 5, pleased that Ittetsu had made Father happy, sent him a silent "You did good!" look.

"Okay, while we're at it, Core 695. What do you think?"

"...Bwuuuh?!" Rokuko froze after Father suddenly spoke to her.

...Please don't surprise me like that, thought Rokuko as she slowly began to speak.

"U-Ummm... I-I, erm, I-I'm from the newest 600 batch, so... I-I think I'd be happy to have some Cores younger than me around, but um, I'd feel weird if any of them beat me in the rankings."

"Hahaha. You'd feel weird, hm? That's very like you, Core 695. I like it." Rokuko's cheeks blushed bright red. Father's statement that her opinion was "like her" meant that he spent enough time watching Rokuko to have a solid impression of her. Maybe being at the bottom of the DP rankings really did stand out that much?

Haku gave Rokuko a warm smile, and in return she let out a sigh of relief. She had been so tense she could feel it herself.

Father continued asking different Cores what they thought, but of course, each suggested that he do as he wished—answers nigh identical to the one that Dungeon Core Number 1 gave. *Maybe I wouldn't have stood out so much if I left it at that,* thought Rokuko, far too late for it to matter.

"Okay, I'll give up on the idea this year. I can think about it again next time." Father clapped his hands together. The atmosphere relaxed instantly.

"Listen, everyone. If you have any requests or questions for me, let me hear them before this party's over. I can't involve myself with you all outside of brief opportunities like this one." Father gave a bright smile, visible due to his mask not covering his mouth. In response, a Dungeon Core—one morphing into the form of a middle-aged man—raised his voice.

"Oooh, our Lord and God! I have a prayer that I hope you can answer."

"That was fast. What is it, Core 380? Ask me anything you want. But I'd really

prefer it if you called me Father."

"I would never dream that a lowly being such as myself is the son of a deity... I am merely the servant of God."

"Aaah, okay. What's your request?" Dungeon Core Number 380 kneeled to the ground and spoke his request.

"Indeed! May the might of God bring about miracles! My request involves the revival of the deceased!"

"Oh? Didn't I already do that? Revived that girl you liked?"

"My current, humble request is that you revive my elder brother Dungeon Core 379! Last winter, he was targeted by the cowardly Core 89 and ended up devoured by Soldiers of God."

"Ahhhh... Core 379. You were twin Cores, right. But sorry. That's no good."

"Why not?! With your divine powers, it should be possible!" Father had never said he *couldn't* do it. He just said that it was no good. There was a big difference between those two. It was likely possible that Father could use his powers to revive destroyed—dead—Cores at will. But Father mercilessly shot Core 380 down.

"Those are the rules." In other words, even Father was being restricted by some rules.

Suddenly, Father slapped his hands together, as if he had just had a brilliant idea.

"Oh, I know! I'll make it so that you can make a monster that looks just like Core 379. He was able to morph into human form too, right? I'll give the monster that power too. It'll cost a little DP, but it'll be a monster that looks so much like Core 379 you won't be able to tell them apart. And... done. Now you won't be so sad, right, Core 380? You can make as many copies of the monster as you want when you get home." Core 380 briefly looked shocked, but soon bowed his head reverently.

"That is... rather, thank you, Lord. Your compassion is wasted on me."

"I'm just glad you're happy." 380 pressed his head against the ground,

shaking. Was he really happy and grateful? It was impossible for Rokuko to tell.

“Well, I imagine you all can’t wait to know, so I’ll put up this year’s DP rankings.” The party’s atmosphere tensed up once again.

“Okaaay, attention please. First up is the top ten! Well, none of these really changed, so let’s just get this over with.” A large window appeared in the air, displaying the top 10 DP rankings all at once. They were unchanged from the last time Rokuko saw them, two years ago.

First through third place were held by Core 1, Core 2, and Core 3 respectively. Fourth place was Core 7, fifth place was Core 9, sixth place was Core 6. And finally, seventh place was Haku also known as Core 89, eighth place was Core 5, ninth place was Core 10, and tenth place was Core 8.

Core 5 roared with frustration, spitting fire into the air. The top ten was almost completely dominated by Single Number cores. The fact that Haku had worked her way up through them just reinforced her admiration of her. Their DP scores were displayed as well, but since Rokuko didn’t know any units of measurements above the trillion mark, she couldn’t read the numbers—she just knew they were staggeringly large.

“Mmm, uh-huh, you really are all talented children, Cores 1, 2, and 3. That makes me really happy. Keep on gathering more DP, just like you have been.”

“Your praise is the greatest reward I could ask for, Father.” Core 1 got on his knee and bowed like a knight. Cores 2 and 3 lowered their heads the same way, as if copying him. Core 2 was a silver knight and Core 3 a bronze knight, so they made a nice trio. It was said that even among the First Lot of Dungeon Cores, from 1 to 99, Father had put the most amount of care and effort into making the first three. It made sense that they would then be at the top of the rankings. But the fact he would ask them to gather even more DP, even after they got so much that Rokuko couldn’t even count them, just blew her mind.

“Cores 7 and 9, you’re both doing really well too. Could you try passing Core 3 before the next gathering?”

“As you wish, Father.”

“I shall do my best.” Cores 7 and 9 were both beautiful women, one with

green hair and the other with blue hair. They were apparently called the Goddess of the Mountains and Goddess of the Oceans, respectively. Rokuko figured the reasoning was similar to why Haku was called the White Winged Goddess.

"Cores 6, 89, and 5. You all spend a lot of time helping Cores lower in the rankings. Helping others earn DP is sometimes just as important as earning DP yourself. Thank you all."

"I do not deserve such praise."

"Your gratitude is my utmost joy."

"Father, as Dungeon Core 5, it is my great pleasure to be of use to you."

Dungeon Core Number 6. A sharp-faced older man with harsh eyes, covered from head to toe in twisted black armor. He was commonly known as the Great Demon King—the Demon Emperor—and he ruled the Demon King Faction, also known as the Demon Army.

Dungeon Core 89. Obviously, that was Haku. She founded the Laverio Empire and was Rokuko's older sister. She was known among the Cores as a traitor.

Dungeon Core 5. As a Black Dragon, he was the only Core among the top ten not taking a human form. That was a deliberate choice, reflective of his belief that he had no reason to hide his true form and instead took pride in the body Father had given him. He was known as the Dragon King. Many lizard-type Cores, including Ittetsu, were members of what was known as the Dragon King faction.

"Core 10, 8. I see you two are working hard too. Keep up the good work, and don't die on me anytime soon, okay?"

"As you wish, my King."

"I'll serve you as best I can, my Father."

Dungeon Core 10. A somewhat older man who wore a priest's robe just like Father, though his was more richly-designed and gaudy.

Dungeon Core 8. In contrast to Core 10, he was an elderly man clothed in a simple shirt and pants, keeping himself upright with a walking cane.

“Okay. Now I’m going to show all the ranks down to 699. I’m not the only one who loves how much these always change, right?” A window much larger and wider than the first one appeared, though its text was smaller. If Keima were there, he would have mentioned that it looked like a school’s list of test results. All Dungeon Cores from 11 to 699 had their ranks displayed. Even dead Cores like Core 379 had their rank displayed, though it only showed their DP at time of death and never changed thereafter.

Rokuko went to the rightmost side of the monitor to look at the bottom rankings. Though she was hoping that she had gotten out of last place, since she had been earning a lot of DP since Keima joined her. She started at the bottom. First, she passed all the Cores that died right after being born, and the Cores that died using all of their DP stores as a last ditch effort for survival, leaving basically nothing behind... but she didn’t find herself anywhere, not even after reaching the 400s. She kept on looking through the 300s. There were a lot of Cores from the 600 batch in the 300s, and since most of them hadn’t yet earned the power to morph into human shape, there were quite a variety of beings clumped together. Core 629, an orange rabbit, called out to Rokuko after seeing her. He was visibly confused.

“Nmm? What’sh you doing here for, 695? The bottom rankingsh are thattawaysh.”

“Eh? Ah, um, actually... My number wasn’t over there. I can’t find it.”

“...Maybe Daddy’sh finally forgot you?”

“I-I don’t think so. I mean, he spoke to me earlier.”

“Why not look at your DP shtoresh and find it that way? He for shure jusht forgot you.” *Oh, right, I could do that.* Rokuko thought back to how much DP she had while looking at the rankings in front of her. 300th place, Core 629. 351,200 DP. *Wait... How much DP do I even have right now? I should have a lot, since Haku always gives me so much whenever she stays at the inn. Right?* Rokuko checked the DP display on her menu. She had locked it to displaying how much DP she could personally use on her own, so it had been stuck at around 100,000 DP for a long time. For the first time in a while, she checked her total DP.

729,359 DP.

"...Wha?" She rubbed her eyes and checked again. The counter remained at 729,359. *Um... No, no, no. No way. Most of our DP is actually stored as gold coins. Keima told me just a few days ago that we'd more than double our DP if we converted all our gold coins into DP. I remember that.*

Wait, wait, hold on. Doesn't that mean my rank should be even higher...? And even without that, I have twice as much as rank 300, with its 350,000 DP?

"What'sh wrong? Why you shtaring at all the preshioush DP I shaved up? I know you jealoush, but you gotta earn it on your own."

"Ah, no, I... Mmm. You're right." Rokuko walked over to the higher rankings. Rank 250 only got up to about 500,000 DP. *Eh?! Um, how far did I go up?* Amid her confusion, Rokuko finally found her own number.

"...Rank 210, Core 695...?" She checked again, and Core 695 was unmistakably written right there. She turned around then looked again. As expected, there it still said Rank 210, Core 695. Cores past 200 had around 1,000,000 DP, and it kept shooting up such that Rank 150 had over 10,000,000 DP.

"...Eheh!" Rokuko couldn't help but grin. She grinned so wide that the deadly trio of 650 Cores came walking over.

"Oooh? What're you doing here, 695?"

"Geheheh. What's a low ranker like you doing way over here?"

"For real. Don't you know your place by now, c'moooon." Rokuko turned to look at them, still grinning.

"Oh my, oh my. I think I'm the one who should be asking that. Why are you three over here? What are you ranks?"

"Oof, that's one nasty grin. You that smug cause Father talked to you? We came over here 'cause you got mixed up in the wrong place. Me? I'm Rank 321. Heheheh. I went up three whole spots."

"I was 322, bwuhuhuh. 650 beat me."

"310 for me. I'm the best outta all of us!"

“Heeey, don’t get too cocky, 652. Hmph. So, 695. What about you?”

...Rokuko let out a mocking laugh. Then, with a smug expression, she dropped the bomb.

“Rank 210.”

“...Mmm? Sooorry, could you say that again?”

“Rank 210! Ahahaha, I beat you all! Every single one of you!”

“Croak? But you’re at the bottom every year. You sure you’re not seeing anything?”

“Don’t believe me? Just look at the rankings! It’s riiight there! Rank 210, Core 695!” Rokuko pointed at the rankings. There indeed was Rank 210, Core 695 written, plain as day.

“Whaaaa?! S-Seriously?!”

“No way! There’s gotta be something wrong with these rankings! How’d little 695 go from the bottom all the way to here?!”

“I’m not little anymore. I’m Rank 210 now. That’s right, I’m above all of you! Address me with Number, Core 650!”

“Not a chance. I won’t accept that you’re Rank 210. Also, isn’t it a little cheeky for you to demand that when you never addressed us with Number?”

“Oh yeah, you have a point. You can drop the Number, then.” Rokuko changed her mind on a dime.

“But for real, what’s up with this? How do you have so much more DP than us when we’ve been saving up every year? Did Father mess up?”

“Father, messing up...? Can’t imagine that. She musta cheated.”

“Croak, croak! That’s right! She cheated! Her score is fake!” Core 651 started screaming about Rokuko being a cheater, croaking non-stop. Rokuko had been the lowest ranking Core every year since she was created, and suddenly she had shot all the way up to 210. Not to mention that these rankings weren’t showing how much DP they had earned in a year. They were showing how much DP they had saved up over their entire lives. It was natural to doubt her success as being

the result of cheating.

Soon enough, several other Cores that Rokuko had shot past started questioning things too, spurred on by the shouting.

“But what could she have done to cheat?”

“Maybe she had the traitor Core 89 split DP with her? Like, by holding a fake Dungeon Battle where 89 let her win...”

“That reminds me, didn’t Dungeon Core Number 112 just mention that she beat him? How could the lowest ranking Core beat him in a fight? Does that mean Dungeon Core Number 112 is another accomplice...?” *Oh crap. They’re kinda close to the truth*, thought Rokuko. *Um? Wait, does this mean I did cheat? Did I accidentally cheat? Oh, oh no, I’m sweating now.*

“Come on, give it up! Tell us how you cheated, Core 695!”

“N-No, you’re wrong! I-I didn’t cheat, I-I shwear!”

“Wow, talk about making it obvious. You’re being way too suspicious... Shhhlurp.” Rokuko’s head spun as she realized she might have accidentally been cheating. Her eyes got hot. She wanted to cry.

“Be silent, you pathetic bugs.” A clear, sharp voice shot through the air. Everyone fell silent immediately.

There appeared a young girl with long, fiery red hair.

“Core 666...”

“Address me as Number, Core 650. Is that not the proper way of showing respect? I’m a higher rank than you and we are far from friends.” Dungeon Core 666. She was the most talented of the 600 batch and obtained the ability to morph into human shape before anyone else. She was also the youngest member of the Demon King Faction led by Dungeon Core Number 6, the Demon Emperor.



“Ngh! Dungeon Core, N-Number 666! You need to say something to Core 695 too!”

“And why is that?”

“Why?! Because she cheated to beat us!”

“Look again. She hasn’t beaten me.” Core 666 shot a finger towards the rankings, pointing to where it said Rank 180, Core 666. She had pushed past all those around her and gotten into the top 200.

“B-But! She faked her DP to get this high! Like, there’s no way Core 89 didn’t just give her all this DP!” Since Haku actually had given her a lot of DP for the Dungeon Battle and as tips at the inn, that wasn’t entirely untrue. *Oh crap, I think I did cheat!* Rokuko panicked further. But Core 666 just let out a single cold laugh.

“Pathetic. If she ‘cheated’ to raise her rank, then you just have to cheat and raise yours the same way.”

“Whaaat?! L-Listen to what you’re saying! It’s ridiculous!” Core 650 shouted, considering that option to be out of the question. Core 666 sighed in response, knowing that nothing was out of the question.

“Your stupidity astounds me. Father created these rankings himself, and thus they have his support. None of them, then, are fake. She cheated because she earned DP in a way you couldn’t? Truly pathetic.”

“Ngh... R-Right, my bad. I forgot that Dungeon Core Number 6 is giving you all your DP too, Core 666. You’d be a hypocrite if you got mad at Core 695 here. My bad, haha.”

“.....” Swoosh! Core 666 thrust her blazing Magic Blade forward, stopping right before Core 650’s eyes. It took a solid second for Core 650 to realize what had happened.

“If you dare scorn Grandfather again, I will cut you down where you stand. Understand?”

“Ah?! Wh-What? Y-You’re saying you’ll kill me? J-J-J, J-J, Just try it!” So said Core 650 while stepping rapidly backwards and hiding in Core 651’s froggy

shadow. Core 666's sword disappeared into thin air.

"I wonder if a snake is just a kind of weak caterpillar. What do you think, Core 695?"

"Wha?! Ah, ummm, I think that sounds right?"

"I see. Did you hear that, caterpillar?"

"Gyaaaah! You sure are being cocky today, Core 695!"

"Wait, what?! You're going to act like I said that?" Core 666 let out a hmph. Her taunting had gotten Rokuko yelled at, but for some reason, her cold sweat had disappeared. Perhaps she had been saved.

"...Oh?" Core 666 suddenly looked at Rokuko, as if she had seen something. Her gaze fell on the ruby-adorned orichalcum ring resting on Rokuko's left ring finger.

"...Core 695. That is quite the splendid ring you have."

"Eh? Oh, this thing? Ahaha, the truth is, I have a Master now. And like, he gave me this ring as a present."

"Oh, your Master did, hmmm? It looks expensive. If my eyes aren't mistaken, that's an orichalcum ring, is it not?"

"Ummm, right. It is. For sure."

"May I take a closer look?"

"S-Sure, is this good?" Rokuko ignored 650's shouting and held her left hand out towards Core 666. She took her hand softly and looked at the ring.

...It was indeed an orichalcum ring with a pure, flawless ruby attached. Core 666 took it all in. If converted to DP, the ring would be worth at least 50,000,000 DP, though all things considered a value of 100,000,000 DP was more likely.

"Do you plan to turn this ring into DP?"

"Eeeh?! N-No way, my Master gave me this ring. It's really important to me. I'd never do that."

"But you would be much, much higher in the rankings if you sold it." *Higher*

than even me, thought Core 666 as she glared as Rokuko. However, Rokuko knew that Keima had thrown it together using a minimal amount of DP, so she didn't expect it to be worth that much. Not that she had any intention of ever selling her precious ring.

"I don't really think so." Core 666 let go of Rokuko's hand after hearing her answer.

"That's certainly arrogant of you, Core 695. You've made me want to ever so slightly... Destroy you."

"Wait, what?! That doesn't sound like a joke when you say it, Core 666!" Despite how Rokuko had just addressed her without Number, which could be considered rude, Core 666 didn't chastise her. Instead, she gave a bright smile, and said...

"Therefore, Core 695. I challenge you to a duel." Rokuko looked at Core 666, questioning whether she had heard that properly. She got the feeling she had heard the word "duel."

"U-Ummm. Sorry, could you say that again?"

"Core 695. I challenge you to a duel." Apparently, Rokuko hadn't misheard.

"A battle...? Ummm, is that different from a Dungeon Battle?"

"I am merely suggesting that we draw our swords and battle where we stand, here and now."

"Merely...?"

"Oh, could it be that the sword on your hip is just for show?" Core 666's tone was sharp and imposing, as she didn't want Rokuko to look down on her.

Indeed, Rokuko had a sword on her hip. And indeed, it was just for show. She had honestly forgotten that she was even wearing it until Core 666 pointed it out.

"...Now, draw your sword."

"Um, it actually is just for show."

"Are you suggesting that I am so beneath you, fists will suffice to defeat me? I

do not know what inspires your empty confidence, but very well. Do as you wish.” Core 666’s blazing Magic Blade re-materialized and she entered a combat stance. *Um, please listen to me.*

Rokuko looked around for help. She made eye contact with Core 629, who promptly looked away. *Gr, you stupid orange rabbit... Actually, I don’t know if you’d even be a good shield.*

“Heheh, that’s the spirit, Core 695! Let her cut you down!”

“Oh my, Core 650. Would you like to duel as well?”

“N-Nah, I’ll pass! Duels are for violent, uncivilized weirdos!”

“...What was that? Duels are uncivilized?” A split second later, Core 666 had moved from in front of Rokuko to in front of Core 650, Magic Blade thrust right at him.

“Guh?! I’m telling you, quit it!” Once again he backed away, this time hiding behind Core 652, the slug.

“Hmph. My blade would be wasted on a weakling like you anyway. Now then, Core 695. Let us begin our duel.” Rokuko thought about what to do as Core 666 gave her a bright smile.

Her options were:

1. Accept the duel.

2. Run away.

3. I’d rather go eat some melon rolls.

...She wanted to ignore reality and take option three, but that’d probably just make Core 666 mad. But she’d be cut down from behind if she took option two, and she had no chance of winning option one. *Darn it, I should have made Keima turn these clothes and this sword into golems too.* But it was too late for that.

“Oh my, oh my. I see you’re having fun, Core 666.” Suddenly, Rokuko’s savior arrived. Haku, wearing a tight white dress, walked up to them with a warm smile.

“...Dungeon Core Number 89. Yes, I thought it best to use this opportunity as a chance to grow closer to Core 695.”

“Even so, isn’t dueling a rather violent way to form a friendship?”

“Perish the thought. Have you not formed a friendship with Grandfather, Dungeon Core Number 6, through similar means? I believe it is natural that Core 695 and I do the same.”

“Ahaha, how cheeky. Have you not been disciplining her properly, Core 6?”

“Heh. You have it backwards, Core 89. Seems like Core 695’s the one that needs disciplining.” Right behind Haku was the Demon Emperor himself, Core 6, clad in twisted black armor. Sparks flew between Haku and Core 6 as they looked at each other.

“I wonder about that. The children of your faction have been quite a tedious thorn in my side lately. I would truly appreciate it if you pulled back on their reins a little.”

“Oh, that’s the first I’m hearing of this. I will inform them to keep me more updated on their efforts.”

“Ahahaha.”

“Heh heh heh.”

Core 6 drew his pitch-black sword. In turn, Haku readied her ivory spear. At some point, Rokuko and Core 666’s duel had turned into a duel between Haku and Core 6. Sparks flew in the air.

“GRAAAAAH! You twoooo! Let me joooooooin!” Core 5, the Dragon King, soared through the air with his massive Black Dragon body, heading directly for Haku and Core 6. He slammed into the ground, causing what felt like a miniature earthquake, and let out a ferocious roar. The force of the roar was so great that the nearby Rokuko’s knees gave in and she fell to the ground. Although she couldn’t say so with confidence, she was fairly certain she managed not to pee herself. On the other hand, Core 666 remained on her feet completely unfazed. The bully trio had all passed out.

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“I’ll crush you, Core 89! Lend me a hand, Core 6!”

“You would dare give me an order? I’ll destroy you first.”

“Wha?! C’mon, why wouldn’t you take the traitor down first?!”

“Feel free to team up. It would save me the time of destroying one of you later.”

“Fool.”

Haku swung her spear back and forth, warming up while taunting the two of them. The atmosphere was so tense the surrounding Cores all ran away to avoid being caught in the crossfire. *I want to run away too*, thought Rokuko. But she was personally involved in this. Though it felt like she was pretty much out of the picture by this point. Either way, though, she couldn’t run away with legs as wobbly as hers.

“Okay, stop. That’s enough, you three.” Father’s sudden interjection made all three of them freeze on the spot.

“I hate to be a buzzkill, but you can’t fight here.”

“Oh my. Forgive me, Father. I got a little carried away.”

“Ngrrr... This was the perfect chance...”

“I did nothing wrong, Father.”

They sheathed their weapons, each defending themselves. The atmosphere loosened up in no time. Though of course, only superficially.

“You know, Cores 6, 89, and 5, I really think you three should be more friendly with one another. All of you take good care of younger Cores, so there’s a lot of children learning from your examples. Now, shake hands.” At Father’s urging, the Demon Emperor and Haku shook hands with cold, fake smiles. The Dragon King rested a claw on top of their hands. It was a truly blood-curdling sight. But Father seemed satisfied by it.

“That said, it might be a good idea to settle this rivalry once and for all. I mean, in a way outside of the Dungeon Point rankings.”

“...I suppose that you have an idea regarding how to do that, then?”

“Sharp as always, Core 89. That’s right.” Father beamed.

“Your younger Dungeon Core followers will have a Dungeon Battle. I see that your friends in the 600 batch are already here, after all... Aaah, Core 650’s the only one without a master, so as a handicap, Cores 651 and 652 can join him.”

“...Bwuh?”

“Hm. It’s not a duel, but it shall suffice.”

“...Wha?!”

“Huh?”

“Awww...”

The bully trio had apparently woken up. *Welp... I don’t know how this happened, but it looks like we’re having a Dungeon Battle. I really need to talk to Keima about this*, thought Rokuko as she rubbed her temples.

Day 360 – Keima’s Perspective

“...And that’s what happened. Essentially, we’re having a Dungeon Battle.” Rokuko, after being gone for about three days, came back out of nowhere talking about some Dungeon Battle. *Who the hell is that Father guy? Is he a god? He’s definitely some kind of god.*

“...By the way, all that happened on the first day, right? What about the other two?”

“Wha? Well, obviously, I ate a lot and drank a lot and partied and had tons of fun! I mean, I’m Rank 210, y’know? I even beat Dungeon Core 112 in a fight, and he’s Rank 63! Eheheheh.” *Man, she sure got cocky fast. Is Rank 210 really that high of a rank? Either way, right now the main problem is that Dungeon Battle she’s talking about.*

“So, why do we have to fight a Dungeon Battle in Haku’s place?”

“Because Father wills it. What choice do we have?”

“...What’ll happen if we say no?”

“We’d be making Haku our enemy. I definitely don’t want that. No way.” *Uh, yeah, that’ll be a no way from me too. Haku would kill me on the spot.*

“...Anyway, it’s going to be a three-way team fight, right?”

“Uh-huh.” According to Rokuko, there were three teams: Core 6 and 666 forming the Demon King Team, Core 5, 650, 651, and 652 forming the Dragon King Team, and finally us and Haku forming the Human Empire Team. Each team will build a new dungeon and place a single Dummy Core within it. Those who had their Dungeon Core destroyed lost—not touched, but destroyed. We were limited to spending 500,000 DP, including the Dummy Core.

The battle would begin in one month. We had that long to prepare the dungeon. However, the worst rules were yet to come. We had to work with the higher ranked Core in our team—we needed to build the dungeon on their land, with their DP, and with their direct involvement. If I wanted to go all out making our dungeon, I needed to expose all my trump cards to Haku. Otherwise, I’d have to make a dungeon without using {Create Golem}.

...I had been hiding my advanced {Create Golem} as a safety measure, but continuing to do that here would force me to design a dungeon fundamentally different from anything I had made previously. 500,000 DP would be enough to do quite a lot without golems, but the same went for my opponents. The key to victory here would be taking that DP and going as far with it as possible, cutting corners here and there to ultimately make a longer and more dangerous dungeon than the others. Also, the higher ranked Cores weren’t allowed to bring special items, but the lower ranked Cores could.

Guess that’s them saying not to rely on Haku too much. I probably can’t just ask her to accidentally drop Magic Blades around the place for me to coincidentally find and pick up. Yeah, probably not. Anyway. Maybe I should just have Rokuko roll that 1,000 DP gacha about two hundred times. With luck like hers, that should end up being a net benefit. Yeah.

“Wait. What’ll we do with our own dungeon while the Dungeon Battle’s going on? It’d be pretty dangerous to just leave it completely on its own. Not that we won’t leave someone behind to keep an eye on it.”

“Don’t worry. Father said he’d connect space-time for us while this is going

on. We'll be able to come back to the dungeon every day."

"Connect space-time...? Oh, like what happens during Dungeon Battles?" *Man, this Father guy really is fishy. That's not the kinda thing someone should be able to just casually do.*

"Actually, it turns out that Father's always the one connecting dungeons during battles."

"Your dad's, uh, really something. I wanna meet him one day."

"Well, I'm sure you'll get a chance to during the Dungeon Battle."

By the way, our menu now showed various new statistics, like how much DP we've used on the new dungeon and how much we had left. *He works fast.*

"So, what two places are going to get connected? It'd be a big problem if a giant portal to the Imperial Capital suddenly appeared in the middle of town."

"He said he'd connect the coliseum in our dungeon to Haku's royal villa in the capital. Once you start making the new dungeon, Keima, he'll switch to connecting ours and that one." *He's really making this easy for us, huh?*

I let out a sigh. With him being this accommodating, we had no choice but to go with it. I had no intention of running away, but honestly, he was making me want to.

"So, what do I have to do?"

"Haku's coming over here and then we'll go to the Imperial Capital together."

"...Do we have enough employees to manage the place while we're gone?"

"If we don't, why not just summon more?" *Oh right, I forgot we could do that. This is exactly why I summoned our three monster girls in the first place. Mmm... We've saved up a ton of DP by now. It might be smart to just go ahead and summon a monster dedicated solely to running the dungeon.*

"Ahaha, I mean, I am Rank 210 after all. We have plenty of DP to spare!"

"That's true. Alright, I'll give Rei about 50,000 DP and let her summon whatever subordinate she wants."

"...Why Rei?"

“She knows a lot about our dungeon. Niku and Ichika can’t use DP, Kinue’s focused on the inn, and Neruneh’s got her research to worry about. The process of elimination gives us Rei. Plus, she’s basically the leader of the monster girls.” For some reason, Rei had ended up in something of a leader position over the other two. It helped that she was the first one we summoned, but beyond that, she just liked taking care of others. Though Kinue was still the nosy mom of the group, so to speak.

“Makes sense. She knows the dungeon second best, after me.”

“Pretty sure I know the dungeon better than anyone. Honestly, you’re probably in third place here, being real.”

“...Well, whatever. Keima, I was thinking about going, u-um, shopping once we get to the capital. D-Do you want to go with me?”

“I mean, if you need someone to carry your stuff, Niku can handle that.” *You’re gonna try to invite me on a date in Haku’s backyard? Yeah, no thanks. I don’t feel like dying.*

“...I want to go with you, Keima.”

“I’m not sure that’s the best thing to do with Haku watching us.”

“Aren’t you a little too afraid of Haku? She’s a really nice person.” *Yeah, I bet she a nice person... when she’s talking to you!*

By the way, Rei swore even deeper loyalty to me after I gave her the 50,000 DP.

“Master I...! I shall not disappoint you, I-I... I swear it!” said the touched Rei, tears streaming down her cheeks. She looked like a hot mess, but I had intended for the gesture to strengthen our loyalty, so uh... Alright.

Day 361

Tomorrow came. A gate opened in the coliseum and Haku came through it.

“Greetings, Keima... Ahaha. This is quite the stylish room.”

“Hey, Haku. I tried making a coliseum, but embarrassingly enough, there aren’t any monsters in here yet.” The coliseum area was about as large as a few

football fields, but was mere inches away from making contact with the [Flame Caverns]. Ittetsu warned me about digging any further, so my plan was to dig downwards in the future.

“In any case, regarding the team battle. You will accept, yes?”

“...Yeah, I’m game. There’s just some things I didn’t hear from Rokuko that I’d like to double check, if you don’t mind.”

“Knowing you, Keima, I imagine you want to know what your payment will be.” Haku cut to the chase, but my payment wasn’t all I wanted to know about.

“That, and what will happen if we lose.” Haku nodded in return with a smile and a smooth “Of course.” The thing about talking to Haku was that each conversation felt like a boxing match where she threw an endless flurry of jabs right at my head, always taking the lead.

“Naturally I expected that you would be concerned about the penalty for losing. Let’s see. I suppose losing the DP and items invested in the dungeon is the only real penalty. As you are indirectly fighting for us older Cores, we will bear practically all of the risk.” *No penalty for us? So basically, it doesn’t matter if we lose? No way. That can’t be right. We’re talking about Haku here.*

“I personally won’t mind if we lose, so please. Proceed without worry.”

“And what will you do if we proceed without worry and lose, Haku?”

“...Father will grant us permission to temporarily restrain our associated younger Cores and lecture them.” Haku put a hand over her mouth and laughed. *Okay, yeah. We gotta win. Haku’s basically saying she’ll get to do whatever she wants with us if we lose.*

“As for the reward, Father will grant two rewards for each Core associated with the winning team.”

“...Can we ask for any reward we want?”

“Heavens no, Father himself will be choosing the rewards. It will be an honor to receive his gifts.” I didn’t know Father and thus didn’t really consider that an honor, but if he gave me, for instance, socks freshly removed from the feet of my favorite idol, well, I could understand the feeling. Though I was probably the

only one who could understand that.

...I wonder if there's some divine bed he could give me. If such a thing exists, I definitely want one. My thoughts were interrupted by Haku clapping her hands together.

"Oh, I have an idea. Why don't we make use of this coliseum and have a duel, as adventurers?"

"I'm gonna have to pass. There's Dungeon Master work I need to take care of."

"Oh my, how disappointing. I'll give you this nonetheless." With an amused smile, Haku pulled out a card from her cleavage. I took the warm card from her—it was a Guild Card. One with my name on it.

"I had another one made for you."

"...Uh, I don't remember losing my first one."

"As a reminder, I run the Adventurer's Guild."

"Is it just me or does this say I'm B-Rank now?"

"Congratulations, Keima, and welcome to nobility."

Yep, the card listed me as B-Rank, which was especially meaningful because adventurers were treated as nobles from B-Rank onward—though not nobles on the level of dukes, counts, or barons. There was apparently a specific low-ranking noble position for B-Rankers, who became known as visads. I, for example, could now be called Visad Keima. It was transient nobility that wouldn't be passed down to the next generation, but still, it was nobility nonetheless. Those who held such a title had the strength to back up their authority, after all, and apparently those who achieved enough over their lives could attain nobility that their children could inherit.

Wait, what about the Guild exam? Guess there's no problem with me skipping it if the head honcho doesn't care. Though I have to wonder about the D-Rank card I still have. Maybe she's telling me to use both and exploit them however I can?

"Normally, raising to such a rank would incur a yearly gold coin fee, but I will

exempt you from it given the circumstances. If my selfless kindness wracks your heart with guilt, I will accept a cream soda as thanks."

"Riiight... I'll give you one later. So, why suddenly make me B-Rank?"

"I can't just have commoners entering my home, you know. There are those who will kick up quite the fuss if you aren't some form of nobility." *Yeah, makes sense. She is the founder of the empire, Haku Laverio. I remember back in Japan that an elephant was once given a noble rank before being presented to the emperor. Basically the same thing. And I guess being B-Rank will be a big help if I ever want to go into Haku's own dungeon.*

"Here is Rokuko's card. Ah, and I did make cards for your slaves as well. Make good use of them."

"Thank you, Haku! Look, Keima, we match now. Like a couple!" *Sweet Christ please don't phrase it like that. Haku just grimaced so hard I could feel my neck about to get snapped.*

Haku handed Rokuko her Guild Card, then tossed Niku and Ichika's over to me. *Actually, why does Rokuko need one when she's Haku's little sister already?*

"Giving Rokuko a normal noble title would cause its own troubles. She is my little sister, after all," said Haku, as if she had read my mind. *Ahhh, right. The imperial family are already nobles by birth. She'd need a pretty high-ranking title to match that, and just her existing is already dangerous enough. I can see why Haku would want to avoid opening that can of worms.*

"In any case, now that you're official nobility... Shall we go visit my home, Rokuko?"

"Yes! Come on, Keima, don't just stand there! Let's go!" Haku took Rokuko's hand and then went through the gate. *Guess I'll get going too. Heeey, Niiiku. Let's goooo.*

We passed through the gate and found ourselves in a storeroom. It was littered with suits of armor, not to mention all the swords and spears and so on hanging from the walls. Boxes were stuffed into shelves and all manner of weaponry and armor were stuffed inside. *Uh, even the swords in those boxes are covered with jewels and stuff. They look pretty expensive.*

Rokuko and Haku, who had gone through the gate first, were looking back at me and waiting. Niku squeezed my shirt. Infiltration successful.

“This is my collection room, as it were. I asked Father to have the gate lead here. Unfortunately, lending you any of this equipment would impact our DP limit for the battle, so this all will have to remain here.” *Her collection room, huh...? I guess all this stuff in boxes is a part of her collection. Are these swords all Magic Blades...? Is your hobby collecting Magic Blades, Haku? I’m pretty interested in natural Magic Blades that aren’t just golems. I’d like to take a look at them, even if I can’t take them back with me.*

“Oh, I remember this lance. It’s the one Chloe used to cast Flame Wall back in that Dungeon Battle you lost, right?”

“Ngh! Wh-Why, yes... Yes it is.” Rokuko accidentally dug into Haku’s old wounds. *Ouch.*

“...In any case, I will prepare rooms for you to stay in. Follow me.” Haku forced a smile and guided us out of the room, into her villa. It was entirely white, like a temple of sorts. *Yeaaah. People definitely worship her.*

“Here we are, Rokuko.”

“Woow... So big!” The bed in her room was as big as the one in our inn’s grand suite. It had a white canopy and a queen-sized mattress. *Now there’s a bed I can respect. Those clear, white curtains are like... a veil, right? That gives it a really royal atmosphere. I can dig it. The pillows and mattress and stuff are all filled with feathers, it seems. They’re all fluffy and soft looking. I wanna dive right into that bed and fall asleep on the spot.*

What about the rest of the room? Ahhh, right... Uh... Looks nice and expensive? It’s a pretty big room, and there’s some kind of shiny magic tool brightening it. Oh, and there’s one of the massage chairs I sold her.

Anyway, I knew Haku would make sure that our rooms have top tier beds! I can tell just from a glance that this is the best bed money can buy. I won’t regret a second I spend sleeping on top of it. I’m getting sleepy just looking at it!

“Keima, you and that slave girl will be sleeping in this room.” Before I could even blink in confusion, Haku had taken me to a tiny, barren room. *Oh geez, it’s*

basically an empty box. Like a tiny storage room that had all its stuff taken out. There's not even a bed here. No pillow, either. Reminds me of when I first came to this world.

"H-Hold on, Haku! Keima deserves a lot better than this..."

"Oh my. But wouldn't Keima come here to avoid work and sleep if offered the opportunity? I believe I recall you mentioning his proclivity for sleeping."

"...U-Um, well... D-Did I really say that?" Rokuko averted her eyes, silently confirming that she did indeed say that. *Okay. I get it. This is your fault, huh, Rokuko? I mean, not that I expected for a second that Haku would treat us equally.*

"U-Um, c-can't you at least give him a bed?"

"If he wants a bed that much, he can go back to his own dungeon every night." *Yeah, it's pretty obvious that Haku wants me to leave so she can be alone with Rokuko. And I mean, I'm fine with that. I'm fine with it, but, y'know? Couldn't you at least not make it so obvious, Haku?*

"...Honestly, I'm just glad she's lending me a room at all. I can just take my own bed out of {Storage} whenever I want to sleep."

"Oh, why don't you just come to my room at night? My bed's big enough for three people to sleep in."

"Sorry, my sweet Rokuko, but that bed can only be slept on by Dungeon Cores."

"Really?! Awww, well, scratch that I guess..." *Rokuko, that's definitely a lie. Haku's just saying that so she can get in bed with you.*

"Anyway, let's stop talking about rooms and get to business. Where should we build this new dungeon?"

"I'm glad you're enthusiastic about this. Shall we go to one of my conference rooms? I have prepared a map." Thus, we headed to a conference room. It was a white room just as expected, but its center was dominated by a physical three-dimensional model of the entire Empire, plus neighboring territories including the Demon Emperor's lands.

"...This is a pretty detailed map. Every other map I've seen has been a lot more vague."

"Indeed. Maps are valuable tools of warfare. I created this map with the help of Kuusatsu... a Hero of the past who suggested I use Harpies to fly above my land and take direct records of it." I took another look at the map, impressed by how useful random modern Earth knowledge was in this world. Tsia Mountain, which contained our dungeon, was within the Empire's territory. Using the size of the mountain to estimate distance... Yeah, the Empire was pretty huge. How many Hokkaidos could even fit in here? More than a few. Not to mention that there's dozens of dungeons marked on the map. I could guess that most of the ones near the capital belonged to Haku.

"So. I believe that the dungeon would best be built in this general area. The terrain is quite varied, which will enable a variety of tactics. There's also quite a few monster nests nearby." *Wait, monster nests? It's not against the rules to use naturally existing monsters?* Or so I thought, but Haku just gave a knowing smile. *Guess not.*

"I think it'll be best to narrow down our options and then check them out firsthand to find the best one."

"Agreed. Personally, I might recommend this mountain the most," said Haku, pointing at a part of the map some distance off from the capital. "A mountain will allow you to execute familiar strategies when building the dungeon, no?" The mountain was fairly close to Demon territory. *Ahh, okay. She wants to build a dungeon that'll put some pressure on the Demon Emperor. She'll probably use it as a reconnaissance camp after this is all said and done. That is, uh, if we get to keep these dungeons. Do we?*

"You seem to be curious, Keima, so I'll tell you that the dungeons built for this battle will be kept by the teams. The younger Cores of the winning team will keep the dungeon, whereas the younger Cores of the losing teams will lose their dungeons to their respective senior Cores. I suggest, therefore, that you do your best." *In short: If we lose, you get to have a new reconnaissance dungeon, and if we win, you get to have a new reconnaissance dungeon that I have to deal with myself. This is a sweet deal for Haku whether we win or lose.*

“Um, Haku. Can you tell what Keima’s thinking even when he doesn’t say anything?”

“I certainly can. His thoughts are written all over his face. I’m quite used to interacting with humans, you see.”

“I wonder if I’ll learn how to do that someday. I want to know what Keima’s thinking.”

“...Would you really need such a skill for that?”

Rokuko fell into thought with a *hmmm*.

“Are you saying that we’re connected by body and soul, so I should be able to tell what he’s thinking without such skills...? My thoughts are Keima’s thoughts?!”

“It does seem that you’ve gotten better at reading the thoughts of others, darling...”

“Ahaha. I’ve grown a lot!” Rokuko puffed out her chest with pride. *Yep, glad to see she’s as airheaded as always.* Haku also gave a relieved nod.

“Anyway, what do you think about this spot, Keima? If Haku’s recommending it, I’m sure it’s good.”

“Eh, hold on. It’s still just a candidate. What kind of dungeon we’ll be making will impact which spot we want a lot.”

In the end, we spent the afternoon poring over the maps, picking the best candidates and making plans to explore them tomorrow. It’ll be a pain, but I really didn’t want to lose this battle.

By the way, Niku and I went back home for the night, whereas Rokuko stayed at the capital.

Chapter 2

Day 362

During the second day of our dungeon being connected to Haku's villa, I decided to go sightseeing through the Imperial Capital. Reason being, the first contender for where to build the new dungeon was within the capital itself. Why? There were many benefits to building a dungeon here, but the main one was that by owning a second dungeon, we could instantaneously travel to the capital by "placing" ourselves there. Basically, we could come visit whenever we wanted to.

...Huh? But how would the location benefit us during the Dungeon Battle? Uh, I guess we could have nearby adventurers come help us. But we could do that anywhere we wanted, really. To be honest, all that about coming here instantaneously was just me having a little fun. There's basically zero chance we're building the dungeon here. That was just an excuse. The real reason is that I want to get a good look at the capital with my own two eyes.

The Imperial Capital—Haku's home base and the holy grounds for any adventurer. It was a fairly developed city, as you'd expect from the capital of a large country, and many people lived there. The busy main street I was standing by was within the dungeon's territory, so the throngs of people I was seeing pass by—not to mention all the people I couldn't see—were all generating DP for Haku. The entire population of the capital was unknowingly making her richer. This was the ideal end state for my own village, so it wouldn't hurt to take a look around for inspiration. Though I didn't intend to go quite as far as Haku had.

"There sure are a lot of people here, Haku. This is the first time I've ever seen so many humans!"

"Ahaha. It's like this every day." By the way, Haku had taken the opportunity to guide us through the city. She couldn't just walk around as normal, though, so she switched to DP-saving mode... in other words, loli mode. Rokuko wasn't the only one who could modify how old she looked.

Even when in loli mode, Haku looked just a little bit older than Rokuko, as befitting a loli older sister. Through mysterious powers unknown to man, her once sizable tits had turned into small mounds. She looked like a late elementary schooler or an early middle schooler; a young girl on the verge of hitting puberty. In order to match Haku (mini), Rokuko had gone into loli mode as well. Now should be a good time to mention that Niku was with us. Haku (mini) in front of me, Rokuko (mini) to my right, and Niku to my left. *Hm... I shall name this formation the Loli Triangle. After so many years, I've finally formed the loli harem of my dreams... nah. Haku's the one leading this little girl army, I'm just along for the ride.*

"Ah, Keima... Perhaps I should call you big brother now?"

"Uh, no, please no. Let's just keep things normal here."

"Very well. In any case, is there anywhere in particular you wish to visit? I'm familiar with every inch of this city." Haku turned around, hair fluttering, and gave me an innocent-looking smile. Her claim carried a lot more weight since she literally had built this city from the ground up.

"Hm. There's a lot of stores I want to check out, plus the Adventurer's Guild... I also want to see the underground coliseum while I'm here."

"Oh my, the underground coliseum...? Ahaha, well, that has to wait until tonight. For now, I'll take you to the merchant's quarter."

* * *

Haku guided us to the merchant's quarter. There were shops all over the place selling vegetables, fruits, clothes, and all kinds of things. There was a butchery and a fishery too. *Speaking of which, the city did look pretty close to the sea on the map. This place is more commercially active than Tsia for sure. Can't see any weapon or armor shops, though.*

"This is the merchant quarter's main street. They sell defensive items on the level of charms and such, but real equipment is primarily sold in the adventurer's quarter. Also, convenient magic tools such as those that provide lighting are all sold here." And that was that. Rokuko was dragged into a clothing store by Haku almost immediately. It was an expensive-looking store designed for nobles, though apparently the staff knew about Haku's stealth loli

mode. It was probably a store she built specifically to visit while a loli. *Yeaaah, this is just normal shopping. Guess I'll tag along.*

"This store has all manner of designs and outfits that originate from past Heroes. Here is a girl's outfit inspired by rabbits, and here is a pure angel's outfit."

"That's just a bunny girl suit and a nurse outfit... Those past Heroes must have been something else." There were police uniforms, maid outfits, and school swimsuits too. They were all made from materials found in this world, but they looked exactly like the real thing. There were male versions of the outfits too, which showed a lot of care and consideration went into this. *Huh... I wonder if one of those past Heroes was a big time cosplayer or something.*

"Let's see the price... Yep, ten whole gold coins. Clothes sure are expensive..."

"You should expect nothing less from a high class store for nobles. Now, my sweet Rokuko. Let us get changed."

"O-Okay!" So she said, but Haku was holding the bunny girl outfit from a second ago. *Looks like she's got bikini armor too, Rokuko. You okay with that?*

Haku snapped her fingers to summon an employee, who quickly appeared and took them both deeper into the store. Niku and I were left behind.

"Niku... Uh, I mean, Kuro. Do you want anything?"

"Um... I-If you insist, I would like to see the clothes over there." Niku pointed at the underwear corner. *Not gonna make this easy for me, huh?*

Rokuko tried out all sorts of outfits, but in the end settled on a simple dress. By the way, I didn't buy anything since it'd be cheaper to just buy with DP, not to mention that the quality would be better too. Haku, on the other hand, bought tons of stuff. On her tab. Apparently, making the store employees go all the way to the castle for their payment was all a big performance to show off that they were big shots who dealt with royalty. *Man, running a business sounds like a pain. Oh, and we actually didn't need to carry any bags. I forgot we had {Storage} for that.*

"It's the responsibility of the elite to spend their wealth and keep the economy running. Ah, and Rokuko, I'll give these to you as a present once the

Dungeon Battle is over."

"Okay! Thank you so much, Haku!" *I'm pretty sure she just bought a bunch of those skimpy cosplay outfits. You're really fine with that, Rokuko? Not that I saw you wearing them.*

"Shall we go to a magic tool store next?" The magic tool store had quite a variety of tools laid out: some that set fires, some that created water, some that shined. Those were all the most popular and each sold pretty well. They were even sold in the adventurer's quarter.

In addition to those standard magic tools, there were musical tools that looked like keyboards, and cooking tools that could peel potatoes. There was even a magic tool that worked like a pen. I really didn't understand why that thing had to be a magic tool... *Wait, what? It refills ink on its own? By making it within the pen itself? Okay, yeah, a pen that never runs out of ink is pretty baller.* Surprisingly enough, there was even a magic tool sold to the public that created paper.

"This 'Mr. Paper Maker' was designed by a past Hero. It turns any thin pieces of wood given to it into paper. Many merchants buy it alongside this 'Mr. Eternal Pen.'" Apparently, adding "Mr." to the start of a product was a sign that it was a magic tool originally designed by a Hero. I looked around and saw several magic tools that also had names starting with it.

"I do think that a paper making magic tool is valuable to have, but should you really be selling it to the public like this?"

"The creator wished for it, there was nothing I could do. To make up for that, I made it such that once broken, the tools could only be fixed by imperial offices." That said, it would only produce a single sheet of A3-sized paper, and it took several hours just to do that. Each buyer also had to register their name for future maintenance and whatnot.

I kept looking at various magic tools useful for daily life, and eventually Rokuko walked up with a pot in one hand.

"Keima, isn't this 'No Firewood Pot' amazing? It heats up on its own!"

"So it's like a hot plate, huh? Can you adjust the heat?"

“It doesn’t look like you can.”

“Oh, this ‘Mr. Heating Pot’ has different heat settings *and* doesn’t need firewood. Warm, hot, extra hot... This must be popular with both adventurers and chefs.” The first pot cost five silvers, while the second one cost five golds. It was one hundred times more expensive. *To think just three heat settings would change the price so much...*

“About that. All of these ‘Mr.’ tools can only be made in our Hero Workshop. Plus, the cheaper versions break a lot faster.” *So this is basically a brand name thing, huh?* The especially cheap heating pots would burst into flames out of nowhere, which ran users the risk of their tents burning down... According to Haku, someone was intentionally flooding the market with dangerous, low-quality brandless items in order to boost the value of brand name items. In Japan, that would lead to them getting sued by the stores she sold to, but in the capital it was known that no brandless items had insurance policies and were all mostly junk. Anyone who bought them had nobody but themselves to blame. *Whoever set this up sure knows how to make some dirty money.*

Oh, that “someone” is Haku herself. I see. Yeah, I don’t know why I didn’t see that coming.

I bought one ‘Mr. Eternal Pen’ and put it into {Storage}. After getting back home, I would ask Neruneh to see if she could make one of them herself.

Eventually, we left the store and Haku showed us all around the city, bringing us to a variety of different stores.

“Now then... Let’s go to the Adventurer’s Guild. The morning quest rush has likely ended by now, so it should be tolerable.” With Haku’s guidance, we headed from the merchant’s quarter to the adventurer’s quarter. Once there, we saw a huge stone building with a massive sign hanging above its front doors —It was the Adventurer’s Guild headquarters. It had its own storage and dissection buildings. If compared to the Guild building in Tsia, it was like the difference between a wooden shack and a mansion. In turn, the branch office near our dungeon was like a doghouse. More like an anthill, honestly.

We boldly walked in through the front door and were greeted with a clean interior that reminded me of a government office, but with a cafe attached.

Though the clean image was ruined by all the adventurers quaffing beer in the cafe. Speaking of the adventurers, some of them called out to us the moment we walked in.

“Oh, lots of cute girls... Haven’t seen any of’m round these parts before. There’s a sleepy-looking dude, too.”

“Whew lad, I’m bettin’ these girlies are gonna be real hotties when they grow up.” I tensed up a little in case they planned to surround us. *Uh... Haku, why are you hiding behind me while grinning like crazy? Rokuko, what’s with the murderous look in your eyes? Niku. Put the knife away. Keep it sheathed and just hold onto the grip if you have to.*

“Heya, sonny. This is the Adventurer’s Guild.” An especially muscular man called out to me. He looked like their leader. I had golem clothes helping me out, but I got the feeling he would beat me to a pulp in a fight. *What to do here...* Before I could decide on what to do, he plopped a hand on my shoulder.

“Take it easy. You’re the oldest one in your party. It’s your job to take care of these fine young ladies. Here, girls, have some candy. We can all eat it together.”

“Th-There he is! Tokoi giving his candy away like always! Those solidified balls of honey that his Don Mercenary Band made famous!”

“He loves children, but all children fear him, so he developed this ultimate strategy: Give them candy! Man, this is just the generosity I’d expect from someone who donates almost all of his earnings to orphanages!”

“He looks so scary he’s used to children fearing him! It’s no urban legend that over a hundred children have started crying after he walked up to them with a smile!”

“Hey, shut it. Calbi, Harim, Ross. I’ll remember this.” *Welp, turns out he’s a great dude.* I took the four paper-wrapped pieces of candy from him.

“Uhhh.”

“...Sorry, did I scare you? I’m, uh, not a suspicious person or anything. You could say I’m a bit famous around these parts, since I’m a B-Rank adventurer. Go ahead and ask the Guild staff if you don’t believe me.”

“Uh, you know, I think I might do that.” I waved over a nearby staff member and did a double check. Apparently, everything those three had said was right. He looked scary, but he was a B-Rank adventurer that took care of others and liked children. He was even the leader of a mercenary band. I got worried for nothing.

“Seriously...? You actually asked a staff member...? I mean, that’s fine. You never know who might be lying to you. Double checking is the right call. Heh, I’m fine... That’s fine. You’re a mature guy making sure to protect his children, heh. That’s a good thing. Hahaha.” Sounding like he was close to crying, he said “Go ahead and ask me for help if you ever need anything,” and then walked off with the other three adventurers.

“...What just happened?”

“That’s just one of the famous adventurers that frequents this Guild. He’s one of the pawns we have available to us. It was very lucky that we met him here. Ah, though if you want to use him, you’ll need to handle the negotiations yourself.” Haku filled me in on the details. *Hm... I get it. Haku’s already considered the idea of calling adventurers over during the Dungeon Battle and making them fight. This guy runs a mercenary band, too, so we could buy him with money if necessary. I’ll have to think about using him.*

Speaking of which, I wonder what kind of quests the capital has. I was expecting some pretty good stuff, given the size of the capital, but nothing on the quest board looked that appealing. Most of them were basically fetch quests that involved going into the dungeon.

“As I said, the morning rush is over. The good, profitable jobs that involve deliveries or other such manual labor have all been taken by other adventurers, as you would expect.”

“Yeah, I see what you mean. I’m not the only one looking for good, easy jobs.”

“Quite. There’s even a famous saying that goes like, ‘You’re not the only adventurer in the world.’” That said, I didn’t want to come here during morning rush just to see what good quests were like. *Guess I’ll give up on this...*

“I imagine there are still some good quests for high-rank adventurers only, B-Rank and above. Would you like to see?” More or less everything on the quest

board was for C-Rank adventurers or below. B-Rank only quests, and certain C-Rank only quests, were considered high-rank quests that weren't posted on the normal board. You had to hear about them directly from the counter and they were heavily restricted according to not only rank but achievements as well.

Though, even with all that in mind, I could expect that B-Rank adventurers had still taken all of the good quests already. *Maybe I'll check them out next time*, I thought moments before something happened.

"Hey, isn't that you, Keima? What're you doing all the way out here?"

"Huh? Who?" I turned around and saw two adventurers standing in front of me. *Er, yeah, I don't recognize these guys.*

"I'm Uzou! You saved our lives, remember?"

"I'm Muzou! We promised to find you a Magic Blade, remember?"

...Ahhh. Yeah, that sure was a thing that happened. I completely forgot about them.

"There's not been a single day where we've forgotten how much we owe you for saving our lives! Right, Muzou?"

"Yeah, but I'm sure saving the likes of us was just another normal day for Keima. We can't expect him to remember us, Uzou." *I mean, yeah, I met you two a single time like a year ago.*

Uzou and Muzou. Brother adventurers, both C-Rank. They were the first visitors to our Dancing Doll Inn and I ended up saving their lives in the dungeon. If I remember correctly, they accidentally got stuck in my Magic Blade testing room and generated us tons of DP.

"So, what're you doing at the capital, Keima? Didja move your home base from Tsia to here?"

"I'm just on a little quest. I'll be going back to Goren soon."

"Goren? Was there a town near Tsia named that...?"

"Oh, I guess you two don't know. There's a town built around that inn now. Things developed pretty fast. Anyway, that town is called Goren."

“Neat.” *Honestly, we use the name so rarely even I forget it sometimes.*

“I’m the town chief, by the way.”

“Dunno if that’s great or just a lot of extra work. Yeah, Muzou?”

“I’m sure Keima can handle it, Uzou.” *Where’s all that confidence coming from? Better that than the alternative, but I don’t want people to overestimate me.*

“...You know, I guess that happened a year ago.”

“Yep... Er, Keima. There’s something we need to apologize about.”

“We told you we’d get you a new Magic Blade within a year, but, er...” Uzou and Muzou faltered, trailing off. *I see what’s going on. They feel bad since they couldn’t find a Magic Blade as soon as they said they would. That’s gotta be it.*

“What, the Magic Blade? Don’t worry about it. I can wait another year.” So I said, but Uzou and Muzou shook their heads hard.

“Nah, we did get a Magic Blade! The thing is, uh...”

“It’s a Magic Blade with a problem... Not exactly something we want to give to the guy who saved our lives.”

“A problem? What kind of Magic Blade is it?”

“Y’see, it’s a Magic Blade that has a sleep-inducing effect. That’s good in that it puts your enemies to sleep, but the effect hits everyone, so even the wielder ends up falling asleep.”

“To be real, the wielder’s closest to the Magic Blade, so they generally fall asleep first. We thought about selling it, but everywhere we went would only pay peanuts for it. Scammers, all of’m.”

“That’s...” *A Magic Blade that puts people to sleep? If these two are telling the truth, that’s one amazing effect.*

“Alright, let’s see it. The Magic Blade. Show me. Now!”

“Wha? I mean, sure, I don’t mind showing it to you.” Uzou took out the still-sheathed Magic Blade from his bag. It was a small, undecorated dagger in a simple sheath. The only thing special about it was the black, round magic stone

in the center of its grip. The magic stone was about as large as a water bottle's cap and was so pitch-black it was like staring into the abyss.

"Hm... How do you use it?"

"If you take it out of its sheath and pour mana into it, the stone'll start radiating sleep energy."

"Mind if I try it out?"

"Just a bit. I don't want to put anyone here asleep." He unsheathed the Magic Blade.

...Oh, oh...! This is it, ahhh. I love this sleepy feeling. Spectacular. I wanna just fall back and let myself sleep. This is the stuff.

"Sorry, Keima, would you put it away? I'm already sleepy." At Uzou's sleepy urging, I sheathed the Magic Blade. It was a good knife. The best knife, even. I would be able to sleep even more than usual with this around.

"You two really don't mind if I have this?"

"...Er, sorry, Keima. I'm so sleepy I must have misheard you. Did you just say you want this Magic Blade?"

"Yep. I can't imagine wanting a Magic Blade more than this one."

"A-Are you being for real?"

"Keima, if we sell that Magic Blade and use the rest of our savings, we could buy a better one for you. Why not wait for that one?"

Uzou, Muzou. What are you two even saying?

"I've never seen a Magic Blade better than this one. I'm just not fine with it, I *love* it!"

"Y-Yeah?"

"Keima...!"

Uh, what? Why is Muzou looking like he's about to cry? And why is Uzou looking at me with eyes full of pity? C'mon, it's not like I'm gonna use this knife for fighting.

“What’s the name of this Magic Blade?”

“It doesn’t have a name. Magic Blades are usually named by the first person to use them. It’s your blade, Keima, so you can go ahead and give it a name yourself.” *Alright*, I thought, and started thinking up a name. *Maybe... Rem Dagger, from REM sleep? Actually, nah, I’m pretty sure REM means “rapid eye movement.” That’s not very impressive. Surely there’s a cool sleep-related term out there. Oh, I’ve got it.*

“I’ll name it Siesta. The Blade of Afternoon Naps.”

“Heh, the Blade of Afternoon Naps? That’s a pretty chill name for a sword, but I guess it fits this Magic Blade perfectly. Right, Uzou?”

“Yep. Siesta, the Blade of Afternoon Naps. Sounds good, right, Muzou?”

Siesta, the Blade of Afternoon Naps. I had ended up with the best Magic Blade possible. And although I had been given this dagger to pay off a debt, I felt the need to thank them, considering just how how good of a dagger it was. I took the Golem Blade and its scabbard off my hips and handed it to the brothers.

“Sorry that it’s used, but here. You can have it.”

“Keima, this is...”

“The same kind of Magic Blade that was in that trap room. I haven’t named it either, so call it whatever you like.” I hadn’t used it much and it didn’t have a name, so it was as good as new, really. Siesta would be enough to take care of all my blade-related needs. No harm in giving up my Golem Blade.

“Actually, wait. Would be a bit awkward to give you two just one blade. Mmm... Have another one.” I pretended to reach into my bag before grabbing a spare Golem Blade out of {Storage}. It was a knife that I had made in case Niku broke hers, but I figured it would be a good match for Uzou and Muzou, who were a swordsman and scout respectively.

“Y-You don’t mind?”

“Yeah. Consider it my thanks for keeping your promise.”

“Wow... Thanks, we’ll take’m!” *They’re basically free to make, so yeah, no problem.*

With all that done, Uzou and Muzou left the guild while waving us goodbye. They had a quest to take care of, apparently. *Hard workers, those two.*

“I know that we can create them at will through the Catalog, but I can’t say I approve of handing out Magic Blades like that. Do you truly have that much DP to spare?” *Oh crap. Right, I gotta keep it a secret from Haku that I can just make those for free.*

“That’s just how valuable Siesta is to me. Nothing more, nothing less.”

“...It certainly is an interesting Magic Blade, despite its flaws. Not something I would want in my collection, however,” Haku said with a slight smile.

“In any case... I may as well introduce you to the Guildmaster here. Follow me.”

“Wait, Guildmaster? Isn’t that you, Haku?”

“No, I happen to be the Grandmaster. I leave general administration to my subordinates,” said Haku as she went behind the counter. No employee made any move to stop us as we climbed up the stairs and headed straight to the Guildmaster’s room. Haku gave a light knock and waited for a response.

But no response came even after a bit of waiting, so Haku just casually opened the door.

“Nzzz... zzz... bwuuuuh...” Within the Guildmaster’s room was a pink-haired girl with cat ears resting her head on a large desk. Soft sunlight was drifting into the room and warming everything up pleasantly. I was getting the urge to sleep too. *Wait, is that the Guildmaster? No way.*

Haku quickly took out a large wooden mallet and slammed it down onto the girl’s cat-eared head. A painful thunk resounded and the catgirl shot up. *Haku wakes peacefully sleeping people up by slamming their heads with a mallet? What a monster. Sheesh.*

“Bwuh?! Wh-What, are we under attack?! Oh! Lady Haku!”

“Good morning, Misha. How is work?”

“Ma’am! No problems to report! There were a few fights, but all was taken care of!” She gave a sharp salute, but her mouth and the desk were covered in

saliva. The desk especially had a big pool of it on top.

"Rokuko, Keima. This is the first time you've met directly, so I'll introduce her. This is Misha the Warcat. She is one of my party members and is in truth a dungeon monster."

"I'm Misha! Although I'm a Warcat, in the Guild I pass myself off as a cat beastkin!"

"Wow, a spunky cat! I'm Rokuko."

"I'm Keima. Nice to, uh, meet you?" She looked like a normal cute girl, but with cat ears and a cat tail. *Do cat beastkin and Warcats look the same? She definitely has a magic stone somewhere in her body, at least, since she's a monster.*

"This is, more or less, her human form. If she ended the transformation, her arms would grow fur down to her elbows. She's even more fluffy that way." *Oh, she can transform like that. And she's even more fluffy in her normal form, huh?*

"Despite what it may seem, Misha is an active A-Rank adventurer, so her presence here helps stave off trouble. She has the strength to back up her reputation, too. Though... I must admit, she partially ended up here because there was little else I could entrust her with." *I see... Putting the right people in the right place is pretty important, yeah.*

"Rude! I may not look like it, but I'm really smart. I mean, I easily solved that 'simple' riddle that even Haku couldn't figure out!"

"....." Haku silently pinched Misha.

"Gyah?! Please don't pinch me, Lady Hakuuu!" *Ah, that one riddle from our first Dungeon Battle. It's a trick riddle that begins with the line, "The answer to this riddle is simple." The smarter you are, the harder it is to solve, and it looks like this girl's the one who figured it out. It's a riddle you can solve in a snap by not thinking too hard about it, so yeah, makes sense.*

"...You were sleeping on the job. Expect a severe punishment later."

"Ah?! I-I'm so sorryyy!" And thus Haku decided to punish Misha, partially for good reason, and partially to vent anger.

We left the Adventurer's Guild and ate lunch at an expensive restaurant. I was so nervous I barely tasted the food, but it was probably better than the food we served at our inn. *I definitely want to bring Kinue here and have her steal their recipes.*

The only thing was, I felt so tired that I just took a nap in the park after eating. *I mean, we can keep sightseeing tomorrow, so what's the problem?*

...Alright, alright. I only took a nap because Rokuko and Haku went off to buy dresses for an evening party or something. Why didn't you buy them at the store we just went to? Oh, this is a different place? We went to a normal daily life clothing store, and evening dresses have their own special store? I guess it's like going to a suit store as opposed to buying one at a department store. Though uh, in what world is a bunny suit "daily life" clothing? This world, I guess.

...Anyway, it felt like I had slept for about five hours, but Haku and Rokuko were just getting back as I woke up. The sun was already starting to set.

"Uh-huh, I knew Keima would go to sleep."

"Wait, he actually went to sleep? He's been asleep this whole time? I thought for sure that he was just saying he would sleep for our sake."

"No, no, Haku... Keima's the type to sleep whenever he has the opportunity!" By the way, Niku had watched over me the entire time that I was asleep on the park bench. *I mean, I appreciate that, but are you sure you're fine doing that? I gave you a silver and said you could spend it wherever you like while I'm asleep.*

"...I enjoyed myself." *I don't know how, but if you're satisfied, I am too.*

And thus, night fell. It was finally time for the underground coliseum where monsters and warriors fought for the crowd's entertainment. There were various rules and regulations, but naturally, everyone's favorite competition was the "Anything Goes Deathmatch."

To reach the underground coliseum, we first returned to Haku's villa and then got into a carriage. By the way, Haku had returned to her normal adult form. The only difference was that she was wearing a white masquerade eyemask that only barely covered part of her face. It was a simple mask, but three blue gemstones were embedded beneath her right eye in the shape of shooting

stars. It looked pretty stylish.

"...Why'd you go back to normal?"

"My my, this is such a rare opportunity. Don't you want to view the fights from a special seat? This will be more convenient for me, personally. Here, Rokuko, a matching mask for you. Keima doesn't need one, I imagine."

"Yaaay, thank you!" *I guess her being in adult form is important in hiding her identity somehow. Also, she didn't even bring up Niku. Not that anybody would recognize either of us.*

"...Wouldn't Niku and I stand out if we're not wearing masks?"

"Oh, fine. Here you go." Rokuko's eyemask had two gems under the right eye, but mine and Niku's didn't have any. I felt there was something meaningful about that. The gems were a stealthy way of expressing one's status, or something like that.

"You will be considered my company for the sake of this, so do try not to embarrass me."

"I'll be careful."

"Incidentally, those not wearing masks will be considered arena warriors. I truly was hoping to see just how much of a fighter you really are, Keima. Oh well."

"...Heh. I'm guessing masks without gems signify servants?"

"Ahaha." *I knew it. That was close.*

The carriage entered a tunnel that took us underground. Suddenly, the tunnel opened up into a massive room, and there inside was a spectacular coliseum. At first I was impressed at the level of engineering required to build such a structure underground, but then I remembered dungeons could do stuff like this in a snap. Even I had built one in my dungeon.

Haku guided us into the coliseum and soon we were in a VIP seating room with a great view. There were only chairs for Haku and Rokuko. *Eh, that's fine. I don't mind standing.*

The coliseum grounds consisted of a flat field. There was a fight in progress

consisting solely of monsters. A massive quadrupedal Big Boar and a human-sized Minotaur were exchanging dramatic blows. The Big Boar charged, but the Minotaur grabbed its tusks and held it back. Despite how his feet were digging into the ground from the force, he used his bulging muscles to throw the creature to the side in what was a very impressive sight.

"Now, which of these two will lose and end up as tomorrow's breakfast?!" *C'mon, commentator, you're making me hungry and I'm not even Ichika. Oh, wait. I just remembered I never ate dinner.*

"Impressive, isn't it?"

"Uh-huh. It's like... The sounds are just amazing. It's like I can feel the fight from here" Each time the two monsters clashed, loud bangs and crashes rang out that literally shook the air.

Things ended when the Big Boar stumbled onto the ground and the Minotaur successfully mounted it, punching the pig's soft stomach over and over while roaring a cry of victory.

"Incidentally, we truly do serve fallen monsters as food. That's why this particular bout is quite popular. Both are cheap monsters as well."

"Oh, so these are monsters you buy with DP?"

"Indeed. I imagine you won't recognize the name, but I have Dolce manage this coliseum. She's a member of my party, just like Misha, and is an extremely skilled Tamer. You can imagine the connection there." *I mean, yeah, she can summon monsters that'll listen to everything she says. If that's not a top-tier Tamer I don't know what is.*

"Now then, since the hype is in the air, let me introduce our next challeng—wait, what? Really? Like, seriously? The boss said OK? Er... Ah, excuse me. Ahem. Let me introduce our next challengers!" *I wonder why the announcer stumbled there. What's up with the next challengers?* My question was immediately answered.

"This challenge came in unannounced, burning with passion! It's the Adventurer Guild's one and only Guildmaster, MISHAAA! The cat beastkin that runs the head Adventurer's Guild is here to show off her strength! She looks like

a young girl, and she's got the brains of one too, but nobody knows her true age! But she's undoubtedly got the strength of a top-class grappler! Her A-Rank isn't for show! Though, honestly... Should an A-Rank adventurer really be here? Should a Guildmaster be fighting in this questionably legal underground coliseum?!"

"Shut it! Aaah, geez, I can't believe Lady Haku made me come here... Well, she said she'd overlook my afternoon nap if I beat the monsters here, so whatever! Ahaha, I'm gonna win for sure!" *Oh, it's Misha.* I looked at Haku and she gave me a nasty grin. *Guess this is her punishment.*

"She will be facing a monster of her own request, the star darling of our coliseum, the Big Tentacle Slime! It has wiggly transparent tentacles and a slime body! Immune to physical attacks, well, it's the perverted monster you all know and love! That Misha the grappler would ask to face a monster immune to her physical attacks shows just how burning her challenger spirit is!" *Yeaaaah... This is her punishment.*

A slime that looked like a sea anemone slid its way into the coliseum. It looked about twice as tall as Misha. As described by the announcer, it was wiggling its tentacles all over the place.

"Wait, what? No, I didn't ask for this. Wait, no! NOOO! KYAAAAH!" The screams of an A-Rank adventurer echoed throughout the coliseum. Haku, by the way, was covering Rokuko's eyes from behind.

"Um, Haku? I can't see."

"Wait just oooone moment, Rokuko. I'm punishing my slovenly subordinate right now."

Back in the coliseum, Misha was in quite the pickle. A slimy, wiggly pickle. I went ahead and covered Niku's eyes too.

Though honestly, it was amazing how long she managed to avoid the tentacles before getting caught. Pretty sure I saw after-images of her dashing everywhere. Too bad she didn't last!



Day 363

“As expected, quite a significant amount of work has built up over your three day holiday...”

“Gracious. Can’t you handle that all yourself, Chloe? I’m busy spending time with my sweet Rokuko.”

“I’m afraid that’s not possible.”

“Ah, erm, fine then. I-I will work today! However, I will finish all three days’ worth of work at once! I will take another day off tomorrow!” And with that, Chloe dragged Haku away. There was apparently a lot of work the ruler of the Empire had to do... *Wait, why’s Haku got a lot of work? Isn’t she retired? Living a nice easygoing life in her villa? Oh, I see. She’s an ultra competent immortal that doesn’t need to worry about handing over power to descendants or growing senile. The Empire needs her continued involvement to prosper. Uh-huh. That’s the kind of idea competent people have, but I’m gonna make sure other people do all my work for me so I can sleep all the time. I swear it.*

In any case, Haku wasn’t with us today, so we decided to go to the beach not far off from the Imperial Capital. It was a sandy beach, and although the weather was too cold for us to wear swimsuits, how could I resist?

“...IT’S THE BEAAAAACH!”

“Bwuh, what the heck? What’re you screaming about, Keima?” I followed my heart and yelled at the beach. The beach was pure white without a bit of trash on it, and the ocean was a clear deep blue. Warm sunlight streamed from above. *This would be the perfect place for building a beach house to nap in. Napping while feeling the ocean breeze in a beach house... Hell yes. Too bad it’s not summer yet.*

There was a section of the beach closer to the Imperial Capital reserved for vacationing nobles, so there were no buildings where we were. Haku planned to take Chloe and the rest of her party to the vacationing spot later. She was using her Dungeon powers to make that section of the beach have an everlasting summer, which meant they could have beach fun all throughout the year.

But we were visiting a part of the beach with nothing. We had gotten here through the assistance of Dolce, one of Haku's party members-slash-subordinates. All of Haku's party members, excluding Misha, could use the magic skill {Teleportation}. Indeed. Everyone except Misha, who had just barely protected her chastity after realizing in the nick of time that she could cover her fists with mana to beat back the Big Tentacle Slime.

Dolce, who was clad in a long white robe akin to that of a white mage from a certain RPG series, was laying exhausted beneath the shade of some rocks. The sun didn't particularly hurt her in human form, but as a Wraith, she wasn't very fond of bright places like the beach.

"Guuuh, the sun should just go and die... I'm gonna melt..."

"Er, uhh, there's some sea roaches over there."

"...That's fine. I actually like bugs and spiders and stuff. Ahaha, wiggle wiggle..." *Okaaaay... Let's leave Dolce alone then.*

I looked around for some shade I could sleep in too, though I had a beach chair and parasol just in case.

"Wait, didn't we come here to look for a spot to build our dungeon?! Why are you going to sleep?!"

"...Good point. Uhhh, that cliff over there looks real good. It's like the kinda place where a detective and a wanted suspect would have a standoff."

"What even the heck does that mean? Do your job, Keima." *I mean, honestly, it hit me the other day that we're just gonna be digging the dungeon into the ground. It really doesn't matter where we do that. The biggest difference would be where I would be able to teleport afterwards. Do I want to visit the beach whenever I want and make salt or something? That's the real question to consider.*

"You know, it's the first time I've ever been to the ocean, but it kinda just stinks."

"That's the smell of salt water. It doesn't stink as much as the oceans I remember. No biggie for me."

“It smells kinda like fish. Hmmm... Keima. Could we use sea monsters or something, maybe?” *Sea monsters, huh? Now there’s an idea. Sharks? A kraken?* I opened the menu and checked the Catalog. We couldn’t summon any of them since we weren’t in a dungeon, but we could look at the prices. *Let’s see here... Oh hoh, a two headed shark. There’s ghost sharks and flying sharks too. Man, sharks are great.*

I can’t ignore the giant squids or massive nautiluses either. There are some humanoid monsters like sahuagins and mermaids too, not to mention jellyfish and sea cucumbers. The ocean sure is brimming with life. Wait... Dagon? Oh god. I get the feeling I shouldn’t look at this thing for too long, not even through the Catalog. Especially since it costs over a hundred million DP. It’s got nothing to do with us right now.

All this made me notice something about the Catalog. The various sea creatures tended to be cheap. On the other hand, mountainy stuff like the Volcano Zone and Wyverns tended to be more expensive. A single Iron Golem at Tsia Mountain would cost 500 DP, but here it was 2,000 DP—four times as much.

“...Do the prices of things change according to where you are?”

“Lemme see... Hmm? It looks like goblins still cost 20 DP.” *Why’d she check goblins first? Never change, Rokuko.*

...Oh, ghost-type monsters are cheaper too? Makes sense, oceans seem kinda spooky at times. Though ghosts show up in mountains sometimes too.

“I get it. By changing the price of monsters, they encourage the dungeon to match its environment and be more unique. I bet the Dungeon Core and Dungeon Master have some influence on the Catalog too.”

“What the heck, Keima, isn’t it a little late to be noticing that? No way would all that Japanese food and whatever be in the Catalog without you around.” *Oh, being able to buy Japanese stuff with DP is something only I can do? Maybe Golems being bipedal is relevant too. Haku uses a lot of humanoid monsters with two arms and legs, for instance. Hmm... In that case, getting to know our enemy would be smart. We could plan ahead to counter what they summon.*

“Hey, Rokuko. What kind of Dungeon Cores are we fighting?”

“Mmm, let’s see. The Dragon King team has three Cores: a snake, a frog, and a slug.” *Well, that’s a varied trio. A reptile, an amphibian, and a... What’s a slug, again? A kind of mollusk? Either way, he’ll probably be able to summon all sorts of slimy wiggly monsters for cheap.*

“And the Demon King team, um... Core 666 is taking a human form, but she’s really a... Huh. Sorry, I forgot.”

“I’ll try asking Haku tomorrow.” For now, it was time to use the beach chair and parasol I had put into my {Storage} ahead of time. I stabbed the parasol into the sand and spread out on the beach chair beneath its shade. The back and forth of the waves was nice background music. A perfect napping spot.

“...Niku, um, I’ve heard that people pass time at the beach by making castles out of sand.”

“Okay. I’ll make one with you.”

When I woke up that afternoon, there was no sandcastle. Maybe the waves had washed it away, maybe they had just given up. The world may never know.

Day 364

Today we were investigating a mountain, this time led by Amelia the Lamia. Haku had unfortunately been unable to finish her work. Once again she was crammed in her office doing paper work. *Ahhh, feels amazing.*

“May I request your help, Rokuko?”

“Um, what should I do, Chloe?”

“Please say ‘I’m so glad I have a hard-working older sister, Haku! You’re so cool!’”

“I’m on it.”

Thanks to a little assistance, Haku’s enthusiasm was restored and she got right back to digging through the mountain of paperwork waiting for her. *Sorry, Haku, but I’m gonna use this opportunity to enjoy a nice leisurely stroll through a comfy forest under the guise of scouting it out. Or to be more specific, I’m gonna nap.*

“...Erm, if I may interject for a moment, I would like to say that Haku is normally quite competent. Incredibly so, really. It’s just that, when it involves you, she... Erm. She relaxes, shall we say. She lets herself loose and...”

“Ah, right. I, um, I get it. Don’t worry.”

“Forgive me...” *It’s not your fault, Amelia. We’re on your side here.*

Anyway. We were visiting a mountain just barely still in Imperial territory, as close to the demon lands as we could manage. It was the first place Haku had suggested during our initial strategy meeting. The trees were plentiful and the pleasant rustling of leaves in the wind tickled my ears.

First things first, I opened the DP Catalog. *Hmm... Looks like most things cost about the same as they do at Tsia Mountain. Haku’s recommendation holds some weight. She knows her stuff. I’ll definitely be able to make a dungeon here using the same strategies I’ve already learned. I could even make a dungeon identical to the [Cave of Greed], more or less. But that would be showing her all the cards in my hand.*

...Haku wasn’t with us at the moment, but as the dungeon would be part of her territory, she could use the menu’s monitor to see every inch of it. I had to be careful.

“I wanted to ask Haku about Core 666, but I guess I missed that chance.” I went ahead and took a certain something out of {Storage}.

“Um, Keima? What’s with that net? Are you gonna catch a wild boar or something?”

“Nope, this is called a hammock and it’s for sleeping!” By the way, I had prepared both a netted hammock and one with with a tapestry-esque bottom to lay on. My plan was to experiment and see which was easier to sleep on.

“Hm, that certainly seems entertaining.” Amelia slithered forward, joining our conversation. Suffice to say that she had undone her human transformation after we reached the mountains. Her bottom half was all snake, just like I’d expect from a Lamia. *Dang, she’s like seven meters long.*

“Whenever I sleep outside, I tend to coil myself around a tree.”

“Oh? That sure is an advanced sleeping technique only a Lamia could pull off. Sounds pretty nice.”

“It certainly is. I wrap myself around a tree and rest my upper body on a thick branch. In any case. How do you use that, erm, tool that you called a hammock?”

“Check it out.” Figuring that seeing it in action would be better than any explanation, I looked around for a good set of trees. Luckily, the forest was full of trees. I got Niku to drive the ends of the hooks into a perfect pair of trees and thus the hammock was ready. I got onto it carefully, making sure to balance my weight so I wouldn’t fall right off. The net pulling against me made me feel kind of like an orange. *I wonder how the tapestry one would feel.*

“Like this. It’s pretty comfy, honestly.”

“I see, I see. Hmm... Do you have a longer one of these? Perhaps one about seven meters long?”

“Unfortunately not on me. But they’re pretty simple to make, I’m sure you could fashion one yourself without much trouble.”

“I see, certainly. A hammock such as this would allow me to sleep peacefully with my legs stretched all the way out.” *Er, legs? You’re gonna call your snake half “legs”? Uhhhhh... Is it just me, or did she get a lot sexier all of a sudden? Why is a snake tail so much hotter when I think of it as a pair of legs? Oh god.*

My troubled thoughts were interrupted by Rokuko poking the hammock and me from the side. I swayed back and forth.

“Hey, Keima. Couldn’t you do this at our dungeon too?”

“Variety is the spice of life.”

“Hmmm. Well, I’m going to go look around.” Speaking of which, Rokuko didn’t usually go outside that much. She was basically a shut-in, maybe due to having developed a habit of staying inside her dungeon. But her personality was definitely more on the active and energetic side. *Honestly, it’s hard to tell if she’s an indoors or outdoors kind of person.*

“Yeah, go ahead. You should be safe with Amelia around.”

“You sure? You’ll be all on your own and defenseless, Keima. What’ll happen if wild mountain animals attack you?” *Ah, yeah, that’d be pretty serious. I forgot that bears exist and mess people the heck up.*

“I will protect Master.”

“Ahhh, cute little slave girl, I’m sorry. This is very difficult for me to say, but the monsters around here are quite dangerous. Leaving my presence would put any of you at great risk. There’s a High Orc settlement nearby, for instance... They won’t attack with me around, however. I am stronger than I look.” High Orcs were a stronger Orc species and each was fairly deadly on its own. They weren’t as strong as Dragons, but they would kick my absolute crap in. A settlement of them would require two or three veteran knight platoons to clear out.

Incidentally, that settlement was one of many under Haku’s management and served as a reserve force for battles with the demon army. *Amelia could probably negotiate with them to leave us alone, but that would probably fall under “help from the senior cores,” so I want to avoid it if possible. Haku told me to deal with mercenaries on my own, after all.* In which case, well, it was best to stick together.

“...Well, putting aside all the monsters and wild animals, all the bugs around here are a pain in the butt. This place isn’t as comfy as the ocean, so... Alright. I’ll tag along on your little jungle adventure.”

“Yay! Let’s go, Keima.” With Rokuko smiling brightly in the lead, I followed her after a good stretch. *Hey. I didn’t agree to go ’cause she was radiating a “please come with me” aura harder than a melting down nuclear reactor of desperation. The hammock just wasn’t a good fit for me. Simple as that.*

“Keima, is this mushroom edible?! It looks super blue!”

“Hey, don’t touch that. There are some mushrooms so dangerous you can’t even touch them, and that one’s obviously poisonous. Leave it alone.”

“Ah, that one’s edible.”

“Seriously?!”

“Oh, I misspoke. It’s edible for us Lamia. A normal human would die

instantly.”

“...Maybe I’ll be safe since I’m a Dungeon Core.”

“I seem to recall Haku saying that it was better for her not to eat them.”

“Miss Amelia, what about this one?”

“Oh, little girl. That mushroom is quite tasty and edible even for humans. Let us make a soup with it later.”

And so we went on a surprisingly fun walk, with Rokuko picking up every poisonous plant imaginable and Niku gathering edible fruits and mushrooms. Thanks to Rokuko, I ended up fairly informed on the poisonous plants of the region. *Hahaha! I wonder if any of this will be useful at some point. I sure bet it’ll help if we make the dungeon here.*

Day 365

Today we were checking out a sizable grassy plain. It was wide and flat enough that I could see a military platoon training here. Haku, and for some reason Misha, were both with us. Misha was holding a large umbrella to shield Haku and Rokuko from the sun. *Isn’t that kind of thing Chloe’s job?*

“Chloe can handle paperwork, but Misha cannot. I imagine that will suffice as an explanation.” *Yep. Giving the right people the right job is important.*

Haku walked along the plains, grinning to herself. Reason being, Rokuko was holding her hand as they walked together. They looked like they were going on a picnic.

“In any case, I would rather not build a dungeon here, considering I do in fact use these plains for military drills. I’d prefer us to move closer to my Empire’s borders.”

“You really are planning on using the dungeon for war, huh?”

“But of course. Why would I lose out on the dead’s DP by fighting anywhere else? Not to mention that undead monsters are quite cheap.” *Man, she’s been smiling hard for a while. She must be really glad that she finished up her work and gets to go out with Rokuko again.* I checked the DP Catalog and saw that four-legged animals such as buffaloes and boars were cheaper. Not to mention

rabbits.

“In any case. Would you care to have a mock duel with Misha today, Keima?” Haku clapped her hands together with a bright smile. *The hell is this woman saying?*

“This is your opportunity to have a direct duel with an active A-Rank adventurer. Feel free to cry tears of joy, we can wait.”

“Uh, no thanks. I’m a Dungeon Master. My job’s to stay deep inside a dungeon and cackle menacingly, not fight.”

“I can’t have a B-Rank adventurer incapable of combat running about.”

“What about Rokuko?”

“She is perfectly fine as is. Can’t you tell that her cuteness is already S-Rank? Not to mention that it would be the height of incompetence to expose a Dungeon Core to danger.” She was treating me a lot worse than Rokuko, but eh... I was used to it.

“How about we compromise and let Niku duel Misha instead?” Rokuko piped in to make a suggestion. I glanced at Niku. Her expression didn’t change, but I sensed that she was more than willing to fight.

“Alright, fine. Go ahead and give Niku a little training. Be gentle.”

“May the best fighter win, Miss Misha.”

“Right! Let’s do it!” Misha gave her chest a few pounds, sending her boobs jiggling.

“Now then... O Seed, may you sprout and grow. Stretch to the sky — {Grow Wood}.” Haku chanted a spell and made a single tree grow. Misha put her umbrella into {Storage} and in its place spread a blanket beneath the newly sprouted tree’s shade. *Did she really just grow an entire tree to use as shade? Seriously?*

“Now, Rokuko. We can watch the fight from here.”

“Okay.” I went to the shade too. Haku wouldn’t let me sit on the blanket, but she didn’t complain about me getting in the shade. Niku unsheathed her Golem Knife and faced off with Misha. Misha, in contrast, was barehanded. We had

just seen in the coliseum yesterday that she was a grappler that fought without weapons. This was a duel, but Niku's weapon was real. Haku herself said that was fine, and Misha in her confidence agreed.

"So. Are you ready?"

"Yes." Misha was standing lazily in place, not even trying to enter a battle stance. Niku charged forward with a slice to exploit that. But Misha pushed the blade aside and dodged the strike without taking a single step.

"Hm, that's a nice blade. And you're skilled with it. I smell a lot of potential. Anyway, try again if you want. I'm not gonna take a single step."

"...Hyah!"

"Whoa now." The sharp clang of metal hitting metal screeched through the air. The sound came from Misha's foot and Niku's Golem Knife. A closer look showed that the aura surrounding Misha had blocked her knife.

"Ahaha. To think you'd aim for my feet the second I said I wouldn't take a single step... Your master sure has trained you well."

"You blocked it... Hm." Niku slid backwards, taking her distance. Misha scratched her head. She had no intention of attacking herself.

"What *was* that?"

"{Hard Chi}, certainly. It creates an incredibly hard aura of energy around the user. Now, Misha, it's your loss if you take a single step."

"Whaaa?! H-Hold on, Haku, please! That's just too much! At least let me use kicks!"

"Hear that, Niku? Use as many skills as you got. I'll give you a nice reward if you win."

"Understood. O Fire, become a sphere and smite my enemy — {Fireball}."

"Gah, what?! You shot a fireball at my feet! Gaaah, so hot! Hooot!" Misha responded to Niku's merciless use of magic skills with a long range skill of her own, {Distant Strike}, landing a clean hit. Niku rushed forward and sliced away at her feet, but Misha just blocked them with {Hard Chi} before landing a clean counter on her.

And so...

“Up you go.”

“Ngh! Ah, nooo!” Misha followed up the counter with a hearty throw, resulting in Niku hitting the ground with her stomach. She then held her down from the back, preventing her from getting up or really moving at all.

That was that. In the end, Niku didn’t manage to make Misha move even a single step.

“Whew. How was that, Haku? I won!”

“Congratulations. I’m both impressed and ashamed that you’re capable of feeling pride from beating up a small child.”

“Awwww...”

Niku stood up and walked up to me.

“I lost. Please forgive me...”

“Hey, you did pretty well for fighting an A-Rank adventurer.” Niku was originally D-Rank, so this was just the natural result. I rubbed her head. She closed her eyes blissfully and wagged her tail.

“Now it’s your turn, Keima. It will be your win if you can make her move a single step. Hm... And if you win, I’ll give you information on Core 666.” Haku gave a slight smile. *Hm. Amelia must have reported what I said to her. Ehhhh... Is she really not gonna tell me if I lose? I guess us losing the Dungeon Battle would give her a legal way to keep Rokuko close at hand at all times, so... Ugh.*

“...Alright. Mind if I get a free hit in first?”

“Well, I suppose that won’t be an issue. Do you mind, Misha?”

“Honestly, that dog girl is definitely way stronger than him, so sure. Lemme take a stance first, though.” Misha spread her legs far apart and lowered her hips. That was a safe, defensive style. Or so I thought before she started lifting her feet and slamming them into the ground like a sumo wrestler would. *Yeah, she’s not taking me seriously, is she?*

I shot her a look, telling her I was ready to go. *I’m gonna wipe that smug smirk*

right off your face.

"Keima, knock her down in one blow!"

"Do your best, Master."

"Yep." I stood in front of Misha as Rokuko and Niku cheered me on. I then tossed a small magic stone beneath Misha's feet and started chanting. "Mass of earth, change your shape and become a servant that obeys my every command — {Create Golem}."

"Bwuh?! He's making a golem beneath my feet?!" Misha jumped to the side. It was my win. *Idiot, what kind of Dungeon Master would fight fair? The best stance in the world won't matter if the ground underneath you turns upside down.*

"Alright, I win."

"You're as cheap as ever, Keima. There's nobody else in the world nearly as cowardly and unfair as you are." Rokuko smiled. *Uh, was that supposed to be a compliment? I bet it was. Is being cowardly and unfair a compliment for a Dungeon Master? I guess so.*

"...Oh my, oh my, it seems you've lost, Misha."

"Wait, um! I mean, that was just unfair, right?!"

"The conditions were you'd lose if you took a step, and you jumped away. I cannot imagine a more stunning failure. It was your fault for not preparing to defend against Earth magic the moment those rules were established. Ahaha. You said you were 'really smart' earlier, but I see that could not be further from the truth."

"Aww... uwaaah..." Misha started crying, but Haku didn't budge.

"Now then. Information about Core 666. Ask anything you like, I will answer if I can."

"Alright, let's get straight to the point then. What type of Core is 666? Like, what species?" Haku closed her eyes in thought, trying to remember.

"I have only vague memories of her true form, given how long she's been shapeshifting. She isn't human-type, and she is part of the Demon King faction,

so... I imagine she's either item-type or demon-type." Item-type? Before I could even ask, Haku elaborated.

"I have Living Armor under my employ. Item-type Cores are that kind of thing. You know, like fake treasure chests. Mimics." *Huh, I see. Guess I should expect that kind of thing to show up in the Dungeon Battle.*

"Let's see. Although this is information Rokuko knows as well, she has red hair and wields a flaming Magic Blade. Do you remember how the rules for victory are 'destroy' the Dummy Core this time, not touch it? It was Core 666 who suggested that change."

"Oh yeah. I forgot about that. She definitely just wants to destroy stuff."

"Seriously, Rokuko? That's some important info."

"What, that she wants to destroy stuff?"

"No, that she's the one who suggested the change." If she actively requested the change, then there's some meaningful intent behind it. A hidden reason why she would want to do that. It could potentially be nothing... but still, Core 666 definitely had some reason why she went out of her way to suggest it. At the very least, it was inconvenient to us. We could no longer win by sending in a swarm of rats. Dummy Cores were naturally too tough for rats to break.

"That's about all I can tell you about Core 666. It's rude to talk about the true forms of Cores taking human shape, in any case." Haku ended the conversation there. I didn't care about Dungeon Core manners or whatever, but from Haku's perspective, she had told me the minimum amount necessary.

"More importantly, Keima. That was quite an impressive {Create Golem}."

"Yeah? It's my specialty, I'd say. {Create Golem}." I ended up showing her one of my trump cards, but I had already intended to show it to her anyway. The fact I could make golems without using DP was a clear sign I knew the skill, there was no hiding it from her. And although it was a somewhat rare skill, it wasn't so rare that it'd be surprising for a normal adventurer to have it. And since it was right in the DP Catalog, a Dungeon Core like Haku would know about it.

"Skills of the 'create' and 'summon' variety allow you to create monsters

without spending much DP... Ahaha. I haven't done it lately, but I recall doing that quite a bit in my youth." *Figures. Haku definitely wouldn't have overlooked a strategy with this great of a cost-performance ratio.*

Summon skills involved summoning a wild monster from somewhere in the world and binding them to the summoner's will. They drained mana as long as they were active, which made them a poor fit for dungeons most of the time, but summoning a strong monster right as a boss was needed was a fairly solid strategy. Also, the strength of the summon monster changed how much mana they drained.

"I'd appreciate it if you would recommend me the best create and summon skills you know of."

"Oh my, can't you see the DP Catalog? I recommend all of those." *Well... I guess one strategy would be to use all our 500,000 DP on skill scrolls. Even if we lose our dungeon, the scrolls we bought would last forever.*

"There is a more advanced form of {Create Golem}, you know. {Summon Golem}. With some proper training you will soon learn to summon even Stone Golems and Iron Golems at will."

"Interesting. Very interesting." If I fiddled with the chant properly, I might learn to summon Mythril Golems and Orichalcum Golems too. Might even be a good way to fill in a Dungeon Boss room.

While I was thinking about that, Niku asked Misha to train her.

"Lady Misha, I want to grow stronger. Please train me."

"Sure, sure. Beastkin and Warbeasts are like, family, y'know? Let's be friends, little Kuroinu." Misha stuck out her right hand. Niku nodded firmly and shook Misha's hand. Misha then punched Niku in the stomach with her left fist. Niku flew back about three meters.

"Bwahaha! A little pup like you doesn't need fancy training! My motto is to learn through real battles! No mercy, even for kids! A fool who lets their guard down on the battlefield gets killed on the spot!"

"Ngh... I wasn't careful enough..."

“You can still stand, right? I’ll hold back just enough to not permanently damage you, so fear not. Just take the beating. Promising adventurers are the treasure of our Guild. But always remember! Cat girls are superior to dog girls! Carve that into your soul!”

“No mercy? I wouldn’t have it any other way...!”

Cats and dogs were apparently just as competitive in this world, as Misha eagerly set about bullying Niku in the name of training. When she got hurt enough, Haku would cast {Healing}, allowing her to rejoin the fight and get hurt all over again. This continued until evening, and Niku never managed to land a single blow on Misha the whole time.

“...Whew. You’ve got a lot of talent for a dog girl. I’m betting you have a bright future ahead of you.”

“Yes... Thank you very much...” Niku was collapsed to the ground, exhausted. *Good work. No seriously, good work. Supper tonight’s gonna be all you can eat hamburgers for Niku.*

Meanwhile, Rokuko had fallen asleep on Haku’s lap at some point. *Man, I would kill to use those thighs as a pillow. Too bad they’re just for Rokuko.*

“...Ah! Are they done?”

“Oh my, you’ve woken up? Good timing, my sweet Rokuko. They just finished.”

“...Ah, s-sorry, Haku, I drooled on you! Let me use {Purification} real fast!”

“Ahaha. No need for that, my dear.”

As an aside, Misha could apparently fight for seven days straight without a single break. *Man, fighting for a whole week without sleep is basically inhuman... Oh. Right, she’s a Warcat.*

...Aaanyway, watching them sure got me tired. I’ll take a nap once we get home. With Niku as my daki, of course.

Day 368 — Day 3 of Year 2

I think it’s about time to make the dungeon. We took a look around the

Empire and learned a lot. I had decided on where to build the dungeon, so the only thing left to do was actually dig it out.

With that in mind, it was time to have one last meeting about the dungeon. Rokuko fell asleep seconds after it started, tuckered out from all her playing around. *Look at that happy sleeping smile. God I wish that were me.* Haku had no issue with Rokuko sleeping and covered her with a blanket. *Isn't that being a little too forgiving? I mean, this is her dungeon we're gonna be talking about.*

"Now then, Keima. Where would you like to build the dungeon, I wonder?"

"I was thinking about making it here." I pointed to a part of the map. To be more specific, the middle of the ocean.

"...Keima, are you by chance mocking me?" Haku gave me a grin filled with the most intense murderous rage I had ever seen in my life. *Jesus fucking Christ I almost pissed myself.*

"No, I'm being serious! I'm not joking at all!"

"Please explain yourself. We senior Cores have been given the right to hear our juniors' plans by Father, under the name of giving them advice."

"C-Certainly! Here, allow me to explain every detail of my strategy!" The more polite Haku sounded, the more furious she looked. She was definitely doing it on purpose but holy fuck it was scary.

The gimmick I had thought up this time was simple: Build the dungeon at the bottom of the ocean. Think about it. What would happen if you built a dungeon underwater? You couldn't breathe inside it. Too much water. What's that, you say? Such a dungeon would be impossible to conquer? Nonsense. It would be a normal dungeon, just filled with water. We could invade the enemy's dungeons using water-based entities like I did back when flooding the [Flame Caverns]. Plankton were a little too, er, dumb and immobile to explore dungeons, but tiny fish would suffice. My plan was to flood our enemy dungeons with a tsunami and destroy them with sardines.

It was a plan only an ocean-based dungeon could pull off. This way, I wouldn't be revealing any of my trump cards to Haku. I had used a similar "conquering through numbers" method with the rats, so Haku already knew about that. All I

had to do was summon some kind of shark to destroy their Dummy Core and we were good.

...I had no idea how effective this plan would be against Core 666's item-type or demon-type monsters, but the idiot trio should get absolutely destroyed. That would allow us to focus our efforts on beating Core 666.

"And that's that. If all goes well, the Dungeon Battle will end up as a one on one between Core 666 and us."

"I see. A very logical plan, I'll give you that... But how do you intend to build a dungeon on the bottom of the ocean?"

"Well, I figured I could just fiddle around on the menu and stuff."

"Building amidst the water, and so far from the surface... Will 500,000 DP suffice?" I figured that 500,000 DP would be plenty for pretty much anything. Was I wrong?

"The minimum requirement for building [Rooms] and [Hallways] is that humans must be able to survive within them. You won't be able to build rooms in water. You would need to create bubble-esque domes to enable them to breathe. Not to mention that maintaining the walls will be a constant, inefficient drain of DP." *Oh, really? Dang. And I guess from her tone of voice that she's actually tried this before.*

...A bubble dome, huh. Makes me think of the Ryugu Palace. Maybe I should throw in a dragon for laughs.

"The likely result will be a constant, speedy loop of the dungeon walls falling apart and being repaired. It looks quite nice, but isn't practical. I therefore cannot approve of your plan to build a dungeon at the bottom of the ocean."

"That's fair. We'll build it somewhere else." As one would expect from an extremely ancient Core, she had shared valuable advice from a position of experience. *Ahhh... Wait. This flow of information, or "advice" as you might call it, is probably exactly what Father was hoping for. Not that I'm upset about it.*

"Let's build it here instead." I pointed at the beach this time.

"Oh, the beach? Might I ask why?"

“Simple. If we can’t build it underwater, we’ll build it on land, then flood it with water.” I knew from my own experience that one could flood an already built dungeon with water.

Upon hearing my plan, Haku grimaced and rubbed her temples.

“...Where in the world do you get your outlandish ideas...?”

“Can it work?”

“Yes, it can. It certainly can. But flooding a dungeon you’ve built yourself is like... putting the cart before the horse. How will you live inside of it?” *Huh? I don’t get it.*

“Why is the livability of the dungeon even a question? Don’t dungeons exist to kill their enemies? And this is a dungeon we’re building exclusively for a Dungeon Battle. If we want a home, we have our [Cave of Greed] waiting for us.”

“...Ah, I see. I forgot that you are a human. You don’t see Dungeons as places to live in. You do realize that if we win, this dungeon will become something of a vacation home for sweet little Rokuko, yes? Wouldn’t you hate to have a flooded vacation home?” Haku glanced at Rokuko. Alas, Rokuko hadn’t spoken a single word since the meeting started. Reason being that she had been asleep in her chair the entire time, which suited me perfectly. No chance of a sleeping person complaining about a flooded vacation home.

“Haku. There’s a famous saying where I come from.”

“Oh, an idiom from another world? Consider me interested.”

I coughed and cleared my throat.

“WINNING IS EVERYTHIIIIING!” Nobody from this fantasy land would recognize that as the magnificent Kars from Jojo quote that it was, but the nuance definitely got across. Rokuko jolted awake and shouted “B-Bwuh?! I-I washn’t shleeping!” with drool all over her mouth, but we ignored her.

“Uhhhh. Basically, victory is always the priority, and we can worry about looking cool and respecting our enemies and so on after it’s secured. Or really, those things don’t really matter at all. Winning is everything. It’s all we should

care about."

"...That is a ridiculous saying which suits your mindset well, Keima. You are absolutely correct in that cowardice is best unquestioned in warfare, as long as victory is obtained. However..."

"Wait, um, what? Keima, tell me what's going on."

"You would know if you hadn't been sleeping." Regardless, I explained my dungeon-flooding plan to Rokuko.

"Mmm, seems okay to me?"

"Truly, Rokuko? Your vacation home will be underwater. You don't mind that?"

"Bwuh? We can just drain it after the Dungeon Battle is over. Right, Keima?" *Oh man, Rokuko saying something clever again. It can definitely work as a vacation home too that way. Was she thinking while sleeping? That sure reminds me of someone.*

"Well, feel free to do whatever you want, Keima. I'll handle all the cleanup."

"Okay. I'll leave it to you, partner."

"You can trust me, partner. Ahahahaha." *At some point, I've learned to actually trust her. Heh. And if we lose, there won't be any cleanup since it'll go to Haku. In a certain way, Rokuko's saying she trusts that I'll win. Uh... That's her intention, right? Right?*

"...It seems I was being a little too rigid in my thinking, then. Haaah..."

"I haven't been helping Keima this whole time for show! You just gotta get used to his crazy ideas."

"I don't know whether to rejoice at your growth, or weep at how you're being polluted by his mindset..." Haku looked seriously worried about that despite how little it mattered.

With that settled, we got to work ironing out the details of our plan, including how specifically we'd be flooding the dungeon and which monsters we'd be using. Haku pointed out quite a few errors in my thinking and gave enough advice about countering potential plans of our opponents that I once again

found myself sincerely impressed with her. It looked like we'd easily be able to win without me exposing my golem trump card. Or so I thought, but Haku made sure to drive home that our enemies had Core 5 and Core 6 on their side. *Right. We're not the only team with a veteran helping out. Can't let my guard down.*

The fruitful meeting ended and we decided to start constructing the dungeon tomorrow. *Oh, and Rokuko? She fell asleep again, the dweeb. But whatever. Do what you want now, I'm gonna load all the cleanup on you! Get ready!*

Day 4 of Year 2

It was finally time to build the dungeon. First, we dug it out. To save DP I summoned golems with pickaxes and shovels to do the initial digging.

We were all in the temporary Master Room within the Dummy Core. Father had given us specially made Dungeon Cores for this Dungeon Battle which had temporary Master Rooms for use by younger and older Cores to discuss things. (I had no idea how it differed from a normal Dungeon Core, but Haku told me not to worry about it.) Anyway, I went inside with everyone else and then made the golems dig.

It was time to dig. Time to dig a lot.

"You certainly are cheap," complained Haku as I was building my dungeon.

"I'm fine with being cheap. We've got plenty of time."

I withdrew the upended soil and spread the new dungeon's territory. Occasionally, I threw a magic stone into the collected soil and made another golem employee with {Create Golem}.

"So, what else will you be using this soil for?"

"Making walls and filling in gaps later. Though making new golems, as you can see, is really the main thing."

"Hmm. Well, using all your resources is the most fundamental of all fundamentals... I see now how you saved so much DP in our battle. Using extracted soil for {Create Golem} material is quite efficient."

"Yeah, pretty much." I didn't really want to reveal too much about my DP-saving methods, but I figured simple recycling wasn't too important to hide. It

was basic stuff and didn't matter to Haku anyway. *From her perspective, this is like fussing over a single penny in the national budget. Basically, as long as she doesn't figure out that I can alter magic chants at will, I'm fine.*

"I'm sure none of this is interesting to you, Haku. You've got plenty of DP to use whether you economize or not."

"That's certainly true. Despite how it may seem from your experience, it's actually quite rare for Dungeon Battles to involve limits on DP. The majority of them have no rules." *Yeah, two out of the three Dungeon Battles I've fought have had DP limiting rules.*

"Ahaha. Keima's specialty is being anal with DP." *Don't say anal, please. Just... no.*

"I must admit, you are quite skilled at managing your resources."

"Riiight? Keima's enough of a cowardly cheat that he could beat even you with the same amount of DP, Haku!"

"Look, could you settle on either complimenting me or dunking on me, one or the other, instead of doing both at the same time?"

"Bwuh?! Ummmm... Aren't I complimenting you? You're cowardly, like, in a good way." *Yeah I'm gonna go out on a limb and say exactly nobody is gonna interpret it like that. Dungeon Core culture remains a mystery. Like, is she really complimenting me? It's hard to tell.*

Oh, and by the way, Haku had started pulling off the inhuman feat of carrying her paperwork around with her to work while spending time outside with Rokuko. Which meant that she was sliding her hands over letters and paperwork next to Rokuko as her young protege watched over the golems.

"...Chloe. Isn't it a bit problematic for Haku to take her super important imperial paperwork outside?"

"This is not ideal, but as it encourages Lady Haku to work with enthusiasm, I consider it acceptable enough. After all, the responsibility will fall on Haku if any problems arise from it." *Oh, right. Haku's at the top of the authority ladder, so if she says she'll take responsibility, literally none of the rules apply to her.*

“What about your town chief work, Keima?”

“Huh? Oh, personally, I have my subordinates do all of the work. I’ll pop in if something serious happens, but so far so good.” *Honestly, things are probably going so well precisely because I haven’t been popping in.*

“I’m quite envious you do that. Well then, Keima, would you mind helping me with my own paperwork? The income and expenditures don’t add up on this financial report. Can you tell why?”

“It’s probably a falsified report. Probably some noble looking to fatten his pockets. And come on, don’t show me these top secret imperial forms. What’ll you do if someone sends assassins after me?”

“Oh? But you already know this country’s greatest secret, that being my true identity as a Dungeon Core. Isn’t it a bit late to worry about that?” *Wait, she’s right! Oh no!*

“H-Hold on, does that mean you want Keima dead, Haku?! Don’t kill him! Keima’s my partner!”

“My my. Don’t worry, nothing I do will kill him.”

“Oh, that’s a relief. He’ll be fine then!” *Yeah, she didn’t say anything about not doing things that won’t kill me. She’s definitely gonna jump on any chance she gets to beat the shit out of me for touching Rokuko or something.* I delicately handed back the financial report, making sure that I didn’t see anything on it.

AAnyway, let’s focus on making the dungeon here... Or so I said, but we were stuck waiting for the golems to dig out the pre-assigned sections of soil, so I had some free time to kill. There were plenty of digging golems already and they would keep on absorbing mana without ever stopping.

Hm... Oh right, Rokuko learned {Create Golem} too. I dunno when, though. She must have bought the scroll with her own DP funds. May as well just stick Rokuko on dungeon watching duty while I kill time. Really, I should have been having her handle everything this whole time. No need for me to try and act normal while using my own messed up {Create Golem}.

“Rokuko, could you take care of things here for me?”

“Sure, but what are you gonna do, Keima? Sleep?”

“I’m gonna think about which traps to use.” Normally I’d be going to bed, but I didn’t want to sleep while Haku was going out of her way to tag along and help. *Crap, is it just me or have I been awake all the time lately? But anyway. Time to think about what traps would be best here.*

Everything’s gonna be underwater, so I’d really like some electric traps. Maybe putting some poison in the water would work? But I don’t think either of those would be that effective against item-type enemies. Yeaaah... The best thing for me to do here is ask Haku for advice on how to beat item-type monsters. Man, I want to just use {Create Golem} to make a bunch of stuff for free, but I guess I’m stuck using DP.

“Pitfalls and skewering needle traps should work.” By the way, our army would consist primarily of [Sharks], [Schools of Sardines], and [Half-Merman Sahuagins]. The Sahuagins could fight on land as well and thus would be useful even if the flooding plan failed. Just the kind of quality I’d expect from Haku’s recommendation. *Aaaand... I’m feeling like adding a giant octopus or two. Octopi are like the ninja of the ocean. They’re excellent scouts good at squeezing into tight places and hiding themselves with ink.*

Anyway, back to traps. We needed to pick those that wouldn’t backfire and hurt our own monsters. Which meant we had to pick very, very carefully.

“Excuse me, Keima. Might I ask what that Dagon is? It does not appear in any catalog I’ve seen.” Chloe had walked up close to me and peered over my shoulder as I looked at my DP Catalog. I hadn’t been hiding it, but... *Christ, she smells good. Her butler crossdressing made me forget she’s actually a succubus.* My lust, which had recently been dormant, began to stir.

But, huh. Looks like Haku’s DP Catalog, or at least, Chloe’s DP Catalog doesn’t show any of the Elder Gods of Lovecraft lore, the kind of creatures that show up in games with sanity meters.

“...Right. These are mythical beings from my world. Please don’t speak its name directly. Don’t even look at it in the catalog, if possible. You’ll lose sanity points.”

“A creature so fearsome you lose your mind just looking at it...? Consider me

frightened.”

“Yup. Let’s try to think about this guy as little as possible.” I quickly set Dagon to *do not display* mode. Him not being in Haku’s Catalog signified that he was probably appearing due to my special nature as someone from another word. I didn’t expect that to influence monsters too. *Maybe this means I should buy some otherwordly monsters to catch our enemies off guard. But for now I’ll just buy the safe monsters Haku suggested. In my opinion, a Dungeon Master truly shows his worth through what he can do with simple ingredients, not through the ingredients themselves.*

Day 5 of Year 2

It was time to build my second dungeon. I decided to start by having Rokuko roll the gacha. The dungeon could change a lot depending on what she rolled.

“Okay, I’m gonna roll the 10,000 DP gacha.”

“Yup. Good luck.” I was having Rokuko roll 200,000 DP out of our allowed 500,000 DP. She would start by rolling the 10,000 DP gacha five times, then conclude by rolling the 1,000 DP gacha a hundred and fifty times.

“Speaking of which, were you not summoned through the 1,000 DP gacha, Keima?”

“I sure was.”

“Then she must be about to summon a creature worth ten of you,” said Haku with a smile. *Hey, we already rolled the Phoenix from this, alright?*

“Gacha is inefficient. You have no idea what you will roll, so the Catalog in its reliability is superior... or so the vast majority of Cores say. It is true that the gacha rarely produces favorable results. In the vast majority of cases, it would have been better to just spend the DP directly on the Catalog.”

“Huh? But I heard that you once summoned a dragon through the gacha, Haku.”

“Indeed I did, but only when experimenting with spare DP. I rolled the 1,000 DP gacha ten thousand times, resulting in a single child White Dragon. The rest were duds.” *10,000,000 DP and just a single success? Dang, that’s a 0.01%*

success rate. What kind of rip-off game is this?

Wait. What does that mean for Rokuko, whose luck is so good she easily rolls for more value than she pays for? Honestly, let's not think about it.

"I believe in Rokuko's luck no matter what!"

"I won't let you down! Here I go... Hyah!" Woosh! A giant magic circle of about ten meters in diameter formed in front of us. It was the same effect that occurred when she rolled the Phoenix, I think? Though back then the circle spread outside of my room.

"...I did not expect to see the success fanfare so soon."

"Oh, that's what this is?" Speaking of which, the magic circle that appeared when I rolled was pretty small.

The magic circle span around as it shrunk down to about two meters in diameter. Then... A transparent tentacle monster squished out of it, revealing our new monster.

A Tentacle Slime Appeared!

"Eugh, what...? I think I've seen one of these before. That one was about twice as big though."

"A Tentacle Slime, hm...? This is a monster with a high affinity for the dungeon we have planned. Oh, Rokuko, the one you saw before in the coliseum was an advanced form of this monster, known as a Big Tentacle Slime."

"Looks like we got the small version." A quick look at the Catalog revealed that it was worth 80,000 DP. I reflexively grinned at our immediate success. *Good going, Rokuko. I knew you wouldn't let me down. Now, time for round two.*

"Bwuh? It's small."

"A bad roll, it seems. Worry not. I assure you, this is the norm."

Unbelievably, the roll produced a magic circle only one meter in diameter. *What happened, Rokuko?!* With a poof, an octopus appeared through the magic circle. It had a large, round head and eight tiny legs. For some reason it was wearing a headband, which made it look like an obsessive otaku. *Uh... That is an*

octopus, right? This isn't going to be a twist where Dagon is actually a tiny geek, right...?

"A Toon Octopus. They're popular as pets due to their cute appearance, but as monsters they are fairly weak."

"Hm, dang." They cost 500 DP in the Catalog, but sold for tens of silvers. *Well... I guess I'll sell it through Haku's connections later?*

"Oh, but when in water, it can be used to create ink clouds. They last for only ten seconds, but coat an area in pitch black for the entirety of that time. Also, for mysterious reasons, nothing can kill it. An infinite barrage of ultimate attacks will leave no lasting harm, and within a week it will recover in full." *What kind of gag powers are those? I guess 'cause it's parodying comic book characters, or something? Either way, I get the feeling he and Rei would get along well, as fellow monsters lacking attack power.*

Rokuko rolled the 10,000 DP gacha again. Her incredible luck worked its magic and another large magic circle formed with a woosh.

"The success fanfare, again... Rokuko, your luck truly is spectacular."

"Eheheh, naturally. I wonder what this one's going to be?" This time, the magic circle shrunk to about a meter in diameter. And out plopped a big barrel. *A... barrel? The heck is this?*

"An item, not a monster, I see." *Oh yeah. We rolled a {Chef} skill scroll a while ago.*

"An item? What is it?"

"It appears to be wine. Vintage wine, to be specific, aged quite significantly... This is too valuable of an item to be reckless with. I will store it myself and make sure no harm comes to it." Haku speedily stashed the barrel into her {Storage}. *Uh, you know we're the ones who paid for that, right...? Well, whatever.*

Fourth roll. With a boom, an even larger magic circle appeared. *Another success. But wait, is it just me or is this circle like five meters bigger than the last one?*

"Whoa, I get the feeling something amazing is gonna come out of this. Right?"

“...This is the fanfare for a huge success. I have never seen it before.” The magic circle shrunk bit by bit, tightening to almost nonexistence before a shining ball small enough to fit in one’s palm plopped out.

“...This is a skill orb of some kind. They’re similar to skill scrolls, but you can’t tell what skills they contain until you use them. Though when buying them with DP, we can just see the skills from the catalog.”

“Wow. That’s pretty cool. Keima, try it out.”

“Why me and not someone else? Any attack skill will be wasted on me. I’m not getting on the front lines. You really wanna risk that?”

“Fear not. Unlike skill scrolls, a skill orb can be used multiple times.” I checked the DP Catalog, but didn’t see any orbs. Haku suggested that I likely hadn’t bought enough skill scrolls for them to appear. *It’s true, I don’t really use those too often.*

By the way, a skill orb generally cost a hundred times as much as an equivalent scroll. And yet they broke after ten uses, so really, they were a huge waste of DP. *Yeah, I can see why nobody uses them and why I’ve never heard of them before.*

Anyway, I gave using the orb a shot. It worked just like a skill scroll in that all I had to do was pour mana into it. And so I did, pouring mana into it while trembling with excitement at whatever skill a huge success roll would produce. The orb shined brightly, and I felt a magic circle working its way into my head.

“Woah, this... this skill is... fucking awful! Oh, hell no! Fuck no!”

“What skill is it?”

I had learned... {Sleep Resistance: Level 9}. It gave me resistance towards skills and drugs that would otherwise leave me unconscious, and allowed me to stay in environments that would otherwise knock me out. Not only that, but as the name implied, it treated sleep the same as falling unconscious. Since it was level 9, I could apparently last a whole month without sleeping.

“Hmm. Well, that’s a useless skill for Dungeon Cores.”

“Oh, but it’s a quite useful skill for adventurers who are Dungeon Masters.

Resistance to sleep means you can remain active without falling unconscious. That lessens the possibility of a Master falling asleep during a Dungeon Battle and missing critical moments. Aren't you glad, Keima? Now you can work for weeks at a time without sleep."

"Why me...? Why...?" On top of everything, it was a passive skill that was constantly active. *Why must my sleep be stolen from me so? Is this punishment for working so much lately? Have I scorned the very sleep I hold so dear? Ohhh, God of Sleep! Please show me mercy!*

"Oh, look, Keima! Look! The last 10,000 Roll was a miss, but it gave us a [Super Sleeping Drug]! It's flavored, too!"

"Oooh... But I can sense it. I can sense that this drug will have no effect on the current me...!" *Um, God of Sleep? Are you tormenting your lost sheep?! I'll have you know that tormented sheep jump the wrong way when you're trying to fall asleep by counting sheep!*

"Keima, um, can't you like, turn the sleep resistance on and off?"

"Oh, looks like I can. Thank goodness... I owe you my life, Rokuko. That was too close."

"Oh, consider yourself lucky. There are many passive skills that can't be deactivated at will." *Whew. I'll have to thank the God of Sleep later. Not sure if he actually exists though. Sheesh, a terrible skill like this deserves to be kept off at all times! My life is on the line here.*

We moved on to rolling the 1,000 DP gacha a hundred and fifty times, but we went fast and got that over with ASAP. Of the rolls, only ten ended up being monsters, with everything else being skill scrolls, potions, and other miscellaneous items plus armor. To summarize our results: We had made absolute bank. Though I knew that would happen if Rokuko rolled the gacha for us.

First, the monsters. As for misses, we got a Flying Fried Squid, two Marlins, and five Sharks. As for successes, we got a Baby Turtle with a diamond shell and an Ammoknight. Why did the gacha give us so many sea creatures? I could only assume that location influenced the gacha as well, or that Rokuko's luck had pulled through again. Either way, we had no way to store the fish or sharks on

land, so it was lucky that we had done this next to the ocean. Where were they now? Chilling in the ocean. There sure would have been a big panic if people were at the beach.

Also, the Flying Fried Squid was a mysterious creature that could fly through the air as if it were water. I had no idea how it could operate in both the air and water like that, but wow. Just incredible. *I bet a certain plumber would know a lot about these flying squids.*

Anyway. About the turtle.

"Oh my, this is a... diamond type Jewel Turtle. It's young, but buying one with DP would cost 50,000 DP."

"...How many years will it take for him to grow to his full size?" At the moment, he was about as small as the kind of turtle you'd see being sold in a pet store. The diamonds studding his shell all looked as big and clear as wedding ring diamonds. Since they were green as well, you could easily make a necklace right out of his shell. That alone made him look very valuable.

"I believe they grow about one centimeter per year. Oh, speaking of which, Jewel Turtles are quite an effective means of producing DP. They return their investment after five years of growth, and every year after that is pure profit. I strongly recommend them to any Dungeon Core that isn't already maintaining human farms. Though be sure to keep this a secret between you and me. Their value will drop if word of this spreads."

"Ah. Okay." *Five years is a pretty long time, and since buying them costs 50,000 straight up, younger Dungeon Cores won't really be able to profit much from them. Well... Considering the profits are guaranteed, it might be smart for us to buy a few of them just to have. I would definitely cry if we hid them in the dungeon and some adventurers took them, though.*

"Oh, perhaps Rokuko's ring was made from a matured Jewel Turtle. One would just have to make the orichalcum ring and then place it upon the back of a ruby type turtle. After a year of waiting, the ruby would grow over the ring. All one would have to do is grind away to excess ruby, I suppose...? But keeping watch over the turtle to ensure the ruby remained pure would be somewhat problematic... Okay. I'll have dwarves use this method to make a matching ring

for my sweet, precious Rokuko...” Haku was murmuring to herself about something, so I shifted my attention to the other rare gacha result.

The Ammoknight’s full name was “Ammonite Knight.” Its shell was about the size of a large dining table, filled with helix ridges that hurt to look at. Inside was a nautilus-looking tentacle monster thing. It looked a little... okay, it looked extremely gross up close. It was swimming around in the water at the moment. Of all the monsters it looked the most useful, given its high defense.

Not to mention that it was a “knight.” It could use a sword and shield. Even in the water it moved like you might expect a knight on land to. Definitely seemed like a strong fighter. I imagined that it’d be weaker on land than in water, but it could still operate.

But you know, what’s with all the tentacle monsters we summoned? There’s the Tentacle Slime, the Toon Octopus, and even the Flying Fried Squid has tentacles. Wait... Wait! Is this the gacha responding to Rokuko’s lust for goblins and tentacles?! Nah, no way.

Oh, and here’s all the items we got:

Potions

28 Healing Potions

35 Superior Healing Potions

12 Mana Potions

14 Superior Mana Potions

4 Status Recovery Potions

1 Berserker Potion

1 Elixir

Scrolls

3 Slash Scrolls

10 Ice Bolt Scrolls

4 Lightning Scrolls

1 Grow Weed Scroll

1 Create Golem Scroll

1 Summon Gargoyle Scroll

2 Storage Scrolls

13 Healing Scrolls

1 Area Heal Scroll

Misc

1 Turtle-shaped Scrubbing Brush

1 Underwater Motor (For Use With Plastic Models)

4 Orichalcum Coins

1 School Swimsuit (Old Fashion and Navy Colored)

1 Set of Bikini Armor

1 Fisherman T-Shirt

And that was that. One hundred and forty items in all. *Uh... I wonder why we ended up with more “superior” potions to normal potions. Not to mention, I’m pretty sure that elixirs are super rare full heal items. Oh, it’s a cream you rub onto your skin, not a drink? Who would have thought.*

And look at these scrolls. We got thirteen [Healing Scrolls] even though each is worth 100,000 DP, not to mention the high ranked [Area Heal Scroll]. And a [Summon Gargoyle Scroll] too? Geez.

The misc items I'm less sure about. Orichalcum coin? Underwater motor? Ehhh. I don't have the electricity for the motor. Also, what's up with the school swimsuit, bikini armor, and T-shirt? You wanna see Rokuko wearing these, 1000 DP gacha? Oh, and Rokuko got super pumped when she saw the turtle brush. Why? Come on. It costs like 5 DP.

Incidentally, one [Elixir] was worth 300,000 DP and one [Area Heal Scroll] was worth 250,000 DP. Selling those two alone would earn us more DP than we were given for this entire Dungeon Battle. Each [Orichalcum Coin] was worth 100,000 DP, too, and we got four of them.

...So basically, we got over 2,000,000 DP worth of monsters and items from 150,000 DP. This is more than just profitable, this is just cheating. Cheating, I say! This is over a 100% return on investment, Jesus. Let's keep doing this and never stop. You may think that these random items won't help us at all in this Dungeon Battle, but that couldn't be further from the truth.

Like, this [Summon Gargoyle Scroll] is some serious stuff. {Grow Weed} can't do anything but grow small plants, but with my spell-altering potential I could probably grow trees too. It'll be real useful once I go home and escape Haku's watchful eye. I could even sneak in wood for the battle without it impacting how much DP we can spend. It's a gamble, but we could throw the Berserker Potion on infiltrators and have them destroy each other.

As for Haku's thoughts on all this, when I asked she said, "Perhaps she has a skill similar to Wataru the Hero's {Ultra Good Fortune}...?" Honestly, I was wondering the same thing. Rokuko's good luck definitely had something to do with a skill. Or at least, I really hoped that was the case.

Meanwhile, Rokuko herself was playing around with the turtle brush.

"Why are you so pumped about that brush anyway?"

"Wha? Don't you remember getting the same thing before? We match now. Isn't that awesome?" *I mean, okay, but matching scrub brushes? That's just weird.*

Day 13 of Year 2

"Hey, Keima. We've already dug out five floors to the dungeon. Just how deep

are we going?”

“I’m planning on having at least ten floors this time. All vertical.”

“So we’re gonna spend 50,000 DP just on floors? Oof!” Partially given the flooded gimmick we were going for, the deeper our dungeon went, the better. I was even making sure each floor was very vertically spacious to add distance.

We spent 200,000 DP on the gacha and 50,000 DP on the floors. The remaining 250,000 DP would be spent on rooms, traps, and placing monsters. *Oh right, I can’t forget about our attacking force.* Updated estimate: 150,000 DP on readying floors, 50,000 DP on the attack force, and 50,000 DP for emergency use the day of. *Ah, and let’s not forget that the Dummy Core given to us by Father still counts for the DP limit. I’ll count that as part of the floor preparations.*

In any case, I left preparing the dungeon to Rokuko and Niku while I temporarily returned to the [Cave of Greed]. I immediately used the scrolls Rokuko rolled to learn {Summon Gargoyle} and {Grow Weed}, plus {Ice Bolt} since there were so many left over. I decided to give the {Healing} and {Ice Bolt} scrolls to the four girls who stayed back at the inn. Blame Rokuko’s luck for giving us so many extras.

While I was at it, I recorded the chants for {Summon Gargoyle} and {Grow Weed} on golems which I then gave to Neruneh. Hopefully she could learn them from the recordings.

...She ended up learning {Summon Gargoyle}, so I directed her to continue her research on Gargoyles (Magic Tool Golems). Although, that was all she had been doing for a long while... *Maybe I should just call them Lesser Gargoyles to draw a line? Or maybe we could just go back to Magic Tool Golems. Anyway, time for some experimentation. Gonna change the chants.*

The chants were as follows:

“Gate, open. I summon thee, magic-wielding monster of stone. Serve me — {Summon Gargoyle}.”

“O Seed, bud and grow — {Grow Weed}.”

“Shoot forth, ice, and pierce mine enemies — {Ice Bolt}.”

“O Light, cure this fellow’s wounds — {Healing}.”

{Summon Gargoyle} was up first. It interested me the most. The *magic-wielding monster of stone* part was probably talking about the Gargoyle. Which meant changing that would maybe let me summon other monsters. *Welp, time to give it a shot.* Since I was in my own room in the chief residence, I didn’t hold back.

“Gate, open. I summon thee, magic-wielding monster of iron. Serve me — {Summon Gargoyle}!” A purple magic circle grew before my eyes with a magical woosh. But it disappeared before anything came out of it. *Wait, what? I figured that would have summoned an Iron Gargoyle, but I guess not. Let’s try something else.*

“Gate, open. I summon thee, goblin. Serve me — {Summon Gargoyle}.” A second magic circle appeared and a single goblin rose up through it.

“Gob!” *Well... Mission success. I summoned a goblin. But I dunno. Summoning a goblin with {Summon Gargoyle}? I don’t know what’s going on anymore.*

“...Uh, are you my servant now?” The goblin nodded repeatedly. *Okay, he’s servile. Time to try the next one. Though I guess this means my kind Auto Translator will replace the name of the monster with the proper phrase for me?*

“Gate, open. I summon thee, Gargoyle. Serve me — {Summon Gargoyle}.” A third purple magic circle appeared. *Let’s see what happens.*

...A Gargoyle pushed through the magic circle and then fell to the floor. I had successfully summoned a Gargoyle. Somehow, I felt a mana path of sorts connecting us. The Gargoyle’s path was thicker than the goblin’s, which probably meant that maintaining its presence took more mana. Either way, the Gargoyle seemed servile as well.

“Seems like I’ve got myself a pretty serious spell. This is wild.” *Doesn’t this mean I can summon any monster I know the name of for free? Let’s see if I can summon something other than a monster.*

“...Gate, open. I summon thee, Ichika. Serve me — {Summon Gargoyle}.” A purple magic circle grew... and at that exact moment, I collapsed onto the floor, unconscious.

* * *

I woke up to Ichika giving me a lap pillow. The goblin and Gargoyle were nowhere to be seen. Her ridiculous tits were blocking my view of her face, but these thighs were unmistakably Ichika's.

"...Guh?"

"Oh. Finally awake, Master? What the heck happened to you, dude? I told you about weird experiments. I warned you, bro."

"Hey, who said I was doing anything weir—gah, my head! It hurts so bad!" A shooting icy pain shot through my skull, as if my head had been slammed into a giant iceberg. It was like brain freeze, except so bad I legitimately felt like either I or an important part of me was in the process of dying.

What's happening...? Ichika patted my head, rubbing it gently. *Oh... It's calmed down now.*

"You were practicing some magic here, yeah? It's totes obvious that's how this happened."

"...R-Right. Maybe I ran out of mana?"

"I dunno, dude. I've heard about people passing out after, like, using their magic skills too much? But never anything about headaches. Also, like... A purple magic circle popped up under me or something."

"Oh, right. I was trying to summon you with {Summon Gargoyle}, Ichika."

"Uh, Master?! Do I look like a friggin' Gargoyle to you?! No wonder you passed out."

"The goblin I tried summoning first worked, though."

"With {Summon Gargoyle}?!"

Yeaaah... Trying to summon a human with it was probably a mistake. Maybe 'cause people don't have magic stones? I might have done something like trying to divide by zero in a computer program. Could be that the real mistake was specifying a specific person. Either way, I'm just glad the spell cut off when I passed out. If I had my Sleep Resistance skill on, I could've kept going until my head exploded or something. God, that's scary.

Anyway, this headache's so horrible I'm nervous about experimenting any further. It's honestly bad enough that I never want to use {Summon Gargoyle} again. At the very least, I should be more careful and proceed step by step next time.

"Wait. How are you even here, Ichika? The summoning failed."

"I came through the door, bro. Liiike, the magic circle kinda gave me, like, information about you? Went straight to my head, and then the magic circle fizzled out before finishing, and I was like, oh shizzle, I better go check up on him. You didn't answer when I knocked, which like, okay, he's the sleep dude, he's probably asleep. But you were just experimenting, so like, whaaat? I opened the door and oh double shizzle. Master's passed out on the ground alone!" *Seems like the goblin and Gargoyle returned to where they came from right after I passed out. Thank Christ they just disappeared and didn't attack me while I was unconscious.*

"What did you mean by information about me?"

"Right. It was like, asking if I would defy this person or not? And I could tell it was you, Master, so I tried not to resist, buuut..." *Oh yeah. Speaking of which, the Iron Gargoyle I tried to summon didn't show up for some reason. Maybe that's because it defied me. Ehhhh... The mystery pile keeps getting taller.*

In any case, the headache had calmed down, so I decided to enjoy Ichika's comfy lap pillow for a little longer. {Summon Gargoyle} could wait. *Wait about the other spells? Oh, right.*

"O Light, soothe my headache — {Healing}." Faint, fluffy light enveloped my head. *Ahhhh... That's the stuff.*

"Master, my dudest of dudes, shouldn't you have used that spell a lil' bit earlier?"

"I'm thinking the same thing. It's hard to just use a spell on the spot when you're not used to it... I need to take advantage of my magic a bit more."

"I mean, I think you're taking pretty good advantage of it. Also, I forgot to cast {Healing} too, teehee." *Yeah, but I pretty much only use {Create Golem}. But anyway, it seems like I still have plenty of mana, so let's get back to*

experimenting. But a little more carefully.

{Ice Bolt} was an attack spell so putting it aside, up next was {Grow Weed}. Honestly, spells that involved daily life stuff seemed a lot more worthwhile to fiddle with.

Ichika and I headed to the farmland. My first test would be growing fruits and vegetables out of season.

"...O Tomato, bear fruit — {Grow Weed}!" I had reached the point of just using a different chant instead of fiddling with an existing chant, but regardless, a tomato plant rapidly grew out of the ground, bloomed, and developed fruit. *Uhhhh... Did it like, get fertilized there? Honestly, let's not think about it.*

I grabbed the fresh red tomato and took a bite.

".....Yuck!" Despite being a tomato, it was dry and felt gritty in my mouth. Not to mention that it barely had any flavor. It felt exactly like eating sand. *I don't get it. This looks just like a healthy tomato.*

"Chalk this one up as a failure. This stuff'll only be good as an emergency food source."

"Lemme try a bite, Master... Ahhh, yup, that tastes like total garbage sauce. Gonna give it a solid three out of ten."

"Not even a one out of ten?"

"Dude. Master. Food can get so, so much worse than this." *Ichika's got so much experience with food, I feel compelled to believe her.*

"Oh, go ahead and eat the rest if you want."

"...For real? Wanna get bit? Chomp chomp?"

"Huh? What are you gonna bite? Oh, the tomato, right. Ahahahahaha. Hah." I left the useless tomato with Ichika and moved on to the next experiment. *The tomato might have tasted bad because it's a fruit. Maybe a vegetable will work better.*

"O Cabbage, sprout from the ground — {Grow Weed}." I walked up to a half-grown cabbage and cast {Grow Weed} onto it. Once it had grown two, three leafy layers, I peeled one off and took a bite. "Nom... Oh, wow. This is paper. I

am eating paper. I feel like a human shredder right now. Or maybe a goat."

"Vegetables don't work with {Grow Weed} either. That sucks."

"What a bummer."

"Here, Ichika, you can eat the rest."

"For real...? Wanna get bit?"

"Oh, you wanna bite into this cabbage that much? I knew I could count on you. You can count on a dinner of curry rolls tonight."

"...'Kay, I'll forgive you!" She forgave me for something. I didn't really follow.

"Uh, you know I'm not telling you to just eat this junk raw, right? You can ask Kinue to flavor it for you or something. Go ahead and use as much curry powder as you want."

"Dude, I wish you said that like three minutes ago. I already ate the whole tomato..."

"Ichika, your sheer determination to let no food go to waste is as admirable as it is inspiring. Let the world know that here stands a fantastic woman."

"Yeah, yeah. How about you help me take down this cabbage? I dunno if I could handle it on my own." Having no other choice, I decided to help her. Kinue stuck the paper-esque cabbage into a stew for us.

...It ended up surprisingly edible once given some flavor. *I'm pretty surprised, like wow.* While I was there, I tried asking for Kinue's opinion.

"{Grow Weed}... That sounds like a useful spell for tending to the lawn. It should be effective when not used to grow food, I imagine. Otherwise, I could see it being useful for hiding passages with weeds."

"Oh, that's a good idea. I'll try it out." *A vine-filled room where you gotta push through to find the exit might be nice. We're making a flooded dungeon right now, so seaweed should do the trick. Heh. Who knew Kinue was such a strategist?*

"Oh, by the way, I haven't seen Rei. Any idea where she is?"

"Rei is currently not present. I believe she is in the middle of thoroughly

researching the Catalog to find the best way to use the 50,000 DP.” *She still hasn’t used it? Well, it is her first subordinate that she’s summoning. No harm in thinking long and hard abo—Wait, wait, wait. No. I gave her that DP so she could buy help to keep the inn and stuff running while Rokuko, Niku, and I are away for the Dungeon Battle. Why hasn’t she used it yet?*

“...How’s the inn holding up? You’re not understaffed, right?”

“The inn is quite fine. There’s nothing for you to worry about, Master.”

“If you say so. I’m trusting you all here, okay? Okay. Tell Rei to hurry up and spend that DP.”

“As you wish.” She had been so firm about the inn being “quite fine” that I was honestly a little worried. *But well, like I said, I’m trusting them here. I won’t try to butt in. As long as the dungeon’s fine, we’ll manage.*

“What about the town in general? Any problems that need the town chief around to fix?”

“You said that the vice chief’s permission would suffice for anything outside of the inn, so not at the moment. The Dyne Company is managing our funds and growing by the day. As for outward expansion and road development, everything is going quite smoothly thanks to the Adventurer’s Guild support.”

“...Uhhhh, what? Expansion? Are more people coming?”

“Certainly. I have been expanding the dungeon’s territory to match the growing town.”

“Ah. I see.” *Now that she mentions it, they’d had the power to do that ever since I unlocked the menu for them.*

More people, huh... Guess that means we’ll be getting more DP. It was kinda late for me to be wondering about this, but I asked if there were any problems with trash disposal. Apparently, it was common knowledge in this world that trash left in dungeons disappeared, which made total sense. Dungeons could make all garbage, even corpses, disappear into DP. Communities that formed around dungeons had no problems with waste disposal whatsoever.

Overall, there really weren’t any problems for me to worry about. At worst,

the town was getting big enough to draw attention. Food wasn't an issue since the dungeon contained Jellies, which would serve as emergency rations, and we also had plenty of stored grain. *Hmmm... Maybe I should place more Iron Golem spawns to match the increased population?*

"I don't know what to say. I'm just really glad I have competent subordinates."

"Thank you for your praise, Master."

Guess I should get back to focusing on the Dungeon Battle. I'll start by making a ton of Golem Blades.

Day 23 of Year 2

It was the day before the Dungeon Battle. We had finally finished the dungeon and we were ready for tomorrow. Which meant today we were having a preparatory meeting for the Dungeon Battle along with a sizable meal... or in other words, we were having a hype-building party.

"Now then, let us pray for success at tomorrow's Dungeon Battle... Cheers!" A loud "cheeeers" rang out in reply, headed by Misha's loud voice. We didn't have many people eating, but it was a viking-style buffet. The chefs and waiters were all human-type monsters under Haku's command, so we could freely talk about dungeon stuff.

Our ordinary [Cave of Greed] had me, Rokuko, Niku, and Ichika participating.

Haku's [Ivory Labyrinth] had Haku, Chloe, Misha, Dolce, Amelia, and Sally participating.

It was my first time meeting Sally. She was the last member of Haku's party and the only one who hadn't helped prepare for the Dungeon Battle. She was a Living Armor monster, though as she was taking human form in order to eat, she had a body inside of her. Imagine a cliché blonde female knight with a ponytail. That was her. She looked like the type to say "J-Just kill me already!" while slobbering on orc cock with heart pupils. But in reality, she was the commander in chief of the knight platoons, so an orc wouldn't survive for two seconds against her. *Man... This whole country's really dancing on Haku's palm. Not that I didn't know that already.* Anyway, our first conversation went like

this.

“Would you like to have a duel? Of course, a serious duel with no holds barred.”

“I politely decline. I’m not a fighter myself, and my motto is to avoid any fights I can.”

“I can create that unavoidable situation, if you wish.”

“Are you threatening me?” I kept emphasizing how weak I was and ultimately declined her duel invitation. She only backed off after I promised to have Niku and Ichika duel her later, but who could blame me?

I poured apple juice into my empty cup after joining the cheer. *Huh? Why not alcohol? C’mon, the Dungeon Battle is tomorrow. I’m not gonna risk having a hangover on the big day. Nobody from my dungeon is allowed to drink. And like, why are we even holding this party the exact day before? Is Haku actually hoping I lose? I bet she is. She’s just loving having the “right to instruct” Rokuko.*

Rokuko and Haku walked up to me as I stuffed my face with roast chicken.

“Hey, Keima, this stuff is super tasty.”

“Oh? That looks a lot like fried rice. Yep, tastes good.”

“Ahaha. This is the imperial castle, after all, not a country tavern. We have the finest ingredients in all the lands and skilled chefs capable of preparing anything. Of course the food tastes good. Oh, and we have a direct disciple of Ishidaka the Hero, famed as the God of Food amongst chefs. They were able to use that ‘rice’ you gave us to replicate several legendary recipes. This ‘fried rice’ is one such recipe. They were quite pleased, believe me.” *Ishidaka, huh? I think that’s where Ichika got her name from. Guess the God of the Sea is also the God of Food, and also a Hero.*

As an aside, the God of the Sea title apparently came from legends of them spreading more advanced methods of preparing fish and curing the diseases of sailors with lemons. *Yeaaah, that makes sense. They were definitely a Hero with some kind of cooking cheat skill.*

My thoughts were interrupted by Haku talking to me.

“Now then, Keima. Did you ever think of a name for the dungeon?”

“Oh, you want me to name it? I figured it wouldn’t really matter...Oh, right, you’re kind of responsible for that kind of thing.”

“Yes. I believed it best to ask for your opinion on the matter. Do you have any ideas?”

“...Taking inspiration from your naming sense, how about the [Ivory Beach]? This dungeon doesn’t have anything to do with greed, so yeah.”

“Oh my, how splendid. With that settled... You know what to do, Misha.”

“Yes! Understooood!” Misha gave an enthusiastic reply. *Uh, she’s so drunk her face is already red. Isn’t that a problem?*

“Whaaa? It’s okaaaay, I’m not druuunk!”

“Everyone who’s drunk says that.”

“Oh, then, I am druuunk! Meoooow!”

“See? You’re drunk.”

“Drat, you tricked meee. Y’knooow... Keima, I feel like you’re way more nice to me than anyone else. Wassup with that?”

“I mean, I gotta say, I felt like we had a lot of common when I saw you sleeping pretty back in the Guild. Don’t make me say it, c’mon. Now I’m embarrassed.”

“Oh? Oooh? Are you flirting with me, Keimaaa? Y’know, I don’t mind if we go and *nap* together after this party’s all done. Not that I’ll let you get a wink of sleep, nyahaha!”

“Uh, no, let me sleep. My life’s on the line tomorrow and I need to be ready. Get off me. Off. Please?!” Misha clung to me in a drunken embrace. *Holy shit, she’s so strong! I can’t get her off me! And she reeks of alcohol!*

“Um, Misha?! Keima’s my partner, get off him!”

“Nyahahahahaaaah! I’m just kiddiiing! You’re sooo cute, Rokukoooo! Nooow, let’s kissy wissy, Keimaaa! Mwaaaah!”

“How is she already this drunk...?” I held Misha’s face back with a hand and

looked to Haku for help... *Oh man, she's not gonna do anything. She's hugging Rokuko and having the time of her life.*

Hey, don't lick my hand, Misha! Your tongue's really rough, it kinda hurts?!

"Now, now, Misha. Let go of Keima."

"Amelia! Can I bite you? Can I bite your tail?"

"You may not. Forgive her, Keima. She always acts like this after drinking." Amelia stuck her lamia tail (feet) between Misha and I to deftly pull her away. *Whew, I'm saved.* Or so I thought, before...

"I do not know if this will be enough to apologize, but I will take her place tonight. Don't worry, I'll be gentle with you."

"Wait, are you drunk too, Amelia? You are, right? Please be drunk."

"See? Aren't my feet nice and chilly?" She wrapped her scale-covered tail (feet) around me and seductively pushed her soft, sizable chest against me.

...The cool touch of her tail (feet) cooled my head down a little. *I get it now. This is a legitimate honey trap. I can see Haku grinning like crazy and she's telling Rokuko that she just needs to believe in me. Rokuko herself is gritting her teeth, believing in me and watching from afar. If I touch any of Haku's monster girls, I'm gonna get absolutely destroyed. Forget about the Dungeon Battle tomorrow, I'd be in no condition to do anything. Geez. My true enemies were my allies all along.*

"Would you please get off me for a second, Amelia?"

"Oh my, you're no fun. To think that you stared at my feet so passionately the other day."

"Okay, it's my turn, right? Time's up, Amelia." Not even trying to be subtle anymore, Dolce the Wraith walked up. *Wait, does this mean Chloe and Sally are waiting their turns?*

"By the way, we Wraiths don't have feet, but... What do you think?"

"Not even a question. Try again in human form."

"Wooow, your purity is so radiant it's melting my dark, daaark being. Okay,

your turn, Sally.” *She didn’t even try! Not that I mind.*

“An Imperial Knight would never pull such cowardly tricks as a honey trap! Therefore! I shall pass!”

“Aaah. I forgot that Sally has a boyfriend. Carry on, then.”

“Wha?! N-N-No I don’t!”

“Oh? So you do have a boyfriend, then. Don’t be shy now. Tell us who it is.”

“Lady Haku, I have sworn to be a knight of the Empire for my entire life. I would not spend my time on something as frivolous as romance.”

“Rather, I just think it’s possible that someone is attempting to trick the Imperial Knights with a honey trap. Be sure to perform a background check on him.”

“Pamella would never do something like that!”

“Oh, his name’s Pamella? Are you certain he’s not that fraud artist known throughout the country for tricking people into fake marriages?”

“Don’t even think about faking evidence against him!” Haku laughed to herself. *Whew, looks I don’t have to worry about Sally.*

I looked around for Chloe, figuring she would be next. *Wait... She’s not here?*

“Oh my, where is Chloe? At this rate, she’s my last hope. Did she run away?”

“Perhaps. She is dedicated solely to you, Lady Haku.” *Man, that’s a relief.* I let out a relieved sigh. If a Succubus like Chloe put her all into seducing me, I might have actually succumbed.

“Guess it’s my turn to seduce him, dudes! C’mhere, Masteeer!”

“Ichika. Just be quiet and eat your food. That’s an order.”

“Welp, that settles that. Want some melon, Rokuko? I’ll go grab a plate.”

“That’s the fruit that tastes exactly like melon rolls, right? Please and thank you.” *Whew, that should be all of them. Satisfied now, Haku? Sexual harassment won’t work on me.* I grinned at Haku.

“My my. As a reward for your gallant restraint, I shall pour you a glass of

alcohol. Will ale suffice?”

“Er, thanks, but no thanks. I don’t want to drink with the battle coming up tomorrow.”

“Oh? You would refuse my alcohol...?” The final challenger was sexual harassment from a superior. In other words, sexual harassment with an unspoken threat of danger.

I gave in. *Damnit...*



Ichika’s Perspective

After casually participating in Haku’s honey trap to seduce Keima, Ichika skipped back to the food-covered tables. She had been given a direct order to quietly enjoy her food, and she planned on fulfilling that duty. With pleasure. So, so much pleasure.

“Heya, Niku.”

“Nom.” She called out to Niku, who was chewing down meat.

Niku gulped down the meat that was in her mouth. She then wiped the sauce around her mouth with the handkerchief Keima had given her before turning to face Ichika.

“What brings you here, Ichika? Find anything especially delicious?”

“Mmm, not really. Master’s just drowning in babes over there.”

“Master is popular, then?” Niku puffed out her nonexistent chest with pride. They were talking about Keima, but a slave’s pride was their master’s pride.

“Though he totes turned ’em all down.”

“I see. That’s our Master for you.”

“Shouldn’t you be going after him yourself, girl? What if he gets stolen away?” Although Keima had been using Niku as a dakimakura frequently, he hadn’t laid his hands on Ichika a single time. Therefore, she wasn’t worried about all the girls going after him at all. They weren’t threatening her position.

But Niku didn’t seem worried at all, either.

“I am Master’s dakimakura. He may do whatever he wants with me. If the time comes where he doesn’t want me, I just need to work hard until he does.”

“Whew, talk about a slave down to the bones.” *But I totally get how she feels, so I guess I’m head over heels for Master too.*

After all, Keima was the ideal master. He gave her food and the food tasted amazing. He wasn’t violent with her, curry rolls were the best food in the world, he didn’t demand the impossible from her, and curry rolls were incredible. In short, curry rolls were the best.

“It’s thanks to him that I ended up as a B-Rank adventurer too, huh. Maybe I should thank him by joining him in bed too, hm? I wouldn’t, y’know, ‘bite’ him either.”

“...He doesn’t mind love bites. Though only when he’s sleeping, so be sure not to wake him up.”

“Oooh. I see. Wooow.” Ichika went back to eating random food.

...So good! Although the food wasn’t particularly fancy, it had been prepared by top class chefs using top class ingredients in a feast for Haku, the top of the Empire. There was no way the food would be anything but superb. At worst, it was a shame that so much of the food would be left over and wasted. Well, the chefs and servants would probably eat it, but Ichika considered it a waste that she herself wouldn’t get to eat it.

“Why not just put it into your {Storage}?”

“I don’t even know {Storage}! Put it in yours, Niku!”

“You can’t use my {Storage} without Master or Rokuko’s permission.”

“No way... What should I do?! What CAN I do?!” Ichika wailed with sincere sorrow over missing out on the food as Niku shook her head in exasperation.

“Sheesh. Okay, Ichika. You have to try and learn {Storage} right now. Right here.”

“Oh! Right! My natural talent for Space-Time Magic will be unlocked here and now! Teach me, Niku!”

“The chant for {Storage} goes like this.” However, despite Niku reciting the chant for {Storage}, it wasn’t so easy to learn a spell one had never used before. Her efforts ended in failure, as was predictable.

“There’s no helping what you can’t do. Just eat what you can.”

“You’re right... My stomach’s got a Space-Time portal inside of it!”

“Oh, Ichika. If you want to bring some food back with you, I can put it into my {Storage} for you.” Rokuko, who had just been watching over Keima, suddenly butted in.

“Woah, girl, you didn’t tell me you were a literal goddess. I’ll serve you for the rest of my life!”

“Wow, that’s some enthusiasm. I didn’t think anyone would treat me as a goddess over something this tiny.”

“The wrath of stolen food is never forgotten, but the gratitude of given food lasts forever. Totally.”

“I guess so. Well, if you’re fine with that, Ichika, I am too.” Rokuko went ahead and stuck the nearest large plate into her {Storage}. Ichika questioned whether actually stealing the plate was the right thing to do, but since it was Rokuko doing it, she decided not to think too hard about it.

“...Oh, girl, shouldn’t you be protecting Keima?”

“Ah, about that. He drank Haku’s alcohol and fell right asleep, the silly goof. Would you take him to his room, Niku? I’m sure you remember where it is.”

“As you wish.” Rokuko pointed to the distance, where Keima was sleeping on the floor with red cheeks. Although there was a fluffy carpet beneath him, there was a high possibility that he’d catch a fever.

“I’ll take him to his futon.”

“Uh-huh, thanks!” Thanks in part to her golem assistance, Niku easily picked up Keima and left the party with him.

“...Wait. Does this mean Niku totally just won the Keima bowl tonight? Kinda late to say this, but you don’t mind leaving Keima with her, Rokuko?”

“Wha? Niku’s just a dakimakura, I don’t mind. Anyway... Aren’t you going to eat?”

“Uh, of course I am, dude. The desserts over there are looking totes delish. Wanna eat with me?” Rokuko’s logic confused Ichika, but either way, she was more focused on eating the food in front of her.

Keima’s Perspective

“Oooooh! This is amaziiiing!” I gave Neruneh a “Mr. Eternal Pen” as a souvenir from the Empire and boy did she love it.

“Grrr, I want to take it apart... But it has protection. Things are set up so the magic circle will disappear if I try take it apart...!”

“That’s a thing you can do?”

“It’s written in the manuaaal! I guess I should have expected that much from the Hero Workshop.” *Maybe that protection is from a Hero’s Cheat Skill.*

“Eeeh, yeah, I don’t think I could copy that.”

“It looks like this one refills with ink if you pour mana into it. It’s made of water, and um, dark... earth, I thiiink?” By the way, one side of the pen was transparent so you could see the ink inside. And on top of that, there wasn’t just black ink. There were a few colors you could buy: red, blue, and green. Though I had bought the most basic color, black.

“You can make ink with water?”

“Is that wroooong?”

“Honestly, no clue. I just thought it took oil or something.” Incidentally, you could apparently make normal (?) ink with yet another Hero Workshop magic tool known as a “Mr. Ink Maker.” *What’s normal about that...?*

“...Basically, the Hero Workshop has a monopoly on all technology.”

“Yuuup. Or maybe it’s just nobody else can manage to make theeeem.” *Yeah, the workshop’s apparently been around for centuries. Maybe they’ve developed magic tools for making magic tools. Or maybe the original Hero is still alive. Leeet’s not think too hard about that.* As an aside, I hadn’t purchased a “No Firewood Pot” or a “Mr. Heating Pot,” but I told her that they existed.

“I think the stove thing you were talking about earlier sounds more usefuuul. You could use normal pots with it, and switching pots would be easyyy. If it were a magic tool, it’d just be a flat metal plate, so it’d be easy to carry arooound.”

“...Now that you mention it, stoves are pretty convenient.”

“Oh, riiight. Mr. Gar, would you please bring Fire Experiment Number Sixteeeen... Okaaay, thank yooou.” Her helper Gargoyle silently brought Neruneh a box, who took it and gave the Gargoyle a head rub. Satisfied, the

Gargoyle returned to acting like a statue in the corner of the room. Inside the box was a flat slate with a magic circle engraved on it.

"This is my experimental stooove. It's made of clay since it's just an experiment, but it uses the same dial magic circle we made the kotatsu wiiiith. You can adjust the heaaat." The experimental stove had a dial and five raised protuberances for pots. *Woah, when did you make something this convenient? Maybe I'll have her make me one, just in case I feel like going on an adventure or something. I am B-Rank now, so they couldn't hurt to have on hand. Not that I'll ever use them. Probably.*

"Good work, Neruneh. This is exactly the kinda thing I was hoping you'd make."

"...It's all thanks to you, Masteeer. It's made of clay, so it'll break if you put it in your bag, but I could make a steel one for you no probleeem." We could mass produce a steel version, but it'd be pretty annoying. Extremely annoying, even. And it seemed like the whole stove would get hot while in use. At that point, it'd be better to make a stand for it and not even try to carry it around. That could be a good experiment.

"Hey could you make a wooden stand that can fit into the clay board? I want to strengthen the protuberances, so opening a hole in those and putting metal scraps in there should be fine. Uuuh, opening holes there won't impact the magic circles, right?" I borrowed the clay plate and used {Create Golem} to shave down the blank parts and open up holes where the protuberances were. I then made a wooden board with metal bits to slot into the holes. *Yep, this feels like a perfect lightweight stove.*

"...Like that, you'll just need a wooden cover and it won't break even in a baaag. I can make these clay ones on my own without needing you to waste your time helpiiiing."

"On, nice. I knew I could count on you, Neruneh. Go ahead." *Oh, she'll make a cover too? Man, I'm lucky to have a researcher like her.*

I handed the clay slate back to Neruneh. I'd show it to Gozou once she finished.

"I'm not that great, this is all thanks to you, Masteeer."

“Don’t be selling yourself short, Neruneh. I’ve got high hopes for you.”

“...I’m not being humbleeee? Listen, ideas are liiike...” Neruneh let out a sigh.

“If you told Kantara that you could use as many magic stones as you like, and make magic circles out of clay, he’d pass out from shock, okaaaay?”

“Oh! Speaking of which, I’d like to put a timer on the stove. Do you think you could combine one with a Golem Timer? It’d be like a switch that you twist, and the stove will stay on until the switch ticks back to its original position.”

“See, you always just casually revolutionize scieeence! Uwaaaaah!” Neruneh weakly hit my chest over and over. *Ahaha, she’s so sweet. This kinda hurts though. Stop please.*

As an aside, she interpreted “go ahead” as “make a lot,” so the next day she had finished ten entire stoves for me. *I’m glad she managed to mass produce them, but I only really wanted one.*

As a bonus for Neruneh, I made a toaster oven for use in her laboratory (using Phoenix eggshells). It just kinda came together when I used {Create Golem} on one of the stoves and the eggshells. *Now she can eat as much toast as she wants. I wonder if she’ll like it.*

“...Kantara would actually die if he saw thiiis. Well, now that I can cook stuff easily in the lab, my research will only get fasteeer.”

“Oh, I didn’t think about that. Nice.”

“Uh-huuuuh. Thank yoooou. Also... I’ve never heard of a toaster oven befooore.” *Well... I’m just glad she likes it.*

In any case, I gave one of the leftover stoves to Kinue and put the rest into treasure chests within the dungeon. They would be a super-rare item.

Chapter 3

Day 24 of Year 2

In the blink of an eye, it was morning and I was laying in bed with Niku as my pillow. *Geez. Alcohol is scary. Good thing I prepared a Golem Alarm Clock just in case something like this happened.*

I cast {Healing} on my head. *Ahhh, much better. Man am I glad I passed out in no time. If not for that, Haku might've forced me to drink until I died of alcohol poisoning. The last thing I remember is her screaming "Oh Beer! Oh mighty and joyous Beer!" while chugging beer from a huge mug, so yeah.*

In either case, I finger combed my hair to fix my bedhead and poked Niku's squishy cheek. She let out a tiny groan and woke up immediately. Yawning, I took Niku and we left the room, both of us rubbing our sleepy eyes. We met up with Rokuko on the way to our meeting place, the conference room.

"Morning, Keima. I see you woke up in time."

"Heya, Rokuko. I'm just glad I set up that alarm... Haaah. I hope I never have to waste the blessings of this fantasy world and be woken up early like that again. Alarm clocks have no place here... And why're you looking so cheery, anyway?"

"Wha? I mean, we just had that party. How could I not be pumped up?" said Rokuko, looking as bright and full of energy as ever. *Going through a drinking party like that and actually feeling energized takes a special kind of skill, I think. It just tired me out.*

We reached the conference room and found Ichika already there, waiting for us. She had woken up earlier than anyone else, it seemed, and judging by the broad grin on her face she had gotten plenty energized from the party. *Wait a second...! Niku looks like she's feeling great too. Am I the weird one here?!*

"Didn't know you were such a hard worker, Ichika. I kinda expected you to camp out in the kitchen until the last moment."

“Dude, you can’t call yourself a pro adventurer if you aren’t on time when ya need to be. Like, ever heard of timed quests? This is just common sense.”

“Huh... Guess I’ll quit being an adventurer. I only joined the Guild so I could have an excuse for going in and out of town anyway.”

“...You’re kinda a B-Rank now, so um, you’re just gonna have to deal with it a little. ‘Kay?”

Last came Haku. She was exactly on time, not a second early or late. Judging by the skip in her step, she was more than excited for the upcoming Dungeon Battle. Which made sense given that she and Rokuko would be getting physically, literally, closer whether we won or lost. *This is actually a proxy war between Haku and some other senior Cores, so I’m glad she’s enthusiastic, at least.*

“Oh my, Keima, do you intend to lose?”

“Nah, I’m gonna try to win.”

“Then you should have no issue with my excitement. We senior Cores will not be participating in this Dungeon Battle, beyond giving advice. Do try not to lose.”

“Ehhh, well, we’ll see how it goes.”

“My sweet Rokuko, fear not. I’ll take care of the situation if you lose.”

“I appreciate the thought, but Keima won’t lose! No way!”

We used Haku’s {Teleport} to move directly to the [Ivory Beach’s] Core Room. Inside was the Dummy Core resting safely on its stand, and a warp gate to the [Cave of Greed]. We immediately entered the Master Room through the Dummy Core. Once there, I started off by casually summoning ten or so Gargoyles with {Summon Gargoyle} and sending them to the key points we had worked out beforehand. *Man, it sure sucks that summoned monsters will leave if the summoner gets knocked out. Now I have to stay here and not fight on the frontlines. Dang.*

While I was at it, I checked the gimmicks we had set up for today to make sure everything would run smoothly. I started polishing some sections off and before

long, it was time for the Dungeon Battle.

“Okay, everyone, it’s time. Have you all finished your Dungeon Battle preparations?” An unfamiliar voice suddenly echoed throughout the Master Room. The voice had a tone that was friendly, yet tinged with a sort of authority that made defying the speaker seem out of the question. One of the walls became a monitor that displayed footage of a black-haired, golden-eyed man with dark sooty skin and a blue priest’s robe. Half of his face, mostly the area around his eyes, was covered by a mask. *Hm... I guess this is Father. He looks a lot younger than I thought.*

“The Demon King Team is fully prepared, my Father.”

“No problems with the Dragon King Team, Father.”

“Human Empire Team reporting. We’re quite ready, Father.”

The three senior Cores all spoke with respectful tones. Seeing Haku bow her head just drove home how big of a deal this Father was.

“Okay then, let the battle begiiiiiin... in a second. Is there anything you all want to say, junior Cores?”

“This is Core 666 speaking. Core 695, don’t forget that this is a duel between you and I.”

“Hold up! Er, this is Core 650. Just gotta go ahead and say I’m gonna win this one. Even if you two teamed up, we have three Cores on our team! How could we lose?!”

“...Um, Core 695 here. I don’t really have anything to say. Let’s just go ahead and start so I can win.” *Daaamn, Rokuko. When’d you get so spunky?*

“Hahaha! Let’s start, then. Five seconds. Four, three, two, one... Triple Threat Dungeon Battle, begin!” The moment Father finished speaking, two warp gates appeared in the room we had selected before the battle. Within the room was a veritable army of golems, some of which were carrying boxes on their backs. Within those boxes was our reconnaissance force.

Within seconds, a horde of giant snakes about as thick as a muscular forearm rushed out of one gate. It kinda looked like a scene from a horror movie. That

gate probably led to the Dragon King's dungeon.

Through the other gate came rattling skeletons... or should I say Skeletons. It definitely looked like a scene from a horror movie. I could imagine that the they were part of the Demon King Team.

I launched instructions at Niku while having the golem platoon fight off the snakes and Skeletons.

"Alright, let's get straight to the point. Activate the flooding."

"Understood. Opening the first floodgate." Niku fiddled with her monitor.

Don don don don... boom! The floodgate connected the dungeon floor to the ocean. A huge wave of ocean water flooded straight into the floor containing the gate room... our bottom-most floor. Indeed, the floodgate that we had just opened connected to our *bottom* floor.

In truth, I had designed the dungeon layout to exploit the flooding gimmick to its maximum potential. Imagine a tower, basically. One with an entrance on the bottom floor, that you conquered by climbing upwards. What would happen if you flooded the dungeon from the top to the bottom? Well, the water would flow downwards, obviously. That was just how water worked.

Our underground dungeon was mimicking that style. Its entrance was on the bottom floor and its Core was on the first floor, which was the opposite of what you'd expect from a dungeon. Though since you had to start at the bottom to reach the first floor, the Core was technically in the deepest part of the dungeon just like any normal dungeon.

"Goodness, your ideas never fail to surprise me, Keima."

"Hahaha. This way we don't just flood the dungeon, we use the flow of water to push them back." Simple flooding wouldn't impact monsters that didn't need to breathe, such as golems. However, an intense flow of water would stop just about any monster in its tracks. And it could be used as a weapon. *See that roaring flood of water on the monitor? Yeah, if that hit me, I'd be squashed like a friggin' bug.*

Judging from the map, ninety percent of the bottom floor was already under water. I had fiddled with the hallways to specifically maximize the force of

water crashing into the gate room. Just think about what the end of a gutter looks like.

I waited for the right timing, then opened the door to the gate room. The flood of water roared inside and like a raging tsunami, slammed into the snakes, Skeletons, and even our own golems, washing all the monsters away.

Dragon King Team's Perspective

"Hahaha! Let's start, then. Five seconds. Four, three, two, one... Triple Threat Dungeon Battle, begin!" The moment Father finished speaking, two warp gates appeared in the room they had selected before the battle. Core 650 (giant snake), Core 651 (giant frog), and Core 652 (giant slug) immediately began their attack.

"Okaaay! Go and fight, Bite Snakes!"

"Croak croak. Good thing we left the attacking force to you, 650."

"Snakes are the fastest out of all of us, sooo." The moment the gates appeared, the snakes rushed though them. To be more precise, the gates appeared inside of the room they had preemptively packed full of snakes. Their plan was to get a head start while simultaneously blocking any invasion efforts from their opponents.

"This is it! The monster rush strategy that Dungeon Core Number 5 taught us! Power through numbers!"

"Geheheh, look at how many monsters we summoned! You can do so much more when you've got tons of DP."

"No way can we lose with thiiis many monsters!" Core 650 directed the overflowing snakes into the enemy dungeons and immediately got to work fighting the monsters waiting within the enemy gate rooms. The Human Empire Team had sent golems and the Demon King Team had sent Skeletons. They could assume that those monsters would form the bulk of their enemy's armies. Which was good, since they had more Bite Snakes than the enemy had monsters, and Bite Snakes were faster than either Skeletons or golems. Or at least, that's how it looked to Core 650 and his pals.

“Aaahahaha! My cute snakes are the strongest monsters in the world!” They wrapped around the Skeletons and crushed their bones, while others bit the clay golems to pieces. However, the enemy monsters didn’t take that sitting down. They fought back by punching snakes to death, crushing them underfoot, or slicing away with weapons. The Bite Snakes were stronger in a one-on-one, and there were more snakes than enemy monsters. But they were still experiencing casualties.

That said, the enemies were suffering even more casualties, so it probably didn’t matter. After all, they had more DP at hand than ever before. The initial battle was going so well for Core 650 that he and the others didn’t think too hard about the fact that the enemy teams had the exact same amount of DP. Core 5 himself didn’t say anything, figuring that if things were going well, they just had to keep up the momentum.

That’s when it happened.

The door in the Human Empire Team’s room burst open and a huge torrent of water flooded in. The raging flood smashed into the fighting Bite Snakes, not to mention their own golems, and... flowed straight through the Dragon King Team’s gate. They had been protecting their gate room with a horde of monsters, but the flood of water just crashed through them and flowed down the dungeon halls with the snakes along for the ride.

“Wh-Wh-What the heck?! I-It’s not stopping! Wh-What should I do?!”

“What...?! Grr, that Core 89 and her cowardly tricks! She even flooded her allies!”

“Do you know what’s happening here, Dungeon Core Number 5?!” asked Core 651 (giant frog), looking to Core 5 for help.

“This is a water attack! A strategy built around using a flood of water to wash your enemies away! You’ve gotta stop the flow somehow!”

“S-Somehow?! We don’t know what to do!”

“Calm down, Core 650! Your snakes can swim in water, so use them to kill the monsters that flowed into the dungeon! Core 651, Core 652, withdraw all the water you can where possible and dump it outside of the dungeon! Water

without enemies is just normal water, so it can be withdrawn! Water attacks generally use built up stores of water, so it'll end if we can outlast it! Even if she has a second round planned, we can buy time while she's building up water again!" The junior Cores obeyed Core 5's orders and got to work. They had to deal with the raging flow of water and the enemies, enemies, enemies.

The golems that had been carrying boxes—most of them were corpses now—got carried by the flow of water and slammed into walls, along with plenty of snakes. Once the boxes broke, enemy icons burst onto the map in huge numbers.

"Wh-Whoa, what the heck is happening?! Fish?! Wha?! Fish?!"

"Calm down! This is your time to shine, Core 651! Eat the fish with your frogs! We can't withdraw the water with enemies inside of it! Grrr, what a bastard Core 89 is, what a BASTAAARD! GAAAAAH! If this were my battle, I'd turn this fuckin' water to steam with my dragon fire!" If this were indeed Core 5's dungeon, he would line up with his dragons and turn both the water and the enemies within to steam using their fire breath. But as this was a battle between junior Cores, they were restricted to the trifling amount of 500,000 DP (trifling to Core 5, anyway.) That wasn't enough to summon even a single good dragon. Could you even call it a battle, then? The best you could do with 500,000 DP was line up a couple of Lesser Dragons.

"Dungeon Core Number 5! Th-There's too much wateeeer! We're not putting a dent into it!"

"Whatever, just keep at it! Our dungeon'll get flooded if you don't get rid of that water!" Core 652 desperately followed Core 5's instructions and withdrew water to dump it outside. But regardless, the floor was already mostly flooded. The water reached the second floor, and the flood was still filled with fish, Skeletons, and golems. Withdrawing all of that water would be... more than a little difficult.

Demon King Team's Perspective

"Hahaha! Let's start, then. Five seconds. Four, three, two, one... Triple Threat Dungeon Battle, begin!" The moment Father finished speaking, two warp gates

appeared in the room they had selected before the battle. Snakes rushed in through one gate immediately. The other gate remained ominously silent. The Skeletons could take care of the snakes.

"Creatures of bone. Go forth and crush my enemies." Core 666 stated her orders and watched on to see what would happen. The flow of snakes from the Dragon King Team was too overwhelming to reach their gate, but it was just a matter of time. Golems awaited at the other end of the Human Empire Team's gate.

During the battle, several snakes found themselves capable of advancing further into Core 666's dungeon, but they chose instead to fight the skeletons every time. She could assume that Core 650 had thoughtlessly bought a horde of monsters with no deeper plan than overwhelming her with the power of numbers. Regardless of the fact that the advance force's primary goal should have been advancing deeper into the dungeon to gather information.

...On the other hand, the Human Empire Team was not attacking. It should have been safe to assume that they were planning something. As she looked forward to finding out what that plan was, a flood of water burst through the Human Empire Team's gate. It was a massive flood of immense proportions. Golems and Snakes flowed right into her dungeon. They smashed through her army of Skeletons and continued onwards, being carried deep into her dungeon by the flow of water. "Haha, now this is something. Core 695! You are a suitable rival for me!" Core 666 laughed in amusement as her dungeon was invaded by a flood of water. She would respond to a serious attack by being serious as well. First, she needed to use {Summon Skeleton} to restore the Skeletons she had lost. Core 666's lips curved upwards joyously as she began the chant.

Keima's Perspective

Okay. Our army (of fish and golems) was riding the waves of the flood deep into the enemy dungeons. The Dragon King Team had plenty of snakes and frogs. *I wonder if they'll have slugs too. Salt would probably work on them, but maybe not under water. I'll worry about that when they show up, though.*

The Demon King Team seemed to just have Skeletons. *Uhhh... I guess those are demon-type? Salt would probably work on them, in another sense, but*

again... water... Eh, nevermind. Salt won't do anything.

"Keima, we've mapped out the whole first floor of both dungeons. They both connected their floors with downward stairs, so the flood's mapping out the second floors as we speak."

"Nice, keep it up. We're gonna ride this wave for as long as we can." *And once we can't anymore, we'll send out our Golem and Sahuagin platoons. No breaks on this dungeon conquering train.*

"I had my doubts when you discussed this plan with me, but I see that flooding is a quite powerful strategy... What are the chances we win just like this?"

"Pretty low, Haku. There's a lot of flaws with flooding. You can see how it's barely affecting the Skeletons." Even within entirely flooded rooms, the Demon King Team's skeletons were walking around casually. I also saw two knights clad in pitch black armor. They looked nice and sinister, like you'd expect members of a Demon Army to look; the water didn't seem to bother them in the least.

However, the Demon King Team wasn't doing anything to block the water. At this rate, their dungeon really would be underwater before long. *Hm... Maybe that's all part of their plan? We can't send in another wave if their dungeon's still flooded. Our fish will be able to fight more effectively underwater, but maybe they have a plan to turn that advantage on its head.*

"Let's stop the water for a bit. Invite the enemies inside, then crush them again."

"Okaaay. I'll be ready to open the door whenever you need me to, Keima." Once the flow of water stopped and everything calmed down, I sent forth platoons of golems to investigate. The Gargoyles were still in reserve.

...Oh man, the fish exploring the Demon King's dungeon just found a Boss Room on the second floor. Looks like the boss is a giant skeleton fish. They must have summoned it after seeing our flooding strategy. That's pretty good. And we can't get a drop of water deeper into their dungeon until we beat the boss.

On the other hand, we reached the third floor of the Dragon King Team's dungeon. They must have been doing their best to get rid of the water, as the

flood was shrinking bit by bit. I could imagine that they were withdrawing the bits of the water that didn't contain our troops. *Okaaay, I wonder how many floors their dungeons have?*

...I looked at the golems advancing through the enemy dungeons. Thanks to our now completed map, I directed them down the shortest path to the stairs, but they naturally didn't just let that happen. The Dragon King Team sent forth an army of frogs that pushed through the drowned snake corpses. They swung their massive tongues like blunt weapons, crushing our golems. *Tongue blackjacks, huh?*

The Demon King Team, frustratingly enough, didn't send forth their Skeletons and instead merely had their two armored monsters crush our golems effortlessly. They swung their swords around and mowed down anything in their way. *Yeah, our weaponless Clay Golems can't even touch them.*

"I kinda expected as much from the Demon King Team, but I'm surprised the Dragon King Team is putting up this much of a fight..."

"Keima. The Dragon King Team does have Core 5 on their side, remember? He may have more muscles than brains, but that just means he's built for fighting. It's only logical that those receiving his instructions will know how to put up a fight."

"I-I know that, Haku. Sorry for having hopes and dreams." The Dragon King Team's guards blocked our fish and Clay Golems from going any further. I could imagine that there were traps waiting for us beyond their troops anyway.

Putting them aside, I figured it would be best to try and send forth sharks to try and take down the Demon King Team's boss.

"Ichika, are the sharks ready? I want to get a feel for how strong the boss is first, so send out three sharks to fight him. Take 'em straight to the boss room."

"Right on! C'mon sharks, let's do this thaaang!" Three small sharks charged through the Demon King Team's gate. Their dungeon had become entirely flooded, so not only could they move with ease, but the enemy monsters were sluggish as well. The armored knights sliced two of them down, but the third managed to slip past them in the process. I briefly wondered if that was our first real loss of DP, so to speak, but then remembered that some of the magic

stones within the golems had been destroyed. Though a decent chunk of the enemy skeletons had been destroyed too.

"Anyway, Ichika, I'm leaving that bone fish mid-boss to you."

"You got it, man! My shark's gonna munch him to pieces!"

The enemy made its own move. One of the armored knights entered the Dragon King's dungeon. Aaand he started slaughtering the snakes and frogs. *Welp. These guys are strong as hell. They must have dumped a lot of DP on them.*

"Keima, they've gotten through our defenses." Our gate room had ended up light on guards since we sent most of the golems into the enemy dungeons. Skeletons and snakes were entering our dungeon. *Alright, time to lure them in.*

"...Okay. Unleash the first stock."

"Okaaay. I'm opening the door to the first stockroooom." A thick, viscous liquid poured out of the room.

"...Oh my, Keima. Is this what I think it is? Tentacle Slime bodily fluids?"

"Yep."

"And these hallways are sloped, aren't they?"

"Yep."

Tentacle Slimes excreted a fluid that assisted their body in making them immune to physical attacks. The fluids were thick and slimy. Slimy meant slippery. And that made it good for improving your bloodflow, but let's not talk about that right now. Instead, imagine what would happen if you poured it down a slope. That was exactly what was happening to the platoons of snakes and skellies.

Dragon King Team's Perspective

A black knight that had charged into the dungeon was slaughtering their snakes and frogs.

"Gaaaah! Who the hell is this armored guuuuy?! What the hell did Core 666 summon?!"

“Relax, Core 650. Judging by how it was fine underwater, it must be a Living Armor of some kind. And it looks like someone’s controlling it directly. Surround it and crush it with numbers!”

“Like this, Dungeon Core Number 5?!”

Unfortunately, the snakes and frogs were just too weak. A single swing of the armor’s sword would chop a snake in half and mince a frog’s tongue, leaving them dead or incapable of fighting further. There were even some monsters that simply got stepped on and crushed to death beneath the weight of the armor. It was only after the junior Cores followed Core 5’s advice and attacked it from all directions that they got a few hits in. The snakes managed to bite its legs.

But the black armor must have been made from something special, as neither the Bite Snakes’ fangs nor the Big Frogs’ tongues seemed capable of dealing any damage to it.

“Sheesh, he’s like a Soldier of God or something. The best our monsters can do is slow him down.” Core 5 murmured to himself. There was strength in numbers, but at a certain point, the raw strength of an individual could overwhelm that principle, which was exactly what was happening before their eyes.

“Dungeon Core Number 5, the flood’s calmed down now, soooo, should I send out my monsters?”

“Yeah. Core 652, control the snakes that are invading the other dungeons. We need to prepare monsters that can fight in the water. Hey! Can you summon Sea Snakes?!”

“Y-Yeees! I’ll summon them right now! Right noooow!” Core 650 summoned snakes capable of swimming underwater. They were water monsters that couldn’t survive on land, but that was perfect for their situation. They sent several of those into the Demon King Team’s dungeon.

Core 5 got the feeling that Sea Snakes were only capable of living in salt water, but that couldn’t be true. He decided not to think about it too hard.

“Core 651, you focus on the invasion force too. 652, handle the Human

Empire Team while Core 651 handles the Demon King Team. Core 650, keep up focusing on defense. Ngh...Not enough heads around here. Why don't you three have subordinates?" The entire dungeon was being run by the three Cores themselves. Given that it was a three-way battle, having one person on defense and two on attack was the absolute bare minimum of administrators. Initially, they planned on summoning subordinates and using them, but...

"I mean, we never expected them to eat each other!"

Indeed. They had spent their precious limited DP on various support monsters. But since they summoned *various* monsters—a snake, a frog, and a slug—they had eaten each other. They had summoned low-intelligence monsters to save DP, figuring that they would be good servants after a little training, but they had begun eating each other the moment they were left alone. Nothing remained but chewed on corpses.

"It's 'cause you cheaped out, idiots! You should've summoned smarter monsters, with restraint! Gaaah, and thanks to that we don't have enough DP right now!" Naturally, even Core 5 could barely believe them. Such was the result of casually watching from afar, figuring that three Cores fighting together would be enough for an easy win.

"Alriiight, first room of the Human Empire Team's dungeon conquered! Keep it up!"

"Croak, the Demon King Team's black armor is getting in my waaay... Core 652, it's all on you nooow." Core 652, the slug, was controlling the Bite Snakes in the Human Empire Team's dungeon. They came close to attacking the skeletons, but the enemy of your enemy is your friend. There was an unspoken ceasefire between them in the enemy dungeon. They advanced deeper inside together.

"Alright, alriiight! Climb up that slooope!" They started climbing the slope, but suddenly slimy liquid came flowing down. There was no room for escape, so the snakes and skellies got wrapped up in the same flood. The skellies got pushed back, but the snakes clung to the slope and thus remained mostly in place. They interpreted that as getting a leg up over the Demon King Team and tried advancing further... but.

“Guuuh! Wh-What the heck is going ooon?! Ngggh, aaaah!”

“What’s happening, Core 652? Keep us updated!”

“The snakes, they can’t mooooove! They’re too slimyyy!” The snakes, covered in a slimy and slippery mess, slid down the slope as they wriggled futilely. They built up speed until *bam!* They slammed into the Skeletons which had been standing up.

“Th-This is juuust... What do we dooo?!” The slimy liquid covered the slope’s surface. There was no way for the snakes to avoid getting covered with it. Even if they charged the slope, they would just decelerate and ultimately slide back now. Core 652 lamented that he only had snakes on his side when slugs might have been able to climb up the slope just fine.

“Aaaah! The bones are getting in the waaaay! Ngggh, they’re stepping on the snaaaakes!”

“Swap that around and use the bones as ground! Wrap around their legs, Core 652!”

“O-Okaaaay!” Under Core 5’s instructions, he wrapped the Bite Snakes around the Skeletons’ legs, but that just served to weight them down and send them both down the slope.

“It’s not workiiing! We keep slippiiing!”

“You whaaat?! You’re sleeping! Swap places with me, Core 652! Snakes can normally move across the top of water, y’know! No way should a little bit of slippery ground stop them! You just suck!”

“F-Fineee, swap with me! Wait, aaaah! The black armooooor!” Core 652 panicked after being faced with the black armor slaughtering their troops, but in contrast, Core 650 was completely calm.

“Alriiight, here we go! I mean, if the floor’s no good, just go across the walls! They’re plenty rocky for us snakes!” Core 650 controlled the snakes and had them climb onto the walls. They avoided the sticky floor. There was nothing else in their way. Or so they thought, until a second flood of water came crashing down the hall.

Keima's Perspective

Wow. The snakes managed to stick to the walls. I didn't expect that. Despite making such a huge slope and making sure to get the fluids on the walls too, my [Slime Slope] was conquered with unexpected ease. The problem probably lied within the bumpy walls making the fluid less effective. *Well, it blocked the Skeletons, so let's say it was ultimately successful.*

"Oh my, oh my. Do you truly not mind washing away all the slime you worked so hard to gather?"

"That slope was just meant to buy time. The moment they got past it, the fluids stopped meaning anything. Besides, I still have about three rooms full of the stuff." Like pressing a reset button, I opened the floodgates and washed everything away. Flash flooding was still plenty effective. Though it made me feel like I was flushing a toilet.

Oh, and I'm gonna boost the difficulty of the Slime Slope by having the Gargoyles cast attack magic from above. There are some parts of our dungeon with nothing but a thin rope bridge with no guard rails... Wait, won't snakes beat that pretty easily too? They can move across wooden branches without a care in the world, so. Well. Whatever. I have plenty of ways to deal with snakes.

"So, is the Demon King Team's second armor still not moving?"

"Seems so. It's just smacking snakes and golems around in their gate room. It's kinda making me nervous."

"And the boss skele-fish?"

"I'm totally chasing after it with the shark, but he's a real nasty bugger! Gonna take a bit longer!" The first two floors of the Demon King Team's dungeon were almost entirely under water. The traps they had set throughout the hallways were rendered useless by the water, so it really felt like our team was crushing them, but according to Haku, we should never let our guard down around Core 6. *Uh... Does that mean there's a good chance we might beat the Dragon King Team without really trying? Oh dang, we're already at their fifth floor? That's fast. Don't they have a boss or something? Our Sahuagin platoon is getting bored.*

“Master. The enemy has reached our second floor.” I checked my monitor after hearing Niku’s report. The washed-away snakes and skellies were climbing the slope once again. This time, I let them advance without washing them away. In truth, we were capable of launching a flood whenever we wanted, but by spacing them apart we gave off the impression that we needed time to store water. The further up they get, the more often I’ll flood them. That way, we’ll hit more monsters with each wave. *And the water will go all the way down, too. Heh.*

“Alright, I think it’s time to spend a little DP.”

“Oh my. And what manner of bullying do you have planned for them, Keima?”

“You’ll see in a second.” I spent DP to summon a certain monster.

Demon King Team’s Perspective

“Oh? No flood this time?” Core 666 spoke, her voice tinged with surprise. She was continuing her advance with the skeletons from {Summon Skeleton}, but progress was slow.

On the other hand, in the Dragon King Team’s dungeon, her Black Iron Living Armor had just finished slicing a three-meter tall giant frog with astoundingly hard skin in half. Though only the surface of the skin was hard, and it was only about as hard as iron, so her Living Armor—under the control of her Dungeon Master—easily managed to slice it apart. She wouldn’t have spent as much DP on it as she did if a measly frog would be able to block its path.

The frog’s movements were slowed due to being underwater, but it felt like it might have been the dungeon’s boss. But either way, advancing through the Dragon King Team’s dungeon was best left to the Human Empire Team until further notice. Core 666’s Master was having fun controlling the Living Armor, so there shouldn’t be any harm in letting him play around on his own. What truly mattered was the Human Empire Team’s dungeon. Core 666’s lips curved into a grin as she imagined what might await her.

Past the slope was a small room. There were no multiple paths. The dungeon seemed to be following a singular path, which made exploration unnecessary. Its design was likely optimized for controlling floods and maximizing their

efficacy. The fewer places to escape the rushing water, the better for them.

There were Gargoyles in the small room. They shot out balls of fire and water, hitting the Skeletons.

“Oh, there’s quite a lot of them. This might be a little too much for Skeletons to handle... but we have the numerical advantage.” Core 666 controlled her Skeletons such that five surrounded each Gargoyle. They had bone bodies and bone weapons, but they could still disturb the Gargoyles’ mana with blunt attacks. Given enough time, the Gargoyles would fall even without a particularly decisive blow.

However...

A few Bite Snakes began attacking the Skeletons.

“My, my. Have they gone senile?” If an obstacle arose, one merely needed to eliminate it. Her Skeletons swung their blades and decapitated the snakes. But then, she saw some of the Skeletons moving onwards and kicking the other snakes, despite having received no orders to do so.

“...Ohoh. Now this is clever.” The rogue Skeletons did not have the green dot of an ally on her map. In this triple threat Dungeon Battle, all enemies were marked as red. In other words, these red Skeletons belonged to the enemy. Additionally, the Dragon King Team’s snakes were marked as red.

...In other words, the Skeletons attacking the snakes would look like they belonged to the Demon King Team from the Dragon King Team’s perspective. It was possible that the Bite Snakes that attacked her Skeletons belonged to the Human Empire Team as well. Or perhaps they had only summoned Skeletons, and the fooled snakes of the Dragon King Team had attacked out of revenge... That was the more likely possibility. Reason being, when tricking the enemy, there was no need to give more hints then necessary. Core 666 would have done the same thing.

...It was quite late for this, but Core 666 finally noticed that thinking “the enemy of my enemy is my friend” had been quite naive of her.

“Hahaha, they mixed poison within our midst! Excellent, truly excellent! Very well then! I shall crush these stone statues underfoot, and then proceed to

massacre the snakes!” She should have done that from the start. An enemy remains an enemy no matter the circumstances. There was no need for her to cooperate with a useless faux-ally. *Ahhh, goodness, what a joyous battle this is.* Core 666 grinned from the bottom of her heart.

...Core 6 watched on, silently. He had not spoken once since the Dungeon Battle began. Even during the construction of the dungeon, he had left everything to Core 666 and her Master. However, Core 6 did not trust Core 666’s Master whatsoever.

Her Master had originally been a swordsman raised within a human farm. Who would trust livestock with anything? At best, one might have faith that they will provide a worthwhile amount of DP. In any case, he had been on the execution block to provide a burst of DP, when somehow he became Core 666’s Master, and began attending her as a “servant.” The human had managed to survive up until this point without ever displeasing Core 666, though reportedly she had found it necessary to scold and “discipline” him at points.

Core 6’s motives for participating in this Dungeon Battle were simple: he was testing Core 666’s master.

If he could be used, that was fine. A wise man uses his available resources to their fullest. If he could not be used, there was no debate as to what would be done. The human would be eliminated, so that Core 666 might learn and grow.

Core 6 watched the battle unfold, silently.

Keima’s Perspective

“Heya, Keima. Do you mind if I ask you a question? There aren’t any aquatic Dungeon Cores right now. Why is that, you ask? Well, because they wouldn’t be able to attend the party. Keima, do you know how a Mermaid Core or something of the sort could attend a land party?” Out of nowhere, Father contacted me. *Uh, kinda busy here, dude.*

“...You could hold the party at a beach, or you could build a pool nearby. Worst come to worst, you could place a bucket filled with water on a cart and pull them around.”

“Those are good ideas. Anything else?”

“Well, you could give them the human transformation skill right from the start. I’ve heard about mermaids having that kind of power. Oh, and like, can’t you just give them whatever skill lets monsters swim through the air?”

“I knew you’d have some bright ideas, Keima. Thanks for the help.” *Mr. Judge, please don’t discuss personal matters while the battle is ongoing.*

“Keima, I’m surprised you could just casually reply to Father like that.”

“I mean, he’s your old man, right? I’m just trying to think about him on that kind of level.” Whether he’s a god or not, he’s Rokuko’s dad. Nothing to worry about. If I let myself start worrying, there’ll be no end to it.

“O-Old man...? Keima, might I suggest that you show more respect for our Father?”

“Mmm? I don’t mind, anyone can call me whatever they like. Keima, feel free to call me dad, or even stepdad if you want. That’s what Lyon called me.” *Wait, can he hear everything we say? He’s just butting into our conversation, holy crap. And who the heck is Lyon?* Ichika skipped over and whispered into my ear. *Ahhh... The first Emperor of the Laverio Empire. Or in other words, Haku’s old Master. He’s been made into a unit of currency now, right. One copper for one Lyon.*

“Let us not speak about him, Father. He was a past mistake of mine, nothing more.”

“If you say so.”

Their conversation felt oddly like that between a real father and daughter. Kind of interesting that her ex-boyfriend was the first emp— *Oh shit, Haku’s glaring at me. Nothing, nothing. Never mind.*

Anyway, putting that aside. I ordered the Skeletons I had just bought to attack the snakes. The Dragon King Team fell right for the bait and attacked the Demon King Team’s Skeletons. *What a bunch of suckers.* But the Demon King Team took things a step further. They started to completely massacre the Dragon King Team’s snakes. Judging from how they only started after finishing off the Gargoyles, they had probably concluded from our little trick that the Dragon King Team was merely a nuisance to them.

The snakes dispersed and fled like spiders, separating the two groups. *Weeell, the dungeon still basically just has one path through it, given the whole flooding gimmick. The only side paths are the hallways leading to the lower floodgates. Dead ends, basically.*

Either way, despite their failure to kill all of the snakes, the two enemy parties still remained split up. Which was good for us. I didn't have to deal with them working together to beat us anymore.

"Oh right, gotta summon new Gargoyles." I repeatedly chanted the full incantation for {Summon Gargoyle}. It was a pain, but Haku was watching. I sent the summoned Gargoyles toward the next bottleneck.

...Oh, the next floor's the completely submerged area. It was a floor where you had to climb stairs to advance, then climb down the other side submerged in water. Think of it like a drain trap—the thing that stop bugs from crawling up through a drain. The nature of dungeons prevented us from making an unbeatable dungeon, so I had to put periodic air pockets that prevented the way down from being *literally* submerged, but... Honestly, the requirements there were pretty vague. Like, snakes needed those air pockets, but Skeletons sure didn't.

"Anyway, I'll send the Gargoyles to the air pockets. It'd make sense to hit 'em with electric magic like {Spark} while they're soaking wet, but well... I don't think that's an option here."

"Hm? Why not, Keima? That sounds like a good idea to me."

"...I don't think electricity will do much to literal skeletons."

"Ahhhh..." Muscular dudes would die on the spot, but reanimated bones? Dunno. I glanced at Haku.

"If you have a question, please state it directly. As {Spark} is a Light elemental spell, it is quite effective against Skeletons."

"Oh, is that how it works?"

"I'm not sure what you're asking."

Anywaaay, I get the feeling the Skeletons will just ignore the air pockets

entirely. Might get some snakes, though. If the Skeletons ignore the pockets too much, we could try shooting the water with {Spark}... Though the electricity would disperse to the point of uselessness, probably.

Enough about defense, though. How're things going on the offensive?

"Ichika, Niku. How's the attack going?"

"Totally just took down the bone fish thing with my shark, dude. The boss door opened so I'm sending the sardines through to check out the third floor."

"The black armor continues to dominate the Dragon King Team's dungeon. We are merely exploring and guiding them forward as the Demon King Team takes care of the rest. Ah, and slugs have joined their defensive efforts. They are clinging to the ceiling. Should I put them on the monitor?" *Okay, let's not look inside the Dragon King Team's dungeon anymore. But anyway, sounds like things are going pretty well. The main thing we need to worry about is our allies in the dungeons attacking us. Might sound hypocritical for me to say this, but working together to conquer the dungeons will help things go a lot more smoothly. I might not even have to use some of the tricks I prepared. Not that I have any problems with that. Nothing better than winning with some trump cards still up your sleeve.*

Since our own invasions were going so well, I decided to resume the flooding a bit and add water to their dungeons before they reached our completely submerged area.

"Okay, open the floodgates and leave 'em open for a bit. We want their dungeons completely flooded."

"Okaaay. The third floodgate should hit most of them right now. I'll open it up." Water flooded out and raced towards the Skeletons and snakes.

"...Oh?"

"Ah, Keima! They're not getting washed away!" The snakes sure got knocked back. But the Skeletons stood in place, leaning against a wall. They had formed a line and pressed against the wall to avoid the flow of water as much as possible. The Skeleton in front took the brunt of it, allowing those behind him to hold their ground. *This is how you deal with flash floods when in a group.*

They sure figured this strategy out fast. Did Core 6 lend a hand, or was it Core 666 that thought this up? Maybe it was her Master.

"Keep up the flooding. Looks like they can't move doing that, so I'm gonna throw some junk at them."

"O-Okay." I took an empty [Mana Potion (Barrel)], put a Gargoyle inside of it, and then dumped it on the waves such that it slammed right into the Skeletons. The barrel and several of the Skeletons burst to pieces, leaving the Gargoyle free to follow up with some blows of its own. That proved to be too much for the Skeleton platoon, which broke rank and got washed away.

Since the Gargoyle got washed all the way to the Dragon King Team's dungeon along with the Skeletons, I decided to have it begin exploring. The lesson here is to be careful about giant logs when caught in a flash flood. *Hm... I wonder if they'll find a way to counter the Gargoyle barrel plan. I'll think of some other strategy, just in case.*

Demon King Team's Perspective

Flooding was more troublesome than expected. Although they found a way to withstand it temporarily, their efforts had been thwarted. By the time the flooding stopped, their dungeon's third floor had been flooded and they had to summon another boss fish. They learned from their enemy and selected one fish from a school of fish as their boss. That should buy them some time.

...Good grief. I'm about to run out of the DP I saved for today. Core 666 let out a sigh. In any case, she summoned more monsters with {Summon Skeleton} and sent them charging into the Human Empire Team's dungeon. Lining up several Skeletons into a centipede formation seemed like it would function as a way to move forward during the flooding, with proper precautions. In other words, Core 666 had found another way to use Skeletons. And nothing could make her happier.

"I knew it. Core 695 is the greatest rival I could ask for..." Core 666 made her Skeletons advance and soon discovered a small room atop a set of stairs. Ahead was another set of stairs, only flooded and going downwards. There didn't seem to be other paths forward. Which meant this floor was already submerged.

Core 666 didn’t hesitate to send her Skeletons forward. They were disposable, after all.

The cramped hallway felt like it was underneath an entire ocean. There was barely any light and seaweed was growing everywhere. It swayed back and forth, making the poor visibility even worse. She made a Skeleton look up, and far above them was another small room, glowing like the moon in the sky.

“This is quite the stylish floor.” But naturally, it was part of a dungeon. Naturally, there were traps. A Skeleton that had been sticking its hand out to navigate the staircase suddenly found its hand cut off.

“Hm...? Did they do something? No... there’s something already here.” To double check, she made the Skeleton step forward and swing its arm (bone). Immediately, the arm was sliced.

“...Hm. Can you tell what this is, Grandfather?” Core 6 looked at the monitor after Core 666 asked him for help. It was hard to see, but that posed Core 6 no issue. He saw the thread easily—the thin, firm thread made of orichalcum.

“Impressive. This is a thread made of orichalcum. I’ve never seen the metal stretched so thin before.”

“Orichalcum! That’s right, Grandfather, I remember Core 695 wearing a ring of orichalcum at the gathering.”

“I see. They must have a skilled dwarven blacksmith on their side... If the opportunity arises, I shall show you a full orichalcum ingot. They are beautiful.”

“Aha, I can’t wait. It’s a promise, okay?” A thread, though. It was impossible to just up and cut orichalcum thread. No matter how thin it was, orichalcum required the special techniques of the dwarves to be broken. Which meant they had no way of removing the thread.

Further investigation revealed that there were two hallways, one directly forward and one side path. Up ahead, the two paths connected. The thread was laced around the hallway like a wild spiderweb. Behind the web was a room that seemed to contain air. A breathing point irrelevant to their Skeletons. But if one tried to race through in search of air... They’d be sliced into neat little pieces.

“...I see what they’re going for.” Core 666 imagined what would happen if the flooding were to be combined with the web. The thread was so sharp that it could slice bones from a touch. If one were to be pushed by a flood into the threads, they would be torn apart into the shape of the web. The very thought of it was brutal. Spectacular.

“How would my Magic Blade fare, Grandfather?”

“You would be wise not to try it. My own Magic Blade could endure, given its Indestructible trait, but even then cutting orichalcum is no easy feat.”

“Oh...? Even your Magic Blade, Grandfather?” Core 666 gave a fearless grin as she continued to cast {Summon Skeleton}.

Keima’s Perpsective

I flooded the submerged area. Though for obvious reasons, that just meant flowing in new water from an above floor. The new water hit the water in the drain traps, pushing it downwards. The centipede strat didn’t seem to work as well underwater, as the Skeletons just floated back and ended up sliced into strips by the orichalcum wires. *Bwahahaha! These wires are great, aren’t they?! I brought them with me!*

“Orichalcum thread... I am quite impressed that you managed to craft the metal into thread that thin.”

“Let’s just say my town has a pretty good blacksmith.” That’s how I was passing it off. *Obviously, I’m the one who actually made them.* I had brought the four coins Rokuko had rolled from the 1,000 DP gacha back to town and turned them into super thin wires, similar to how one might make glass fiber. Like, the stuff you make by letting it kinda drip down, or something. I saw it on TV.

It took more mana to get going, but it was way easier to mold orichalcum than iron with {Create Golem}. I had full control, hell yeah. I was kinda worried I made it too thick at first, but then I cut my fingers just trying to pick it up. The stuff was so dangerous even an Iron Golem would get sliced to pieces trying to handle it, despite the thread being thinner than a strand of hair. *Orichalcum is some dangerous stuff, sheesh.* The one-meter long wires were so long that a golem would need to grip both ends and pull with all its might just to barely

bend them. (I had cheaped out somewhat and put iron casings on the end, for grip and to help stick them to the walls.)

"I might have to ask him to make such wires for myself."

"Please make any such requests through me. It'll be easier for everyone that way. If you try and ask the blacksmith yourself, he'll claim he can't make them until you leave."

"Really now? I suppose skilled workers would prefer not to draw any crowds. I'll make sure to send my requests through you, Keima." *The orichalcum ring is kind of backing up my story here, so I'm not too worried. Though it's way harder to make these wires than it is to make a ring.*

"Hey, Keima. This submerged floor is, like, the middle of our dungeon, right?"

"Yeah, pretty much."

"Then we definitely don't want to let them get past here. How are the enemy dungeons holding up?"

"I'll check up on the squad in the Dragon King Team's dungeon first. Niku?" Niku nodded.

"...We have reached the seventh floor of the Dragon King Team's dungeon. We believe that it contains a Boss Room despite its odd number. Not one containing a mid-boss, either, but the last boss." Ultimately, the dungeon was a simple labyrinth without any proper gimmicks. They had placed anti-human traps seemingly at random, which had no effect against our fish. The armor that the Demon King Team's Living Armor was wearing protected it completely. The best traps they had were the spear traps, but the armor completely deflected them.

I really hadn't expected the dungeon to be so simple. The only trick they had left was the dungeon boss, but judging by how pumped up the black armor looked swinging its sword around, I got the feeling we wouldn't have to do anything ourselves. We might just end up drawing the black armor's ire. *If he wants to solo this dungeon, he can feel free.*

"How about the Demon King Team's dungeon?"

“Mmm, looks like there’s another Boss Room on the fifth floor. Prolly gonna be another weak-sauce mid-boss.” In the other dungeon, there was the skeleton of a giant wolf guarding the way forward. Unlike the bone fish on the second and third floor, this was probably a boss monster they had prepared before the battle began. It fit right into the existing dungeon and hadn’t been summoned on the spot to counter the flooding. Speaking of which, the flooding was slowing it down, but it still seemed pretty strong.

Though thinking about it, the actual traps in the dungeon were pretty simple stuff. Leg-high ropes, pitfalls, arrow traps activated by walking into a wire, and so on. Nothing too clever. Maybe blocking the flooding by exploiting the nature of a Boss Room was just an uncharacteristically good play by them? Were they a one trick pony? Either way, it felt like they had barely spent any DP up until this point. I had no idea what else the dungeon could have in store. *Can’t let my guard down. I’m guessing the Dungeon Boss is gonna be a monster a lot stronger than those black armors.*

“Ah! Keima! The black armor that was in the Demon King Team’s gate room is entering our dungeon!” *Welp. Guess they’re getting serious now.* I took a look and saw the black armor walking through our dungeon, surrounded by Skeletons. It seemed to be using the Skeletons as a shield for any potential traps.

“Let’s try hitting them with a flood. Open the first floodgate.”

While we were at it, I prepared a Gargoyle barrel. *Time to see if they’ve thought up a counter for these.* And see that I did.

The barrel crashed against several Skeletons, and the black armor sliced apart the Gargoyle after it popped out. Backup Skeletons rushed forward immediately, likely summoned through {Summon Skeleton}. They had been summoning new monsters ever since the battle at the start, and really, it made me appreciate just how crazy strong summoning skills were. *You can get a bunch of pawns for nothing but a little mana, y’know?*

I followed their example and used {Summon Gargoyle} non-stop. *One Gargoyle barrel might not do much, but how about five? Ten? Well, they probably still won’t do much, but still. I’m counting on you, my Gargoyle friends.*

And uh... It kinda feels like you all might get pissed at me for sending you to die, so uh, don't come back even if you survive! Man, now that I think about it, {Summon Skeleton} would make me feel a lot less like an asshole. Skeletons are dead from the start, after all. Wait! I forgot about how pissed the spirits of the dead can get. That's the most amateur mistake I could have made, Christ. Never underestimate the spirits of the dead. Never.

"What should we do? Just leave the floodgates open?"

"Nah, brief bursts are better than a constant flow. Being hit head-on with the flood of water causes the most damage. Also... Send out the [Giant Ball]. Now seems to be the best time to use it."

"It's finally time! Okay! Crush them, [Giant Ball]!" Rokuko happily fiddled with her monitor and unlocked the room (in the ceiling) with the [Giant Ball] sealed inside. And thus, the [Giant Ball]... a massive iron sphere fell onto the sloped dungeon floor. It was the exact kind of ball that appeared in a certain movie about a certain adventurer. Obeying the mathematical formula of "gravity + slope + ball = roll," the [Giant Ball] began to slowly roll down the slope. It looked like a huge bowling ball. The pins? Our enemies.

As an aside, I had built the Giant Ball to be just barely smaller than the hallway. It was unavoidable outside of a room. Even if they sliced it in half, weight and inertia would keep it together!

The [Giant Ball] started off moving slow, but it gradually sped up. By the time it contacted the black armor, it was moving so fast that anything hit by it would probably reincarnate into another world. But don't worry. As I said, there was a little space between the walls and the ball. Your corpse won't stop the ball from moving. You may die in peace, knowing that those behind you will soon follow. Just like those snakes that got turned into red paste!

As a second aside, Haku suggested this trap. She said it'd be a waste of our sloped hallways to not have some giant rolling balls. *And she's got a point. This thing looks a lot more deadly than a flood of water.*

"Ahaha. Behold the union between my trap ideas and Rokuko's dungeon design... Splendid, is it not?"

"S-Sure is, hah."

“Crush theeem! [Giant Ball]! Show them how strong Haku and I areee!” And so, moving at immense speeds, the iron ball finally made contact with the Skeleton platoon led by the black armor.

It all happened in an instant. Skeletons, crushed. Bones everywhere. And... The ball, stopped in place, with a crimson Magic Blade stabbed through it.

The black armor had stopped the rolling ball by stabbing it with its burning hot sword. It then swung its Magic Blade several times, sending red lines searing through the iron ball, which proceeded to melt it.

“...Uh?” I couldn’t help but hang my mouth open in surprise. *I mean, that was a pretty huge ball, y’know? Just think about how much inertia it had. Think about heavy it was! The idea of stopping it with a single sword is pretty insane. And just how hot would that sword have to be to melt the whole iron ball?*

“No way, I thought we had them... I can’t believe Haku’s [Giant Ball] got melted!”

“A flawless counter. Well, you win some and you lose some... But oh my. Rokuko, is that not Core 666’s Magic Blade?”

“Wow, it is. I remember that sword... Wait, is she invading our dungeon herself?!”

“Woah, what? I totally thought that was just some kind of Living Armor.” *Aren’t Living Armors supposed to be empty on the inside? Wait... Maybe this is something like the Wearable Golems I’m wearing. I’ve heard that Core 666 is a real battle maniac. It makes total sense that she’d come after us herself. Especially since Dungeon Cores don’t need to breathe. Being submerged under water won’t bother her at all. Hmm... Maybe this Living Armor is her true form?*

“Good grief, why must all those of the Demon King faction be so obsessed with battle?” Haku shook her head, rubbing her temples. *I guess it’s pretty common for Demon King faction Cores to be like this. Maybe they’re often their own Dungeon Bosses. Well, anyway... I’ll use this opportunity to send my Sahuagin into the Demon King Team’s dungeon.*

“Ichika, now’s our chance. The black armor isn’t guarding their dungeon anymore. Take the Sahuagin and mess that bone wolf up.”

“You got it, dude.”

“Need any reinforcements, Niku?”

“Not right now. But if you have spare Gargoyles, I could use them.”

“Alright. I’ll summon some for you.” I cast {Summon Gargoyle} and sent some of them to the floodgate room on our bottom floor.

...It’s a bit late to say this, but I could move the Gargoyles to any floor I wanted by using secret paths. Secret in the sense that I just had them move through the ocean outside of our dungeon. Each floor had a floodgate room that looked like a spaceship’s airlock, so I could move monsters to any floor I wanted. Secretly, too, if I withdrew the water first and didn’t launch a flood. The enemy couldn’t exploit this since I could shut the floodgates tightly. Basically, there was one proper path, and they were gonna have to use it instead.

“Ouch, looks like the black armor’s reached our middle floors, the submerged area.”

“Grrr, I guess we can’t hit Core 666 with another [Giant Ball] now.”

“I do have a second one set up in the upper floors. I think I’ll send that one with a flood so they can’t melt it.” That combination might end up so strong that Core 666 just dies on the spot, but that would be her fault for fighting on the frontlines despite being a Dungeon Core.

“...It won’t be my fault if Core 666 theoretically dies here, right?”

“It will be considered a tragic Dungeon Battle accident and nothing more. Feel absolutely free to murder her.” Haku gave me her seal of approval. *Guess I’ll take this pretty seriously then.*

“Keep on flooding the middle floors with water. Let the orichalcum wires cut’m to pieces.”

“Okaaay.”

“Oh, and be sure to utilize the counter-current too. That’ll stop them from bunkering up.”

“Oh, I’ll make sure to open floodgates on both sides, then.” We could still

flood the middle floors with water from the lower floors. We'd pour so much water in that it'd develop a counter current, and while the enemy gets tossed around by the raging flow, the orichalcum wires will tear them apart.

Demon King Team's Perspective

"That iron ball was quite, ahem, frightening." A rolling iron ball with immense momentum. Core 666 had let her guard down due to expecting nothing but water, and thus it took longer than necessary for her to react. The ball had been on the verge of crushing her to death, but at the last moment she successfully stopped it. Shudders ran down her spine. *This is it. Yes, this is what I want.*

"Aaah... How splendidly fun!" She broke out into a smile. The thrill of narrowly avoiding death. There was nothing Core 666 wanted more than this. Peace and calm was nothing more than a poison that dulled the senses.

"What a lovely battle this is. Wits, traps, and devious schemes! So this is your power, Core 695. Are you enjoying this as much as I am, I wonder?" Core 666 wanted to share this ecstatic glee with her archenemy, her greatest friend. She had wanted to do so for a very long time.

But that wish had never been granted. At least, not until now. Reason being, Core 666 was such a skilled strategist that no Core of the 600 batch could compare to her. And naturally, even Core 666 felt some degree of distance towards the Cores of the 500 batch and earlier. She felt nothing but simple hostility for Cores older and more powerful than her. If they were older and weaker, then she felt nothing but disgust, as her batch was the youngest of them all. None of them were fit to become her archenemy. Her friend.

But Core 695 is of the same batch. Perhaps she could become the archenemy of her dreams, one that shared her glee for battle. One that shared this aching thirst. This sensation that might be called love. The aching, unbearable feeling of wanting more and more.

Core 666, more than anything else, loved this glee that filled the empty pot of greed within her. If she had an archenemy that felt the same way... Well, she struggled to put this into words, but... It would surely feel so incomparably perfect that she would want to crush and destroy her.

“Aidy, I beat the Dragon King Team’s boss. The Core’s right behind it.” Suddenly, her Master contacted her and gave a flat report. The voice was that of a young man, one that called Core 666 “Aidy,” and the report was one of a successful conquest.

“Very well, destroy it. How was their dungeon?”

“Nothing special. Boring.” There had been a final boss, a giant slug made of steel. But... the ocean water the Human Empire Team was flooding their dungeon with rusted its body, and the salt absorbed its internal bodily liquids such that it melted and became immobile.

“The Steel Slug rusted and melted. Ended up more like a piece of trash than a boss. The Human Empire Team’s plan got them too good. That’s that.”

“I see.” They had apparently left their final trump card to that useless slug Core. Embarrassing, really.

“Will you follow after me once you’ve destroyed their Dummy Core?”

“Yeah. And... done. It’s destroyed.” As if to back up her Master’s report, Father contacted them.

“Okaaay, the Dragon King Team loses! Too bad, Core 5. I’m pulling out your attack forces.”

“GRAAAAAH! We failed in everythiiiiing!”

“We’re sorry, Dungeon Core Number 5!”

She heard the pathetic bugs crying out in fear and sorrow. With that, there were no more nuisances getting her way.

“I can finally focus on having fun with Core 695.” Core 666 advanced further through the Human Empire Team’s dungeon. And, surprisingly for one bound in heavy Living Armor, her steps were light.

Keima’s Perspective

The Dragon King Team actually managed to lose without doing anything notable in particular. The word “good” went through my head. The Dragon King Team had been dominated by the flooding from start to finish, and the black

armor had easily slaughtered all their troops. They deserved their loss. In triple threat battles, the first step was to eliminate one of your opponents to begin a simpler one-on-one. If everyone starts on equal footing, the first to be eliminated will be the weakest participant. Simple as that.

"But y'know, why'd that steel slug thing have tank treads and a cannon on its back...? It was like an actual tank. Might have been dangerous if not for the ocean water." It would have been an enemy that combined speed with devastating attack power. A fair fight with it probably would have taken a long time to finish.

"Ichika, how goes the invasion of the Demon King Team's dungeon? Did you beat the mid-boss?"

"Almost. The Sahuagins just got there and are wrecking shit." Within the flooded Boss Room, our platoon of Sahuagins and the shark were dunking on the bone wolf. The Sahuagin Rider swimming around on the Marlin in particular was doing lots of damage. Judging by the cracks in the wolf's bones, Ichika was right. It would be double-dead in no time.

"Looks like the other black armor guy is invading our dungeon too, instead of going on the defensive. Sheesh."

"I guess they're going all out. Let's drop a [Giant Ball] on this one too."

"Good idea. Let's use all of the ones we have while he's still on the bottom floor. We'll throw in some flooding while we're at it. Withdraw all the water you can on the first floor to dump it outside." The Dragon King Team's gate had been sucking up all the water, but since it was closed now, all the water was just building up. Though, to be fair, that was how I originally intended this flooded dungeon to work.

"What's going on with Core 666's black armor?"

"She pulled back midway through the middle floors. Looks like she wants to join forces with the other black armor before advancing."

"...I dunno if I should be afraid of that, or be glad for the chance to take them both down at once. What do you think, Rokuko?"

"Honestly, I think they'll be more of a pain together than anything. Especially

since Core 666 has {Summon Skeleton}.” *Shouldn’t Core 666 be a little tired from spamming that skill so much? I guess I can’t talk, though, since I’ve been spamming the hell out of {Summon Gargoyle}.*

So, we tried hitting the second black armor with another [Giant Ball], but this time he just grabbed onto it and held it back. His feet sank into the ground, giving off the impression that he was pushing with all his might. The [Giant Ball] even broke in the process. *Not gonna be able to reuse that one. But it looks like it hurt the black armor pretty bad, so it must have done a lot of damage.*

“Eh, well, putting aside the lack of Skeletons this time, Core 666 definitely warned him about the ball. He did seem on guard, after all. But pulling the same trick twice will trick them into letting their guards down. Once they reach the upper floors, *then* we’ll send the balls rolling with a flood.”

“Well, by that point they’ll have met up. I’m sure they’ll be able to handle it together.”

“So we just gotta take one of them out in the submerged middle floors, right?” *If possible, that’s the idea.*

Looks like they’re both in the submerged area now. They’ve already found the orichalcum wires. They probably won’t walk right into them.

“Rokuko, send out Gargoyles, and the octopus too. Try and take at least one of them down.”

“Okaaaay, here I go!”

Demon King Team’s Perspective

“Shall we go, then?”

“Yeah.” They advanced further into the flooded area, moving slowly with their Skeletons taking the lead, such that they could react in time if a wave came roaring down. They were proceeding through a straightforward hallway with practically only one way to go, though they soon came across a crossroads. The most direct path had orichalcum thread laced around, forming right angles that interlocked about four times.

It was hard to see past them, but up the stairs behind the threads were

several Gargoyles. They could cast spells despite being underwater. One might think it clever to send non-living monsters underwater since they didn't need to breathe, but the water diluted their spells to the point of ineffectiveness. Whether they tried to shoot fire or water, the existing water surrounding them got in the way. By process of elimination, the best they could likely do was throw stones. That would do some damage to the Skeletons, but nothing to the Living Armors made from black iron.

"Let's ignore them and proceed."

"Alright, I'll take the lead." The Living Armor under the control of Core 666's Master stepped forward. It made loud stomps as it walked. They took a right at the first crossroads, and came upon a dead end—though there was a room with air above if they needed it.

One long detour around the first orichalcum hallway later, they reached the place where the Gargoyles from before were. That they had to take such a detour to avoid a trapped hallway a few steps long was frustrating, though they knew it was necessary. The Gargoyles had retreated further back and were launching stones at them. It was more of an annoyance than anything.

And then, suddenly, a monster came swimming toward them.

"...An octopus?"

"My my, I wonder what this is. I've never seen a monster like this. Grandfather, do you happen to know?"

"Hrm... I feel that they are merely called octopuses. I can hardly recall anything about them." Core 6 wasn't particularly well-informed about monsters. There was no need for him to worry about each and every weak monster in the world. Naturally, he didn't remember their special traits either. Which is why he was a little surprised to see the monster suddenly shoot out ink and cloud the armor's vision with black.

"Gracious... We can hardly see now."

"Look out for attacks. Stay on guard." The crunching of their feet hitting stone remained as loud as ever. Their vision cleared in a matter of seconds. The octopus was nowhere to be seen.

“I wonder what they hoped to accomplish with that?”

“Who knows. But whatever, let’s keep going.”

“Ah! No, stop!” Ignoring the Gargoyles throwing stones from the left, Core 666’s master commanded his Living Armor to move forward. And then...

Plop. One of its legs got cut off.

“...What?!” Despite being underwater, the weight of its armor made it fall forward, leading to it getting sliced to bits. The Living Armor was no longer living. Core 666 could hear her Master groan beside her in the Master Room.

“They got me...! Aidy, what just happened?!”

“A revolving floor, it seems. They truly did trick us.” She checked the map and saw that they indeed had been rotated ninety degrees. The Gargoyles that had been attacking them from the left ran away as soon as the Living Armor ended up diced. There were no wires between them. It was too late. Core 666 regretted not making doubly sure that Skeletons were in the lead at all times. She could summon as many of them as she wanted while she still had mana.

“Core 666. Calm down and proceed with an eye on your map.”

“Yes, Grandfather. And Master... Be ready for your punishment later.” Core 666 started to walk forward, but all of a sudden the dungeon started to shake. A flood was coming.

“Ngh! Skeletons!” They all lined up vertically to counter the flood of water. Moments later, an intense flood hit them. The flooding was especially troublesome since there was no way of knowing when it would occur.

“Wait, Aidy! Not there!”

“Ah! No...!” The revolving floor turned. She had forgotten about it. It was already difficult for the Living Armor to hold its ground, so once it was in the brunt of the flow, its heavy body floated up. The Skeletons too got washed away and sliced to pieces. The chunks of the other Living Armor’s corpse floated off.

Wires were racing toward her.

“Ngh, HAAAAAAH!” Screeech! She used her Magic Blade as a shield to protect

herself from the orichalcum threads. Even when slammed against the orichalcum thread, her sword did not break. It endured. “Aha! I knew the Indestructible trait was powerful! It’s not breaking!” Core 666 laughed in excitement, having confirmed the strength of her own Magic Blade.

“Oh? You gave your blade that trait?”

“Indeed. It used quite a chunk of our allotted 500,000 DP, but it’s thanks to that!” Once she adjusted to the flood of water, she escaped into a side path... the path they were originally going down. That had been a pretty dangerous spot, but she managed to survive.

And so... Core 666 conquered the completely submerged area.

Keima’s Perspective

I knew this would happen. I knew that at least Core 666’s armor would get through the floor. ’Cause I mean, when she started to float in the water toward the orichalcum thread, I actually said out loud: “Did I get her?!” Give me a break. That’s like asking for your evil plan to fail. I’ll have to be more careful next time.

“That was close, Keima. Don’t worry. You almost got her. Pat pat.”

“Why are you patting my head?”

“I mean, you seemed kinda pouty and upset, so.”

“Ah, nah, I’m just annoyed at myself for saying the one thing you should never ever say. Thanks for the concern. Also Haku’s watching, so please stop.” She was looking at me with a deadly cold gaze; I could practically feel through telepathy her thinking “Now then, how shall I slice him up for dinner?” *I’ll be like a fish on a chopping board in front of her, hahaha!*

“Oh, sorry, Haku! I really need to focus during Dungeon Battles, right.”

“Ahaha. It’s quite alright, my sweet lovely Rokuko. Shall I, ahem, ‘pat’ you as well once we return home?”

“Geez! Don’t tease me, Haku!” *Uh, she’s definitely serious. But I’m not gonna say that out loud.*

Anyway, back to the Dungeon Battle. The Demon King Team had one set of black Living Armor and several Skeletons in our dungeon. The latter had likely been summoned through {Summon Skeleton}. As for our attack on their dungeon...

“Hey, Ichika. I’m guessing you already beat the boss?”

“W-Well, totally, but... The door ain’t opening, dude. I got the fish guys looking around.”

“There are no enemy icons remaining in the room. I will help you explore.” Ichika and Niku responded, both of them sounding troubled. *Seems like they’re in a bit of a pickle. Guess there’s no choice but to get back to exploring.*

“Um, maybe there’s a hidden path to the next floor?”

“Yeah, or something like a door that only opens if we activate some trap somewhere. Don’t forget to check the ceilings... And the pitfalls.” *We have hidden passageways in pitfalls back in our own dungeon, after all. I don’t wanna spill the beans in front of Haku, but if that’s where the correct path is, well, we gotta look.*

“Ahaha. This reminds me of the Dungeon Battle we had somehow, Rokuko.”

“Bwuh? Ummm, well... I guess, Haku.”

“Might as well try leaving through the entrance and looking around... Put some golems on that.”

“As you wish, Master!” Luckily, the enemy had not a single monster remaining. It was like they were inviting us to explore as much as we liked. Either they were confident we wouldn’t figure them out no matter how much we searched, or they were gathering their strength on a yet undiscovered floor. *Or maybe something else? Man, I really hope I didn’t miss anything...*

“What do you think, Rokuko?”

“Well, first of all, I think it’s weird that the door in the Boss Room didn’t open even though there’s no boss inside. I think the best thing for us to do might be to try and investigate the Boss Room. It might be a fake.” *A fake, huh. That is true. Haku was hinting at this, but yeah, I did something like that too. Though it*

was just a puzzle door with nothing behind it. Could be that this is a Boss Room with nothing in it.

"Ichika, try destroying the Boss Room's door with whatever you've got. It should be destructible without a boss."

"Mm'kay. It's a steel door so it might take a hella while, but I'll give it a shot." With my orders given, it was back to the defensive. I took a glance and saw that the black armor had just crossed the long bridge with Gargoyles launching magic from the other side. There was exactly one Skeleton remaining. It seemed to be more competent than the other Skeletons were. Her Master was probably controlling it.

"Niku, once you're done exploring, come help with defense. Things could get real dangerous real fast. And... Rokuko. Send out *the* Tentacle Slime. We'll settle things with Core 666 on these upper floors."

"Already? And wait, why'd you emphasize the *the* like that?"

"'Cause I mean, he's *THE* Tentacle Slime."

"...That didn't explain anything, okay?" *He is basically a major boss in our dungeon, y'know.*

"Okay, send out the [Giant Ball] with a flood of water. Hopefully that'll be enough to settle this."

"Opening the floodgates and sending down the [Giant Ball]. Yaaay, here comes the final blow! Die die diiie!" *Yeah, this is never going to work. I better gather all my forces in the big room up on top.*

We combined the ocean water with the iron ball such that the flaming hot Magic Blade couldn't stop it. The flood pushed the [Giant Ball] on at even greater speeds than before, right toward Core 666. Even if she managed to stop the ball, it'd still be pushed from behind by the flood hard enough to wash her away. And even if she tried to melt the iron ball, the water would keep it too cold for that. I watched the monitor. *Alright, let's see how she blocks this.*

Having heard the sounds of a flood, Core 666 and the Skeletons formed a line. But what greeted them was a massive iron ball. Core 666, seeing that, readied her Magic Blade like a bow and arrow. And then, she thrust it toward the

charging ball.

"...{Crimson Road}." I heard the end to a chant.

"What?! Whoa, seriously?!" A moment later, the ocean water and steel ball evaporated together. The Living Armor's hands were glistening red with pure heat. *Right, must have been a skill. Some kind of attack skill. Core 666 is, uh, pretty intense.*

"Seriously? Is this real life...? Isn't that a little unfair?" The rest of the water eventually caught up and cooled Core 666's black armor. Her red hands returned to black steel.

"{Crimson Road}. A Fire elemental attack skill. Although held back by a one use per day limit and a guarantee to inflict fire damage against oneself, its immense firepower makes it a more than worthwhile attack. She must have used it as a last resort, knowing she had no other options." According to Haku's explanation, that was a trick she wouldn't be pulling twice today. In which case we would win if we could hit her with another [Giant Ball] plus flood combo, but...

"Keima, we're out of [Giant Balls]."

"...Seriously? Can't we withdraw one we used before?"

"Melted, broken, kinda just disappeared. That's all of them." *Crap, we should have made more of them!* Unfortunately, I couldn't directly buy giant iron balls with DP. Haku apparently had them in her Catalog under the trap section, but, well... We didn't use traps much ourselves so we never unlocked it. *I'm always making traps myself... Crap! Being a cheapskate is really biting me in the ass here!*

"Haku, would it be against the rules for you to, um, buy one for us?"

"Sorry, Rokuko, but indeed it would. Perhaps during the preparation phase, but not the day of the actual battle. The goal of this battle is merely to encourage the growth of younger Cores, remember."

Which meant we had to buy or make something from our existing items that could work as an iron ball... *Maybe an Iron Golem? No, never mind, no way. An Iron Golem would just tumble around in the water and get sliced to bits. It*

wouldn't build up enough momentum! Man, if only Haku weren't here! I could just make one myself with {Create Golem}!

"Okay, let's try to think about this another way. We made our enemy use up their trump card. That means we're on equal terms here. Fifty-fifty. But actually, we still have some tricks and firepower left, so really, we have the advantage here!"

"Keima, we don't know if that was her only trump card, so I think we're still fifty-fifty here?" Rokuko corrected me.

"...Well, whatever. We're ending this in the next room." I said while gathering the entirety of our dungeon's forces in a single room.

Demon King Team's Perspective

Core 666 advanced through the Human Empire Team's dungeon. It hurt to have used {Crimson Road}, her trump card, but she didn't regret it. It was that or let herself get hit by a massive iron ball.

Suddenly, she was contacted.

"Aidy, they got through the Boss Room."

"I see. Regardless, I doubt they will be capable of finding the Dummy Core."

"Yeah. They're not gonna find it." Core 666's Master spoke with utter confidence—confidence that their Dummy Core would absolutely remain undiscovered.

"So, how is our dungeon holding up?"

"As expected, it's no longer functioning. 'Cause I mean, the Core's with you." Indeed. The true hiding place of the Dummy Core was within Aidy's black armor. It was the size of a basketball, but it fit perfectly into the stomach of the Living Armor's black armor.

You should want to attack the enemy dungeon with your mightiest monster. But you should also want to protect your Dummy Core with your mightiest monster. In order to resolve this contradiction, Core 666 and her Master thought up a plan. A simple plan, as powerful as it was reckless—Make the Dummy Core into your mightiest monster.

They had been preparing this plan since long before the Dungeon Battle started. Which is why Aidy went out of her way to ask for the winning condition to be changed from “touch the Dummy Core” to “destroy the Dummy Core.” That way, she wouldn’t lose even if her enemy managed to slip a hand into her armor.

This Dungeon Battle was the perfect opportunity to test her idea. She had lazily built the dungeon itself five floors with 50,000 DP. She bought traps that would continue to work even once the dungeon stopped functioning, and most of her monsters came from {Summon Skeleton}. And to top it off, the final Boss Room was just for show. They had spent DP on two Boss Rooms to halt the flood, not to mention buying the bone fish, but they served their purpose quite well and bought plenty of time. The remainder of their DP was spent almost entirely on strengthening Core 666 herself.

“Ahaha. I doubt Core 695 will predict that the Dummy Core is with me.”

“Looks like they’re exploring outside our dungeon a bit. We’re just gonna let them keep wasting their time until this battle’s over.”

And so, Core 666 advanced further into the dungeon. She soon came across a room.

“Master, would you open this door for me?”

“Sure.” The Skeleton her Master controlled opened the door. Immediately, a transparent tentacle launched out and grabbed it.

“Wha?! Ngh, c’mon!” The Skeleton, having no weapons aside from one of its own bones shaped into a club due to being summoned through a skill, couldn’t damage the Tentacle Slime at all.

“Tch. I’m switching to another Skeleton.”

“Master. Although I can summon replacements with {Summon Skeleton}, my mana is limited outside of our dungeon. It will run out in no time. Please fight more carefully.”

“Hey, that was a price we had to pay.” They both knew that something would be waiting behind the door. Otherwise, there would be no point to the door. Hence why they had a Skeleton open it, and hence why he was entirely right—it

was a price they had to pay.

But that changed nothing. Core 666 giggled to herself as she replaced her pawns with {Summon Skeleton}.

“Expect a greater punishment than before. Expect it, and look forward to it.”

“.....”

“Oh my. You choose not to respond?”

“Haaah... Fine.”

“That’s right, Master. Never forget that you are a mere puppet. My puppet.” She swung her inflamed Magic Blade, burning the Tentacle Slime’s tentacle. The sound of water evaporating sizzled through the air, and the slime pulled back its tentacle. Fire and magic were slimes’ primary weaknesses. Her Magic Blade was practically a slime killer.

“Still, it’s not often you see a slime like this. Is it their boss? What do you think, Grandfather?”

“Tentacle Slimes. Their immunity to physical damage can be troublesome at times... but I need not even say their weak points. One could suffice as a boss. That said, I believe they are quite expensive... Did they buy the boss before the Dungeon Battle was even proposed?”

“Oh my, that would be quite something if true. Was Core 695 looking forward to our duel that much?”

They entered the room and saw that, starting with golems and Gargoyles, there were enough monsters inside to be considered an army. There were the Sahuagins that used to be in their dungeon, the octopus from before, a squid flying through the air, and all sorts of strange monsters. There was the Tentacle Slime as well. *This is quite a lot of monsters*, thought Core 666, genuinely impressed.

“They’ve prepared a warm welcome for us, it seems. I certainly won’t lack for a partner in this dance party.”

“Looks like you get to go all out.”

“Ahaha, how exciting...” Core 666 readied her flaming Magic Blade and

charged into the horde of monsters.

Keima's Perspective

"The door in their Boss Room was a dummy, huh?" I was listening to Ichika's report.

"Yup. We destroyed the heck out of it, but it was just a metal plate hiding a dirty wall."

"Huh. Was there an 'under construction' sign there?"

"An under construction sign? What?"

"Uh, never mind. It's an inside joke. Anyway... Guess we gotta look for the way forward."

"Yupperooni. I definitely missed something or another, so I'm gonna start from floor one and work back down."

"Nah, don't bother." I stopped Ichika. I had told Niku to check outside the dungeon entrance just to be safe, but the only thing that taught us was the fact that their dungeon was located within the Demon King territory. For a second I thought about what to do, and that second was all it took to come to a conclusion.

"It doesn't really matter."

"It doesn't matter...? Um, what? We can't win if we don't conquer Core 666's dungeon."

"Think about it, Rokuko." I plopped a hand on Rokuko's shoulder. "The enemy's Core is inside our dungeon right now, remember?"

"...Ah!" Indeed. The location of their Dummy Core was irrelevant. Even if, for example, they had stealthily hid it and brought it with them to the dungeon, it didn't matter. If we beat Core 666, we would ultimately win the Dungeon Battle. Taking her down would be defeating the entirety of their invasion force, and in the event of her accidentally getting destroyed, we would win by default. *Yep. Either Core 666's totally confident in herself, or she's a total idiot. Hopefully it's the latter.*

“And I mean, really, Core 666 is definitely carrying the Dummy Core.”

“...A mobile Dummy Core?” I didn’t know how she was carrying it. But judging from the Demon King Team’s dungeon, I couldn’t imagine any other possibility. It wasn’t making new traps, it wasn’t making new monsters, and to top things off, it wasn’t fixing broken doors or walls. In almost every sense of the word, it was a dead dungeon. So much so I was honestly a little worried that it would collapse in on itself if we weren’t careful.

“Yep. Let’s say that Core 666 herself is inside that black suit of armor, and let’s say that she’s about as tall as Niku. Wouldn’t a Dummy Core fit in the helmet?”

“I see.” A Dummy Core was the same size as a normal Dungeon Core, which meant it was as large as a basketball. Incidentally, Haku’s Core-self was apparently even larger than that, so it varied on an individual level. Though it did seem like the armor’s head was a bit too small to fit the Core. If we assumed that Core 666’s body was a bit bigger, it could still fit in the stomach area of the armor.

Maybe Core 666’s body was some kind of gas or liquid that filled the entire suit of armor. My running theory was that Core 666’s true body was a suit of armor, and that she was wearing a large black suit of Living Armor on top of herself. That seemed likely. Kind of like a certain superhero wearing a second suit of power armor on top of his first suit.

It wasn’t a bad idea. If we assume Core 666 is an unbeatable warrior that could turn the tides in any battle, that was the best strategy for her bar none. She’d definitely be invincible if she could use that ridiculous {Crimson Road} skill over and over with no risk and no cost. That’d make her like a level 99 character crushing new game plus.

But in reality, she was having a hard time with our army of monsters. I mean, she was going on an intense rampage and throwing everything she had at them, but it was slow going. Despite not showing any signs of exhaustion, she wasn’t quite strong enough to effortlessly slaughter our troops.

Actually, shouldn’t it be against the rules to take the Dummy Core out of the dungeon? I guess not, since Father’s not saying anything. I’ll just have to deal with this myself.

“I didn’t even know you could take a Core out of its dungeon area. Haku, there’s definitely some kind of problem with doing that, right? What’s the catch?”

“Good question, Rokuko! Indeed, there are problems with it, first of which being that a dungeon might collapse without a Core. You can see that the Demon King Team designed their dungeon to remain stable even after the removal of their Core. They have plenty of walls and small rooms, and there’s plenty of ground between each floor layer. All of these things make it easier for a Dungeon to remain standing even after its Core is destroyed. That said, a dungeon ceases to be a dungeon without a Core even if it remains standing. Returning the Core won’t bring it back to life, either. You have to start from square one.” So in short, removing a Core will generally cause a dungeon to collapse, and in all cases it will reset the dungeon territory back to nothing. It would cost the regular 5,000 DP to mark existing floors as dungeon floors again. *That’s pretty rough.*

Haku continued.

“Since it will cease being a dungeon, it will be unable to produce the traps and monsters you are so familiar with. Existing traps will generally cease to work, and although monsters don’t disappear on the spot, those born from [Monster Spawners] will indeed die instantly. Reason being, they are created such that they can only survive within a dungeon.” One food source for monsters was the mana that filled dungeons. It made sense that they would starve to death without that food. And in turn, there were cases of monsters surviving and forming feral communities if provided with the proper living conditions. Haku’s knowledge of such cases hinted at how she had experience destroying many, many other Cores.

“What about monsters summoned through spells?”

“Those feed on the mana of their summoner, so they have no relation to the dungeon. It would only matter if you summoned a monster belonging to the dungeon in question, I suppose.” Summoned monsters would disappear if their summoners did, and monsters created through “create” spells would live on normally, following the orders they were last given. Create spells were thus useful when considering the aftermath of a Dungeon Core being destroyed, but

Haku never operated under the assumption that she would be destroyed. As an example, it would be like how the inn by our dungeon would remain standing even after my death. It was nice, but not much point unless I intended to pass it on to my descendants.

"Oh, so that's what happens? I'm impressed, Core 89. That's news to me." Father suddenly butted into our conversation. Haku gave a natural smile.

"Oh my. I assumed this would be common knowledge for you."

"Hey, I don't spy on Cores all the time, you know? Especially not the dungeons of Cores that have died."

"My my! Then I am honored to have been of use to you, Father."

Uhhhh, I listened to Haku talk for a long time, but none of that really has anything to do with what's happening. My main priority is destroying Core 666... I mean, uh, accidentally destroying Core 666... Wait, crap. Defeating her. I need to defeat her. Pretext is important. This is just going to be an unfortunate accident that happened in a Dungeon Battle that got too serious.

I double-checked what was going on. A quick look at the monitor and map showed that within the monster house-esque room I had prepared, only one enemy dot remained: the Living Armor's. Its accompanying Skeletons had all died. The Tentacle Slime had turned each one to bone dust. No matter how skillfully they moved, Skeletons were ultimately just Skeletons, and they could do nothing to a monster immune to physical damage.

However, Core 666 had a flame Magic Blade. The Tentacle Slime took heavy damage from her as it whittled down the Skeletons, losing several tentacles in the process, and now it was covered in wounds.

"Alright, Mr. Tentacle Slime... Actually, that's too long. Let's shorten it to Mr. Tent. Mr. Tent, retreat for now. That black armor's flame Magic Blade is too dangerous. Go to a safe place and recover." *Wait, crap. Does that count as a name?* I glanced at the menu and saw that "Tent" was listed as a Named monster. *Tee hee! Well, it's a little late to worry about adding a few Named monsters here and there. Plus, I mean, he's the star monster of this Dungeon Battle. He deserves this.*

Mr. Tent retreated so that his squishy, wounded body could recover. The bodily juices that I had stored beforehand were very effective there. They just returned to his slime body and healed him better than a potion would.

Gargoyles kept on blasting magic, as if to fill the void left by Mr. Tent absconding. They cast wave after wave of {Stun Bolt}, forming a solid layer of energy that pelted the black armor along with rock arrows. But none of it did much! *Her armor's way too strong! This is bad. The hole left by Mr. Tent's absence is a lot bigger than I thought.*

I gave orders to the Sahuagin platoon. They soon grabbed massive, weighted steel chains. Not just one, but several. Dozens. They were chains I had just bought with DP. My plan was to throw them at Core 666 and see if they could weigh her down. She had us trumped in quality, but we had overwhelming quantity on our side. In which case, our only hope was exploiting our numbers to their fullest. Core 666's flame Magic Blade could definitely cut through steel, but probably not that easily.

And so, our Sahuagin platoon threw the weighted chains at her. She cut through and knocked back several, but the infinite storm of chains was too much for her to fight back in full. The chains wrapped around her armor, locking her arms and legs together... ceasing her movement! *Now we just gotta finish her off*, or so I thought.

"Keima! She's not done yet!" The black armor fell over, unable to move... And suddenly, a lovely little girl with striking red hair appeared next to it. A little girl who was obviously way too small to have fit in that armor. Needless to say, that was Core 666 morphed into human form.

"Core 666 separated from it!"

"Separated...? That's a thing you can do?" She had hair as vividly crimson as blood, and eyes as startlingly red as fire. She wore a black dress with red and white frills that seemed to suggest she was far too dignified to wear armor in the first place. In short, her appearance screamed that she preferred the fire element.

Core 666 gestured, and her flaming Magic Blade—that suited her image perfectly—started extending straight out of her hand, as if it were growing out

of her body. She then swung it down on the black armor to free it from its chains. Though she swung so hard that the full-plate helm of the armor got sliced clean off. There was nothing inside the helmet. And now, we could see inside the armor.

...Within the stomach area, there was a Dummy Core resting snugly. She had freed the armor, but in the process revealed the location of the Dummy Core. *Yeah, I figured she brought it in with her. But it doesn't look like Core 666 was wearing the armor herself. In which case, maybe her true self is that Magic Blade? It did look like it grew out of her hand, so... If she and the Magic Blade are one and the same, Core 666 is really just a sword when she's not in human form?* I turned to Haku to confirm.

"Haku. Are Magic Blades actually monsters? Like, item-type monsters."

"Oh my, you didn't know? About seventy percent of Magic Blades in the world are monsters." Haku casually dropped an enormous twist on me. *Magic Blades aren't items, they're monsters? Seventy percent of them, anyway. Dang. I mean, it makes sense that there'd be Living Weapons alongside Living Armors. I just didn't expect them to be called Magic Blades... Oh, now that I think about it, my Magic Blades are just golems.*

"Now the game truly begins!" shouted Core 666 as she returned to her Magic Blade form, entrusting herself to the Living Armor as it made a mad dash to the end of the room. And it was just a normal big room, not a Boss Room. She charged right through it. And unfortunately... Beyond the room was just Mr. Tent's Boss Room and our Core Room.

"Oh dear. She got through, Keima. Any last minute plans?"

"What are we gonna do, Keima? Our Tentacle Slime definitely can't beat that flame Magic Blade." asked Rokuko, sounding completely relaxed.

"Well... We just gotta avoid losing, right? We can just run away from her." Indeed. The [Ivory Beach's] Dummy Core was no longer in its Core Room.

Ammoknight. We had put the Core in its shell and had it flee through the dungeon. Right now, it had used our secret passageways to escape into one of the breathing rooms in our completely submerged area, where it was playing chess with a Gargoyle. *The hell is he doing? And where'd he get a chess set?*

Anyway, this was really surprising. I didn't expect them to pull the same mobile Core trick I did. And now I knew that I could, as a last resort, abandon the dungeon and flee into the sea with the Core. We'd never lose then, unless something seriously major happened underwater. And if we never lost, we could just keep fighting until we won.

Relaxed, I watched Core 666 advance through our dungeon.

Demon King Team's Perspective

Past the big room was a Boss Room. Inside was the Tentacle Slime that had run away after Core 666 wounded it. Judging from how it looked, its wounds had not yet fully healed.

"Hmph. No mollusk can defeat me." The Living Armor held Core 666's true self, the flame Magic Blade. Core 666 was the Magic Blade which her swordsman Master wielded. Under normal circumstances, he would wield her directly, but as this was a Dungeon Battle, he was resigned to controlling the Living Armor from afar.

"Now then, time to eradicate this small fry... Oh?" And yet, the Tentacle Slime squished away from Core 666, showing no intention of fighting. She couldn't help but metaphorically tilt her head. Why would a Dungeon Boss run away? That was practically asking an invader to proceed forward. And so she did, soon coming across a small room that seemed to be their Core Room. There it was, their Core Room... and yet, there was no Core. There was no mistaking that it was their Core Room. Reason being, the gate Father had opened was still there. The gates Father had opened for this Dungeon Battle all connected to the teams' individual Core Rooms. Though the Demon King Team had already filled in the Core Room of their abandoned dungeon.

"...What could this mean?"

"Maybe they had the same idea we did?"

"Which would mean... Their Core is being carried by a monster. Is that what you are suggesting?"

"That's the only thing that makes sense here." Her Master gave her advice, and...

“Ha... ahaha! HAHAHAHA! Excellent, Core 695, just excellent! This is a plan I fostered for years, and you had the same one! The exact same one! We truly are alike, you and I!” Core 666 laughed in joyous amusement. “In any case, that their dungeon still operates is proof that their Dummy Core is still inside of it.”

“Yep. The question is where the heck the monster ran off to... We’re screwed there. We don’t have any pawns to send searching.” Her Master said they’re screwed, but his tone had no trace of defeat within it. In fact, he sounded just as pleased as Core 666, as if things were finally getting interesting to him.

“But we still have a way to win. We’re going in.” And thus, the Living Armor with Core 666 in hand and the Dummy Core inside jumped into the gate connecting to the [Cave of Greed].

Keima’s Perspective

Okay, Core 666 got inside our Core Room. That’s fine. After all, they have to destroy our Dummy Core to win, and it’s nowhere near there. We can’t lose if they can’t find our Dummy Core... Or so I thought, moments before disaster.

“Huh?” Core 666 jumped through the gate. *The hell is she doing?! She should know our Dummy Core is still in the dungeon, right?! Oh, wait! I get it! She’s trying to conquer the [Cave of Greed] instead!*

“Judge! Is this allowed?! She’s leaving the Dungeon Battle!”

“Hm? I don’t remember ever saying you can’t take the Cores out of the dungeon, so what’s the problem? And weren’t you thinking of doing the same thing, Keima?” *He’s fine with this. Oh shit. And he figured out I was gonna abandon our dungeon if things got dicey.*

Even if they didn’t find our actual Core, they were definitely gonna mess our dungeon up. This demanded emergency measures. I opened the menu for the [Cave of Greed] and activated the monitor. I was just in time to see the Black Armor slowly standing up in the coliseum area. *Ngh... I can see what’s happening, but I can’t control any monsters or place any traps. I’ll need to go through the gate to enter our dungeon, but the black armor’s right there. The best I can do right now is contact the monster girls.*

To make matters worse, since I had planned to win through numbers, the

monsters we had in the [Ivory Beach] were high in number but low in quality, not to mention most of them were sea creatures. Any reinforcements I sent would probably be cut down right at the gate, too.

...Guess I'll just send Mr. Tent and some Gargoyles over. Maybe now's the time to unchain the true power of my {Create Golem}...? Nah, not yet.

"Keima?! What should we do?!"

"The quickest way to end this would be to accept defeat, but..." I glanced at Haku. She was smiling brightly.

"...That's a last resort. We'll just have to take the battle to our real dungeon! I'll contact them immediately."

"Master! Can you hear me?" Suddenly, they contacted me first. Judging by the voice, it was Rei, who I had left in charge of the [Cave of Greed] while I was gone.

"Oh, is this Rei? Our enemy's invaded the [Cave of Greed], take them down!"

"As you wish. Please leave this to me. I shall turn them back with the full extent of my power!" declared Rei, her voice dripping with confidence.

"Do you have a plan?"

"Yes! I shall fight her myself! Here I go!"

"Wha?!" I checked the monitor and saw Rei entering the coliseum. *Uh... You know you have an attack stat of 0, right?!*

Demon King Team's Perspective

The gate led to a coliseum.

"This appears to be a coliseum. Ahaha, I appreciate the aesthetics. I wonder if she predicted that I would come here?" Core 666 had jumped on her Master's plan to abandon searching for a Dummy Core and just attack their enemy's home base instead. Especially since this Dungeon Battle had originally been a duel between Core 666, Aidy, and Core 695, Rokuko. Some incompetent rabble had interfered, but now she finally had the opportunity to have a fun, fun battle to the death with Core 695. Perhaps her invasion would encourage Core 695 to

send her favorite Dungeon Boss after her. Or perhaps Core 695 would come fight herself? Either way, Core 666 was excited.

She waited for a bit. Soon, someone passed trough the door to the coliseum.

“You shall go no further... I, Rei, will protect this dungeon!”

“A Named Vampire, I see. This could be fun... Now, let us dance!” Rei swung her right arm, whereupon several balls of fire appeared. In moments, they all at once launched towards Core 666... towards the black armor. Some shot straight forward, some curved, some went from below, but all of them moved in different paths to limit her movements. But the black armor avoided all of them by simply stepping forward. It then swung the flame Magic Blade down towards Rei... who jumped backwards to avoid it. Fire arced through where the Magic Blade had been, burning the air.

“A Magic Blade of fire, I see. I have just the thing for that.” This time, Rei thrust her left hand forward. Arrows of ice appeared one by one like ice pillars, each launching toward the armor the moment they were born. They all shot directly forward, but she created tens, hundreds of them in the span of a few seconds.

“Ahaha, a magic user, then? How interesting.” The armor swung it’s Magic Blade through the air. The fire burned the air and temporarily blocked the ice arrows. The black armor used that moment to dash to the side and avoid the rest of the arrows.

“You’re quite skilled.”

“And I suppose you’re not the weakest enemy I’ve ever faced... Oh, no interfering, now.” A Gargoyle went through the gate, but before it could do anything, it was sliced in half and crumbled to the floor. Core 666 had cut it in half in the span of a blink.

“Now, shall we continue? Not that it’s any mystery who will win this fight.” Things were going well for her. She hadn’t taken a single hit yet. Core 666 was just having fun.



Unpredictable fireballs and straightforward ice arrows. Rei combined the two spells to attack at once. Core 666 dodged all of it, slicing down anything that came even close to hitting her. And although she responded with attacks of her own, Rei flew through the air much like you would expect a vampire to, and whenever a strike nearly hit her she would briefly turn into mist to dodge the blow entirely. Give how the Magic Blade was engulfed in fire, it was probably doing mana damage even if it wasn't doing physical damage, but Rei looked unfazed.

They both lacked the means to finish each other off. The only thing piling up for certain was the corpses of Gargoyles.

Suddenly, Rei rushed straight towards her opponent.

"You are a worthy opponent indeed... But can you survive this?" Rei lifted up both hands, and above her appeared a giant black ball. It was pure dark such that it absorbed all light passing through it. The mass of darkness seethed like a black sun and grew bit by bit. It was around ten meters in diameter. If launched, it would not be unavoidable, but it was sizable enough to be considered an area of effect attack.

"Ahaha... This is quite powerful magic. Or it would be, if it were real." Core 666 had realized the truth. Thanks in part to how her Vampire opponent had not been chanting when casting her spells, and thanks in part to such a powerful magic skill not disturbing the flow of mana around her whatsoever. Combine that with the fact Rei seemed entirely undamaged, and...

"...I believe that Vampires are skilled in illusion magic, no? Hmmm?"

"...Ngh!" Rei faltered. Core 666 had never heard of a magic skill that produced a dark sun of this magnitude. In which case, it was likely the result of an illusion skill. Not to mention that despite being such a supposedly powerful attack, it did not radiate any pressure.

"Ahaha. I suppose the fire and ice were illusions as well?"

"Don't be ridiculous! I-If you think this is an illusion, well, let it hit you! My magic will rip apart your black armor and adorn it with blood!"

"Will it now? Your threat is as empty as a child scarecrow's."

“You will regret your arrogance in the afterlife... {Stygian Sun}!” Rei launched the black sun. The ten-meters wide ball of darkness did actually look a little intimidating rushing towards her. But that was all. It had no heat, no smell, and she felt no danger.

Core 666 did not even move. She was utterly confident that the black sun was an illusion. When it finally engulfed her, all that happened was her vision went black. As expected, it did not damage her in the lea– Danger. She felt a spark of mana dripping with murderous intent. She jumped to the right on pure reflex.

Immediately after, time and space shattered. Through her darkened vision she could see a globe of destroyed reality sucking her armor in. It cracked and bent, screeching unholy sounds.

“What...?! It’s damaging my black armor this much?!” The Living Armor moved its destroyed body, causing chunks of its armor to fall off and reveal the gleaming Dummy Core within. To think that her opponent had merely been pretending to not know magic.

“...” She searched for stirs in the mana around her. Even without vision, she could dodge a spell if only she sensed it first. And when focused, she would not miss even the slightest stir of mana... But she would miss the arrow that sliced the air and pierced deep into her Dummy Core.

“What...?!” The Core cracked and ruptured. The cracks grew bigger and bigger until finally the Demon King Team’s Dummy Core shattered, growing dim.

“Oh, looks like that’s that. Congratulations, Human Empire Team! You win!” Father’s declaration sealed Core 666’s defeat.

Keima’s Perspective

I looked at the monitor and saw that Rei and Core 666 were engaging in an intense battle. Somehow, Rei was freely using magic, flying through the air, and shrugging off blows with a smile. *What the hell? When did Rei turn into such a fighter?*

“Keima, not her. Look over there. At the edge.”

“Hm?” A closer look revealed another Rei in the stadium seating. Her eyes

were shut and she was murmuring something with her arms thrust outwards. *Uhhhh... What?*

“She’s using her Vampire skills... illusion magic!”

“...Wait, so this cool and heroic Rei is just...?”

“An illusion!” *Daaang. That sucks... Oh, it looks like she’s invisible if you try looking from within the coliseum.*

Now that I was paying attention, I could see Neruneh and Kinue with her. They were shooting out {Fireballs} and {Ice Bolts}. Though they disappeared in the air, and only reappeared after colliding with Rei’s illusionary fireballs and ice arrows. *Huh, that’s a pretty clever combo. But won’t the jig be up in a second if one of the completely fake magic spells hits her?*

“May I take a look as well?” Haku peered into the monitor. “My my, how interesting. These are quite skilled subordinates you have. Perhaps you have influenced them, as their Master?”

“Yep, I’ve done my best to teach them.” Also, I was sending Gargoyles out to help, but they were sliced to pieces in seconds each time. *Man... It’s hard to deal with campers. I’ll leave her to Rei and just keep sending Gargoyles to keep her stuck to the gate. Too bad Mr. Tent won’t get his time to shine. But anyway, {Fireballs} and {Ice Bolts} are just too weak to hurt that black armor... Oh, wait. I’ve got it.*

“Hey, Rei. Could you pretend to do some kind of huge area of effect attack, but in reality just block her vision?”

“Wha?! A pretend area of effect attack that actually blocks her vision, Master?”

“Yep. Like... Could you make a huge black ball that looks kinda like a fireball, and then call it a black sun?”

“I-I can do it! Shall I begin right away?”

“Yep. Make it look real cool, like an ultimate move. And Rokuko, place me in front of the gate.”

“Okay. Be careful, it’s dangerous out there.” Alright, time to get ready. I

closed my eyes for a second, and opened them to see myself in front of the gate connecting to the [Cave of Greed]. I double checked where I was standing with the position of the gate. *I guess this angle should be fine?*

"If you think this is an illusion, well, let it hit you! My magic will rip apart your black armor and adorn it with blood! You will regret your arrogance in the afterlife... {Stygian Sun}!" *Oh, looks like Rei's already launched the distraction. Gotta match her timing.* I hurriedly took a certain something out of my {Storage}. That something being one of the [Gravity Bombs] that Rin, the black wolf, gave me.

"Black Plate." I said the activation keyword and the black ball started to rumble. *Holy shit, just looking at this is scaring the crap out of me.* I didn't want to waste it, but using this was our safest option. So, I aimed at the gate leading to where Core 666 was, and...

"...Whup!" Threw it. I opened the menu and quickly checked the monitor. Everything was dark due to Rei's attack, but I could hear sound. I heard a gut-wrenching, horrible screech when the black ball presumably hit the ground. Then, the sound of metal bending and cracking. Did she get sucked into the [Gravity Bomb's] area of effect? The map said she was still alive. *Guess it's not as big of an explosion as I thought.*

"Master, the enemy is greatly weakened! I can see a shiny ball within her armor!"

"Oh, really? I guess you can see inside that mess since you're the one making it. Can you finish her off?"

"Your wish is my command..." Rei readied her bow gun. It was the Golem Bowgun I'd made. By using the act of ordering a golem as a degree of separation, even Rei could inflict damage on another. The bowgun was designed especially for her and would launch arrows when ordered to pull the trigger. And so, Rei aimed into the dark dome and let loose.

"Oh, looks like that's that. Congratulations, Human Empire Team! You win!" Father's casual declaration confirmed that Rei had finished things off with one beautiful shot. *M-Man, I sure am glad I have some skilled subordinates.*

Epilogue

“The Human Empire Team wins! Congratulations, Core 89; congratulations, Core 695; and congratulations, Keima.” Once again, a declaration from Father. We really had won. Rei pretty much delivered the final blow instead of us, but the judge’s word was law.

Light enveloped Core 666 and then she was gone. Father had probably returned her to her own dungeon. *Uh... You forgot the wrecked armor. I guess that means I can keep it?*

“We did it, Keima! We’re the winners! Yaaay!” Rokuko was so happy she started jumping for joy. *You a kid or something?*

“I know, I know, you’re happy. Calm down a little.”

“Ahahahahahaha, but me being victorious means that Haku is victorious as well. That means I’m twice as happy! How could I be calm?!”

“You should be calming down twice as fast, then.” I did have to stop her from using my head as a handle to jump higher, though. I appreciated the headpats, but her skirt was flying up and it wasn’t too hard to see underneath. That just wasn’t ladylike. *And to be clear, despite my foot fetish, feet aren’t the only thing I like. You feel me? Thighs are pretty good too.*

“You did some good work too, Niku. Ichika.”

“That was exhausting...”

“Dude, I’m def gonna get a bonus for this, right?”

The two of them had been controlling golems and Sahuagins with precision for so long that now they were completely worn out.

“Rei, you and the others did good too.”

“Sir! Thank you very much, Master!”

“I have kept the dungeon clean.”

“I’m hoping for another souveniiir.”

Last but not least were the three monster girls who gave their all to protect the dungeon. I really hadn't expected the three of them to finish off the Dungeon Battle like this.

"By the way, Rei. You were using, like, illusion stuff, right?"

"Yes! I strengthened myself with the DP you bestowed upon me! I did not manage to acquire the attack points I yearn for, but it enabled me to protect the dungeon. To think you would predict this and preemptively grace me with DP... Your wisdom is as astounding as ever!"

"...Yes. It is as you say." *Let's leave it at that. Wait... But doesn't that mean we don't have a newcomer?*

In any case, Haku was smiling brightly now that our victory had been confirmed.

"I see you experienced some unexpected difficulties at the end. I would have liked it if you had finished Core 666 herself off."

"Hahaha, I'm just glad I had skilled subordinates to back me up. Also, that would have been taking things a bit too far." In truth, I was just partially worried about what would happen to me, a Hero (?) slash Dungeon Master, if I were to kill a Dungeon Core. Though the main thing was that I didn't want to draw any unnecessary ire from the Demon King Team Cores by killing one of their own. Not to mention that I would have had to try destroying her by sending monsters after her. That probably wouldn't have gone too well.

The Demon King Team contacted us. We accepted and soon a large oval mirror-shaped monitor appeared in the sky with Core 666 within it. She was wearing a red dress.

"I lost."

"I won." Rokuko puffed out her chest with pride. Seeing that, Core 666 gave a small but pleased grin.

"Core 695. Our next duel shall be a one-on-one."

"Nope! I'm taking this win and running away!"

"Oh my. That would make me sad. I don't want to lose the true friend I have

gained through this Dungeon Battle.”

“True friend? U-Um, what?”

“Indeed. True friend, arch enemy, the works. Are we not friends now? I should like to play with you again, perhaps with a true duel in the metaphorical flesh. Shall we not proceed with a frank friendship, much like Grandfather and Core 89 have?”

“W-Well, I don’t mind being friends, but... What was that about arch enemies?” *Uh, Rokuko, are you sure you don’t mind being friends with her? I’m pretty sure this “friend” is a battle-crazed maniac that’ll cut you down from behind if you’re not careful.* The moment that thought crossed my mind, Core 666 made eye contact with me through the monitor. *Oh crap, she can see me too. I don’t know why I didn’t expect that.*

“You must be my arch enemy’s Master, then.”

“That’s right. I’m Rokuko’s Master.”

“I see. So your Master calls you Rokuko, then, Core 695? May I as well? We are friends after all.”

“Sure, go ahead. ’Cause we’re friends!”

“Ahaha. Thank you, Rokuko. You may feel free to call me Aidy, as my Master does. And you may as well, Rokuko’s Master. I know that humans prefer that kind of name.” With that said, Aidy turned to face me completely.

“Did you design the flooding-based dungeon?”

“.....No, Haku did. That is... Our senior Core recommended it.”

“I see, so you did. I expected that the root cause of Rokuko’s rapid growth was her Master, and that seems to be the case.” I thought for a second to try and fool her, but she saw right through me.

“Shall we fight again?”

“I’d rather not.”

“This was a tainted battle, but next time, I will not let trash interfere.”

“I told you it’s not happening. Are those ears just for show?”

“Will you plan your attack thinking my hearing is my weak point? The thought of my ears being attacked is just wonderful. Good luck.” *Oh man, she’s not gonna budge. This might get annoying...*

“Y’know, I get the whole mobile Dummy Core plan, but you must be a real idiot.”

“Hm? I believe my plans were quite solid, and I recall you doing something similar yourself. From where do you feel the need to call me foolish?”

“It didn’t matter where your Dummy Core was, ’cause all we had to do was beat you. You pretty much signed your own death sentence the moment you jumped into our dungeon.”

“...Ah?!”

“Nah, Aidy, don’t forget that you’ve got the Indestructible trait. Worst case scenario, you can just morph into your Magic Blade form and wait it out as a prisoner until the Dungeon Battle’s over. Remember? You said that before we started.”

“Oh yes, that’s quite right.” Behind Aidy I could see a younger dude with red hair so dark it was closer to black. If Aidy was the color of fresh blood, he was the color of dried, dark blood. *That must be her Master. He looks kinda younger than me, if he’s human.*

“Are you her Master...? And a human?”

“Yeah. You too, it looks like. Never seen another human Master before. And judging by that outfit, you must be from another world.” *Oh yeah, I’m still wearing my jersey. I sure just leaked some information I shouldn’t have.*

“Yeah, these are pajamas where I’m from.”

“Pajamas, huh. What a weird guy... You fought in the Dungeon Battle in your pajamas?”

“Yep. They’re good for sleeping. Why wouldn’t I want to be as relaxed as possible for a battle like this?”

“...Well, whatever. We’ll probably never meet again. Later.”

“Hey!” *Wait up, tell me what that Indestructible trait thing was all about.* Or

so I tried to say, but her Master swung the sword on his hip so fast I couldn't even see it. The mirror-like monitor shattered into pieces and disappeared. *Is, uh, is that how you're supposed to hang up here? I kinda wanted to form a connection there, as a fellow human Dungeon Master... Oh well.*

"Oh, right, Keima. Can I contact the Dragon King Team?"

"Huh? Do you have something to say to them?"

"Just a little." I had no reason to refuse, so I let her do as she wanted. They must have accepted her contact as the mirror appeared in the air again. *Oh man, a huge snake. Plus a frog and a slug.*

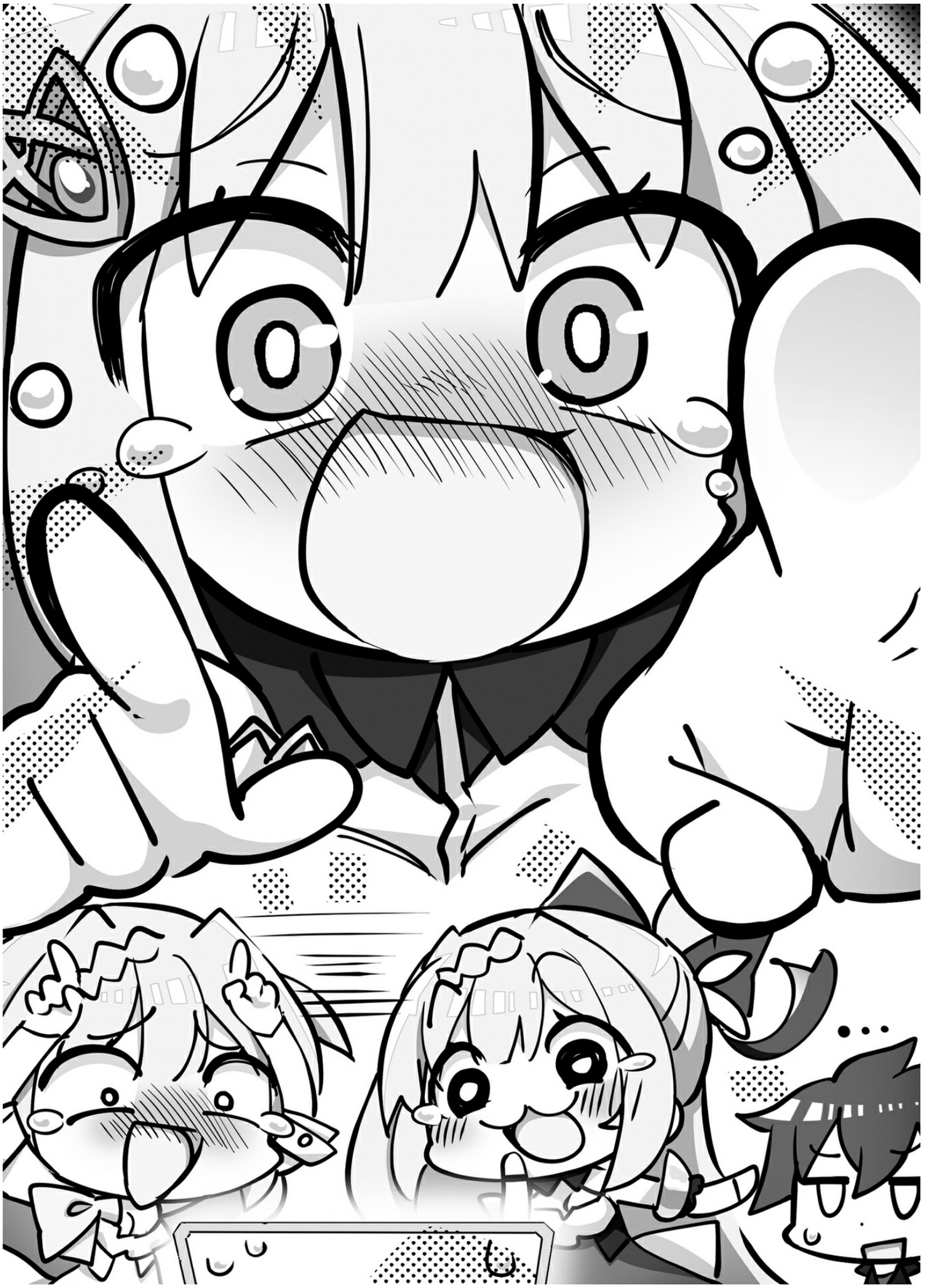
"What do you want?! Did you come here to laugh at us, Core 695?!" Rokuko let out a hmph. And then...

"Hey, hey, how does it feeeeel? How do you feeel right now? You've always made fun of me and I just absolutely DESTROYED you, like wow, you guys TOTALLY lost in every way, and it wasn't even hard. How does it feel? You mad that all three of you couldn't even beat me after ganging up together? You wanna cry? C'mon, say something, losers!"

"Woah, you actually just came to laugh at us?!"

"Obviously! I won and I'm amazing, you suckers! Later!"

"Now you're running?!" This time, the mirror in the air disappeared like a TV being cut off. *Okay, now I know that other guy was just being edgy.*



“...Whew... I feel so much better now!”

“N-Nice. Glad you got all that out.”

“This is all thanks to you, Keima! Thanks!” Rokuko smiled the biggest smile she had all day, as if a huge weight had been lifted off her shoulders. I didn’t know what to say to her. So, I just rubbed her head.

“Okay everyone. Once again, congratulations on your victory, Core 89 and Core 695. It’s reward time nooow.” Father contacted us next. *Here it comes... Reward time.* “First, a secondary prize. As a reward for trying so hard, I will take your names—Haku Laverio, Rokuko Dungeon Core—and recognize them officially, to the full extent that my authority allows.”

“Oh my! Thank you, Father!”

“Wow! The name Keima gave me is now my official name!” I didn’t really understand how that was a reward myself, but both of the Dungeon Cores were overjoyed. *But why’s Rokuko’s last name Dungeon Core...? Oh, ohhhh. Right. I called her that, like, once when I first named her. I think.*

“Wait. Rokuko is Haku’s little sister, so shouldn’t her last name be Laverio?”

“Oh, um, really?”

“I mean, if you go around calling yourself Rokuko Dungeon Core, people are gonna figure out your secret in no time. So, er... Father, could you change her last name if possible?”

“Hmm, well, I like to think that all of my children share the last name ‘Dungeon Core’ as a sort of family name. But if you insist... I’ll change it just for you, Keima. I’ll take your last name and make Core 695 officially Rokuko Masuda.” *Why my last name?!* I looked at Rokuko and saw that she was blushing. She even put her hands on her cheeks as if heating up. *Hey, I can see you grinning, y’know.*

Father continued while smiling himself.

“I’m pretty bad about thinking up names myself. That’s why the numbering system was such an amazing revelation for me. I can just methodically increase their numbers. It’s easy.”

“But, er, wouldn’t Haku’s last name be fine...?”

“Haku took the name Laverio after marrying Lyon, right? I think it makes a lot of sense for Rokuko to take the last name of her partner too.”

“Father, um, are you saying, that Keima and I a-are, um, getting married?!” I glanced at Haku. *Oh, she’s doing something with her hands. Mmm. Holding out her thumb, slicing it across her neck, stabbing in the direction of her heart, and then giving me a thumbs down. I can tell that’s trying to say “You’re dead and this is how I will kill you.” Fantastic.*

“Hold up, Rokuko. I would like our relationship to remain clean and pure.”

“Mmm? What do you mean, pure relationship? Are there impure relationships?” Rokuko tilted her head in confusion. And then, she said, “Well, either way, I don’t mind being a little impure if it’s with you, Keima.” She gave me a bright, soft smile. The kindness in her smile made my heart thump.

“Indeed. There’s nothing like Master’s {Purification}.”

“Yup! You know what’s up, Niku. Keima’s magic can make anything clean in a second!” Rokuko nodded enthusiastically to Niku. *Wait, that’s what you meant? Seriously? Christ, give me a break. I nearly had a heart attack. My heart’s had it rough lately. I really need to get some sleep. This Dungeon Battle has seriously kept me busy for a while now, I’m exhausted.*

“Uhhh, anyway, I don’t think us getting married on the spot right now is exactly a good idea, so... Where I’m from, dungeons are often called labyrinths, so how about we fiddle with that and roll with Labyrinthart? Oh, hart is short for heart.”

“Labyrinth’s heart, then? That’s fine. You don’t mind if I give all my children that last name to share?”

“Not at all.”

“Okaaay. Haku Laverio and Rokuko Labyrinthart. I will recognize these names as official with all of my authority. I will also allow all of my children to address themselves with the last name Labyrinthart.” It seemed that Father really did just find it too annoying to think up a bunch of names on his own. He rolled with my idea on the spot. I was just glad that Haku wouldn’t be cutting off my

head now.

"...But you know, Keima. I heard that giving rings is symbolic of marriage in your world. I think you marrying Rokuko has been a long time coming already."

"Anyway, what was the main reward? You mentioned this just being a secondary prize."

"Oh, that's right. I'll give two rewards to each of you, Haku, Rokuko." *Nice, got the topic changed.*

"First, Haku, I'll give you a Magic Blade that I made. That, and... Oh, I should probably keep this a secret from Keima and Rokuko. I'll send it to you later, in secret."

"I appreciate your consideration very much, Father. I will accept your gifts with gratitude."

...I wonder if a Magic Blade made by Father will have the power to destroy the world or something. And what's with that gift he's keeping a secret from us? I really wanna know.

"As for you, Rokuko... Okay. I'll give you one part of the Divine Bedding, the Divine Futon. Oh, and Keima, this is a gift to Rokuko, not you." *Wait, the Divine Bedding is real?! And since he said one part, I guess there's a whole lineup of Divine Bedding stuff? Holy crap. I have to collect them all.*

"Divine Bedding always has a bunch of side effects and stuff, so be sure to read the instruction manual before using it. Okay. The second reward is for you, Keima. Here." A basketball-sized white ball plopped down in front of me.

"A Dummy Core?"

"Nope. It's empty and doesn't have a number, but it's a real Core. Go ahead, break it." *Uhhhhh?* "You're a Hero too, aren't you? Not just a Dungeon Master. Something really special should happen if you break that dungeon Core, so go ahead. Oh, do you need a weapon?" *Oh man, he figured me out. I guess I should have expected that...* While I was wondering what to do about that, a sword dropped in front of me. It wasn't decorated in the least, and even its handle was part of the same metal that formed the blade. Really, it looked like someone had taken a big chunk of orichalcum and morphed it into a simple

sword. *Wooow, a bargain on orichalcum. I wonder how many ingots it took to make this.*

"Consider that a bonus. I'm in a pretty good mood today. Don't worry, it's not a Magic Blade or anything. It's just orichalcum I shaped into a sword. Use it however you like."

"Could I turn it all into wires?"

"You could. Do whatever, whateeeever you want with it."

My {Create Golem} would definitely get found out if I messed with this sword. I held it up. *Yeah, it's a lot lighter than it looks. Must be a trademark of orichalcum.*

With everything set up for me, I had no choice but to destroy the glowing Dungeon Core in front of me. I took the orichalcum sword and sliced the nameless Dungeon Core. The sword went right through it with barely any resistance. *Man, this thing is sharp. I'm impressed Father just casually made something like this. Honestly, I don't want to waste it now.*

The Dungeon Core got cut in half with a single blow. Poof. A warm wind blew out of the sliced-apart Dungeon Core.

"So, how'd it go? Did you get a skill?"

"No, I don't think s—Ah..." A shudder ran down my spine, as if I had been hit by electricity. *I know this feeling. This is close to what I feel when using a skill scroll.* Information was being planted directly into my brain. *Ahhh, yeah, here it is. I kinda remember this. This is kinda like the "Now installing, please close all other programs until finished" phase of downloading a game.*

I stood still for a bit and patiently waited for it to end. Once the installation was finished, I heard a somewhat familiar voice speak inside my head with a mechanical tone.

"You have learned {Ultra Transformation: Level 3}." *Uhhh... Why's it already level 3?* I tried figuring out why it jumped straight to level 3, but the only information in my brain was a description for how to use the skill itself. Said description was as follows.

– In each 24 hour period, you can transform into one thing you envision per skill level. (Three times per period at level 3.) – Level 1: You can transform into something that exists.

– Level 2: You can mimic some abilities of what you've transformed into.

– Level 3: Once per 72 hour period, if you die while transformed, you can revive by undoing the transformation.

I expended mana while transformed. The transformation would end either when I willed it or when I ran out of mana. The rate of mana expenditure depended on what I transformed into and could become very severe. Also, my abilities while transformed were limited.

I didn't know what additional effects level 4 and beyond would bring, but man, this seemed pretty impressive. *I can transform into anything that exists, huh? I'd expect nothing less from a cheat skill. Not to mention that I can revive once per three days. Though I get the feeling that if I try to revive in the middle of lava or something, I'd just die again instantly. Oh well.*

"I guess that was the announcer. Pretty similar to our menus, I think."

"Wait, everyone else heard that too?"

"No, just me. I was eavesdropping a bit. So, what skill did you get?" Personally, I would have preferred to keep the skill hidden as a sort of trump card. But I figured it best to at least say its name. I got the feeling telling Haku was a mistake, but Father himself was asking. I definitely did not want to get on his bad side. He mentioned that I was a Hero right in front of Haku. One wrong move and they might see me as a traitor to their side.

Okay, let's answer.

"You did give me a bonus, so I'll tell you the skill's name, at least. It's called {Ultra Transformation}."

"{Ultra Transformation}, huh? That's a pretty interesting skill." *Huh? That sounds like he knows what the skill is.* "A past Hero had that skill too. I think they got it up to level 7. They could completely copy the target's powers and use their own at the same time with a boost. They did some pretty wild things with it." *Oh shit, that sounds crazy. Wouldn't they be invincible?*

“Oh yes. I do believe I eliminated them by swarming them with about five hundred soldiers when they were alone.”

“Right, right. That was some good work you did, Haku.”

Oh, it lost to sheer numbers, huh. Makes sense. Not like you can clone yourself with it. Wait... Huh. I bet there’s a cloning skill out there.

“In any case, I’m surprised to learn that you are a Soldier of God, Keima... I did know that you were from another world, but still.”

“Haha, well, I’m just a normal Hero since I don’t want to go out of my way to destroy dungeons. This is the first cheat skill I’m getting, anyway. I don’t consider myself a Soldier of God.”

“I see. Very well, then... Now. Would you care to share the abilities of that skill in detail? Oh, I have an idea. Would you perform a demonstration in front of me?” *Okay. I can tell that’s an order.*

“There’s a daily limit to how many times I can transform, so we’ll have to keep the demonstration short. What do you want me to transform into?”

“Hmmm, let’s see... Could you transform into Rokuko?” *I, uh... Maybe? Let’s see.*

I envisioned Rokuko in my head and chanted {Ultra Transformation}. I didn’t have to say it out loud to activate the skill, but I figured it would be best to do so here.

Woah, I’m shrinking. My vision’s kinda morphing around. Aaand... Now I’m at eye level with Rokuko.

“Wow, you really do look just like me now.”

“I can’t tell myself, but neat. Guess the transformation doesn’t extend to clothes, since I’m still wearing this jersey. And yep. My voice sounds like yours now.” The clothes I had been wearing now hung loosely off me.

“Don’t look under those clothes, got it?”

“...I wasn’t even thinking about it.”

“I’ll punch you in the face if you touch yourself anywhere.”

“Hey, I was just wondering if the transformation worked on places I haven’t seen before. Do you have any scars or something I don’t know about?”

“Nuh-uh. How could there be a scar on my body you don’t know about, anyway?”

“Ah! I had been stunned silent from the army of cute Rokukos in front of me, but I cannot let that statement go unquestioned!” *Hey, hey, don’t take that the wrong way.* I undid the transformation.

“...What Rokuko meant is that I have protected her well enough that nothing could have given her a scar. Go ahead and use lie-detecting magic if you don’t believe me.”

“Are you telling the truth?”

“Yes, of course.”

“...That does seem to be the case.” *Oh man, she actually used lie-detecting magic on me. But that’s fine, ’cause I can prove my innocence when she does. I just have to stay innocent.*

“I’ll take this opportunity to confirm this. Do you intend to harm Rokuko in any way shape or form?”

“Of course I don’t. I swear to God.”

Father suddenly burst into laughter. “Ahahaha! Did you just swear to God in front of me?! Me?! Ahaha! Keima, you are a riot.” *Oh, right. This world’s God is the one sending Heroes to mess up dungeons. They’re definitely enemies. Oh, and there’s that theory about Father being a god too. I can see why he would laugh.*

“Very well. By the way, would you mind transforming into Rokuko once more? I would like to have Rokuko on either side of me saying ‘I love you, sister!’ if possible.”

“Ah, sorry, but I can only transform so many times per day. That’ll have to wait for another day.”

“Oh my, what a shame. In that case... Could you try transforming into this letter? Specifically, the contents.” Haku showed me a sealed envelope. *Heh.*

Now this is a good experiment. First, it tested whether I could transform into an inanimate object. Second, it tested to see whether I could transform into something I had never seen before. In this case, the contents of the envelope. At the same time, we would see if I retained the writing on the letter within. Haku was testing all of these things at once with a single transformation. She intended to extract as much information from me as possible while I was in a position where I had to cooperate. *And when the heck did she even prepare that letter?*

Well, whatever. I thought of the letter within the envelope and used {Ultra Transformation}.

"...{Ultra Transformation}." My body twisted in shape. *Yeeep, looks like I turned into the envelope. Guess my mental image was too lacking in information for me to transform into something I haven't seen.*

I drifted onto the floor. Looking at the Master Room from this angle was kind of cool... *Oh, Haku's walking this way. I can see right up her skirt. Her tights go all the way up, nice. Thanks for the view... Oh, up I go.* She picked me up. *Y'know, I wonder how I'm even seeing anything.*

"Fascinating. The transformation included the address, which I had not shown you. But I suppose transforming into the letter was impossible? Perhaps you need to see it directly. Hm... I will try cutting you a bit. I wonder if the damage will remain when you exit the transformation." *Gyaaah?! Stop! Ah, I can't talk! Stop twisting, I'll rip! I'm actually gonna riiiip! I'll revive since level 3 has that power but stiiiiiill!* I immediately exited the transformation and returned to human form. In Haku's hand.

"Kyah! Please don't return to human form so suddenly, Kei—Oh my."

"Whoa! Whew... That was close. I thought I was gonna die..."

"Keima?! Aaaah! Your clotheeees!" *Huh?* After a second of confusion, I saw my clothes piled up on the ground. *Ahhh, I get it. I left my clothes behind when I transformed into an envelope. So basically, Haku is princess carrying my completely naked body right now.*

"KYAAAAAAH! HAKU, YOU PERVEEEEEEERT!"

“How rude. I cannot believe you would accuse me of being perverted. After all, you are the perverted one here, given your nude form.”

“Why are you so calm?! It’s freaking me out!”

“I’m quite used to seeing the naked corpses of adventurers, among other things. Fear not, you’re one of the cuter ones.” *Stop! Don’t call me cute! It kinda hurts!* “Ah, and Rokuko, do stop looking at this filthy thing of his.”

“Yesh ma’am! I’m shorry! I-I’m not looking, Keima! Don’t worry!”

“R-Right...” And so, I put my clothes back on with tears forming in my eyes. Also, Father was laughing so hard he was actually buckling over. *Sniff. I can’t take this anymore.*

“I think that was the hardest I’ve ever laughed in my life. You really are a funny guy, Keima. I love it. Oh, and don’t worry. I disconnected all contact with other teams after giving your secondary reward.”

“Hahaha, that’s a relief. Like, from a pride perspective, I... Yeah...” This traumatic experience had given me a good excuse to refuse further experimentation with Haku, so practically speaking, I was glad it happened. Or at least, that’s what I had to tell myself to hold back the tears. A surprising amount of secrets had been busted wide open here, but Haku’s test had ultimately been very productive. I would need to do some tests of my own once we got back.

“Speaking of which, Keima. Would you like to become an S-Rank adventurer?”

“...No thanks.”

“Heroes are generally given an S-Rank by force, you know.”

“You wouldn’t want a Hero hanging out by the [Cave of Greed] at all times either, right? It’d bring way too much attention.”

“Oh my, that wouldn’t be an issue at all. The town is growing as we speak, the time for obscurity has long passed. And really, the mere presence of a Hero would likely quell unnecessary problems before they began.” *Okay, fair, that does sound pretty nice. But I’m pretty sure Heroes have duties and stuff they have to fulfill.*

“Don’t Heroes have to work for the benefit of their country or something?”

“Indeed they do. That is why they are afforded such luxuries.”

“Then no thanks. ’Cause I’m not a Hero, I’m a Dungeon Master.” *And I definitely don’t want to work.*

Oh, wait. Maybe I could convince her if I transformed into Rokuko and acted really cute? Aaactually, scratch that. It’d probably just piss her off.

“...I suppose that’s fine. You are a Dungeon Master, after all.” Haku left it at that and returned to her seat.

Father clapped his hands to gather our attention. He must have connected everyone together again, as monitors for the Demon King Team and Dragon King Team were on either side of him.

“Okay then. Haku, Core 5, Core 6. Give us some closing words.”

“As the winner, I shall start. Core 5. I hope this lesson has reminded you of your place as a mere lizard. You would do well to show me the proper respect and never forget that you are beneath me. Of course, if you have issues with the battle that Father himself prepared, feel free to whine to your heart’s content.”

“Ngh! Grrr...!”

“Core 6. You failed to train your disciple properly. And it is quite gross how you make her call you Grandfather. In some ways, is that not disrespectful to Father? Ohhh, I suppose you chose the name to signify that you are a senile old man with no wits about him. Carry on, then. Ahaha.”

“Hmph. Foolish insults as always.”

Uh, Haku, aren’t you just trolling them?! You’re gonna start a war here. Oh, wait. Haku and Core 6 are already fighting an actual war with their kingdoms. That sounds like some real deal stuff.

“I will go next, as second place. Core 89... or Haku, rather. We are the same age, so if I am an old man, you are quite the decrepit grandma. Don’t try to act young, it’s painful to watch. Though in terms of mental age and maturity, I suppose you do remain an infantile young girl. Hahaha, I certainly am jealous of

your youth! It must be nice living a life carefree enough to not develop wrinkles."

"Oh my? Quite cocky words for a loser."

"Hmph. I would not have lost had Core 666 not spent everything on strengthening herself. But with that in consideration, Core 666 is the long-term victor of this battle. To think that she would have obtained Invulnerability for herself."

"Ahaha, and who in the world cares? My Rokuko saved quite a lot of the DP from this Dungeon Battle as well. So much so that she could win again if we held another battle immediately." *Oh man, she's totally baiting him. It's like she wants the next fight to start now since she knows we'll win. But I don't want to do back-to-back Dungeon Battles, so I'd really prefer it if she stopped.*

"Hey. It's my turn now, right? Listen up you two, this wasn't my loss. I had to deal with wrangling three idiots together, and on top of that—"

"Your excuses are pathetic."

"Silence, lizard who knows how to win only through force. You are embarrassing yourself."

"....."

"Though if I'm being quite honest, Core 6, the only one truly embarrassing himself is—"

"Hahaha! You're one to talk, Haku, given how—"

Oh man, they actually shut him up. And now they're back to trash talking. I guess this is like a third reward for them.

...Aidy was looking on with envy behind Core 6. *What? Does this look like a pair of lovers sweet talking each other to her? Hey! No matter how much you look at me with eager eyes and heavy breathing, I'm definitely not gonna give you an excuse to start a full-scale war with us! Rokuko, don't make eye contact with her? "But you're friends"? She isn't worth it!*

Father clapped his hands. Haku and Core 6 fell silent immediately and gave him their full attention. "I'm glad that my children are all so nice and friendly

with each other. But, well, all good things end eventually. Does anyone want to say goodbye before this is over?”

“Listen up, Core 695... Rokuko! Don’t get cocky just ’cause Father gave you an official name! I won’t lose to you agaaain!”

“Silence, Core 650! How dare you interrupt when Father is talking?! Looks like I’ll need to be more strict with your education... Prepare yourself! Core 651, Core 652, that goes for you two as well!”

“Croak?!”

“F-Forgive us, Dungeon Core Number Fiiive!”

“Hahaha, don’t worry about that. I did ask if anyone wanted to say goodbye. Try not to be too harsh.” Father spoke with a laugh, and Core 5 could say nothing more. Though Core 650’s snake face still looked deathly pale.

Incidentally, Aidy was looking at Rokuko with a smile. Rokuko returned that with her own smile, figuring why not since they were friends, but... Somehow, I got the feeling that Aidy was just as dangerous as Haku was. *Yeah, I’m gonna pretend I didn’t see anything.*

“Okay, everyone, let’s meet again at next year’s party!” And with that, Father disappeared alongside the other Cores, signaling the end to our third Dungeon Battle. *Man, that felt like it took forever.*

* * *

The Divine Bedding. Yup, the Divine Bedding. One of the rewards we received, and in my opinion the main reward. The night of our victorious Dungeon Battle, Rokuko and I went to her room after having our fill of the celebration party. Though it was more like we individually snuck away from the party. It was both a celebration and farewell party that was planned to last two entire days, so Haku didn’t say anything when Rokuko left early.

She left the party after sending me a meaningful glance. It took a solid chunk of time before I realized what the glance meant and left the party myself, heading to her room where I imagined she was. And as expected, there she was. We met up and just like that, we were alone. *Heheh. I have accomplished a feat unknown to any dense harem protagonist and understood a girl’s feelings!*

It's all thanks to the connection formed between two partners of the soul. And just saying, there's no lewd intent here. None at all.

"Th-There you are, Keima. I've been waiting."

"Yep. Here I am." Rokuko had changed into her pajamas. I knelt in front of her. And then. "Please show me the Divine Beddiiiing!"

"Wow, you really got right on the ground! Keima, you don't need to do that. It's okay. Lift your head. Let's look at the Divine Bedding together."

"Oooh... Are you an angel?"

"Y-You know you just compared me to something as dangerous as a Soldier of God, right?" *Oh right, I guess angels pretty much are bad news to the dungeon faction. Angels are "Soldiers of God" too, after all. Uhhh... What should I compare her to, then?*

"Demon?"

"I don't think so."

"Maybe... Goddess?"

"Wh-What's with you, Keima?! I-I don't think I'm good enough for anyone to worship!" said Rokuko, waving her hands while blushing and looking pretty pleased with herself. *Okay, that's it. Goddess. I'll have to remember that. And speaking of which, I just remembered that Haku is sometimes called the Ivory Goddess.*

"Alright, let's see the Divine Bedding."

"...Okay." It was finally time to see part one of the Divine Bedding, the Divine Futon. Every muscle in my body was tense. My heart was beating unbelievably fast. Both Rokuko and I were excited like children about to open a gift from their father.

Rokuko took out a ribbon-wrapped box that looked exactly like a Christmas present. It was too small to hold a futon, but I figured some {Storage}-esque magic was at work. Rokuko pulled the ribbon off and then put her hands on the box's top. I swallowed reflexively.

"...Hyah!" She steeled her resolve and opened the box. A flash of light

beamed from within and out came a divinely white futon, which landed in Rokuko's hands.

"...It's beautiful."

"Uh-huh. I think so too..."

I found myself enraptured by it. *This is the Divine Bedding. This is the... Divine Futon.*

"I'll be honest. I underestimated it. I mean, wow... I didn't expect it to be this good."

"...It does feel good. Do you want to try touching it, Keima?"

"One sec. Lemme read the instruction manual first. 'Cause I mean, this thing is so divine one wrong touch might send me back to my world and lock me out of ever coming here again. I don't think I should even touch the box yet."

"Th-That's true. You're right, Keima. We should be careful here. Ummmm, where was the manual again?"

"Probably on the underside of the box's cover. Try turning it upside down."

"Okay. Like this? The futon's in the way, I can't see much. Can you, Keima?" Rokuko, still holding the Divine Futon, turned the present box's cover upside down. *And... Yep. There's a letter.*

"Yep. Found it. Right where I thought it was."

"Mmm... This? I'm kinda scared to open it."

"If you don't open it for me, we'll never see what it says."

"I-I know that. Here, you can see it now, right?" Rokuko opened the instruction manual. Within were warnings and instructions about the Divine Futon. *Let's see here.*

"...Rokuko, this is..."

"Wh-What? Is something wrong?"

The instruction manual went as follows.

Name: The Divine Futon (Rokuko's only)

Effect: Whoever uses this bed will be blessed with incredible sleep. They will doubtlessly have wonderful dreams. No matter how tired they are, using this will fully restore their energy and mana. Even if they exercise vigorously before bed, they can go to work the next day without fear. One thousand year guaranteed. (However, if anyone but the owner of this item uses it, they will receive divine punishment.) ※A Note from Father※

This item belongs to Rokuko. Be careful, since only the owner can use it. The kind of divine punishment it inflicts upon anyone but its owner is so scary not even a god would mess with it. You definitely can't use it, Keima. That said. This is to prevent theft or infidelity, so no divine punishment will fall upon a couple with trust in one another sleeping together. Understand? Okay. You know what to do.

Oh man, this note... How is this even real... And what's with the "you know what to do"? Really? But you know, thinking about it, the gods of legend back on Earth sure did cheat a lot. Makes sense that the futons of this world would have anti-cheating systems built in. Gonna be a lot harder to cheat with those.

...But a couple with trust in one another can sleep together. Hmmmm.

"So basically, we can sleep together in it just fine, Keima. Right? Or do you not trust me?"

"That's not what I'm worried about. It says couples. If it's a system to stop cheating, it might not be smart for a non-married couple to sleep together."

"Oh, good point. I forgot I'm still Rokuko Labyrinthart right now. Should I just go ahead and change my name to Rokuko Masuda?"

"I don't think so. Let's not be hasty." *She FORGOT that she's STILL Labyrinthart? Man, she's got her sights totally set on me. I don't dislike Rokuko, but it's only been one year since we met. I'm not in that much of a rush to get married.*

"...Y-You're right. We need to hold a wedding and report our marriage to the chief before we can be an official married couple... oh, wait, you're the town chief!"

"Hold up. I'm pretty sure we'd need to get Haku's permission before any of

that.”

“Mmm, but it feels like Haku kinda likes you, so I don’t think she’ll mind.” *Lies. Complete lies. Haku would kill me on the spot if I gave her the opportunity.*

Suddenly, Rokuko clapped her hands together.

“I know. Why don’t you just become me?”

“Become, you...? Oh, {Ultra Transformation}!” I had one transformation left. *Will transforming into Rokuko let me use the Divine Futon? Is it even possible to fool divinity? Well, considering that this skill also comes from a god, they’re on equal footing there. It’s fifty-fifty. Not to mention that I do trust Rokuko, and Rokuko does trust me. We’re not a married couple, but that’s another fifty-fifty bet. Woah! Add those fifty-fifties together and we’ve got a 100% success rate! Hell yeah!*

“{Ultra Transformation}...! Alright, here we go!” I touched the Divine Bedding, having transformed into Rokuko. I had nothing to fear with a 100% success rate backing me up... nfwaaah! Just touching it made my knees buckle with sleepy bliss!

“Keima, it’s actually embarrassing to see my own face making an expression like that.”

“Oh, whoops. Didn’t notice.” I wiped my mouth in case I had been drooling.

“Do we need to worry about your transformation coming undone while you’re sleeping?”

“Doesn’t seem so. I think the transformation will remain until my mana runs out or I cancel it myself.”

“Okay. Let’s get in bed together, then. That’ll be safest.”

“Oh, nice thinking. Just what I’d expect from my partner.” Any theoretical divine punishment should be halved if I get into the bed with Rokuko. Which means that my 100% success rate has been multiplied into a 200% success rate! *Didja hear that? 200, wow. No way can I lose now.*

Rokuko got into the futon and called me over while flapping its covers. I slid in next to her.

The Divine Futon felt so amazing that I could pore over the life work of a thousand poets for decades and fail to find the proper words to express just a fraction of my satisfaction. If forced to say something, I would say to imagine how good you feel right after waking up. In this futon, it feels that good from start to finish, never stopping. The dream I had was pretty good too, and although I didn't remember it, I vaguely remember a pleasant feeling similar to flying through the sky.

Day 25 of Year 2

When I woke up the next morning, Rokuko's face was right up close to mine. *Okay... It's all coming back to me.*

HOLY SHIIIIIIT! WHAT THE FUCK WAS I THINKING?! I'm alive, right?! I'm alive! No divine punishment? None? Ahhh, but it might be time delayed... 50% plus 50% equals 100%? No, you idiot, that math doesn't make sense. That should be a maximum of 75% at best. And the punishment being divided in half has nothing to do with the success rate. Just how much did this Divine Futon mess with my head?!

And the divine punishment's not the only thing I should have been more careful about. Haku still exists. I'm pretty sure Haku and Rokuko are sharing this bedroom, which means it wouldn't have been odd at all for her to walk in at any moment. The same could be said for right now.

Thus, I left the futon. *Whew, let's see... No bed sweat or anything. Just the cold sweat I just felt.* {Ultra Transformation} seemed to be functioning fine and I was still Rokuko. A loli. Honestly, I was positively overflowing with mana and I got the feeling it would take a long time for my transformation to end on its own. *Is all this mana thanks to the Divine Futon's power?*

"Anyway, looks like I'm alive. For now, anyway." Though my body did smell nice for some reason. Sniff sniff. *I wonder why... Oh, this is Rokuko's scent. It helps that we slept together, but I'm also transformed into her, so yeah. And oh shit. I just full-on sniffed her armpit. I feel kinda guilty.*

"Nmmm... Wait, why's there another me...? Oh, Keima. Morning."

"Oh, awake, huh? Morning, Rokuko."

“...So we’re married now, right?”

“What the hell are you saying?”

“’Cause I mean, you being me means we’re literally the same in body and soul, right? We physically became one last night and slept together... I think this is enough for a common law marriage to hold up. And it’s all thanks to the Divine Futon!”

“No! That’s definitely not how it works!”

“...Come back in, Keima. Let’s fall back asleep together. This futon feels amazing, doesn’t it?” Rokuko smiled at me with flushed cheeks, holding up the futon’s blankets and inviting me inside. *Ngh! Now this is some skilled seduction! She’s holding up the blanket in just the right way, and I can see her feet...! Something in my chest is squeezing tight, what even is this feeling?! My head’s tingling! A-Anyway, I think I need to get out of this form as soon as possible. It’s messing me up. Making my head act weird.*

...But if I leave this transformation, I’ll have no plans for dealing with Haku. I should be able to escape unharmed in Rokuko form even if she finds us like this. With that in mind, I can’t detransform yet. Or at least, I can’t leave this room as “Keima.” Which means I can’t detransform inside this room. I’ll be fine if I go back to my room and detransform there. Alright.

“Aren’t you coming, Keima?”

“S-Sorry, but this can wait until we’re back at our dungeon. This is Haku’s territory and I shouldn’t be in this room. I’m going back to mine.”

“Ahhh... You do have a point. Let’s sleep together again once we go home, okay?”

“Sure.” I turned so hard my hair spun behind me and then left the room, entering the hallway. I had to get back to my room and detransform as soon as possible. But when I took my first step down the hall...

“Oh my, Rokuko.” I reflexively jumped in fear, then turned around to see Haku rubbing her temples, looking sick. *This isn’t that divine punishment, right?*

“Er, uh, h-hi sister!”

“Sorry, dear, but could you not shout so loud...? I have quite the headache.” *Oh crap, I just called her “sister.” Now I’ve got no choice but to trick her.*

“Do forgive me for not making it to bed last night, but the alcohol just kept on flowing. By the time I realized, it was already morning... Ow.”

“Um, do you have a hangover?”

“Indeed. Some quick Restoration magic helped quite a bit, but... oh, that outfit.” That outfit? I looked down and saw I was wearing my jersey. *Oh crap, did she figure it out?*

“I suppose you just woke up as well, then? Gracious. Why aren’t you wearing the cute pajamas I made for you?”

“...Huh? Er, that kind of sounds like I usually sleep wearing a jersey.”

“What’s gotten into you? Of course you always sle—ow, ow.” *Rokuko always sleeps in jerseys? Well, I do remember buying some with DP. I don’t see her sleeping much, but I guess she always sleeps in one when I’m not around? I dunno why she’d do that but I’m not complaining.*

“Now then, shall we go take a bath together?” *Sounds fantastic. Wait, no! I gotta get away from this.*

“S-Sorry, Haku, but I need to go to the bathroom!”

“Oh my. I suppose I shall go with you then.” *Not even the legendary bathroom technique worked?! Ngh, fine. It’s time to unleash my ultimate move.*

“Actually, never mind about the bathroom. Keima’s calling for me, so...”

“Then you most certainly need to change first. You can’t meet him wearing that jersey.”

“But, um, I have to go right now!”

“A proper lady always dresses up before meeting a gentleman. I imagine your dungeon isn’t in danger, and if it were urgent he would contact you directly. Since you don’t need to hurry, prioritize proper dress. I can assure you that Keima is sleeping while waiting for you, so fear not.” *Not even my ultimate technique “My partner needs me” worked?! Wh-What else I can do...*

“Now then, first comes the bath. You can change once you’re clean. I’ll dress you up quite nice and cute. If you wish, I’ll even braid your hair.”

“Er, ah, um, I don’t really think I want to take a bath right now.”

“...Keima will never fall for you if you smell of sweat.”

“AActually, I think Keima might actually like the smell of sweat? But anyway, I’m in a hurry, so just {Purification} should be okay.”

“My my, where’s the fun in that? None, if you ask me. I just had the Hero Workshop create new bath powder for me. We shall clean ourselves amid the soft scent of lillies.”

“Maybe later! Let’s take a long bath together when I have the time!”

“Ow... Again, the yelling does not help. Now then. I didn’t quite hear what you said, but we’ll have all the time in the world to talk once we’re in the bath.” *Jesus Christ. Haku is on an absolute mission to take a morning bath with Rokuko.* Somewhere during the conversation, Haku had grabbed onto my arm. *Just what I’d expect from an A-Rank adventurer... She’s got no openings! What should I do?! What CAN I do?!*

Three options. Please select one.

Option 1: My handsome self thinks up a genius escape plan on the spot.

Option 2: An ally comes and saves me.

Option 3: I fail to escape. Reality is cruel.

Given that I was a Dungeon Master who had defeated Aidy in a battle of wits, I selected option one!

“Well, if you insist. But I want to go change first, so, would you wait here for a second?”

“Hm? Why would you change clothes before going to take a bath?”

“It’s like how eating a snack before breakfast helps with digestion.”

“I wonder about that. But in either case, don’t we usually change together?”

“To me, dressing up before meeting you, Haku, is as important as dressing up before meeting a boy, so... I would be really happy if you waited for me. I’ll be

done really soon—”

“I will wait.” *YEEES!*

“O-Okay, wait right here.” I returned to the bedroom. I then—although it truly pained me—woke up Rokuko from her blissful sleep. *I’m sorry, but this is an emergency. I hope you can forgive me. But you know... This futon looks really great. I’m feeling pretty sleepy, zzz... Wait, crap, crap, crap.*

“Mnhmmm... Keima, eating socks raw will hurt your stomach... You need to boil them in the onsen first...”

“Please, wake up. I’m begging you.”

“Fwaaah... Whaaat...? Did the socks taste good?”

“I’ve never eaten any before. So if you could lend me your socks later, I’d really—wait, never mind. Wake up.”

“...Nmm, hey, Keima. Did you change your mind?”

“Nope, something worse happened.” I explained the situation to Rokuko.

“Fwaah, okay. I just need to go take a bath with Haku myself, then.”

“Yup. And trust me... one day, I’ll repay you for having disturbed your sleep.”

“Will you do anything I ask?”

“If an investigation reveals no potential issues.”

“...Fine, okay. You owe me one,” said Rokuko with a grin as she put the Divine Futon into her {Storage}. Owing her one was kinda scary, but I did what I had to do. Rokuko left the bedroom.

“Sorry to keep you waiting, Haku.”

“My, my! You wore the pajamas for me! Nnnghaah, my head...”

“Are you okay? Let’s get you some water and then go take a bath.” Their footsteps faded into the distance. *Crisis averted. Time to head back to my room.*

I left the bedroom and headed to my own room. *Oh crap, Ichika’s walking this way. She’s yawning.*

“Oh, Rokuko. Wassup.”

“Nothin’ much, girlfriend. Laters!”

“Wait, hold up!” I tried giving a casual greeting and then ignoring her, but she grabbed my shoulder. *Oh Christ. I can’t detransform after giving a girly hello like that. I gotta act like Rokuko again...*

“Rokuko... You had a preeetty good time last night, huh!”

“Wha?! I don’t know what you’re talking about!”

“Girl, you don’t need hide it from me. You had a hot and sweaty night with Master, I know. Heard your loving passion with my own two ears, dude.” *Really? You eavesdropped, Ichika?*

“Couldn’t hear too well through the door, but still. So pretty! Look at it! Lick it, touch it! I heard it all and you two were so lovey-dovey I had a pretty good time just listening, if you know what I mean.”

“I-I really don’t know what you’re talking about! We just both slept in the Divine Futon, that’s all. Platonically!”

“Uh-huh, uh-huh. I get it, you’re embarrassed. But you’re looking super fresh, so it must’ve felt pretty great, huh?”

“That’s just how good the bed was. Different things.”

“Mmmm?” Ichika looked at me (transformed as Rokuko) with a grin. *Why are you looking at me like I’m some kinda cute puppy? Nothing happened, I’m telling you.*

“Anyway, I was just gonna ask you if that little advice I gave you helped out. So? Master totally went head over heels, didn’t he?” *Hey! What’d you tell Rokuko, Ichika?!*

“Mmm, weeelll? Uh-huh, h-he was head over heels, definitely.”

“Rad! Congrats, girl. That’s all I’m here to ask. You know where to come if you need any more advice, yooo.” Ichika nodded in satisfaction and walked away.

“Wait, Ichika! Don’t tell anyone I slept with him, okay?!”

“Oooobvs, girl.” *And don’t just ignore that! Crap, she’s gone. That and meeting Haku definitely weren’t part of the divine punishment, right? I doubt a*

god would be afraid of that... Though being Rokuko has helped alleviate things.

And finally, I reached my room. I went inside and saw Niku folding up a futon.

“Oh, Rokuko. Um... Congratulations?”

“...Who’d you hear it from?”

“I listened through the door, with Ichika. Though I soon left, as I needed to use the bathroom.” *Oh man, Niku too?* I held my head in my hands.

“Errr, how should I explain this...”

“It’s okay. Don’t worry. Now, allow me to give you advice pertaining to Master...”

“Wha?” *Advice about me? This I’ve gotta hear. Let’s wait a bit and see what she has to say.*

“The first thing to Master as a dakimakura is to go to the bathroom and drink no water after that. Master rarely wakes up during the night, but even so, it does not take much to awaken him when it’s bright out or he’s already woken up once. In those cases you cannot leave to go to the bathroom, which can be fairly rough.” *Uhhh... Dang, looks like she’s had a hard time. Sorry. Go ahead and use the toilet whenever you need to.*

“In addition, Master won’t wake up no matter how much you lick or sniff him. Once he falls asleep, he’s yours to play with.”

“What?!”

“You can even give him love bites. The flavor can be addicting. You can judge whether he’s close to waking up by how he reacts to bites. You’ll master it over time. Oh, but it’s important to wipe up your saliva after licking.” *Niku, what the hell are you doing to me at night...? But I mean, I guess that much is fine. Puppies lick their owners all the time, and I touch her dog ears, so yeah.*

“Next. Here is what you’ll want to do when he gets hard.”

“Stop.” *Uh... I get hard at night? Really?*

“That is simply how men are. Ichika assured me of this. It gets especially hard in the morning.”

“...So, what do you do when it gets hard?”

“First, take his legs and—”

“Okay, stop. I don’t want to hear it.” *What. Why is this little girl “dealing with” my morning wood? God, can you hear me? Is this divine punishment? Oh, I did this to myself?*

“...This is an important part, but I understand. It is hard to describe with words, and before long I will have an opportunity to show you in person.”

“What are you planning?!”

“First, spread his legs apart, so they don’t get in the way when y—”

“Sorry, I wasn’t actually asking for specifics, that was just bad phrasing.” *Man, I really hope Niku’s not acting on the “sexual tool” meaning of her name here. I’m too scared to ask. Fuck you, divine punishment. This is all your fault.*

“Don’t worry, Rokuko. You’ll be fine.”

“E-Errr, what do you mean?”

“If even I can do it, you will have more than enough room.” *Room for what.....?* “Hm? Room to be his dakimakura.”

“R-Right.” *Anyway, when should I turn back to normal? I get the feeling nothing good’s gonna happen if I stay like this. Crap, I guess Rokuko’s insane luck didn’t get copied by {Ultra Transformation!} This sucks.*

And so, although it was pretty awkward, I decided to transform back to normal.

Okay, done. My jersey fit me perfectly again.

“...M... Master...?!” Niku panicked. I watched her flounder all over the place for a bit, and eventually she sat down. Then, she bowed her head incredibly low. *Man, she sure is an expert at groveling.*

“.....”

“You can lift your head.”

“...Understood.”

“So, what do you do to me while I’m sleeping?”

“Um, well. I... I lick you, and bite you... a-and call you daddy...” *Did she just say... Daddy? Well, I guess that makes sense. Niku’s still just a kid. She’s young enough to miss her parents. And her memories are vague enough that she can barely remember them. I can understand why she’d look at my similarly black hair and want to call me dad. I’m not that old, but I am a dude. I’ll try and make this work.*

“Alright. You can call me daddy every now and again.”

“Wha?! You... You don’t mind?”

“You’re a hard worker and you do good stuff. You never get pushy about things, which is nice, but... I do think you deserve more rest and rewards than you’re getting. Especially since you’re a kid.” I hugged Niku. Gently, like a father. I rubbed her head as I did so, and Niku wagged her tail.

“Okay, so is there anything you want? Daddy will see what he can do.”

“W-Well, um... Please let me bite your ear.”

“...My ear?”

“Is that, a no...?”

“Of course not. Bite it to your heart’s content. You can even lick it if you want!”

“...Yes!” She got to work absolutely devouring my ear. Man, I sure let out a weird noise when she stuck her tongue into my ear hole.

Rokuko’s Perspective

I left the party to check the gift that Father had given me. On my way, I glanced at Keima. *I wouldn’t mind giving it to Keima, but I’m using it first! Father did say it was a gift for me, so.*

I returned to my room and summoned the Divine Futon that Father had given me. It plopped right out of the menu.

“Wow, so this is the Divine Futon... It feels super nice. But not thaaat amazing, I guess?” With a plop, a letter and a box fell out of it. *A box...? The letter must*

be the instruction manual Father mentioned. The Divine Futon could wait. I went ahead and opened the letter. Inside was an instruction manual that Father had written.

“Ummm, let’s see here.”

Name: Divine Futon (Owner: Rokuko)

Effect: You can sleep with anyone you wish. Fate itself will be manipulated, and none will interfere until morning. If it is physically impossible to meet the one you wished for, you will meet in your dreams instead. Note: This effect can be used only once per 8760 hours (365 days). Note: As the one you wish for will be summoned against their will, they may arrive feeling confused or disjointed. This will recover by morning.

The dreams you have will be shared with them. You can freely select the contents of the dreams. The owner of the bedding has priority here. Note: The owner can select whether the memories of these dreams will be retained.

If you sleep within this futon for over one hour, all of your strength and mana will be restored. Even if you sleep for less than one hour, you will still regain some of both. Injuries are not cured. Note: If one other than the owner sleeps in this futon without permission, their strength and mana are drained instead.

Additionally, sleeping in this futon makes it more likely for convenient things to happen to the owner. The extent of this depends on the owner’s luck.

A Note From Father: This is a present from your father to you, Rokuko! Ah, the present box itself is just a bonus. Be sure to put the futon into the box before showing it to Keima. I included a fake instruction manual on the underside of the box’s cover. You should show that one to him instead. I wrote that only your husband can sleep in this futon, Rokuko. The rest is up to you. Try and take things to the next level so he can’t escape. Also, this letter disappears on its own, so be careful.

“W-Wow, those are some amazing effects. This really is the Divine Futon... wait, it disappears?” The letter vanished with a poof after I finished reading it all. *Well... That’s Father for you. I don’t really understand him! Anyway, time to try out this Divine Futon.* I put a hand on the futon and... *How should I make my wish? I guess I’ll just try saying it.*

"...Oh mighty futon, oh mighty futon. I want to sleep with Keima." Actually saying that felt kinda embarrassing. But the futon shined. That seemed to have done it.

"Wait, that means Keima's coming, right? I need to get this into the present box..." I pressed the futon against the box and it got sucked right in. Once I put the cover on it, I was done. *Oh... I should put this box into {Storage}.*

...Wait, I haven't changed! I'm not ready! I need to change before Keima gets here. Ummm, I shouldn't wear my usual jersey. I'd be super embarrassed if Keima found out I was wearing his clothes to match him. Haku made that, um, negligee(?) for me, so I'll just change into that. Mph, haah, plop. Done! Oh, it's kind of transparent. Mmm... Well, okay! I have underwear on, it's fine.

Oh right, I need to wear cute socks for Keima. Aaah, but he's already on his way here! Maybe I should just go barefoot? Actually, that's probably for the best, since we're getting in bed! And Ichika told me I should show him my bare feet! I sat on the bed, this time completely ready. I waited for Keima, excited.

After a bit, someone knocked on my door.

"Who is it?"

"It's me." *He's here! Keima actually came!* I opened the door.

"Th-There you are, Keima. I've been waiting."

"Yep. Here I am." Keima smoothly knelt in front of me. And then. "Please show me the Divine Beddiiiing!" He groveled in front of me. *Honestly, I can't tell if this is him getting disjointed or if it's just him being normal.*

* * *

Now then. Keima was sleeping soundly beside me. He looked like me, but he was definitely Keima. I stroked his cheeks. Then, I touched his lips. Normally, whenever I tried to kiss Keima, I'd end up hitting his cheek or nose, but this time, I got the feeling I wouldn't miss.

I straddled Keima, taking care not to wake him up. My heart was pounding. *Calm down, me. Keima's sleeping. There's plenty of time.*

I slowly lowered my face to his. Thirty centimeters. Twenty. Ten, five. Keima's

breath tickled my face. We were so close. I angled my chin to precise coordinates in order to avoid kissing his nose.

I shut my eyes. I could hear Keima's breath right next to me. I steeled my resolve and lowered my face further...

...*Kiss.*

Soft lips touched mine. Our noses rubbed together. The ticklish sensation sent sparks through my head and wet my eyes... fwaah! I threw my head back and opened my eyes.

"I did it, I did it...! F-Finally!" I opened my eyes, and saw myself sleeping beneath me. That kinda killed the mood a little.

"Zzz..."

"...It's like I'm looking at a mirror." Keima was asleep, looking exactly like me. *Wait. Does this mean I didn't technically kiss Keima?* I poked Keima's cheek. *Yep, that's my face.*

Well, whatever. I'll steal Keima's real lips next time! For now, the dream. Maybe I should make it one where I tease Keima a lot? I could make him wear bunny suits and stuff!



Extra Episode - Will This Boost Morale? Swimsuits at the Beach!

Although we had gained a new dungeon by the ocean, it was too early in the spring for a swimsuit beach party. Yep. That sure was something I thought in the past.

“What’s all this about seasons? Just make the area around the beach dungeon territory and set it to summertime.” Haku was a genius. And we had plenty of DP available to follow up on that plan. Thus, a new branch dungeon known as the [Ivory Secret Spot] (named by Haku) was suddenly born next to the [Ivory Beach].

At a glance, it looked like a normal normal log house. Officially, it was merely a point for faster communication between Haku’s dungeon and ours. But in reality, it was a dungeon born entirely out of my crude desire to see Rokuko in a bikini and enjoy the summer beach whenever I wanted!

An ivory beach that was always experiencing summer. Haku’s army of beautiful women. And finally, all the hotties that worked for the [Cave of Greed]. What a beautiful sight. So beautiful it might be too much for me, the guy who usually spends all day sleeping.

“Keima! What do you think about this outfit? Cute, right?”

“Mm, yeah. Real cute.” Rokuko puffed out her chest with pride. She was wearing a white bikini that exposed a lot of skin. She’d probably end up sunburned and in a lot of pain later. Haku, who was also looking at Rokuko, wore a white one-piece bathing suit. *Haku... You may be giving a dignified smile, but blood is gushing out of your nose and ruining it.*

“My sweet Rokuko is too radiant for you to look at, Keima. Please crush your eyeballs immediately.”

“No thanks.” *Alright, I’ll just look at the others.*

“I heard that this was a swimsuit for children.”

“I’m a kid at heart, so it’s okay! And white is an adult’s color, so it’s all

okaaay!” For some reason, Niku was wearing a school swimsuit (navy blue), as was Misha (white). It was hard to tell whether they were on good or bad terms. *Oh, are those tail holes? Must be specially made for beastkin. Nice.*

“That lab coat looks fairly nice with a swimsuit.”

“I’m curious about what’s going on under your skiiiirt. Can I loooook?” Amelia was wearing a hefty bra and a frilly skirt that left her snake tail entirely exposed, while Neruneh was wearing a black one-piece with her witch’s hat and white lab coat. I felt that they had similarly relaxed personalities.

“Chloe, is this a suitable location for the parasol and chairs?”

“Yes, Kinue. But would you pull the table up about ten centimeters closer?” Kinue wouldn’t take off her maid outfit, and the cross-dressing succubus Chloe remained in her butler suit. *These two are, well, yeah. No helping this. They love their work.*

“Wow, so like, now you’re living with this Pamella guy? Kinda weird name, but okay.”

“That’s right. He said that he wished to marry me, even though our lifespans are so far apart.” Ichika was wearing a two-piece green bathing suit. *Pretty normal stuff, finally.* In contrast, Sally the Living Armor was in her human form and wearing bikini armor. *Wait, seriously? She’s a Living Armor and she’s wearing a separate suit of armor? I don’t get it.*

“...I wish the sun would just burn up... and the ocean waves would stop...”

“Why couldn’t we come here later...?” And finally, Rei was wearing a black bikini, looking exhausted beneath a parasol alongside Dolce, who was wearing a white hoodie. *Makes sense for a Vampire and a Wraith. They may have resistance to the sun, but they live in the darkness. Can’t blame ’em for not being too happy here.*

With all that said, I was the only dude on the beach. Well, Phenny and Mr. Tent were technically guys? So correction. I was the only human dude on the beach. Everywhere I looked I saw flashes of bare feminine skin. *Hmm, how do I make it out of here alive? I could just keep my eyes shut. Heeey, Kinue! Do you have a parasol and chair for me too?*

“Now then, shall we enjoy the beach to our hearts’ content? We can rest in the beach house if we get tired.” Haku pointed at the nearby shack. *Oh, right. Beach house. I thought it really was just a normal log house, but I see it serves a dual function here.*

“By the way, I placed a Silky in charge of the beach house. While I was at it, I made her into a Named Monster called Post, and she is the Dungeon Boss of this [Ivory Secret Spot].”

“You sure have DP to spare...”

“Now then, Keima. I will grant you the right to do one of these three things: have a nice nap at the beach, rub and lick Post’s feet, or play with Rokuko and the others. Choose.” *Wha?! What’s with these options? It’s not like Haku to throw me a bone like this. There’s probably a trap thrown in here. I know Haku never does anything nice without there being a trap hidden somewhere.*

“...I’m more or less this group’s supervisor, so option three.”

“Tch, I wanted to wander off with Rokuko on our own, but if you insist...” *Oh man, I knew it was a trap. Her suggestions were really just trying to lure me away from Rokuko. But that said, I didn’t want Haku to get revenge on me for interfering here, so I’ll just smooth things over.*

“Well, I’m gonna be lying down over by that parasol, so you can go play with Rokuko however you want.”

“Oh my, truly? Then do that I shall. Rokukoooo, let’s swim together! If you don’t know how to swim, I can teach you. Let’s go!” The moment I said that, Haku ran off toward Rokuko, her large boobs bouncing as she did. She was running super fast considering it was the beach. Her slender, athletic legs were the perfect fit for her beautiful feet that practically glided over the sand. Truly, the feet of a goddess.

“Bwuh?! Um, o-okay...! What about Keima?”

“It seems that he’ll be observing everyone’s feet from over there.” *C’mon, seriously?*

“Ah, that sounds like Keima.” *Why are you buying that, Rokuko?*

Anyway. After that.

“Let’s race to see who can swim to that cliff faster, dog! If you lose, stop copying my fashion and strip off that bathing suit!”

“...Fine. If I win, you’ll strip off yours.”

“Do you think that a pup that can only dog paddle could possibly beat my front crawl? Hmmm?”

“Say that after removing the inefficient melons on your chest.”

Misha and Niku raced to a cliff about five kilometers away. Niku lost, stripped, and for some reason, Misha ended up stripping as well.

“There’s so many water materiaaals... Aaah, I want to bring it all home to experiment wiiith...”

“Heeey, Neruneeeh, you’re about to leave the dungeon territory, girl. It’s really cold out there. Let’s just fish instead, fish! Let’s steal food right out the water! We can even go diving for more!”

Neruneh and Ichika went fishing for food, but nearly got lost.

“Is this the volleyball game that Keima suggested? It seems to take a lot of energy.”

“Ultimate move, Cobra Block! What’re you gonna do about it, Sally?!”

“Wha, Amelia, is that even fair? You can block anything if you stand on your tail!”

“Ahahaha, this is my ultimate strategy born from exploiting a loophole in the ru—ow! Hey, don’t aim for my boobs! My swimsuit will come off!”

Some of them played team volleyball.

“Everyone, the barbecue’s reaaady.”

“Oooh, a Minotaur barbecue cooked with the flames of a Phoenix! My stomach’s going crazy!”

“Is there any Phoenix meat, meow?”

“Phenny’s not for eating! Oh, this sliced jelly stuff tastes pretty good.”

“Ah, Rokuko. That is the sliced tentacle of a Tentacle Slime. It boosts vitality.”

Phenny, Kinue, and Chloe started a combo barbecue.

“Haku. I... I think playing with sand is the real appeal of a beach.”

“D-Don’t worry! You’ll learn to swim in no time! I’ll save you even if you start to drown! Actually, Dungeon Cores don’t need air, so it’s not even possible for you to drown.”

Apparently, Haku was trying to cheer Rokuko up after failing to teach her to swim.

What’d I do? Basically just slept and ate some barbecue. Got something to say? Alright, alright, look. Sure, there were lots of bare feet, but they were covered in sand or blocked by water. The best I got was the bottom of Rei and Dolce’s feet as they laid beneath their parasol.

“Come on, Keimaaa! We came all this way to the beach, don’t just sleep! Play with me!” Eventually, though, my peaceful sleep was interrupted by Rokuko, Niku, and Haku. *Uh... Niku, what’s with that seashell bikini? Rest in peace, school swimsuit.* Haku looked pretty satisfied, so I could guess she and Rokuko had spent a lot of time together.

“Ehhhh... Alright. What do you wanna do?”

“Let’s make a sand castle!”

“Lame, we just made a whole dungeon in the sand. Let’s swim instead.”

“Th-The ocean’s not for swimming. The water’s full of salt, the waves hit your face, and something kept grabbing my legs.” *Oh yeah, ghost-type monsters were cheaper around this part of the beach... Are there ghosts here?*

“Okay, how about a boat? It could go pretty fast with a monster shark pulling it. Sounds fun, right? I remember seeing an inflatable raft in the Catalog... There it is. 500 DP, sure.” I bought an inflatable raft from the Catalog. It had no engine and was the kind you used oars to move. Aaand then I bought an air pump, summoned a Clay Golem with {Create Golem}, and had it fill the raft with air.

“Wow, that’s cool. It’s a boat that swells up when you put air in it.”

“Yeah. Too bad it’s kinda hard and time-consuming to fill it with air.” But we

had a golem with infinite energy helping us, so the boat was ready in no time.

“Okay, let’s head out to the ocean.”

“Yaaay! Okay, Keima, let’s go! This beach is ours! Niku, bring the boat.”

“Understood.”

Okay, now I just need to have the shark under our control pull the boat and I can sleep on the waves as much as I want. Huh? You thought this was buildup to a Kraken popping up and initiating some friendly tentacle rape? Too bad. Haku would take care of any monsters that popped up, so yeah, we were fine.

* * *

Night fell without much happening after that.

Sure, Haku got seasick on the boat and fell on top of me, burying my face in her massive chest. Sure, Rokuko slipped and fell with her crotch landing on my face. Sure, Niku’s seashell bikini vanished in the wind and was never seen again. But really, that’s all small stuff... Nothing much happened. Nothing at all.

Like, did a Kraken appear, and when Haku hit it with a {Fireball}, did the blast pop a hole in the boat? Did the Kraken get mad and try to tentacle rape me of all people for some reason? No. Nothing happened.

If you asked whether or not we replaced the inflatable raft with a normal wood boat that then got replaced with another boat Haku summoned, well, I don’t know what I’d tell you.

“It seems that Kraken was female, then,” said Haku as she cooked Kraken meat. *What in the world is she talking about, I wonder...?*

“Hyaaaaahaaah! It’s finally niiiiight!”

“We are now invincible, the strongest, the rulers of the laaaand!” Rei and Dolce blasted the air with enthusiastic spells and illusion magic. Boom, pow, baaam.

“A day at the beach is best ended with fireworks indeed. A Hero summoned in the past once said so.”

“Ahhh, I guess the fireworks of this world are just magic.” Haku went off to

join the fireworks battle. She really went all out to show off to Rokuko. *By the way, I could buy fireworks with DP, but... I guess I shouldn't? I'll try and keep my gunpowder usage to places where Haku can't see.*

"Hey, Keima."

"Hm? What's up, Rokuko?"

"We played a lot and had tons of fun today. Let's come to the beach with everyone again someday!"

"...Yeah, sounds good. And I mean, we can come whenever we want now that we have the [Ivory Beach]."

"Well, you know, I also wouldn't mind coming with just, j-just you," said Rokuko as she clung to my arm. We were both in our bathing suits, so there was a lot of skin contact going on... *Oh fuck, Haku's looking this way.*

"....."

"....."

And so, our first day at the beach came to a close beneath a sparkly sky of magic fireworks, with Rokuko grinning happily and me sweating in utter terror.

As an aside, Rokuko ended up with killer sunburn since she hadn't put on any sunscreen, but she cured it in a snap with {Healing}. Magic sure is something else.

Afterword

Hell yeah! Thanks to you guys, we made it to volume five! Thank you all. This really is thanks to you readers. By the way, doing the web polls and sending fan letters or thoughts to the address posted online both look really good to my publisher, so doing either of those are legitimate ways to support me. Okay, okay. That's just a joke to start off this afterword.

I'm not actually given that much time to write an afterword, so I'm just gonna write what comes to mind on the spot. This time I have four pages, so I'm gonna go on for a while.

Okay. Let's start with some sweet lore for volume five. This volume had tons of new characters, but they're basically all Dungeon Cores. Leeet's see, one, two... About eighteen of them were Dungeon Cores. I'd be rich if I were paid each time I introduced a character, but I'm not, and most of them are background mobs. Only Core 666, Aidy, was given a character design.

About Aidy. The truth is, she's a character I thought up in the planning stages of Lazy Dungeon Master, before I started writing anything. I even thought of her before Rokuko. There was a big chance that this story would have starred her instead of Rokuko. But I eventually settled on Rokuko, since she was an easier character to write and the plot would have a more natural direction. Aidy would have been really frustrated if paired up with someone passive like Keima, since he avoids fighting when he can. Though that could have been fun to see.

Next, about Core 5. He wasn't illustrated, but he's a Black Dragon. He leads the faction which most reptile Cores belong to, including Ittetsu. Core 5 views Haku as his greatest enemy, but most of the Cores in the Dragon King Faction are mainly just exasperated with that and wish he would stop bothering. So yeah, it's a pretty peaceful faction. Core 5 earns a lot of respect since he takes good care of his juniors.

His dungeon has Dragons as its main fighting force and is basically "might makes right" personified. The weakest monsters there are Wyverns, and you can't walk two steps without seeing a Dragon. It's incredibly dangerous. Traps? Who needs 'em! It's an old-style dungeon in that way, and adventurers use it as

a place to test their strength. Also, his dungeon is positioned on a leyline, so he gets tons of DP just from that. Anyway, that's the kind of dungeon he has.

Core 6, being the Demon Emperor, owns human farms and when necessary picks fights with the Laverio Empire to acquire more livestock (humans). The Cores of his faction trade and make their own human farms. They exchange stronger humans, which give more DP, as practical breeding bulls. Weak humans are killed. Aidy's master managed to survive amid all those horrors. Thinking about it, he's in a pretty intense position.

Incidentally, the Demon King Cores hold a huge tournament where they fight to see who is the strongest. The winning Core receives the praise of the Demon Emperor and all the DP gathered by the participants. Their dungeons tend to be Demon King castles with the insides modified to be more dungeon-like. They have plenty of traps, but not many monsters. As the dungeons are castles, servants are always running around through them. To conquer them, you have to go through a boss rush of the dungeon's Four Heavenly Kings to reach the Demon King's throne. Yep. The dungeons were pretty much designed for Heroes to feel like they're conquering a classic Demon King castle.

Well, that's all from me this time. Let's meet again in Volume 6.

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Lazy Dungeon Master: Volume 5

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Lazy Dungeon Master