

## The Death Mage Who Doesn't Want a Fourth Time

Del capítulo 280 al capítulo 301

Chapter 280 - The empire of law is burned by the storm

Vandalieu planned to directly reach Botin's seal and remove it before defeating Gorn and his allies. The objective of this plan was to remove the seal on Botin while preventing Gorn and his allies from realizing that Vandalieu and his companions were cornered, keeping them under the impression that Alda's protection of Botin remained intact.

Vandalieu and his companions were capable of defeating Gorn and his allies in a head-on battle. It would be a fierce battle, and much would have to be expended for it, though the enemies who were not so individually powerful might scatter during the battle.

It was also possible that they could defeat Gorn and his allies through the alternative method of laying a trap for them. But there was a chance that they or Alda would try something reckless if they were driven into a corner.

After all, Gorn and his allies did not believe that Vandalieu was here to remove the seal on Botin. They were under the impression that he was here to devour Botin's soul.

The loss of the subordinate gods whose souls Vandalieu had devoured so far was a great one, but such gods were not irreplaceable. It would take thousands or perhaps tens of thousands of years, but the gods' ranks could be replenished through the selection of believers who were worthy of ascending to godhood.

However, it was nearly impossible to replace a great god such as Botin. The process of replacing such a god was the same as the one for replacing a subordinate god, but there were no mortals who were capable of ascending to becoming a great god. It was possible that one could ascend to become a subordinate god, then undergo further growth from that point to become a great god, but... that would be impossible even on a timescale of even a hundred thousand years.

This much was clear if one looked at the example of Farmaun Gold. He was one of the champions and the founder of the Adventurers' Guild, but he had not matched Zantark, the War-God of Fire and Destruction, in any aspect other than strength in combat.

That was precisely why Alda and his subordinates, who were under the impression that Botin would support them once she woke from her slumber, had to avoid losing her at all costs.

There was no telling what lengths they would go to in order to defeat Vandalieu if they were cornered in that situation.

There were demigods who weren't a part of the force guarding the Demon King's Continent because they were culling monsters to prevent the spread of Devil's Nests in uninhabited lands, or because they were guarding seals on evil gods and fragments of the Demon King. These demigods would surely come in a time of desperation, and it was even possible that Alda would use one of the pseudo-Divine Realms to descend himself.

Vandalieu wanted to avoid a situation where he would have to fight such enemies while simultaneously removing the Demon King's seal on Botin.

... In addition, it was unclear as to whether Botin really would become an ally of Vida once she was freed.

Peria, the Goddess of Water and Knowledge, had granted Juliana her divine protection and sent her a Divine Message to remove the seal on Botin, so Peria was certain to cooperate with Vida's faction.

However, there was almost no information to base decisions on when it came to Botin. After all, she had been sealed for the entirety of the hundred thousand years that had passed since the battle against the Demon King.

The only piece of information available was the fact that a hundred thousand years ago, she had chosen Hillwillow as her champion, a creation-oriented champion like Zakkart.

However, Borgadon, the God of Mountains who was one of her subordinate gods, had assured Vandalieu and his companions that Botin would not see them as enemies attack them without asking any questions... despite the fact that Vandalieu was host to a countless number of Demon King fragments and many of his companions were Undead.

Botin was the Mother-Goddess of the Earth, so she had a rough side to her, but she was also the patron deity of craftsmen. Though she did get angry, she was not a goddess with a short temper.

"The surface area of Gartland is a third of the surface area of the Demon King's Continent, though it was built away from Botin's seal and extends past the continent's edge," said Vandalieu. "But if we dig from the wall, we should be able to dig a tunnel that connects to Botin."

"That is precisely correct," agreed Mayor Yurak, who was still wearing the headbands that were given out to fans during the concert. "However, the bedrock of the wall is hard, and we must dig for tens of thousands of meters. In addition, there is no doubt that hundreds or thousands of monsters will appear from within the earth. Personally, I cannot approve any operation that jeopardizes Gartland's peace."

Though my mood is elevated from the wonderful stage performance I just witnessed, that will never change.”

Gartland, being a vast subterranean space, had a different environment from that on the surface. It did rain, but there were no typhoons, tornadoes, or lightning strikes to worry about. Parts of the walls and ceiling collapsed every time there was a large earthquake.

As Gartland had been created by and was supported by the gods who protected it, no large-scale cave-ins happened. However, that did not mean that cave-ins did not happen at all; on some occasions, several house-sized boulders would come falling down.

Up until now, such falling boulders had been dealt with by destroying them with spells or martial skills. However, if Vandalieu were to begin a large-scale tunnel-digging operation, it was possible that the ceiling would have cave-ins on a scale that could not be easily dealt with.

“I’ll be meticulously careful as I dig. I’ll consult with Povaz and the other gods at regular intervals, and keep an eye on the state of the ceiling and walls as I proceed,” said Vandalieu.

“I see. That is reassuring,” said Yurak.

As Yurak was being guided by Vandalieu, he believed his words immediately. He was aware that Vandalieu was capable of conversing directly with the gods, and he had learned that a number of Gartland’s inhabitants had received the mysterious Divine Protection of a being whose name had parts like “V,” “a,” “n,” “da,” “l,” and even “ieu.” Yurak himself had received such a divine protection as well.

“And as for the monsters that appear... I have no concerns about your ability to exterminate them, but please do not cause any large explosions. I shall provide you with our current records of what kind of monsters may appear,” Yurak said. “Also, just in case, please exterminate some of the monsters in our Dungeon, where there are the same kinds of monsters that will appear from within the earth, so that everyone can feel at ease.”

“Very well,” said Vandalieu.

And so, the operation to dig a tunnel from Gartland to reach Botin’s seal began.

“But before that, I want to visit the settlements of each race, so could you please write letters of recommendation for me?” Vandalieu asked.

Yurak was just the mayor of the town around the underground lake, not the leader of all of Gartland.

Since Vandalieu was about to begin an operation that would affect all of Gartland, he thought that it would be best to talk to the other important people here.

“If you wish to find Zorg-dono, the leader of the Snow Ice Titans, after watching the concert with me, he for some reason declared that he would have a drinking contest with Borkus-dono at the bar. And I have been told that the Androscorpion and Glaistig leaders will arrive in this town tomorrow,” said Yurak. “I believe it likely that they have been sent Divine Messages from the gods. We had noticed that something was taking place on the surface, after all.”

It seemed that the leaders would be coming here instead, and there was no need for Vandalieu and his companions to walk around and visit the other settlements.

Around the time that the excavation project in Gartland began, the capital of Duke Marme’s realm, one of the cities of the Amid Empire, was on fire, and its air was filled with its people’s screams.

The screams were screams of joy, however.

“Gold coins! It’s raining gold coins!”

“Pick them up! Hurry and pick them up!”

Haggard people wearing shabby clothes were frantically picking up the gold coins and gemstones raining down from the sky.

“I have plenty, so don’t fight each other over them. Here, I’m going to throw them this way now, so don’t stand right below,” said a woman wearing a veil over her face, who was floating in the air, scattering gold freely down below her.

The woman’s hair was hidden, but her physique suggested that she was a Dwarf. She was flying around the slum district, scattering gold as she went.

“Blessings, we’re blessed! Thank you so much!” cried one grateful resident.

But though some were thankful, there were others who were trying to shoot the Dwarf woman down with arrows – the guards who maintained order in the city.

“Damn it, hurry up and shoot her down!” one of them shouted.

“You thief, pretending to be all righteous! That gold is property of Duke Marme!” shouted another.

The guards fired arrows at the Dwarf woman, but their aim could not keep up with her dance-like movements; they buried themselves in the wall of the building behind her instead.

“I told you, the fact that it belongs to the duke is precisely why I’m scattering it around,” the woman said.

“Hey, watch out! ‘Whirlwind Kick!’”

The Dwarf woman performed a kick that produced a gust of wind, blowing away the arrows that had been flying towards the people who were busy picking up the gold she was scattering.

The wind produced by her kick caused the guards to fall over and roll across the ground.

“That’s dangerous! If you’re going to aim at anyone, aim at me! If you don’t, I’ll kill you where you stand!”

the Dwarf woman yelled, with anger and a murderous intent in her voice.

The captain of the guards made a terrified noise. “This force of presence... and that ‘Unarmed Fighting Technique’ martial skill! Could it be, the ‘Storm of Tyranny’ –”

“There’s no need to be nosy!” said Merdin of the ‘Storm of Tyranny’ as she sent another shockwave kick at the guards, just powerful enough to scatter them without killing them.

Meanwhile, some distance away from the slum district, a tragedy was unfolding at the church of Alda that faced the main street’s plaza.

A man whose body looked like a single mass of solid muscle was holding the church’s head priest in the air by the neck with one hand, and he was surrounded by a group of priest-warriors.

“Impossible! Why, why is the sacred light not working?!” one of them shouted in disbelief.

“Is he really a Vampire?! He’s not a Kijin or a Titan?!” shouted another.

“Oh dear. How impolite of you to accuse a guest of being a member of a different race. As you can see, I am but an ordinary Vampire,” said Zod – otherwise known as Zorcodrio, the Abyssal Pure-breed Vampire – as he crushed the head priest’s neck in his hand.

His smile grew deeper as fresh blood sprayed into the air.

“H-how dare you do such a thing to the head priest!” one of the priest-warriors shouted in rage.

“Fool! Don’t get near him!” one of his companions warned.

But the enraged priest-warrior charged at Zod, mace raised. “‘Super Rapid Reaction!’ ‘Surpass Limits!’ ‘Familiar Spirit Descent!’ ‘Heavy Strength Breaker!’ Die, you filthy monster!”

With his physical abilities enhanced by his ‘Armor Technique’ martial skill and the effects of his Skills, as well as the familiar spirit descended upon him, the priest-warrior activated his ‘Club Technique’ Skill and swung his mace down.

The mace sank into Zod’s body. The priest-warrior smiled, believing that he had done it.

But the damage inflicted by this all-out attack was nothing more than a scratch to Zod.

“A formidable strike, considering that it has done damage to my body,” Zod remarked.

The priest-warrior’s eyes opened wide in shock, and the blood drained from his face.

“Damn it! Attack him with whatever you can! Create an opportunity for him to get out!” shouted one of the other men, who appeared to be the leader of the priest-warriors, desperately trying to save his subordinate.

Zod’s body trembled as it was struck by the ‘Air Bullet’ projectiles cast by the priest-warriors.

The priest-warriors took this as a sign that their attacks were working, and the priest-warrior who had swung his mace at Zod earlier, seeing his opportunity, began running to fall back.

“‘Filthy monster’... You people are the ones who oppress and sometimes even kill others, even if they are pregnant women or young children, simply because they are of different races, and yet I am the filthy monster... Very well,” Zod murmured.

The trembling movements of his body grew faster and larger. When pale blue sparks began to appear, the priest-warriors realized that his trembling had been a preparation for an attack.

“Then I shall show you what a monster can do! ‘God’s Roar!’” Zod shouted in rage, using his ‘Muscle Technique’ and unleashing powerful lightning from his muscles.

The lightning contained enough power to pierce the defensive spells and armor of the priest-warriors, turning their bodies into ash.

Zorcodrio was a Pure-breed Vampire... and a demigod who had lived for a hundred thousand years. He possessed power equivalent to that of Colossi, Elder Dragons, and Beast-Kings.

On top of that, he had mutated into an Abyssal Pure-breed Vampire by consuming Vandalieu’s blood. No ordinary mortals, no matter how elite they were, stood a chance against him.

In the treasure house of the church, which had been set ablaze by Zod’s lightning, there was a masked man and woman... Dalton, a Dark Elf, and Lissana, an Elf who was the reincarnated form of Jurizanapipe, the Evil God of Degeneration and Intoxication.

“Zod is going pretty wild,” Dalton said as the pair searched for the thing that they had come here for.

“You’d think he’d calm down a little after getting a wife and child, but don’t you think his boiling point has actually gotten lower?”

“I’m sure he’s thinking, what if those who were killed were his own wife and children?” said Lissana. “It’s nice and human-like, isn’t it... it’s not good that he seems to be forgetting why we’re here, though.”

“Human-like, huh... There were so many humans here, and I don’t think any of *them* thought like that

when they killed members of other races, did they?" Dalton said in disgust.

"That's human-like too. In a bad way, though. Well, they *are* humans, after all," said Lissana as she continued searching for the object they sought.

She threw chests filled with gems and gold coins into her Magic Bag, and examined paintings and sculptures a little before throwing them in as well.

"Aren't you forgetting our objective as well?" said Dalton, giving her an accusatory look.

"No, I'm not! It's just, don't you think that it would be a waste for these to be buried here with the rubble?" said Lissana, avoiding making eye contact with Dalton. "Ah, I found it!" she said, finally discovering the mechanism that opened an entrance to a secret chamber.

"I guess the head priest of this place didn't want to put it along with the riches he'd been hoarding. Let's see... just one fragment, huh. A pretty poor haul," Dalton sighed.

"There are three sealed evil gods, too. Let's just take the fragment with us. The seals look like they'll break if we move them."

"Are you sure? What if they're actually on Vida's side?"

"Hmm... There's no chance of that. I checked; all three of them were in the Demon King's army. I mean, it's possible that we could convince them to join us, but it would take a lot of effort to seal them up again if we tried and failed, and Vandalieu isn't here."

And so, with just the sealed Demon King fragment in hand, the two of them left the crumbling church of Alda.

But the house of Duke Marme, who ruled this land in the name of the emperor, did not stay silent over such great crimes – One was taking place at another location, and knights were on the scene in response.

They were forcibly silenced by a certain masked man, one by one.

"You bastard! Curse –" one of them began, but in the next moment, the masked man's fist crushed his skull.

"You lowly adventurer –" shouted another, before the masked man tore through his chest with an overarm swing.

"Spare me! I'll pay you as much as you –" said a third, begging for his life as he tried to flee.

The masked man swept his legs out from under him and then crushed him underfoot.

But it seemed that the knights were aware of the masked man's identity.

"Th-the 'Thunderclap' Schneider! Do you think these actions will be forgiven, even from you?!" shouted the man who seemed to be the captain of Duke Marme's order of knights.

Schneider gave a snort. "If they won't be forgiven, then what? Are you going to capture me, put me in prison and then execute me in public?" he said tauntingly.

"Damn it! Y-you bastard...!" the knight captain cursed, unable to say anything in response.

After all, Schneider was currently causing all of this chaos right inside Duke Marme's mansion.

The 'Storm of Tyranny' had not conducted any surprise attack. They had shown up, without hiding, and simply assaulted their targets through their front entrances.

Schneider had knocked out the guards, broken down the door, cast a torrent of spells upon the garden, then slaughtered the knights who had come out.

Those were the events leading up to this point.

Naturally, the knights and mages had tried to stop Schneider... or putting it more bluntly, tried to kill him, but their efforts had ended in failure.

Even with the mages and knights in formation, raining spells and arrows fired with 'Archery' martial skills, and even with bodyguards who were former A-class adventurers attacking him simultaneously, they had been unable to stop Schneider.

*Weak laws are meaningless in the face of overwhelming violence*, the knight captain thought in the back of his mind.

Elite adventurers possessed strength in battle that could not be matched even by large groups of ordinary humans. 'Strength in numbers' was a common-sense rule in battle, but it did not apply to such adventurers.

If such adventurers were to commit a crime, how were authorities supposed to capture and punish them? Many had pondered this question in the past.

This was achieved by the authorities having similar military might on their side, through coordination with the Adventurers' Guild, through rewarding capable adventurers with high positions in society, and integrating adventurers into the establishment. Naturally, such measures had been taken in Duke Marme's domain as well.

But the former A-class adventurers that served as bodyguards at the mansion had been defeated by

Schneider, achieving nothing other than buying a little time. A messenger had been sent to the Adventurers' Guild to request the aid of any available adventurers, but there were no signs of any reinforcements coming.

And it had widely been considered that Schneider and his companions had already been successfully integrated into the establishment.

"W-why is someone like you, who has been blessed with Alda's love, acting like a complete outlaw?! If there was something you were dissatisfied with, if you felt some discontent for the world, then you should express it not with violence, but with words, in the world of law!" the knight captain shouted.

"Enough! I've been a follower of Vida since before I turned twenty! I'm about to voice my discontent with the world right now, about the insanity of the teachings of Alda, the God of Law and Fate!" said Schneider.

"W-what?!" the knight captain exclaimed with his mouth wide open in shock at this revelation.

Schneider had shown a considerable amount of savagery in the Amid Empire, such as beating a nobleman he didn't like to death on the main street of a city, but even then, nobody had thought that he was a follower of Vida.

After all, he had always been the first to accept commissions to exterminate members of dangerous races created by Vida, such as Majin and Lamia, and the previous pope of the Great Church of Alda had received three messages warning that Schneider could be in danger.

The truth was that Schneider had always been the first to accept the requests to exterminate Majin and Lamia so that he could help them escape, and the Divine Messages received by the previous pope stating, 'Schneider is in danger,' were actually warnings: 'Schneider is dangerous.'

"Ah, I feel so free now. I don't have to do any more bothersome things like donating to the Church of Alda every year or pretending to pray at churches at harvest festivals and events. Phew! It's a real pain, pretending to be religiously devout. The stress has aged me so much, but I can finally feel the weight off my shoulders," Schneider said, now in a visibly good mood, stretching his shoulders as if to show how much relief he felt.

There was no doubt that he was beaming under the mask he was wearing.

"Now then, let's get on with it and –"

"Wait, Schneider! Look at this!" shouted another knight, stepping between Schneider and the knight captain, holding something in his arms.

The object in his arms was... a young rabbit-type Beast-kin girl, and he was holding a sword to her neck.

"If you want this girl's life to be spared, surrender and put yourself in a cursed collar!" the knight demanded.

There were special slave collars created for punishing adventurers of A-class or above who had committed great crimes.

The human and economic costs for creating such collars were great, so only large nations could afford to build them. In addition, the criminal needed to sign a contract agreeing to be cursed of their own free will... in other words, they could not be forced into wearing the collar by threats or by being drugged.

Thus, such collars were of little practical use.

However, there was such a collar in the house of Duke Marme, as he was a nobleman of the large nation that was the Amid Empire. If Schneider were to wear it, even Schneider would become a mere prisoner.

"You bastard, what are you thinking –" the knight captain began, shouting – at his subordinate.

"Captain, please be quiet!" the knight said, cutting him off. "What's the matter, Schneider! Should I cut off this girl's annoying ears first?!"

"N-no! Help, please help me!" the girl screamed in terror.

"Why don't you give it a try? While you're at it, you might as well just cut them both off at once," said Schneider, making a gesture – one hand in a fist, as if holding the ears together, and the other making a slicing motion underneath.

"W-what?!" the knight exclaimed, his eyes wide open in shock at Schneider's response.

"You can't do it? Then I suppose I'll do it for you," said Schneider.

In a single instant, Schneider closed the gap between himself and the knight who was holding the girl, and swung his arm.

"Single Flash."

Using a 'Swordsmanship' martial skill, Schneider performed a hand chop that tore through the knight and the girl.

However, what came from the mouth of the little rabbit-type Beast-kin girl was not a high-pitched scream, but the dying cry of an obese man. Before the girl's corpse hit the ground, it had transformed into the body of a human man holding a black dagger.

“H-how did you know...?” whispered the knight, whose now-open chest was leaking a tremendous amount of blood.

“It looks like you tried your best with the illusionary spell, but I couldn’t smell the body scent of a rabbit-type Beast-kin,” Schneider said nonchalantly. “And when you came running over, her breasts weren’t bouncing at all, despite being so big. Foolish youngster, just how many years do you think I’ve been a woman-lover?”

It had been a do-or-die plan, using an illusion to disguise the appearance and even the voice of his companion. Even if the knight had been killed, the disguised companion would kill Schneider with a cursed dagger. And yet, for the outrageous reason that Schneider had described, he had seen through this plan.

“Pointless,” the knight whispered as he collapsed onto the ground.

“You fool... This man is not someone you can fool with such a plan. But you did well. You bought more than ten seconds against the ‘Thunderclap’ Schneider,” the knight captain said, drawing his sword. “Now, it is my turn! Face me, Schneider!”

“No, I don’t really care about you. I’ve already killed the guy I was planning to kill,” said Schneider.

“What?!”

The knight captain was standing there, ready to stop Schneider at the cost of his own life, but Schneider raised a hand in farewell.

“I mean, we’ve already achieved our goal. The brat of that big baby, the new duke, escaped ages ago, so there’s no need for you to put your life on the line to buy time,” Schneider said. “Pick up those unconscious youngsters over there and get yourself somewhere safe... Wait, no, I suppose I just need to leave.”

With that, Schneider turned his back on the knight captain and began to walk away.

“What is the meaning of this! They’re alive?!” the knight captain said, realizing that his knights were bleeding heavily with their chests torn open, but still alive and merely unconscious. “You’re letting us go? Are you taking pity on us?!” he shouted at Schneider, while hurriedly applying Potions to the wounded knights.

“Don’t misunderstand,” said Schneider. “Our current sponsor is strict about who we kill. He wants us to make all efforts to avoid collateral damage, and to not kill people unless there is a reason that makes it necessary to kill them – and those instructions apply even though we were attacking the residence of a duke of the Amid Empire and the Church of Alda. But the decision of what a ‘reason that makes it necessary to kill’ and what isn’t is entirely at our discretion, so we accepted those instructions. Your role was just to remonstrate the foolish actions of your predecessor, and these youngsters look like they’re newbies and they probably haven’t done anything too terrible yet, so there’s no need to kill you.”

The head priest and priest-warriors at the church of Alda had been filling their own coffers while persecuting vulnerable members of Vida’s races, so Zod had killed them.

The guards were likely just following the orders given by their superiors, so they wouldn’t be killed for now.

The knights Schneider *had* killed were those belonging to another order of knights who had previously burned down entire settlements of races created by Vida, so that was why he had killed them.

He had killed other knights, nobles, and mages for similar reasons, and the ones he had only beaten half-to-death were those he had spared because there was no reason to kill them.

Schneider walked down a corridor of the mansion that was occupied only by unconscious enemies, and let out a groan as he heard a large, echoing sound from the other side of the hole in the mansion’s outer wall that he had created.

“That Zod, he’s gone and brought down the thunder. I don’t care about the church being destroyed, but I hope there aren’t any fires,” he murmured to himself. “‘God Iron Form,’ ‘Flame Iron Arms,’” he said a second later, suddenly activating an ‘Armor Technique’ martial skill and casting a spell to strengthen his arms.

In the next moment, a blast of wind tore through the air and ripped a straight, line-shaped wound into his arms.

A middle-aged man holding a longsword in one hand suddenly appeared before Schneider.

“... You’re just as absurd as usual, to have received only a scratch from a blow from my sword on your bare skin,” he said.

“To be able to put a scratch on me without even using a martial skill. Who’s the absurd one here? If I recall, you’re the Fourth Sword now?” said Schneider.

“The absurd one is clearly you. Your appearance hasn’t changed a bit since I was the Tenth Sword. I was sure that you’re not a human, but it turns out that you’re the only ordinary person in your party. What’s the

meaning of that?"

The middle-aged man was one of the Fifteen Evil-Breaking Swords, the secret force that served the Amid Empire. The 'Beheading Shadow' Leonardo.

He was the man who had served as one of the Fifteen Blades the longest among the current members, with the exception of the Zero Sword, their commander.

"The only ordinary person?" Schneider repeated. "Merdin is a Dwarf and Lissana is an Elf. And you should count Dark Elves among people too, you damn Alda-worshipper... Well, I do understand why you wouldn't want to count Zod as an ordinary person, though."

"Nonsense. I know that girl is not an Elf. We have simply been letting you swim," said Leonardo.

"Hah! You had no pole to catch us with, and you say that you were letting us swim? How about you be honest and just admit that you just sucked on your thumbs and watched us because you couldn't deal with us, you narrow-minded old man?"

"Hmph, don't raise your voice with me. It seems that you've become less patient and more aggressive with age despite trying to look younger than you are, you geezer. Perhaps you could have gotten away with attacking a baron or a viscount, but you have attacked the house of a duke, someone who is in line to the imperial throne. There will be consequences. You understand that, don't you?"

What Leonardo referred to was... Schneider and his party would not only be expelled from the Adventurers' Guild with bounties placed on their heads, but the lives of those with deep ties to them would be endangered as well.

The Fifteen Evil-breaking Swords possessed information on Schneider's women, children, friends, and acquaintances that even the Adventurers' Guild didn't know of.

However, Schneider and his companions were aware of that.

"Yeah, go ahead and try... I don't know if you'd be able to cross that mountain range, though," Schneider said.

Those with deep ties to Schneider and his companions had already moved to the Demon Empire of Vidal, in the region inside the Boundary Mountain Range, out of the Amid Empire's reach.

Leonardo made a bitter expression and clicked his tongue. "I suppose the subordinates that were making regular reports to us on your movements joined your side."

"I suppose so," said Schneider. "Ah, are they going to label everyone whose face I know as someone who is connected to me and hang them? If so, there's an old acquaintance of mine right in front of me now, so I could give them a hand."

"No, things will not come to that!"

Schneider and Leonardo both activated martial skills – 'Super Rapid Reaction,' 'Lightning Thrust,' 'Eight Shadow Slice' – as their shadows crossed. Shockwaves tore the walls of the mansion apart, the floor crumbled, and pieces of rubble flew into the surroundings as if there had been an explosion.

"You were after the Demon King equipment kept by the duke's house and the fragment at the church, huh," Leonardo muttered.

Beneath Schneider's cloak was one of the pieces of Demon King equipment that had been kept hidden at the mansion.

"How unfortunate it is that you only obtained one of the three pieces of equipment. I have recovered the other two. Most of the fragments at the church were moved to the Great Church at the new pope's orders, too," Leonardo said. "I suppose all that's left for you to do is release the members of Vida's races that were enslaved by the duke and his men on false charges and accusations."

"You're wrong," said Schneider. "Our objective is to free the members of Vida's races that the duke and his ilk enslaved by abusing his power! Then comes the killing! Gathering Demon King fragments and equipment is just something we are doing while we're at it!"

Leonardo's eyes opened a little wider in surprise; he had been convinced that the new Demon King Vandaliou had ordered Schneider to gather Demon King fragments.

"Well then, see you later! I'm going to quit while I'm ahead!" said Schneider.

With that, he began running away at full speed. He had already achieved his goal, and the members of Vida's races that he had saved were in a safe place.

Thus, there was no point in fighting in a one-on-one battle against a powerful enemy.

As Schneider dashed away from the scene, truly as fast as his 'Thunderclap' Title suggested, Leonardo began giving chase, but he decided that chasing too far was unwise and stopped.

"Even I wouldn't be able to fight five enemies at once. His Majesty the Emperor... the new emperor warned me not to chase too far, too," he murmured to himself.

The current emperor was still Marshukzarl. However, the power he wielded as emperor was already leaving his hands.

The Fifteen Evil-breaking Swords already served a new emperor. That new emperor was a puppet of Eileek, the new Pope of the Great Church of Alda, and Eileek himself was a puppet of the gods. That much was clear to Leonardo, but...

"Those like Ervine would have likely sided with Marshukzarl, but that doesn't matter to me. And my current position gives me more worthy foes to cut down," he told himself as he ran his tongue along his longsword, licking Schneider's blood from the blade.

#### Chapter 281 - One statue is canceled, another is built

Gartland's Dungeons had originally been low-difficulty E-class and D-class Dungeons.

The God of Entrails Povaz and the other gods who had created the Dungeons had deliberately made them that way. After all, if they created high-difficulty Dungeons and a monster rampage were to somehow occur, the entirety of Gartland could be destroyed.

Gartland was about a third of the size of the Demon King's Continent. However, half of that was the underground lake. If a monster rampage from a Dungeon were to occur and monsters spilled out into Gartland's surface, Gartland's residents would have nowhere to run.

And since Gartland had been built deep beneath the ground, little miasma came in from the outside, so there was no need to gather and disperse miasma in Dungeons.

That was why the gods had created E-class Dungeons to use as training grounds and emergency shelters, and D-class Dungeons where Gartland's residents could gather various natural resources and food.

They had also created a single C-class Dungeon to train warriors capable of defeating the powerful monsters that sometimes appeared from the ceiling and walls.

These Dungeons should have been sufficient for Gartland's population, but with the addition of Zozaseiba and his Titans, the demand for natural resources grew, and so the gods had created additional Dungeons.

With Nineroad's plan to gather all of the world's miasma on the Demon King's Continent, the continent became severely contaminated, and the effects of this had reached Gartland as well, causing all of the Dungeons to increase in difficulty by one class.

"According to the records of our ancestors, this caused great chaos at the time," said a beautiful woman, her hooves clip-clopping against the ground as she walked.

She had the lower body of a horse, dark brown in color, and the tail of a scorpion. Vandalieu was riding on her back.

"I'm sure there was," said Vandalieu. "They needed to gather natural resources from those Dungeons to sustain their lifestyle, so it must have caused a lot of problems."

Before the contamination, workplaces had been safe as long as one kept an eye out for the odd monster that was about as strong as a stray dog, but all of a sudden, countless numbers of monsters as strong as bears had begun to appear in those workplaces. It was easy to imagine the chaos that the people had faced back then.

"It is difficult even for the gods to reduce the difficulty of a Dungeon after it has increased," the woman continued. "However, our ancestors fought bravely and grew accustomed to their new environment. Now, the gods have acknowledged our efforts and our strength, and they encourage us to improve our skills in the 'Five Gods' Fortress,' which has become a B-class Dungeon. That Dungeon is this place."

"I see. Thank you for your explanation," said Vandalieu.

Vandalieu and his companions were currently in the process of clearing the 'Five Gods' Fortress' in order to prove that they were capable of exterminating the monsters that would appear during the digging of their tunnel in Gartland.

The beautiful half-horse woman with a scorpion's tail was Zalzarit, the leader of the Glaistigs, who was accompanying them as a witness to their strength.

Glaistigs normally possessed the lower bodies of goats, but she had undergone atavism which had given her the lower body of a horse, and one of her ancestors had married an Androscorpion, so that was why she had a scorpion's tail.

Perhaps due to this, the race title displayed in her Status was not 'Glaistig,' but 'Pabilsag.'

"It is an honor to be of use to you," said Zalzarit, concluding this topic of conversation.

As if they had been waiting for their turn, the other two leaders that were present began to speak.

"Well then, allow me to explain the history of the Snow Ice Titans. It is a history filled with great sadness –"

"No, I should speak of the history of the Androscorpion race. The tragic story of us becoming unable to produce threads from our mouths –"

"What are you talking about! The history books state that the Androscorpions only lamented their inability



to produce threads for a handful of years, and they quickly adapted!"

"What are you saying! There is no way that could be true! And as for your people, the history books state that you already lived in snowy lands when you lived on the surface!"

Zorg, the Snow Ice Titan leader, and Feltonia, the Androscorpion leader, began arguing, forgetting that Vandalieu was there.

Zorg looked like a yeti, with his long, white hair, beard, and fur, but if one looked closely, they would see that his face and body were the same as a human's, other than the fur and the size. He was wearing armor on top of his clothing, so from a distance, he looked like a monster like a Snow Giant.

On the other hand, Feltonia was a beautiful, black-haired woman with glossy, chocolate-like skin, and wore gold ornaments on her body. Her lower body was that of a scorpion, low to the ground, so the height from which she cast her gaze was closer to that of a human than an Arachne.

Androscorpions didn't have small-type or large-type individuals; it seemed that they were all of around the same size.

"You Androscorpions adapted just fine to Gartland's deserts, and people even say that you run faster on the sand than Centaurs! And your agriculture has been successful, with the use of water from the oases! By using magic to turn the sand into sandstone, you've built a splendid city of gold in the desert! We couldn't be more jealous!"

"You Snow Ice Titans have adapted to Gartland's cold regions, and have built a kingdom of frozen earth and ice, have you not! It is true that it is not suited for agriculture, but you live rich lives in your city of ice! You have domesticated Huge Reindeer and Snow Bears, and you take meat and fur from the enormous monsters you defeat! We are so very jealous!"

"What are you saying! You Androscorpions are very powerful, are you not! Many of you are mage-warriors, using the pincers and poison stinger of your lower bodies as weapons, while casting magic with your upper bodies!"

"You Snow Ice Titans have exceptional physical capabilities and many of you are mages who are proficient in the use of water-attribute magic. Your bravery is spoken of even in the deserts!"

"... Is this supposed to be an argument?" said Vandalieu. "Well, I suppose it's interesting to hear the reputations that each race has."

Zalzarit gave a wry smile. "What both of them are saying is indeed true," she assured Vandalieu.

It seemed that Zorg and Feltonia were trying to show off how much hardship their races were enduring in order to persuade Vandalieu to visit their city or their settlements. However, they had begun quarreling on the topic, and this had turned into a strange argument that involved complimenting each other's race.

Incidentally, the Glaistig race led by Zalzarit, who was not a part of this argument, lived in a settlement along Gartland's walls. As they possessed the lower bodies of goats, they maneuvered the walls skillfully and mined ores and other resources, and grew crops on terraced fields using the underground water that emerged from the walls.

As warriors, many of them were light-armed fighters or archers, and there were a considerable number of spiritual magic users. They were a powerful race that was not inferior to the Snow Ice Titans or the Androscorpions.

... Even if humans were to invade Gartland, they would likely be defeated unless they invested a considerable military force into the attack.

After all, the battlefields would not be in their favor. The Snow Ice Titans would fight on extremely cold mountains, and the Androscorpions in deserts. As for the Glaistigs, the battlefield would be a series of steep cliffs, where humans would not even be able to walk properly.

Each race would simply need to retreat to their settlements, with the exception of the residents of the town by the salt lake.

It was probably a coincidence, but it seemed that Gartland was in a strategically exceptional position, unless their enemies were extraordinarily powerful like the battle-oriented champions or demigods.

"We will have Vandalieu-dono visit us first!" Zorg and Feltonia exclaimed simultaneously.

"Zalzarit-san, do you know why these two want me to visit their homes so badly?" asked Vandalieu, seeing that the quarrel was showing no signs of ending.

He wanted to put an end to the dispute over having him visit before it escalated.

The reason for that was that it was possible that the two of them would declare that they would build statues of him. It had already been decided that statues of him would be built at the Merfolk settlement and the lakeside town; he couldn't stand the thought of more being built.

However, it seemed that Zalzarit didn't have any idea why they were so intent on having Vandalieu visit either. "I am afraid I have no suggestions. I have not heard that they have any residents with incurable illnesses or living in poverty. There aren't any who are hosts to a fragment of the Demon King like

Doraneza, either,” she said.

Doraneza, the leader of the Merfolk, had been forced to remove the seal on the Demon King’s mucus glands and allow it to infest her so that she could help her people and Dediria’s tribe of Majin escape from the Bahn Gaia continent to Gartland. News that Vandalieu had extracted the fragment from her without killing her was already spreading across Gartland.

However, there had been no Demon King fragments in Gartland before Doraneza’s arrival.

Povaz and the other three gods who had been a part of the Demon King’s army had fled and scattered immediately after the defeat of the Demon King Guduranis, the source of the fragments. Bellwood and the other companions had sealed the fragments along with the pieces of Guduranis’s flesh immediately after defeating him; there had been no time for Povaz and the others to acquire any of the fragments. Povaz and the others had not taken part in the battle between Vida and Alda that came after that, and there had been no opportunity for them to steal any of the fragments that were under the guard of Vida’s faction.

Of course, even if they had acquired any of the fragments, they would likely have thrown them away before they created Gartland.

They had not wished for the resurrection of Guduranis, nor had they wished to amass their own power and become the enemy of every god in this world like the Evil God of Joyful life Hihiryushukaka or the Evil God of Release Ravovifard.

Povaz and the others had chosen to wait until they were welcomed by Vida’s faction, and secretly give shelter and protect members of Vida’s races until then. With that being the case, any fragments they obtained would be nothing more than dangerous objects that would see no use as a weapon.

The same was true for Zozaseiba and the Titans when they joined Gartland.

Thus, there had been no fragments in Gartland other than the Demon King’s mucus glands.

The only other reason for Zorg and Feltonia’s desperation that Zalzarit could think of was the demigods of Alda’s forces on the surface, but the situation wasn’t so desperate that immediate action was needed. It wasn’t as if they had discovered Gartland’s existence and were planning to invade today or tomorrow.

On top of that, there was not much of a point in bringing Vandalieu to their homes.

As Zalzarit pondered the question, thoroughly perplexed, Zorg and Feltonia finally stated the reason they wanted Vandalieu to visit their homes.

“We won’t let you have the next concert!” they declared simultaneously.

It seemed that they wanted Vandalieu to visit their homes not because they wanted him to do something for them, but because they wanted a concert to be held there.

“It seems like Kanako and the others captured the audience’s hearts better than expected,” said Vandalieu.

With that said, it wasn’t that Zorg and Feltonia had become extreme idol fans. They wanted to spread the guidance that came with the concerts to their people as soon as possible.

The guidance improved physical ability, made it easier to raise Levels, and provided bonuses to acquiring Skills. On top of that, Vandalieu’s guidance did not specifically target certain types of people; it was effective even on ordinary people who weren’t warriors or mages.

With improved physical ability and Skills being acquired more easily, non-combatant civilian work would see improved efficiency, and that would lead to wealthier and more comfortable lifestyles. Apprentice craftsmen would improve their craft and become capable workers multiple times faster; the potential economic benefits were immeasurable.

“But shouldn’t you be saying this to Kanako rather than me?” Vandalieu asked.

“Yeah! Why are you acting like I’m not even here?!” Kanako complained. “Consecutive Fire!” she shouted, firing multiple arrows at a horde of Tyrant Mudmen.

Vandalieu and his companions were in the middle of clearing the ‘Five Gods’ Fortress,’ a B-class Dungeon, but the only ones who were actually fighting the monsters were Kanako and the others who weren’t taking part in the conversation.

“In the first place, why aren’t you fighting, Van?!” Kanako asked.

“Come to think of it, Borkus and Jeena aren’t here, either. Well, I’m having fun fighting monsters that I’ve never seen before, so I don’t mind,” said Doug.

“Then can we leave all of the Mudman-type ones to you?” said Melissa.

“Yeah, thanks, Doug,” Privel said in agreement with this idea.

Mudmen were humanoid monsters with mud-like skin and heads that had no features other than a round mouth lined with sharp teeth. Until fifty thousand years ago, Tyrant Mudmen were thought to be the most powerful of them. They were Rank 5 and abnormally weak for monsters in a B-class Dungeon. And since Kanako and the others were already more powerful than B-class adventurers, they weren’t particularly

threatening enemies. However, they constantly excreted very sticky body fluids from their skin, and it had a foul, sludge-like smell.

“No, that’s a little... Shit, I guess I’ll get it over with. ‘Hecatoncheir!’” said Doug.

“Van-kun is slimy as well sometimes, but he smells way better,” said Privel. “I’m going to use my Breath!”

“Alright. I’ll keep the blood sprays off us,” said Melissa.

Kanako and the others were fighting mainly at a distance, as they didn’t want to get the Mudmen’s excretions on themselves.

Melissa cast an absolute barrier with ‘Aegis’ to stop the advance of the five-meter-tall Tyrant Mudmen. Meanwhile, Kanako’s bow, Doug’s telekinesis that was controlling Vandalieu’s arm that he had received previously, and the ice breath of the Dragon heads on the ends of Privel’s tentacles applied the damage needed to steadily clear the enemies.

Tyrant Mudmen possessed plenty of Vitality along with Skills such as ‘Physical Resistance’ and ‘Water/Earth Attribute Resistance,’ but even they couldn’t withstand this fierce attack; they began falling one after another.

“No, we simply thought that talking to you while you’re fighting would be a distraction, Kanako-san, we weren’t ignoring you...” said Zorg.

“Yes, the champions had a saying – to shoot the general, you begin with the horse. We thought it would be best to invite Vandalieu-dono in order to invite you to perform a concert,” said Feltonia.

It seemed that Vandalieu was the horse in this situation.

“Neigh,” said Vandalieu.

“Don’t make a horse noise that sounds nothing like a horse! It makes me want to turn around and stare at you!” said Doug, who was still busy fighting.

“But in the end, I’ve been shot. If Van decides the place for the next concert, then that’s where the next concert will probably be,” said Kanako.

Vandalieu’s decision was needed for holding a concert. Though Gartland’s first concert several days ago hadn’t needed Knochen as a mobile venue, Vandalieu’s cooperation was necessary for Knochen to be used and for the Demon King Familiars that provided the lighting and background music. The transformation equipment that served as the performers’ outfits had been made by him as well.

Of course, Kanako would be able to organize a concert of her own if she had enough time and resources to organize a venue and stage, and prepare performers to provide the music, but... it was questionable as to whether a stage would be available in the cold regions inhabited by the Snow Ice Titans or the deserts inhabited by the Androscorpions.

And Kanako’s time was limited, as she couldn’t stay away from the city of Morksi for too long.

Though Zorg and Feltonia hadn’t taken all of these things into account, they nodded and looked back at Vandalieu, who was still riding Zalzarit’s back.

“So that’s how it is after all,” said Zorg. “Then a grand statue in our homeland –”

“Yes, in the deserts where we Androscorpions live, a large statue –” said Feltonia.

“Umm, that’s not a good way to persuade me to visit,” said Vandalieu, interrupting them.

“We will not build any statues, so please visit us,” Zorg and Feltonia said, immediately and in unison.

“Kanako, do you have any openings in your schedule? If you don’t, then I’ll sing and dance on my own if I have to,” said Vandalieu.

Zorg and Feltonia had heard about Vandalieu’s reaction to learning from Mayor Yurak that a statue of him would be built, so they used the promise of *not* building a statue as a way to convince him to visit.

“Van-kun has given in right away?! And he’s willing to sing and dance?!” Privel exclaimed in astonishment.

“... I’d actually be interested in watching that performance. But I have a feeling that it’ll sound more like a script recital than singing, and with the stage filled with Demon King Familiars, it’ll be impossible to tell whether it’s a concert or a horror show,” Melissa remarked.

Despite their surprise, they continued defeating the Tyrant Mudmen. Doug finished off the last one using Vandalieu’s arm, which had the Demon King’s claws and was covered in the Demon King’s exoskeleton, bringing an end to the battle.

“So, you still haven’t answered the important question of why we’re the only ones fighting, have you?”

Doug said, sounding slightly fed up.

As Vandalieu was beginning to plan out his schedule, Zalzarit answered for him.

“That is because we must check whether you possess the strength necessary to deal with the monsters that will appear during the construction of the tunnel,” she said. “I have been told that construction will continue even when Vandalieu-dono is not here, so we wish to see the strength of those other than him, just in case. Incidentally, we have heard that Borkus-dono and the other Undead are all at least Rank 10,

so we did not feel that it was necessary for them to prove their strength.

Monsters that resembled worms, ants, and moles appeared from boulders in Gartland's walls and ceilings, and unidentifiable monsters similar to Mudmen appeared from wet soil. In addition, the soil and boulders themselves sometimes turned into Golems, and fossils from the very distant past sometimes turned into Undead.

These monsters were of low Rank; the ones that appeared on a daily basis were Rank 1 or 2. The members of Vida's races who lived here trained themselves regularly, so these were nothing more than small fry that could easily be defeated.

However, on very rare occasions, there were hordes of Rank 5 Tyrant Mudmen or Gluttony Worms – enormous ravenous caterpillars. Once every few centuries or perhaps once a millennium, monsters of Rank 7 and above would appear.

The 'Five Gods' Fortress' was a Dungeon made for fighting the high-Rank monsters that appeared in Gartland. It had increased in difficulty from C-class to B-class, causing it to produce monsters of Rank 7 and above, but even so, it was the perfect rehearsal for fighting the monsters that would appear during the tunnel's construction.

"I see, so that's why. So the reason Vandalieu fought up until the fifth floor but then we started fighting after that had nothing to do with the Dungeon posing no challenge because the bugs were getting too fond of him, huh," said Doug.

The insect-type monsters that appeared in this Dungeon had become tamed by Vandalieu the moment they appeared before him.

As the group climbed a hilly road, enormous woodlice called Gart-balls had knocked Vandalieu over, then ant-like monsters called Gart-ants had given him honey directly from their mouths. Gart-worms had wrapped themselves around them, and Gart-spiders had forcefully taken him to their nest. Incidentally, all of these monsters had only ever been seen in Gartland, and they were one Rank higher than similar monsters on the Bahn Gaia continent.

... There had been no response at all from 'Danger Sense: Death' from the moment they appeared, so it was possible that they had become tamed before they showed themselves and had only rushed towards him to greet him like a playful dog.

It was a terrifying thing to think about, but they were currently all inside Vandalieu's shadow.

"Well, that was one reason for it," said Vandalieu. "I think you've shown off your strength plenty now. Should I take over again?"

"No, we're kinda in the middle of it now, so we'll keep going until the next mid-boss," said Doug, declining Vandalieu's offer. "My movement has gotten a little duller lately anyway."

It seemed that Melissa and Privel agreed with his idea.

"It's more fun than concerts, so I guess that's fine," said Melissa.

"I'm not quite satisfied yet," said Privel. "And Van-kun! Having four legs isn't bad, but just so you know, I have eight!" she added as a jab at Zalzarit.

Zalzarit, Zorg, and Feltonia looked at Vandalieu with surprised expressions.

They were now under the astounding impression that in the outside world, it was not the shape and length of legs that made them attractive, but their number!

"Yes, yes, I know," said Vandalieu.

Vandalieu wasn't denying it! Was Privel telling the truth?! The three leaders from Gartland were all dumbfounded.

"I think there's definitely been a misunderstanding. Well, it's more fun that way, so no need to clear things up," said Kanako as she walked off after Doug and the others.

Doug and the others would come to regret their decision – the Dungeon's mid-boss that appeared before them later was a Rank 8 Absolute King Mudman, which surpassed the Tyrant Mudmen and was truly the most powerful Mudman variant, and it was covered in a fearsome quantity of mucus.

Having proved their abilities in the 'Five Gods' Fortress,' Vandalieu and his companions began work on the tunnel.

As they would need to fight off the monsters that appeared, the tunnel was made wide and tall enough so that three Titans – Borkus and the others – would be able to fight shoulder-to-shoulder without any problems. The tunnel was easily large enough to fit a two-lane road, but it would be problematic if the tunnel were to collapse due to reckless fighting, so it had been made with plenty of room to work with. However, Vandalieu couldn't simply stay here and focus entirely on the tunnel's construction, so once he

made all the necessary preparations, he returned to Alcrem and rejoined Kühl, who had been acting as his body double, as well as Darcia and the others.

He then attended a meeting with Takkard Alcrem to discuss the Temple of Borgadon, which was being built in the former 'Sacred Wastelands,' which had recently become nothing more than an ordinary wasteland.

It had already been decided that the temple's outer appearance would not be changed much from its previous appearance, but its interior design, decorations, and statues would be changed significantly. Naturally, that would include the living quarters that Goldie and the other Mimic Humans had used as their den, but also the normal parts that were used by the ordinary worshipers.

At the previous temple, Borgadon had been worshiped as one of the gods of Alda's forces. The statues accompanying Borgadon's had been those of the great god Botin and other earth-attribute gods who belonged to Alda's forces, and there had also been statues and carvings featuring Alda, the leader of the gods, and the heroic god Bellwood.

That would be completely reversed, and the new temple would be one where Borgadon was worshiped as a god of Vida's faction.

Botin would also still be worshiped there, but the earth-attribute gods would be replaced by the earth-attribute gods of Vida's faction. The statue of Alda would be replaced by one of Vida, and statues of Ricklent and Zuruwarn would be added as well.

Finally, a statue of Hillwillow, the champion who had been chosen by Botin, would be built in place of the one of Bellwood.

Up until now, Zakkart – viewed by many as the 'Fallen Champion' – had never been worshiped at a temple on a large scale, and neither had any of the other creation-oriented champions. At most, there had been carvings and paintings depicting their mythical history of a hundred thousand years ago, only at the temples of the gods that had chosen them as their champion.

This was presumably because of those who worshiped Alda and the champion Bellwood, who went on to become a heroic god. The influence they wielded had likely caused people to avoid worshiping the creation-oriented champions, who had attempted to introduce knowledge and technology from their own world.

Thus, building a statue of Hillwillow was a bold step from Vida's faction – something that Alda's forces would consider an outrageous act that would not be forgotten by history. Mortals living on the world's surface could only imagine the gods' reactions to this, but it was easy to predict how other mortals would react.

Many in the Alcrem Duchy would be shocked, and the nobles who opposed the duke would likely be able to use it in their political battles. And even the moderate worshipers of Alda would not be pleased. The duke was no clergyman, and the people were certain to think that he was merely an opportunist who would pander to Vida's faction now that he was done pandering to Alda's peaceful faction.

It was a decision that Duke Takkard Alcrem would never personally make. However, his hair had become more abundant and his skin had regained its youthful tone recently; he had immediately agreed to the requests of Vandalieu and his companions.

After all, though this had not been made public, he had the support of Vandalieu – and by extension, the Demon Empire of Vidal – and thus, he could expect future assistance in all kinds of forms.

Also, it was expected that ordinary people who weren't particularly devout worshipers would quickly adapt, even if they were shocked at first. The temple of Borgadon would change significantly, but there would be no visible changes at other temples, and it wasn't like anything was being forced on them.

And the clergymen who served Borgadon, those who would normally be the most opposed to such changes, had all been Mimic Humans and were now dead.

Thus, there were two problems being discussed at the meeting. The first was the design of the statue of Hillwillow. Nobody had built a statue of him for at least the past ten thousand years, so there was nothing to use as a reference for how a statue of him should appear like there was for statues of gods and other great historical figures.

Vandalieu had asked Borgadon, Vida and the other gods what Hillwillow had looked like, as they had known him personally, but no matter how close to his actual appearance the statue was, there was no point if people didn't recognize that it was a statue of Hillwillow.

Thus, it was decided that the statue would depict Hillwillow wearing the mythical-class equipment that had been given to him by Botin, according to the legends in which Bellwood was the most prominent figure.

The second problem at the meeting was... the steaks of gray meat served as lunch during a break in the

meeting was the meat of Zerzoregin, the Evil God of Cannibalism.

The duke remarked, "It was very delicious, but I wish you had told me before you served it."

After that, Vandalieu and his group, with the addition of Arthur and his companions, returned to the city of Morksi after staying in Alcrem for longer than they had planned.

Several minutes after the carriage carrying Vandalieu left the highway and disappeared into a forest, the Boulder Colossus Gorn, looked into the skies from the shore of the Demon King's Continent with a sour expression.

"... So, they've come."

Cuatro, sailing across the blue sky... and next to it was an enormous sphere made of flesh, with a Majin man riding on it. And there was also... a Vampire that was completely unfazed by the sunlight.

"Gorn! Brateo! Madroza! The assumption that Vandalieu-dono intends to devour Botin's soul is an extreme misunderstanding! If you stand in our way for such a foolish reason, then I will show you no mercy, even if we were comrades in arms once!" declared the Vampire – Zod, who had already pumped up his muscles.

"Personally, I would be more bothered if you didn't stand in our way! It's finally my turn to fight! It won't be worth coming all the way out here if I don't get to go wild!" said Godwin, the king of the Majin inside the Boundary Mountain Range.

"Big words from someone who's standing on people," Legion muttered.

"Zod... To think that serving Vida after she lost her sanity was not enough for you, and you are now a hound of Vandalieu, who gathers fragments of the Demon King and devours souls, even those of gods! We are the ones who will show no mercy!" shouted Brateo.

"You cannot charge in, Brateo," one of his allies warned. "More importantly, we must determine whether that ship is the real one or a fake like last time."

"But we must enter battle to do that," said Brateo. "Let's go. Don't forget to be wary of it possibly exploding until we know that it's the real one!"

And so began the third battle against the demigods of Alda's forces.

### Chapter 282 - A thrilling battle

The battle commenced, but before swords were actually crossed, Vandalieu stood on Cuatro's bow and called for Gorn and his allies to surrender, his voice amplified by a Magic Item.

"If you surrender now, I give you my word that I will spare your lives and your souls. We will seal you away until we settle things with Alda, or we will have you wield your power for our side, but we will acknowledge your positions as gods when it's over. If you don't accept this offer –"

Vandalieu's offer was cut short by the sound of Sirius's majestic war horn and Zepaon's drums, and the simultaneous attacks from Gorn and his allies.

Their lightning attacks, boulders, and compressed water blades were strengthened by the music.

Vandalieu blocked all of them by sending out a huge number of 'Barrier Bullets' – a new death-attribute spell that compressed 'Impact-negating Barrier' and 'Magic Absorption Barrier' into a projectile – but it didn't seem like any further discussion would be taking place.

"What now? You promised the gods you would call for the enemy to surrender, but you got cut short. Are you going to try again?" asked Ereshkigal from within the mass of Legion, who were floating in front of Cuatro to provide cover.

Vandalieu shook his head. "No, I didn't expect much to come from it, so it's fine. Let's go."

Legion agreed with this decision, and the two people riding on top of them did as well.

"Yeah! I didn't know what I'd do if everything got solved through talking!" said Godwin enthusiastically.

"My sentiments exactly!" Zod said in agreement.

Godwin and Zod leapt from Legion and charged straight towards the demigods.

No matter what kinds of skills an insect had, there was no way it could defeat an elephant.

So then, would it be possible for a single person to exchange blows with an enormous creature that stood over a hundred meters tall? Would they be able to engage in hand-to-hand combat with a god?

The answer to that was told in the skies above the Demon King Continent's coastline.

The 'Majin King' Godwin laughed in amusement as he stopped the punches and kicks of Brateo, who was much larger than him, head-on. "What, is that all you've got?!"

"What?! Is this guy really a Majin?! He is incredibly resilient!" Brateo exclaimed in shock.

Brateo's punches and kicks were imbued by lightning, and they were not only capable of pulverizing a fortress, but tearing apart the ground beneath it. And yet, Godwin showed no signs of struggling.

"I've heard stories from a hundred thousand years ago, but you really are nothing special! Even my grandma's punches are stronger, never mind those of old man Xerx!" said Godwin.

Godwin possessed the Title: 'One who has been punched by a god.' In order to punish certain unpleasant behaviors, Xerx, the guardian deity of Godwin's nation and race, had brought his fist down upon Godwin in his Divine Realm, and Godwin had resisted that attack.

Xerx found himself exasperated. He told himself that the Majin were partially responsible for accepting such a king, and began to overlook some of Godwin's delinquent behavior... though he ended up bringing his fist down upon Godwin numerous times.

Such a legend did exist, but that did not mean that Brateo's punches and kicks were actually weaker.

Godwin was stopping these attacks through the effects of 'Transcend Limits,' 'Magic Armor King Technique,' enchantments, Magic Items, and he had even used 'Familiar Spirit Descent.'

"You bastard! Let me show you, you little fledgling who has only lived for a few thousand years!" Brateo shouted in rage, preparing to take a large swing.

Faced with an attack that was more powerful than those that had come before it, Godwin smiled.

Meanwhile, Zod was fighting Gorn.

The Boulder Colossus Gorn bellowed a war cry as he threw a fist, and Zod shouted as he charged in with his entire body to clash against it. Gorn's fists were covered in diamond gauntlets that he had apparently made himself, but Zod wasn't even wearing armor – just a shiny bodysuit.

The difference between their masses was clear. Anyone watching would be able to predict the next moment – Zod's life immediately ending as his body exploded, his flesh and blood being scattered everywhere.

But that didn't happen. Gorn let out a shout of surprise as lightning ran through his right fist, and Zod was sent flying back in the direction that he had come from. However, he had not spilled a single drop of blood. He stopped himself in mid-air with a fearless smile on his face.

"Your lightning has become even more powerful than it was a hundred thousand years ago?! And your appearance... I see, so you've undergone 'Transformation' as well!" Gorn muttered.

Looking at his opponent, he realized that the current Zod had surpassed the Zod he had known... the Pure-breed Vampire Zorcodrio who had received countless attacks and survived. And Zod's appearance reminded him of the equipment that Vandalieu had given to some of his subordinates.

"Precisely. I received this transformation equipment from Vandalieu-dono mere days ago," said Zod.

The suit that clung tightly to Zod's body was a piece of transformation equipment that Vandalieu had made for him. Its comfort of use could be described in one word as 'spectacular.'

Zod's body, with its sturdy muscles and a skeleton that was strong enough to support it, was so tough that even Botin, the Mother of the Earth and Goddess of Craftsmanship, had said that he needed no armor. Even Orichalcum armor would accomplish nothing for him other than impede his movements.

After becoming an Abyssal Pure-breed Vampire, his muscular strength and regenerative capabilities had improved even further, and the toughness of his body had continued to improve as well.

What was effective for Zod was something that fit tightly to his skin... in other words, an extremely elastic liquid metal armor that didn't hinder the movements of his muscles at all. Vandalieu's transformation equipment.

It improved his defense, enhanced his offensive spells, and even prevented excess electricity created by the vibrations of his muscles from dispersing and going to waste. He lost the effects of his 'Augmented Defensive Power when unarmored: Very Large' Skill, so his overall defense actually decreased, but the transformation equipment granted him extra offensive power, agility, and most importantly, it increased the power of his 'Muscle Technique.'

It was the best possible armor for Zod, and it was a weapon. In compensation for the equipment, Vandalieu had requested him to become his mentor in 'Muscle Technique,' but that was no burden for Zod.

Gorn let out a groan. "Vandalieu does not match Guduranis in power, but it seems that the rumors are true, he is a far more problematic Demon King in other ways!"

His right fist was severely burned beneath the diamond gauntlet. Even for a Pure-breed Vampire, a demigod just like Colossi, Zod possessed fearsome power.

Zod had used lightning attacks a hundred thousand years ago as well, but... to Gorn, he had posed no threat other than his extreme defense and resilience.

"Gorn-dono, allow me to dispose of this fool who is reliant on his equipment!" shouted the Sea Bird Beast-King Valfaz, as he flew in to attack.

"W-wait, Valfaz!" said Gorn, trying to stop him.

Valfaz, who had the appearance of an enormous black-tailed gull, was one of the sons of the Bird Beast-

King Lafaz, who had joined Vida's faction. Lafaz had survived battle against the Demon King's army by fusing with an evil god, one of the enemies who had slain their great ancestor, the Beast-God Ganpaplio. All of Lafaz's children, who were supposed to have become Beast-Kings, denounced him as a disgrace, and Valfaz was one of them.

*I'm not going to wait!* Valfaz thought.

Valfaz had become the Sea Bird Beast-King, and the bird-type Beast-Kings of Alda's faction, including Valfaz, were praised more for their cunning and their ability to conspire rather than their valor and the beauty of their feathers.

Valfaz was dissatisfied with this.

It was true that a hundred thousand years ago, he had conducted himself cunningly. That was because it had been impossible to surpass his elder siblings who were all but destined to take the position of Beast-King.

But now, a hundred thousand years later, things were different. Valfaz had spent long years gaining experience and training. He would not lose even in a competition of valor. And yet, the way those around him perceived him did not change, and that was because there were no opportunities for him to achieve great things in battle.

That was why he had joined the group that guarded Botin. And instead of aiming for Cuatro, where Vandalieu was, he was aiming for the less dangerous target in Zod.

"Die! I'll tear your entire body apart!" he screamed, attacking Zod with his sharp beak and talons.

This attack struck Zod, sending him flying higher into the sky. But that was all.

"I did it... What?!" Valfaz uttered in shock.

"I admire your spirit ... *only* your spirit, I should say," said Zod.

Valfaz's attack had indeed landed. However, Zod's body was protected by his transformation equipment, and had received no damage other than that of a hard blow. And thanks to his 'Super Rapid Regeneration,' that damage was healed in less than a second.

"And it was foolish to send me flying above you. 'God's Roar!'" Zod shouted, unleashing the 'Muscle Technique' martial skill that he had used at the church of Alda in Duke Marme's domain. With the effects of 'Revenge: Battle against Alda's Forces' Skill and all of its electrical energy converged rather than dispersed due to the transformation equipment, the lightning bolt of 'God's Roar' was far more powerful than ordinary lightning as it pierced Valfaz. A scream of agony that could have been his dying scream filled the air.

At the same time, Brateo screamed as well, clutching his fist. He looked down at his right hand to see that all of its fingers, which were thicker than logs and far tougher than steel, were all bent and broken except for the thumb.

Godwin gave a triumphant laugh. "You fell for it! You Colossi are so big that you have so many blind spots! You clueless fools!"

The damage to Brateo's fingers had been from a counterattack by Godwin. Brateo's fist had hidden Godwin from his own vision, and in that moment, Godwin had attacked the fingers that were curled into a fist.

"This is not good! Fall back, Brateo! Your wounds from the previous battle have not fully healed!" shouted Gorn. "Nabanga, switch places with Brateo! I'll help Valfaz, the rest of you, back us up!"

The Iron Colossus Nabanga charged in to help Brateo, while Gorn charged in to help Valfaz, whose entire body was emitting a stream of white smoke. The other Colossi and Beast-Kings moved to support them. However, Cuatro's cannon fire kept them back.

Or rather, they were kept back by Schneider and others who were riding atop the cannonballs.

"Let's go! Follow Zod!" Schneider yelled.

"W-what?!" shouted Gorn, his eyes wide in shock.

"Impossible! They're riding the exploding projectiles?!" exclaimed Brateo.

They had little knowledge regarding cannonballs; Schneider and the others looked like they were committing an act of suicide.

"I agree," said the cannonball-type Demon King Familiar Schneider was riding on.

Vandalieu, their creator whose personality inhabited the Demon King Familiars, was equally surprised.

"How reckless. How do you intend to get back to the ship?" the Demon King Familiar asked.

Naturally, the cannonball-type Demon King Familiars were a one-way ticket to the enemy. They were capable of pursuing enemies that ran around trying to escape, but they were unable to return to Cuatro.

"I'm counting on you!" said Schneider.

The Demon King Familiar sighed. "Very well."

"Alright! We're your seniors when it comes to being an adventurer, so we'll give you a lecture on how to



fight huge monsters!" said Schneider.

Even as this amusing conversation was taking place, the cannonball-type Demon King Familiars were chasing the enemy and exploding. The explosions likely reminded Gorn and his allies of the self-destruction of the fake Cuatro; they chose to strengthen their defenses in order to protect themselves from the spray of shrapnel rather than keep their eyes on Schneider and the others. It seemed that the fake Cuatro's self-destruction had caused a significant amount of pain.

Having withstood the impacts and explosive flames, Nabanga let out a groan. "Where are they?!"

"Where?! And there were no fragments in the projectiles?!" shouted an Elder Dragon.

They looked around for Schneider and the others, whom they had lost track of, and they swung their arms and tail around to try and clear away the smoke.

As the smoke began to clear, Lissana appeared, having returned to her original evil god form rather than being in her usual Elf form.

"First, some commotion!" she said, pursing her lips and blowing a thick pink breath.

The breath turned into a fog that spread unbelievably far, completely covering and obscuring the demigods.

Nabanga coughed. "This is... poisoned alcohol! Is that Jurizanapipe, the Evil God of Degeneration and Intoxication?!"

The Elder Dragon made a surprised noise. "Alda said that you were not an Elf, but to think that it was you!"

Surrounded by a mist of poisoned alcohol that would cause ordinary people to lose consciousness and never regain it ever again, the demigods immediately closed their eyes.

"Great Ice Giant Spear! And I'm never going to fight you head-on!"

"Flying Lightning Heavenly Kick! I'm aiming for the weak points at either the sides or the back of the joints!"

An enormous spear of ice that looked like an iceberg, conjured by Dalton, pierced through the fog and buried itself in the belly of the Great Ocean Dragon God Madroza, and Schneider's kicks landed on the side of Nabanga's knee.

A dull scream came from Madroza as her snake-like torso folded over itself, and Nabanga's face twisted in pain as his knee was destroyed.

"And now, retreat before the enemy regains their composure!"

Merdin, who was wearing a Magic Item that allowed her to walk on air, retrieved Dalton and Schneider.

As their positions would be given away if they dispersed Lissana's mist of poisoned alcohol, they couldn't use spells that allowed them to fly, so Merdin had been waiting to extract them.

And Legion appeared there to pick them up.

"Yes, yes, we're here to do what we can in Vandalieu's place," said Pluto.

"Come, return, brave warriors!" said Valkyrie.

"Damn it! That cursed, lowly human who pretends to be elderly!" shouted Nabanga, raising his spear to throw it at the enormous Legion as revenge for his crushed knee.

"W-wait, you must not carelessly attack that mass of flesh!" said Madroza, stopping him.

The demigods were aware that Legion possessed the Counter, which returned all damage caused to Legion to the one who dealt it, and that this ability had defeated the 'Light-speed Sword' Rickert, the First Sword of the Fifteen Evil-breaking Swords.

Nabanga made a frustrated noise.

The Demigods were enormous and possessed superhuman strength and resilience that matched their size. However, that also resulted in a lack of maneuverability.

Heinz of the 'Five-colored Blades' had come up with a countermeasure to the Counter ability possessed by the copy of Legion in Alda's 'Dungeon of Trials.' This countermeasure was to use a powerful attack, then inflict a small scratch on Legion immediately afterwards before the powerful attack was countered.

The countered damage would be equivalent to the small scratch.

However, given Nabanga's enormous size, it was impossible for him to imitate such a tactic. He groaned as he returned to the task of saving Valfaz.

But Cuatro had begun its cannon-fire once more, and Vandalieu had begun to fire 'Hollow Cannon' and 'Death Cannon' as well, so it wasn't easy to make an approach.

"Don't get ahead of yourself just because you destroyed one of my fists!" roared Brateo, firing a bolt of lightning at Godwin.

But Zod, using Valfaz as a platform to leap from, put himself in between Brateo and his target.

"Electrification!" he shouted. "Godwin-dono!"

"Yeah! I'm ready!" Godwin said in response.

Zod looked like he had leapt forward to cover Godwin, but Brateo's lightning did not burn him; it simply disappeared into his muscles as if it had been absorbed.

In the next moment, Zod's body was generating enough electricity to cause the very air itself to shake, and Godwin murmured an incantation.

“Karmic God's Roar!”

“Conjure Demonic Hellfire Beast!”

Zod absorbed Brateo's lightning attack and returned it along with the electricity generated by his own body, and Godwin's spell gave birth to a demonic-looking beast made of flames that charged towards Nabanga.

“Wha-?!”

Nabanga was struck by lightning and the flaming beast charged into him, sending him falling towards the Demon King's Continent at an intense speed.

“Brother!” shouted the ‘Bronze Titan’ Lubuug, his younger sibling, as he tried to chase after his falling brother, but it didn't look like he could make it in time.

Meanwhile, Valfaz regained his consciousness a moment before landing in the ocean, and took to the sky once more. He quickly attempted to make an escape, but... something attacked him from within the sea.

Knochen, who had separated into his numerous pieces and stayed hidden in the water, roared as he attacked.

Valfaz screamed. “S-STOP!”

He was the Sea Bird Beast King. But that did not mean that he was adept at being in the water. If he were to be attacked by a countless number of bones while he was already wounded, he wouldn't even be able to swim.

On top of that, Knochen possessed several leftover Elder Dragon bones that Pete had left after devouring their flesh, as well as bones of the Demon King that Vandalieu had given him. These pierced Valfaz's tough feathers and buried themselves in his body.

As Valfaz screamed in agony, he heard Vandalieu's voice.

“Valfaz, is it? Your father Lafaz has requested that I show mercy to his unworthy son,” the voice said.

“W-what?! Y-you are going to spare me?”

“Yes, of course. Knochen, strangle him to death at once.”

“Wha-?!”

Before Valfaz could react, the bones that made up Knochen's body wrapped themselves around Valfaz's neck and wrenched it sideways, breaking it with a loud snap.

“As Lafaz requested, I will spare your soul. Gufadgarn, please recover Valfaz's corpse, and then make an attempt to take us back,” said the Demon King Familiar floating near Valfaz's head.

“Yes, great Vandalieu,” said Gufadgarn.

Gufadgarn was the evil god in Vandalieu's shadow, and the words of a Demon King Familiar were the words of the only being in this world that she worshipped. Not a single word spoken by the Demon King Familiars escaped her ears, and she appeared on Cuatro's deck immediately.

As she retrieved Valfaz's corpse, the space around Cuatro, as well as Zod, Godwin, Schneider and the others who were aboard Legion and hadn't returned to Cuatro yet, began to warp.

“I will not allow you! It is time for us to show our worth!” shouted Larpan, the God of Mirror Images.

He and the other space-attribute gods, who had been lying in wait rather than aiding their comrades, blocked Gufadgarn's teleportation. The distortion occurring in space around Cuatro and Legion slowed, and no further change occurred.

“Now! Strike the ship that Vandalieu is on!” Gorn ordered.

“Valfaz! We will avenge you!” shouted one of the other demigods.

The demigods began to move to defeat Vandalieu, who was aboard Cuatro. It seemed that Gorn and the others had interpreted his attempt to escape as a sign that there was some reason that made it difficult to continue the battle.

The main objective of Gorn's defense force was to protect Botin from Vandalieu, but if Vandalieu and his companions carried out these hit-and-run attacks over and over, his forces would be whittled away before his plan bore fruit.

They had to defeat Vandalieu here, and if that wasn't possible, they had to at least deal some heavy damage. If they didn't, there was no doubt that he would come back and attack again in the near future.

They couldn't afford to be naive enough to not attack simply because the enemy was retreating.

Meanwhile, Vandalieu and his companions weren't shaken by these events at all. Their attempt to retreat had failed and they were facing a horde of demigods flooding in, but they were completely unfazed.

“As you predicted, great Vandalieu, my teleportation has been prevented,” said Gufadgarn.

“It seems so,” said Vandalieu. “How long until we can teleport?”

“At this rate, approximately three minutes. However, I believe the enemy still has more space-attribute gods lying in wait.”

“We have Legion too, after all. Legion, please try teleporting.”

The attacks of Gorn and his allies were being stopped by Cuatro’s cannon barrage, the beams of light Vandalieu was firing from his eyes, and his ‘Barrier Bullet’ and ‘Death Cannon’ spells, but these defenses could be broken through at any moment. Still, Vandalieu and his companions were composed and were speaking calmly. Legion, and everyone aboard them, were showing no signs of panic either.

“Hmm, it’s not working. Rather than being blocked, it feels more like we’ve been grabbed so that we can’t move,” said Jack.

“To think they can interfere with Jack’s teleportation...!” said Hitomi.

“There’s a space-attribute spell that immobilizes the target by fixing the hands and feet of the target in place, so this is probably an improved version of that. I did warn you about it before, didn’t I?” said Dalton.

“But since they’re casting it while blocking Gufadgarn’s spell at the same time, I think we’ll be able to teleport in less than a minute,” said Lissana. “Well, I think they’ll break through before that, though.”

As she predicted, the demigods endured the cannon barrage and beams of light, blocked ‘Death Cannon’ with their own spells, broke through the ‘Barrier Bullet’ projectiles with the sheer quantity of kinetic energy generated by their enormous bodies, and closed in.

“Well then, fake-Cuatro-type Demon King Familiar, charge. Everyone else, inside my shadow,” said Vandalieu.

In response to Vandalieu’s orders, the stern of Cuatro... the fake Cuatro, exploded. With this explosion as a propelling force, it charged boldly at the demigods.

“Alright. Schneider-san, everyone, please get off,” said Pluto.

Vandalieu leapt off the fake-Cuatro-type Demon King Familiar and his shadow expanded, ignoring the light around it.

“Zod! Godwin! We’re gonna leave you behind!” Schneider yelled as he leapt off Legion into Vandalieu’s shadow.

“Oh, I would not be pleased with that!” said Zod as he and the others followed.

Meanwhile, Gorn’s eyes opened wide as he saw Cuatro accelerating towards him and his allies.

“No! That’s a fake! It is going to explode!” he shouted.

“Yeah, that’s right,” said Baba Yaga, who had transformed mid-air and was now clinging to Vandalieu.

“Burn!”

In the next moment, she detonated the huge volume of blubber aboard the fake Cuatro.

Pushed downwards by the flash of light and explosive noise above, Vandalieu used the ‘Flight’ spell to slow down and stop right above the sea’s surface.

“Can you teleport?” he asked.

“I am able,” replied Gufadgarn’s voice.

“Probably because Larpan switched from blocking our escape to protecting the Colossi,” said Baba Yaga.

“Then it’s likely that Gorn and the others are wounded but not dead... Larpan is more troublesome than Gorn, Brateo, or Sirius, isn’t he,” muttered Vandalieu.

Larpan had chosen to protect Gorn and the others over stopping Vandalieu and his companions from teleporting. He had immediately made the decision that preventing the enemy’s teleportation would be meaningless if Gorn and the others were wiped out. That decision-making ability was more troublesome than pure strength in combat.

“But we’ve found out how long Larpan and the other space-attribute gods can stop our teleportation, so let’s go back. First, to the basement Dungeon in Morksi,” said Vandalieu.

But Legion weren’t too happy with this idea.

“... Could we go to a different city?”

“Fine, let’s go to the Majin nation to take Godwin back first.”

“Yes! I love you, Vandalieu!”

Vandalieu knew how Legion felt about Morksi ever since a statue of the ‘nameless heroes’ was built there, and the statue was the result of a plan that he himself had put together, so he decided to prioritize what they wanted.

“What?! I’m not in the mood to go home today!” Godwin said in protest.

“Your daughter is waiting for you at home,” said Vandalieu, showing him no lenience. “Also, the clone I

sent to act as your representative in your absence is busy working as we speak.”

Godwin groaned from inside Vandalieu’s shadow that almost matched the groan Knochen let out as Vandalieu retrieved him.

And with that, they retreated using Gufadgarn’s teleportation.

《You have acquired the ‘Murder Healing’, ‘Self-Strengthening: Murder’ Skills!》

《The Levels of ‘Constant Mana Recovery,’ ‘Strengthened Attribute Values: Reigning,’ ‘Strengthened Attribute Values: Worshiped,’ ‘Murder Healing,’ ‘Self-Strengthening: Murder,’ and ‘Greater Multi-cast’ Skills have increased!》

After Vandalieu handed the reluctant Godwin over to Iris and the government officials of the Majin nation, Schneider and his party left Vandalieu’s shadow in Talosheim.

“By the way, I have a question for you, Schneider, since you’re a veteran adventurer,” said Vandalieu. “What is it? Did some troublesome monsters show up in Gartland? Do you need advice on how to eat them?” asked Schneider.

“The stronger variants of Mudmen... No, that’s not it. Recently, my Attribute Values haven’t been increasing even though my Level is increasing, so I just thought it was odd,” said Vandalieu.

What Vandalieu wanted advice about was the fact that his Attribute Values hasn’t increased ever since he acquired the “Destruction Guider” Job.

His Level was increasing as it has always been, as he received one-tenth or so of the Experience Points his companions earned. However, his Attribute Values... They weren’t increasing at all, not even his Mana.

“Your Attribute Values aren’t increasing?” Schneider repeated. “Not like just your Strength or Intelligence, but all of them?”

“None of my Attribute Values are increasing at all.”

“None of them are increasing at all, huh... I’ve heard of cases where some of them don’t increase, but I’ve never heard of cases where none of them increase at all.

It was said that the way Attribute Values increased was closely related to individual qualities and ratios determined by Jobs. If two different people both acquired the ‘Apprentice Warrior’ Job, it was possible that one would gain more Strength than other Attributes Values while the other gained more Agility than Strength. A third person might not even experience much of an increase in Strength, Agility or even Stamina.

The first might be suited to being a power-type fighter, the second a lightly-armed fighter focused on speed, and the last might be someone who was lacking in physical talent altogether, being more suited to being a mage.

Such cases occurred even for apprentice-type Jobs, which were highly versatile, so it was certainly possible that someone with a Job with very skewed Attribute Value ratios could get no increases to certain Attribute Values. An example would be a muscle-head who was proud of his strength acquiring the ‘Berserker’ Job and increasing its Level to 100 without gaining a single point of Intelligence.

“But to not get any Attribute Values... Maybe you were just extremely unsuited for your Job?” Schneider suggested.

“No, it’s my fifth Guider Job so I don’t think I’m unsuited for it,” said Vandalieu.

“That’s amazing, and you say it so casually. Well, isn’t it just that kind of Job, then? Maybe its Attribute Value ratio is just really low. If not, then you’d have to be aged to the point where you have no room for development at all, including in your brain, but... I’m nearly sixty and I’m still able to increase my Attribute Values by increasing my Level, and you’re barely over ten, so I can’t imagine you’ve aged too much.

Even if you have just as much white hair as me.”

“I was born with white hair,” said Vandalieu. “Well, I’ll just change Jobs and see what happens.”

The level of his ‘Destruction Guider’ Job had already been maxed out. He had acquired a large quantity of Experience Points in today’s battle.

“I see. If you need anything else, let me know,” said Schneider as he walked off.

He and his party would be checking in on the slaves that they had freed the other day, and then spending some time with their families.

They were planning to attack a mine to free more slaves the day after tomorrow, so they had made a request for Gufadgarn to teleport them there.

Vandalieu had asked them, “Aren’t you working too much?”

But Schneider had replied, “No, not as much as you.”

After parting ways with Schneider, Vandalieu headed for the basement Dungeon in Morksi as originally planned, accompanied by Gufadgarn and the others. After all, they had only just departed Alcrem, so it would be unnatural for them to be out in Morksi’s streets.

He planned to change Jobs in the Job-changing room in Sam's carriage, as he had come to Morksí through teleportation beforehand, and then make preparations for the next attack. However, Darcia alerted him to something more important, forcing him to change his plans. "Vandalieu! Kana-chan has something important to discuss with you!"

#### Chapter 283 - Another Guider and shaken gods

The damage to Gorn and his defending force in this battle was great, second only to the damage they had taken during their first battle against Vandalieu.

They had learned their lesson in the prior battle; when the fake Cuatro exploded, they had immediately created defensive walls with magic and physical objects like rock and ice, and the God of Mirror Images Larpan had switched his focus from impeding Gufadgarn and Legion to protecting Gorn and his allies. The explosion itself had also not been as powerful as the first one. Thus, they had fortunately not suffered much direct damage.

However, the Sea Bird Beast-King Valfaz had been slain, and the Iron Colossus Nabanga, who had fallen and landed on the continent, had been confirmed to be dead.

And although the demigods' wounds were relatively light, they were not so light that they would be able to fight again at full strength right away.

As for the leading members of the defending force, Gorn, the commander on the battlefield, had suffered terrible burns on his right arm, and four of Brateo's fingers on his dominant hand had been broken.

Madroza's wounds were lighter than Gorn and Brateo's, but she had suffered a wound to her abdomen as well.

However, not all of the damage they had received was visible to the eye.

"It is likely that the previous battle and this one were to confirm the existence of us space-attribute gods, and to test our ability to see how long we can impede the teleportation of Gufadgarn and Legion," said Larpan, the God of Mirror Images.

Gorn and the others grimaced.

At the beginning of the battle, Vandalieu had stood on Cuatro's stern and called for Gorn and his allies to surrender. After that, he had cast spells that (to Gorn and his allies' knowledge) only the real Vandalieu could cast.

Based on this, Gorn and his allies had determined that the ship Vandalieu was on was the real Cuatro – or rather, made the assumption that even if it was a fake, it wouldn't self-destruct since Vandalieu was aboard.

They were aware that Vandalieu had learned of the space-attribute gods lying in wait during the previous battle. Thus, they had not imagined that he would discard his only means of escape when he was aware that his teleportation would be blocked.

However, the fake Cuatro had indeed self-destructed, and Vandalieu and his companions were still alive and well, having escaped without giving pursuit to Gorn and his allies.

"He has learned our formations, chipped away at our forces, and they should have a good idea of Larpan's power. It is likely that the next time he appears, he will be intent on pushing through until he reaches Botin," said Gorn.

"This is no time to be talking calmly, Gorn!" shouted Brateo. "The monsters of the Demon King's Continent that you've gathered are still too few in number! The hole we must try to fill is only growing deeper, and we are making no progress!"

"Please calm down, Brateo," said Madroza. "Based on what we know from the previous battles, Vandalieu will not appear again so soon. He and his allies have exhausted themselves as well." Several days had passed between Vandalieu's second and third attack. It was likely that he had spent those days preparing another fake ship to detonate.

Thus, Madroza assumed that it would be another few days before the next attack.

"We don't know that. If he intends to devour Botin's soul in the next attack, then maybe he won't use a fake exploding ship that takes days to build," said Brateo.

"Madroza. We do not know if Vandalieu will come tomorrow or in several days' time. However, that does not change the fact that we must regain our fighting strength and prepare to intercept him," said Larpan.

"Indeed," Madroza said in agreement, but she did not withdraw her argument. "However, making futile moves will only make the situation worse. Brateo, even if you continue trying to gather the continent's monsters, with those injuries, you will only make yourself a target for counterattacks."

Gorn had previously suggested using the demigods' descendants who had become monsters – Giants and Dragon-type monsters – as disposable pawns against Vandalieu.

Naturally, they would not gather these monsters by persuading them or striking a deal. They would threaten them and force them to do their bidding. They were not expecting the monsters to understand

their plan, and they were not expecting to be able to coordinate their attacks with the monsters. Having them charge at Vandalieu would be enough. They didn't need to train them or form bonds with them like Nineroad had with her familiars. And even if they were to change sides and join the enemy, it would be no great loss.

When the God of Thunderclouds Fitun attacked the city of Morksi, some Thunder Dragons had fled in fear of Vandalieu, while others had become attached to him and tamed by him.

Even if the same thing happened this time, it didn't matter. They were disposable pawns, with their number as their only useful quality. Gorn and his allies would simply attack the ones that turned against them along with Vandalieu's forces.

If Vandalieu took pity on these monsters and tried to protect them, it was possible that this extra task would hinder him, so it would even be a good thing if that happened.

However, these disposable pawns would be facing the Demon King, so no matter their number, they needed a certain level of quality. If they were of the same quality as the Thunder Dragons and Mountain Giants used by Fitun, they would quickly be decimated by the attacks of that flying ship.

That was why the demigods had been running around the Demon King's Continent, gathering monsters of Rank 10 or greater, but... now that Brateo and Gorn each had one unusable hand, if the monsters took notice of that, it was possible that they would find an opening to escape or make a counterattack against them.

Brateo grunted. "... You're right."

"Brateo, Larpan, there is something I must say," said Gorn. "I intend to move our defensive line from the sea around the continent, back to the coast."

"Gorn, have you lost your mind?!" exclaimed Brateo. "That would allow Vandalieu to come closer to the sea! Not only that, but it would mean that Madroza and the others would have to fight away from the sea. What are you thinking?!"

"It's impossible to continue meeting the enemy above the sea. And because there is some distance to the pseudo-Divine Realms, the support that Sirius-dono and the others can provide is limited," said Gorn.

Pure gods like the God of War Horns Sirius, who did not possess physical bodies like demigods, had been able to descend upon the world during the Age of the Gods, but this was a difficult feat now. It consumed a tremendous amount of power, so even descending for a short period of time would require them to exhaust all of their power and fall into a long slumber afterwards.

However, even in the current age, there were ways for gods to descend without consuming much power. One of those ways was to descend upon pseudo-Divine Realms, which were certain spaces in the physical world that had been made to be similar to the Divine Realms in which gods resided.

Gorn and his allies had created numerous such pseudo-Divine Realms on the Demon King's Continent, and they were using them to allow Sirius and other gods to descend upon, and as safe zones where they could rest.

However, in the end, they were nothing more than pseudo-Divine Realms. Gods descending on them were unable to move outside them. And the creation and maintenance of pseudo-Divine Realms was usually not an easy task.

Large quantities of Mana or a large-scale religious ritual were necessary to create a pseudo-Divine Realm, and this cost needed to be paid at regular intervals in order to maintain it.

Gorn and his allies used the miasma on the Demon King's Continent to meet the enormous Mana requirement. The continent was filled with so much miasma that the environment had distorted to the point of resembling a completely alien world. Maintaining a few pseudo-Divine Realms had no effect on the continent at all.

And even if the miasma being used to maintain the pseudo-Divine Realms was condensed or spread out into the surroundings, the continent couldn't possibly become any more contaminated.

However, creating more pseudo-Divine Realms would be difficult. If they wanted more support from Sirius and the other gods than just playing music imbued with Mana from afar, they would need to be closer.

"We could not defeat Vandalieu during the first battle; in fact, we are the ones who suffered heavy losses. It was clear at that point that we cannot keep meeting him in battle over the sea," said Gorn. "Don't think of this as a sign that we're being driven into a corner. Think of it as a plan to lure him within our reach so that we can take him down."

Brateo made a dissatisfied noise. "It cannot be helped. Half of the monsters you gathered can't fly, after all."

With Brateo's reluctant agreement, Gorn's forces began making preparations for Vandalieu's next assault.

Upon hearing that Kanako had something important to discuss, Vandalieu had imagined that it would be to do with the next concert, or making a recruited member she'd become close with a permanent member, or perhaps she had an acquaintance suffering from an incurable illness or a physical defect that she wanted him to cure.

But he was wrong.

"Van, 'Guider' has appeared," said Kanako.

"... So there are more people who want to become idols?" said Vandalieu.

"Van, that's 'like-minded.' I'm talking about 'Guider,' the kind that guides. A 'Guider' Job has appeared for me."

It seemed that Kanako had gone to change Jobs after her previous Job reached Level 100 after the Dungeon-clearing in Gartland several days ago and today's stage performance. When she did, a Guider-type Job had appeared among her available Jobs

"It's a Job that hasn't appeared for you, called 'Artistic Guider'... is this ok?" asked Kanako, looking worried.

Vandalieu put a hand on her shoulder. "There's nothing to worry about, Kanako. You won't start seeing only weird Jobs appear just because you take a Guider Job."

"... Umm, that's not what I was concerned about."

"Huh? It's not?"

Vandalieu was expressionless as always, but Kanako realized that he was genuinely surprised.

"Of course it isn't," Kanako said. "My Jobs might be normal compared to yours, Van, but to the average person, they're definitely weird."

She had started with normal Jobs like 'Apprentice Thief,' 'Mage,' and 'Archer,' then she had acquired 'Firework Technician,' a Job that was unknown to human societies, and after that, her Jobs were 'Magical Girl,' 'Magical Idol'... If one did not compare them to Vandalieu's Jobs, they were certainly strange.

"What I'm worried about is that if I take the Job, our guidances might clash, canceling each other's effects out or becoming weaker," said Kanako. "There aren't any known historical cases of two Guiders being together, are there?"

The emergence of a Guider was not a frequent event. It was normal for a single Guider to emerge across one long era.

It had once been said that ten Guiders existed at the same time during a period of time that was dark and chaotic even for Lambda's standards, but... in the current age, it was known that this account was mostly false, and only two individuals during that time had actually been confirmed to be Guiders.

Thus, Kanako's concerns were reasonable.

"I think it's fine," said Vandalieu. "It's true that there are no cases of two Guiders being together in history, but there are in legends. Over a hundred thousand years ago, all seven of the champions who fought the Demon King Guduranis were Guiders. In other words, I'm sure it's a matter of the contents of the guidances."

"The contents? For example, your guidance affecting Undead and certain kinds of monsters?" said Kanako.

"Yes, that's right."

Vandalieu believed that if two different guidances were to clash, then it would be a result of the contents of the guidances. A guidance was an ideology and a doctrine. There were ideologies and principles that could co-exist, and others that clashed with each other. Guidances were the same.

Of course, if the Guiders themselves strived to coexist and avoid clashes, and kept their ideologies separate from one another, then it was likely possible for them to avoid clashing.

The champions of a hundred thousand years ago had also divided into two groups – the creation-oriented champions and combat-oriented champions – and these two groups had antagonized each other. But Vandalieu had heard from the gods that even though this was the case, they had maintained a minimum level of cooperation and they had not conflicted to the point of being hostile towards each other, at least on the surface.

"We can only make guesses as to what kind of guidance the 'Artistic Path' is, but we can get a pretty good idea from the name of the Job and the things that you've accomplished up to this point. I don't think it will clash with my guidance," said Vandalieu.

'Artistic Guider' was, in short, the result of Kanako's idol activities in this world. She was the first person to introduce idols to this world – idols that were not simply popular individuals or religious images. Not only had she become an idol herself, but she had also encouraged and taught people who had been born and raised in this world to become idols as well. That was why the Job had appeared to her.

And Vandalieu had supported her idol activities. He had created transformation equipment as she

requested, provided Knochen as a stage for performances and used split entities of himself as equipment and, more recently, as performers.

In human society, he was known as the creator of transformation equipment, and he was known to be helping Kanako as the son of Darcia, who had already made her debut on stage.

Even if Vandalieu were to find another music or performing-art-related Guider Job in the future, it was unlikely that it would clash with Kanako's 'Artistic Guider.'

"... Alright. Then I'm off to go and become an 'Artistic Guider!' It sounds like it'll provide some nice bonuses to my Attribute Value growth and my Skills, and I'm sure we'll have even more audience members with the effects of the guidance!" said Kanako.

"See you later," said Vandalieu.

Ordinary Guiders weren't able to lead others easily like Vandalieu could. They would need to teach their ideology and spread their guidance gradually, but in Kanako's case, she would lead through her art... her singing and dancing.

Though it would not be as rapid as Vandalieu's, her guidance would likely spread with each stage performance. However, there was one concern: One could assume that her guidance would target even those who were not a part of her audiences.

"... Maybe I should let Melissa and Zadiris know first?" Vandalieu wondered to himself.

The guidance that Kanako was about to acquire was likely to also affect those who performed on stage with her. There was a chance that even Melissa, who had reluctantly performed a handful of times, and Zadiris, who was only performing to create more 'Princesses' around her, would be guided.

"Kana-chan was laughing and saying 'I'm going to go and become a Guider' as she headed towards the Job-changing room, so I guess her problem has been solved," said Darcia.

"Yes, Mom... If she's going around and spreading the news herself, maybe I don't need to tell them?" said Vandalieu.

"You mean Melissa-chan and Zadiris-san? You don't need to worry about them. If they're really opposed to it, they won't be guided, and if they're guided, then it means that they weren't opposed to it," said Darcia.

"I suppose you're right," Vandalieu said in agreement.

As Darcia said, one could not come under the effect of a guidance unless all of the conditions for them to be guided were met.

However, there was something that Vandalieu had not realized. Guider-type Jobs affected those around the user before they appeared as a Job available for them to select.

This effect was a faint one that was not represented by numbers in one's Attribute Values or Skills.

However, that effect was something that even Vandalieu, as a Guider himself, had taken notice of after Kanako's stage performance in Gartland.

In other words, Melissa, who had reluctantly agreed to work with Kanako, and Zadiris, who was currently performing on-stage with the recruited members in Morksi in Kanako's absence, had already been guided... It was too late!

"Well, we need to celebrate, so let's celebrate by making a sauté, chicken katsu, and a chicken curry with Valfaz's meat. And let's make something with Valfaz's feathers," said Vandalieu.

"Making deep-fried katsu using a defeated enemy... That's a little ironic," Darcia remarked.

Following this mother-son conversation, Vandalieu headed for the Job-changing room himself and touched the crystal ball inside.

《Jobs that can be selected: Dark King Mage, Fallen Warrior, Insect Ninja, Chaos Guider, Hollow King Mage, Eclipse Cursecaster, Demon Ruler, Creator, Pale Rider, Tartarus, Wild Spirit, Dark Battery Cannoneer, Magic Staff Creator, Soul Fighter, God Destroyer, Qliphoth, Dark Beast User, Spirit Therapist, Artisan: Transformation Equipment, Hollow Shadow Caster, Balor, Apollyon, Demigorgon, Soul Devourer, God Devourer, Nergal, Ravana, Shaitan, Chi You, God Spirit Mage, Ouroboros, Rudra, Blood Ruler, Demon Electricity User, Yin Guider (NEW!), Divine Guider (NEW!), Juggernaut (NEW!)》

"More new Jobs... and even two Guider Jobs," Vandalieu murmured to himself.

Was a 'Yin Guider' one who led shadows, or one who led others into the shadow... Was it perhaps a Job similar to 'Demon Guider' and 'Dark Guider?' As for the other Guider Job, Vandalieu knew why it had appeared.

"It's probably because I guided Gufadgarn, as well as Bashas and the others."

As it was a Job for guiding gods, this was likely the case. However, he also got the feeling that if that was true, it had taken a little too long to appear. Perhaps it was a Job related to guiding others into the realm of godhood... past Rank 13. Or perhaps it was simply a Job that did not appear until one had guided a certain number of gods.



As for 'Juggernaut,' Vandalieu didn't have a good idea of what kind of Job it could be based on his current knowledge. Perhaps it was the name of something from the myths and legends of Earth.

*Even with the 'Perfect Record Technique' Skill, I still don't know what I don't know.*

Vandalieu had visited Earth after acquiring the 'Perfect Record Technique' Skill, and he had stocked up on new knowledge while he was there, but he had no knowledge regarding 'Rudra' or 'Juggernaut.'

"Well, seeing new Jobs that I don't know much about isn't anything out of the ordinary. Now then, what should I take next?"

Although Vandalieu's Skill Levels had increased with the 'Destruction Guider' Job, his Attribute Values hadn't increased at all. He could select another Guider Job to increase his Attribute Values, or because his current enemies were mostly demigods, perhaps it would be better to take 'God Destroyer' or 'God Devourer.'

"Select 'Dark King Mage.'"

It would be problematic if he took another Guider-type Job and his Attribute Values continued to not increase, and he would be using 'Dark King Magic' against the demigods. And he would also be using 'Dark King Magic' to remove the seal on Botin. It was about time that he chose the 'Dark King Mage' Job.

《The Levels of the 'Dark King Magic,' 'Chant Revocation,' 'God Spirit Magic,' and 'Spirit Therapy' Skills have increased!》

**Name:** Vandalieu Zakkart

**Race:** Dhampir (Mother: Goddess)

**Age:** 11 years old

**Title:** Ghoul Emperor, Eclipse Emperor, Guardian of the Cultivation Villages, Holy Son of Vida, Scaled Emperor, Tentacle Emperor, Champion, Demon King, Oni Emperor, Trial Conqueror, Transgressor, Black Blood Emperor, Elder Dragon Emperor, Food Cart King, Genius Tamer, True Ruler of the Red-light District, Patron Saint of Transformation Equipment

**Job:** Dark King Mage

**Level:** 0

**Job history:** Death-Attribute Mage, Golem Transmuter, Undead Tamer, Soul Breaker, Venom Fist User, Insect User, Tree Caster, Demon Guider, Archenemy, Zombie Maker, Golem Creator, Corpse Demon Commander, Demon King User, Dark Guider, Labyrinth Creator, Creation Guider, Dark Healer, Disease Demon, Magic Cannoneer, Spirit Warrior, Bestower, Dream Guider, Demon King, Demiurge, Whip Tongue Calamity, Divine Enemy, Dead Spirit Mage, String User, Great Demon King, Vengeful Berserker, Destruction Guider

**Attributes:**

Vitality: 577,752

Mana: 8,940,478,230 (+8,046,430,407)

Strength: 59,631

Agility: 52,968

Stamina: 63,430

Intelligence: 68,171

**Passive skills:**

Monstrous Strength: Level 6

Super Rapid Regeneration: Level 4

Dark King Magic: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)

Status Effect Immunity

Magic Resistance: Level 9

Dark Vision

Dark Dream Demon Creation Destruction Path Enticement: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)

Chant Revocation: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)

Guidance: Dark Dream Demon Creation Destruction Path: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)

Constant Mana Recovery: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)

Super Strengthen Subordinates: Level 3

Deadly Venom Secretion (Claws, Fangs, Tongue): Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)

Strengthened Agility: Level 9

Body Expansion (Tongue): Level 10

Augmented Attack Power while Unarmed: Small

Strengthened Body Part (Hair, Claws, Tongue, Fangs): Level 10  
Demon Thread Refining: Level 1  
Mana Enlargement: Level 9  
Increased Mana Recovery Rate: Level 9  
Strengthened Attack Power while activating a Magic Cannon: Very Large  
Augmented Vitality: Level 2  
Strengthened Attribute Values: Reigning: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)  
Strengthened Attribute Values: Worshiped: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)  
Strengthened Attribute Values: Demon Empire of Vidal: Level 1  
Self-Regeneration: Cannibalism: Level 3  
Augmented Attribute Values: Cannibalism: Level 3  
Strengthened Attribute Values when Enveloped in a Soul: Medium  
Murder Healing: Level 2 (NEW!)  
Self-Strengthening: Murder: Level 2 (NEW!)

**Active skills:**

Blood Rule: Level 1  
Transcend Limits: Level 8  
Golem Creation: Level 7  
Hollow King Magic: Level 6  
Precise Mana Control: Level 3  
Cooking: Level 8  
Divine Alchemy: Level 1  
Soul Destruction Fighting Technique: Level 5  
Greater Multi-cast: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)  
Surgery: Level 8  
Embodiment: Level 4  
Coordination: Level 10  
Super High-speed Thought Processing: Level 6  
Commanding: Level 10  
Thread-reeling: Level 8  
Throwing: Level 10  
Scream: Level 8  
God Spirit Magic: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)  
Demon King Artillery Technique: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)  
Armor Technique: Level 10  
Shield Technique: Level 10  
Shadow Group Binding Technique: Level 7  
Transcend Limits: Fragments: Level 2  
Spirit Therapy: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)  
Whip Technique: Level 3  
Spirit Form Transformation: Lightning  
Staff Technique: Level 2  
High-speed Flight: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)  
Musical Instrument Performance: Level 1 (NEW!)

**Unique skills:**

God Devourer: Level 8  
Deformed Multiple Souls  
Mental Encroachment: Level 9  
Labyrinth Creation: Level 5  
Great Demon King  
Abyss: Level 10  
Divine Enemy  
Soul Devour: Level 9  
Vida's Divine Protection  
Earth's Gods' Divine Protection  
Group Thought Processing: Level 7  
Zantark's Divine Protection  
Group Control: Level 7

Soul Form: Level 4  
Demon King's Demon Eyes  
Origin's Gods' Divine Protection  
Ricklent's Divine Protection  
Zuruwarn's Divine Protection  
Perfect Record Technique  
Surpass Limits: Soul: Level 2  
Mutation Induction  
Demon King's Body (Merged with the Demon King's mucus glands!)  
Demigod

### **Curses**

Experience gained in previous life not carried over  
Cannot learn existing jobs  
Unable to gain experience independently

Having checked his Status, Vandalieu left the Job-changing room and thought about the things he needed to do.

"I need to teach Matthew and the others how to fight, then there's the screening of the battles in Alcrem and the Demon King's Continent, and after that, I need to persuade Seris and the others to become Abyssal Vampires. I need to practice instruments, do my 'Muscle Technique' training every day, spend time with my family... and let's also implement the restraining measures on the enemy that Chezare suggested."

Vandalieu had learned from Valfaz's spirit about the Boulder Colossus Gorn's plan to make up for the forces he had lost, and he didn't mind simply letting it be carried out. An army of monsters commanded by a tamer would be a threat, but a disorderly mob of forcibly-gathered monsters was much less so.

... There was also the fact that the plan to slip past Gorn and his allies to remove Botin's seal directly from underground was underway, so it was convenient that their attention was focused on gathering monsters.

However, it was probably wise to execute the restraining measure that was suggested by Vandalieu's trusted vassal, the general and prime minister Chezare, to prevent Alda's forces from deploying reinforcements to support Gorn and his allies.

The Goddess of Flow Pargtarta was a subordinate god of Peria, the Goddess of Water and Knowledge, and as she carried out her duty of guarding her slumbering master, she received reports from the defense force that had been deployed to the Demon King's Continent by Alda's forces.

She was not currently in command of the defense force. Alda had approached her to ask her to take command, but she had declined because she had no experience in giving orders.

However, she was an old goddess who had existed since before the Demon King Guduranis's invasion, and a trusted advisor of Peria, so the gods of the defense force made sure to keep her informed.

"Vandalieu was thought to be after Botin-sama on the Demon King's Continent, but it seems that he is also searching for this place, where Peria-sama slumbers," one of the young gods reported.

"Today, one of the Elder Dragons of the defense force discovered a strange insect, and it turned out to be Vandalieu's familiar, created using fragments of the Demon King. They immediately hid themselves and let it pass, however, so we do not believe that he is aware of the location of this holy ground," said another, speaking in a dire tone.

Pargtarta's beautiful face was clouded with distress. "Either he is intending to attack this place while pretending to be after Botin, or he has changed targets because Gorn-dono and the others are putting up a sturdy defense. In either case, we cannot let our guard down. It will be hard on the defense force, but please be extra vigilant so that we can protect our masters," she said, bowing her head to the younger

gods.

However, she did not believe that Vandalieu intended to devour the souls of Peria and Botin. She had already determined that this was a baseless assumption made by Alda.

But she had not made direct contact with Vandalieu, nor had she been told this by Peria, so this was only conjecture on her part.

Still, her master had decided that it was best for her to not know anything. If this was the best *flow*, then she just needed to do as her master trusted her to do.

“Please raise your head, Pargtarta-dono! After all, the great Alda has sent us here so that we can protect you and Peria-sama from the evil Demon King’s minions!” one of the young gods said.

“Please leave it to us. It is our duty to protect the order of this world and defeat evil!” said the other.

Knowing nothing made it easier, in fact, for Pargtarta to deal with these young gods.

*The fact that Vandalieu sent one of his familiars this way must be to constrain the movements of the force defending Peria as well as Alda and the other gods, preventing them from sending reinforcements to the force defending Botin and concentrating their strength in one place, or perhaps it is just a way to cause confusion. Things are flowing well,* she thought to herself.

Gorn and his allies had been attacked three times, while the force defending Peria had not been attacked even once, so wouldn’t it be best for Peria’s defense force to send reinforcements? Or wouldn’t it be even better to send the whole defense force to join Gorn and his allies in order to combine their strength to battle against Vandalieu?

It was true that there were gods who advocated for this. At this rate, if Vandalieu continued to corner Gorn and his allies, this plan of action might be taken.

With these thoughts running through her mind, Pargtarta saw the oblivious young gods off as they gave fervent speeches and returned to their posts in high spirits.

Another thought – the realization that she had become a wicked goddess – suddenly ran through her mind, but she told herself that this was also part of the *flow* and tried not to dwell on it.

Job explanation:

Destruction Guider

A Job for guiding those who desire destruction... those who wish for their own destruction, extreme pessimists, and Undead who wish for their own existences to be extinguished. Thus, it is inevitable that one who acquires this Job will meet their own ruin.

However, Vandalieu has already experienced multiple other Guider Jobs, and the guidance of this Job is merged with that of the other Jobs, so it has become a Job that creates change in those who wish for their own destruction, and guides them to other paths.

The Job provides bonuses to Leveling Skills that place a burden on the user such as ‘Surpass Limits’ and its variations, as well as those that take effect upon destroying others such as ‘Slaughter Healing,’ but it is an extreme Job in the sense that it provides no growth to Attribute Values at all.

### Chapter 284 - Those who are nurtured between attacks

After changing Jobs and acquiring the ‘Artistic Guider’ Job, Kanako hummed to herself as she left the Dungeon and stepped out into the basement of Vandalieu’s house. She then left and headed straight for the warehouse that she was using as the venue for her lessons.

“Gosh, my body feels so light. My feet are dancing on their own,” she said happily.

The legendary champions summoned by the gods had all acquired Guider-type Jobs, and future generations had considered having a Guider-type Job to be a requirement to be a champion. Those with such a Job had such great influence that nobles and even royalty would not be able to make light of them. But Kanako did not have much of a sense that she had acquired such an influential Job.

Acquiring a Guider-type Job was a great feat in and of itself, but the important thing to Kanako was the Job’s effect and the bonuses it provided to her Skills. Her Attribute Value growth would come later, so she didn’t know how much it would provide in that regard yet, but her ‘Dancing’ and ‘Singing’ Skills had immediately improved due to the Skill bonuses of the ‘Artistic Guider’ Job. She would soon be seeing if her guidance’s effects would affect the recruited members who were taking her lessons, so she couldn’t help but be excited.

“It would be nice if I could give lessons that people can learn from in a short period of time. Unlike before, we don’t have the time to spend years working hard in obscurity,” she said to herself.

By 'before,' she was referring to her life on Earth and in Origin. In Lambda, the world she currently lived in, people were generally considered adults from the age of fifteen. And if a girl stayed single past age twenty, she was considered past her prime.

That wasn't so much the case for people of long-lived races like Kanako, such as Dark Elves (though she was actually a Chaos Elf), but for humans, the length of time they could stay in the business of the performing arts was limited.

On top of that, CDs and DVDs didn't exist yet, and published goods like photo albums weren't commonplace. If idols wanted to earn money themselves, they would need to stand on stage.

"If we try anything thoughtless like trying to sell handshake tickets, there'd be so many people who misunderstand our intent. Swimsuit models and body pillows would be considered indecent... No, swimsuit models might be acceptable."

Very revealing forms of armor, such as bikini armors, were quite common in this world. Most of these armors were Magic Items that either provided a significant amount of protection even to areas where the wearer's skin was exposed, or provided other effects that made up for the lack of protection. And like their names suggested, there was no difference between them and bikini-type swimsuits other than their material and thickness.

Considering that women were not apprehended by guards in the streets for wearing such armor, perhaps swimsuit models would be acceptable?

But just as this thought occurred to Kanako, she thought of another problem with this.

"... Considering the current level of technology, I'd have no choice but to ask Van to make the items in order to get the quality that I want. Even if they're not considered to be indecent, I can't ask him to do that."

Kanako did not consider swimsuit modeling and body pillows with the image of her in her stage outfit as something to be embarrassed about. However, the ones printing such images would be the Demon King Familiars... split entities of Vandalieu that shared his consciousness. With that in mind, she couldn't help but to feel some resistance to the idea.

In her previous life, she had known another, more senior idol who had felt embarrassed when a TV program showcased a DVD product containing a slideshow of photos of her that had been made in her earlier days in the industry. Kanako had felt that embarrassment herself, around three years after her own debut... but she had never expected to experience it again in her current life.

"Come to think of it, Van has returned several times, hasn't he? In fact, he even has a split entity of himself there..." said Kanako, frowning as she suddenly remembered that Vandalieu had visited Earth and Origin in soul form, and even had Banda, a split entity of himself created from fragments of his soul, in Origin.

It had already been more than a decade since she was an idol in Origin, and even then, she hadn't been at the top of the idol world, so it was unlikely that footage from those days would happen to be broadcasted on TV now. However, computers and the internet existed in Origin, though they worked slightly differently from the computers and internet of Earth. Naturally, websites for uploading user-created videos had existed for more than a decade.

If Vandalieu wanted to look up what Kanako looked like back then, he could.

"Well, it isn't like I can issue a gag order now," Kanako told herself.

There were currently several people around her who had known her in her previous life – Melissa, Doug, and Legion. There was constantly a risk that one of them might make some off-handed comment that would get Vandalieu interested in what Kanako had been like in her previous life.

Thus, it was likely best to protect herself with a method other than a gag order... by creating a dark history for the others as well.

"Melissa and Legion have already made their debut, so they're fine. The problem is Doug," Kanako muttered to herself.

"What about me?"

Speak of the devil, Doug had heard Kanako talking to herself. Lost in her thoughts, Kanako had already arrived at the warehouse.

"Oh, it's nothing. I was just thinking about the best way to make male idols popular," she said.

"That isn't just nothing!" said Doug. "You went to change Jobs, then came back whispering to yourself so I came to talk to you and then... Hmm? Is there something, like, different about you?" he asked, staring at her.

"What do you mean by 'different?' I haven't changed anything other than my Job," said Kanako, a little confused.

She had only just changed Jobs, so her Attribute Values hadn't increased, and although some of her

Skills like ‘Singing’ had increased, it was difficult to imagine that this was noticeable in her behavior.

But it seemed that Doug believed that something had clearly changed about her.

“No, something’s obviously changed,” he said. “How do I put it... It’s like there’s an aura or something around you. Kind of like what people called a ‘celebrity aura,’ you have it even more than you did in our previous lives.”

“A celebrity aura? I made my debut last year, so why now... Could it be that this is the guidance?” said Kanako.

“Guidance?!” exclaimed Doug, his eyes wide in shock. “You... you’ve become a Guider?” he asked more quietly.

The only ones who knew that Kanako had become a Guider were Vandalieu and the others whom Kanako had talked with before changing Jobs.

“So that’s why. What kind of Guider are you?” Doug asked.

“An ‘Artistic Guider.’ It looks like I provide guidance in the arts,” said Kanako.

“That’s the kind of Guider only a real idol would become,” Doug said, cracking a small joke to try and calm himself down.

Kanako thought a little about the aura that he was apparently perceiving... and the ends of her mouth rose in a smile. “Doug, the fact that you have felt my guidance... You must like idols quite a lot.”

“What?! No, I just watch because I’m working security at the venues...!”

Leaving Doug even more shaken than when she had told him that she had become a Guider, Kanako entered the warehouse. Inside, Zadiris, Basdia, Eleanora, Bellmond, and the locally-hired members including Rudolf were doing their own practice, resting, and tuning their instruments.

“Good morning! Good work, everyone!” she said.

She had a habit, or perhaps a fixation, from her previous life – when working in the entertainment industry, the greeting was always ‘good morning’ regardless of the time of day.

“Good morning!” everyone said in unison.

The locally-recruited members had been bewildered by this fixation of Kanako’s at first, but it seemed that they were accustomed to it now. Zadiris and Basdia were looking at them with wry smiles.

Up to this point, nothing was different compared to before Kanako’s Job change.

But one of the locally-recruited members – the blue-haired Elf bard – abruptly stopped tuning his guitar and stood up out of his seat to stare at Kanako.

“W-what’s the matter?” asked Kanako in a flustered, high-pitched voice.

She had hoped that there would be some kind of change, but there was a sharp look in Rudolf’s eyes that she had never seen before.

Meanwhile, Randolph ‘the True’ – the S-class adventurer who was using the false name ‘Rudolf’ – came back to his senses and realized that Kanako and everyone else were staring at him.

“... No, it’s... nothing. I just thought that there was a different air about you,” he muttered, sitting back down in his seat.

He knew that he hadn’t completely managed to brush the matter aside; he was particularly aware of Basdia and Eleanora’s sharp gazes being directed his way, but his mind was torn more towards thinking about the change he had seen in Kanako rather than his blunder.

*The air about her has clearly changed. Has someone disguised themselves as her and taken her place? No, there is no mistake that it is her. And what I am feeling is not a sense of discomfort. Is this a sense of elation?* he thought, bewildered.

But he and Doug weren’t the only ones who were feeling something from Kanako.

“Well then, let’s get started and take it from the top,” said Kanako, having gathered her thoughts, and she began guiding the dancers.

As the locally-recruited members who were in charge of singing and dancing began to perform, she gave advice, such as “Stretch your back out more!” and “Yes, just like that!”

Kanako herself perceived the lessons to be proceeding as always. However, everyone else felt a significant change.

They were able to understand how to follow Kanako’s instructions more easily than before. Things being taught were quickly becoming second nature to them, and they felt a sense of fulfillment that accompanied the improvement of their technique.

Doug, who was watching from the warehouse’s entrance, couldn’t help himself from listening intently.

“Kanako-san, I just can’t do this last step very well no matter how I try. What should I do?”

“Please help me with my singing next!”

“C-can I join the singing and dancing lessons too?!”

The trainees’ sense of fulfillment created an increase in their enthusiasm towards the lessons, and they

were seeking Kanako's advice and guidance more proactively.

Not only that, but Ediria, an adventurer who had mostly been learning instrumental performance, was voicing her desire to learn how to sing and dance as well. She felt a slight discomfort in the corner of her mind, but she was approaching Kanako without paying any heed to it.

Not only that, but even Zadiris – who had already learned the song that was currently being practiced – wanted to participate.

“Kanako, could I join in as well? I have already received a passing mark from you for that song, but my body will grow dull if I just stand and watch,” she said.

“That's unusual of you. What bizarre turn of events do I owe this to?” asked Kanako.

“I know what you are saying, but you should not make comments that dampen people's interests.”

Zadiris was slightly put off by Kanako's comment, but she was usually uninterested in the lessons. Or to put it more accurately, she put effort into practicing. Kanako had already decided that Zadiris was capable enough to perform on-stage in front of audiences, but Zadiris continued practicing without slacking until she was satisfied with her own performance.

However, after that, she only took part in the bare minimum of lessons required to maintain that standard.

“I mean, if I make an error, it is me who makes a fool of myself on stage. And as I am known as the boy's familiar, that would reflect on him as well. So, that is how it is,” said Zadiris, making up this explanation and blushing as she joined in on the lesson.

“You're finally being honest with yourself,” said Kanako, putting a hand on Zadiris's shoulder. “Well then, let's get Zadiris-chan in and start over. Rudolf-san, I'm counting on you for the music!”

“Chan?!” And what do you mean, I am being honest with myself?!” exclaimed Zadiris.

But nobody paid any heed to that, and the lesson resumed.

Basdia watched her mother smoothly falling to a level from which she could not return, then stared at Rudolf as he played the guitar to provide the music.

*The look in his eyes a moment ago, the presence that he emanated for just a moment. He is no ordinary person. If Eleanora and Bellmond are wary of him as well, then it's certain. It seems that he is not a bard after all, she thought.*

But she slumped in exasperation as she looked at Bellmond to see that she was playing with some threads in her hands, pretending to play a stringed instrument.

It seemed that Bellmond was interested in the guitar Rudolf was playing, rather than having noticed that he was no ordinary person.

“... We should expect things from Bellmond that *aren't* judging a person's character,” Basdia whispered.

“You're right,” Eleanora whispered back.

And with that, Basdia decided to simply endure the aching of her body for today and keep an eye on Rudolf with Eleanora.

The day after Vandalieu changed Jobs to 'Dark King Mage,' he decided to take some 'days off.'

But 'days off' didn't mean that he would be resting his body and indulging in simple pleasures. However, it would be strange to call what he was spending his time on 'work,' so he had decided that these were days off.

A grotesque-looking Ogre let out a dull roar as it manipulated the wind to scatter arrows made of air into its surroundings.

Was this an Ogre Mage casting a spell? No, that wasn't right. There were numerous black, tube-like objects protruding from the Ogre's limbs, abdomen, and chest, and the arrows of air were being released from them.

The ones facing the grotesque Ogre were the Vampire Zombie Isla, the Black Goblin Ninja Braga, and the 'Starving Wolf' Michael, who ruled the red-light district of Morksi – the 'Kisser' Miles.

“Damn it! It's acquired more troublesome abilities than the one before!” said Isla.

“Don't try to see the attacks, feel the flow of the air!” said Braga.

“But we don't need to capture it alive this time, right?! Then this will be easy!” said Miles.

“Don't try to see the attacks? Feel? You make it sound so easy. I'm a Zombie, you know,” said Isla.

Although she didn't look like it, as the decomposition of her body had been halted, she was a Zombie.

Thus, her senses were different from that of a living person.

“You say that, but you're avoiding them all anyway,” said Miles; Isla was dodging the arrows of wind just as well as he was.

“Of course I am. Even if I can't see them, their aim is sloppy and they're so loud,” said Isla.

Each time the grotesque Ogre released an arrow of wind, there was a noise that sounded like a high-pitched whistle. The black tubes sucked in air, compressed it and then released it as an arrow of wind, and the noise was produced by that process.

Braga and Miles avoided these invisible arrows of wind by feeling the flow of air, while Isla did so by relying on the noise they made.

Perhaps realizing that there was no use in its wind arrow attacks, the grotesque Ogre roared and charged at its three approaching foes.

The black tubes expelled air that provided propulsive force, causing the Ogre to move as fast as the wind. Its superhuman strength and speed would be enough to tear apart a knight in full plate armor in an instant; under ordinary circumstances, the Ogre would be untouchable.

However, the grotesque Ogre's foes were capable of moving even faster than the wind.

"First, I'll cut off your head! 'Blade Slash,'" said Braga as he charged at the Ogre head-on, performing a 'Dagger Technique' martial skill with a single-edged ninja blade to sever the Ogre's neck.

The Ogre's head screamed in pain and shock.

But even though it had lost its head, with blood spraying from the surface where its neck had been cut, the Ogre's body did not stop. Not only that, but the dull sound of bones and flesh bending could be heard all over its body as it transformed in a repulsive manner and pointed both of its arms at Miles and Isla.

"MAIN BODY!" came what sounded like a scream from the black tubes, and in the next moment, a spiral of air erupted from both arms. By adjusting the angles of the black tubes growing from its arms, it had created a sideways-spinning whirlwind.

If one were to get caught up in this whirlwind produced by the creature's two parallel arms, they would be blown away and turned into something resembling a dirty, worn rag.

"Transform! 'Swift Water Rapid Reaction!' And I'll destroy your internal organs!" shouted Isla.

Having activated her transformation equipment and her 'Transforming Chain Armor Technique,' she evaded the whirlwind by a hair's breadth and buried her sword in the creature's torso with all of her speed and monstrous strength.

The creature roared once more. "The host cannot be maintained, separate, separaaaaa —"

The grotesque Ogre... or what had been an Ogre, with its belly torn and its spine severed, made another significant transformation. The black tubes all over its body grew longer and thicker, tearing its flesh and skin. The Demon King fragment inside its body was attempting to separate itself from its host.

"And here comes the finisher!" said Miles, taking out a palm-sized box and leaping to within arm's reach of the Demon King fragment.

The fragment screamed. "MAIN BODYYYYY!"

It tried to resist, but having lost its host, it was not particularly powerful. It continued screaming as it was sucked into the box.

An Orichalcum chain was wrapped around the box, which was also made of Orichalcum, and the sealing was complete.

Miles let out a sigh of relief. "Boss, we managed to seal it."

He turned around to see a mysterious creature that resembled an armadillo and was bigger than an Ogre, clapping in applause with fin-shaped front limbs.

"Everyone, well done. Now then, shall we take a fifteen-minute break and try again?"

This mysterious creature was a familiar and split entity of Vandalieu, a Demon King Familiar.

"Will it be the Demon King's spiracles again? Or will it be the other one, the Demon King's spurs?" asked Braga.

"It's not good to get used to the same fragment, so let's go with the Demon King's spurs. The host is a surprise, though," said the Demon King Familiar.

Several days ago, Schneider and the other members of the 'Storm of Tyranny' had stolen two Demon King fragments... one that had been sealed and another that had been turned into a piece of Demon King equipment, from the Marme Duchy, and they had given them to Vandalieu.

However, Vandalieu had already absorbed several dozen fragments, and there was no immediate need to absorb the spiracles and spurs.

Thus, he had decided to use them for training rather than absorbing them right away.

It was possible that his companions might encounter a Demon King fragment that had infested a host and was running amok while away on a mission where Vandalieu could not immediately come to deal with it.

If they had prior experience with sealing fragments, they would be able to seal the fragments away themselves in such cases.

The training was taking place in the Dungeon that Vandalieu had created in the basement of his house in Morksi, on a new floor that he had made just for this purpose. There was a trick to ascending to the prior



floor – one needed to answer a riddle to open the door to the stairway. As the Demon King fragments moved on instinct alone, they would never be able to leave the Dungeon.

And even if Braga or one of the others were to be infested by the fragments, it wouldn't be a problem, as Vandalieu would just need to carry out a surgery like when he extracted the mucus glands... and he had also stationed a Demon King Familiar here to supervise the training, which would impede the fragments if the situation required, so even that was unlikely to be necessary.

Incidentally, the hosts that Vandalieu was having the fragments infest were soulless monsters that had been generated by his Dungeon. As these were flesh mannequins with no souls, the fragments took over them and began rampaging immediately upon infestation.

"Vandalieu-sama!" said Isla – the last person to take the training – as she embraced the Demon King Familiar's soft, fluffy belly without any worry about the next training session.

"Isla, even though we are taking a break, there are dangerous objects very close by," said the Demon King Familiar.

"The empty sealing equipment that were in Vida's resting grounds, the ones that Vida made herself with meticulous care a hundred thousand years ago, aren't going to come apart," said Isla. "More importantly, I have not seen you in so long, Vandalieu-sama. If your main body is too busy, then I must at least enjoy your clones!"

Isla had been wearing a cruel smile during the training, but her mouth was hanging open in a slovenly smile now. If she had a tail, it was almost certain that it would be wagging furiously right now.

"I suppose it can't be helped," said the Demon King Familiar, curling around to envelop Isla with its belly and opening the eyes and mouth on its back. "Let's extend our break from fifteen minutes to thirty," it said through the newly-opened mouth.

"Are you sure thirty minutes will be enough? Judging from how she looks now, I don't think she'll be of any use for a while," said Miles.

"I think Eleanora will leave Kanako to come and join us. I'll wait until then," said Braga.

After that, Eleanora, who had learned from Kanako that Vandalieu had returned, came to join the training. However, in the break following that, she too was enveloped in the warmth of the armadillo-shaped Demon King Familiar.

Meanwhile, more training was being carried out on the floor above the Demon King fragment sealing training.

The leader of the kids of the orphanage, Matthew, and the rest of the orphanage's children, were working hard to train their 'Unarmed Fighting Technique.'

"Hey, Van. I want a sword more than 'Unarmed Fighting Technique!' I don't have claws like you, you know," said Matthew.

"Matthew, it's best to be able to fight even when you're bare-handed," said Vandalieu. "'Unarmed Fighting Technique' has limited range and is lacking in power at first. But it's effective to improve your physical abilities to provide a base for all combat-related Skills."

'Unarmed Fighting Technique' used one's own body as a weapon. Thus, Vandalieu believed that training this Skill was effective for improving one's physical abilities and convenient for acquiring other combat-related Skills as well.

"Hmph. Fine, but once I've learned the 'Unarmed Fighting Technique' Skill, make sure you teach me how to use other weapons as well," said Matthew reluctantly.

"Of course. I've already prepared weapons for you to practice with," said Vandalieu, pointing at the weapons he had made for the children to train with.

They were not the weapons with deliberately blunted blades that were used for the training of city guards and knights, but highly-safe wooden weapons with Talosheim-produced rubber covering the parts where the blades, points, and striking surfaces would be.

After 'Unarmed Fighting Technique,' the children would use these weapons to train with the weapons they liked and were the most compatible with.

After that, once the children had some practice battles with Vandalieu and other teachers and learned to use martial skills, they would go into beginner-level Dungeons with the monsters that they had tamed. If they wanted to become adventurers, they would be taken to hunt bandits before they took the exams to be promoted to D-class. There were some bandits that Vandalieu had kept as experimental subjects, destined to be recycled for parts and used to make Undead. But they had no willpower and strength left

in them; it was possible that the children would sympathize with them if they were used for the training. Freshness was important when it came to villains.

“... Van, you’re thinking something really messed up, aren’t you,” said Matthew.

“Matthew, to think that you can tell what I’m thinking just by looking at me. As expected of a good friend. I’m proud,” said Vandalieu.

“You’re not denying it?! What are you going to make us do as our training progresses?!”

“It’s alright, Matthew. You’re not the ones who are going to have messed up things done to you.”

The one talking was a spirit form version of Vandalieu that he had used ‘Embodiment’ on. His main body, the physical one, as well as Legion, were receiving training some distance away.

Zod was facing Vandalieu, who had produced a countless number of muscle-fiber tentacles.

“Do you understand? ‘Muscle Technique’ is not a matter of simply pumping up your muscles. So, can you please return to your ordinary form?” Zod said calmly, truly thankful that their training was in a separate place from that of the orphanage’s children.

“This is quite difficult, isn’t it,” said Vandalieu.

“Nobody has ever acquired it before, after all, not even Schneider. However, practice makes perfect!”

said Zod. “The essence of ‘Muscle Technique’ is being aware of every muscle in your body and controlling all of them. Now then, please go ahead and try.”

Legion were making comments of their own.

“Every muscle in our bodies, huh.”

“It sounds more difficult than just building up your muscles.”

As they said, ‘Muscle Technique’ was not something that could be used just by becoming muscular. Even if one became capable of vibrating every muscle in their body to produce electricity, extremely precise control over the muscles was required to direct that electricity at an enemy.

Vandalieu was going through great trouble to try and replace all of the muscles in his body with the Demon King’s muscles to control them, and Legion was attempting to control its body that was made solely of flesh.

“However, there is no need to learn all of my ‘Muscle Technique,’” Zod told them. “In ‘Unarmed Fighting Technique,’ there are some who focus on the fists, and others who focus on kicking. You should find your own ‘Muscle Technique.’”

In other words, it seemed best to aim to acquire a ‘Muscle Technique’ that wasn’t focused on generating electricity in the muscles.

“Hmm, muscles...” said Vandalieu.

But just as he began pondering this, Rita’s voice called out to him.

“Bocchan! It’s time to spend time with your family! And I’ve brought Seris-san and the others!”

She was pushing a wagon loaded with a tea set and cakes, and Darcia was with her, along with Seris and Vestra, the nuns from the orphanage.

And so, Vandalieu took a break from the training.

《The Level of the ‘Monstrous Strength’ Skill has increased!》

《The ‘Commanding’ Skill has awakened into the ‘Group Commander’ Skill!》

**Name:** Kanako Tsuchiya

**Race:** Chaos Elf

**Age:** 2 years old (Approximately 15 years old in appearance)

**Title:** Reincarnated Individual, Magical Girl, Evangelist

**Job:** Artistic Guider

**Level:** 0

**Job history:** Apprentice Thief, Mage, Archer, Thief, Earth-Attribute Mage, Firework Technician, Magical Girl, Magical Idol, Magical Dancer

**Passive skills:**

Dark Vision

Mental Corruption: Level 2

Intuition: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)

Death Attribute Resistance: Level 5  
Strengthened Agility: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)  
Detect Presence: Level 5  
Increased Attack Power when equipped with a bow: Medium (LEVEL UP!)  
Rapid Regeneration: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)  
Superhuman Strength: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)  
Magic Resistance: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)  
Allure: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)  
Self-Strengthening: Ancestor: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)  
Self-Strengthening: Guidance: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)  
Self-Strengthening: Transformation: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)  
Guidance: Artistic Path: Level 1 (NEW!)  
Artistic Path Enticement: Level 1 (NEW!)

**Active skills:**

Earth-Attribute Magic: Level 9 (LEVEL UP!)  
Water-Attribute Magic: Level 9 (LEVEL UP!)  
Life-Attribute Magic: Level 7  
Mana Control: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)  
Singing: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)  
Dancing: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)  
Dagger Technique: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)  
Unarmed Fighting Technique: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)  
Archery: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)  
Silent Steps: Level 5  
Lockpicking: Level 3  
Trap: Level 3  
Throwing: Level 3  
Compounding: Level 3  
Artillery Technique: Level 1  
Firework Manufacturing: Level 3  
Surpass Limits: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)  
Familiar Spirit Demonfall: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)

**Unique skills:**

Venus: Level 10  
Chaos  
Deanna's Divine Protection  
Vandalieu's Divine Protection

**Chapter 285 - A peaceful tea-time**

The God of Strings Hirshem had a large problem on his hands. Up until a short while ago, the God of Heat Hazes Rubicante also had a large problem, but Hirshem's was a greater problem now.

They had sent Divine Messages to the young potential heroes whom they had granted their divine protections to and nurtured, but for some reason, they had headed to a city that the Demon King was using as one of his bases, and they were now among the Demon King's allies.

Fortunately, the Demon King's allies had not noticed that Ediria, the one whom Hirshem had granted his divine protection, or Carlos, the one who had received the divine protection of Rubicante, were potential heroes who were being nurtured for the sake of defeating Vandalieu.

... Hirshem and Rubicante believed it was probably fortunate that their potential heroes had not made any attention-drawing achievements as adventurers in this city.

However, that fortune would not last much longer. The Demon King Vandalieu was expected to return to the city soon.

If Ediria and Carlos were to meet Vandalieu in their current state... Although Hirshem and Rubicante didn't want to admit it, it was possible that they would be guided by him.

Vandalieu's guidance was still quite unclear to Alda's forces. They didn't know what kind of ideologies people needed to have in order to be guided by it, so they had no idea how to counteract it.

It seemed that Vandalieu called himself a follower of Vida; in ordinary circumstances, the gods would think that the ideologies needed to be guided by him were likely to be similar to the teachings of the Vida, the Goddess of Life and Love.

However, if that were the case, why was he able to guide monsters? Perhaps beast-type and plant-type

monsters were understandable, but why was he able to guide Undead and even insect-type monsters that were considered to have no true intelligence? This was impossible to explain with the knowledge the gods had.

Thus, it was possible that Ediria would be guided by Vandalieu despite being a worshiper of Hirshem, a god who belonged to Alda's forces.

Especially if she was surrounded by the Demon King Vandalieu's allies.

"That is precisely why I sent Divine Messages telling her to leave this city, but for some reason, almost none of them have reached her. No, now that I think about it, is it because her heart is more drawn to the new music that is being taught to her by that girl than it is to me... To think that even this girl would become a Guider as well and guide Ediria!" Hirshem muttered to himself, expressing the regret and anger he felt towards his own negligence by playing a nonsensical mixture of notes on his harp.

*Just when did that happen?* Hirshem thought, but the moment this question crossed his mind, he realized that it was pointless to think about it.

There were several places that Alda's forces could not see, such as the region within the Boundary Mountain Range and the Demon Continent. And Vandalieu was constantly accompanied by the evil god Gufadgarn. Kanako had likely teleported to such places, then built up experience and changed Jobs there.

Where, and when? Such questions weren't important; the greater problem for Hirshem was that although he was a wind-attribute god, he was also a god of string instruments – in other words, his authority was related to music – and yet, he had never considered the possibility that Kanako might become a Guider. This fact had him seething in frustration.

"There have been plenty of musicians in the past who made eccentric performances, sang unique songs, created original dances, and attempted to spread their methods to others. Why was *this one* able to become a Guider? Guiders are defined by their ideologies – their own original ideologies. It should be impossible to become a Guider simply by turning Vida's teachings and Vandalieu's ideologies into songs."

One could not become a Guider simply by spreading Vida's teachings. If this was possible, every clergyman who spread their religions would be Guiders. The same was true even if it was Vandalieu's ideologies being spread. Even if one were a fanatical worshiper of his, they could not become a Guider. A follower – one who followed another – could not become a Guider.

"Then that girl... Is it because Kanako Tsuchiya is a reincarnated individual? Is it that her singing and dancing has something beyond mere novelty, something that did not exist in this world up until now? If that were the case, I can understand why Alda-sama detests Rodcorte... the god who sent the reincarnated individuals to this world."

A hundred thousand years ago, all seven of the champions who had been summoned to this world from another had discovered Guider Jobs. That was because they had possessed ideologies that had not previously existed in this world, and they sought to spread those ideologies. In other words, this had been inevitable, as they were people from another world whose help Alda and the other gods had begged for. To the people of this world, the champions had been symbols who fought on the frontlines; they had invented weapons that had previously never existed and spread their knowledge; they had taught new methods of training and fighting battles.

Thus, when the gods learned that Vandalieu became a Guider, many of them had thought that it was because he was a reincarnated individual.

However, no reincarnated individuals other than Vandalieu had acquired a Guider Job up until this point. The circumstances weren't clear for the second reincarnated individual to be sent to this world, Kaidou Kanata, as he had met his destruction without undergoing a single Job change, but Hajime Inui and Junpei Murakami – reincarnated individuals who had arrived later and had also been destroyed – had not shown any signs of potentially becoming a Guider either.

The same was true for the ones who were currently alive –Asagi Minami and his companions; Mao Smith and Kaoru Gotouda, who had left the Bahn Gaia Continent; the eldest daughter of Duke Hartner's house, who hadn't yet regained her personality and memories from her previous life.

Thus, the gods of Alda's forces and Rodcorte had arrived at the comforting conclusion that not all individuals from other worlds could become Guiders.

After all, if the world was flooded with new ideologies that had never existed before as numerous as the reincarnated individuals, and the people of this world were influenced by these ideologies, the people would become divided. In the worst-case scenario, wars between humans would become so fierce that the gods would have no time to worry about the Demon King.

And yet, less than a year after the gods had arrived at this conclusion, Kanako had become a Guider. To

Hirshem... and to every god belonging to Alda's forces, this was a fearsome surprise attack, equivalent to being stabbed in the back.

It wasn't a simple matter of Kanako and those around her becoming even more powerful; the bigger threat was that worshippers of the gods of Alda's forces would be converted to worshippers of Vida's faction.

On top of that, one of the potential heroes who was supposed to be growing stronger in order to be used in the battle against Vandalieu was deeply involved with her... and it looked like a second would soon follow.

"What should I do... I must report right away that Kanako Tsuchiya has become a Guider. That goes without saying. But what should I do about Ediria?" Hirshem wondered, producing more incoherent notes with his harp.

Should he abandon Ediria or not? Hirshem thought hard, not just about her, but also about his dignity as a god, the way that gods should be.

Thinking logically, it was clear that he should let go of Ediria immediately. As she had received Kanako's guidance, he should have concluded that she would not be of any use as a pawn, and cut his losses. He needed to remove his divine protection and quickly find a new potential hero to raise.

Rodcorte would certainly advise him to take this course of action.

However, the way that gods were supposed to be to their followers... Was this the correct way to be for Hirshem, the God of Strings?

He asked himself this over and over, but he could not say that it was.

It was true that Ediria had been drawn by the music that Kanako had taught her. That was not a sin – or at least, Hirshem's teachings did not consider it to be a sin. He taught his worshippers to be connected to one another, just like strings on an instrument. To play their notes together, to produce a rhythm and order – and to be sensitive to the things around them.

With that being the case, Ediria being drawn to Kanako's music meant that she was following his teachings correctly. As a result, she had become guided by Kanako, but... even that was just her being drawn to the music and the stage it was performed on.

It wasn't as if she had failed to resist some wicked temptation.

"... The note has been decided."

He would not conceal the fact that Kanako had become a Guider; he would report it to Alda. It was possible that Rodcorte had already informed him.

However, he would leave his divine protection on Ediria. It wasn't impossible for a guided person to leave the Guider. As a guidance was an ideology, there were cases of this happening in the past.

And most importantly, she had done nothing wrong as a worshipper of Hirshem; there was no sense in punishing her.

"The other thing is, what should I do about Rubicante... I shall keep an eye on him for now," Hirshem murmured, playing his harp as he prepared to send a message to Alda.

What were muscles? They were strength. And strength was power.

Then what was power? The ability to perform exercise? Energy? Heat?

Vandalieu thought about this and arrived at a conclusion: It was all of these things.

"There is a lot of depth to 'Muscle Technique,' isn't there," he said.

"Hey, Vandalieu. It's tea-time right now, so you have to relax. Make the Demon King Familiars around us rest as well," said Darcia. "You too, Legion."

"Okay," said the various voices of Legion.

Vandalieu had created muscular-type Demon King Familiars... humanoid Demon King Familiars made of just muscles and bones, to acquire muscles and 'Muscle Technique.' He turned his attention away from them and back to the food in front of him.

Legion, who had split into several masses of flesh in order to practice, returned to a single mass of flesh as well.

In front of them were a variety of items one would not expect to see at tea-time in a Dungeon. Teapots with three kinds of tea, coffee, and enough teacups for everyone present. A mountain of fluffy pancakes, jam and butter to spread on top, syrup, cheese, and fruit.

However, Vandalieu wasn't reaching for any of these.

Instead, he was being served by Saria and Rita, the Living Armor maid sisters.

"Bocchan, would you like milk in your tea? Or lemon? Or would you prefer coffee?" asked Saria.

"You wanted butter and syrup on your pancakes, right?" said Rita.

Saria blew on Vandalieu's drink. "It's still quite hot."

"Okay, Bocchan, say 'ah,'" said Rita.

The two of them were feeding Vandalieu.

The children of the orphanage were eating pancakes as well.

"Van-oniichan, you look like a baby, being fed like that," Marsha said, laughing as he watched Vandalieu.

"Wood lady, I don't like this 'coffee' stuff. Isn't there anything sweet?" said another, looking at Eisen.

"There is. Here," said Eisen, who was a Skogsrå, as she plucked apple-like fruits from the branches growing from her back and crushed their juice into an empty pot to serve to the children.

"Van... I think your 'family service' is kinda weird," said Matthew.

The family service that Vandalieu was receiving was him being served by the maid sisters and the others who were like family to him. However, he was... not sitting on Darcia's lap.

He was sitting on top of the Ghouls Basdia and Tarea, and was also being waited on by Eisen and Quinn, the queen of the Gehenna Bees.

"Van, I get the feeling that you've become a bit heavier. Have you grown bigger?" asked Basdia.

"Perhaps you have put on some muscle," said Tarea.

"Do you want some honey in your tea?" said Quinn, who was able to produce honey from her mouth.

"Here, some apple juice," said Eisen, who was making more juice.

Darcia, as well as Zadiris who looked only two or three years older than Matthew in appearance, were sitting in front of Vandalieu while facing him, along with the rest of the children of the orphanage.

"Matthew, would you like to sit on my lap?" asked Zadiris.

"Don't go acting like you're all older than me, Zadiris. I'm not a kid anymore," said Matthew.

"I-I *am* older than you! I have been alive for about thirty times the length of time you have; I am an adult!" said Zadiris, who was three hundred years old.

"You're lying!" exclaimed the ten-year-old Matthew. "Adults don't do embarrassing poses like that!"

Incidentally, the 'embarrassing pose' he was referring to was Zadiris covering her mouth with closed fists while looking up with a cute expression.

"Th-that is part of the dance, so it cannot be helped, can it! And Kanako and Darcia perform that as well!" said Zadiris, desperately trying to convince Matthew that she was actually older than him.

"Darcia-san is Van's mom, right? And Basdia-nee-chan was singing the same song but *she* didn't do that," said Matthew, still doubtful.

Tarea was struggling to contain her sniggers.

"Matthew, that's because I was given other roles because doing that wouldn't suit me," said Basdia, trying to back her mother up.

"I see, Va –" said Matthew, turning towards Vandalieu to get a corroboration for Basdia's testimony.

However, he saw that his good friend was covering his mouth with his fists. With his mouth covered, Vandalieu's eyes were even more prominent than they usually were.

"Va... n... When you do it, your eyes are a bit scary," said Matthew.

He looked around... and saw Zod, who had his muscles still in a pumped-up state and his cheeks stuffed full with pancakes, striking the same pose with fists that were larger than Matthew's head. No matter how one looked at it, it looked more like a fighting pose.

Rita, who had been serving the table, was also doing the same pose... but the color of her wax-like skin gave a shudder-inducing sinisterness to it.

Looking at Gufadgarn, Matthew only felt a sense of emptiness, and Legion was still in their flesh mass form, so they were still just a mass of flesh no matter what they did.

And then, Matthew –

"AAAAH! Don't transform into me and do that pose! And you guys, stop laughing!" he shouted.

Kühl had transformed himself to take on Matthew's appearance; he made wobbling noises as Matthew flailed his arms at him to chase him away and try to stop the other children's innocent laughter.

Matthew then turned to Zadiris and gave her a kinder look. "... I was wrong, Zadiris. Do your best!"

"I don't know what has changed your mind, but very well," said Zadiris with a nod, unconvinced but accepting Matthew's apology nonetheless.

"Matthew-kun, it's the first time we're doing maid-like things in a long time, so we're just enjoying ourselves," said Saria.

"Bocchan has been away a lot lately, and he's spending his time in a place where there's new women..." said Rita.

"That's right," agreed Tarea. "He only comes to see us when there's work..."

"Don't say things that will make the children misunderstand," said Vandalieu. "Though it's true that I've

been going back and forth to a country where there are women whom I've recently become acquainted with."

It was true that Vandalieu had recently become acquainted with Doraneza, Dediria, Zalzarit, and Feltonia, and it was true that he had been paying frequent visits to Gartland. However, that didn't mean that he was doing anything he should feel guilty about.

"And Tarea, after we had a meeting about the transformation equipment, I gave you a massage and had a meal with you, didn't I?" said Vandalieu.

"Vandalieu, Tarea-san wants you to spend even more time with her. And you haven't been going on adventures with Saria and Rita lately, have you? The same goes for Zadiris-san and Basdia-san," said Darcia. "The next time you go to Gartland, make sure to take them with you."

"I see... Alright. The next time we go to mess with the demigods, the five of you can come with me," said Vandalieu.

"Yay!" the Living Armor sisters cheered.

"Come to think of it, the only battlefield I have stood on lately is the one called the performing stage. My body has not grown weaker, but my intuition might be a little rusty," said Zadiris.

"Dancing skills transfer over to battle, but it's not my real intention to step away from battles," said Basdia. In contrast to Zadiris and Basdia's excitement, Tarea was looking panicked.

"No... Wait a moment! I am a non-combatant, aren't I?!" she said, looking pale as she pulled on Vandalieu's arm for an answer.

"It's alright, Tarea. It's just training in the form of a real battle," said Vandalieu.

It seemed that Tarea's participation had already been decided.

Darcia smiled happily as she watched this conversation take place.

"Van-oniichan, you're not allowed to drink, gamble, and buy women," said one of the children.

"Marsha-chan, Vandalieu will be fine. Right?" said Darcia.

"Yes. I'll keep it to drinking blood, firing cannons, and taming new monsters," said Vandalieu.

"Normally, none of that would be a good idea either, but... you're not normal, I suppose," said Vestra, one of the nuns of the orphanage, with a stiff expression on her face.

"Vestra-nee-chan, rather than worrying about what Van's doing, I think you should be worrying about getting surgery along with Seris-nee-chan," said Matthew.

"M-Matthew! Vandalieu said that we don't need to rush things with the surgery, didn't he?!" said Vestra.

"That's right, Matthew! And the sun doesn't affect us, so there's no reason for us to be hasty!" said Seris, the other nun from the orphanage, hastily attempting to put off the surgery.

The two of them looked just like humans in appearance, but they were actually Subordinate Vampires. The Pure-breed Vampire Birkyne had toyed with them and made them acquire the 'Sunlight Resistance' Skill, then brainwashed them so that they thought that they were just ordinary humans.

Vandalieu had removed their brainwashing, and the two of them had regained their memories and the knowledge that they were Vampires. However, as they possessed the 'Sunlight Resistance' Skill, they had no particular restrictions on their freedom.

Of course, they felt the urge to drink blood, but Vandalieu and the others were willingly providing them with their blood, so this wasn't a problem. The surgery that they would be having was a heavy-handed cosmetic surgery to remove the burns and scars that covered their entire bodies.

"The surgery isn't scary. It's just a matter of removing the damaged skin while drinking the Blood Potion made from my blood," Vandalieu explained.

"That sounds really painful!" said Vestra, shaking her head.

"No matter how many times you tell us that, it sounds like nothing short of torture," Seris agreed.

Indeed, this method of torture was used on prisoners who refused to spill information – using healing magic to heal their wounds while torturing them.

"As someone who's gone through it, the surgery is not torture," said Bellmond, who had already received a similar surgery.

Though she had erased her presence with everything she had when dances were being choreographed, she was eloquent now as she spoke of her own experiences.

"There is pain, but it is slight. More importantly, the numerous vials of Blood Potion that you consume change the body, increase regenerative ability, and quickly produce new skin. The sensation could be described as... a little itchy and painful," said Bellmond, her cheeks flushed and tears welling in her eyes as she let out a sigh.

... This was clearly not the face of someone recalling an 'itchy and painful' sensation.

"Bellmond-san... It's good that Eleanora-san isn't here," said Darcia.

Indeed, if Eleanora was present at this tea party, she would likely give a testimony that was considerably

inappropriate for children's ears.

"See, neechan, this lady with a tail says it's fine," said Matthew, who had been busy eating pancakes and wasn't looking at Bellmond's face.

Even so, Seris and Vestra's faces were screaming, "No!"

However, silent eye contact was one of the things that Vandalieu was not skilled at.

"If you prefer, we could go with the surgery method that Isis recently came up with," said Vandalieu, failing to see the look in their eyes as he mentioned Isis – one of Legion's personalities.

"Yes, I came up with the method, though the actual procedure can only be carried out by Vandalieu," said Isis, pausing her pancake intake to start a demonstration on Baba Yaga, whose upper body was protruding nearby.

"Hey, Isis! What are you doing?!" Baba Yaga demanded.

"First, an incision is made at the back of the neck," Isis said as she made a cut on the back of Baba Yaga's neck. "The Demon King's nerves and blood vessels are then sewn onto the patient's by Vandalieu," she continued, poking at the tubes that she had produced to represent the nerves and blood vessels. "This way, Vandalieu takes over the patient's body below the neck, while keeping the patient alive. Thus, the patient doesn't experience the pain and pleasure... I mean itchiness."

This wasn't particularly gruesome, as neither Isis nor Baba Yaga had transformed so they were in their flesh-mannequin-like state, but it was still somewhat grotesque... though there wasn't a single person who was scared by this demonstration; even the nuns and the children of the orphanage were already used to Legion's presence.

"During the surgery, Vandalieu will feel the pain that the patient would feel, but he'll be fine. And once the surgery's over, he just needs to rejoin your nerves and you'll be back to normal. There weren't any after-effects in our experiments... every single one of the test subjects we used mutated afterwards, but that won't be a problem for you," said Isis.

When this surgery was tested on rats, they had become Giant Rats afterwards. With monkeys, they had become Rank 2 Orangutans. With bandits, they had become Dark Humans who worshiped Vandalieu fanatically. Thus, it was a procedure that Vandalieu could not carry out while keeping a low profile in human society.

However, Isis suspected that Seris and Vestra would be fine even after the surgery... though Seris and Vestra's faces had turned pale immediately upon the mentioning of an incision in the back of the neck, as they had no knowledge of modern medical technology.

"Well, we don't have to decide today, just think about it when you have time... Anyway, should we have you two do the same training as Matthew and the others tomorrow?" said Vandalieu.

With that, Seris and Vestra understood – this would be repeated until they finally agreed to receive the surgery.

Around the time Vandalieu's group emerged from the forest and came out onto the highway to make their official return to the city of Morksi, the Alcrem Duchy's government was busily making moves.

Duke Takkard Alcrem had begun drawing up legislation that stipulated the treatment of Ghouls as people rather than monsters, and the abolishment of the system of autonomous regions for Vida's races.

If these laws took effect, Ghouls would become people just like adventurers, rather than creatures to be hunted, and adventurers would be treated as bandits if they killed Ghouls and plundered their belongings... And on the other side of the equation, Ghouls would be punished just like people would if they kidnapped women or killed adventurers for anything other than legitimate self-defense.

Of course, most of the Ghouls inside the Alcrem Duchy had already moved to the Demon Empire of Vidal; the main intention of these laws was to allow Zadiris, Basdia, Tarea, and Kachia to be free to walk around the city on their own and register at Guilds rather than being treated as familiars.

The larger political issue was the abolishment of autonomous regions for Vida's races. The word 'abolishment' made it sound as if their right of self-government, which had been respected up until now, would be removed, and that they would be driven out of their territories.

However, the truth was that the 'autonomous regions' of the members of Vida's races that possessed Ranks had effectively restricted them from leaving their lands, preventing them from passing through, doing business in, or moving into other areas. They had also been prevented from registering at any Guilds. Thus, the new law was to give them equal rights to the other races and abolish the system of discrimination against them.



And the abolishment of the autonomous regions would affect more than just the members of Vida's races in the Alcrem Duchy who lived in such territories. If the members of Vida's races living in isolated autonomous regions in the other duchies escaped to the Alcrem Duchy, they would become free. Ordinarily, each of the twelve duchies in the Orbaume Kingdom would apprehend criminals who had committed crimes in other duchies and extradite them to the duchies where they were wanted. However, the law stated that this only applied to those who had committed serious crimes that would warrant a death sentence or becoming a criminal slave. A member of one of Vida's races leaving their territory would not be considered a serious crime.

Even so, it was possible that the other dukes would request for Duke Takkard Alcrem to extradite such people, but... Takkard had formed an unofficial alliance with Vandalieu; there was no way that he would obey such requests.

How the Tamers' Guild would treat members of Vida's races who possessed Ranks in their Status such as Ghouls was a more difficult issue, but... even prior to this new law, it had been impossible to discern whether Ghouls and their tamers were truly in a master-and-servant relationship or whether they only pretended, while actually being equals as friends or lovers. So perhaps there was no reason for a reform at the Tamers' Guild to be prioritized over new legislation; the house of Duke Alcrem had not placed any pressure on the Tamers' Guild for such a reform.

The Tamers' Guild would likely change their rules to prohibit tamers from using members of Vida's races as familiars, at around the same time that the Adventurers' Guild would allow Ghouls, Scylla, and Arachne to register as adventurers.

The Church of Alda, having sensed the political movements within the duchy, had quickly lodged their objections, but these had been rejected as these were political, secular matters and clergymen had no say in them.

And the people were still unaware of this new legislation, which was a great reform to the members of Vida's races but an outrage to Alda's worshippers.

The nobles who served Duke Alcrem were split into a faction supporting the legislation and a faction against it. Their influence would spread to other nobles who were related to them but served other dukes, and also to nobles in the royal capital, dragging the political world of the Orbaume Kingdom into a great vortex.

#### Chapter 286 - The Dragon Emperor God

The most mentally difficult task for Vandalieu was writing a reply to Selen, the Dhampir girl who was under the care of the Five-colored Blades. He wrote it with as much sincerity as he could, and had it sent via the Commerce Guild.

His reply listed out the reasons why they could not meet, reasons that were perhaps incomprehensible to Selen, who was an ordinary girl other than the fact that she was a Dhampir, but he did not think of her as childish.

*There'll be adults around her who belong to Alda's peaceful faction, so it'll be fine if they translate it for her,* Vandalieu thought, feeling as if a weight had been lifted off his shoulders as he left the Commerce Guild and headed for the empty warehouse that Kanako was using for her lessons.

He had arranged to meet an eccentric Elf bard who had apparently come to this city to interview him. In truth, Vandalieu had actually already been interviewed by bards on several occasions, so there was no problem with being interviewed by this particular bard... Rudolf.

A day had passed since he had made his public return to the city of Morks; he hadn't arrived today. That was because he had been summoned by Earl Isaac Morks to explain what had happened in Alcrem.

He hadn't been able to prioritize anything above a request from the lord of the region.

"Nice to meet you. My name is Rudolf. Thank you very much for accepting my request for an interview," said Rudolf, bowing his head.

Vandalieu immediately had a favorable impression of him. He was the most polite and respectful of the bards who had interviewed him so far.

"The pleasure is mine," said Vandalieu. "However, if you are looking for someone to interview, wouldn't my mother be a better candidate? Or is there something you wanted to know about Basdia and Zadiris?" Darcia was more renowned in human society than Vandalieu was. And in the battle to defend Morks, the efforts of Zadiris and Basdia, who were considered to be his familiars, were more well-known than Vandalieu's.

Even many of the bards who had previously requested to interview Vandalieu were interested in what kind of person Darcia was from the perspective of her son, or wanted him to be a mediator while they heard from Zadiris and Basdia.

Vandalieu felt no annoyance or shock at the bards with these attitudes. He thought it was only natural, as he knew how the incident had been presented to the public. In fact, he was happier that he was able to

boast about his mother and his companions.

“No,” said Rudolf. “Other bards are already creating numerous songs about your esteemed mother and familiars. I wish to create songs about you. And I am also interested in the events that took place in Alcrem...”

Though Rudolf said that, he was more interested in how Vandalieu thought during the events in Alcrem, rather than the details of the events themselves.

Vandalieu found this slightly curious, but he agreed to this, assuming that it was because Rudolf wanted to create songs that are different from those of other bards.

However, the one on the interviewing side, Rudolf... Randolph, was intensely worried about his true identity being revealed.

*Has he still not realized that I am Randolph ‘the True?’ And the one guarding him is too skilled. Even I can only barely detect their presence, and I know nothing of their nature. And the boy himself...*

Randolf had noticed the presence of Gufadgarn, who lurked in the interstitial space behind Vandalieu. He felt no murderous intent or suspicion being directed towards him... just an indifferent presence that was observing him.

This presence felt extremely ominous to Rudolf – a kind of presence that couldn’t be exuded by another mortal.

Vandalieu was under the protection of such a being; there was no possibility that he was just an ordinary person. Rudolf had already been aware that Vandalieu was extraordinary – ever since learning that he was the tamer of the Hellhound he had encountered.

However, after infiltrating this city, he had become aware that Vandalieu was surrounded by allies who were as powerful as A-class adventurers, or even more powerful than that. And it wasn’t just his strength – he controlled the red-light district and the slums, did charitable deeds such as donating to the orphanage and interacting with the orphans there, and for some reason, was very passionate in musical activities.

In truth, upon learning of Vandalieu’s extraordinariness, Randolph had thought to infiltrate the city and investigate him with the objective of determining whether he was someone who would bring about a calamity that would cause the collapse of the nation, but he had already arrived at the conclusion that this was not the case.

To Randolph, the collapse of the nation was not something like a coup d’état where the king and prominent noble houses were removed and replaced. It was the physical destruction of cities and villages.

But there were no signs that Vandalieu intended to do any such thing. In fact, he seemed like he would support poor villages to get them back on their feet and break down criminal organizations to release cities from their grip.

These were widely considered to be benevolent deeds, and Randolph himself couldn’t think of any reason to get in his way.

It was possible that his deeds would cause great problems for the king and nobles to maintain their rule over their territories, but no matter how greatly Randolph was indebted to their ancestors, he could not care for them to that extent.

Randolf did not serve the nation, nor did he care to pretend to be the defender of the kingdom. There was no reason for him to do the bidding of the king and nobles free of charge.

To begin with, it was the responsibility of those in power to improve the lives of the people and prevent poverty and the deterioration of public order. Unless those creating a revolution were brutally massacring innocent people, there was no reason for Randolph to deal with them when he hadn’t even been requested to do so.

Even if Vandalieu was left unchecked, resulting in the Ghouls and other members of Vida’s races gaining an improved standing in society and Vida’s worshippers increasing in number, none of that was of any inconvenience to Randolph... If members of Vida’s races decided to persecute those of other races in revenge for their past persecution, it would be a different story, but it would be too cowardly to act on an uncertain danger.

Thus, Randolph had thought about simply leaving the city when his objective was accomplished, but just in case... and out of curiosity, he had decided to meet Vandalieu before leaving the city.

However, Randolph regretted that now.

*Curiosity killed the adventurer, huh. I’ve become lax since I retired, it seems.*

Vandalieu was not directing murderous intent, hostility, or ill will towards Randolph. He was expressionless but friendly. Randolph could tell that he was answering his questions as accurately as possible, using a wide range of vocabulary to make his answers easy to understand.

His voice was flat in tone but pleasant to the ears, and listening to it made Randolph feel like the tension

was leaving his shoulders.

There was no light in his eyes but they were deep, and Randolph felt the urge to gaze at them... peer into them.

*This sense of comfort, which can even be described as happiness, is dangerous. If I become submerged in it once, I will never be able to leave again. It's like a bottomless swamp. The atmosphere around Kanako changed suddenly the other day, but... it cannot be compared to this.*

Staying wary, Randolph kept his distance from Vandalieu and continued his interviewing with caution. What Vandalieu perceived as respect was actually Randolph choosing his words carefully out of wariness. "Thank you very much. I think I will be able to create some good songs with what I have learned," said Randolph... Rudolf, bringing the interview to an end and standing up from his seat to shake Vandalieu's hand.

"Thank you for interviewing me. I'm glad to have been of use," said Vandalieu.

Now, all that was left for Randolph to do was leave the city. Of course, it would be conspicuous to leave the city the moment the interview was over, so he would put his affairs in order first.

*As I thought, it seems that he hasn't realized my true identity. Some were suspicious of me, so I might be followed for a while after I leave the city, but... so be it. I'll continue to pretend to be a wandering bard until I'm out of the Alcrem Duchy,* he thought.

"Ah, by the way, how long will you be staying?" asked Vandalieu, as if having read Randolph's mind.

Randolph, who has already turned away from Vandalieu, froze in place.

"... Not long. I think I shall say goodbye to Kanako-san this week and head for another city," he said.

"Oh. I'll be joining next week's concert as a performer, so I wanted you to see me performing, but... also, I was hoping you could test my general purpose transformation equipment for performers, Rudolf-san. Is it too much to ask to postpone your plans?" asked Vandalieu.

*I see. I am honored, but I have plans, so I'm afraid I must decline,* Randolph was thinking.

But for some reason, his mouth spoke the exact opposite answer.

"I see. I have no urgent plans, so if it's just one week..."

《The Level of the 'Musical Instrument Performance' Skill has increased!》

Vandalieu had made his public return to the city of Morksi, but that didn't mean that he was continuously staying there. He was busily moving about, returning to the Demon Empire of Vidal to interact with the citizens and supervising the digging in Gartland.

Of course, there was no problem with leaving these tasks to the Demon King Familiars, which were split entities of himself, but he felt hesitant to do so.

"If I leave everything to the Demon King Familiars, my sense of identity might be in danger," said Vandalieu, who was currently with Pauvina and Luvesfol.

He felt that he was at risk of forgetting which was the real him and which were split entities.

"I think you're overthinking things, you know," said Pauvina.

"Pauvina, I think so too, but I'm doing this just in case," said Vandalieu.

"... I do not understand why you do not feel more endangered," said Luvesfol.

"Luves, would you like to be brushed?" asked Vandalieu.

"Please forgive me."

They were currently at the dig site in Gartland. They were halfway up a cliff in the land ruled by the Glaistigs, where Vandalieu had changed the terrain using the 'Golem Creation' Skill to create a small plaza.

He had created this plaza for things necessary to the digging, such as setting up a staircase for Golems to descend to ground level, but it also served as an excellent observation platform.

To the left and right was the green of the terraced fields created by the Glaistigs and the rocky surface of the steep, precipitous cliffs, and the blue sea where Doraneza and her Merfolk lived was visible in the distance, as was the town governed by Yurak.

Looking even further, there were the snow-covered mountains and cliffs where the Snow Ice Titans lived, as well as the desert of the Androscopions with their pyramid-like buildings.

In the future, perhaps this place could be used as a real observation platform. As he brushed Luvesfol with Pauvina, he made a mental note to make this suggestion to Zalzarit later.

Pain, who had started out as a Pain Worm but was now a moth-like monster that was larger than a Wyvern, made a sympathetic noise as he touched Luvesfol's head with his antennae.

"I-I do not need your pity," said Luvesfol, batting Pain's antennae away, causing Pain to let out a shocked noise. "I am not simply losing myself in pleasure!"

However, considering that Luvesfol was currently lying on the ground, unable to stand on his hind legs, these words seemed to be nothing but putting up a brave front. Pain continued touching his head with his antennae over and over.

"I am telling the truth! You are too persistent, Pain! Even if you tell me to 'be more honest with myself,' I do not know what you are talking about!" Luvesfol insisted.

"I don't think you sound very convincing in that position," said Vandalieu.

"At least your body's being honest, Luves," said Pauvina.

Luvesfol screamed, his wings and tail shuddering as if they were convulsing. "MERCYYYYYY!"

But it was inevitable for him to be in this state in the presence of both Vandalieu and Pauvina.

He knew that this would happen. As for why he had followed them to Gartland despite that, the answer was that this was a relatively comfortable place for him.

The gods of this place, including Povaz and Zozaseiba, had either fought as a part of the Demon King's army or changed sides to join the Demon King's army. The only exception was Marisjafar, so this was a pleasant place where there were no gods that he was on exceptionally bad terms with.

However, it wasn't as if he was being persecuted in the Demon Empire of Vidal. After Marduke's death, he had been punished by the Mountain Queen Elder Dragon God Tiamat, who was the Elder Dragon in Vida's faction with the greatest authority. He had also made apologies to the other Elder Dragons. More importantly, he had become a familiar (companion) of Pauvina.

Luvesfol simply didn't get along with the other Elder Dragons of Vida's faction.

To elaborate on this further, even in Gartland, the gods looked at him with pity at the fact that he had become the pet of Vandalieu's adopted little sister.

*That damned Zozaseiba. He told me that with one more wrong step, he would have ended up like me. It's true that I am nothing more than a pet, being brushed and forced to squirm and crawl on the ground... but this is not the end for me! I will break this Wyvern seal, regain my Elder Dragon form, and prove my worth!* Luvesfol thought, but perhaps this was impossible for him; he was currently squirming and crawling on the ground in the present continuous tense.

... He had originally been an Elder Dragon with a mixture of the water and earth attributes, who preferred swamps and small-to-medium-sized rivers and lakes over oceans. He had been able to fly, but not with the freedom, speed and ease that he could with his current body.

In other words, as long as he was still a Wyvern, his original form was as distant as a dream within a dream.

Meanwhile, Earth Golems and Clay Golems were passing beside him.

"Can you really call this a tunnel construction?" Luvesfol asked Vandalieu, trying to distract himself from the pleasure that was coming from the parts of his body that had hair.

On this cliff, where the construction was taking place, was the entrance to a tunnel that was eight meters tall and ten meters wide.

While digging from Gartland to the surface, it was expected that numerous monsters would appear from within the dirt. Thus, the tunnel had to be large enough for combat personnel to fight.

It would be difficult for Titans like Borkus to swing large weapons inside a normal-sized tunnel, and monsters with forms that were specialized in moving about in small spaces would have the advantage.

However, digging such a large tunnel required double the labor. It was a simple increase in the volume of soil that was excavated and moved out of the tunnel. On top of that, the tunnel was more difficult to reinforce.

Vandalieu was solving these problems with the 'Golem Creation' Skill.

By turning the earth and rock into Golems and having them walk out on their own, the problem of the labor required to dig out and remove the soil was solved. The tunnel's structure was kept reinforced by having Golems made of rock form pillars.

"It is tunnel construction," said Vandalieu. "Normally, I should be hiring locals for the labor and paying them wages as a form of economical exchange, but that would take too much time, and it would be dangerous."

"I wasn't thinking that far," said Luvesfol.

"With this method, even when monsters come out, the first thing they'll attack is a Golem rather than a person, so it's safer this way," said Pauvina.

"And even if there's bedrock in the way, I can work around it efficiently by turning just a part of it into

Golems,” said Vandalieu.

Hearing this explanation, Luvesfol discarded yet another piece of his preconceived notion of common sense.

“The truth is, there is a faster method, and another method that is more traditional. I could dig a tunnel by firing my ‘World Piercing Destructive Hollow Cannon,’ or I could create a huge drill-shaped Demon King Familiar with Demon King fragments,” said Vandalieu.

With a Hollow Cannon capable of piercing and destroying the world, it would be possible to dig a tunnel very quickly, easily piercing any bedrock, Mythril or Adamantite ore veins, and the hundreds of monsters that were in the way.

Using a giant drill-shaped Demon King Familiar would take more effort than that, as the excavated soil would need to be removed, but it would be faster than the Golem transformation method.

“But if you used ‘World Piercing Destructive Hollow Cannon,’ the tunnel would probably collapse right after you make it,” said Pauvina.

“Yes,” said Vandalieu. “It would create a huge length of tunnel all at once, and reinforcing it completely in time wouldn’t be possible. And I can’t make any adjustments to the direction and distance, and if I miscalculate, it might even end up hitting Botin in her seal.”

The seal on Botin created by the Demon King was certain to be immensely powerful, as the God of Law and Fate Alda had been unable to remove it for over a hundred thousand years, but... there was no guarantee that it would protect Botin from a direct hit from ‘World Piercing Destructive Hollow Cannon.’ To bring up another point, multiple uses of ‘World Piercing Destructive Hollow Cannon’ from deep underground would release a tremendous amount of Mana, and it was possible that Gorn and his allies would take notice of it.

If he were to use a large drill-type Demon King Familiar, it was possible that the enemy would detect the noise. And after much thinking, Vandalieu had chosen the current excavation method of turning the soil into Golems, believing that it was the best way in terms of the amount of effort required as well.

“As for us, we are content because we are able to sell the minerals mined in the excavation process,” said Zalzarit, the leader of the Glaistig race whose territory the excavation site was in, as she climbed up from below the cliff. “I have brought lunch,” she added, pointing at the basket hanging from the scorpion tail that she possessed because she was a Pabilsag. “We have prepared fruits and vegetables that were harvested this morning, as well as fish that has been salted with rock salt.”

Several Glaistigs climbed up onto the cliff after her.

“Thank you. Then let us take a break and have lunch,” said Vandalieu.

As if in response to these words, a lion-like roar echoed from inside the tunnel.

Everyone looked towards the tunnel to see a Ghoul with a lion’s head and five arms, one of which was made of semi-transparent spirit-form – Vigaro – leap out of the entrance, scattering the earth and stone Golems in his way.

“Vigaro, what’s the matter?” asked Vandalieu.

“Sorry, it was pretty tough for me alone!” Vigaro replied.

Five shining, silver Golems emerged from the tunnel behind Vigaro. Unlike the obediently-walking Golems that Vigaro had sent flying, these Golems raised their arms and let out a roar that sounded like screeching metal.

“The Golems are running rampant?!” Zalzarit shouted, feeling overwhelmed by the Golems’ roars and raising her guard.

“No, the Golems Van makes can’t do anything on their own. I think they’re wild Golems,” said Pauvina, showing no signs of panic.

“I’m sure they’re Golems that were formed when the minerals in the earth were contaminated by miasma, rather than Golems that were created by alchemy,” said Vandalieu.

He hadn’t reached that conclusion because the Golems were weak. He could discern that these five Golems were powerful enough to have made Vigaro choose to make a temporary retreat.

“They’re not made of iron. Mythril or Adamantite, perhaps,” Vandalieu said.

Wild Golems... naturally-occurring Golems generally possessed low intelligence and they didn’t use martial skills, let alone spells. They were monsters that used their superhuman strength and their toughness as their weapons. That strength was dependent on the materials that made up the Golems’ bodies.

Among such Golems, the ones made of Mythril and Adamantite were considered to be the most powerful, with the exception of those made of Orichalcum, which could only be refined by the gods.

Mythril had exceptional anti-magic properties, while Adamantite was extremely physically durable. These creatures were equivalent to Rank 10 monsters.

“Impossible! Groups of Iron Golems have appeared in tunnels in Gartland before, but to see Mythril or Adamantite Golems, five of them at once, no less! C-can we handle these?” said Zalzarit, unable to contain her panic at the sight of these powerful Golems that would not appear even as a Dungeon Boss in the ‘Five Gods’ Fortress.’

But before Vandalieu could give her a reply, the battle began.

“Drill, rocket, punch!”

Rapiécage, who had been waiting at the tunnel’s entrance to deal with any monsters that appeared, launched both of her fists from her arms. The fists, which were rotating at a rapid speed, struck the Golems in their sides, the sides of their heads, their shoulders, and their chests, sending them tumbling onto the ground.

The Golems roared in rage as they struggled to stand back up. Rapiécage retrieved her fists and looked at where her fists had struck the Golems.

“Marked ones, Mythril. The ones... not marked, are Adamantite,” she said.

If one looked closely, the ones she said were made of Mythril had a clear mark where her fists had sunk into the sides of their heads, but the Adamantite ones only had small dents.

“Got it~♪,” sang four of Yamata’s heads.

“Lightning Spear!”

“Ice sphere!”

Yamata unleashed a soundwave-cannon and several spells. The soundwave-cannon attacks focused on one of the Mythril Golems, while the spells focused on an Adamantite one.

Both Rapiécage and Yamata were Zombies who had been created using multiple corpses... Rapiécage had the torso of a female mage, the head of a female warrior, and the rest of her body was made of monster parts including her Ogre limbs. The base of Yamata’s body was a mutant Orochi, a lower-ranking species of Dragon, and her heads had been replaced by the upper body halves of beautiful women of different races. Neither of them had possessed a great amount of intelligence at first.

And yet, the two of them had decided on their own to use an attack to determine the properties of their enemies, then use that information to use different types of attacks on them. Vandalieu was impressed and moved by how far they had come.

“It’s easier to tell them apart now. Thanks!” said Vigaro, swinging his axe and dealing with the other three Golems.

“Vigaro, how many of them were there to begin with?” asked Vandalieu.

“I’m not sure! But when I defeated around ten of them, the tunnel’s ceiling collapsed a little!” said Vigaro.

It seemed that the Golems had been too powerful to fight in a drawn-out battle at the front of the tunnel that hadn’t yet been reinforced.

Indeed, by taking the fight outside, Vigaro was able to overwhelm three of the Golems on his own, using his axe that was made of Demon King fragments.

“Vigaro looks like he’ll be fine, but I think Rapiécage and Yamata will take some time,” said Vandalieu.

“Pauvina.”

“You got it,” said Pauvina in response, leaping into battle. “Let’s go, Luves, Pain!”

“Hmph, these are clearly enemies that I am poorly-matched against, but it cannot be helped!” said

Luvesfol, spreading his wings and taking to the air to follow Pauvina.

Pain let out a screech as he flew into the air as well.

Pauvina’s Demon-King-fragment mace sank into the Adamantite Golem, while Luvesfol and Pain tossed the Mythril golem around for Rapiécage’s fists and Yamata’s soundwaves to chip away at it.

Vandalieu was simply watching, as there was no need for him to get involved, but as he was giving commands, his ‘Group Commander’ Skill – an awakened, superior version of the ‘Commanding’ Skill – was active, strengthening the abilities of Pauvina and everyone else.

These Golems had no merits other than their strength and toughness, and they weren’t even capable of coordinating their efforts with each other. They were helpless against this assault.

The only thing that Vandalieu needed to worry about now was reinforcing the tunnel – but just as this thought crossed his mind, Luvesfol let out a scream after striking the Mythril Golem’s back with his tail.

“F-forgive me! Forgive me!” he shouted.

“Luves?!” Pauvina exclaimed in shock.

A white, bone-shaped object was protruding from Luvesfol’s tail.

“It seems that something was mixed with the Mythril ore and absorbed when it turned into a Golem,” said Vandalieu.

“For now, punch!” said Rapiécage, as she and Pauvina left the panicking Luvesfol in Pain’s care and

focused their attacks on the Mythril Golem.

The Adamantite Golem fell silent after Vandalieu fired a beam of light at it.

Pain squeaked as he released scales with tranquilizing properties on Luvesfol, who was lying limp on the ground, and he pulled the bone-shaped object out of Luvesfol's tail.

But in the next moment, he dropped it in shock.

"Let's have a look," said Vandalieu.

"Vandalieu, it's dangerous! For us, I mean! Nobody will be able to stop you if you go into a panicked state!" Vigaro shouted in warning.

"No, there's no reaction from 'Danger Sense: Death,' and I have 'Status Effect Immunity' and 'Deformed Multiple Souls.' Ah, but just in case, Zalzarit, you and everyone else should stand back," said Vandalieu.

"Alright! Everyone, get back!" said Zalzarit, having the Glaistigs step back as she continued observing the situation.

Vandalieu picked up the object. It seemed to be a fragment of bone. It hadn't been fossilized... it was a white bone that still had its original hardness and density.

However, the front end of the tunnel was deep in the earth, far beneath the surface. It was a place where it was impossible for a bone to be discovered in a non-fossilized state. And it was difficult to believe that Mythril Golems had formed above the surface and dug more than ten thousand meters into the ground while carrying it.

Most importantly, there was an extraordinary amount of Mana inside the bone fragment.

"It seems to be the bone of a demigod, one that is so powerful that Valfaz and Radatel can't even be compared to them. Do you know what it is?" Vandalieu asked Luvesfol.

Still lying on the ground, Luvesfol replied: "That is... the bone of the father of all Elder Dragons – Marduke-sama, the Dragon Emperor God."

《The Level of the 'Golem Creation' Skill has increased!》

**Name:** Rapiéçage

**Rank:** 10

**Race:** No Life Abyss Chimera Zombie

**Level:** 90

**Passive skills:**

Dark Vision

Rapid Regeneration: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)

Deadly Poison Secretion (Tail): Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)

Physical Resistance: Level 9 (LEVEL UP!)

Magic Resistance: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)

Monstrous Strength: Level 2 (Awakened from Superhuman Strength!)

Strengthened Physical Ability: Entire body: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)

Strengthened Attribute Values: Creator: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)

Strengthened Attribute Values: Guidance: Level 4 (NEW!)

Augmented Mana: Level 1 (NEW!)

**Active skills:**

Electrify: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)

High-speed Flight: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)

Unarmed Fighting Technique: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)

Whip Technique: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)

Transcend Limits: Level 1 (Awakened from Surpass Limits!)

Coordination: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)

Long-distance Control: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)

Sewing: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)

Armor Technique: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)

**Unique skills:**

Dead Encroachment

Vandalieu's Divine Protection

## Vida's Divine Protection (NEW!)

**Name:** Yamata

**Rank:** 10

**Race:** Dark-dwelling Orochi

**Level:** 88

### **Passive skills:**

Dark Vision

Superhuman Strength: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)

Deadly Venom Secretion (Fangs): Level 10

Magic Resistance: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)

Underwater Adaptation

Dragon Scales: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)

Super Rapid Regeneration: Level 1 (Awakened from Rapid Regeneration!)

Body Extension (Neck): Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)

Strengthened Attribute Values: Creator: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)

Strengthened Attribute Values: Guidance: Level 4 (NEW!)

Augmented Mana: Level 1 (NEW!)

### **Active skills:**

Singing: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)

Dancing: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)

Parallel Thought Processing: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)

Scream: Level 9 (LEVEL UP!)

Long-distance Control: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)

Unarmed Fighting Technique: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)

Surpass Limits: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)

Aura of Fear: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)

Mana Control: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)

No-Attribute Magic: Level 2

Multi-Cast: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)

Water-Attribute Magic: Level 3 (NEW!)

Wind-Attribute Magic: Level 3 (NEW!)

Life-Attribute Magic: Level 2 (NEW!)

### **Unique skills:**

Vandalieu's Divine Protection

Vida's Divine Protection (NEW!)

### **Chapter 287 - Firstborn child**

Marduke, the Dragon Emperor God.

He was one of the eleven great gods, born simultaneously with Vida, the Goddess of Life and Love, and the rest of the great gods who governed over the attributes. He was the god and father of all Elder Dragons.

Marduke, as he was described in the myths that still remained, was an enormous and great Elder Dragon. In a world where monsters did not yet exist, he and his descendants, along with the Colossi, were symbols of nature that were revered and respected by the people.

However, when the Demon King Guduranis appeared in this world with a horde of evil gods at his command, Marduke took up the role of protecting the world.

He led his descendants to fight against the Demon King's army, sweeping away swarms of newly-created monsters with a swing of his tail, tearing evil gods apart with his fangs and claws, and spitting a breath with such immense power that even the Demon King Guduranis himself could not approach easily. But the Demon King Guduranis was too powerful. After the destruction of Ganpaplío, the Beast God, Marduke's entire body was shredded to pieces.

A hundred thousand years later, a fragment of one of his bones was discovered in the depths of the Demon King's Continent, inside a tunnel that was being created in Gartland.

The fact that it was discovered in the depths of the Demon King's Continent was not strange in and of itself. Although the commonly-told myths did not include this detail, the place where Marduke was defeated by Guduranis was the Demon King's Continent, as Ricklent had said in the past.

And the first fragment of bone to be discovered was about the length of a dagger. There were no



accurate records of the exact size of Marduke's enormous body. Considering that his body had been torn to pieces which were then strewn across the continent, it was not strange for such a bone fragment to be discovered in a tunnel beneath the continent's surface.

The thing that was strange was that the bone fragment had been inside the body of a Mythril Golem that had formed deep within the earth. Vandalieu and even Luvesfol, the one who had discovered it, found it suspicious.

After the champion Bellwood defeated Guduranis, the Demon King's Continent had been thoroughly destroyed. The possibility that this destruction included the soil far beneath the surface was... unlikely. If that had been the case, it would have been impossible for the current upper surface of the Demon King's Continent to physically exist.

But it was a fact that a bone fragment of Marduke had been found. As there was no chance that someone had placed it here on purpose, this fact could not be denied.

Vandalieu had put the tunnel excavation on hold and searched the Mythril and Adamantite ore veins to see if there were any more of Marduke's bones.

This had led to a series of consecutive battles against Mythril and Adamantite Golems, but it had paid off, as several more bone fragments were found. When Vandalieu cast 'Corpse Healing' – a spell that reversed damage on corpses – on these fragments, they had grown into bones like large trees. And currently, he was showing them to the person who knew Marduke best.

"These are... indeed the bones of my leader and father, Marduke-sama. These are likely to be from his tail, rather than his teeth," said the Mountain Queen Elder Dragon God Tiamat, the most powerful of the surviving Elder Dragons, as she gazed at the bones with a loving gaze. "Though they are faint, Marduke-sama's residual thoughts linger in them. It is no wonder Luvesfol panicked."

The bones contained Marduke's residual thoughts. Luvesfol had likely felt these when the first bone fragment had pierced his tail. He had betrayed his allies and joined the Demon King's army after Marduke's death; Marduke was a being to be feared for him.

"What are Marduke's residual thoughts saying, I wonder? I asked Luvesfol, but he wouldn't give me an answer," said Vandalieu.

Ordinarily, he would have been able to read residual thoughts. But as the residual thoughts were the roars of an Elder Dragon in this case, he was unable to comprehend them.

"There are no words with any particular meaning. Things like 'Curse you!' and 'You bastard!' In other words, they are his roars of fury and dying screams. These feelings are likely directed at Guduranis, but... I suspect Luvesfol lost his mind for a moment because he felt as if that anger was directed at him," said Tiamat.

It seemed that there were no words in the residual thoughts to begin with.

"As the humans' myths and legends say, the Demon King slew Marduke-sama by tearing him to pieces. As these bones are from the tail, it cannot be helped. Perhaps there would have been more meaningful thoughts if they were from his skull," Tiamat said.

"I see," said Vandalieu. "I'm sure Luvesfol will recover when I tell him all of this."

Vandalieu could understand Luvesfol's panic upon feeling the pain of his tail being pierced by a sharp object and, at the same time, the wrath of the great god that he had betrayed after his death.

"Is he still in a frenzied state?" Tiamat asked.

"No, his panic has settled down, but he's limp, as if he's completely spent. I can't get any reaction from him, not even from brushing his body," said Vandalieu.

"It seems that this experience was more effective than my punishment," Tiamat remarked.

It seemed that Luvesfol's mind had been struck hard by the rage in Marduke's residual thoughts. Now, he was lying as still as... no, even stiller than a corpse.

"Well, he seems to have a bold and impudent nature, so he will be fine," said Tiamat as she returned Marduke's bones to Vandalieu.

Vandalieu gave her a puzzled look; the bones were larger than his own body. "By the way, what should I do with these bones?"

"What should you do with them? I would not know... We have never considered how to make use of our own bones, after all. The people of the Demon Continent happily take my shed scales and turn them into arms and medicine, so perhaps you should ask them?" Tiamat suggested. "I do not recommend eating them. They are mere bones with no marrow."

A large but beautiful hand performed a light karate chop on Tiamat's head, and she groaned and turned around to look behind her.

"W-what do you think you are doing, Deeana?!" Tiamat demanded.

Tiamat stood a hundred meters tall; the owner of the hand was the Moon Giant Deeana, who was a

hundred meters tall herself.

“Turning them into arms and medicine is fine, but why would you even bring up the idea of eating them? It is disrespectful,” said Deeana with a disappointed tone, a frown appearing on her dignified, beautiful face.

Vandalieu sensed Deeana’s great respect for the great god Marduke, even though he was not her own parent.

“But, I mean, this boy looks like he could eat the bones and enjoy them, does he not? And I believe I said that I do *not* recommend doing so,” said Tiamat.

“Have you not heard? These bones of Marduke were found in pieces, buried deep beneath the continent’s surface. How could you even mention the idea of eating them? If you do not recommend it, you should not bring it up in the first place. It is disrespectful to Vandalieu,” said Deeana.

... It seemed that Deeana had not scolded Tiamat out of the great respect for Marduke.

“Umm, what I wanted to ask is, do we not need to bury Marduke’s bones or anything?” said Vandalieu. He had devoured numerous gods and their followers in the past, but he considered Marduke to be different from them.

The gods he had devoured had either belonged to Alda’s forces or were remnants of the Demon King’s army... in other words, they were enemies. Thus, he felt no reluctance to make use of them like he would monsters.

But Marduke was the great god of the Elder Dragons, and he had fallen before the gods were divided into Alda’s faction and Vida’s faction. Thus, Marduke himself was not an enemy – though he was not an ally either, of course.

But there were Tiamat; Luvesfol, who was now more lifeless than a corpse; the Crystal-horned Dragon God Lioen, who was guardian deity of the Drakonid nation; the Dragon God of Five Sins Fidirg... no, Fidirg had no relation to Marduke, as he was an evil god who had betrayed the Demon King’s army. Leaving Fidirg aside, Vandalieu had many Elder Dragons among his allies. Thus, he believed it only natural to treat Marduke, the father of all Elder Dragons, with respect.

However, Elder Dragons felt differently from humans on such matters.

“There is no need for that. A hundred thousand years ago, after the Demon King Guduranis was defeated and the surface of the Demon King’s Continent was purged, Bellwood erected a memorial at the final base of the champions’ army. The fragments of Marduke-sama’s horns and pieces of Zerno’s hair that could be recovered were gathered there and buried along with the remains of the dead soldiers of the champions’ army, but... finding that memorial would be difficult,” said Tiamat.

“A hundred thousand years have passed, after all. I’m sure it’s long-gone,” Deeana agreed. “The monument built by Vida was apparently turned to rubble by stray attacks during the battle against Alda’s forces... There might be a replica of that monument in one of the larger churches of Alda; do you want to bury them there?”

“No, I don’t,” said Vandalieu.

No matter how much respect he had for Marduke, it would be impossible to go out of his way to bury Marduke’s bones – which were priceless materials – in the heart of enemy territory.

“Us demigods are different from humans. We do not detest the thought of being consumed after our deaths. After all, creatures that die in nature are consumed by birds, beasts, and insects, and they return to the earth,” said Tiamat. “The same is true for having our bodies turned into arms or medicine. In fact, we believe that it is an honor for our bodies to become weapons for outstanding warriors and tools for wise men.”

“If we built graves like humans, the continents would be covered with them. That’s especially true for gods like Marduke-sama, who were more than ten times larger than I am. The task of digging the holes alone would be a huge undertaking,” said Deeana. “Of course, we do not feel good about our remains being treated crudely, but being put to use in the ways that Tiamat suggested is not an unpleasant thought. In fact, we would feel proud.”

To Elder Dragons and Colossi, being of use to their descendants and the humans who worshipped them even after their deaths was a great honor.

“An exception is being turned into Undead or monsters under the Demon King’s command. Well, I am sure there would be no problems if you were the one turning us into Undead,” said Tiamat.

“Most Undead other than the ones I create lose their sanity and don’t retain their personalities and memories from when they were alive. I understand that you would have thought that way in the past,” said Vandalieu.

The majority of Undead that Vandalieu didn’t create possessed nothing but a hatred for the living; they were dangerous beings that indiscriminately attacked living creatures on sight.

There were some with high degrees of intelligence, but their personalities that wielded that intelligence were twisted in an evil way, so in most cases, this intelligence was only used for the purpose of attacking the living in more cunning ways.

Thus, being turned into Undead after death was something that demigods, humans, and intelligent humanoid monsters all wished to avoid.

It was only natural, as there was a chance that if they became Undead after death, they would attack people who had been their companions and loved ones when they were alive.

"In other words, I'm free to use these bones as I like?" said Vandalieu.

"Yes, you are. I am sure that Lioen and the others in the Drakonid nation will not object, either," said Tiamat. "Madroza and her ilk may scream in objection, but let them scream."

"They would see it as their great god being used by the Demon King to bolster his forces, after all. Well, there's no need to care what they think," said Deeana. "Ah, the same would be true if you find any remains of Zerno-sama. If possible, I'd like to see them at least once before you use them, but I don't mind you using them after that. I'm sure my brother feels the same way."

Tiamat was the leader of the Elder Dragons of Vida's faction, and Deeana was the demigod who was second-in-command among the Colossi. There was no doubting their word.

"But even if you say that, what should I do?" Vandalieu wondered.

Ordinarily, he might create equipment for himself, but given that he commanded the fragments of the Demon King, he had no need for ordinary equipment. As for a staff, he had the Gyubarzo staff, and he was already in the process of building an even superior one.

Everyone else also already had transformation equipment and arms made from fragments of the Demon King.

Vandalieu couldn't think of anyone who immediately needed equipment made from Marduke's bones.

"I suppose I'll give them to Knochen," Vandalieu said.

Knochen was an amalgamation of a countless number of bones; he would be able to absorb Marduke's bones as well.

"It seems that you are unsure about how to use them. Then let me impart some of my wisdom!" said Tiamat in a lively tone, holding an enormous palm that could fit several houses on it out in front of Vandalieu.

"... I have a bad feeling about this," muttered Deeana.

"First, place Marduke-sama's bones on my palm," Tiamat instructed, ignoring Deeana.

"Excuse me," Vandalieu said as he climbed on top of Tiamat's palm and followed her instructions without any hesitation.

"Next, pour blood on the bones," said Tiamat.

"Blood? Well then, I'll use the Demon King's blood vessels..."

Black tubes came out of Vandalieu's wrists and began pouring red blood on the white bones.

"That is enough," said Tiamat, once Vandalieu had covered the bones with a volume of blood that would cause an ordinary person to die of blood loss.

She put Vandalieu back down on the ground with her other hand.

"Now, I shall consume these," she said, wrapping her red tongue around Vandalieu's blood and Marduke's bones and swallowing them. "Hmm, with this, an egg will form in a week, and it will hatch and give birth to a new Elder Dragon in a month. You should think of a name for your firstborn child."

"Uh... Huh? Is that how it is? Wasn't that kind of out of nowhere? There was no emotion or anything," said Vandalieu in shock and dismay as he became aware of Tiamat's intention and what he had done.

Through Marduke's bones, Tiamat had become pregnant with Vandalieu's child. They had not performed sexual intercourse in the biological sense. Ordinarily, consuming Marduke's bones and the blood of another – one of a different race, at that – would not result in a child.

But unfortunately, Tiamat was an Elder Dragon. She was not an ordinary Dragon that had only the qualities of a mortal creature; she was an Elder Dragon that possessed the qualities of a god. She was even a symbol of abundant harvest and fertility.

It was completely normal for Tiamat to create children with mysterious methods that one would only hear of in myths.

"That's why I had a bad feeling," said Deeana.

"Do not be like that, Deeana. *Not* taking this precious chance would be ridiculous. If Zerno's bones are found, the next opportunity is yours," said Tiamat.

"I don't need it! I don't make children using methods like yours!" said Deeana, raising her voice.

"I'm glad to hear that," said Vandalieu with a sigh of relief.

It was possible that Zerno's remains would be found during the tunnel excavation like Marduke's bones.

If Deeana was capable of having children with the same methods as Tiamat, Vandalieu would have had to consider keeping Zerno's remains concealed after discovering them... It seemed that he wanted to avoid creating a child every time he found the bones of a great god.

"Ah, there is nothing to worry about. I am not going to ask you to do anything reckless like making me your official queen or naming the child heir to your empire. The child will likely be born as an Elder Dragon rather than a mortal," said Tiamat. "Please continue to take care of the Demon Continent and the Drakonid nation in the Boundary Mountain Range."

"Alright. First, I'll report what happened to Mom and the others, then I'll hurry and think of a name." And so, Vandalieu became a father.

On one of the several islands of a large lake, there was a small mansion. It was served by a number of well-trained servants and guarded by robust knights and skilled mages. It was furnished with high-quality items and furniture that were as expensive as that found in a castle. There were also numerous Magic Items that made life convenient.

Living a quiet life in this place without even working, the only point of dissatisfaction was that there were certainly some who would become angry and jealous of such luxury.

"I would like for such people to come to this place. I would gladly trade places with them," muttered the emperor of the Amid Empire... or rather, its former emperor, Marshukzarl, as he looked out the window of the room that was now his with a dissatisfied gaze.

There was a group that used Eileek, the new Pope who was a puppet of the gods, as their symbol, and they had finally ousted Marshukzarl from his position as emperor. With the public reason being Marshukzarl having become too ill to carry out his duties in government affairs, Eileek and his allies had nominated a new emperor who had received much support.

How ironic it was that this new emperor was the descendant of a duke whom Marshukzarl had disposed of for planning an insurrection shortly after he became emperor.

Marshukzarl had not executed that duke's entire house, but he had kept himself informed on them – or so he had thought. He would never have expected that the duke had an illegitimate child with a mistress who had been forced to enter priesthood. This child had then returned to secular life and, through some complicated series of events over the generations, his descendant had become the son of another house of dukes.

... No, Marshukzarl thought back and realized that he had been aware of this descendant. He had been aware, but he had ordered that the child be ignored, believing that he was too powerless to accomplish anything of importance.

Around a century had passed since then. To think that Marshukzarl's position as emperor would be taken by the great-grandson of the child whom he had once believed powerless.

"I want to go back and tell my younger self... to erase that child," Marshukzarl murmured.

But of course, it was too late now.

Marshukzarl's rule had been celebrated at the coronation ceremony of the new emperor, then he had been brought to this mansion where it would be convenient for him to rest and recover, and convenient to create the story that this resting had been fruitless and he had passed away.

Marshukzarl expected that he would be kept alive here for a while.

If the new emperor failed in some manner, he would use Marshukzarl to regain the people's support, by executing him for plotting an insurrection.

Or perhaps if those who held animosity towards Eileek and the new emperor were to use Marshukzarl as a symbol of their rebellion, he would be kept alive as bait to draw them to one place so that they could be cleaned up in one fell swoop.

Which would it be?

"I would even consider ending things myself, but... it is futile."

Every person in the mansion, from the knights guarding it to the maids, were all specially-trained subordinates of the new emperor.

And there was no doubt that there were hidden mechanisms all around the mansion.

It was likely that Marshukzarl's muttered words to himself were being listened to. Even if he were to create a rope with the curtains to try and hang himself, or even if he were to try and throw himself out of a window, the servants and knights would certainly come to save him immediately.

There were several considerable possibilities when it came to people who might be able to save him from this situation or end his life.

The Fifteen Evil-breaking Swords... they were out of the question. Perhaps it would have been possible if the 'Five-headed Snake' Ervine were alive, but the Fifteen Evil-breaking Swords were an organization under the direct command of the current emperor. If they were to save Marshukzarl, the former emperor, out of a dislike for the current emperor, it would be a sign that they were not functioning as an organization.

Unless the new emperor was extremely feeble-minded, it wouldn't happen.

The 'Storm of Tyranny'... they were out of the question as well. They wouldn't believe that Marshukzarl was worth killing as he was now.

There was also Vandalieu, but he was also out of the question. If he had any intention to kill Marshukzarl, he would have done it a long time ago. Even if he understood that killing Marshukzarl in this current situation would contribute to turning the empire into a barren wasteland, he would have done it.

As these thoughts ran through his mind, Marshukzarl sighed.

He himself was considerably skilled. He had physical strength and knowledge of magic that made him capable enough to fight against a single knight.

But in his current situation, such skills were equivalent to a bird in a cage having a sharp beak and claws.

*Now then, will my descendant do well?*

Marshukzarl's only hope was that Vandalieu would use his son Sieg, whom he had sent to Vida's faction through the 'Storm of Tyranny,' to allow the empire to survive as a vassal state or territory of Vandalieu's own empire.

*But things will likely not go that well,* he thought, turning his gaze away from the window and down towards the book in his hand.

There was a large commotion in the Demon Empire of Vidal.

The first emperor Vandalieu would have a firstborn child (?) before he named anyone as his official queen, so Chezare, the general and prime minister, and his younger brother Kurt Legston, were completely baffled.

"Your Majesty, it is indeed an auspicious event, but... under what pretext should we celebrate it?" asked Chezare.

The birth of the child of Vandalieu, the emperor, would solidify his rule... His rule was solid enough as it was, but it was still necessary.

However, it seemed that a decision could not be made as to whether to treat this event as the birth of his heir.

"The mother is an Elder Dragon, and the child will also be born as an Elder Dragon. Then should we treat this event as the birth of an heir? You are not married or engaged to her, but if you are having a child with a god..." said Kurt, trying to recall any knowledge that would be of use here. "No, there are certainly no previous examples of this," he sighed, realizing that this was unprecedented.

There were plenty of examples of young rulers or their relatives conceiving children with women whom they were not married or engaged to. The women were often those of low social status, and in many cases, their silence was bought with money.

However, Vandalieu's partner in this case was Tiamat. She was a being who was in a completely different dimension from matters such as social status.

To begin with, the precedents that Kurt knew of were scandals that had to be dealt with in secret. The very basis of this matter was completely different.

"I believe we can just hold an ordinary religious festival. My child will apparently be closer to an Elder Dragon, so it would cause problems in the future if they were to be treated as the first imperial prince or princess... My child will probably be a hundred meters tall, so organizing national ceremonies, diplomatic meetings and formal events in the future so that my child can attend them will be very troublesome," said Vandalieu.

With the conceiving process being what it was, Vandalieu didn't have any sense whatsoever of the fact that he was the father of the child that Tiamat would give birth to. Thus, he was deliberately forcing himself to say 'my child.'

He believed that if he kept saying it that way, then he would eventually become more aware of it. Once he saw the egg after it was laid and the young Elder Dragon once it was hatched, and once he gave it a name, he would feel it more strongly.

Incidentally, the birth of Vandalieu and Tiamat's child had been received as good news by the people

around him.

That was naturally true in the Demon Continent's city, but even the people in the Drakonid nation in the Boundary Mountain Range were already holding a festival and celebrating.

Darcia had seemed happy at the fact that she would become a grandmother, and Zadiris, Basdia, and Tarea had celebrated the news as well... They'd already had children before or after meeting Vandalieu, so they weren't opposed to it.

As for Kanako, Privel and the others, they hadn't seemed particularly bothered, saying that with the conceiving process being what it was, they hadn't been beaten to it.

... Oniwaka, someone who shared Vandalieu's interests and was currently studying abroad on the Demon Continent, had run away from him, shouting, "How unclean! I misjudged you!"

Of course, Vandalieu had immediately run after her, immobilized her, and taken his time to talk to her to make amends.

It seemed that Oniwaka had simply run away upon hearing that Vandalieu and Tiamat had created a child, acting on her adolescent-girl-like ideas of purity.

"I'm just relieved that people are in a celebratory mood rather than a state of chaos. And even though I didn't make this child on purpose, I'd feel sorry for it if nobody welcomed its birth," said Vandalieu.

"Wasn't it quite a chaotic event when you grew spider legs from your back to catch Oniwaka and captured her with your tentacles...?" said the Ghost Kimberley as he made himself visible. "No, I suppose not," he added hastily, quickly shutting up after realizing that Vandalieu was listening curiously and sensing all kinds of vibes from him.

Although there were no large problems on the world's surface, there were some disputes among the gods of Vida's faction. Lioen and the other Elder Dragon guardians of the Drakonid nation celebrated the news, while Talos had told Deena that she should be the one to make an effort next time, causing an argument to break out between the two siblings. Zuruwarn had started laughing so hysterically that he couldn't move.

This new life had been created through a process that was far from ordinary to humans, but it seemed that it was not so extraordinary to the gods.

And so, Chezare and Kurt decided that a festival would be held when Tiamat laid the egg, and today's discussions came to an end.

Nuaza, the head of the Church of Vida, reported: "I shall ensure that the statue of you is completed before the egg hatches, Holy Son!"

Vandalieu was feeling a complex mixture of emotions regarding that.

It was a good thing that everyone combined their efforts into completing a task. However, Vandalieu was not entirely happy with the fact that this task was the construction of an enormous statue of himself.

"Well, if it's celebrated along with the hatching of the egg, its impact might be slightly less... Probably not," Vandalieu sighed.

As he walked across the hall on the first floor of the castle, he saw a pair of familiar faces.

"Hmm? What's the matter?" he said.

It was Sieg, the stepson of Zod, Vandalieu's muscle technique instructor. And with him was Sarua Legston, nephew of Chezare and Kurt.

"If you're looking for your fathers, they're not in the castle. Chezare and Kurt are upstairs, would you like me to call for them?" Vandalieu said.

He was not particularly close to these two. He was closer with Matthew and the other children of the orphanage.

However, Sieg was the son of his instructor, and Sarua was the nephew of his subordinates. Thus, Vandalieu thought of them like one might think of their relatives' children.

Seeing the two of them staying silent and staring at him with serious expressions that one would not expect to see on the faces of children, Vandalieu felt that something was off. He immediately used the 'Super Rapid Thought Processing' and 'Group Thought Processing' Skills to analyze their behavior.

*Am I being challenged to a staring contest?*

*That can't be, me. It's not just their faces; their eyes are serious too.*

*But I get the feeling that they're kind of frightened. Perhaps they're trying to confess to something?*

*Perhaps a prank? Children often pull pranks.*

*But I'm impressed that they have come to apologize before someone gets angry at them for it.*

*It is questionable that they are apologizing to me rather than their parents or families, however.*

Coming to the conclusion that the two children were about to confess to pulling a prank, Vandalieu decided to wait for them to speak. And no matter what they had done, he decided that he would only scold them lightly and quickly forgive them.

And then the two children spoke.

“We’re sorry! We were Bravers in our previous lives!”

“I see. I’m proud that you were able to confess. I’m sure it required a lot of courage... Wait, huh?”

《The Levels of the ‘Strengthened Attribute Values: Reigning,’ ‘Strengthened Attribute Values: Worshipped,’ and ‘Strengthened Attribute Values: Demon Empire of Vidal’ Skills have increased!》

#### Chapter 288 - Perseus and Skanda

Sarua Legston and Sieg were friends. Both of them had parents who had moved to Talosheim, the capital city of the Demon Empire of Vidal, and both of them had parents who were important figures, so they had many opportunities to meet.

Sarua was the nephew of Chezare, who was the general and prime minister of the Demon Empire of Vidal, and his younger brother Kurt. Meanwhile, Sieg was the stepson of the Pure-breed Vampire Zorcodrio.

Most importantly, their ages were similar. This alone was enough for children to become friends.

“I think we should reveal our identities as soon as possible.”

“... Would it be impossible to just keep it a secret and leave peacefully?”

“I’ve said it over and over. I don’t think there’s any chance we can do that.”

The two of them were bound strongly together by a shared secret, and this secret was not something that one might smile at upon hearing, such as a prank that they had pulled or a secret hideout they had made together.

“But if we pretend that we don’t know anything and don’t use our abilities, won’t we be fine? Our names and faces are completely different, after all...”

“Do you think we’d be able to do that? It’s true that Kanako and Legion don’t seem to recognize us, but the people who come later on might.”

The two of them were reincarnated individuals who had been sent here from Origin.

Ordinarily, their memories and personalities would have returned around the age of five or six, but as a result of unexpected encounters with Vandalieu, they had returned fleetingly and vanished again several times. Recently, their previous memories and personalities had finally become stable and fixed.

Before his memories and personality were stable, Sarua had constantly been in fear: When would he remember next? Would he be killed by Vandalieu? Would he be turned into an Undead if his identity was discovered?

But by coincidence, he had learned that Sieg was a reincarnated individual as well, and he gained a little peace of mind.

The two of them had then realized that they were related to important figures in the nation and they would not be executed so easily even if their identities as reincarnated individuals were discovered.

Thanks to that, Sarua had regained his appetite and was able to sleep at night once more. His parents had thought that he had stabilized mentally because he was able to make a friend close to his own age in Sieg.

That was why Earl Legston and his wife, who were former nobles, had made sure that their son had plenty of opportunities to play with Sieg.

A noble’s child being friends and spending time with a child from a commoner family – this alone was not something that would have been allowed by nobles who thought of commoners as being on the same level as the livestock they cared for.

But thanks to Sarua’s parents’ decision, Sarua and Sieg had been able to talk about various things and discuss things with each other.

What had happened to Kay Mackenzie, who had died and should have been reincarnated at around the same time as their own reincarnation? Were Kanako and the others not aware of them? Rodcorte had sent a single message after their memories and personalities had become stable; why wasn’t he saying anything anymore?

And the other thing they had discussed was whether or not to reveal their identities to Vandalieu. He often came to see Sarua and Sieg, and he had frequently had them play with the other children.

It seemed that he had taken the time to see Sarua frequently in particular, as Sarua’s health had not been very good until quite recently.

“I’m sure Van-nii would understand... I really hope so,” said Sieg.

“I’m really scared. Sieg, you were there as well, right? We didn’t attack him directly, but we were still a part of it,” said Sarua.

The two of them had felt guilt towards Vandalieu every time their memories and personalities from their previous lives returned. Even when they remembered their pasts, they didn't forget the things that Vandalieu did for them during the times when they didn't.

There was also the message that Rodcorte had sent once their memories had returned. And they would never forget the shock of seeing 'Vandalieu's Divine Protection' on their Statuses rather than Rodcorte's divine protection.

The two of them had not been particularly close to the 'Gungnir' Kaidou Kanata, whose soul had been destroyed, and they didn't worship Rodcorte.

However, Rodcorte's divine protection was nowhere to be seen on their Statuses. They took this to mean that they were isolated from the rest of the reincarnated individuals.

They were currently in the Demon Empire of Vidal, which was ruled by Vandalieu, and both of them understood that it would be difficult for them to leave the nation and live independently. Their abilities had returned along with their memories and personalities from their previous lives, so it wasn't a lack of capability that made this impossible. As long as they avoided high-difficulty Dungeons, they would be able to slaughter monsters that were around Rank 3 or 4.

However, it would be impossible for them to cross the range of mountains that were thousands of meters tall in order to get to another nation.

"But even so, is it really alright to be honest with him? Can't we keep pretenses up by keeping quiet?" Sarua suggested.

"There's no way we could. We've got our memories back now, after all," said Sieg.

The 'Perseus' Samejima Yuuri... Sarua Legston, now had the appearance of a young boy from a noble family and a high-pitched voice with a lisp. Sieg had known him since their previous lives; it was very strange to see his current appearance and hear his current voice.

But the same was true for the 'Skanda' Tanaka Jin... Sieg. He was a year older than Sarua, but anyone who looked at them would see nothing but a pair of adorable boys.

"Do you think you'd be able to act like you don't remember? I'm pretty sure I'd slip up somewhere," said Sieg.

"Well, I do think it'd be difficult to act as if nothing happened, but..." said Sarua.

"I definitely wouldn't be able to keep it up."

"... Yeah, me neither."

Although their memories from their previous lives had returned, they hadn't forgotten the memories of their current lives. However, it would be simply too difficult to continue being the same little boys that they were until recently.

Both of them had received military training in their previous lives, but that military training had not included acting training to the point that they would be able to pretend to be young children.

If they were in any ordinary nation, both of them would have decided to continue acting. Even if they occasionally did or said things that children of their age wouldn't, no ordinary family would suspect that their child had retained their memories from their previous lives. They would simply think that their child was more intelligent than other children, or that they were just a little unusual.

However, they were in a nation ruled by Vandalieu. The emperor of the nation was the one whom the reincarnated individuals were targeting. On top of that, he had made it public knowledge that he was a reincarnated individual from another world, as were Kanako and the others.

Sieg had read various works on Earth of that genre, and he had felt dizzy when remembering that typically, such characters kept quiet about their secret.

"And Van-nii is able to talk to spirits that we can't see. Even when we're just whispering to ourselves... and maybe even when we're discussing things like this, it's all being overheard," said Sieg.

Sarua and Sieg looked around them and let out sighs that were far too heavy for boys of their age to be making.

They were unable to see spirits; they had no way of knowing whether there were spirits listening to their conversation right now.

Sarua's 'Perseus' was an ability that allowed him to freeze anyone that was looking at him. It wasn't a paralysis ability and it wasn't like 'Death Scythe,' which stopped the movements of the target. It fixed the target in place in their exact current state.

Time stopped for anyone under the effects of 'Perseus,' and nothing external could affect them. Whether one slashed them with a sword, shot them, or burned them, they would be unharmed. The targets would also have no memory of the duration they were under its effects – as if they had been petrified by the head of Medusa, the monster who was slain and whose decapitated head was wielded as a weapon by the hero Perseus.



... With that being the case, Sarua had initially thought that 'Medusa' would be more suitable than 'Perseus' when his codename was decided, but 'Perseus' had apparently been better in terms of his public image.

In any case, 'Perseus' was a powerful ability. It couldn't affect targets through recorded footage and photos, but it was able to affect someone looking at him through a live camera.

In his previous life, he had been driven into a corner by mercenaries with magic-enhanced hearing and a blind swordsman, then died after being caught in a booby trap, but he would never lose against any enemy that relied on their eyesight.

But still, Sarua's ability couldn't target spirits that he couldn't see... or perhaps he *could* freeze spirits, but he couldn't just keep the ability constantly active. 'Perseus' consumed Mana during its use, and the amount of Mana it consumed increased with the number of targets it affected.

As for Sieg's 'Skanda,' it was an ability that allowed him to drastically increase the speed of himself or any objects on him. With the ability active, he could run at what felt like a normal speed to him but actually be traveling as fast as a sports car, and he could perform what felt like an ordinary punch to him that was actually faster than the speed of sound.

He could also increase the speed of any machines, plants, animals, and people that were in contact with him... although it couldn't accelerate bullets and other projectiles fired by weapons, as they lost contact with him after being fired, but it was still a powerful ability.

And even though Sieg accelerated himself, Sieg... at the time, Tanaka Jin, hadn't grown or aged any more rapidly than anyone else. The ability was indeed very cheat-like.

However, no matter how much he sped himself up, he was powerless against spirits. He couldn't see or touch them, after all.

"But wouldn't it be better to think more carefully about the timing? It doesn't seem like Kanako and the others have recognized us, after all," said Sarua.

"Everyone other than Kanako, Doug, and Melissa might already know who we are," said Sieg. "If any of them told Van-nii about us, it would be the worst-case scenario."

"I see... but... what should I do if I end up causing trouble for Father and the rest of my family?"

"I'm worried about causing trouble for Papa and Ma... my mother and father as well. But I'm sure it will be better than Van-nii finding out about us from an enemy, at an even worse timing than now."

Even though they had regained their memories and personalities from their previous lives, it didn't weaken their feelings for their families in their current lives. Their impression of Vandalieu was also based on their relationship with him in their current lives.

To Sarua, Vandalieu was the superior of his father and uncles, and to Sieg, Vandalieu was the apprentice of his father... Zod. And Vandalieu was also an older friend to them both; they had played together many times in the past.

"Alright. We've made up our minds, so let's go and apologize!" said Sarua.

"Yeah. Let's go!" said Sieg.

And so, the two of them told Vandalieu the truth and apologized to him.

Having heard their story, Vandalieu looked at them with a piercing gaze that looked as if it could see right through them. "Thank you for confessing of your own volition. In consideration of your bravery, I will completely forget all grudges from our previous lives."

And with that, Vandalieu patted Sarua and Sieg's heads.

They looked up at him with surprised expressions.

"Huh? Are you sure? We attacked you after you became an Undead in our previous lives, Van-nii," said Sieg.

"I was there as well. Are you really going to forgive us?" asked Sarua.

Vandalieu continued looking at them with a piercing gaze... that was actually not very perceptive.

"It doesn't matter to me. Though I did really hate you right after my death. And I have plenty of things I want to say to Amemiya Hiroto and Narumi. Asagi is annoying as hell, and I intend to kill Rikudou," said Vandalieu.

Hearing Vandalieu mention their former comrades as if it were the most normal thing in the world, Sarua and Sieg trembled with anxiety, their faces pale.

"Ah, so, I don't have any remaining grudge towards you two," Vandalieu added hastily, realizing that he had scared them by voicing his true feelings based on the things he was aware of through Banda's presence in Origin. "I don't intend to complain about things that happened in the past or do anything to

you. I swear on the gods.”

Despite Vandalieu’s promise, Sarua and Sieg looked even more worried for some reason. As Vandalieu found himself at a complete loss as for what else to say, Gufadgarn appeared behind him and whispered some advice in his ear.

“... I swear on my mother,” said Vandalieu, taking Gufadgarn’s advice.

The moment he said that, the tension left Sarua and Sieg’s bodies, and their pale faces returned to their normal color. It seemed that even the children were aware that Vandalieu was a big mother-con – to the point that a promise sworn on his mother was more trustworthy than one sworn on the gods.

“Mom is an incarnation of Vida, so I would definitely keep a promise I swear on the gods...” said Vandalieu.

“What about Rodcorte?” asked Sarua.

“*That* is something that’s just categorized as a god, and not a being that I respect or revere. Just like Alda. I’d rather build a grand temple to a god of poverty than pray to him,” Vandalieu replied.

“I see. Well, I don’t revere him either,” said Sieg.

It seemed that Sarua and Sieg had no respect for Rodcorte. Part of the reason was that they had essentially been abandoned by him, but also because they believed that he had pulled a fast one on them.

The two of them, as well as the ‘Urðr’ Kay Mackenzie who wasn’t here, were reincarnated individuals who had refused to fight Vandalieu. Rodcorte was aware of that.

And yet, Sarua and Sieg had been reincarnated as the children of people who were connected to Vandalieu.

Sieg was still unaware that his true father was Marshukzarl, the former emperor of the Amid Empire, but he believed that it would have been impossible to avoid encountering Vandalieu, considering that his stepfather was the Pure-breed Vampire Zorcodrio.

There was no doubt as to what Rodcorte had intended.

In reality, however, Vandalieu had become a guider who was capable of moving the souls of those he guided to Vida’s circle of transmigration system, so the exact opposite of Rodcorte’s intentions had taken place instead.

Of course, Sarua and Sieg had no complaints in regards to who their parents were. One of Sarua’s uncles was an Undead, and Sieg’s father was muscular to the extreme, but neither of them had ever wished they were born to different parents.

“Most importantly, I don’t want to become enemies with the nephew of Chezare and Kurt or the son of my master. And I know the two of you quite well too,” said Vandalieu.

Sarua and Sieg’s families were the biggest reason for his acceptance of them.

Chezare had been turned into an Undead who worshiped Vandalieu fanatically, and although he would grieve deeply if Vandalieu were to kill Sarua, he would not betray his master... although something might break in his mind. But Kurt would be greatly shaken and tormented by internal conflicts in his heart.

Zorcodrio would never forgive Vandalieu for killing his son even after learning that Sieg was a reincarnated individual. A battle to the death would be the likely outcome of that.

Vandalieu wanted to avoid such circumstances at all costs. Thus, he was very grateful that Sarua and Sieg had revealed their identities as reincarnated individuals so quickly.

“If you two had chosen to be my enemy, I would have had to make amends to at least keep up peaceful appearances using whatever methods I have at my disposal. I’m so relieved,” said Vandalieu.

“Y-yeah. I’m glad that we didn’t become your enemies, Van-nii,” said Sieg.

“M-me too!” said Sarua.

The two small boys were nodding their heads enthusiastically as they agreed. Judging from Vandalieu’s words, they could guess that if it had been necessary, Vandalieu would have forced them to come to an understanding using methods other than violence.

The two of them were undoubtedly fortunate to avoid being subjected to brainwashing through the ‘Mental Encroachment’ Skill or drugs created using ‘Deadly Venom Secretion,’ or even a reconstruction of their brains using the Demon King’s shadow, for the purpose of keeping up ‘peaceful’ appearances.

“Kay is like us, but she’s either not in Talosheim or hasn’t got her memories back yet,” said Sieg. “So you should...”

“If she tells me that she has no intention of becoming my enemy, then I guarantee her safety. As for her family... well, it depends on them,” said Vandalieu.

He didn’t know much about Kay. He didn’t even remember who she had been on Earth. He had no interest in her beyond the fact that she was a reincarnated individual who could potentially become an enemy, but he had no ill will towards her.

It was likely that she had been born in a family with some connection to Vandalieu, like Sarua and Sieg. However, it was possible that some information manipulation had taken place, similar to the way that Sieg's true father had been kept a secret, so it would be difficult to search for her.

Vandalieu had been involved in three duchies in the Orbaume Kingdom – Hartner, Sauron, and Alcrem. Even if the search was narrowed to just these three, each duke was served by two or three marquises, at least five earls, more than a dozen viscounts, and plenty more nobles with a court rank of baron and below.

As for the Amid Empire, there were so many that even attempting to count them was futile.

And there were a countless number of children born – not just legitimate children, but illegitimate and secret children as well.

At this stage, it was impossible for Vandalieu and his companions to find Kay... and even if they search for her, if her memories and abilities from her previous life hadn't returned, there would be no way to tell her apart from any other ordinary young child.

And as for Kay's family in this life, Vandalieu couldn't say anything beyond that it would depend on them. "I'll continue gathering information on Kay... Well then, I suppose we should tell your families that you're reincarnated individuals," said Vandalieu.

"C-can't we just not tell them?" said Sarua, clearly wanting to keep it a secret.

"We could do that, but it'll become apparent sooner or later," said Vandalieu. "You two might not be aware of it, but the fact that your abilities from your previous lives have returned means that your Skills and Attribute Values have returned as well. You have physical abilities and high-Level Skills that no child could possibly have. It'll be a difficult secret to keep."

Even when playing with other children, because they had incredible physical strength, they would constantly need to hold their strength back. If they got into an argument and accidentally let out even a small part of their real strength, they'd end up killing someone.

The Levels of their Skills were high as well, so if they showed their abilities in handling knives, archery, or magic that no toddlers should have, they would draw attention as prodigies or geniuses.

"Come to think of it... we were so caught up in worrying about what we'd do about you that we didn't notice, Van-nii," said Sieg.

"'Status!' ... Ah, you're right. I'd probably beat Father in an arm wrestle," said Sarua.

It seemed that Sieg and Sarua hadn't noticed this up until now. They had been busy discussing what to do regarding Vandalieu, so they hadn't had opportunities to play with the other (ordinary) children lately – so there hadn't been any instances of them drawing attention to themselves.

However, it seemed that the two of them now realized that it would be difficult to continue keeping it a secret without drawing attention to themselves.

"Alright. But will things turn out alright?" asked Sarua.

"I'll be there to explain things with you so that they do," said Vandalieu. "After all, you were all strangers to each other in your past lives; the only difference is that you have your memories of them."

Vandalieu wasn't particularly well-informed when it came to Rodcorte's circle of transmigration system, but given that it was possible to send reincarnated individuals to another world, he believed that there were no clear connections between any individual's previous life and their current life.

The idea that one's family and children must have been family and relatives in previous lives as well – Vandalieu believed that this idea was not true. He suspected that if such connections existed, it would be impossible to bring individuals from another world who were completely foreign existences and have them reincarnated in this world as specific people... children of people who were close to him.

And these suspicions were correct. In Rodcorte's circle of transmigration system, there was no connection between any given individual's current life and their previous one.

It was entirely possible for there to be a family with a mother who was an influential chief carpenter in her previous life, a father who was a jaguar hunter in his previous life, and a son who was previously a pig raised in a farm.

"Your parents might think that your reincarnation caused you to steal the place of the soul that was supposed to be their real child. But even if that's true, it's pointless to think about it," said Vandalieu. "I'm sure the souls that were supposed to be born instead of you two do exist, but they would have been no different from your souls before they regained your memories and personalities from your previous lives." Rodcorte, the god who ruled over reincarnation, was able to arbitrarily control it at a whim. That fact alone made it pointless to think about 'the soul that should have been born as my child'... That soul had been a complete stranger in their previous life, and even if they had been born, they would have been born having forgotten all of their previous memories and everything else.

To Sarua and Sieg's parents, it would be most simple and meaningful to think of it as their sons having

gained their memories and personalities from their previous lives.

“And if you were to ask who is responsible for all of this, it would be me, not you two. It’s only natural that I explain things,” Vandalieu said.

The ‘Perseus’ Samejima had been reincarnated as Sarua Legston and the ‘Skanda’ Tanaka Jin had been reincarnated as Sieg, and it was all because the two of them had refused to fight against Vandalieu. That was why they had been reincarnated as the children of parents who had connections to Vandalieu. With that being the case, Vandalieu believed that he himself was the one responsible for this.

“Th-that’s not true! The one who reincarnated us is Rodcorte,” said Sarua.

“Sarua, I agree with you, but saying that Rodcorte is at fault is as obvious as saying ‘villains are bad.’ And he’s not going to do anything to put your parents’ minds at ease,” said Vandalieu.

It wasn’t necessary to hold the one who was truly responsible for this situation to account. There just needed to be someone to explain the situation to Sarua and Sieg’s parents and accept the blame. That was what Vandalieu had decided.

“Of course, I don’t think things will get that serious. There are precedents in me, Kanako, and Legion, after all,” Vandalieu added.

Following this, Vandalieu explained to Sarua and Sieg’s parents that their children were reincarnated individuals, and as he had predicted, things didn’t turn out too serious.

Sarua’s parents were surprised that the ruler of the nation, the very person they served, had come to personally explain the situation. They were also surprised that their son was a reincarnated individual, but they did not reject him.

As Vandalieu explained, Sarua had regained his memories and personality from his previous life, but he had not forgotten the memories of his current one.

And Sarua’s parents, the Legston family, had lived turbulent lives. They seemed to logically come to the conclusion that they just needed to think of their son as having been born with this particular quirk and treat him accordingly.

Things were simpler with Sieg’s parents. After all, his father was the Pure-breed Vampire Zorcodrio. There was no blood relation to begin with.

“This boy loves me as his father even though I am of a completely different race. That is more than enough for me. But if he is ever troubled, I would like for you to help him as much as possible, as you are a reincarnated individual yourself,” Zod said.

Sieg’s mother Rachel quickly accepted him as well. Her memories had been erased and replaced by false ones by the intelligence organizations of the Amid Empire; she had lived a turbulent life as well. She was likely accustomed to unusual situations occurring.

“But Your Majesty, if this boy enters a rebellious phase after reaching adolescence, I am sure that even I will have all kinds of thoughts, so I will be in your care,” Zod added.

“Our house is in your care as well,” said Sarua’s father.

“Yes. Let us be in each other’s care for many years to come,” said Vandalieu.

And so, Sarua and Sieg came to a peaceful understanding with Vandalieu, and their families formed deeper bonds with him.

**Name:** Pain

**Rank:** 10

**Race:** Great Satan Moth

**Level:** 85

**Passive skills:**

Superhuman Strength: Level 7

Rapid Regeneration: Level 3

Deadly Poison Secretion (Stinger and scales): Level 10

Poison Immunity

Self-Strengthening: Subordination: Level 9

Intuition: Level 3

Strengthened Body Part: Stinger, wings, proboscis: Level 10

Augmented Mana: Level 1

Mental Resistance: Level 7

Strengthened Attribute Values: Guidance: Level 6

**Active skills:**

Charge: Level 5

Unarmed Fighting Technique: Level 5

Transcend Limits: Level 1

High-Speed Travel: Level 2

Coordination: Level 10

Spear Technique: Level 5

Shield Technique: Level 7

Armor Technique: Level 7

Shrink: Level 1

High-Speed Flight: Level 3

Familiar Spirit Demonfall: Level 1

**Unique skills:**

Zanalpadna's Divine Protection

Vandalieu's Divine Protection

Monster explanation (written by Luciliano): Great Satan Moth

An enormous moth monster with wings that look slightly venomous but have beautiful patterns. They are larger than an ordinary Wyvern in size; they are a symbol of death, scattering scales that contain all sorts of toxic properties... in legends, at least.

However, it seems that Pain more often serves a healing-related role in Pauvina's party, producing scales with medicinal effects rather than toxic ones.

He is capable of fighting by using 'Shield Technique' with his tough wings, 'Spear Technique' with his sharp proboscis, and 'Unarmed Fighting Technique' with the claws of his feet.

He is incapable of speaking human language, but it is evident that he possesses a high degree of intelligence and a calm nature.

Incidentally, Luvesfol and Master are able to communicate with him without having to resort to writing – through speech in Luvesfol's case, and by touching antennae in Master's case.

When Master does this, he often mimics the sounds made by Kühl... Apparently, this is not a method of communication and there is no real meaning to it.

**Name:** Luvesfol

**Title:** Raging Evil Dragon God, Pauvina's Pet, Tufty Mane

**Rank:** 10

**Race:** Evil Wyvern Lord

**Level:** 77

**Passive skills:**

Mental Corruption: Level 3

Strengthened Attribute Values: Reigning: Level 5

Superhuman Strength: Level 10

Deadly Poison Secretion (Tail): Level 6

Water Attribute Immunity

Rapid Regeneration: Level 3

Strengthened Attribute Values: Loyalty (Pauvina): Level 5

Self-Strengthening: Flying: Level 7

Self-Strengthening: Swimming: Level 5

Strengthened Body Part: Wings, tail, claws: Level 5

Strengthened Attribute Values: Guidance: Level 3

Augmented Mana: Level 1

**Active skills:**

High-Speed Flight: Level 7

High-Speed Swimming: Level 10

Charge: Level 10  
Unarmed Fighting Technique: Level 5  
Water-Attribute Magic: Level 10  
Mana Control: Level 5  
Water Breath: Level 10  
Coordination: Level 5  
Familiar Spirit Demonfall: Level 1  
**Unique skills:**  
Vandalieu's Divine Protection

Monster explanation (Written by Luciliano): Evil Wyvern Lord

A variant of Wyvern. It is possible that this is the first Wyvern in the world to have ever reached Rank 10. Well, to be more accurate, he is a sealed Elder Dragon, and perhaps he should not be compared to an ordinary Wyvern, his intelligence included.

On top of that, despite Wyverns being considered to be flying Dragons, for some reason, he is able to swim at high speeds, use water-attribute magic, and he is odd in that he is capable of producing a breath of water.

It seems that the reason for this is that he was originally an Elder Dragon of the water attribute.

Incidentally, he is unable to use the no-attribute magic that many of us human mages acquire in order to practice magic, but when I asked him about this, he gave an informative answer: "Do not compare me to you lowly mortal mages. Us Elder Dragons and Colossi are born with the skill to wield the attributes that we are familiar with."

It goes without saying that in repayment for this valuable information, I told Master: "His mane has been looking rather rough as of late. I believe you should put more attention into caring for it."

[Side Chapter 44 - The various gods](#)

'Perseus' and 'Skanda' officially became companions of Vandalieu.

As they had already been guided by Vandalieu before that, Rodcorte did not witness the moment this happened; he did not even take notice of it. But even if he had, he would likely have dismissed it as being an unimportant development.

He had expected that Sarua and Sieg would be guided by Vandalieu from the very fact that they had moved to the Demon Empire of Vidal before their memories, personalities, and abilities from their previous lives returned. He had already stopped considering them to be potential fighters on his side. It was Kanako Tsuchiya who was troubling Rodcorte, rather than Sarua and Sieg.

"Impossible... Why has she, of all people, awakened to become a Guider?! She did not show even a glimpse of that kind of potential in Origin!"

Rodcorte had seen that Kanako had acquired a Guider-type Job through the eyes of the people who met her. Reports from Hirshem, the God of Strings, and Alda, the God of Law and Fate, had supported his observation.

"Being a Guider is one of the conditions of being a champion in Lambda... Those who acquire such Jobs are said to leave their mark on the world and their names are recorded in history, without exception," Rodcorte muttered in anguish, clutching his head in his hands. "So why has someone as lowly as her become a Guider?!"

"Don't you think you're being too harsh on her? I mean, I'm just as surprised as you are, but still," said Aran, one of Rodcorte's familiar spirits, though Rodcorte didn't seem to be listening to him. "Kanako, huh. They say looks can be deceiving, but I didn't think they could deceive like *this*," he remarked calmly. Aran had not been particularly close to Kanako, not in his previous life or on Earth. In his previous life, he had been killed by Murakami, one of her partners, so perhaps it could be said that they were something close to being enemies.

However, even if Aran removed such personal feelings from the equation, he hadn't believed that Kanako had shown any qualities hinting that she might acquire a Guider Job, nor had she possessed the kind of unifying will that one might associate with a hero.

Even after she and her companions betrayed the Bravers, they had been led by Murakami; she had never taken leadership back then.

"You're right about that. To think that she would become a Guider through her idol activities. Does that mean that anyone can become a Guider as long as they're introducing and spreading ideas that don't exist in this world?" asked Izumi, a reincarnated individual who, like Aran, had become a familiar spirit.

It was not Aran who answered her, but the 'Oracle' Endou Kouya, who had become a familiar spirit after

the other two.

"I think so. But I don't think just anybody can introduce and spread ideas and cultures. I mean, Asagi and Mao haven't become Guiders," Kouya said.

"Well, I don't think those guys can become idols," said Aran.

"That's not what I'm trying to say," said Kouya. "What I mean is, we have the ideas and culture from Earth and Origin that don't exist in this world, but whether we're able to spread them is a different matter."

Naturally those who were reincarnated from other worlds possessed the knowledge and sense of values from those worlds. However, it was another matter entirely as to whether they were able to spread these to the new world they were reincarnated in.

First of all, they would need a certain amount of knowledge regarding the technology, ideas, or values. Spreading these things was not a simple matter of shouting, "These ideas exist!" and forcing them into people's ears.

One could only be said to have successfully *spread* the ideas and culture if they were able to make people understand and support them.

Next, in order to spread these things to people, they would need a past filled with notable achievements and deeds, renown, fame, and charisma. The teachings and opinions of a nameless nobody of dubious origin would never be supported.

Even Kanako had only become a Guider after conducting concerts in the Demon Empire of Vidal, on the Demon Continent, and in the city of Morks.

"In other words, what you're saying is that about half of the credit for her becoming a Guider goes to Vandalieu," said Izumi.

Indeed, Kanako had become a Guider because of Vandalieu's support.

In the Demon Empire of Vidal, he had provided Knochen as a concert venue, Demon King Familiars that were split entities of himself as lighting equipment, and various other things as well as the transformation equipment that served as costumes.

And it was Vandalieu and Darcia's influence that had allowed Kanako to hold large concerts from the beginning, not her own ability.

If Vandalieu hadn't helped her, Kanako's idol activities would have probably stayed limited to a small scale.

"Yes, it's probably because Vandalieu helped her that she was able to become a Guider in such a short period of time. But I think she would have become a Guider eventually even without his help," said Kouya. "She is an impressively driven person."

Aran and Izumi nodded in agreement.

"She is indeed a driven person. No matter how much help she had from Vandalieu, none of this would have come about if Kanako herself hadn't made things happen," said Aran.

"Vandalieu alone wouldn't have thought to touch on idol activities... artist activities, after all," said Izumi. Kanako had knowledge of idols and the entertainment world as she had been an idol on Origin, and it was because she had taken the initiative that idol culture was now spreading in Lambda, causing her to become a Guider.

As Kouya said, Kanako was an exceptionally driven person. After being reincarnated in Lambda, she had betrayed Murakami whom she had previously been allied with and convinced Doug and Melissa to join her in leaving Murakami's group. And then they had joined Vandalieu's side.

She possessed a drive that no ordinary person had, and more importantly, she had courage and a lot of nerve.

Kouya, Aran, and Izumi were wearing bitter smiles, as they had been enemies in their previous lives, but... these merits of Kanako's were likely the kind that could only shine when she was free to act on her own.

There had been few opportunities for these merits to shine when she was with the Bravers.

"But Kanako's guidance doesn't have the power to move souls to other circle of transmigration systems, right? So why is Rodcorte so upset about it?" asked Aran.

"Aran, ordinary guidances don't have the power to change the circle of transmigration system that a soul belongs to. It's not that Kanako's guidance doesn't have that power; it's just that Vandalieu's is abnormal," said Izumi.

Kanako's Artistic Path did not have the power to guide people to Vida's circle of transmigration system. However, as Izumi said, that was normal for a Guider.

Thus, Kanako did not cause large numbers of people to move from Rodcorte's circle of transmigration system to Vida's and cause error alert sounds to ring endlessly in Rodcorte's Divine Realm every time she stood on a stage.

However, there were several error alert sounds currently ringing.

“It seems that the people guided by Kanako become more susceptible to being guided by Vandalieu. All Vandalieu did was stand on stage and talk a little, and this happened,” said Kouya.

“I see. If there were CDs, TV, or the internet in Lambda, all of humanity would probably have been guided right away,” said Aran.

It was easy for a culture to become shared among humanity in Lambda, unlike Origin and Earth. That was because there was only one language.

There were dialects that differed depending on the region, but they were minor differences. If Kanako went on a tour around the entire world, there would be no language barrier to get in the way like there would be in Origin and on Earth; her music would be heard across the world.

And although it was partially because Kanako’s music was considered to be hymns to Vida, the people who were guided by Kanako were more easily guided by Vandalieu.

“That’s probably part of it, but it seems that it was a big loss for three important people... no, two, to be guided by Vandalieu,” said Izumi.

But this was not quite accurate.

Ediria, the future hero chosen by the God of Strings Hirshem, and Carlos, the future hero chosen by the God of Heat Hazes. These two had been guided by Vandalieu – despite both of them having received Rodcorte’s divine protection...

“It seems that simply giving them his divine protection and making them pray to him wasn’t much of a deterrence,” said Aran.

Ediria and Carlos possessed Rodcorte’s divine protection, but they were not true worshippers of Rodcorte. They had not been given any doctrine or teachings to follow; to them, Rodcorte was nothing more than some unknown entity.

That was why both of them had been guided by Kanako and Vandalieu without putting up any psychological resistance.

Incidentally, Rodcorte had already removed his divine protection from them.

“I agree that Rodcorte’s divine protection has absolutely no effect that prevents someone from being guided by Vandalieu. But more importantly, I think the fact that Randolph ‘the True’ has been partially guided will be a bigger blow to Alda’s forces,” said Kouya. “It doesn’t seem like they thought of him as an ally to begin with, but I don’t think they expected that he could become an enemy.”

Indeed, the God of Law and Fate Alda had never thought of Randolph as an ally to begin with. But he had never considered him to be an enemy, either.

In the Dungeon of trials prepared for Heinz’s party, the ‘Five-colored Blades,’ Alda had planned to create copies of Randolph for them to fight, just as he had made copies of Schneider’s party, the ‘Storm of Tyranny.’ However, that didn’t mean that Alda had ever seriously expected Randolph to become an enemy. He had just intended to create a copy of Randolph for the purpose of training Heinz and his companions, to provide a wall for them to overcome.

However, Randolph had been guided, even if only partially. That was a great problem.

Randolf’s name was still very well known in the Orbaume Kingdom, and although Randolph himself thought of his connections with nobles as troublesome, they were robust. If he were to become an ally of Vandalieu, Heinz would be even more outmatched in fame and politics than in combat strength.

“It’s only partial for now, but who knows what will happen from here on,” Kouya said in conclusion.

“Vandalieu and his allies might surpass Randolph in fame before he’s completely guided,” said Izumi.

“Yeah, that sounds possible,” said Aran with a nod.

The forces defending Botin and Peria wasn’t a topic of conversation for them. The reason for that was that there were no humans in the regions being guarded, so they had no information on that front.

Of course, considering that Vandalieu was playing musical instruments on a stage, it was clear that the defensive forces were the ones in a grim situation... Vandalieu wouldn’t be doing such things if he was facing difficulties, after all.

《The Levels of the ‘Musical Instrument Performance,’ ‘Strengthened Attribute Values: Worshiped,’ and ‘Strengthened Attribute Values: Demon Empire of Vidal’ Skills have increased!》

The performance with Vandalieu among the instrumental performers was a great success.



Perhaps it was because the concert was a little different from usual, with Vandalieu being a part of the regular performance, using the talking time between songs to tell stories that were told about Vida in the Boundary Mountain Range and the Demon Continent with a few adjustments, and Rudolf transforming using Vandalieu's general purpose transformation equipment.

At the very least, it was nothing like the concerts that Vandalieu had held in the Snow Ice Titan and Androscorpion nations in Gartland with just himself and his Demon King Familiars due to Kanako being busy.

In those concerts, in order to make up for his poor musical skills, he had used a larger number of Demon King Familiars to crawl... or rather, dance, on a variety of strange stages, and performed something that couldn't exactly be called singing.

He had recited lyrics about love and peace, on and on at an unchanging pitch, similar to a Buddhist chanting performance. The audience had listened to this performance and stood out of their seats to cheer and praise Vandalieu.

The performance seemed to have caused the audience to lose their minds; the Snow Ice Titans had carved an enormous mural of Vandalieu on the walls and the Androscorpions had etched a huge image of him on the ground.

As the chiefs of these races had promised, they had indeed not built any statues... When he first saw them, Vandalieu was at a loss for words.

In order to prevent similar things from occurring in Morksi, Vandalieu had chosen not to take part in the performance there.

It was a successful concert of normal scope, but Rudolf departed on the same day as he had planned. But he was a bard, and if he performed in other cities with the methods and songs that Kanako had taught him, her original goal of spreading her music would be achieved.

... In the end, Randolph's true identity was never discovered.

It was decided among Alda's forces that Hirshem, the God of Strings, would be quarantined.

This measure had been taken because he had continued to provide his divine protection to Ediria, unlike the God of Heat Hazes Rubicante who had removed his divine protection from Carlos, but this was not a punishment.

Hirshem had argued that Ediria herself had done nothing wrong as a believer, and there was no reason to remove the divine protection that had been granted to her. Alda had acknowledged Hirshem's wishes on this matter, but Hirshem had still been quarantined, as it would be unacceptable for information regarding the other gods to reach Ediria in the form of Divine Messages.

However, if Ediria ended up becoming an ally of Vandalieu to fight against the worshippers of the gods of Alda's forces or the gods and their subordinates themselves, Hirshem would likely be pressed to remove the divine protection once more.

A reply letter from Vandalieu arrived.

Upon hearing this news, Selen's heart was filled with hope, and she opened the envelope to begin reading, but... she was quickly confused. The contents of the letter were very difficult.

"... There are a lot of kanji that I can't read, so I can't tell what's written," she said.

"Let me have a look," said High Priest Pietro Farzon, taking the letter from her. "This is rather difficult, isn't it? Even a letter written by an adult wouldn't be this difficult," he said with a bitter smile.

As he was the nephew of Duke Farzon, he had received education of a high standard, and he currently served as High Priest at the Church of Vida. And yet, the letter's contents were so difficult to understand that even he could not immediately understand it.

There were several expressions that were no longer used in modern language; it was like reading a historical script.

But fortunately, the contents were not so difficult that he would have to open a dictionary in order to decipher them. After reading the letter carefully, Pietro gave an exasperated sigh.

"What does it say?" Selen asked.

"You see, Selen... It seems that Vandalieu-kun is busy, so he can't meet you," Pietro told her.

"I see..."

As Selen's face fell with disappointment, Pietro patted her head.

“Now then, it’s about time for your studies,” he said, gesturing towards the door.

Once she had left, Pietro sighed as he looked down at the letter in his hands once more.

He had told Selen that Vandalieu couldn’t meet her because he was busy, but the truth was that the letter was more in-depth than that.

“I am a Vida fundamentalist... It is an uncommon doctrine these days, but it is one that does not accept Alda’s peaceful faction, so we cannot meet. Please tell that to the adults around you as well.’ Hmph. Did he deliberately write this using language that Selen cannot read, so that we would be the ones to read it? Or did he simply not want Selen to read it? ... If it is the latter, it is rather immature of him,” Pietro murmured to himself.

Regardless of Vandalieu’s intentions, his position was something that Pietro could not happily accept, as the leader of the sect of the Church of Vida that maintained friendly relations with Alda’s peaceful faction. On top of that, spies had brought him news that in the Alcrem Duchy, where Vandalieu and his allies currently resided, there were great reforms being made regarding the treatment of Vida’s races.

“Heinz, if you do not return soon, the Farzon house will be forced to make a move soon,” he whispered to the empty room.

They trained and faced combat repeatedly. Not much time had passed since they became adventurers, so this experience nourished them, and their skills had markedly improved.

They were supposed to face a new trial today.

By coincidence... and through luck that didn’t match their skill, they had managed to be promoted to D-class, so their skill would be truly tested during their next promotion exam. And even that exam was nothing but a checkpoint for them to pass through on their way to their true goals.

What their friends needed was incredible strength that not even B-class adventurers possessed. The gods they worshiped had expectations that they would gain such strength.

That was why they needed to pass the B-class promotion exam no matter what.

They had gathered information regarding the contents of the promotion exams. Would they be asked to exterminate a group of bandits to prove that they had the strength of resolve to kill other people? Would they need to slay a certain number of high-Rank monsters in a Dungeon? Or would they be assigned as guards for nobles in order to prove that they were capable of smooth communication with the upper class, with whom they would certainly interact with more frequently in the future?

They had thought of and prepared for every possibility.

But in reality, they were given a trial that they had not expected.

“Umm, the B-class promotion exam that was scheduled for you, the ‘Heart Warrior Brigade,’ has been canceled,” said Berard, the head of the Guild branch.

The adventurer party was the ‘Heart Warrior Brigade,’ and every single piece of their equipment had a heart-shaped mark engraved on it.

One of its members... Arthur stared at Berard in astonishment. But he recovered from his shock quickly.

“What in the world? Just why... why has it been canceled, Branch Head Berard?” he asked as he took a step forward, strongly determined to know the reason.

However, he was careful to speak with a quiet, calm voice so that his actions would not be interpreted as a threat.

“We have made preparations for this day. Telling us that it is canceled all of a sudden is not something that we can accept with no explanation. If there is a reason, we must hear it,” said the Dwarf Borzofoy, who was the party’s mage and a childhood friend of the other members, with a friendly smile on his face.

“Nii-san, Borzofoy, it doesn’t matter if the exam’s been canceled, does it? Let’s leave it be. There are plenty of other things we can do, right?” said Arthur’s younger sister Kalinia, trying to calm the other two down.

Arthur and Borzofoy suddenly noticed that Berard was remaining silent and was slowly backing away from them.

It seemed that they had unintentionally overwhelmed Berard, but apologizing would be awkward as well – or so they thought.

“... Indeed, it’s just as you say,” said Arthur, withdrawing his foot back to its original position.

Borzofoy gave a cheerful laugh to play the situation off. “You’re completely right!”

Berard looked not at these three, but at the leader of the ‘Heart Warrior Brigade,’ Miriam. “... So, could you please translate for me?”

“Yes! Arthur-san and the others are not suspicious that there is some hidden meaning behind the exam’s

cancellation; they are simply surprised by the suddenness of the cancellation! And there is no hidden intent in Kalinia-san's words either; I believe that she was simply trying to stop Arthur-san and Borzofoy-san from troubling you, Branch Head!" said Miriam, who was a bow-wielding thief, in a lively tone. Hearing this translation of the others' actions, Berard let out a sigh of relief... he had been worried that Arthur and Borzofoy had interpreted the exam's cancellation to have some hidden meaning behind it, and that Kalinia was suggesting doing something about it through some illegal method.

Berard was not a soft man; he would not normally feel such pressure from a group of youngsters who had been adventurers for less than a year.

But that was not true when the youngsters in question were Arthur, whose fierce-looking face was a trait he had been born with, Kalinia, who was beautiful but had an unpleasant look in her eyes, and Borzofoy, a gaunt and suspicious-looking man with thinning hair.

Berard had sensed that they possessed strength that did not match their adventurer class from the moment they came to the city of Morksi. But within a short period of time, they had improved their skills even further, acquired the ability to observe things, and their presence carried more weight now. Arthur and his party's presence was not merely enough to silence a crying child; it would even silence the guards who came running after hearing the crying child.

If Miriam wasn't their leader, Berard might have been experiencing a stomachache from the stress of dealing with them.

"I see. Very well. But rest assured, the exam's cancellation is due to the nobles who are supposed to act as judges for the exam. I searched for one who was available until the very last minute, but it seems that all of them are busy," said Berard. "There are no ulterior motives as far as the Adventurers' Guild is concerned."

The promotion exam for D-class was a test of whether the participants were able to kill people, but the main ability tested for promotion to B-class was the ability to maintain friendly relations with nobles, with whom one would interact frequently as a high-class adventurer. The exam would also test whether participants were capable of making correct decisions as members of the Guild.

During assignments that involved guarding nobles, adventurers would be in contact with the nobles they guarded for days at a time, and it would be problematic if relations became tense to the point that the assignment could not be completed. It would also be problematic if the adventurers were to turn a blind eye to any illegal acts committed by the nobles.

Thus, it was common practice for the Adventurers' Guild to make requests to nobles and their children to act as judges, and nobles that wished to have connections with promising adventurers would take part in these exams.

"Because they're busy? Even though it's only summer?" asked Miriam.

Of course, there were periods when nobles were busy and periods when they had more free time. However, unless there were events like wedding ceremonies or a state of emergency such as war, the period from spring to summer was usually a period where land-governing nobles were relatively free. They became busier in the social season beginning in autumn, when the harvesting season for farms ended.

Miriam knew this, which was why she was surprised.

Arthur had an idea as to why the nobles were busier than usual. "Is it because of the incident that occurred in Alcrem?"

The resurrection of an evil god that had occurred in Alcrem... The truth was that it was not the resurrection of the evil god Forzajibal, but Zerzoregin. But due to the information suppression that had taken place, the world believed it to have been Forzajibal.

Arthur suspected that the nobles were busy dealing with the aftermath of that incident.

"That may be part of it, but it isn't the entire reason," said Berard. "Well, the nobles say they are busy, so we have no choice but to accept that they probably are."

Berard believed that there was more than meets the eye to the nobles' actions.

There were also many nobles like Earl Morksi who were busy with the reform of the treatment of Vida's races that Duke Alcrem was pushing. However, as some of them had strong relations with the Church of Alda, it was certain that many would be unwilling to cooperate with Morksi, the city where Darcia, the one who was praised as Holy Mother, and her Dhampir son Vandalieu, resided.

But as the head of the Adventurers' Guild branch, he couldn't carelessly talk about his speculations on what the nobles were doing with Arthur and his party.

"Well, please wait a little more for your exam. If it seems like it will take a while before we can find a noble to help, let's ask the earl to introduce us to one. We want you to reach B-class as soon as possible, after

all,” Berard said.

With that, Miriam and her party left Berard’s office.

“But to think that someone like me would be taking the promotion exam for B-class... I still can’t believe it,” Miriam said as they descended the stairs towards the first floor.

When she first met Arthur and the others, she had been just an ordinary E-class adventurer, the kind of rookie adventurer that could be found anywhere. And yet, less than a year later, she was a C-class adventurer who was eligible to take the promotion exam for B-class.

As an adventurer, she was considerably successful.

“Miriam-san, please have more faith in yourself. Your progress has been the greatest out of all of us in the ‘Heart Warrior Brigade,’ hasn’t it?” said Arthur.

“That is right. Miriam, it is because of you that I am as capable as I am now,” Borzofoy agreed.

“Yes. You’re our leader, after all,” said Kalinia.

The thing that Miriam found the most unbelievable was that she was the leader of her party. She was sure that if she were to go back in time and tell her past self that things would turn out this way, she wouldn’t believe it.

“I mean, after receiving so many divine protections, it would be strange if I *didn’t* make any progress...” said Miriam.

Miriam had received a divine protection from each of the gods who had granted their divine protections to Arthur, Borzofoy and Kalinia – the Goddess of Rain Clouds Bashas, the Goddess of Dark Nights Zelzeria, the God of Shadows Hamul – as well as the divine protection of Vandalieu.

There was nobody that Miriam knew who had received the divine protections of so many gods. She had believed that if she didn’t make any progress even after that, there was no hope for her.

“And we still have to become even stronger,” Miriam said.

The incredible thing about the nation ruled by Vandalieu, the emperor who had granted her his divine protection, was that one needed the strength of a C-class adventurer to be considered average.

Ordinarily, C-class was only attainable by adventurers with a certain amount of talent or adventurers capable of working hard enough to overcome a lack of talent.

That was something that Miriam and her party had learned from going to that nation – the Demon Empire of Vidal – numerous times for training. Indeed, people with the strength of a C-class adventurer were not rare in that nation.

*I was shocked to hear that the main occupation of the ramen store owner, Braga-san, is being the Face-tearing Demon, though. But even if you exclude him, even C-class adventurers are just treated as ordinary people over there.*

That was why Miriam wanted to become stronger – both because she was the leader of the other three who adored her, and to live up to the expectations the gods held for her.

“Indeed... In order for Vandalieu-kun to consider us to be of use in battle, we likely need to reach the skill of an A-class adventurer at the least. It is a magnificently high goal. I told you to have more faith in yourself, but I should say the same thing to myself,” said Arthur.

It seemed that he and the others had slightly misinterpreted Miriam’s intent – they had interpreted her desire to become strong enough to be respected in the Demon Empire of Vidal as wanting to become powerful enough to be considered useful in battle to Vandalieu.

It was a misunderstanding that Arthur had made because he considered himself to have not been of much use during the battle against Zerzoregin, the Evil God of Cannibalism and Pillaging.

“Huh? Arthur-san, what are you saying?” asked Miriam.

The misunderstanding was growing at an accelerating pace.

“To think that you are not satisfied with merely being respected... So, you are aiming to become strong enough to do battle on the battlefields of the gods. As expected of our leader,” said Borzofoy.

He seemed to be under the impression that Miriam’s goal was to participate on the battlefields that Vandalieu had found himself on recently – like Bone Man, Borkus, Zod, and Godwin.

“To think that you want the power to fight against the Gods... Miri, I’m truly glad that I can call myself your close friend. We’ll all do our best so that you don’t overtake us,” said Kalinia.

“No, what?! You’re definitely misunderstanding, aren’t you?! The ones who can fight against gods are S-class, aren’t they?!” exclaimed Miriam.

“Yes, let’s surpass S-class adventurers!” said Kalinia.

Miriam screamed in frustration. “You *are* misunderstanding!”

The racket Miriam and her party were making on the stairs could be heard by the adventurers on the first floor, but... nobody went to stop them.

“The ‘Heart Warrior Brigade’ are making a fuss again.”

“Those guys are serious, but they have that kind of side to them as well, huh.”

One of the adventurers clicked his tongue. “Just like Simon and Natania, a lot of the people who join that Vandalieu kid are weirdos.”

“Hey, stop that... They’re right there, you know.”

The adventurer who had clicked his tongue turned around to see a man drinking at the bar inside the Guild, accompanied by his companions, as well as the back of Vandalieu’s head.

“... So, he’s joined the weirdos too, huh,” the man said as he returned his gaze to the noticeboard where the job commissions were posted.

#### Chapter 289 - With Five Sins

Without warning, Carlos suddenly felt dizzy and his body felt heavy.

He thought it might be a sudden illness, or perhaps he had been poisoned – but that wasn’t the case. He checked his Status to see that ‘Rubicante’s Divine Protection’ and ‘Rodcorte’s Divine Protection’ were gone.

Understanding that he had lost something important that had supported him, he collapsed onto the ground with shock.

Ten days passed. No matter what he did, nothing went well. His physical symptoms had quickly disappeared, but during battles and training, he couldn’t help but feel that his skills had become unreliable all of a sudden.

When he still had the divine protections, he had truly felt that he was improving with each battle and each completed request. Although it was gradual, he was sure that he was climbing the stairs of progress. But now, he felt as if he were walking on the spot in front of a wall.

After that, Carlos fell, like someone rolling down a hill. His previously overflowing confidence was broken to pieces. He wanted to blame the loss of his divine protections for everything – the weather being poor, him stubbing his foot painfully against a hard object, and even feeling terrible because he had been drinking too much – even though reason told him that this wasn’t true.

If it were only Rodcorte’s divine protection that Carlos had lost, he wouldn’t have been so shocked. To him, Rodcorte was a god whose identity he did not know; he had only prayed to Rodcorte because Rubicante had instructed him to do so through a Divine Message. He had been thankful for the divine protection granted to him, but if one were to ask whether he had respected Rodcorte and prayed to him every day, the answer would have been no.

The loss of that divine protection would have been a disappointment, but not such a shock that Carlos would start drinking himself into a stupor every day... Ediria, who was also considered to be a potential hero by the gods, had also lost Rodcorte’s divine protection. But she had shown no signs of despair. But it wasn’t just Rodcorte’s divine protection that Carlos had lost; he had even lost the divine protection of Rubicante, whom he had worshiped.

Sitting in the bar inside the Adventurers’ Guild, Carlos knocked back a drink.

“I’m... I’m finished. It’s over for me, now that I’ve been abandoned by the gods. You guys should leave me and find someone better to team up with,” he said.

Meanwhile, his party members were trying to console him.

“Don’t say such stupid things, Carlos!”

“That’s not true! You might have lost some divine protections, but it wasn’t as if you were born with them. You gained those divine protections after you became an adventurer and partied up with us, right?”

“We were all just E-class adventurers back then, but you pulled us together and did a great job as the leader.”

“And no matter what anyone says, it’s not your fault you lost the divine protections. That much is certain.” Carlos’s companions were all in agreement with one another. Indeed, Carlos had no idea why he had lost Rubicante’s divine protection.

The God of Heat Hazes Rubicante, who was a god of the fire attribute, was not a strict god. His teachings were lax, at least to the point that one would not be going against them just by living a normal life as an adventurer. Thus, it was unlikely that Rubicante had given up on Carlos because Carlos had gone against his teachings.

So then, was it possible that Carlos had been abandoned because of a lack of piety? Had Carlos shown insufficient respect for the god who had granted him his divine protection?

But that was unlikely, too. Carlos was as devoted to the gods he worshiped as any other average person before he gained Rubicante’s divine protection. He held an above-average amount of respect for Rubicante after receiving it.

He would always make short prayers before meals and before sleeping, and whenever he earned money from requests, he would give small amounts to the poor and make modest donations at Churches. He wasn’t a fanatic by any means, but he was certainly a worshiper.

And despite that, he had lost his divine protections.

“That can’t be right. I’m sure I messed up somewhere without realizing it. Or... maybe they figured out that there’s no future for me even if I kept the divine protections,” Carlos said in self-deprecation. He would never have guessed that the reason for Rubicante removing his divine protection was because he had become obsessed with Kanako’s idol concerts and been guided by her.

“Don’t be too discouraged. They say that if there’s a god who throws you away, there’s a god who will pick you up. I’m sure there will be a god who sees your potential, Carlos,” said Vandalieu, who was consoling Carlos along with his party members, having guessed the reason as to why Carlos had lost his divine protections.

Vandalieu was doing this because Carlos, a potential hero... apparently a *former* potential hero now, had joined his companions – but the real reason was because he felt pity for him.

He didn’t believe that he had done anything wrong, and he didn’t think it was because Kanako had awakened to become a Guider, so he felt no guilt about it.

Vandalieu just felt sympathy for him.

Of course, he remembered that Carlos had tried to invite Doug to join his party, and that he was always following Kanako and the others around. However, he didn’t have a bad impression of him.

After all, it was only natural for exceptional individuals to draw attention. And although Carlos had been rather persistent in trying to recruit Doug to his party, the two had already settled the matter on their own.

... Those who had used malicious recruitment methods had been dealt with by the ‘Starving Wolf’ Michael, also known as Miles. As for the crafty ones who had tried to recruit people by holding their friends and relatives hostage, they were currently being managed and educated by Luciliano.

“If you keep drinking on an empty stomach, you’ll get drunk faster, so please eat something as well,” said Vandalieu, wanting to cheer Carlos up. “Chef, could you prepare something, please? I’ll pay for –”

“Wait! We should be the ones paying!” interrupted one of Carlos’s party members.

“We’re not going to let a child pay for our drinking snacks!” said another.

And it seemed that Vandalieu’s attempts to comfort Carlos were not really working. Perhaps the words of comfort of a twelve-year-old were not very convincing.

“Master Carlos, it might seem that you’ve hit rock-bottom in life, but that isn’t true. I thought the same when I lost my good arm, but I’ve managed to make a comeback as an adventurer,” said Simon.

“Even when I lost all of my limbs, I never thought ‘it’s over.’ I was desperately thinking about what I needed to do to keep on living somehow,” said Natania.

“If you do your best to think of every desperate way you can live on, I suspect things will work out,” said Simon.

It seemed that Simon and Natania’s words in addition to Vandalieu seemed to strike a chord with Carlos.

“R-really? Do you really think so?” Carlos asked.

“Of course. Your whole body is still intact, and you’ve got your friends with you,” said Simon.

“Even if your divine protections are gone, it’s not like your Attribute Values or the Levels of your other Skills have decreased, is it? So things will work out as long as you don’t give up,” said Natania.

“Well... I mean, it seems that my Attribute Values have actually increased somehow,” said Carlos.

Indeed, it wasn’t as if Carlos had become weaker. The loss of his divine protections had reduced his room for growth and the efficiency of his progress. However, the strength he possessed remained as it had been before. And if one only considered his Attribute Values, they had actually increased due to being guided by Kanako and Vandalieu.

In the first place, Carlos had been chosen by Rubicante as a potential hero because he had potential. If he shaped that potential rather than let it rot away, there was still room for him to grow.

“Maybe you’re right? ... Do you think I can become stronger even without the divine protections?” said Carlos.

He still seemed to only half-believe what he was being told, but he was beginning to get himself together. *With this, I’m sure this guy will be fine. All I’m concerned about now is whether my main self is doing well,* Vandalieu thought.

The wobbling noises of Kühl accompanied his thoughts.

This Vandalieu was not the real one. It was Kühl, who had disguised himself as Vandalieu, with a voice-projection-type Demon King Familiar inside.

As proof of that, Gufadgarn was not lurking in the shadows behind him... though there were not many who were capable of realizing this.

As for the real Vandalieu –

Five ships were sailing across the sky above a blue ocean whose waters reached as far as the eye could see.

On the bow of one of those ships was Vandalieu.

“There doesn’t seem to be any movement,” he murmured.

The space behind him distorted as Gufadgarn appeared out of thin air.

“Great Vandalieu, shall we begin things ourselves?” she asked.

“No, let’s go around one more time. Cuatro, please keep sailing in a circle,” said Vandalieu.

“Yes, sir! Maintain a turn to the right!” said one of the Undead sailors.

The ships were not over the coast of the Demon King’s Continent, but over the ocean area where Peria, the Goddess of Water and Knowledge, slumbered.

The reason for that was that if Vandalieu and his companions kept fighting only against the force that defended Botin, there was a risk that the force that defended Peria would send reinforcements to the Demon King’s Continent.

In order to prevent that, Vandalieu had made his way to the ocean where Peria was sealed away, according to the spirits of Repobilis and Zvold. This would give off the impression that he was after both.

“Van-sama!” said Tarea, calling out to Vandalieu. “The fact that there are no battles is a good thing. They say that guards having nothing to do is a sign of peace, after all.”

Tarea had often been separated from Vandalieu recently, so she thought that coming out here with him wasn’t bad.

However, she still wished to avoid being on a battlefield where Vandalieu and his allies would be crossing swords with gods of Rank 13 and above, the kind that were only spoken of in mythological tales. After all, she was a craftsman who created arms, not a master in magic and combat.

“And the weather is so nice. I think we should go and play at an ocean somewhere far away from here! I’m sure it will be very fun for us to put on swimsuits, play songs, dance, and drink tropical juice!” she said, suggesting that they engage in the leisure activities that Vandalieu had once told her he believed celebrities often indulged in.

Vandalieu had a luxury complex, so he had a strong desire to do what the celebs of Earth and Origin probably did.

Though it was years ago now, he’d once had Basdia, Zadiris, and Eleanora wear bunny-girl costumes at the publicly operated casino in Talosheim so that he could pretend to be a celeb gambling at a casino while being waited on by beautiful women. That was how much of a complex he had.

But Tarea’s ploy was unsuccessful.

“I don’t really agree,” said Eleanora, looking at her through half-closed eyes.

“W-what?!” Tarea exclaimed.

“I mean, think about it. I was singing and dancing up until yesterday, so dancing again wouldn’t really be much of a break,” said Eleanora, who had been continuing her lessons with Kanako up until the previous day.

“And swimsuits, you say... We are in the sky,” Bellmond pointed out.

They were about a thousand meters above the ocean. It was very different from being at a beach. Of course, Cuatro was capable of flying at a lower altitude, but that would mean an increased risk of being attacked by monsters from the sea. Well, they would be able to repel ordinary monsters, but...

“It would be very troublesome if demigods were to attack from inside the sea. Cuatro may be fine, since the bottom of the ship has been rebuilt to be very sturdy, but the other four ships that are just imitations will not hold even for a moment,” said Zadiris.

“There’s no signs of demigods coming out now, but even if we wanted to show them some openings to draw them out, that would be going too far,” said Basdia, voicing her opposition to Tarea’s idea as well.

“That’s how it is, so there will be no leisure. Let’s enjoy ourselves next time,” said Vandalieu. “And you say you don’t like this, Tarea, but you’re quite fired up, aren’t you?”

Tarea had already activated her transformation equipment.

“This is not me being fired up; it is a sign of apprehension! I am wearing this because it provides protection!” said Tarea.

“But Tarea, if you see us fighting against demigods, you might get some ideas for developing new transformation equipment, you know?” said Vandalieu.

“I mean, that’s true, but...”

“And I’ll keep you safe.”

“Alright!”

Tarea’s bitter expression turned into a radiant smile in an instant. Since she was guaranteed to be

protected by Vandalieu in the event of a battle, she had no more complaints.

“But Danna-sama, would it not be pointless for us to continue sailing in circles while the enemy stays in their positions like turtles? How about using *that*?” Bellmond suggested, pointing at the fake Cuatros.

Inside the fake Cuatros was a trump card for provoking the enemy.

If this was used, it would enrage the enemies protecting Peria and possibly drive them to make a move.

“But that would be pointless if the enemy ignores it. We don’t *have* to fight, so it’s fine if we just go back without fighting, isn’t it?” said Eleanora, making the exact opposite suggestion.

Indeed, there was no need for Vandalieu and his companions to defeat the gods defending Peria right now.

The one they were trying to unseal was Botin, Mother of the Earth and Goddess of Craftsmanship, not Peria. The reason for sailing in circles above the ocean where Peria slumbered was to mislead the gods of Alda’s forces to believe that Vandalieu was after Peria as well, not just Botin.

“Eleanora is right. There’s no need to force a fight here,” said Vandalieu.

The provocation trump card was for nothing more than provocation. It was likely to be effective at agitating and angering the enemy, but it was not so important in actual battle. However, enough work had gone into making it that Vandalieu was hesitant to waste its use.

Keeping it and waiting for the next opportunity was an option.

“Indeed. Unlike Botin, who is sealed on the Demon King’s Continent, Peria slumbers inside the sea. With the gods in defensive positions, too,” said Zadiris.

“In order to approach Peria, we would need to enter the sea. The water-attribute gods and demigods would have an advantage if they waited to ambush us,” Vandalieu agreed.

The gods defending Peria were likely confident that they would be able to protect her even if Vandalieu were to fire ‘World Piercing Destructive Hollow Cannon’ from above the ocean’s surface. There was also the possibility that Peria was slumbering inside a special space that could not be affected by external attacks.

... The difficult part was that Vandalieu could not afford to test whether this was true or not.

“Well then, let’s go back, shall we? But let’s leave fake Cuatro number four behind and make it self-detonate if anything happens,” said Vandalieu.

There was a risk that the enemy would attack as soon as Vandalieu and his companions turned their backs, but the exploding fake-Cuatro wasn’t a trump card or anything. The only thing needed to make it was wood and the Demon King’s fat, so it was a low-cost investment.

Thus, it was a convenient choice to leave behind to keep an eye on things.

“Now then, once we’re some distance away from this place, let’s open a ‘Teleportation Gate’ and –” Vandalieu began.

But he was interrupted by an enormous, towering pillar of water rising from the sea towards the heavens.

“Go! Defeat them!” a voice roared.

From within the pillar of water came six demigods – Elder Dragons, Colossi, Beast-Kings... but that wasn’t all.

“They are holding Colossi... No, they seem to be Golems,” said Eleanora.

The demigods were flying forth, carrying Golems that were just as large as them. The Colossi were humanoid, but the non-humanoid Elder Dragons and Beast-Kings looked quite awkward as they flew with the Golems on their backs.

“It seems that they intend to make these Golems fight us,” said Bellmond.

“How can you be so calm?! Those Golems are made entirely of Orichalcum!” Tarea screamed.

The strength of Golems changed with what material they were made of and their size. These Golems were a hundred meters tall like the demigods. If it was indeed made of Orichalcum, a material that only gods could refine, then it would be a minimum of Rank 13.

It would certainly not be weaker than the smaller, half-smashed Dragon-shaped Orichalcum Golem that Vandalieu and his companions had once defeated beneath Talosheim’s castle.

“Captain, begin our counter-attack,” Vandalieu ordered.

“Aye, sir! Begin counter-attack!” shouted one of the Four Dead Sea Captains.

The enormous cannons made of Demon King fragments, installed at the bottom of Cuatro and the fake Cuatros, roared as they fired a volley of cannonballs, and enormous eyeballs and lips began firing beams of light and sound wave attacks. These rained down on the Golems and the demigods carrying them, but...

“Use the Golems as shields!”

The demigods used the Golems as shields to avoid direct hits from the beams of light and cannonballs.

The fragments of the Demon King were the body parts of the Demon King Guduranis, against whom only



Orichalcum had been effective. Thus, even after these fragments had been absorbed by Vandalieu, they would not provide a one-sided advantage against an Orichalcum defense.

However, one of the Orichalcum Golems crumbled under the barrage of cannonballs.

“Th-this isn’t working! This Golem can’t withstand –” the Elder Dragon carrying it shouted, before screaming as he plummeted along with the broken Golem he had been carrying.

Orichalcum was indeed an exceptional metal that was capable of opposing fragments of the Demon King. But in the end, it was nothing more than a material. It was only natural for its performance to depend on the skill of the one who had refined it.

“Oh no. They were too confident in their Orichalcum Golems. All that precious food and Orichalcum...” said Vandalieu, disappointed that he had made his attacks too strong.

“Danna-sama, there are five more demigods with five more Golems on the way, so do not be too disheartened,” said Bellmond, trying to cheer him up.

Indeed, the remaining five Golems were being damaged by the beams of light and cannonballs, but they were still shielding the demigods effectively.

“Gah! To think that great Orichalcum Golems crafted by the great gods would break... The repairs were insufficient!” one of the demigods shouted.

The Orichalcum Golems that the demigods were carrying were ones that had been used during the battle against the Demon King’s army a hundred thousand years ago and broken during battle; the gods who protected Peria had repaired them.

A large number of demigods had been gathered to defend Botin, who was sealed away on the Demon King’s Continent. That had left fewer demigods in the force that defended Peria, so they had brought out the broken Golems to make up for their lack of forces.

*Of course, since they’re Golems, they are immobile. Even though they are able to float in the air, they cannot fly at high speeds. If we didn’t carry them like this, they would serve as nothing but targets in an airborne battle... though they are nothing more than shields now. When they were being repaired, I should have suggested adding flying capabilities!* thought Zabak, the Sea Serpent Beast-King, cursing his past self as he carried his Golem forth alongside his companions.

They had not expected Vandalieu to come with a fleet of flying ships.

Once they got the Orichalcum Golems close, Zabak and the demigods with him intended to take some distance and regroup with their allies.

Their allies that weren’t present were currently warping space as quickly as they could in order to protect Peria – so that even if Vandalieu were to fire ‘World Piercing Destructive Hollow Cannon’ from above, it would be diverted away before it reached Peria.

Seeing Vandalieu and his companions stop flying in circles, Zabak and those with him had taken action to buy time until that task was complete.

The truth was that Vandalieu was trying to retreat rather than attack, but... the gods had not been able to withstand the pressure of his presence.

*Just a little further!* Thought Zabak, who was now less than a hundred meters away from the fleet.

But Vandalieu and his companions had been waiting for this to happen – for the forces defending Peria to come and attack them.

“If they get any closer, Cuatro might get some scratches. Van, is it about time for us to go out?” asked Basdia.

“I don’t mind, but all of you should target one pair... one Golem and one demigod,” said Vandalieu.

“Alright! Everyone, we’re aiming for that unagi!” said Basdia.

“Basdia, that’s a sea serpent!” said Eleanora, correcting her.

“Well, serpents and unagi are similar, are they not? Both are delicious when prepared using kabayaki,” said Zadiris.

“I do not believe that argument makes a lot of sense,” said Bellmond.

With that, Basdia, Eleanora and the others leapt from Cuatro’s deck in Zabak’s direction. As a result of improvements that Vandalieu had made to Basdia and Zadiris’s transformation equipment, they now had the ability to fly. Eleanora and Bellmond were capable of flying on their own.

“Now then, let’s get rid of the fake Cuatros except the self-destructing one. Let’s use our trump cards one by one,” said Vandalieu.

One of the fake Cuatros began breaking apart and falling to pieces from within, revealing a Colossus with cloudy eyes and ashen skin.

Radatel, the Colossus of Lightning, who was now a Colossus Zombie, let out a roar and scattered lightning into his surroundings as he intercepted the Colossus and Golem that had been traveling towards

him.

“You are Radatel?!” the Colossus shouted, his face twisting in anger as he recognized the Zombie. “So, your corpse was turned into an Undead... What a vile deed!”

He released his Orichalcum Golem and prepared to take Radatel down in a two-on-one battle.

And then Sam, Knochen, and Pete appeared from another of the fake Cuatros.

Sam let out a wild laughter. “I would never have imagined I would fight an Orichalcum Golem in a place like this!” he said, having not taken part in the battle against the Orichalcum Dragon in Talosheim.

Knochen, who was previously several separate Undead and had fused into one being as a result of that battle, let out fierce roars of excitement.

“Now then, we’ll be aiming for the Elder Dragon that’s carrying the Golem over there! We won’t lose to Father, Hof!” said Rita, who was riding Hof.

“Let’s go, Mähne! Pete, please come with us,” said Saria, who was riding Mähne.

Accompanied by Pete, the Living Armor sisters moved towards the Elder Dragon that was carrying a Golem.

Pete snarled fiercely as they charged forth.

As a result of devouring the Great Vortex Dragon God Zvold, his Rank had increased even further, and he now had the majestic appearance of what one might describe as an emperor of centipedes. He was likely capable of taking on an average Elder Dragon on his own.

... Mähne and Hof, who were carrying the Living Armor sisters, were considerably out of place in terms of their fighting strength, but they were using ‘Familiar Spirit Demonfall’ so they would likely be fine.

One demigod-Golem pair had fallen, and three of the remaining five had been prevented from advancing any further. Radatel had become weaker after being turned into a Zombie, but he made up for that by wearing armor made of Demon King fragments, so even a Colossus and Golem tag-team couldn’t defeat him easily. On the other hand, Sam and the others were likely capable of defeating a Golem and an Elder Dragon, given enough time.

As for the other two pairs, the trump card that Vandalieu had prepared was heading in their direction. It was Fidirg, the Dragon God of Five Sins, an evil god with the appearance of an enormous hand that was covered in scales, with each of its fingers replaced by the head of a one-eyed snake.

“A complete recovery!”

“It feels good to look down on you fools that have sided with Alda!”

“Truly exhilarating!”

“This is payback for a hundred thousand years ago! Take this!”

“Ah, come to think of it, was this guy there a hundred thousand years ago?”

Fidirg laughed as he looked down on the demigods of Alda’s forces, spitting balls of light from his mouths.

“Impossible! Alda destroyed four of your five heads! You recovered from that and created a vessel in just a hundred thousand years?!” one of the demigods shouted.

“Don’t lose your focus!” shouted one of the Colossi. “He’s a small-fry among the enemies in Vida’s faction! He’s just a weakling that clings onto Vida. We’ll defeat him quickly!”

Indeed, Fidirg had been among the weaker evil gods in the Demon King’s army. His survival of the battle that took place a hundred thousand years ago was more due to luck than due to his valor.

His complete recovery was indeed surprising, and it would be foolish to underestimate him. However, he was about as much of a threat as the high-Rank Ghouls, the Vampires, Knochen, and Pete.

“I shall use my Golem to crush Fidirg! You hold Vandalieu back!” ordered the Colossus.

“Hmph, there is no other choice!” said Dolstero, the Sea Urchin Beast-King.

He closed in on Cuatro, where Vandalieu was, while holding his Orichalcum Golem between his spines as a shield.

In their original plan, they were supposed to throw their Golems at the enemy once they got this close, then evade further attacks. But one pair had already been taken down, and two of the remaining pairs were stopped in their tracks and were now forced into a close-quarters battle while being aimed at by cannons from above.

At this rate, they couldn’t buy enough time. Dolstero steeled his resolve; he and the other demigods were ready to fight themselves rather than rely just on their Golems.

But that resolve was not enough.

“See whether you can crush me or not!” Fidirg said tauntingly.

“I shall test whether I can!” declared the Colossus.

He blocked the light projectiles being fired from Fidirg’s mouths using his Orichalcum Golem as a shield, and the Golem didn’t appear to take any significant damage.

"It seems that weak snakes do as much barking as dogs!" the Colossus shouted, ridiculing Fidirg. "The projectiles being fired by the ships are more effective... What?!"

He cut his sentence short as Fidirg began radiating a black aura.

"Familiar Spirit Demonfall!"

Fidirg allowed his own vessel to become a body for a split entity of Vandalieu.

"If I can't give divine protections or familiar spirits, I'll borrow a familiar spirit myself!" Fidirg said.

"Y-you fool! Do you have no pride as a god?!" the Colossus shouted, astounded at how pathetic of a god Fidirg was. "And you don't even have a Status! How is it even possible for you to do that?!"

"It's called the wisdom of the weak!" one of Fidirg's heads replied immediately.

"You guys can use magic and martial skills even though you have no Statuses either!" another pointed out.

There was no point in pointing out how weak someone was when they were already aware of it. The Status System was made for mortals, so gods did not possess Statuses, but that didn't mean that gods could not use their experience, skill, and mastery in the form of magic and martial skills.

"I mean, I think you're the first god in history to summon the familiar spirit of a mortal onto yourself," said the split entity of Vandalieu inside Fidirg.

"In other words, I'm a trailblazer!" one of Fidirg's heads said.

"Now then, take this!" said another.

In the mouths of Fidirg's five heads, spheres of condensed black energy appeared instead of the projectiles of white light that he had been firing before, and the moment they reached their limit, five black beams of light erupted forth.

"IMPOSSIBLE!" shouted the Colossus.

The five black beams pierced through the Orichalcum Golems that had deflected the projectiles of light, creating five holes in the Colossus's body as well.

"To think that a god would be willing to accept power from a mortal, even if that mortal is the Demon King...!" Dolstero muttered in shock as he continued dodging incoming projectiles, unable to stop Gufadgarn from retrieving the remains of the slain Colossus and his Golem.

The actions that Fidirg had taken were equivalent to abandoning the reason for a god to exist. Gods were worshipped because they were incredible, great beings that granted their divine protections to mortals. It was true that the faith of a god's believers acted as their source of energy, but they were never directly empowered by a mortal to this extent.

It was possible that actions like Fidirg's would cause a god's believers to abandon them.

"That's not how it is. Fidirg and I are equals," said Vandalieu, appearing on the bow of Cuatro, the ship that Dolstero was trying to approach.

He was holding a staff – and it was not the Gyubarzo staff that he had used in the past.

"Transform. Staff of Five Sins, activate."

Five pipes emerged from the staff and fused with Vandalieu's arm, and five protrusions that resembled the heads of snakes emerged from the staff's tip.

"I-it cannot be!" said Dolstero, letting out a terrified noise.

Obedying his survival instinct that was screaming at him to flee, Dolstero cast his Orichalcum Golem away and attempted to escape. The Golem floated in place and let out a groan as it tried to get closer to Cuatro in order to protect Dolstero, but... Dolstero had not thrown the Golem far enough. It would not make it in time.

"Dark Peak Death Flash."

A new 'Dark King Magic' spell, which condensed the life-absorbing 'Death Cannon' into a single beam of light, pierced through the Orichalcum Golem and Dolstero and killed them instantly, not even giving them the time to scream as they died.

《The Levels of the 'Constant Mana Recovery,' 'Super Strengthen Subordinates,' 'Murder Healing,' 'Self-Strengthening: Murder,' 'Divine Alchemy,' 'Greater Multi-cast,' 'Staff Technique,' and 'Soul Devour' Skills have increased!》

《You have acquired the 'Strengthened Magical Power when equipped with a Staff' Skill!》

Chapter 290 - The horseman of the apocalypse decides not to ride

Though it was difficult to tell because of his shape, Dolstero, the Sea Urchin Beast-King, was defeated by Vandalieu.

"Are Sea Urchin Beast-Kings in season now? To begin with, is it male or female?" said Vandalieu,

sounding worried.

The current season was summer. Sea urchin gonads were edible, but on Earth and in Origin, the male gonads were considered to be more high-class ingredients than the female gonads. The same was true in this world as well.

The flavor and the volume that could be harvested also varied depending on the time of year. Vandalieu couldn't help but be worried about this.

"The previous Sea Urchin Beast-King was male, but I believe Dolstero is female. And unlike ordinary beasts, Beast-Kings do not lay eggs every year, so it is not certain, but... a Beast-King should have plenty of Mana all year round, at all times. I am sure your tongue will be pleased, great Vandalieu," said Gufadgarn as she recovered Dolstero's enormous body and the Golem's wreckage, down to the tiniest shard.

The Orichalcum Golem and the Elder Dragon that were shot down on their initial approach had been too far away for Gufadgarn to recover, so she was eager not to cause any more failures.

"That's a relief," said Vandalieu. "Well, I've finished experimenting with the Staff of Five Sins and 'Dark Peak Death Flash,' so let's go and back everyone up, shall we? I don't get any Experience Points for defeating them myself, after all."

The Staff of Five Sins was a new piece of transformation equipment that he had created for himself. As its name suggested, it was an Artifact that contained the spirit clone of Fidirg, the Dragon God of Five Sins.

There was little change when it transformed, but by producing pipes that fused with Vandalieu's arm, it allowed him to use the staff without losing the effects of the 'Augmented Attack Power while Unarmed' Skill. The 'Strengthened Magical Power while equipped with a Staff' Skill, which Vandalieu happened to have recently acquired, was also active.

The 'Dark Peak Death Flash' that the Staff of Five Sins produced could be considered an advanced 'Dark King Magic' spell; it converged multiple 'Death Cannon' beams to release it as a single spell.

After creating this spell, Vandalieu had realized that his imagination was quite limited; all of his advanced spells were simply converging energy and releasing it. However, this spell had taken down a Beast-King with tremendous Vitality and an Orichalcum Golem with a single attack, so it was a satisfactory result.

Vandalieu was particularly surprised that it had defeated the Golem, which only contained a transient life. This battle could be considered a great success.

"Then perhaps you should complete a Job change first?" said Gufadgarn.

Vandalieu was surprised by this suggestion. Ordinarily, even if one reached their Job's maximum level during battle, taking a break to change Jobs before continuing would be utter madness.

But as Vandalieu looked around the battlefield, he could see that the situation was overwhelmingly in his allies' favor. The remaining enemies were three demigod-Golem pairs, but... the Golem of the pair that Eleanor's group was facing was cracked all over; it looked like it would fall to pieces at any moment.

The Elder Dragon that Rita and Saria were facing was still going strong, but his Golem had turned into a punching bag for Knochen and Sam.

The last pair was under cannon fire from Cuatro and couldn't get any closer.

"I see. I'll change Jobs very quickly then, so please make a Gate to the Job-changing room," said Vandalieu.

"As you command," said Gufadgarn.

A 'Teleportation Gate' leading to the Job-changing room inside Cuatro appeared beneath Vandalieu's feet, and he fell into it.

"What?! Wait, Van-sama?!" said Tarea, shocked that Vandalieu, who was supposed to protect her, was leaving her.

But Vandalieu's shadow, which was still lingering near her feet, stood up.

"I'm still here, so don't worry," it said.

"Oh my! Shadow Van-sama!" said Tarea, calmed down by the presence of the Demon-King's-shadow Vandalieu.

"Now then, let's see what we have here," said Vandalieu.

He had fallen into the Job-changing room, but he could still hear Tarea's voice through the Teleportation Gate as he quickly reached out to touch the crystal ball.

《Jobs that can be selected: Fallen Warrior, Insect Ninja, Chaos Guider, Hollow King Mage, Eclipse Cursecaster, Demon Ruler, Creator, Pale Rider, Tartarus, Wild Spirit, Dark Battery Cannoneer, Magic

Staff Creator, Soul Fighter, God Destroyer, Qliphoth, Dark Beast User, Spirit Therapist, Artisan: Transformation Equipment, Hollow Shadow Caster, Balor, Apollyon, Demigorgon, Soul Devourer, God Devourer, Nergal, Ravana, Shaitan, Chi You, God Spirit Mage, Ouroboros, Rudra, Blood Ruler, Demon Electricity User, Yin Guider, Divine Guider, Juggernaut, Underworld God Mage (NEW!)»

The new Job available this time was 'Underworld God Mage.'

Its name was impressive, but... it was likely a Job related to using advanced 'Dark King Magic' spells. It was possible that Vandalieu developing new death-attribute spells had something to do with its appearance.

In any case, Vandalieu needed to decide on his next Job. Vandalieu used the 'Super High-speed Thought Processing' Skill to quickly consider his initial plan while taking the new 'Underworld God Mage' Job into account.

If he were to take a Guider Job, how about 'Divine Guider?'

Fidirg had been restored to his small shrine in the great marshlands to perform the task of maintaining the barrier that protected the region inside the Boundary Mountain Range. He was considered one of the weaker gods, and yet he had defeated an Orichalcum Golem and a demigod with ease. But it was not solely because he had summoned a split entity of Vandalieu upon his vessel.

Fidirg had been under the effects of Vandalieu's 'Group Commander' Skill, which had awakened from his 'Commanding' Skill, and his 'Super Strengthen Subordinates' Skill. And most importantly, he had been guided by Vandalieu.

Thus, if Vandalieu became a 'Divine Guider,' Fidirg's strength in battle would become even greater.

Vandalieu considered this, but he put aside his interest in the newly available Job and 'Divine Guider' to choose the Job he had planned to take.

"Select 'Pale Rider.'"

Vandalieu was currently engaging in battles against the demigods as a diversion. These battles yielded a considerable volume of Experience Points, and based on the progress of the tunnel construction in Gartland, he would engage in one more such battle. In other words, it was possible that he would be able to change Jobs one more time before reviving Botin and fighting in earnest against the force defending her.

Taking into account non-diversion battles and training, he might even be able to change Jobs twice.

Thus, he had decided to choose one of the Jobs that shared a name with mysterious gods of Earth. They were full of mystery, so he had decided to try choosing one of these Jobs and seeing whether they came with drawbacks like the complete lack of Attribute Value growth that 'Destruction Guider' had.

However, 'Pale Rider' was not a god, but a figure mentioned in the bible – a horseman that brought pestilence, a harbinger of the apocalypse. And considering that Vandalieu's current Attribute Values exceeded those of an S-class adventurer, a drawback like a lack of Attribute Value growth wasn't much of a concern.

«You have changed Jobs to 'Pale Rider!'»

«The Levels of the 'Magic Resistance,' 'Constant Mana Recovery,' 'Deadly Venom Secretion: Claws, Fangs, Tongue,' 'Mana Enlargement,' 'Increased Mana Recovery Rate,' 'Augmented Vitality,' 'Murder Healing,' 'Self-Strengthening: Murder,' 'Embodiment,' 'Super High-speed Thought Processing,' 'Group Thought Processing,' and 'Group Control' Skills have increased!»

«'Dark King Magic' has awakened to 'Underworld God Magic,' and 'Abyss' has awakened to 'Root Source!'»

**Name:** Vandalieu Zakkart

**Race:** Dhampir (Mother: Goddess)

**Age:** 12 years old

**Title:** Ghoul Emperor, Eclipse Emperor, Guardian of the Cultivation Villages, Holy Son of Vida, Scaled Emperor, Tentacle Emperor, Champion, Demon King, Oni Emperor, Trial Conqueror, Transgressor, Black Blood Emperor, Elder Dragon Emperor, Food Cart King, Genius Tamer, True Ruler of the Red-light

District, Patron Saint of Transformation Equipment

**Job:** Pale Rider

**Level:** 0

**Job history:** Death-Attribute Mage, Golem Transmuter, Undead Tamer, Soul Breaker, Venom Fist User, Insect User, Tree Caster, Demon Guider, Archenemy, Zombie Maker, Golem Creator, Corpse Demon Commander, Demon King User, Dark Guider, Labyrinth Creator, Creation Guider, Dark Healer, Disease Demon, Magic Cannoneer, Spirit Warrior, Bestower, Dream Guider, Demon King, Demiurge, Whip Tongue Calamity, Divine Enemy, Dead Spirit Mage, String User, Great Demon King, Vengeful Berserker, Destruction Guider, Dark King Mage

**Attributes:**

Vitality: 580,660 (Increased by 2,888!)

Mana: 10,281,549,964 (+10,281,549,964) (Increased by 3,576,191,291 in total!)

Strength: 61,419 (Increased by 1,788!)

Agility: 54,292 (Increased by 1,324!)

Stamina: 66,411 (Increased by 2,981!)

Intelligence: 78,996 (Increased by 10,225!)

**Passive skills:**

Monstrous Strength: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)

Super Rapid Regeneration: Level 4

Underworld God Magic: Level 1 (Awakened from Dark King Magic!)

Status Effect Immunity

Magic Resistance: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)

Dark Vision

Dark Dream Demon Creation Destruction Path Enticement: Level 10

Chant Revocation: Level 10

Guidance: Dark Dream Demon Creation Destruction Path: Level 10

Constant Mana Recovery: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)

Super Strengthen Subordinates: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)

Deadly Venom Secretion (Claws, Fangs, Tongue): Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)

Strengthened Agility: Level 9

Body Expansion (Tongue): Level 10

Augmented Attack Power while Unarmed: Small

Strengthened Body Part (Hair, Claws, Tongue, Fangs): Level 10

Demon Thread Refining: Level 1

Mana Enlargement: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)

Increased Mana Recovery Rate: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)

Strengthened Attack Power while activating a Magic Cannon: Very Large

Augmented Vitality: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)

Strengthened Attribute Values: Reigning: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)

Strengthened Attribute Values: Worshiped: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)

Strengthened Attribute Values: Demon Empire of Vidal: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)

Self-Regeneration: Cannibalism: Level 3

Augmented Attribute Values: Cannibalism: Level 3

Strengthened Attribute Values when Enveloped in a Soul: Medium

Murder Healing: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)

Self-Strengthening: Murder: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)

Increased Magical Power while equipped with a Staff! (NEW!)

**Active skills:**

Blood Rule: Level 1

Transcend Limits: Level 8

Golem Creation: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)

Hollow King Magic: Level 6

Precise Mana Control: Level 3

Cooking: Level 8

Divine Alchemy: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)

Soul Destruction Fighting Technique: Level 5

Greater Multi-cast: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)

Surgery: Level 8

Embodiment: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)  
Coordination: Level 10  
Super High-speed Thought Processing: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)  
Group Commander: Level 1 (Awakened from Commanding!)  
Thread-reeling: Level 8  
Throwing: Level 10  
Scream: Level 8  
God Spirit Magic: Level 3  
Demon King Artillery Technique: Level 6  
Armor Technique: Level 10  
Shield Technique: Level 10  
Shadow Group Binding Technique: Level 7  
Transcend Limits: Fragments: Level 2  
Spirit Therapy: Level 2  
Whip Technique: Level 3  
Spirit Form Transformation: Lightning  
Staff Technique: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)  
High-speed Flight: Level 2  
Musical Instrument Performance: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)

**Unique skills:**

God Devourer: Level 8  
Deformed Multiple Souls  
Mental Encroachment: Level 9  
Labyrinth Creation: Level 5  
Great Demon King  
Root Source (Awakened from Abyss!)  
Divine Enemy  
Soul Devour: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)  
Vida's Divine Protection  
Earth's Gods' Divine Protection  
Group Thought Processing: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)  
Zantark's Divine Protection  
Group Control: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)  
Soul Form: Level 4  
Demon King's Demon Eyes  
Origin's Gods' Divine Protection  
Ricklent's Divine Protection  
Zuruwarn's Divine Protection  
Perfect Record Technique  
Surpass Limits: Soul: Level 2  
Mutation Induction  
Demon King's Body  
Demigod

**Curses**

Experience gained in previous life not carried over  
Cannot learn existing jobs  
Unable to gain experience independently

“With ‘Mana Enlargement’ reaching Level 10, my Mana is now over 20,000,000,000... two hundred times what I had in my previous life,” Vandalieu murmured to himself.

No matter what Rodcorte did to Amemiya Hiroto and Rikudou Hijiri, it was probably impossible for Vandalieu to fall behind them in terms of Mana. Though it wasn't something that Vandalieu took pride in, he was certain of it.

And so, in order to return to the battlefield, Vandalieu returned to Cuatro's deck through the still-open ‘Teleportation Gate.’

“Welcome back, real Van-sama!” said Tarea. “What Job did you choose?”

“Thanks, Tarea. I chose ‘Pale Rider,’” Vandalieu replied.

Though he said that, Tarea did not know of the religions and legends of other worlds, and Gufadgarn had only fragmentary knowledge, so neither of them knew what ‘Pale Rider’ meant.

“It’s a legendary horseman that spreads pestilence,” Vandalieu added.

“I see. Would you like to test the Job’s effects immediately?” asked Gufadgarn.

“I don’t think that’s wise. If its effects cause me to spread disease indiscriminately, it would cause a lot of damage.”

If Vandalieu spread disease like the legends told, Eleanora and Bellmond would be fine as they had ‘Status Effect Resistance,’ but Zadiris, Basdia, Mähne, and Hof would be at risk, so Vandalieu did not intend to test his new Job.

“Then will you save your remaining trump cards for another occasion?” asked Gufadgarn.

“Yes, as planned,” said Vandalieu.

He still had backup forces, such as the space-attribute Ghosts whose Ranks had increased. But since his companions were in a dominant position on all fronts but one, there was no need to use them.

“Hmph... So, I don’t get to make an appearance,” said Vigaro in a disappointed tone as he came out of the cabin where he had been on standby onto the deck.

He had been staying hidden on the ship as backup, in case the others had some trouble in their battle against the demigods or the enemy came in greater numbers than expected.

“Unfortunately not. Fidirg is doing well, after all,” said Vandalieu.

“True. That Golem is barely holding its ground, and Fidirg is giving it a one-sided battle,” Vigaro agreed.

“Vandalieu. It seems that there is no need for you to feel any concern about Fidirg,” said Gufadgarn.

The one Vandalieu had been mainly concerned about, the one that he had expected to need Vigaro’s support the most, was not his daughter Basdia, but Fidirg.

When Vigaro first encountered Fidirg, he had perceived Fidirg as a being that was overwhelmingly more powerful than himself, but... time is a cruel mistress.

“Since there’s no need to worry about Fidirg, using any more trump cards will tip the situation too heavily in our favor, and that would make it look suspicious if we left without fighting against the force defending Peria,” said Vandalieu.

Their objective was to create a diversion, not do something about Peria. Thus, it would not be good for a full-scale battle to break out with the forces defending Peria.

If a full-scale battle broke out, it was possible that Vandalieu and his allies would suffer significant losses, as he had only brought enough for a diversion-creating battle. And if they ended up defeating the force defending Peria, it would look suspicious if Vandalieu didn’t do something about Peria afterwards. And although it was unclear whether it was possible or not, if Vandalieu were to revive Peria and take her away while she still slumbered, the gods of Alda’s forces would focus their numbers on defending the unharmed Botin.

If the demigods gathered there were to use some ability to detect the tunnel that was being dug underground, the entire diversion would be rendered meaningless.

“And it seems like Tarea would like me to stop,” said Vandalieu.

Tarea was clinging onto Vandalieu and the shadow Vandalieu, who had come down from the ship’s bow back onto the deck – though it appeared as if she were embracing him, due to their difference in size.

“Really, please stop. I believe in you, Van-sama, but this is too much stimulation for me,” said Tarea.

Perhaps having been influenced by Sam, Mähne and Hof had become able to fly through the sky, and with Saria and Rita on their backs, they were toying with the Elder Dragon.

Tarea’s Rank was higher than Mähne and Hof, but she had a production-related Job. Thus, her Attribute Values were not particularly high, and it seemed that she felt uneasy even with her defense increased by her transformation equipment.

“I’ll stop, so don’t worry,” Vandalieu told her. “But before that, could you please support the Radatel Zombie with the ballista-type Demon King Familiar?”

Knochen, Sam, Saria, and Rita were overwhelming the Elder Dragon and his Orichalcum Golem, but the Colossus of Lightning Radatel, now a Zombie, was at a disadvantage against a Colossus and his Orichalcum Golem.

Being beaten by the Golem and hit by the Colossus’s spells, although the Zombie Radatel had not sustained any great damage, it was wounded. It was counterattacking by releasing lightning attacks with fierce roars and swinging its arms around to spin its whole body in a body-slam attack. But Tarea couldn’t see any chance of it turning the situation around.

“Isn’t that Zombie a little too weak for one that you created, Van-sama?” Tarea asked.

“I made it in a hurry, so it looks stronger than it really is. I wasn’t really counting on it to do much fighting



for us,” said Vandalieu.

If Vandalieu had used ‘Surgery’ to improve Radatel’s corpse, the Zombie Radatel’s physical abilities would have been improved, though it would not be as strong as he was when he was still alive. However, Vandalieu hadn’t done that.

Though this was a terrible way to put it, the truth was that Vandalieu had created and brought the Zombie Radatel here not to bolster his fighting forces, but to provoke the Colossi of the forces defending Peria who had been his companions.

He still wanted to avoid it being destroyed, so he had put together a crude armor for it with Demon King fragments, but even so, Vandalieu was fine with most of it being destroyed as long as its head remained intact.

Even if its body was destroyed, he could still reuse the spirits inside it.

... Incidentally, Borkus and the others had treated the people of Gartland to Radatel’s meat, but that had nothing to do with the Zombie Radatel being weak. After all, Borkus had served the meat of Radatel’s heart – an organ that Zombies had no need for.

“In fact, it would be convenient for it to get damaged more. It would create a reason for us to retreat,” said Vandalieu.

In conclusion, the Zombie Radatel was not an ‘ally’ to Vandalieu.

Incidentally, Vandalieu had already devoured and erased Radatel’s soul from existence, so it was the spirit of Repobilis, the Starfish Beast-King, that was inside the Zombie Radatel. It was possible that placing a spirit that didn’t match the body had contributed to the Zombie Radatel being so weak.

“I see. That is fine, but... why me? It is true that I have the ‘Archery’ Skill, but that Demon King Familiar should be able to fire arrows on its own,” said Tarea.

“There’s no deep reason behind it. I just thought that if you manage to hit the enemy, it would help increase your Levels as well,” said Vandalieu.

“Even if you miss, you’ll be hitting the Zombie Radatel, so I don’t think there’s any problem,” said the Demon King Familiar.

“Well, if you say so,” said Tarea.

She felt a little sorry for the Zombie Radatel that was being treated so poorly, but she told herself that it being destroyed meant that the spirit of Repobilis inside might be granted a new body, so she began aiming the ballista with no thoughts of mercy on her mind.

It was an enormous crossbow that would normally take three people to operate, but... although Tarea was far weaker than Ghouls who had taken combat-related Jobs, her physical strength was equivalent to that of dozens of ordinary sailors, so she had no trouble wielding it.

“Here I go! Fire!” said Tarea in an imitation of Vandalieu as she pulled the trigger.

A long, thick arrow made of Demon King fragments was fired forth.

Meanwhile, Fidirg had finished off the Orichalcum Golem he had been fighting. Elated with victory, he moved to help the struggling Zombie Radatel.

“Next is a close-quarters battle –” he began to tell himself, but a moment later, he yelped in surprise.

“Something grazed me!”

Tarea’s arrow had grazed Fidirg. The Zombie Radatel let out a dull scream as the arrow pierced the center of its back, and the Colossus in front of Radatel screamed as the arrow buried itself in his shoulder.

“To think that you would aim for me despite striking allies in the process. You truly are no different from Guduranis at your core!” the Colossus muttered.

However, the Colossus was a hundred meters tall; the arrow seemed to have done even less damage than it initially appeared to.

He pinched the arrow between his fingers, pulled it out, and let out a furious bellow.

“I told Fidirg that we’d be fighting from range from start to finish, didn’t I? I’ll use my split entity to remind him to fall back.” said Vandalieu. “Now then, Tarea, fire the next shot.”

“Van-sama?! This large ballista’s aim doesn’t seem to be very reliable!” said Tarea.

Neither Vandalieu nor Tarea, the one who had actually pulled the trigger, were concerned by the Colossus’s words. Vandalieu was simply ignoring them, while Tarea had bigger things to worry about.

“This is your first time doing this, after all. If you fire a second and third shot, I’m sure you’ll get used to it,” said the ballista-type Demon King Familiar.

“The ballista-me is right. Now then, go ahead,” said Vandalieu.

The ballista-type Demon King Familiar quickly loaded the next arrow and drew back the thin muscles that served as springs, and this seemed to help Tarea make up her mind.

“Oh, to hell with it!” she said.

She pulled the trigger repeatedly, sending a volley of arrows forth. A third of them missed, another third buried themselves in the Zombie Radatel, and the rest found their mark in the Orichalcum Golem and Colossus.

Of course, it wasn't just the ballista projectiles; there were the cannonballs fired by the large-cannon-type Demon King Familiars, as well as Fidirg who had retreated even further back than Tarea, releasing projectiles of black light... darkness projectiles. But these were aimed more carefully to ensure that they did not hit the Zombie Radatel.

Unable to withstand these attacks, the Orichalcum Golem broke apart and stopped functioning. The Colossus, having lost his shield, was exposed to this fierce barrage of attacks and couldn't even turn his back to flee.

But he gave a furious roar; it seemed that his will to fight had not been broken.

"I'll get at least one attack in!" he shouted.

He grabbed one of the fragments of the Orichalcum Golem before Gufadgarn could recover it, and threw it.

A chunk of Orichalcum that was larger than a small ship flew towards Cuatro at the speed of a bullet. The damage from this projectile would not be insignificant by any means.

But Knochen roared, and a countless number of bones flew in between the chunk of Orichalcum and Cuatro.

"Thank you, Knochen," said Vandalieu.

Knochen gave a happy groan in response, and the sound of a countless number of hard objects being snapped could be heard as he intercepted the Orichalcum fragment.

Knochen was an amalgamation of a countless number of enormous bones; ten or twenty thousand of the bones that made up his body being broken was not even a scratch to him. Even if they snapped or were broken to pieces, they were still bones.

Seeing his counter-attack that he'd poured his heart into being stopped so easily, the Colossus's face turned even redder with anger.

But the next sound that came from his mouth was not an angry shout, but a scream.

Having defeated the Orichalcum Golem they had been facing, Sam, Saria, and Rita had appeared. With their current strength, they were capable of reliably defeating a crudely-mended Orichalcum Golem that was between Rank 10 to 12 as long as they didn't let their guards down.

"Hah!" Sam said triumphantly. "We have come to provide reinforcements!"

"Aim for the back of the knees, Rita!" said Saria.

"But hitting the lungs from behind is tempting as well, Nee-san!" said Rita.

With this, the Colossus was heavily outnumbered. He was the last one standing, and he was certain to be defeated without returning a single blow to his enemies.

But Vigaró, who had been waiting to deflect the Orichalcum projectile and had his moment stolen by Knochen, reached the end of his patience.

"Screw it, I'm going in!"

Holding axes and a shield with his four real arms and one spirit-form arm, Vigaró leapt down from the ship.

And then, Zadiris and the others who had defeated their own demigod-Golem pair showed up.

"It seems that we are the ones who took the longest," said Zadiris.

"We're late to the party, but we're going to catch up now!" said Eleanora.

"In that case, I shall return to Danna-sama's side," said Bellmond.

"I'll leave this one to my father," said Basdia.

It was only Eleanora and Zadiris who headed in the Colossus' direction.

Having finished their task of distorting space to set up a defensive measure against 'World Piercing Destructive Hollow Cannon,' the force defending Peria began attacking from beneath the sea's surface, but the Colossus had already been defeated.

An increasingly fierce barrage of high-pressure water breaths, spells, and beasts created by magic came from the water, but Vandalieu used the last remaining fake Cuatro as a shield and detonated it as he retreated.

Job explanation:  
Dark King Mage

A superior version of the 'Death-Attribute Mage' Job. Its Attribute Value growth favors Mana and Intelligence, but also provides large bonuses to the acquisition and improvement of magic-related Skills. Naturally, one must awaken 'Death-Attribute Magic' or Level it close to awakening in order to acquire this Job.

#### Chapter 291 - A moment after battle, and cannibalism

Heinz, the leader of the 'Five-colored Blades,' had lost count of how many times he had experienced temporary death. He had failed over and over – If only he had cut a little deeper, if only he had moved a little faster.

The enemies he fought against – the 'Fallen Champion' Zakkart, the Vampire Ancestor, gods that had fought fierce battles against the Demon King such as the Beast-God Ganpaplio, the Colossus God Zerno, and the Dragon Emperor-God Marduke – were vastly powerful to the point that it would be inadequate to describe them as 'strong.'

And he had never defeated the Demon King Guduranis, not even once.

"With this, there are still four floors... five, including Guduranis. There's still a long way to go," Heinz sighed.

He was standing in the town that was now uninhabited after the destruction of Curatos, the God of Records, who was supposed to be in control of this place.

"I mean, we're going at a pretty good pace, right? The gods were worried that we would never be able to clear it at all, but there are only five floors left," said the martial artist Jennifer, who served as a front-line fighter for the 'Five-colored Blades.'

At the cost of his life, Curatos had prevented Alda's Dungeon of Trials from collapsing completely, but about a third of its floors had been destroyed and made unusable.

Thus, although the 'Five-colored Blades' had only progressed to the middle floors at the time, they'd been forced to start much deeper into the Dungeon – ten floors from the final floor.

That had been incredibly difficult. The enemies they'd had to face included the great gods such as Marduke and Zerno, as well as the Demon King Guduranis (his first form). As the copies' movements had become simpler due to Curatos's destruction, Heinz and his companions had managed to barely defeat them by suffering countless defeats and learning their behavior patterns, but... they didn't even want to imagine what kinds of enemies were awaiting them on the remaining four floors.

They could understand why Alda, the God of Law and Fate, had been concerned about whether they would be able to clear the Dungeon.

Even though their deaths were temporary, they still felt the pain and sensations of dying, so it wouldn't have been strange for them to break mentally.

"Indeed. If you and Edgar had not returned, we may have given up," said Diana.

It hadn't even been clear as to whether those whose souls had been wounded by Vandalieu would become able to fight again, especially Edgar.

But Heinz had been treated by the goddess worshiped by Diana – Mill, the Goddess of Slumber – and Edgar had been treated by a god whose name they hadn't even been told. Thanks to them, both of them had returned in a perfect state far more quickly than had been expected.

"Yeah, you're right. I was especially surprised by Edgar," said Heinz.

"I never imagined that he'd return even stronger than he was before," said Jennifer.

Edgar's growth was astounding. The soul fragments of the heroic spirit Luke had been transplanted into him. His movements were nimble and his technique was sharp, as if his soul had been exchanged for Luke's. It was like he was permanently under the effects of 'Heroic Spirit Descent.' This extreme improvement in Edgar's strength was a large part of the reason Heinz and his companions only had five floors left to face.

"That's true, but no overdoing it," warned the female Dwarf Delizah, the shield-bearer of the 'Five-colored Blades.' "It seems that Edgar still feels unwell. I don't know what exactly is involved in healing a soul, but that's exactly why we need to be cautious."

Edgar's strength had indeed drastically improved, but as Delizah said, he was suffering physically, and the reason was a mystery. After long battles, he suffered from terrible heart palpitations, shortness of breath, headaches, and nausea, which caused him to become unable to move.

Even Diana's magic had no effect on these symptoms. The 'Tranquility' spell that calmed the mind seemed to ease them very slightly, so it was presumably a problem related to Edgar's mind.

"Isn't that... because of the trauma? He was in quite a terrible state, right?" said Jennifer.

Edgar's soul had been toyed with by Vandalieu until it was on the verge of breaking, and then he had been beheaded by Curatos who had taken the form of their former party member Martina in order to prevent any further damage to his soul.

Perhaps these events had been traumatic for Edgar.

But Diana shook her head. "It is possible. However, if that were the case, my spells would have more of an effect. My goddess Mill is the Goddess of Slumber. A goddess who grants peace to people and heals their minds and bodies."

In this world, it was believed that the mind was very closely related to life. Thus, there were spells of the life attribute that had effects on the mind.

Edgar had asked Diana to cast these spells, and she had done so numerous times, but their effects had been slight.

"Of course, it is possible that it is my skill that is lacking," Diana said, lowering her gaze.

"No, your magic is unquestionable, Diana. It's probably not a problem with the mind, but a problem with the soul," said Heinz with a nod.

Edgar's compatibility with Luke, the heroic spirit of the God of Judgment Niltark, had been good enough for him to use 'Heroic Spirit Descent.' But this had likely not been enough to prevent side-effects from transplanting fragments of Luke's soul into him.

Ordinarily, this would be the obvious explanation. It was Heinz's job as leader to hope for Edgar to overcome these side effects and support him as a comrade.

*But while we were going through the trials, Edgar was giving off a bloodlust that was far too powerful, and... a presence that is similar to Vandalieu's, but different. What in the world was that?*

Heinz had perceived something strange about Edgar.

Although the trials used copies that were like hallucinations with physical form, the battles were the real thing. It wasn't strange to give off an air of bloodlust during these trials, and Jennifer, Delizah, and Heinz himself all did so as well.

But the bloodlust Edgar had for the copies was not merely sharp and cold. Heinz felt as if it had a malignant hatred to it.

And there was *that* presence that could be felt ever so slightly when battles dragged on.

"I don't know if there'll be an answer for us, but let's try asking Alda. Diana, try praying to Mill as well," Heinz said.

The gods were busy. On the surface, the battles with Vandalieu were apparently intensifying. It was unlikely that the gods could devote all of their time to Heinz and his companions.

Heinz knew this, but with souls being involved, there was no choice but to ask the gods.

Meanwhile, Edgar was alone, lying down in his room at the inn... or rather, the recreation of an inn that had existed in a human town a hundred thousand years ago.

"Damn it, why does it feel like I have a hangover when I haven't been drinking?" he groaned quietly to himself.

His headache and nausea showed no signs of abating, and yet his body felt perfectly fine from the neck down. And when he entered battle, the headache and nausea vanished completely, allowing him to fight feeling refreshed.

The 'Status Effect Resistance' Skill and Potions all had no effect on these symptoms. Even Diana's spells only provided a small relief. Battle was the only thing that freed Edgar from them.

But Edgar instinctively understood that he mustn't over-indulge in battle.

The longer a battle continued, the more hatred he felt for his enemies. He understood that they were nothing more than copies, and the enemies were beings from myth that he was not acquainted with.

And yet, Edgar had found himself feeling irritated by the copies of Ganpaplio, Marduke, and Zerno. He had almost lost himself completely when he first saw the copy of Guduranis.

It was a sensation that Edgar had almost never felt in his entire life, a feeling that he had been insulted in some great way, and his entire consciousness had been completely filled with hatred.

Immediately after his symptoms appeared, Edgar had thought that they were the effects of the soul fragments that had been transplanted into him, the memories and emotions of Luke. But when he thought about it, Luke was a person who had lived tens of thousands of years after the defeat of the Demon King Guduranis.

As he had become a servant of the gods, it was understandable that he detested Guduranis, but... even so, the hatred was simply too vivid.

*What in the world has happened to me? But it's gradually improving over time. Is it because my soul was almost broken but I'm already fighting in battles just as I did before... no, in even fiercer battles than before?* he wondered.

He remembered being taught as a child that Jobs and Skills were engraved on one's soul. He had never been conscious of that fact, but his soul had almost been broken, and perhaps that was the reason he was suffering from these side effects.

But Edgar felt that the side effects were not as severe now as they had been at first.

“Niltark and the others haven’t said anything about them either, so I suppose that’s how it is. I don’t have the time to undergo a quiet rehabilitation, so I just have to put up with this until it gets better.” This was all because he had been weak and he had been defeated by Vandalieu, so he just needed to endure the symptoms until they subsided. That was what Edgar told himself. Vandalieu had dealt great damage to the forces defending Peria and Botin, and the potential heroes Ediria and Carlos had been guided by him, so it was true that Alda could not afford to give Edgar a long period of time to rest. However, the reality was that the side effects were not subsiding, but progressing. And Niltark and the other gods did not have an accurate understanding of the current state of Edgar’s soul; like Edgar, they were aware of his side effects but believed that they were fading. That was how much of a departure from common sense it had been for Rodcorte to transplant the fine fragments and powder of the soul of the Demon King Guduranis to Edgar. And the powdered soul of the Demon King Guduranis was far more cunning than Rodcorte believed.

Meanwhile, the former potential hero Carlos was drinking water at the counter of the bar. Having been convinced by Simon and Natania, he was finally listening to the words of his companions. He had quit drinking and started retraining his body, which had recently become dull. Today, he had entered ‘Garess’s Ancient Battleground,’ the B-class Dungeon that had appeared in the city of Morksi a few months ago, and returned after defeating the first mid-boss. With his divine protections lost, he could feel that it was more difficult to increase his Levels, but even so, he was making progress, slowly but surely. And he was satisfied with that. “Bartender, give me a new glass of water! And some toasted beans!” said Carlos, placing a new order. The bartender didn’t even look at Carlos. Perhaps nobody could blame him, since Carlos was sitting at a bar ordering water. Still, he was ordering snacks as well, so he thought that the bartender could be a little kinder, but he decided against complaining. The bartender would probably be friendlier if he ordered a pricier snack. Just as this idea occurred to Carlos and he decided that he’d order a cheese platter next – “You seem to be in good shape.” Before Carlos knew it, Vandalieu was sitting on the seat next to him. But for some reason, Carlos wasn’t startled or surprised by this. “Yeah, I can hardly believe it. My body feels light, I feel good, and I’ve got a good appetite,” said Carlos. “Isn’t that just because you’ve stopped drinking?” suggested Vandalieu. Carlos laughed. “Too right! But it’s thanks to you and your apprentices. I’m really grateful.” What would have happened if Simon and Natania hadn’t convinced Carlos to pull himself together? He shuddered to think about it. There was no telling how long he would have drowned himself in alcohol, how far he would have fallen. Why did this have to happen to him of all people? Such thoughts did linger in his mind, but nobody else was responsible for the fact that he had started trying to drink away his sorrows after losing his divine protections. After the loyalty of his companions was spent, and he quit being an adventurer, perhaps he would have even stooped as low as being a bodyguard for bandits. Considering that, Carlos owed a lot to Simon and Natania, as well as Vandalieu, the one who had brought them to him. “I’d like to buy you a drink, in fact, but... if I recall, you don’t drink, do you?” said Carlos. “No, Mom won’t allow me to until I become an adult,” said Vandalieu. “I see, what a shame! If it were still daytime, I’d be able to buy you a treat instead, but nothing’s open at this time of day.” He looked outside and saw that it was pitch-black. He had entered the bar and begun eating a light dinner after he got back from the Dungeon, and it seemed that some time had passed since then. That was odd, since it was currently summer and the sun was supposed to set later. “Then let me buy you a drink instead,” said Vandalieu. “Come on,” Carlos said with a laugh, thinking that Vandalieu was joking. “What are you... saying...” He looked down at his hands to see that a wine glass filled with a crimson liquid had appeared near them. The bartender was still looking the other way and hadn’t taken even a single step towards Carlos. “S-sorry. I’m trying to stay away from alcohol. A self-imposed ban, you know,” said Carlos, feeling that

something was amiss and trying to push the glass away from himself.

But the moment he gripped the glass, the crimson liquid inside began bubbling as if it were boiling.

“W-what in the world?!”

“It’s alright. It isn’t wine.”

“No, that’s not what I’m talking about...”

Carlos yelped in surprise as the crimson liquid began overflowing from the glass. Carlos then realized that the liquid was not bubbling; additional liquid was filling the glass from the bottom.

“H-hey, what’s going on?!” he shouted.

Right before Carlos’s very eyes, the bartender melted away. His skin and clothes fell apart like the skin of a rotten fruit, and a crimson liquid spilled forth from within.

He turned back around to see that Vandalieu was gone and the entire bar was filled with the crimson liquid.

He screamed and tried to escape from the bar, but the crimson liquid engulfed him. He desperately tried to swim back up to the surface, but his body was sinking.

Filled with fear, he looked down to see an enormous, black hole. Instinctively, he realized that this was the exit.

*That’s right. I wasn’t in the bar, and I’m not sinking... I was in the bottom of that hole from the very beginning.*

Watched by the crimson liquid... by Vandalieu, Carlos fell towards the liquid’s surface.

Carlos screamed as he opened his eyes, tumbling off his bed in an inn that was considered one of Morksi’s higher-class ones. Relieved that he had woken up from his dream, he stood up.

“What the hell was that dream?” he muttered to himself.

Was it a nightmare? He’d woken up screaming, so he did think it was a nightmare. But he didn’t think that it had been a bad dream.

He could remember every detail of the dream, but strangely, he didn’t feel any fear. In fact, he felt refreshed, as if he had just finished a good training session and let off some steam. And when he was engulfed in the liquid, the liquid that had entered his mouth had been very –

Suddenly, a scream came from the room next to Carlos’s. At first, Carlos thought that it was angry shouting at his own scream when he woke up. But judging from the fact that it was just a scream rather than shouted words, he realized that the owner of the voice had likely woken from a dream like he had.

“If I recall, the guy in the room to the right was... Rock, from the ‘Iron Boulder Brigade?’ The guy who said that he’d be advancing to B-class soon.”

Were dreams contagious? With this stupid thought crossing his mind, Carlos left his room to go and wash his face, forgetting about the faint, sweet taste lingering in his mouth.

He didn’t realize that ‘■■■■■’s Divine Protection’ had appeared on his Status until after he had eaten breakfast.

《The Level of the ‘Cooking’ Skill has increased!》

“This morning, for some reason, I had a dream where I made Carlos, Rock and some others drink ‘a lot,’” said Vandalieu.

A week had passed since the battle against the forces defending Peria. Vandalieu was in the pseudo-Divine Realm of Zantark, the War-God of Fire and Destruction, in the center of the Demon Continent... an outdoors space with pools of magma here and there, and he was making lunch for everyone next to an enormous white sphere.

While waiting for Vandalieu to finish cooking, everyone was commenting on the individuals Vandalieu had mentioned.

“I see. This Carlos and Rock, they are promising young individuals, I presume?” said Tiamat.

“So, you are close enough friends that they offer to buy you a drink. But they are names that I have not heard here or in Talosheim,” said Deena the Moon Giant, younger sister of Talos.

“I’ve never heard of them before; I suppose they’re human names?” said Fidirg.

“Carlos, Rock... I've heard those names before. They're in Alcrem – no, was it the city of Morksi?” said the heroic god Farmaun Gold, who served as a substitute for the great god of the fire attribute and was worshiped as the founder of the Adventurers' Guild.

Incidentally, Vandalieu was making a cream pasta using the Sea Urchin Beast-King Dolstero, with mushrooms grown in Gartland.

Disassembling Dolstero's body had yielded both male and female gametes. Some varieties of sea urchins had separate sexes while others were hermaphroditic; it seemed that Dolstero was one of the latter.

Gufadgarn, who had been convinced that Dolstero was female, had been surprised by this discovery, but as she had said, both the male and female gametes were packed full of nutrition regardless of the time of year and had an extremely delicious, savory flavor.

They had been so delicious that Luciliano had insisted that Dolstero be preserved and turned into a Live-Dead... though it was possible that he had suggested this in order to fill his schedule and avoid being made to participate in the next diversionary battle.

Meanwhile, Tarea, who had become a Ghoul Artisan Princess after her Rank increased, had sorrowfully and feverishly begged, “Please take me to the next one as well!” But Vandalieu had the feeling that she would do something reckless if he brought her to the next battle, so he intended to keep an eye on her for a while.

And according to Vandalieu, Dolstero's soul had been very delicious, having a deep flavor with a smooth, cream-like texture.

The sauce of the pasta he was making now was a recreation of the flavor of Dolstero's soul, and he was aiming to make it reach new heights by combining it with the mushrooms that were commonly used in Gartland's cuisine, as well as bacon made from Elder Dragon and Colossus meat. He called the dish ‘soul sea urchin cream pasta.’

While preparing the sauce and boiling the pasta, Vandalieu replied to the questions of Tiamat and the others.

“They're adventurers who are currently staying in the city of Morksi, in the Alcrem Duchy. As for their potential... Carlos does have potential. I'm not very sure about Rock,” Vandalieu said.

“You do not know? You said that you made them drink a lot; did you not mean that you gave them your divine protection?” asked Tiamat, sounding confused.

“I don't know,” Vandalieu replied, without so much as blinking. “It's not like I grant my divine protection based on their potential... their talent, or lack thereof. And to begin with, giving my divine protection isn't something I actively, consciously do.”

While he would struggle with comparing a warrior and a mage of similar strength, Vandalieu's ability to tell how strong someone was wasn't completely hopeless.

However, he had no idea as to whether they had talent or not. Thus, he did not take into account someone's talent or lack of talent when helping them and granting them his divine protection.

He had accepted Simon and Natania as disciples, and he had adopted Fang, Mähne, and Hof, but that wasn't because he had seen talent in them.

But he had simply assumed that if Carlos had been granted the divine protection of Rubicante, the God of Heat Hazes, then it was likely that he had talent and promising qualities.

“Hmm? Then for what reason do you grant divine protections? You have the ability to give out as many divine protections as you want, but it is not as if you are handing them out indiscriminately, is it?” asked Deeana. “You said that granting them is not a conscious act, but if you were to feel that it is a problem, I am sure you would use some method to try and prevent them from being given.”

Indeed, Vandalieu was not simply handing out divine protections indiscriminately. He would not grant it to someone he was simply acquainted with if he considered them to be his enemy.

So surely, there was some criteria for receiving his divine protection, but...

“I probably look at their character... I think it's a matter of whether I want to support them or not,” said Vandalieu.

His perception was different in dreams compared to when he was awake, so he couldn't say for sure.

“Hmm... Well, perhaps things are fine the way they are. The fact that you are a Guider means that all who are guided by you essentially have something like a divine protection anyway,” said Deeana.

“Ah, I remember now. Those guys, huh. Rock and his friends are good guys. His qualities are just a little above average, but he's good-natured. I'm sure he'll be able to nurture his juniors well. As for Carlos...

Given my position, I can't say too much about him,” said Farmaun.

It seemed that he had remembered Rock of the ‘Iron Boulder Brigade’ and the former potential hero

Carlos.

Even though every Adventurers' Guild branch had a small statue of him, he didn't know of every single adventurer.

"You can't say anything?" asked Fidirg.

"No, I can't. In human society, I'm known as a god who belongs to Alda's forces. People believe that Rubicante is a subordinate god of mine. Well, I came to Vida's faction as a substitute for a great god, so that is technically true," Farmaun said.

In other words, Farmaun felt ashamed when it came to Carlos as his predicament was a result of the fact that he was unable to control his subordinate.

Though it went without saying, it would be a poor choice to grant Carlos his divine protection to replace Rubicante's. Since he was known as a god of Alda's forces in human society, Carlos would remain a follower of Alda's teachings.

Even if he wanted to tell Carlos his intent through a Divine Message, there was no guarantee that Carlos would interpret it accurately. After all, Rubicante had apparently failed to instruct Carlos to stay away from Vandalieu.

"Come to think of it, are you unable to tell the potential heroes apart from other adventurers, Farmaun?" asked Vandalieu.

"... That would be difficult, though I might be able to tell if they pray to me saying that they received a divine protection from another god, or if I looked at them directly," said Farmaun.

By 'look at them directly,' Farmaun didn't mean meeting them personally in his Divine Realm, but looking down at the world from his Divine Realm. This could be done without being noticed by people who were supposedly potential heroes.

However, returning to the Bahn Gaia continent would mean his existence being noticed by Alda's forces. In the worst-case scenario, a battle between Farmaun and the gods of Alda's forces would break out in his Divine Realm; the potential heroes would be the least of his worries.

"I see. It's not possible, then," said Vandalieu as he heaped boiled pasta onto plates and covered it in sauce. "Food's ready."

"Oh, this looks delicious!" said Tiamat, who had shrunk herself to the size of a human.

"Yes, let us be thankful for this food... and eat!" said Deeana, who had done the same.

"... It's probably a little too late to mention this, but isn't this cannibalism for you guys?" Farmaun pointed out.

"And? So what?" said Fidirg, who was using the Staff of Five Sins as his vessel.

None of the others paid Farmaun any attention.

"Itadakimasu!" the four gods said simultaneously.

And with that, the gods became engrossed in eating the food before them.

"... So, you guys can shrink yourselves," said Vandalieu after waiting for the pace of their eating to slow down a little.

"Yes. To be more precise, it is not that we have shrunk ourselves; we have separated a part of our consciousness away from our main bodies and materialized it," said Tiamat.

"It is of no use in a battle, and a Colossus like me would be indistinguishable from a human when I do it, so I do not do it often," said Deeana.

Various accommodations were possible for gods in Divine Realms, including demigods, and Vandalieu was proud that they had taken such measures for the purpose of eating his Dolstero pasta.

While starting to boil the next batch of pasta, Vandalieu looked up at the enormous white sphere... the egg that had been produced between him and Tiamat.

"By the way, I've started to think of a name for my first child... It *is* just one child that's growing inside this egg, right?" Vandalieu asked.

There were legends that told of Tiamat laying an egg with a diameter of about ten meters, birthing a hundred children at once, but –

"That is right," Tiamat replied. "Someone like me is able to choose, depending on the time and situation. In the past, we needed numbers, so I birthed many at a time, but things are different now. I cannot afford to birth a hundred children now and become swamped with the task of raising them, after all."

Tiamat had created the Drakonid race with Vida, and she had created the Maryujin race with the Majin and the Kiryujin race with the Kijin. But before that, she had given birth to many children with demigods such as Elder Dragons and Colossi. When doing so, she had often given birth to twins and triplets, but never hatches of more than nine.

"I see. Maybe the nature of the birth depends on whether you give birth to the child as a god or a mortal... In any case, I'm relieved, since I've only thought of one name," said Vandalieu. "Ah, it moved."



“It seems that the child between you and Tiamat is growing healthily,” said Deeana. “It will be some time until it hatches, but I am sure it will be a powerful Elder Dragon.”  
The egg’s contents, surrounded by a soft shell and warmed by the geothermal heat of this place, wriggled in anticipation as the child waited to be born into the world.

**Name:** Tarea

**Rank:** 9

**Race:** Ghoul Artisan Princess

**Level:** 13

**Job:** Artisan Idol

**Job Level:** 80

**Job history:** Apprentice Arms Smith, Arms Smith → Slave (Forced job change at level 47), Apprentice Prostitute, Prostitute, Arms Smith (Level 48), Arms Smith: Famous Artisan, Magical Craftsman, Alchemical Craftsman, Magic Tempering Craftsman, Transforming Craftsman, Dark Refining Craftsman, Singing Ogre Princess

**Age:** 274 years old (18 years old physically and in appearance)

**Title:** Crafting Princess

**Passive skills:**

Dark Vision

Pain Resistance: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)

Superhuman Strength: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)

Paralyzing Venom Secretion (Claws): Level 1

Allure: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)

Enhanced Attribute Values: Guidance: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)

Self-Enhancement: Transformation: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)

Mana Enlargement: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)

**Active skills:**

Estimation: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)

Dark Artisan: Armor: Level 1 (Awakened from Armor Smithing!)

Dark Artisan: Weapons: Level 1 (Awakened from Weapon Smithing!)

Bedroom Skill: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)

Dancing: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)

Love-making: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)

Archery: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)

No-Attribute Magic: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)

Mana Control: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)

Alchemy: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)

Surpass Limits: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)

Singing: Level 3 (NEW!)

Familiar Spirit Demonfall: Level 2 (NEW!)

Coordination: Level 1 (NEW!)

**Unique skills:**

Zozogante’s Divine Protection

Vandalieu’s Divine Protection

Zelzeria’s Divine Protection (NEW!)

Monster explanation (written by Luciliano): Ghoul Artisan Princess

Tarea has gone from Ghoul Elder Artisan, Ghoul High Elder Artisan, Ghoul Unlimited Artisan, and for some reason, finally to Ghoul Artisan Princess with her latest Rank increase. I myself would like to question whether it is suitable for ‘Princess’ to come after ‘Unlimited.’

Perhaps the reason for this is that she acquired a Job called ‘Singing Ogre Princess,’ a Job that can be acquired by Ghouls and Kijin women who possess the ‘Singing’ Skill.

Personally, I would like to support her in her fervorous pursuit of increasing her Rank even further... though I hope from the bottom of my heart that her wish remains unfulfilled. After all, if it does, then

Master's attention will turn towards me instead, and I will be dragged onto the battlefield instead. Tarea has acquired Zelzeria's divine protection; this is likely because she was once a prostitute. That goddess is apparently often worshipped by prostitutes.

**Name:** Mähne and Hof

**Rank:** 7

**Race:** Dark Night Horse

**Level:** 1

**Passive skills:**

Superhuman Strength: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)

Dark Vision

Mental Resistance: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)

Disease and Poison Resistance: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)

Strengthened Body Part (Hooves): Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)

Self-Strengthening: Guidance: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)

Shadow Assimilation

Air-running: Level 3 (NEW!)

**Active skills:**

High-speed Travel: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)

Transcend Limits: Level 1 (Awakened from Surpass Limits!)

Charge: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)

Aura of Darkness: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)

Familiar Spirit Demonfall: Level 2 (NEW!)

**Unique skills:**

Vandalieu's Divine Protection

Side Chapter 45 - A peaceful moment before a certain storm

Meanwhile, in Origin, several days after Vandalieu's twelfth birthday in Lambda...

The people of this world conducted Mana measurements on children after they turned three years old, though the timing of these measurements differed slightly from country to country. Public medical institutions carried out tests to determine children's affinities for each attribute – which were characteristics that people were born with – and it was required by law to report the results of these tests. That was true even for the children of high-ranking government officials, celebrities, gang and mafia members, and it was true for the children born to parents who belonged to the Bravers.

A week had passed since Amemiya Mei's third birthday, and her family took her to get the tests done. To the people of this world, the test at three years of age was equivalent to Shichi-Go-San celebrations. The test itself was simple and it didn't take long for its result to be known. Many families enjoyed a meal at the restaurant or held a party at home after the test, making it a bigger celebration than the child's third birthday.

Having taken leave from work for this day, the Amemiyas intended to do this as well.

The hospital staff had taken a sample from Amemiya Mei... a sample of cells taken from the inside of the mouth. But inserting this sample inside the machine that extracted Mana rather than DNA had not yielded a result.

"... This is strange. Why isn't the test result appearing?"

"A problem with the machine?"

"That's not possible. The machine is functioning normally."

Machines that measured one's affinity for each attribute were commonplace in modern times. These affinities generally never changed over the course of one's life, so these machines were only ever used once for each person, but even clinics in countryside regions and remote islands were required by law to have them.

Operating them was even simpler than an X-ray machine; no special qualifications were required. Anyone could operate them after taking a several-hour course on the handling of personal information. Maintenance on the machine had been carried out according to regulations, and it was functioning normally today. And yet, Amemiya Mei's sample – and only hers – had produced no result other than 'Error.'

"Maybe the sample was contaminated. Can you get them to provide another?"

"Very well..."

The staff had come to the conclusion that they had contaminated the sample by mistake... Perhaps part

of another person's sample had been mixed into Mei's, causing the machine to not produce a correct result.

In other words, they believed that it was the result of human error on their part. Naturally, they weren't convinced by this explanation. But given that the machine was functioning as normal, that was the only possibility.

People in this world possessed an affinity for at least one of the seven attributes – earth, water, fire, wind, life, light, and space. These affinities were possible to measure once the Mana in a child's body stabilized, at around the age of three.

This was common knowledge. An eighth attribute had once been discovered, but to the people of this world, that was like a single albino crow among the world's entire population of crows, and it was not something that was actually taken into consideration.

One of the staff immediately went to where the Amemiyas were waiting, and after explaining the situation, they came back with another sample from Mei.

With an unusual amount of care and attention to detail, they put that sample in the machine and began the test. But the result was the same 'Error' as before.

"What... could this mean? Should we ask for another sample?" said one of the lower-ranking male staff.

"No, the result will probably be the same no matter how many samples we take. It's likely that the problem is not with our procedure or the machine, but with Amemiya Mei-chan herself," said the more senior staff member.

"P-problem?!" the male staff member said in astonishment.

The Amemiyas... They were world-famous people and known for being heroes, and the senior staff member was suggesting that there was something happening in the body of their daughter.

But this conclusion was not such a serious one.

"The Mana in her body is likely still unstable. There are individual differences in development, after all. Though it is extremely rare, cases of Mana not stabilizing by the age of three have been reported to the medical association," the senior staff member said.

"I see. That's a relief... Then what are we going to do about the test result?" asked the male staff member.

"Let's have them come back for another test in half a year."

It was very important to determine one's affinities for the attributes. The type of magic one would learn and the kind of profession they would go into in the future depended on them, after all.

If one wanted to be a firefighter, it would be easier to learn to cast water-attribute magic to be able to produce a generous volume of water than achieve the extremely high level of technique and control in fire-attribute magic required to start and extinguish fires at will.

However, the children being tested were at a stage before they even received elementary education; there was no battle against time here. None other than the most education-obsessed parents would care much about learning their child's affinities for the attributes half a year later than other children.

"Alright," said the male staff member, moving towards the door to go and explain the situation to the Amemiyas. "Then let's... go...?"

But suddenly, he stopped in his tracks in an unnatural manner. The other staff members in the room also stopped moving entirely, as if time had been frozen.

"What's the matter?" the senior staff member asked in confusion, but the other staff members didn't even look at him. "Hey, stop messing... around...?"

And then he saw it. The thing that the other staff were staring at.

In the corner of the room, a blind spot of the security camera, there was something resembling a person.

"Hello," it said.

It looked like a man with white hair and a white face, wearing a fur coat. But its voice, despite having a flat tone, was of high pitch, so perhaps it was a woman.

However, the staff quickly stopped thinking about its gender as they noticed that its face had four eerily-glowing eyes.

The staff attempted to scream in fear and escape to call security. But their bodies... they were completely frozen, and they couldn't even move their eyes.

"It doesn't seem to be very effective at this distance. I need to open my eye wider," said the creature...

Banda, as he opened his mouth wide to the point that it was larger than a human head.

He revealed the inside of his mouth, which was lined with sharp teeth, and an enormous eyeball protruded from within.

The eyeball emitted an ominous glow that swept the men's consciousness from their bodies. However, their bodies did not collapse to the floor; they remained as they were.

“You people will now do exactly as I say. Switch Amemiya Mei’s sample with that of a child that has an affinity for only the light attribute, and run the test again. After that, dispose of both the real sample and the replacement using your standard procedures. Your normal standard procedures, that is,” Banda instructed them. “Once you have done that, forget these instructions and forget that I even exist. Do you understand?”

Seeing the staff nod in response, Banda gave a satisfied nod and closed his mouth, then undid his ‘Embodiment’ Skill to go to the security room next.

Banda had expected that an ordinary test machine would not be able to produce a result for Mei during the test that would take place when she was three years old. Ordinary machines couldn’t detect death-attribute Mana, after all.

*So, Meh-kun did have an affinity for the death attribute after all, he thought.*

This was the only possible conclusion, given the fact that this ordinary test machine had failed to give a result for two consecutive tests.

What would Banda do in the event that Mei did possess an affinity for the death attribute? He had preemptively consulted the ‘Druid’ Joseph Smith, who had become his ally, as well as several others that he had guided through dreams, to come to a decision.

He would brainwash the hospital staff to fabricate a result stating that Mei had an affinity for only the light attribute. With the light attribute, elementary-level education only involved producing a light at the fingertips and controlling the strength and color of that light. During these exercises, Banda would be able to fool those around Mei using his luminescent organs.

Yes, fooling them during that time was the best he could do.

In the future, it would become impossible to hide Amemiya Mei’s affinity for the death attribute. Or at least, if she wanted to live in this world’s society, it would be impossible to avoid this secret becoming known. Magic was an everyday part of life in this world, after all.

The only thing that Banda could do was buy a little more time before her secret was discovered.

*Well, I’m not even so sure that I’ve managed to buy much time with this.*

He was on his way to brainwash the security staff to make them alter or delete security camera footage, but despite doing all of this, the amount of time he had bought was very small... Banda suspected that it wouldn’t even be more than a few days, let alone years.

A mysterious being that was not a ghost had previously entered the Amemiya residence, and Banda had disposed of it. If this was the doing of an underling of the ‘Avalon’ Rikudou Hijiri, the traitor among the Bravers, then Mei was already being targeted.

With that being the case, it was only a matter of time.

*I’ll need to make bolder moves moving forward.*

Fortunately, he had recently resynched with his main body, Vandalieu, and updated his abilities... He was surprised that he had become a father, but that was the least of his worries right now.

*When the time comes... If it turns out that Meh-kun can’t find happiness in this world, I’ll summon my main body and have him materialize... But what should be done about the Amemiyas? I think it wouldn’t be so bad to make my main body suffer like I’m doing now.*

Banda had already come to a decision on what to do about Hiroshi, Mei’s older brother, as well as Joseph on the others. The only problem was Mei and Hiroshi’s parents.

With the test at the hospital over, the Amemiyas returned to their home, believing the result that their daughter possessed an affinity for the light attribute, and hosted a party as they had planned.

“Thank you, everyone, for coming here to celebrate my daughter today. Forget about work for a day and enjoy yourselves. Cheers!” said Amemiya Hiroto, raising his glass.

The Bravers in attendance and the friends that the Amemiyas had made in this world raised their own glasses with a “Cheers!” in response.

The ‘Hermes’ Baker and the ‘Titan’ Iwao were exchanging small talk with glasses of champagne in their hands.

“Amemiya and Narumi are a great couple, huh. I gotta do my best to keep up,” said Baker.

“Baker, you said the same thing when Hiroshi turned three,” Iwao pointed out.

“Ugh! I-it can’t be helped, alright? The person I was dating at the time broke up with me!”

Their conversation then turned to those who had died and were not here.

“Back then, that Asagi was trying to show off some crappy magic trick and messed it up, just as everyone expected, huh,”

“Yeah. That guy had that kind of side to him... Akagi, Tendou, Mao, Endou. Those guys were all laughing back then, too. I wonder what they’re doing now? Is there a heaven, or have they been reborn somewhere?” Iwao wondered out loud, staring off into space.

“I’m not sure about Mao, but the others have been reincarnated and are doing well. According to the information network of Duke Alcrem’s house, anyway,” Banda replied, fully aware that Iwao couldn’t hear him.

According to Duke Alcrem’s information network, Asagi and his companions were apparently working as adventurers employed by the Birgitt Duchy while conducting a research project on seals for Demon King fragments.

Banda’s main body, Vandalieu, was impressed with the way they had established themselves in Lambda’s society far more quickly than he had, likely due to the fortunes and destinies they had received from Rodcorte.

As for their research, Vandalieu was unable to deal with Demon King fragments that went out of control in distant locations, so he was hoping that they would produce some results... though he had no intention whatsoever of reaching out to them and assisting them.

Asagi and his companions were surely being provided with information regarding Vandalieu by Rodcorte and the Birgitt house, but the fact that they hadn’t come to interfere with anything he was doing was likely a sign that they, like him, had no intention of making contact.

As for the ‘Noah’ Mao Smith, even the Alcrem house’s information network didn’t reach beyond the borders of the Bahn Gaia continent, so he’d only heard rumors from merchants. According to these rumors, her trading was going well.

Either way, the information gathering that the Alcrem house had conducted as part of its intelligence activities had been done with the instruction of gaining any information on new adventurers who had signed exclusive contracts with the Birgitt house, and a strange female Dwarf who had left the Bahn Gaia continent, rather than an instruction to investigate reincarnated individuals. Thus, it was possible that another investigation would turn up new information.

“That’s enough with the gloomy talk. Those guys would hate for us to be talking about them when we’re supposed to be celebrating,” said Iwao.

“You’re right... Then let’s make this the last of that. Cheers,” said Baker.

And with that, they clinked their glasses together and focused on celebrating Mei’s affinity for the light attribute.

Incidentally, Kanako, Melissa, and Doug weren’t mentioned by the Bravers. The Bravers considered them to be traitors like Murakami, and this was actually true, so they couldn’t be blamed for that.

*I understand that, but it’s still unpleasant,* Banda thought.

“Banda?” said Mei, who was sensitive and sensed that Banda wasn’t in a happy mood.

“It’s nothing, Meh-kun,” said Banda, clearing these thoughts from his mind.

“Hmm? What is it, Mei?” asked one of the Bravers, the ‘Echo’ Ulrika Scaccio. “What is Banda...?”

“Oh, don’t mind her. It’s a friend that only Mei can see,” said Narumi.

“A friend that only Mei can see... Is she okay?” said Ulrika, sounding concerned.

It was not Narumi, but Iwao, who answered.

“It’s fine,” he said. “It’s what’s known as an imaginary friend, you know. Friends that only you can see, when you’re a small child.”

“Is she really alright? It isn’t some form of trauma from the incident, is it?” said Ulrika, worried that this phenomenon might be an effect of the incident in which Mei and Hiroshi were kidnapped along with their babysitter and bodyguard.

She herself was suffering mentally due to her harsh missions, and was reliant on the regular use of medicine to stay mentally stable, so she couldn’t just ignore this.

“Ulrika, like Iwao-kun says, it’s fine,” Narumi assured her. “Mei’s been talking about her friend Banda since before the incident happened.”

She possessed the ‘Angel’ ability that allowed her to share a consciousness and sensations with others, but she had not used it on Mei to attempt to see Banda – because she was convinced that it was just an imaginary friend that her young daughter would have only temporarily.

She believed that exposing that Banda was just an imaginary friend would be similar to telling her that Santa Claus didn’t exist, so after discussing it with her husband, she had decided to simply keep an eye on her daughter. It would probably be discussed again if Mei could still see Banda after reaching elementary school age, however.

“Banda,” said Mei, reaching out towards Banda.

“Come on, you promised not to pay too much attention to Banda today, didn’t you?” said her older brother

Hiroshi, scooping her up into his arms.

Banda had asked him to take care of Mei during the party as he would not be able to use 'Materialize' with the guests around.

"Thanks, Hiroshi. Though you probably can't hear me right now," said Banda.

"Nii-cha, he says thanks," Mei told her brother. "What about wriggle-wriggle?"

"You're welcome. And no wriggle-wriggle," said Hiroshi.

"No wriggle-wriggle?"

"Definitely not."

"I suppose transferring myself into Hiroshi isn't possible. I don't have a physical body, after all. Ah, but it might be possible with his shadow," Banda said to himself.

Banda was a split entity of Vandalieu, created by putting fragments of his soul together. Thus, he did not have a physical body. However, perhaps it was possible to transfer a part of himself with someone's shadow, something that also didn't have a physical form.

"I'll try it out next time," Banda decided.

If successful, it would increase Hiroshi's power. His acquisition of no-attribute magic was proceeding smoothly, but this alone was unlikely to be of much use against Rikudou Hijiri. It was worth attempting.

"You know, Banda says he's gonna try it out," said Mei.

"Try *what* out?! Stop it, don't do anything weird to me!" said Hiroshi, who was still holding Mei, as he anxiously spun around in circles to try and see Banda.

The adults around the children laughed.

Just as this scene was filling the room with a lighthearted atmosphere –

"Hey, sorry I'm late."

The 'Avalon' Rikudou Hijiri arrived. Behind him was the 'Shaman' Moriya Kousuke.

"You sure took your time. I thought you'd decided not to come," Amemiya said jokingly.

"Sorry about that. Some leader somewhere decided to spend some time with his family, and that's made things harder for the rest of us, you see," Rikudou said with a smile.

"Such harsh words. But I'm sure you can manage, right, leader in the shadows?"

Amemiya and Rikudou shook hands, and a lot of the people nearby, including Narumi, Iwao, and Baker, welcomed Rikudou as well.

There were some exceptions – the people who had been guided by Vandalieu through dreams, including the 'Druid' Joseph Smith, who was being careful not to show the nervousness he was feeling inside.

Seeming not to take notice of this, Rikudou Hijiri began talking to Joseph.

"I haven't seen you for a while, Joseph. I heard that counseling has been going well for you," he said.

"Yeah. It'd still be difficult for me to go back out on the field, but I think I'll be of use researching plants and supporting the agriculture industry," said Joseph, startled but managing to produce a friendly reply.

"That's good to hear. The truth is, there are a number of Bravers who had some mental problems, including you, and all of you started recovering around the same point in time. Do you have any idea why?"

"That's... Sorry, but nothing comes to mind."

In reality, it was because he had been guided by Vandalieu, but he couldn't say that.

"It's just a coincidence, isn't it?" Joseph said, trying to play it off.

"I suppose so... All of you were in treatment for a while, and the psychiatrists assigned to you weren't collaborating in any way. I suppose it should be thought of as a coincidence," said Rikudou. "Either way, I'm happy for you."

"Y-yeah. Thanks," said Joseph, who was feeling bewildered.

He didn't mean to doubt Banda, but was Rikudou really conducting illegal death attribute research?

Rikudou was behaving so naturally, as a friend, and certainly didn't seem like he was plotting anything.

That sentiment was shared by the other Bravers whom Banda had made his allies. And Joseph wasn't the only one desperately trying to stay calm.

It was the 'Shaman' Moriya Kousuke.

*There's no mistake about it... There's something here! In this room... right next to me!*

He was capable of creating an artificial spirit using his own Mana, and he could instinctively sense Banda's presence.

*What a tremendous quantity of Mana. As much as the 'Undead,' or even more. And it is clearly on its guard against me... no, against Rikudou-san. Once we achieve what we came here for, we should leave as soon as possible.*

As Rikudou's underling, Moriya had conducted many intelligence-gathering missions and assassinations. It was this experience that allowed him to sense the invisible threat that was Banda... though there was

almost nothing that Moriya could do in this situation despite being able to sense this threat. Seeming not to take notice of Moriya's behavior, Rikudou finished up some more small talk with his colleagues and then approached Mei and Hiroshi.

"Hey, Hiroshi-kun," said Rikudou. "Would you let me hold the adorable star of today's party?"  
"Uh, y-yeah."

Banda had told Hiroshi that if Rikudou Hijiri were to speak to him, he should do what he was told. And so, Hiroshi handed Mei, who had suddenly fallen very quiet, over to Rikudou.

"Hello, Mei-chan. You've grown big, haven't you?"

Mei looked up at Rikudou with a curious expression as he held her. Behind him was Banda, who was ready to take action if he tried anything, even if that meant being seen by the other Bravers.

Banda had his mouth wide open, ready to bite Rikudou's head off at a moment's notice. His four arms, which were capable of tearing through iron plates like they were made of clay, were wrapped around Rikudou's body in a near-embrace. It seemed that Mei found this very curious.

On top of that, a part of Banda was already hiding in Rikudou's shadow. He was capable of either instantly killing Rikudou or immobilizing him if he showed any strange behavior, activated some device, or cast a spell.

And the soul of Vandaliou was ready to immediately tear open a hole in space and enter this world if needed.

... *This isn't Rikudou.*

But being this close, Banda realized that the person before him was not Rikudou. He... or rather, she, was the 'Metamorph' Shihouin Mari, who had transformed herself into Rikudou Hijiri.

"What's the matter?" 'Rikudou' said. "Or maybe this is to be expected. It's the first time I'm meeting you like this... I'm?"

"You okay?" asked Mei. "Have you figured it out? Who you are?"

"I-I wonder what you're talking about. It's me, Uncle Rikudou. I'm friends with your mom and dad... Huh?"

Rikudou had been wearing a calm, easygoing expression, but now, his face was completely drained of blood and it was covered in beads of cold sweat. His smile was now strained and forced.

"I-I am Rikudou Hijiri. Rikudou, Hijiri? Y-yes, Hijiri. This place is, I am... I am? Dad... Mom?"

'Rikudou Hijiri' began convulsing in an unnatural manner and looked like he would start foaming at the mouth and collapse at any minute.

"Rikudou-kun!" shouted an alarmed Narumi, hastily taking Mei from his arms.

"Rikudou-san!" exclaimed Moriya as he grabbed hold of 'Rikudou' to stop her from falling. "I'm sorry! Rikudou-san seems to be feeling a little unwell, so we'll excuse ourselves! Enjoy the party, everyone!"

"H-hey, is Rikudou alright? Shouldn't we cast some healing magic...?" said Amemiya, looking concerned.

"Don't worry, we have medication for him. But it takes a while to take effect, so we'll be leaving," said Moriya, firmly refusing his offers of help, as he was aware that the person that he was holding was not Rikudou Hijiri.

He was acting desperately to control the situation; if the disguise of 'Metamorph' became undone here, revealing the supposedly dead Shihouin Mari, there would be no way to play this situation off.

Many were bewildered by this series of events and watched with concern as 'Rikudou Hijiri' was taken away.

The real Rikudou Hijiri, having seen what had taken place at the Amemiya residence in real-time, smiled in satisfaction. He was now certain that his great ambition would be fulfilled.

"As I thought, Amemiya Mei has an affinity for the death-attribute and death-attribute Mana."

According to her test result, she had an affinity for the light attribute, but Rikudou hadn't believed that for a second. After all, the shadow of the Eighth Guidance lurked around her... though it was actually Banda.

Rikudou believed that if something strange had happened at the test... if the test was redone, or if the hospital staff he had bribed refused to listen to his orders, or if the security camera footage was mysteriously deleted, then the conclusion was that Mei had an affinity for the death attribute, regardless of the result that came out on paper.

"I must acquire her and research her at any cost."

This was the second person to be born in this world with an affinity for the death attribute, the first being the 'Undead.' Researching her was certain to help unravel the death attribute's mysteries.

Her parents, Amemiya Hiroto and Narumi, as well as the Bravers who often had contact with them such

as Joseph, would cause problems in acquiring her. The yet-unidentified 'remnants of the Eight guidance' were also more than problematic, but... it had to be done, even if Rikudou had to make some sacrifices and reveal his true identity.

With these thoughts in mind, Rikudou began counting the cards he had up his sleeve and the methods he could use.

"It's unfortunate that 'Metamorph' has fallen out of good condition at a time like this, but whatever. I'll have her help me with some human experiments before she breaks. Experiments to artificially acquire an affinity for the death attribute, that is."

Why did the 'Undead' – Amamiya Hiroto, and Amemiya Mei, possess an affinity for the death attribute? Why did Pluto and the other members of the Eighth Guidance only have an imperfect affinity for it? None of them had an affinity for any other attribute; they had that in common. So what had set them apart?

It was the experience of death.

"Though it goes without saying, us reincarnated individuals, including the 'Undead,' experienced death on Earth. But Pluto and the others, although what they experienced was close to death, they did not actually die. Isis, who entered a state of brain death. Valkyrie, who entered cardiac arrest. Berserk, who lost most of his body. Shade, who lost all of his... None of them died completely. But it's likely that Amemiya Mei died completely once. When she was a fetus."

It had happened when Mei was so small that her mother, Amemiya Narumi, hadn't even been aware that she was pregnant with her. She had been killed by Pluto. When Pluto poured 'death' into Mei's mother Narumi, it would have taken some time for Narumi to die. But Mei had been smaller than a fingernail, and she had not been able to withstand it.

But Pluto had reabsorbed the 'death' immediately afterwards, and Mei had been revived along with her mother. This had been possible because Mei had been a fetus, in a state where she depended on her mother to exist.

Rikudou had been there, and he was certain that this was what had taken place.

"To acquire the qualities for the death attribute, one must experience a complete death. I see. That explains why no research institutions have managed to produce any death-attribute users thus far."

Plenty of research institutions had likely conducted experiments where they stopped the hearts of experimental subjects through various methods and then revived them. But none had caused brain death as well as cardiac arrest in the subjects before reviving them. Or even if they had, it was unlikely that they had attempted to test whether the subjects were capable of using death-attribute magic afterwards.

After all, dying a complete death was a requirement, and Rikudou Hijiri had only become aware of this because he knew that the 'Undead' was a reincarnated individual, and because he himself had also experienced death once.

"All there is to do now is to figure out how to revive the brain after brain death. If we erase the subjects' affinities for other attributes before killing them, implant devices like the ones used on the 'Undead' so that we can control their Mana... Hmph. To think that I would end up creating Frankenstein's monster in another world."

Rikudou's research up until this point had been like fumbling blindly in the dark. Believing that he could now see a path to success, he struggled to suppress a laugh... and failed, bursting into loud, triumphant laughter.

"I would certainly like 'Metamorph' to produce some results. After all, if she succeeds, I will not have to kidnap my friend's daughter!"

But unbeknownst to Rikudou, Pluto and the others, despite having died completely in Origin, were still only able to use death-attribute magic in limited ways after being reincarnated in yet another world as Legion.

#### Chapter 292 - The back-shield with phantom thorns

Vandalieu poured Mana into one of the numerous chunks of Orichalcum that he had acquired during the battle against the forces that defended Peria, the Goddess of Water and Knowledge.

Previously, he had barely been able to change the shape of Orichalcum at all, but he was now able to freely manipulate its shape and turn it into whatever he liked.

"It's not as simple as iron or copper, huh," he murmured.

It seemed that it was impossible to transform Orichalcum into a new metal in the way that he had created Death Iron and Dark Copper. But that wasn't much of a surprise, as this had also been impossible for Mythril and Adamantite, which were far easier to work with than Orichalcum.

"Considering that it is still impossible at this stage... it likely has nothing to do with your skill or the quantity of your Mana, Master," said Luciliano as he wrote down the results of this experiment.

"Which means?" said Vandalieu, indicating for Luciliano to elaborate.



"I have explained this before, but Orichalcum, Mythril, and Adamantite are metals that are considered to be magical metals. In their raw material state, before any processing, they already contain Mana. In other words, they have already undergone transformation, and I believe that it is impossible to transform them any further."

"I see," said Vandalieu, accepting Luciliano's theory. "In that case, let's use existing metals for their transformation equipment. Death Iron, Dark Copper, Soul Silver, and Life Gold... and let's make one for him, too. It seems that he's supported by the god of Origin, but even so, it would be problematic if he were to lose."

And with that, he set the Orichalcum aside to begin processing the solid, liquid, and spirit form metals that he had prepared. He had previously needed Legion's help to see Soul Silver, but he could now see it himself using the Demon King's Demon Eyes.

"... In other nations, you would be able to buy a fully furnished mansion with hired servants with the small amounts of metal you are currently playing around with. What is the matter with our nation's demand for metal?" said Luciliano with a wry smile.

The demand for metal in the Demon Empire of Vidal was very different from that of other nations. The price of Mythril and Adamantite was higher than iron, about the same as that of Obsidian. And despite the fact that Obsidian was supposed to be the cheapest of human-made magical metals, no Obsidian was produced at all.

The reason for that was, Vandalieu was able to create Death Iron and Dark Copper from ordinary iron and copper, and these were functionally superior to Obsidian, so the nation's blacksmiths didn't have the time nor a reason to create Obsidian.

And there were also weapons made of Demon King fragments being produced, which could not be matched by anything other than Orichalcum.

Finally, there was also the fact that the citizens of the Demon Empire of Vidal were the kind of populace to erect an enormous idol of their emperor as a sign of gratitude and worship, ignoring the emperor himself strongly opposing this.

Given that Artifacts made of Orichalcum performed equally with weapons that were created by Vandalieu using fragments of the Demon King, the overwhelming majority of people chose the latter.

A large part of the reason behind the popularity of transformation equipment in the empire was the fact that it had been handmade by Vandalieu... Zadiris, wanting more magical girls to exist, had promoted this point heavily.

"The demand in other nations is irrelevant right now. It's not like we're going to export this Orichalcum," said Vandalieu.

"Indeed. If it were to somehow be processed into equipment, that equipment would likely find its way into the hands of Alda's potential heroes or supporters of the 'Five-colored Blades,'" said Luciliano.

"Incidentally, will transformation equipment work in that other world? I have heard that there is no time attribute there."

"I do intend to test it beforehand. And I need to do an experiment to see if I can even send it there."

"Is it not the first time you are using Soul Silver and Life Gold? Will this really be alright?"

"I've used them on Saria and Rita. There weren't any visible changes to Attribute Values, the acquisition of Skills or increasing Skill Levels though."

Saria and Rita were Living Armors and their armor parts were their main bodies. These had already undergone improvements using Soul Silver and Life Gold. However, the effects of these improvements had been things like a sharper sense of taste, becoming able to feel satiation from eating, and becoming able to sleep.

"If I recall, those you are sending transformation equipment to are all humans... Do they have problems with their sense of taste or their sleep cycles?" asked Luciliano.

It was great that Saria and Rita were now leading more fulfilling lives, but Luciliano questioned whether this was in line with Vandalieu's objective.

"We've learned that Soul Silver and Life Gold can be carried over in dreams," Vandalieu told his doubtful apprentice. "The god of Origin is stopping me from descending on the planet directly from space, so I plan to send the equipment through dreams."

Vandalieu planned not to forcibly destroy the boundary between worlds unless it was an emergency... If he did it multiple times, it was possible that the Amemiya residence would become a spatial singularity point.

But Vandalieu was already very busy. He was training to acquire 'Muscle Technique,' constructing the tunnel in Gartland, taking measures to facilitate a reconciliation between the gods of Gartland and Vida's faction, reading story books to his firstborn child along with Pauvina and the others... He was doing some

of these tasks simultaneously using Demon King Familiars, but at this rate, he wouldn't be able to devote his entire attention to creating transformation equipment.

"Ah, it's about time for my dance lesson. Well then, I'll use split entities to continue the work so I'll leave the rest to you," said Vandalieu.

Having acquired the title of Honorary Countess, Darcia had earned the right to participate in high society, and the duke had earnestly requested that she do so.

Vandalieu was receiving dance lessons so that he could accompany her. Incidentally, he wasn't nervous. As he had a luxury complex, a luxurious and glamorous party where nobles dressed up and gathered to enjoy delicious food was like something out of his dreams.

There were balls held in the Demon Empire of Vidal as well, but... they were more like festivals than parties, and such events were overwhelmingly outnumbered by fighting tournaments.

In addition –

"Considering that my child with Tiamat will be revealed soon, as well as the ceremony to mark the completion of that huge statue of me, events like that aren't such a big deal," said Vandalieu.

"Master... You still refuse to admit that it is an idol built to worship you as a god?" Luciliano sighed. "In any case, I have mentioned this before, but I think you need training of the mind more than dance lessons. I can predict nothing other than that the venues will be painted bright red with the blood of the nobles who dare to look upon your mother with an inappropriate gaze."

Luciliano seemed worried that Vandalieu accompanying Darcia to such events would result in tragedy. But Vandalieu shook his head. "Luciliano, what do you take your master for? I won't do anything like that."

He understood that Darcia was beautiful and attractive from the perspective of nobles. Thus, he would not be bothered if Darcia attending social events would lead to nobles paying her a lot of attention, complimenting her, making advances on her, or asking her for a dance.

He was aware that such behavior was considered good manners in high society. In fact, it would probably make Vandalieu angry if she were to be socially ignored.

However, fools could be found anywhere in the world.

"... Then what of the ones that commit a breach of etiquette?" asked Luciliano.

"It will depend on the severity, but dealing with it on the spot should be the responsibility of the host of the event, the duke," said Vandalieu.

"... Master, when you go to this party, do not forget to bring extra cream as gifts."

Luciliano felt true sympathy, not for the nobles attending the event, but for Duke Alcrem and his servants.

"Luciliano, do your best with turning Dolstero into a Live-Dead. And I intend to have you participate in the next battle," said Vandalieu.

"... This is not the time for me to be sympathizing with others," Luciliano muttered.

《You have acquired the 'Dancing' Skill!》

Autumn. A season when villages held festivals to celebrate the harvest.

And it was a social season for nobles, during which numerous parties were held.

The party in the Alcrem Duchy was livelier than other years. But it was no more extravagant than the parties of other years, nor were there any special occasions such as the naming of heirs or announcements of engagements.

And yet, more nobles attended this party than in previous years because of the institutional reforms that Duke Takkard Alcrem was leading and pushing for... to the nobles who favored the Church of Alda, an outrage that would leave a scar on history, and to the nobles who worshiped Vida, a tremendous revolution.

The autonomous regions of the various races of Vida in the Alcrem Duchy would be abolished, and they would become able to migrate freely and work whatever jobs they wished to... although they would not be able to join any Guilds yet.

In addition, Ghouls, who had been treated as humanoid monsters in the past, would now be treated as a race of people protected by the law.

The nobles had been greatly shocked by these two changes.

Consequently, many of them wished to meet the duke directly to hear his true intentions, and lords of the

more distant regions could not remain ignorant to the events happening in the center of the duchy, so these lords or representatives sent by them had gathered here as well.

Duke Alcrem stood before the guests to address them.

“Ladies and gentlemen, it is still too early to bid farewell to this year and welcome the new one, but there is no doubt that this year has been full of trials for the Alcrem Duchy. The death of my youngest sister Juliana; the collapse of the Temple of Borgadon, the God of Mountains, in the Sacred Wastelands; the resurrection of an evil god. This duchy almost met its doom. The fact that I am able to see you all today is thanks to the ‘Knight of the Collapsed Mountains’ Goldie, hero of our duchy, and Honorary Countess Darcia Zakkart, the ‘Holy Mother of Victory,’ a new hero. And it is thanks to the efforts of our people. May Goldie rest in peace, and may our new hero bring us even more prosperity. To our heroes!”

“To our heroes!” said the nobles in unison, raising their glasses with the duke.

But it seemed that those who shared his sentiments were in the minority.

The nobles who had originally belonged to the faction opposing the duke, as well as the nobles who had recently joined this faction due to the great reforms, were observing Duke Alcrem and the individuals around him in order to gather information.

The central figure of the faction opposing the duke was Marquis Theodore Posser. He had brought his second son and second daughter to this party under the pretext of finding marriage partners for them, and they were now roaming around the venue to gather information from the children of other nobles. Meanwhile, he was pretending to converse with the members of his own political faction while continuing to analyze the situation.

This year had indeed been a year filled with trials for the whole Alcrem Duchy. Or to be more accurate, it could have become a year of trials for the entirety of the Orbaume Kingdom.

The death of Juliana Alcrem was an insignificant problem, but there had been the Dungeon monster horde attack on Morksi, and the resurrection of an evil god that had destroyed the Sacred Wastelands (in reality, a fusion of two evil gods, but the public story was that it had been the evil god Forzajival).

If these events had not been dealt with in time, and the Dungeon monster horde or the evil god had been left unchecked, the damage would not have been limited to just Morksi or Alcrem. The nobles who were gathered here and their lands would not have been left unscathed. In the worst-case scenario, they could have been destroyed entirely. Even in the case that they were fortunate enough to not be attacked directly, the destruction of a major city of commerce and the capital of the duchy would have had catastrophic economic consequences.

And it was unlikely that the evil god would have paid any heed to the borders drawn by mortals on maps; he would have brought as much destruction as possible to the other duchies as well.

That would have truly caused a year of trials for the entire kingdom.

Even Theodore felt gratitude towards those who were responsible for preventing these disasters.

*His skin looks healthier and of better color than it did when I saw him last year. And there is clearly more hair on his head. Has he hired a skilled wig maker and used some magic on his face to hide his poor health? If that is the case, he should be announcing that he will give the headship of his house to his heir at an end-of-year party or at one of the parties held in the kingdom to celebrate the new year, but... is he pushing himself? But judging from his behavior, it does not seem to be that serious,* Theodore thought, analyzing his various observations.

After careful consideration, he decided that it was best not to make any aggressive political moves for the time being. Enemies of those who had achieved things recognized by everyone would be easily criticized, and this was doubly true when the people were weakened by fear.

Greed, coldheartedness, cruelty, corruption. It was important to avoid being associated with these qualities, even if it was the truth. It would cause one’s every action to be doubted and one’s every intention to be probed regardless of whether there was a good reason for doubt or not. And that would lead to more interactions with those of similarly poor reputations.

From the outside, one would appear to be the root of all evil. And this would impede any attempt to do anything.

*Moderation in all things. Though my faction opposes the duke, it is not that I wish to defeat him.*

Theodore was a slender man in his early forties with a cruel-looking face; he looked like the textbook example of a corrupt noble. But that was just his appearance; it did not mean that he was actually a corrupt noble.

His integrity was not spotless, and he had enriched himself considerably. However, he had not accepted bribes to allow bandits, slave traders dealing in illegal slaves, or drug dealers to do as they pleased.

Although his faction opposed the duke, that was due to their political stances. As Takkard Alcrem had devoted himself to Alda’s peaceful faction, Theodore had aimed to take the profits that could be gained

by being the leader of a faction and through connections to the anti-peaceful-faction group within the Church. He did not genuinely oppose the duke's house. Though he was a marquis, he was still a vassal of Duke Alcrem, so if he were to oppose the duke in earnest... by starting a rebellion, then the Posser house would be crushed.

In fact, Theodore wished for the duke to remain healthy. The sudden death of the head of a house, followed by a sudden succession by an heir, would greatly disturb the stability of that house's rule. If the Alcrem Duchy were to undergo such destabilization, Theodore would have bigger problems to worry about than leading the faction that opposed the duke.

*Come to think of it, there was strength in his voice when he was speaking. Perhaps the duke is actually in good health, and I am being too suspicious?*

The nobles around Theodore began voicing their own opinions.

"But Marquis Posser, Duke Alcrem is becoming quite troublesome. Perhaps he has been influenced by the new hero; he has not only shown indecent spectacles in public places, but he has also disturbed the very order of his own duchy."

"A Dark Elf becoming an honorary countess is unheard of, but abolishing the autonomous regions? I doubted my ears when I first heard the news."

"Harpies will be flying through the skies and Centaurs will be running about on the ground before the year ends. They might have some use in replacing carrier pigeons and workhorses, but they will quickly become eyesores if they get too carried away."

There were rocky mountains on the north side of the Alcrem Duchy that was the autonomous region of a group of harpies, and at the base of those mountains was the autonomous region of a group of Centaurs. The entire Centaur population was less than a thousand, so they were unlikely to have much influence, but there were several tens of thousands of Harpies, and there was no telling what would happen if they were set free from their autonomous region.

"Get carried away? They are still unable to join any Guilds, including the Commerce Guild, are they not?" one of the other nobles asked.

The Guilds were institutions that were independent from the government. Of course, they were not completely free from the government's influence, but they were not merely buildings, either. Thus, Duke Alcrem could only urge them to make reforms, and decisions on such reforms would be made by the Guilds themselves.

However, the Guilds could not simply ignore the new laws in the Alcrem Duchy, so they would gradually have to make changes to their systems, as the Adventurers' Guild had done by abolishing commissions for exterminating Ghouls.

But such things would not take place anytime soon; it would be several years before they happened.

"Do you not understand? If the Harpies and Centaurs are released from their autonomous regions and those regions come under the direct rule of Duke Alcrem, the duke's house must rule them. And due to the nature of these regions, they will be difficult to rule by sending a representative official to govern. Thus, I suspect that the duke intends to grant court ranks to the Harpy and Centaur leaders and make them lords of the regions."

"I-it can't be! The idea of mixing our precious noble blood with the blood of birds and horses is unthinkable."

"Does the duke mean to invite birds and beasts to high society?!"

Theodore's followers were showing the whites of their eyes as they whispered furiously amongst one another.

*How clever,* Theodore thought.

"... The birth of Harpy and Centaur nobles. So be it," he said.

"Marquis Posser?!" the other nobles exclaimed, turning to him with shocked expressions.

"In fact, it would be more inconvenient if the duke were to try and rule those regions directly. The duke's house would become too powerful," Theodore continued.

"But even if that is true for the Centaur lands, the autonomous region of the Harpies is a rocky mountain range and there should be almost no profits coming from it. I do not think it would contribute to the duke's power, unless you have some explanation...?"

Some of the nobles opposing the duke were devoted worshippers of Alda. These nobles were too devoted to their religion and had a strong tendency to treat members of Vida's races with contempt.

But Marquis Posser had never looked upon Vida's races with contempt. After hearing about Duke Alcrem's proposed reforms and investigating their significance and purpose, he had come to believe that he should be cautious of Vida's races.

"I have heard that Centaurs possess greater mobility and stamina than high-quality riding horses, and

they are proficient with spears and bows. They will likely be exceptional as cavalry. And the Harpies' ability to fly is magnificent. Unless there is a storm, they will deliver information faster than any horse. In battle, they may not defeat a Dragon Knight in one-on-one combat, but there are thousands of them that are capable of fighting. In an all-out battle between them and the Dragon Knights, who number less than a hundred, there is no question as to who would be victorious," said Theodore.

If the autonomous regions of the Centaurs and Harpies remained under the direct rule of the duke, their people would become a part of his realm's people. In that case, it was possible that the duke would have sole control over the power of these races.

"That is true..."

Theodore's followers were convinced by this explanation. But Theodore did not feel a threat in only the military use of the Centaurs and Harpies. There was a threat in their economic effects as well.

As Theodore became more and more absorbed in his thoughts –

"Well, well. If it isn't Marquis Theodore Posser. Good day," said a voice from nearby.

It was Earl Isaac Morksi, the first noble of the Alcrem Duchy to make contact with Darcia and Vandalieu.

"Earl Isaac Morksi," said Theodore. "What brings you here?"

"I am going around and greeting everyone, of course. I *am* the lord of a city of commerce, after all," said Isaac.

Earl Isaac Morksi was not a part of the faction opposing the duke; he was, simply put, an ordinary noble. Thus, he kept his distance from Theodore and rarely conversed with him.

And yet, he had gone out of his way to actively speak to Theodore. Theodore found this strange – especially because the duke's speech before his toast had drawn attention to Earl Morksi. Earl Morksi actively choosing to speak to Theodore, who belonged to the faction opposing the duke, would inevitably give off the impression that he had joined the faction himself.

Still, as the city of Morksi was a part of the duchy, if it had suffered significant losses in recent events, it would not have been unusual for the earl to speak to nobles regardless of which factions they belonged to in order to ask for support to rebuild.

However, the city of Morksi had not suffered any losses. In fact, the defeat of the monsters attacking the city had caused a healthy supply of high-quality materials to find their way into its markets. On top of that, the newly-formed B-class Dungeon, 'Garess's Ancient Battleground,' and the shows that one of Theodore's followers had described as 'indecent spectacles,' had attracted a great number of adventurers and travelers to the city and brought about an unprecedented wave of prosperity.

Or perhaps there was some religious problem in the city of Morksi, and because Theodore had connections to the Church of Alda, Earl Morksi had come to him for help?

"Rather than pay attention to me, perhaps you should direct your attention towards those people over there, like everyone else is?" suggested the earl, pointing at the people who were surrounded by a large crowd of nobles.

It was Honorary Countess Darcia Zakkart. The moment Theodore saw her, his breath was taken away. It wasn't because she was beautiful. It was because the dress she was wearing was so spectacular.

*W-what is that dress?! The fabric is silk... No, it is no ordinary silk! And the tailoring... I have never seen this style before. Is this another secret of the Dark Elves?!*

"Well then, I must go and greet her, so if you would excuse me," said Earl Morksi, walking off in Darcia's direction before the speechless Theodore could say anything.

"I-it seems that the earl has also lost himself to her beauty," said one of Theodore's followers.

"Good grief. How unsightly for someone his age," muttered another.

Ignoring them, Theodore stared at Earl Morksi's back... and then he realized something.

Most of the nobles surrounding Darcia were in their forties or above, and all of them had full heads of hair and healthy-looking skin. According to Theodore's memory from the previous year, most of them had been lacking in terms of their hair... there were even some whose heads had previously been completely bald.

*Could it be... Is it her?! If those are not wigs, then... has Darcia Zakkart already taken control of the Alcrem Duchy from the shadows?!*

A freezing chill ran up Theodore's spine as he felt an unprecedented sense of danger. He didn't care about his hair, but he had imagined his own fate, the fate of someone who was connected to the group that was against Alda's peaceful faction, and the fate of the Posser house.

*I-I must join that side at any cost! If I do not... my house will be ruined!*

Watching Marquis Theodore Posser from a distance, Takkard Alcrem could see exactly what he was thinking.

*Ordinarily, he would not be such an easy man to understand, but... well, I suppose it cannot be helped,* he thought.

Theodore was the leader of the faction opposing the duke, but he had united the opposing political forces and kept them in check from doing anything too foolish. He was more capable and useful than many of Duke Alcrem's own allies, so he wanted him to join him.

That was why he'd asked Earl Morksi to make a move, and things looked promising.

After all, in politics, incompetent allies were sometimes more terrifying than capable enemies.

*It seems that everyone is very interested in why I have made these reforms. I am sure that most of them think that I have been seduced by Darcia-sama's charm, or that I have military or economic objectives in mind.*

Duke Alcrem believed that other than the idea of him being seduced, these were reasonable theories. In truth, he did have expectations in that regard.

In terms of positive economic effects... The Centaurs were a small population of less than a thousand, but if they joined forces with human merchants, the potential economic effects were unfathomable. Of course, this would also cause damage to horse trainers as well as the Adventurers' Guild and Mercenaries' Guild that would normally take on work to guard traveling merchants.

But villages and towns along highways would remodel their inns so that Centaurs could stay there as well, so carpenters would have more work and lumberjacks would experience an increase in demand for lumber.

And it was possible that Centaurs would also be hired in farming villages. After all, they were a race of people that were as intelligent as humans and stronger than the average farm horse.

And unlike domestic animals that required to be cared for year-round even if they were shared by their whole village, Centaurs could be hired just when fields needed to be plowed or new lands were being cultivated, so there would be less costs associated with these tasks.

It was possible that the Centaurs might dislike being hired as replacements for domestic animals, but... after they were released from their autonomous region, they would be compelled to change as well. It wasn't just humans who would need to change their ways. It was likely that there would be Centaurs seeking work and payment rather than just pride.

The Harpies would have an even greater effect than Centaurs. The Harpies of the Alcrem Duchy lived in a mountainous region, so few of them were the flightless kind with developed lower bodies like those of ostriches; many of them were highly capable in flight.

That made them suited for carrying messages, but... more importantly, they were able to acquire medicinal herbs and marine products in tall, rocky mountains and the seas beyond them, regions that humans wouldn't be able to reach without risking their lives.

And depending on the Harpies' strength in battle, they could also deal in materials taken from monsters inhabiting the rocky mountains or the sea north of the continent.

The amount that a single Harpy could carry in one trip was small, but they could be equipped with Magic Items that lightened whatever they carried.

And as Harpies earned more, they would spend more as well. Up until now, they had only been able to purchase everyday items, luxury items, and decorations from a limited number of merchants, but they could now buy whatever they wanted.

It was impossible to estimate the profits that could be generated with the release of these two races.

A smart person may have been able to foresee these profits in the past. And yet, these actions had never been taken due to discriminatory mindsets and practices, as well as the influence of the Church of Alda, which was deep-rooted in the Orbaume Kingdom despite the fact that worshiping Vida was still allowed.

There was also the fact that the kingdom's capital detested non-human races having political power.

Every duchy believed that it would be impossible to defy the capital and carry out such reforms.

*And yet, I am carrying such reforms out. They likely suspect that I am doing so because I have acquired a shield that will shrug off any interference from the Church or the great nobles in the capital. But they will not realize that I have acquired an unimaginably reliable thorned shield!* Duke Alcrem thought.

Vandalieu Zakkart stood behind him. That alone erased any fear of the Church or the nobles in the capital. They were like puppies giving him gentle bites; he even felt pity for them.

It was possible that those opposed to the reforms would try to economically blockade the Alcrem Duchy to prevent people and goods from entering.

It was possible that they would stoke discontent in the populace, encouraging them to assassinate the

duke and his allies, causing a rebellion.

It was possible that the army would be turned towards the Alcrem Duchy, which would be considered to be an enemy of the entire Orbaume Kingdom.

And yet, even if these dangers became a reality, Duke Alcrem had nothing to fear with Vandalieu at his back.

The empire he ruled was large and had abundant funds. He had already promised economic support. Before any assassinations and rebellions could occur, those who plotted them would be erased from existence, leaving only the skins of their faces behind. And even if the army was sent to the Alcrem Duchy, it would be crushed immediately.

In addition to these guarantees, the V Cream that Vandalieu had provided as a 'token of friendship' was a big factor as well. Applying this to the top of the head caused one's hair to regrow, and applying it to the skin caused wrinkles and sagging to disappear, turning it into the fresh and youthful skin of a teenager. Some had even made astonishing reports that it worked as a treatment for joint pain, severe skin diseases, and even burns.

There were some who did not believe how powerful Vandalieu Zakkart was or how much of a threat he posed, but they understood the effects of the V Cream once they applied it, so it was useful for gaining allies that agreed with the reforms.

... Of course, the duke used it himself as well.

"Duke Alcrem, I have returned. It seems that Marquis Posser has taken the bait," said Earl Morksi, who had returned from his task.

"Well done. Marquis Posser will be a reliable comrade. I am glad that I was not forced to destroy him and have you become a marquis," said Duke Alcrem.

"Oh dear. Have I wasted an opportunity to gain a higher court rank?" said the earl.

Duke Alcrem laughed. "It was a joke, 'Duke' Morksi-dono."

He suspected that Earl Morksi was more well-liked by Vandalieu than he was – if he had not cooperated with Vandalieu, perhaps he would have been eliminated and Earl Morksi would have been made duke. That was precisely why Duke Alcrem had suggested the reforms before Vandalieu had ordered him to make them.

*These reforms must pass at any cost!*

Vandalieu Zakkart and the Demon Empire he ruled were the ultimate shield. But this shield had thorns attached.

If the Alcrem house was too slow to make a move... or if it was decided that the Alcrem house would no longer be of any use, it would be impaled from behind.

"You took that joke a little too far. But are you sure that not inviting his companions and Lady Juliana was the right choice? Is it not possible that this will be taken as a sign of disrespect towards them?" asked Earl Morksi.

"That thought did occur to me, but... Zakkart-dono told me, 'It is still too early for that,'" Duke Alcrem replied.

He had thought of various measures to prevent Vandalieu's companions from drawing too much attention with their presence, such as increasing the number of members of Vida's races at the venue by hiring Centaurs and Harpies as security and waiting staff. But Vandalieu had declined and told him that it wasn't necessary to go so far.

This response had made Duke Alcrem feel relieved to know that Vandalieu was someone who could understand his circumstances. But at the same time, it had made him keenly aware of the thorns. Earl Morksi seemed to feel the same way; his face had turned pale.

"... It is still too early?" Earl Morksi repeated.

"That is right. We must hurry and make it a reality."

First, the Harpy and Centaur elders needed to be made nobles, no matter what obstacles Duke Alcrem faced in doing so.

Meanwhile, the thorned shield of the duke, Vandalieu, was dancing with Darcia and enjoying the delicious food that had been prepared for the event.

The delicious food was considerably inferior to the food produced by his nation, but enjoying the atmosphere was an important part of 'eating out'... And there was no effort needed to eat food prepared by others.

"This dress that you tailored for me is really popular. I've been asked so many times where I got the

fabric,” said Darcia.

“It’s because you’re the one wearing it, Mom,” said Vandalieu. “Thanks to you, I’ve managed to create some good publicity for honey silk.”

With this, honey silk... the honey-colored silk created by the Gehenna Bees, would become popular, mainly among the upper class. The secret trade with the capital of the Alcrem Duchy was going smoothly. *Since he suggested the reforms without me pushing him to, I need to give him a little something back in return, after all,* Vandalieu thought.

The thorns that Duke Alcrem and Earl Morksi perceived were but a figment of their imaginations, however... though it was unlikely that they would realize that anytime soon.

“May I ask for your next dance, Darcia-dono?” asked Sergio of the Five Knights of Alcrem.

“Oh my,” said Darcia. “Are you sure you would be happy to dance with me, Sergio-san?”

“Of course!” said Sergio with a bow.

“Th-then after that, I would also like a dance!” said Ralmeya.

“Ralmeya-san... Perhaps you ought to be resting a little instead?” said Darcia.

Vandalieu had asked Duke Alcrem to keep no-good individuals from approaching Darcia; Duke Alcrem had instructed Sergio and Ralmeya to carry out that task by taking turns to dance with her. This prevented unmarried nobles and their children from approaching her.

“Well then, Vandalieu-dono, would you like to dance with me? We are of similar height, too,” said Baldiria.

“Please be gentle with me,” said Vandalieu.

While Darcia was dancing with Sergio and Ralmeya, Vandalieu danced with Baldiria. This was also to prevent impudent nobles from trying to introduce their daughters or sisters to him.

Thanks to the efforts of the Five Knights of Alcrem, the party proceeded without trouble and no tragic bloodshed occurred.

Incidentally, the last of the Five Knights, Bravatiyu, was unable to eat anything for the entire party, as he was some distance away from Vandalieu and Darcia and busy watching the movements of the more foolish nobles.

《The Level of the ‘Dancing’ Skill has increased!》

#### Chapter 293 - The first stage begins

Rodcorte clutched his head and began to wonder if the top of his head was the natural resting position for his hands. In recent times... in what was *very* recent times to Rodcorte, he had been clutching his head in his hands very frequently.

It felt very natural for him to clutch his head like this as he tried to escape from reality.

“... What am I to do,” he muttered, coming back to his senses.

This was not a question for himself, but a confirmation of his own intentions.

He wanted to do something about the ‘Avalon’ Rikudou Hijiri, the ‘Braver’ Amemiya Hiroto, and he also wanted to do something about Amemiya Hiroto’s daughter, the split entity of Vandalieu, and the several reincarnated individuals that had been deceived by that split entity.

There were still dozens of reincarnated individuals in Origin. However, Rikudou Hijiri and Amemiya Hiroto had more power than most of them. Rodcorte very much wanted these two to cooperate with him and defeat Vandalieu when they were reincarnated in Lambda.

Although they were not exceptionally powerful in Origin, if Rodcorte were to make some adjustments before they were reincarnated, and they underwent some Job changes in Lambda, they would likely be more powerful than the potential heroes that Alda and his allies were nurturing.

And yet, the two of them were on a collision course with each other in Origin. That fact alone wasn’t something that Rodcorte minded. After all, what Rodcorte wished to avoid most was for them to live for decades more and reach old age.

They were his potential trump cards to play against Vandalieu, but they were worthless if they stayed alive and were never reincarnated.

However, the problem was that Rikudou Hijiri was trying to make a move on Amemiya Mei, who was possessed by Vandalieu’s split entity.

“What does he intend to do if his soul is broken?”

It was possible that Vandalieu’s split entity did not have the ability to destroy souls, but Rodcorte had no way of knowing whether that was true or not without putting it to the test. Testing it with Rikudou Hijiri or Amemiya Hiroto’s soul would be problematic.

Thus, Rodcorte had sent a Divine Message to Rikudou Hijiri, instructing him to stay away from Amemiya



Mei, but... it had been surprisingly ineffective.

“Judging from his behavior, my Divine Message has only reached him in the form of an indistinct idea. Still, it’s fortunate that he didn’t approach the Amemiya residence.”

Amemiya Mei possessed real death-attribute Mana, and Rikudou Hijiri believed that investigating her would allow him to acquire the power of the death attribute for himself. Thus, he was trying to obtain her skin cells, hair, blood, whatever he could get his hands on.

He had intended to attend the party at the Amemiya residence himself.

He had given up on that, likely because of the possibility that there was something lurking in the Amemiya residence, something that had destroyed the artificial spirit sent by the ‘Shaman’ Moriya Kousuke, and because of the ominous thoughts sent to him by Rodcorte in the corner of his mind.

*Or rather, I’d like to think that my Divine Message had at least that much use...*

The problem was, how would things turn out now?

Rikudou Hijiri had learned that Amemiya Mei possessed an affinity for the death attribute through sensors he had placed on the body and clothes of his body double... the ‘Metamorph’ Shihouin Mari.

He was currently forming a plan to acquire Mei at any cost.

*Though he will certainly fail.*

That much was a given. After all, a split entity of Vandalieu was protecting Amemiya Mei. There was no chance of success for any plan that aimed to acquire her and perform tests and experiments on her.

*In fact, he must not succeed.*

If, through some miracle, Rikudou Hijiri suppressed Banda and acquired Mei... it was extremely likely that the real Vandalieu would come to Origin.

The method he would use to do so was unclear; perhaps he would descend from outer space in soul form, or perhaps he would appear by breaking the boundary between worlds, or perhaps he would take over the body of one of the humans he had guided through dreams. Since he was allied with the god of Origin and Zuruwarn, the God of Space and Creation, this was possible.

If that happened, the situation would be out of control. The damage would be far greater than that caused by a single split entity.

*No matter what reckless things that split entity does, I will be able to suppress the damage to some extent. If its targets are Rikudou Hijiri and his subordinates and collaborators, then I will manage. At worst, a single continent will be lost.*

Using his authority as a god, Rodcorte had forced his familiar spirit Aran to use his power and calculate the power of Vandalieu’s split entity, Banda.

From that, he had learned that nobody in Origin was currently capable of defeating Banda other than the reincarnated individuals. Even if all of the most exceptional mages of this world, the latest weapons that combined both technology and magic, fighter aircraft, helicopters, missile-launching satellites, and the toughest soldiers were all expended until there was nothing left, there was no hope of defeating Banda. Even in such a scenario, Banda would be able to protect Amemiya Mei, Hiroshi, and a few other people who happened to be present. His materialized body was made of fragments of the Demon King. Every metal that existed in Origin was as brittle as candy to him.

Even if napalm bombs were used to asphyxiate him, he would likely absorb the heat of the fire and extinguish the combustion itself in order to protect Mei and any others that were present.

It was possible that the Bravers, the reincarnated individuals, would be able to defeat Banda... though the probability of them being defeated by him was greater.

*To begin with, having them gain experience in Origin is the first step for them. They are supposed to spend this time gaining experience so that they won’t die so easily in Lambda, and so that they can contribute to the world’s development. Why has Vandalieu, who has already been reincarnated in Lambda, sent a split entity here?!*

They were at different stages. There was no way that the reincarnated individuals could defeat Banda in an ordinary battle.

*And Rikudou Hijiri is planning to acquire Amemiya Mei using just the forces that he has built up himself. Even if that means turning Amemiya Hiroto, Narumi, and all of the reincarnated individuals that are not a part of his organization against himself... There is no chance that this will succeed.*

Depending on the plan that Rikudou Hijiri came up with, it was possible that he would defeat Amemiya Hiroto and kill all of the reincarnated individuals allied with Amemiya. But he would fail, because he would never be able to defeat Banda.

“If things turn out this way, then Rikudou being defeated and killed by Amemiya Hiroto would be the more desirable outcome for me. That split entity may be able to break or devour souls, after all.”

If Amemiya killed Rikudou, Rodcorte would be able to inform Rikudou regarding various things and make

his request when his soul came to this Divine Realm.

Rodcorte's goal was no longer the development of the world of Lambda. It was the erasure of Vandalieu, the destruction of his empire, and the annihilation of its people that were aware of Rodcorte's existence. If he succeeded in this goal, it would become possible to remove the world of Lambda from his system, and then he wouldn't need to concern himself with whether Rikudou acquired immortality or not. Of course, the ideal scenario was for Rikudou to die in the battle as well, thus removing all anomalies from Lambda and allowing Rodcorte to continue managing it.

"The worst-case scenario is Rikudou's plan succeeding and causing Vandalieu to appear in Origin. The souls of Rikudou, the reincarnated individuals who are his underlings, and the leaders of the political and business circles and the criminal organizations that support him will certainly be devoured. And it is even possible that he will devour the souls of Amemiya and the rest of the Bravers. Origin would then face an unprecedented danger."

Simply imagining the damage that Rodcorte's circle of transmigration system would sustain in such a scenario filled him with despair. He was already guiding human souls in Lambda through unimaginable means such as concerts and hair-growth creams.

Now that things had come to this, it was actually a good thing that the god of Origin had allied itself with Vandalieu. Rodcorte could at least believe that Vandalieu wouldn't destroy and extinguish the existence of a world that was his ally.

As Rodcorte deliberated over the situation, his familiar spirits gave their own opinions and suggestions.

"Then how about you send a Divine Message to Amemiya as well, not just to Rikudou? I think it'll be more effective on him than Rikudou," said Aran.

"Yeah," Kouya agreed. "Thanks to being influenced by my 'Oracle' and Asagi, Amemiya respects gods to some extent. Not that he got into any particular religion, though."

Amemiya Hiroto had been a comrade to Aran, Kouya, and Izumi when they were Bravers, and Rikudou was a man who had betrayed their comrade. Even Rodcorte, who struggled to understand humans, could tell whose side they were on.

"... Very well. I too would prefer that Vandalieu's split entity does not get involved," said Rodcorte.

To pour a vast amount of effort into Rikudou's side to grant him the tiniest chance for a miraculous victory, or to give a little help to allow Amemiya Hiroto to win.

No thought was needed to know which was the correct choice.

"But I do not know if I can allow Amemiya to achieve a perfect victory. Be aware of that," Rodcorte told his familiar spirits.

He had decided to have Amemiya Hiroto win, but it was difficult to weaken Rikudou and his allies starting from now. It was possible for him to withdraw his divine protection from them, like he had done with Carlos and Ediria in Lambda. However, this would not cause Rikudou Hijiri and his allies to lose power; it would only decrease the rate at which they progressed and remove their additional room for growth. The progress they had already made so far would remain as it was.

Rodcorte couldn't do anything about their cheat-like abilities and their fortunes until they died and appeared in his Divine Realm. And because the fortunes that protected the reincarnated individuals were something that both Rikudou and Amemiya possessed, they would cancel each other out.

On top of that, the Status System did not exist in Origin.

In Lambda, the concept of Vitality... in other words, HP, existed. Thus, a strong individual would not be killed by a lapse in concentration. If a strong individual was stabbed in the back by a child with an ice pick, or tumbled down a flight of stairs, they would feel some pain and then walk it off. Even if they were shot by a high-caliber rifle, unless they were shot in the eye or the mouth, they would get away with just a light wound.

But in Origin, no matter how well-trained a strong person's body was, it was possible that they would die if they were stabbed in the back with an ice pick or tumbled down a flight of stairs. If they were hit by a bullet, the resulting wound would not be a light one.

Considering this, it would be difficult to have Amemiya Hiroto achieve a moderate victory. After all, Amemiya Hiroto's side overwhelming Rikudou's was not a desirable outcome for Rodcorte, either.

If it was an overwhelming victory, it was possible that Amemiya Hiroto would not kill Rikudou and his allies and would instead try to punish them within the means of the law. And if the sentence given to Rikudou was life imprisonment... he would end up living a long life, and Rodcorte would not acquire him until decades later!

Of course, that would make Amemiya Hiroto's death a distant event as well.

*But there is no use in putting more thought into this. If possible, it would be best for both of them to kill each other, but if Amemiya Hiroto were to be defeated and Vandalieu descended upon Origin, everything*

*would be meaningless. I will have Amemiya Hiroto win and prepare some additional power to grant Rikudou once he comes here. As a side-effect, his lifespan in his third life will be drastically shorter, but that is of no consequence.*

With his plan decided, Rodcorte began thinking of the Divine Message he would send to Amemiya Hiroto.

As the nobles entered the period for events in high society, there were tremors in the Guilds of the Orbaume Kingdom.

Up until now, many among the Guilds outside the Alcrem Duchy had viewed things optimistically. They had believed that the duke's deranged actions were just an act for Vida worshippers or a bluff for political bargaining.

But it was around this period that they realized that the duke was not deranged; he was genuinely trying to make reforms happen. And it was becoming clearer and clearer that a significant number of nobles, including Earl Morksi, were supporting these reforms.

The Adventurers' Guild in the Alcrem Duchy had sent notifications to the Guilds in neighboring duchies, telling them that they were free to post commissions requesting for Ghouls to be slain, but if it were discovered that Ghouls within the Alcrem Duchy had been killed as a result, harsh punishments would follow. These notifications had made it impossible to continue ignoring reality any longer.

The Adventurers' Guild had hastily spread this information in areas bordering the Alcrem Duchy, and meetings were to be held to discuss whether Harpies, Centaurs, and Ghouls would be allowed to become adventurers in the future.

Of course, significant chaos was also taking place in Guilds within the Alcrem Duchy.

When Duke Alcrem first announced the reforms, a large number of nobles had opposed them and taken the stance of not abiding by them.

But the head of the Posser House, Theodore, had suddenly declared that he would support and cooperate with the reforms, and other nobles had followed Marquis Posser's lead.

But the implementation of the reforms in the Adventurers' Guild in Morksi, one of the Alcrem Duchy's cities of commerce, was already complete.

The most open Adventurers' Guild in human society now was likely the Morksi branch.

One person who was living proof of that fact was currently standing in front of the commissions board with her arms crossed.

"I should leave the Goblin-hunting commissions to the newer Guild members, and the other requests are for gathering medicinal herbs and maintenance work on the highways... There aren't any jobs that stand out," she murmured to herself.

At a glance, she was just an ordinary young female adventurer. She was tall for a woman, and she was equipped with plate armor, a longsword, and a shield; nothing about her was out of the ordinary for a member of a veteran party. The only thing about her that drew attention was an awkward collar around her neck.

But she was neither a veteran nor, strictly speaking, an adventurer.

"Juliana-chan," someone said, calling out to her from behind. "Are you out on an errand?"

"Ah, Rock-san. Hello. Have you just returned after completing a request?" said Juliana, a half-Minotaur with the horns and tail of a bull.

Officially, she was not an adventurer, but a monster that had been tamed by an adventurer.

Ordinarily, she would be treated as an animal or monster rather than a person, and she would not be allowed into the Adventurers' Guild building.

"No, I'm taking a day off today," said Rock, the leader of the C-class adventurer party known as the 'Iron Boulder Brigade.' "I heard there was a dissection of a rare monster from 'Garess's Ancient Battleground' taking place in the dissection room in the back, so I was watching that. What about you, Juliana-chan?" He did not scold Juliana and toss her out of the building as the Guild's rules demanded.

In fact, he was having a friendly conversation with her. And none of the other adventurers or Guild employees saw a problem with how Rock was treating Juliana.

This was proof that in this Adventurers' Guild branch, Juliana was a person and not a monster or animal.

"I'm just checking the commissions. I was asked to find a request that seemed good and could be done in two or three days," said Juliana.

"A time limit, huh... Considering your skill and the skills of those guys, then these are a bit questionable," said Rock, looking at the postings on the commission board once more. "Simon, Natania, and the 'Heart Warrior Brigade' are all B-class now. They've all gone and surpassed me."

Simon had spent about ten years living in solitude, but Natania had become an adventurer more recently than Rock, as had Arthur's party, the 'Heart Warrior Brigade.' From Rock's perspective, they were all his juniors.

But Rock had been a D-class adventurer until he advanced to C-class after the Dungeon monster rampage that happened earlier in the year. Meanwhile, his juniors had recently reached B-class.

The status of C-class was proof that one possessed extraordinary strength as an adventurer, and it was certainly a respectable achievement. But it couldn't be compared to B-class.

Of course, Rock and his companions worked together on commissions with Simon and the others and fought practice battles against them for training, so Rock knew how skilled they were and wasn't jealous. In fact, given that they had the talent to progress so quickly, he figured that they would eventually be promoted to A-class.

He wasn't suspicious of Simon, as he believed his long slump was because he had lost his dominant arm. That was how much respect he had for Vandalieu's technical skills, as he was the one who had built their artificial limbs.

"... I don't understand how I haven't been surpassed by Vandalieu, though," said Rock.

The fact that Vandalieu was not even E-class, but still F-class, was the thing that Rock found most incomprehensible.

F-class was for apprentices and ordinary people doing some side work, and they weren't even able to accept commissions in which combat was a possibility.

But Vandalieu entered Devil's Nests and Dungeons outside the city on his own without taking any commissions requiring him to do so, and he hunted monsters whose meat was sold as skewers at his food carts.

"Master is underage and has still not enrolled in the adventurers' school," said Juliana.

Vandalieu was also a tamer who had supposedly tamed Juliana.

No matter how one thought about it, he was not an F-class adventurer, but thanks to the Guild's rules, he was forced to stay in F-class.

"I'm sure he'd be promoted right away if he asked Berard-san, though. He's acquainted not just with the lord of this region, but with Duke Alcrem as well, isn't he?" said Rock.

"I believe you are right, but it seems that Master is interested in attending the adventurers' school," said Juliana.

"... The special adventurers' school they say is in the capital, huh."

Ordinary adventurers' schools were nothing outstanding. They were training facilities to teach the skills needed to accept combat-related commissions... in other words, the skills needed to defeat a Rank 2 monster in one-on-one combat, to underage individuals who wanted to be adventurers.

They would also be taught basic reading, writing, and arithmetic, how to identify the plants they would be asked to gather, and the skills needed to take apart monster corpses – skills that the Guild wanted adventurers to have.

Schools also provided a place for young adventurers to find people to form parties with.

This was the kind of facility an ordinary adventurers' school was.

There were no requirements for enrolment; anyone, even adults, could enroll if they wished to.

But the adventurers' school in the capital of the Orbaume Kingdom was different.

People enrolled in this school were the third or fourth children – or illegitimate children – of noble families, who could not become head of their house due to being born later than their siblings and who were of no use in political marriages. There were also the children of influential merchants, the children of adventurers who had made a name for themselves, and children who were born with Unique Skills.

It was an adventurers' school that could only be attended by those who could receive monetary support from their parents and those with talent.

The basic curriculum was the same as other adventurers' schools, and they could be graduated from just as easily once students earned enough credits. But the school had an exceptional lineup of instructors, and many of its graduates reached C-class; some had even reached A-class.

This was how the royal domain nurtured and retained powerful adventurers who were capable of dealing with unexpected situations such as monster rampages from Dungeons.

But upon hearing that Vandalieu intended to enroll at this school, what came to Rock's mind was...

"Does he plan to recruit promising individuals there while they're still young?"

Even though many of the school's graduates ended up reaching C-class, it was difficult to imagine that Vandalieu, who already possessed the strength of a B-class adventurer or greater, could learn anything there.

"I think so," said Juliana, who was in agreement with Rock.

She suspected that Vandalieu intended to form connections with the children of nobles and encroach upon the royal realm by winning over its policymakers.

This would involve recruiting people on a greater scale than what Rock was imagining, but Juliana didn't elaborate on this topic with him. She believed that he was a trustworthy person, but whether the god he worshipped was trustworthy was another matter.

"I see... It's gonna be lonely around here starting next year, then," said Rock. "Sorry to change the topic, but do you know any gods with six characters in their name where the fourth character is 'da?'"

Indeed, the topic had been changed. It looked as if the god he worshiped would soon be the same one that Juliana worshiped.

"... A god whose name is six characters, and the fourth is 'da?' Is this some kind of quiz?" asked Juliana. "Y-yeah. A trivia question that one of my friends asked me. I'm at a total loss because I can't think of the answer," said Rock.

"I see... I'm sure you'll figure it out soon."

*I'm sure he's still half-doubting whether he should connect the divine protection he suddenly received with the dream he had.*

But he would soon understand that he had come into contact with a great being... though there were multiple others who had received the same divine protection at around the same time, so it was possible that he would arrive at the answer much more quickly after talking to them.

With these thoughts running through her mind, Juliana looked at Rock with the expression of someone looking at their junior or younger brother.

"I-I see. Well, I suppose you're right. Umm, say..." Rock stammered.

Sensing fanaticism as well as affection in Juliana's gaze, he felt confusion and a sense of danger, and he attempted to change the topic once more.

"Say, you said that you were looking for a commission that you could get done in two or three days, right? Do you have any plans coming up?" Rock asked.

Rock knew that Vandalieu and Darcia were currently not in Morksi because they were attending the party held by the Alcrem House. Darcia had announced during her last live performance that she wouldn't be on stage for a while due to her attendance at the party.

Rock remembered it well because he had been worried that foolish nobles and spoiled young men would cause trouble with Vandalieu and Darcia.

"Yes," said Juliana in response to Rock's question. "Once Master and Darcia-sama return, we are planning to visit the autonomous regions of the Centaurs and Harpies, so we will not be back here for a while. Simon-san, Natania, and the members of the 'Heart Warrior Brigade' are also planning to come with us."

This was the truth, but not the entire truth. After visiting both regions, Vandalieu intended to teleport to the Demon Empire of Vidal, to the Demon Continent, and to Gartland, making preparations for the plan, and then executing it – the plan to carry out the instructions in the goddess's Divine Message.

"I see. Darcia-san is a saint of Vida, after all," said Rock, not finding anything suspicious with what Juliana said. "Tell everyone to do their best."

And with that, he waved goodbye and walked off.

Juliana left the Adventurers' Guild as well to meet up with her friends that were waiting outside.

Maroru, Urumi, and Suruga, the three rat sisters, were charming passersby with their three-meter-long bodies and their big, round eyes, performing in return for donations... snacks.

"You are popular as usual," Juliana said to them.

The three rat sisters squeaked happily in response.

Meanwhile, Fang let out a tired growl.

His Rank had increased and he was now an Orthrus, a two-headed dog that was larger than a three-horse carriage. But unlike the rat sisters, his fur was safe to touch, so he had become a plaything for children.

He had originally been a dog that didn't have a very sociable disposition, but because Kanako's teachings of striving to be a mascot character had been drilled into him by the rat sisters, he was unable to fend the children off.

However, because his Rank increase had raised his intelligence as well, he had learned perseverance and how to restrain himself and be thoughtful of others. Thanks to that, he was unable to slip away from this situation.

These children were friends of Juliana's... in a way, childhood friends.

"Everyone, we must leave now, so please let Fang go," Juliana told the children.

“Ah, it’s Juliana-chan!” one of the children said excitedly.

“She’s gotten even more huge!” said another.

“I am in my growth period, after all. And it is not very nice to call a girl ‘huge,’” Juliana said, scolding the second child as she began taking the children that were sitting on Fang’s head and putting them on the ground.

And then she returned to the home where her companions from her previous life were waiting. Incidentally, all of these companions had grown to about the same height that they’d had in their previous lives, so Vandalieu had purchased the houses on either side of his house and attached them to it; the house was about the size of a small mansion now.

A fleet of seven ships sailed through a clear winter sky towards the Demon King’s Continent.

“Now then, let’s begin stage one,” said Vandalieu.

“... So, the time has finally come,” said Luciliano, who was standing behind him.

“Yes, the time has finally come,” said Juliana.

Luciliano and Juliana’s words were almost the same, but the emotions behind them were the exact opposites.

“My lord, you intend to experiment with ‘Muscle Technique’ as well, do you not? What will we do if they cannot withstand it? Should we retreat in the middle of things?” asked Bone Man.

Vandalieu thought a little about this question.

The first stage of the plan was another distraction battle, just like the previous ones, other than that Vandalieu had increased the strength of his fighting forces a little. The second stage was the main one, and his plans would have to change if the forces defending Botin were defeated during the first stage.

“In that event, let’s not retreat and continue on to stage two,” said Vandalieu. “The preparations themselves should be complete, after all... other than my son.”

“It’s time for his nap, isn’t it?” said one of Legion’s personalities.

“Once he falls asleep, it’s hard to wake him up. It’s a child’s job to sleep, so that’s fine, though,” said another.

Indeed, the Elder Dragon that had hatched from the egg created between Vandalieu and Tiamat was not very good at waking up. Although his body was already capable of withstanding battle and he had the strength to munch on monsters of Rank 10 and below like they were snacks, he would never wake up during his nap time.

“Mom, Pauvina, Luvesfol, and Fidirg are watching over him, so I’m sure things will be fine even without me there. I’m a little worried about Luvesfol’s safety, though,” said Vandalieu. “Now then, full speed ahead.”

But despite his words, he showed no signs of fear or worry as he ordered Cuatro to sail forth.

He had already overcome a great trial... the ceremony to celebrate the completion of the enormous idol of Vandalieu. After that, a battle against the forces defending Botin was nothing to fear.

《The Levels of the ‘Strengthened Attribute Values: Reigning,’ ‘Strengthened Attribute Values: Worshipped,’ and ‘Strengthened Attribute Values: Demon Empire of Vidal’ Skills have increased!》

《You have acquired the ‘Muscle Technique’ Skill!》

**Name:** Fang

**Rank:** 8

**Race:** Orthrus

**Level:** 78

**Passive skills:**

Dark Vision

Superhuman Strength: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)

Detect Presence: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)

Intuition: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)

Self-enhancement: Guidance: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)

Enhanced Body Part (Fangs, Claws): Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)  
Mental Resistance: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)  
Fire Attribute Resistance: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)  
Strengthened Attribute Values: Guard Dog: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)  
Rapid Regeneration: Level 1 (NEW!)  
Disease and Poison Resistance: Level 1 (NEW!)

**Active skills:**

Silent Steps: Level 3  
Aura of Darkness: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)  
Scream: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)  
Charge: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)  
Coordination: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)  
Flame Breath: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)  
Surpass Limits: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)  
Dance: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)  
Familiar Spirit Demonfall: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)  
Parallel Thought Processing: Level 1 (NEW!)

**Unique skills:**

Vanadlieu's Divine Protection  
Zantark's Divine Protection (NEW!)

Monster explanation (Written by Luciliano): Orthrus

According to Master, Orthrus is the younger brother of a dog that guards the gates to hell in the mythology of other worlds. To think that it has two heads, teeth sharp enough to tear through an Earth Dragon, the ability to produce a breath of hellfire while being resistant to that hellfire... the afterlife of those worlds must have perfect security.

Or so one would think, but the legends apparently say that it was beaten to death by a hero.

Fang has gone from a Rank 6 Garm to a Rank 7 Huge Garm, and is now an Orthrus. A short while after battle one day, his head apparently split into two all of a sudden, and after regeneration, he had two separate heads and necks. Simon, Natania, and Arthur's party, the 'Heart Warrior Brigade,' were no doubt very surprised by this development.

... Surprisingly, I was able to read a detailed report written by Lady Miriam, who had committed the event to memory. As expected of a true friend of Master; she certainly has guts.

From this Rank increase, Fang has acquired the 'Rapid Regeneration,' 'Disease and Poison Resistance,' and 'Parallel Thought Processing' Skills, but it seems that he has not gained any additional personalities at this stage.

I would certainly like to observe what happens if he becomes a Cerberus, the older brother that guards the gates of hell, so I am looking forward to his continued progress.

Ah, it seems that he has also acquired Zantark's divine protection. That is likely to be because he is rather fire-attribute-ish, I suppose.

**Chapter 294 - The one who spreads death through muscles**

The forces that defended Botin, led by the Boulder Colossus Gorn, had repelled Vandalieu three times, suffering losses in the process. Of course, Vandalieu had carried out the second and third battles as distractions, and he had held back during those battles.

So far, Gorn's forces had lost three Beast-Kings, an Elder Dragon, and two Colossi.

Their numbers were steadily decreasing; they could not get carried away and congratulate themselves on their consecutive victories.

The Goddess of Water and Knowledge Peria, who was still slumbering, was also being targeted. The forces defending her had recently lost five demigods and six Orichalcum Golems, so it was impossible to ask them for reinforcements.

Vandalieu and his companions anticipated that Gorn and his allies would make some move to do something about this situation. At the very least, they would come up with some plan to replenish their lost forces.

Forcing that plan to be used was the first stage. It would be ideal to crush that trump card in an exchange of blows and then retreat.

If that didn't work, the tunnel would go to waste, and Vandalieu would destroy Gorn and his allies and then be forced to proceed to Botin and undo her seal while keeping up a defensive posture – before Alda

could make a move after learning of the destruction of Gorn and his allies, and before the forces defending Peria could make their way here.

But Gorn and his allies had made a better move than Vandalieu had anticipated.

The monsters of the Demon King's continent welcomed Vandalieu's fleet of seven ships with sinister roars.

There were all kinds of Giants, Dragons, fish-type, beast-type and demi-human-type monsters, spirits that had been driven mad by the miasma, Golems, and many other kinds of monsters that even Luciliano couldn't identify on sight. A horde of tens of thousands of these monsters were flying through the sky and approaching Vandalieu's fleet.

All of them were among the upper half of the food chain on the Demon King's continent, and some individual monsters were as powerful as demigods. Though it wasn't clear whether Gorn and his allies had captured powerful monsters alive and trained them or whether they'd captured relatively weaker ones and increased their Ranks, they'd more than achieved their goal of making up for the forces they had lost.

The horde of monsters were leaping from the Demon King's continent, a land that could only be described as utter geographical chaos, and they were approaching fast.

"W-wonderful! I have never seen any of these monsters before!" said Luciliano, who had been reluctant to come here at first, now laughing loudly with excitement as he observed them using a Demon King Familiar that acted as a camera.

"Did you mean to say 'repulsive?!'" said Simon, half-screaming in terror.

But it seemed that Luciliano was not listening.

"Why are there so many monsters coming this way?! You said not a single monster attacked you when you came here before, Master!" Natania shouted, clinging onto Vandalieu's shoulder.

"Gorn and his allies are likely manipulating them somehow," said Vandalieu, not panicking at all. "Some of them have already started killing each other, so maybe they aren't controlling them; they might just be standing behind the horde of monsters that they've gathered and driving them forward."

More than half a year ago now, rampaging Dungeon monsters had attacked the city of Morksi... though it was actually an attack by the God of Thunderclouds Fitun and his heroic spirits, disguised as a monster stampede. The monsters that Vandalieu and his companions were facing now were overwhelmingly more powerful and numerous than back then.

Unlike monsters that came out of Dungeons to stampede on the surface, there were some monsters among the horde approaching from the Demon King's continent that were killing each other.

The horde was only slightly better than a disorderly rabble of wild monsters.

"To think that gods would gather monsters, creatures that should be culled, to use as fighting forces! They are not commanding them as tamers; they are simply releasing these monsters into the wild! What did they intend to do after the battle with us was over... Even if this is the Demon King's continent where no people live, this cannot be forgiven!" Arthur of the 'Heart Warrior Brigade,' shouted angrily with an expression that could make even a strong-hearted person faint.

"I believe that monsters of high Rank that have the ability to fly would be capable of traveling from this place to other continents and islands. It is rare for monsters to leave Devil's Nests of their own accord, but after leaving them, some wander about instead of returning," said Gufadgarn, validating Arthur's anger and informing Vandalieu of the risks.

"The Flying Krakens that were guarding the waters have lost a lot of their numbers, too," said Legion.

"In other words, just giving those monsters a decent beating will leave some danger... Why do I, the person whom they call Demon King and fear so much, have to be worrying about the potential damage to other continents and islands?" said Vandalieu, feeling that all of this was very unreasonable.

*If that's all part of his plan as well, then he's truly a great commander,* Vandalieu thought sarcastically.

"Then shall we leave it at a decent beating?" asked Gufadgarn.

"... We will carefully exterminate every last one of them," said Vandalieu.

Now that the risk of damage to other continents and islands had been pointed out to him, he couldn't help but be bothered by it – especially when this risk could be eliminated with a little effort.

"All ships, fire at the monster horde. Let's leave the ones that flee to those with mobility," said Vandalieu. The Four Dead Sea Captains shouted these orders to their crew, and Cuatro and the rest of their ships opened their gunports and fired egg projectiles and beams of light at the monster horde. The sound wave cannons weren't used as the monster horde was still some distance away, but this didn't seem to be a problem.

The monsters were bewildered by the cannon-fire, a form of attack they had never experienced before, and they screamed and fell into the sea as they were helplessly engulfed in flaming explosions and



pierced by beams of light.

“Oh no, precious research subjects are being turned into ash and fish food!” Luciliano lamented.

“Luciliano, I’m recording everything with my Demon King Familiars, so please let this one go,” said Vandalieu.

Dozens of Demon King Familiars, with eyeballs of the Demon King that were large enough for someone to carry in their arms as well as wings that were membranous or insect-like, were flying around Vandalieu’s fleet and filming the battlefield.

Vandalieu had originally sent them out to keep an eye on the surroundings and fire more beams of light if needed, but... they were now acting as filming drones for Luciliano’s sake.

“And we’ve defeated fewer monsters than I thought,” said Vandalieu.

The cannon-fire had shot down only a very small portion of the huge horde of tens of thousands of monsters, with most of them being the ones leading the charge. Most of them were smaller than demigods, and although the attacks weren’t being aimed particularly precisely due to there being so many targets, the monsters produced by the Demon King’s continent were powerful, intelligent, and had exceptionally good intuition. They were avoiding the projectiles and beams of light and the stronger monsters were using the weaker ones as shields.

At this rate, approximately forty percent of the horde would make it to the fleet intact.

“I see,” said Luciliano. “Then there is no other choice. We shall enter battle first, and –”

“That won’t be necessary. Let’s have warship number four, the Blood Death Ship, charge in,” said Vandalieu.

“Wha–?! Master, wait! That is for retreating, is it not?! And we have not made plans for using that against such an enormous horde of monsters!”

“It’s not a problem. We just need to change the order that we’ll use them. And I need to make opportunities for my adorable apprentices to fight against opponents that will make their skills shine.”

“Gah! You’ve seen through me!”

It seemed that Luciliano’s attempt to face monsters that he could easily defeat on his own in order to avoid the battle against the demigods that would take place at the same time had been foiled.

“A-adorable?!” said Natania, with her cheeks turning red.

“Aye-aye, sir!” said one of the Four Dead Sea Captains.

The Demon King Familiars operating warship number four... the fake Cuatro named the ‘Blood Death Ship,’ began speeding it up, making it charge forth towards the horde of monsters.

One of Gorn and his allies’ purposes for preparing this monster horde was to force Vandalieu to detonate fake Cuatros, which he had done frequently in previous battles, causing the monsters to take the brunt of the damage in their place.

That was why they had even gathered monsters that were so weak that they wouldn’t even buy any time against Vandalieu and his companions, emphasizing quantity over quality.

But they had not spent months gathering monsters and training them to obey basic commands just to have them killed by explosions.

Suddenly, a majestic horn sounded, and the monsters’ movements immediately changed. Monsters that were clearly resistant to heat, such as lions with manes of fire, moved to the front, while Dragons and Mage Giants that wielded staffs cast spells.

The monsters had shown no signs of being under anyone’s command thus far, but with this signal from Sirius, the God of War Horns, they had taken a defensive formation against the incoming self-destructive attack.

“Jyuh?! Their previous behavior was just a ploy!” exclaimed a surprised Bone Man, who was on a different ship from Vandalieu and the others.

But Gorn and his allies had not taught the monsters to put on such an advanced performance.

“Rather than it being a ploy, they just sharpened up after hearing the voice of their masters. Just like dogs,” said the ‘Sword King’ Borkus.

Indeed, the monsters had not been putting on an act; they had obeyed the signal of the horn.

“Well, it doesn’t matter very much,” said Vandalieu.

The Blood Death Ship exploded, producing an explosive noise, a shockwave, and a cloud of crimson smoke.

But despite the loud noise of the explosion, there was no Demon King fragment shrapnel or heat. The monsters let out noises of confusion as they were engulfed by the smoke.

However, the monsters that possessed the ‘Intuition’ Skill at a high Level screamed as they desperately tried to flee. But before they managed to escape the smoke’s radius, the screams of the monsters that had been engulfed by the smoke could be heard.

Enormous demi-human-type monsters and beasts that were dozens of meters tall writhed in agony as they tore at their own bodies, and finally fell towards the sea with their skin completely eaten away, leaving their bones and muscles bare.

“Master, it seems that ‘Bloodlust’ is working as expected. It is truly magnificent,” said Luciliano, observing the scene with a fervent look in his eyes.

“... I’m glad we’re still quite far away. I wouldn’t have been able to eat meat for a while if we were closer,” Natania mumbled, her face turning pale.

“Really? Watching them is making me hungry,” said Juliana, rubbing her belly.

The Blood Death Ship had been filled not with the Demon King’s fat, but with Vandalieu’s blood. With the ‘Bloodlust’ spell, the blood had been turned into carnivorous micro-organisms. The explosion had been to disperse the micro-organisms in a mist-like form.

Although the blood had been turned into micro-organisms through ‘Bloodlust,’ this did not change the fact that it was a part of Vandalieu. Essentially, these micro-organisms were like microscopic Demon King Familiars.

Thus, they possessed Vandalieu’s Skills such as ‘Magic Resistance’ and ‘Status Effect Immunity,’ so they were extremely troublesome micro-organisms that could not be destroyed through flames or electricity produced by spells.

“But is it not impossible for this attack to cover the entire monster horde?” asked Arthur.

“Arthur, that’s true initially, but the micro-organisms are devouring the monsters and multiplying, so I think they’ll cover the entire horde soon enough,” said Vandalieu. “Before that happens, I’d like everyone to deal with the ones that have escaped from the ‘Bloodlust,’ the ones that are protecting themselves from it somehow, and the inorganic monsters like the Golems.”

‘Bloodlust’ was multiplying and devouring the monsters one after another, but that did not change the fact that they were airborne micro-organisms. They could not move on their own, and they could not attack monsters made of inorganic materials such as Golems.

“Is it safe to get close? I heard that you are unable to control them,” said Borzofoy, the lean Dwarf mage.

“That was previously true, but not anymore,” Gufadgarn replied in Vandalieu’s place. “Now that Vandalieu has acquired the power of a horseman spoken of in the mythology of other worlds, one that is the harbinger of the end of the world, his blood only devours fools who get in his way, and does not harm those he has granted his favor.”

“I’ve become able to control it more precisely through the effects of the ‘Pale Rider’ Job... though it might also have something to do with the power of ‘Sylphid,’ whom I devoured before,” said Vandalieu. “In any case, it won’t harm you if you have my divine protection. But since it’ll obscure your vision, we should probably avoid fighting inside it.”

Though Gufadgarn’s explanation was difficult to understand, Vandalieu’s was simple.

“I see. That’s a relief. Everyone here has received Master’s divine protection,” said Simon, who looked keen to fight.

“And we have also received transformation equipment for this occasion. If we let Master continue to do everything for us, then this will be nothing more than a picnic for us,” said Luciliano with a sigh, resigning himself to his fate. “I would have been content with observing the performance of my creations from behind, but... Come, everyone. Transform!”

“Yeah!” everyone else shouted in response.

“Once Luciliano gets in the mood, he suddenly gets really fired up, huh,” said Vandalieu.

Simon and the others activated their transformation equipment in unison and cast ‘Familiar Spirit Descent’ or ‘Familiar Spirit Demonfall.’ This was impressive to behold, but they did slightly look like villains.

Simon and Natania’s artificial-limb-type transformation equipment was black as usual. Arthur and his party’s transformation equipment was colored bright red and white... but the appearance and behavior of the people wearing it was the problem.

It somehow seemed like the monsters were scared of Arthur and the others – though this was probably just Vandalieu’s imagination. But Vandalieu seemed satisfied with the equipment.

“Everyone transforming together is quite nice,” he said.

And as Simon and the others leapt from Cuatro’s deck, equipped with flight-assistant-type Demon King Familiars, Vandalieu flew out as well.

“Now then, Legion, I’m leaving command over Cuatro to you guys,” he said.

“Leave it to us. Do your best, Vandalieu,” said Legion.

Producing membranous wings from his back, Vandalieu overtook Simon and the others, searching for any monsters in the horde that were too strong for them to fight.

And then he spotted a Giant that emerged from within the dense crimson mist of 'Bloodlust,' which had thickened after devouring thousands of monsters. At a glance, it looked like a Golem shaped like a Giant, but...

With a roar, it leapt out of the 'Bloodlust' and immediately shed the mineral shell that was covering its entire body. It had likely conjured a shell of inorganic matter with a spell in order to protect itself from 'Bloodlust.'

It was not a demigod Colossus; it was of the Giant race, the inferior monster descendants of the Colossi. But the wisdom to protect itself from 'Bloodlust' and its fearsome presence made it clear that it was no weaker than a demigod.

The race name of Giants differed depending on where they lived. So what was the race name of this dozens-of-meters-tall Giant with dull, black skin, curved horns, and four arms that lived on the Demon King's Continent?

"Let's temporarily name this a 'Satan Giant.' Its Rank is... around 13 or 14, perhaps," said Vandalieu.

Judging that it was probably stronger than the Colossus of Lightning Radatel, Vandalieu decided to use the Satan Giant as his experimental subject for 'Muscle Technique.'

First, he used 'Spirit Form Transformation: Lightning' to change his spirit form and Mana to take on the properties of electricity. And then he stimulated his muscles while activating the Demon King's muscles, bones, and nerves.

Power filled Vandalieu's limbs, and the overflowing Mana turned into crackling sparks.

The Satan Giant grunted as it immediately raised its guard and took a defensive stance.

"'Muscle Technique' and 'Soul Destruction Fighting Technique' combined... I suppose I'll call it 'Monster Flesh,'" said Vandalieu.

Vandalieu activated his 'High-speed Flight' Skill to close the distance and struck the Satan Giant with his fist.

His fist was so tiny compared to the Satan Giant's arm, which was like a bundle of thick logs, but the Satan Giant's hard skin was pierced with ease. And then... inside the Satan Giant's arm, Vandalieu's fist expanded and changed shape, causing the Satan Giant's arm to explode from within to scatter flesh into its surroundings.

But like the monster that it was, the Satan Giant did not falter after losing one arm. Without waiting for its arm to regenerate, it screamed ferociously as it attempted to counterattack against the arm that was more enormous and twisted than its own and had numerous sharp bones and horns protruding from it. It used its remaining arms to try and grab onto Vandalieu's enormous one and use 'Miasma Breath,' which would eat away at those hit by it, towards Vandalieu's much smaller body.

But the Satan Giant let out a surprised noise as its hand grasped nothing but thin air. Vandalieu's transformed arm had instantaneously shrunk back to its original size.

"Now then, one more attack," said Vandalieu.

The Satan Giant was off-balance and defenseless, and its mouth was wide open in its attempt to use its Breath attack. Vandalieu approached it rapidly and performed a front kick at its open mouth.

Vandalieu's leg distorted and expanded to an enormous size, causing the Satan Giant's head to explode from the inside. It seemed that even a Giant capable of withstanding 'Bloodlust' would die after losing its head; the headless Satan Giant groaned as it began falling towards the sea.

"It's a newly-discovered race and high in Rank, so please recover it," said Vandalieu.

"As you will," said Gufadgarn, recovering the corpse.

"How was 'Muscle Technique' in real battle?" asked Gufadgarn.

"There were no problems. For now," said Vandalieu.

The 'Muscle Technique' that Vandalieu had learned was entirely different from Zorcodrio's, which vibrated the muscles to create an electric attack.

That was because the key to 'Muscle Technique' was precise control over one's muscles. Vandalieu could not control his muscles as precisely as Zorcodrio did.

When he realized this, Vandalieu had reversed his entire way of thinking. Instead of creating electrical attacks by vibrating his muscles, couldn't he give his spirit form and Mana the properties of electricity, then use them to control his muscles and make them vibrate?

This idea had worked out, and Vandalieu had acquired 'Muscle Technique.' As a result, Vandalieu could control his body even more precisely than he had been able to before. He was able to strengthen and compress his muscles, then massively expand them in an instant.

The Vandalieu-style 'Muscle Technique' was complete.

'Monster Flesh,' a martial skill of 'Muscle Technique,' was an attack that involved piercing the enemy with his limbs and then releasing his compressed muscles to expand in an instant, destroying large enemies

from the inside.

It was completely different from Zorcodrio's 'Muscle Technique,' but Zorcodrio had been delighted to see a new form of 'Muscle Technique.'

"The next problem to solve is how to apply it when fighting in closed indoor spaces and against human enemies," Vandalieu said to himself in conclusion. "Anyway, other enemies that look too powerful for Simon and the others –"

As he searched for another experimental subject, a horn sounded across the battlefield once more. The Boulder Colossus Gorn, the Great Ocean Dragon God Madroza, the Colossus of Roaring Thunder Brateo and the other demigods, who had remained hidden thus far, showed themselves.

"It seems that they have noticed that at this rate, they will not even be able to exhaust us of any resources, and they will simply lose the monsters that they gathered to fight on the frontlines," said Gufadgarn.

"I see. Then let's start the first stage in earnest," said Vandalieu.

Hearing Vandalieu's words relayed through the Demon King Familiars, Borkus and Bone Man leapt from their ship, and three of the fake Cuatros exploded. From within emerged the Zombie Radatel, who had been repaired under Luciliano's guidance; Knochen, who was taking a break from working as a concert venue; and Zozogante, the Evil God of the Dark Forest, whose part in maintaining the barrier over the Boundary Mountain Range had been taken over by Fidirg.

"The preliminary skirmish ends here! How dare you use the corpse of my son! You'll regret that!" shouted Brateo.

Seeing Brateo ignore his commander Gorn and charge in, Vandalieu had mixed feelings, as he needed his enemies to actually put up a good fight.

《The Levels of the 'Monstrous Strength,' 'Super Rapid Regeneration,' 'Underworld God Magic,' 'Blood Rule,' and 'Muscle Technique' Skills have increased!》

《You have acquired the 'Strengthened All Attribute Values' and 'Magic Fighting Technique' Skills!》

《'Strengthened Agility' has fused with 'Strengthened All Attribute Values!'》

《The 'Strengthened All Attribute Values' Skill has improved to Large!》

**Name:** Simon

**Race:** Human

**Age:** 28 years old

**Titles:** Flying Sword, Iron Arm

**Job:** Magic Equipment Swordsman

**Level:** 68

**Job history:** Apprentice Warrior, Warrior, Swordsman, Spirit Form User, Transformation Equipment User, Spirit Swordsman, Magic Sword User, Magic Swordsman

**Passive Skills:**

Strengthened Muscular Strength: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)

Detect Presence: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)

Starvation, Disease and Poison Resistance: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)

Mental Resistance: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)

Strengthened Attack Power when equipped with a sword: Very Large (LEVEL UP!)

Self-Strengthening: Transformation: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)

Strengthened Attribute Values: Guidance: Level 3 (NEW!)

**Active Skills:**

Swordsmanship: Level 9 (LEVEL UP!)

Armor Technique: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)

Surpass Limits: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)

Coordination: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)

Dismantling: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)

Housework: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)

Spirit Form: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)

Materialization: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)

Long-distance Control: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)  
Familiar Spirit Demonfall: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)  
Surpass Limits: Magic Sword: Level 3 (NEW!)  
Unarmed Fighting Technique: Level 1 (NEW!)  
Dancing: Level 1 (NEW!)  
Surpass Limits: Equipment: Level 1 (NEW!)

**Unique Skills:**

Vandalieu's Divine Protection  
Vida's Divine Protection (NEW!)

**Name:** Natania

**Race:** Wildcat-type Beast-kin

**Age:** 18 years old

**Titles:** Iron Cat (NEW!)

**Job:** Magic Equipment Fist Fighter

**Level:** 27

**Job history:** Apprentice Warrior, Warrior, Unarmed Fighter, Spirit Form User, Transformation Equipment User, Spirit Fist Fighter, Magical Fighter

**Passive skills:**

Dark Vision  
Strengthened Agility: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)  
Detect Presence: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)  
Disease and Poison Resistance: Level 4 (NEW!)  
Strengthened Attribute Values: Guidance: Level 4 (NEW!)  
Self-Strengthening: Transformation: Level 5 (NEW!)

**Active skills:**

Throwing: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)  
Silent Steps: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)  
Unarmed Fighting Technique: Level 9 (LEVEL UP!)  
Armor Technique: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)  
Surpass Limits: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)  
Dismantling: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)  
Trap: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)  
Spirit Form: Level 5 (NEW!)  
Long-distance Control: Level 2 (NEW!)  
Surpass Limits: Equipment: Level 1 (NEW!)  
Dancing: Level 1 (NEW!)

**Unique skills:**

Vandalieu's Divine Protection (NEW!)  
Vida's Divine Protection (NEW!)

Job explanation (Written by Luciliano): Magic Equipment Swordsman, Magic Equipment Fist Fighter

Both Jobs are based on using transformation equipment. These Jobs have presumably appeared because Simon and Natania do not use magic, and they use transformation equipment for everything from everyday life to deadly combat.

If one wanted to deliberately make these Jobs appear, they would presumably need to use transformation equipment 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Both of them have acquired the 'Dancing' Skill, but this is because Kanako convinced them that dancing can be applied to combat, so I shall record that it has nothing to do with the Jobs.

... Master should have stopped this from happening, but he was apparently receiving dance lessons right behind Kanako at the time, so it seems that they were not completely able to reject this idea.

**Chapter 295 - A distraction, but a fierce battle nonetheless**

The battle at the coast of the Demon King's Continent was growing fiercer.

The 'Bloodlust' was spreading as a dense crimson fog, and Cuatro and the fake Cuatros had resumed

their bombardment. The demigods defending Botin slipped past these attacks to attack Vandalieu and his companions, alongside the surviving monsters of the horde they had used as their frontline.

“You bastard, defiling my son’s corpse is unforgivable!” shouted the Colossus of Roaring Thunder Brateo as he cast lightning from the sky upon Vandalieu.

“You knew from the very beginning what would happen to you if we beat you and recovered your corpses,” said Vandalieu as he created a thin sheet of water overhead to block the lightning. “Well, I’m sure that sort of cursing is normal when you’re trying to kill each other, and there’s not much meaning behind it.”

“You didn’t need to bother to reply, then,” said Orbia, the water and earth-attribute Scylla Ghost whom Vandalieu had used ‘Dead Spirit Magic’ with to generate the defensive sheet of pure water.

“Impossible! You blocked the lightning with water?!” exclaimed Brateo.

He did not know that pure water did not conduct electricity; he was so surprised that he stopped in his tracks... If it had been natural lightning, the high voltage might have been enough to pierce through the sheet of pure water. But the lightning Brateo conjured was created using his Mana, and the pure water that had blocked it was created with a spell using Vandalieu’s Mana.

Even if Brateo’s attack had the theoretical advantage over Vandalieu’s defense, there was no way that he could defeat Vandalieu in a clash of Mana. Unaware of this, his movements had become slower due to his astonishment, and Vandalieu’s explosively-expanding fist closed in on his face.

“But it’s not all too surprising coming from you!” Brateo shouted, deflecting Vandalieu’s fist with his gold-colored gauntlets.

Brateo threw out his other hand, curled into a fist, which sank into Vandalieu’s twisted, distorted one.

“... So, you were just pretending to be shocked,” said Vandalieu.

He had immediately returned his expanded arm back to normal size, but it was now in a tragic state; it was twisted and broken, with jagged pieces of bone protruding through his skin.

“I suspected your attack would be weak to a counter. I was right!” said Brateo triumphantly.

He had likely been watching when Vandalieu defeated the Satan Giant. He had found the weakness of the current Vandalieu-style ‘Muscle Technique.’

The explosive expansion was indeed a threat, but the moment Vandalieu’s limbs were expanded, they were weak to an attack from the side.

The force produced by Vandalieu’s limbs during the expansion was capable of destroying the body of a demigod. But once they had finished expanding, they were like balloons waiting to be deflated.

“You really hit me where it hurts, huh,” said Vandalieu.

“That’s what happens when you get carried away just because you were able to master the ‘Muscle Technique’ you desired for so long, Your Majesty,” said Princess Levia.

“I have nothing to say in response to that,” said Vandalieu remorsefully as he used the Demon King’s jaws to tear off and devour his broken and twisted arm.

Taking this lesson to heart, Vandalieu decided to stop his experimenting with ‘Muscle Technique’ and go back to his usual methods of fighting.

“‘Hollow Cannon.’”

In response to the beam of black light fired from Vandalieu’s hand, Brateo immediately covered his entire body in electricity and raised his golden gauntlets in an attempt to protect himself.

But his defensive magic was easily pierced, and the gauntlets he had apparently taken from the Bronze Colossus Lubug fell apart.

Brateo screamed in pain. “To think that Lubug’s gauntlets would be destroyed by one attack!”

But that was all. Vandalieu’s attack had not managed to pierce through Brateo’s hands. Borkus had torn Lubug’s bronze armor to pieces, but it seemed that this was not because the armor had been weak, but because Borkus was just that skilled.

“Now it’s my turn! Take this rain of lightning!” shouted Brateo.

“... ‘Barrier Bullet,’” said Vandalieu.

As a countless number of lightning strikes rained from the sky, Vandalieu blocked them by releasing a countless number of projectiles – barriers that were compressed into spheres.

But on the other side of Vandalieu’s layer of barrier projectiles, a spear-like kick from Brateo was closing in.

Having sensed this with ‘Danger Sense: Death,’ Vandalieu activated ‘Monster Flesh’ on his fist and threw it forth to cancel out the momentum of Brateo’s kick.

“You’ve gotten smarter all of a sudden,” Vandalieu remarked.

“I refuse to let Harinsheb and Repobilis’s sacrifice go to waste!” Brateo retorted.

By releasing attacks generated using Mana, Brateo had forced Vandalieu to create a ‘Barrier Bullet’ wall,

which was made of compressed spheres of 'Magic Absorption Barrier,' and then used that wall to conceal an ordinary kick... Physical attacks that didn't use Mana could not be blocked by 'Magic Absorption Barrier.'

Of course, it was unclear as to whether even 'Impact-Negating Barrier,' which absorbed all energy including kinetic energy, would have been able to stop this kick.

Demigods were about a hundred meters tall, and each of their movements generated vast amounts of kinetic energy. The Shellfish Beast-King and Starfish Beast-King had become unable to move after they lost their momentum, but even Vandalieu would find it difficult to stop the movements of Brateo, who could continuously keep moving while releasing lightning from the surface of his body.

"Vandalieu, perhaps it is wise to defeat Brateo here?" suggested Gufadgarn as Vandalieu regenerated his arm that was no longer under the effects of 'Monster Flesh.'

Vandalieu was struggling in his battle against Brateo, but he could almost certainly defeat him by using 'World Piercing Destructive Hollow Cannon' or 'Dark Peak Death Flash.'

This was likely on Brateo's mind as well, and perhaps he had come up with a counterattack for that. Even so, with Gufadgarn lying in wait, Vandalieu would be able to deal with this.

"No, it'll be a problem if this guy doesn't survive until the second stage... If I defeat this guy and Madroza, all of their forces will be under Gorn's command," said Vandalieu.

Brateo was the strongest among the forces defending Botin, and perhaps Gorn or someone else had given him the idea, but he had started to take troublesome measures against Vandalieu's magic, but... he was a necessary enemy to disrupt the opposing forces' chain of command.

Vibrating rapidly, the Radatel Zombie produced even more powerful lightning than he had when he was alive, and fired it at the monsters and demigods.

Luciliano let out a maniacal laughter. "Do you see the lightning attacks of the Zombie Radatel, whose body I remodeled using the principle behind 'Muscle Technique?!'"

He was wearing transformation equipment in the form of a lab coat with protective armor pieces covering places like his chest and his elbows.

After the battle against the forces defending Peria, Radatel had come back in a tattered state. Luciliano, wanting to test how powerful he could make a hastily-made Zombie with his skills, had repaired and remodeled it.

Luciliano was not capable of making large-scale changes such as replacing the bones or muscles on his own. It was impossible to acquire monster parts that would fit the enormous body of Radatel, who was a Colossus.

Thus, Luciliano had decided to implement 'Muscle Technique,' which Vandalieu, Legion and even Oniwaka, who joined midway, were learning from Zorcodrio.

Radatel had been born with the ability to generate lightning. Now, the Zombie Radatel was able to do the same by vibrating its muscles. Luciliano had remodeled it so that it could generate and fire even more powerful lightning attacks than Radatel when he was alive.

The demigods directed their rage at Luciliano as they approached the Zombie Radatel.

"Curse you! To toy with corpses, you bastards truly are evil!"

"We shall purify Radatel's corpse and free his soul!"

But these words had no effect on Luciliano.

"Ah, it seems that it is working as bait as Master intended, too," he said in a satisfied tone.

It was a characteristic of humans to strip the bodies of things they killed of any usable equipment and materials. That being pointed out to him only made Luciliano want to say that it was too late for that.

It was possible that Vandalieu and Luciliano, master and apprentice, were actually quite alike.

"But that Zombie does not look like it will last for long," said a doubtful Bone Man, who was standing next to Luciliano and watching the Zombie Radatel fight. "Its lightning is indeed powerful. But because it is acting as bait, the demigods are approaching it one after another... Jyuh! One of the demigods' attacks just landed!"

"Well, that is probably true. My remodeling only improved its electrical attacks; nothing has changed about the strength of its body. In fact, the muscles may have deteriorated drastically by being made to vibrate at high speeds," said Luciliano. "Its movements are becoming visibly poor, after all."

The Zombie Radatel was being beaten by the Demigods' fists and burnt by Breath attacks; it was being broken rapidly. Perhaps Luciliano's theory of its muscles having deteriorated was correct; its movements were sluggish and lacking in sharpness.

“Ah, an Elder Dragon has hit its neck. It’s doomed now,” said Luciliano calmly, showing no signs of frustration.

“Jyuh? Is that not one of your creations?” said Bone Man, finding his reaction odd.

“It is indeed one of my creations, but it was nothing more than a tool for testing my skills. It is not a work of art or a creation I would consider beloved, so it doesn’t bother me that it is being destroyed. And Master will likely recover the spirit inside.”

The Zombie Radatel was not immeasurably invaluable to Luciliano. It had more than carried out its role of acting as bait, so he was satisfied with that.

“That does not seem to be true for those demigods, however,” Bone Man remarked.

The Zombie Radatel met its fate at the hands of an Elder Dragon, a Colossus, and a Beast-King. Of course, Vandalieu recovered Repobilis’s spirit, but Radatel’s corpse was burned by the Elder Dragon’s Breath attack and turned to ash that scattered towards the sea.

“Refusing to let their comrade’s corpse be toyed with any further, they moved ahead of the monsters they were supposed to be using as their vanguard and defeated it while being hit by lightning attacks. I suppose their anger will be pointed towards the creator of the Zombie next,” said Luciliano. “So, I’m leaving the frontline fighting to you. I’ll be devoting myself to your support.”

“... Jyuh,” Bone Man groaned in a rather dissatisfied tone, despite having been next to Luciliano from the beginning for this very purpose at Vandalieu’s orders.

But there was nothing to be done.

Luciliano did not have the ability to fight three demigods at once, and his transformation equipment was built to provide defense more than improve his magic. If Bone Man abandoned his task of protecting him, he had only two choices – run around to stay alive, or die.

“Send a signal,” said Bone Man. “Facing three demigods at once would be difficult, so I would like to call Borkus and the others over.”

“I see. Then let’s waste no time,” said Luciliano, reaching into his pocket to pull out a signal flare... fireworks that Kanako and Doug had successfully put to practical use.

Soon after that, Knochen’s groan could be heard as he approached to recover the bones of the Zombie Radatel.

Among the heavy explosions of cannon-fire, the ‘Sword King’ Borkus heard a smaller bang and saw a red light in the sky. The corner of the remaining half of his mouth rose in a smirk.

“Sorry, but I’m going to have to put an end to this now,” he told the iron-armor-clad Colossus that he was facing.

“N-not yet. This isn’t over yet! I will not let you leave!” said the Colossus as he put himself between Borkus and his destination, his will to battle burning brightly in his eyes that were each as large as Borkus himself.

But the armor he was wearing was heavily damaged, and his body carried deep wounds.

“I shall avenge my brother! I must avenge him!” he shouted.

This was the Bronze Colossus Lubug, who was wearing the armor of the deceased Iron Colossus Nabanga. His gauntlets began glowing crimson, and he unleashed a series of thrusts at Borkus, threatening to incinerate and crush Borkus with his fists that were now hot enough to burn the air around them.

To a demigod like a Colossus, Borkus, who was only three meters tall, was like an insect or a rat. Thus, they possessed no techniques to defeat mortals.

They could swiftly bury any mortal with quick movements of their hands or feet. Elder Dragons and Colossi were like wonders of nature, and mortals were neither enemies to them nor allies to protect.

They simply needed to rule over them, strike fear into them, pay them just enough care that they didn’t go extinct, and accept the very rare challenge from them. Teaching and guiding them was a job for the gods.

“I see. That’s a good reason! ‘Elder Dragon Slayer!’” roared Borkus.

The mere shockwaves from Lubug’s punches could sear flesh and send someone flying. Borkus weaved between the storm of attacks and unleashed an attack of his own.

Borkus’s magic sword, which was made of fragments of the Demon King, cut into the gaps in Lubug’s red-hot gauntlets.

“That reason is much easier to understand than saying we’re your inferior descendants or that we have dirty blood! Fights to the death need to be simple, after all!” Borkus shouted, the half of his face that still had skin smiling like a ferocious beast.



Lubug screamed in pain, but even as blood poured from his wounded arms, he didn't stop his attacks. His blood, which was pouring from his wounds like waterfalls, evaporated from the heat of his gauntlets, creating steam that stank of blood.

Like 'Bloodlust,' this mist blinded even Undead, which were capable of seeing in the dark as if it were midday. Of course, Lubug had also lost sight of his foe, but...

"Die!" Lubug shouted.

He had overwhelming size on his side. He swung his arms around, slamming every corner that was concealed by the mist.

"Those stupidly huge arms are really obvious, even in this mist!" said Borkus.

Lubug's movements, and the sounds generated by them, were large. Borkus leapt up, avoiding Lubug's arms, closing the gap and aiming for Lubug's neck.

But Lubug had predicted this.

"Bronze Needle Rain!" he shouted, using a spell to conjure a rain of bronze needles... which would look like spears to ordinary people, towards the fast-approaching Borkus.

"Super Rapid Reaction! 'God Iron Form!' 'Flowing Willow!'"

Lubug's spears were made of bronze, which he ruled over, but Borkus used martial skills to increase his reaction speed, parry the bronze spears with his magic sword, and deflect them with his armor.

Still, a significant number of spears pierced Borkus. The moment Lubug saw them pierce the gaps in Borkus's armor and break the bare part of skull, he was certain that he was victorious.

But Borkus did not stop despite missing the right side of his head.

"Familiar Spirit Demonfall!" Borkus roared.

With 'Transcend Limits,' he surpassed the limits of his magic sword and armor. Covered in a black aura, he finally ignored the bronze spears and swung his magic sword.

"Demon Blade Flash!"

Having already used his arms as bait, Lubug was unable to defend himself against Borkus's newly-invented 'Sword King Technique' martial skill.

"Impossible... Your sword does not stop even after your head is broken...?!" Lubug groaned.

With his helmet broken, his blood poured from him like waterfalls once more as he began to fall towards the sea.

"My brains are built differently from yours... and I've only got half of them left," said Borkus as he took out some jerky and chewed on it... jerky made from Radatel's meat.

This was a preserved food item that he'd had made in order to activate his 'Strengthened Attribute Values: Eating Demigods' Skill; without it, he might have struggled a little more against Lubug.

Borkus watched Lubug's corpse being recovered, then noticed that a friend had joined him.

"Ordinary Zombies stop moving when their heads are destroyed, though," said Jeena.

"Oh, Jeena. You're finally here," said Borkus, smiling with the quarter of his face that was still left. "Hurry up and heal... Damn, you can't," he said, remembering that he was an Undead. "This is bad, I'll probably go crazy if I lose *all* of my brains."

Even Jeena, who had the Title of 'Saint of Healing,' couldn't heal Undead.

Only Vandalieu's 'Corpse Healing' spell and Blood Potions could repair Undead bodies. And unfortunately, Borkus had already consumed the Blood Potion that he had been carrying.

"Borkus, have you already lost all of your brains? His-Majesty-kun gave you a Demon King Familiar for healing so that you could use it at times like this, right?" said Jeena.

"Ah, now that you mention it, he did!"

Borkus reached into a pouch hanging from his belt and took out a Demon King Familiar that had been made to use 'Corpse Healing.' It was a jewel-beetle-like Demon King Familiar, with antennae, segmented legs, and a treasure orb of the Demon King. It cast 'Corpse Healing' and restored Borkus's head and joints.

"Alright! Now, let's go and help Luciliano and Bone Man! ... Come to think of it, what about Simon and Natania-jouchan?" Borkus asked.

"Zandia and Zadiris have gone to support them, so don't worry. Eleanora and the others are there, too," said Jeena.

Luciliano, Borkus and the others were fighting the demigods without much difficulty, but some of Vandalieu's allies were, of course, struggling.

Arthur and Simon were in a hard-fought battle for their lives.

Arthur grunted in exertion. “Instant Triple Slash!”

“Go, ‘Flying Sword!’” said Simon.

Arthur’s martial skill of three consecutive high-speed slashes struck a two-headed bear-like monster with eight legs in total, causing it to fall back with blood gushing from its wounds. However, Simon’s artificial arm, which had been fired like a projectile while holding his sword, was deflected by one of its front legs. But –

“Separate!” Simon shouted.

His deflected artificial arm split at the elbow, and the forearm thrust into the bear-like-monster’s back, skewering its heart.

But the bear-like monster roared; it would not stop. Simon and Arthur would learn this later, but this monster had multiple hearts.

A loud bark came from Fang, who attacked with a body slam to stop the bear-like monster as it tried to attack the one-armed Simon.

“Dark Arrow Flash!” cried Miriam as she was teleported into the bear-like monster’s blind spot by Borzofoy’s spell and pierced its right head with an arrow. “Simon-san, please continue attacking with your arm!”

It seemed that losing a head was a more painful loss than losing a heart despite having multiple of both; the bear-like monster’s movements stopped. And as Miriam had ordered, Simon continued using ‘Long-distance Control’ on his artificial arm to perform one thrusting attack after another.

With a claw attack from a fast-running Natania and spells from Kalinia and Borzofoy landing, the bear-like monster finally breathed its last.

“Phew, we managed to beat it... I wonder what Rank it was?” said Simon as he re-equipped his artificial arm and wiped the sweat from his brow.

“Probably around Rank 11, I suppose. Nee-san and the others should come and help us with ones that are Rank 12 and above,” said Natania, whose artificial limbs were still in their transformed state.

Rank 11 monsters were foes that even A-class adventurers could not defeat with certainty. Simon and the others were B-class adventurers, whom the Adventurers’ Guild considered to be strong enough to face Rank 7 or 8 monsters. Ordinarily, they should have been trampled one-sidedly and slaughtered by the bear-like monster.

That hadn’t happened because their Attribute Values were increased by Vandalieu’s guidance, because they had undergone training in the Demon Empire of Vidal with powerful training partners that most people wouldn’t get the chance to train with, because they had received transformation equipment, and because they had summoned familiar spirits upon themselves.

It was also the result of their coordination.

“Rank 11... It was a fearsome foe. I shudder to imagine facing it alone,” said Arthur, whose transformation equipment was in the form of a bright red cloak and chest guard.

He was glaring around with an expression that would make even the most fearless ruffian flee for his life; he was likely keeping an eye out so that they wouldn’t be attacked by another monster while their guard was down after defeating one enemy.

From the perspective of an outsider, he looked like a berserker with his black-red cloak covered in the blood of his enemies, looking for his next prey.

“Indeed. However, it is fortuitous that we were able to defeat it without anyone suffering any major injuries, thanks to our coordination and Miriam’s command in battle,” said Borzofoy, holding his staff in his arms and letting out a sigh of relief.

His transformation equipment took the form of a black robe and cloak, as a symbol of respect to the God of Shadows Hamul, the first god to have given him a divine protection.

No matter how one looked at him, he looked like an evil wizard.

“M-my command is nothing worth mentioning,” Miriam said, realizing that she was being complimented as someone amazing and hastily downplaying her role in the battle. “I acquired the Skill for some reason so I just did it, but it’s not an amazing strategy or anything. Borzofoy-san and Simon-san, you guys are the ones who are really amazing, timing your movements so well!”

Her transformation equipment was a white leotard, a brooch and ribbon on her chest, a frilly skirt on her waist, long-sleeved gloves on her hands and long tights on her legs.

She had told Vandalieu that a normal-looking transformation equipment was fine; it was so normal that it actually stood out among the transformation equipment of her party members.

“That’s not true, Miri. You understand us better than anyone, and you’re the one who has us breathing in sync. You’re the only leader for us,” said Kalinia, giving Miriam earnest, honest praise and foiling her

attempt to escape compliments.

As for her transformation equipment, she had said to Vandalieu: "I want mine to be the same as Miriam's... but wearing bright colors is embarrassing, so plain colors... No, please make it the color of the night sky that is ruled by Zelzeria."

Thus, it had a dark blue and purple color scheme.

And unlike Miriam, she was a warrior priestess and fought on the frontline depending on the situation, so she had extra armor instead of frills.

As a result, it was like a bodysuit with protective armor over the chest and limbs, so it was completely differently shaped from Miriam's.

That, in combination with her unpleasant-looking eyes, gave her the appearance of a female villain (battle-ready version).

"Th-that's not true! Right, Simon-san, Natania-san?!" said Miriam, pleadingly questioning the two who weren't members of the 'Heart Warrior Brigade' in a desperate attempt to avoid being complimented.

"No, I think you were magnificent," said Simon.

"Yeah, you helped me out a lot as well," said Natania.

Seemingly not noticing the pleading tone in Miriam's voice, they complimented her honestly.

Incidentally, Simon's artificial arm, which was his transformation equipment, was jet-black. Thus, he currently looked like a warrior of darkness. Natania's artificial limbs, which had changed shape to resemble the limbs of beasts, made her look like a monster with a woman's head from a distance.

"W-why does it turn out this way?!" Miriam screamed in despair.

A sympathetic Fang rubbed his heads on her to cheer her up.

Perhaps Miriam was destined to be loved by good people who looked like villains. Of course, there was no mistake that her command had contributed to her companions' victory.

**Name:** Arthur

**Race:** Human

**Age:** 24 years old

**Title:** None

**Job:** Holy Swordsman

**Level:** 85

**Job history:** Apprentice Hunter, Hunter, Expert Hunter, Monster Hunter, Demonoid Hunter, Apprentice Warrior, Warrior, Magic Sword User, Magic Swordsman

**Passive skills:**

Augmented Muscular Strength: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)

Strengthened Agility: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)

Detect Presence: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)

Intuition: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)

Mental Resistance: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)

Disease and Poison Resistance: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)

Strengthened Accuracy when equipped with a Bow: Medium

Strengthened Attack Power when equipped with a Sword: Very Large (LEVEL UP!)

Strengthened Attribute Values: Guidance: Level 3 (NEW!)

Night Vision (NEW!)

**Active skills:**

Dismantling: Level 5

Silent Steps: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)

Trap: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)

Archery: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)

Dagger Technique: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)

Leather Crafting: Level 1

Unarmed Fighting Technique: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)

Swordsmanship: Level 9 (LEVEL UP!)

Vocal Mimicry: Birds and Wildlife: Level 4

Surpass Limits: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)

Housework: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)

Armor Technique: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)

Surpass Limits: Magic Sword: Level 3 (NEW!)

Familiar Spirit Descent: Level 2 (NEW!)

**Unique Skills:**

Talent for Combat

Bashas's Divine Protection

Vandalieu's Divine Protection

Vida's Divine Protection (NEW!)

**Name:** Kalinia

**Race:** Human

**Age:** 20 years old

**Title:** None

**Job:** High Priestess

**Level:** 45

**Job history:** Apprentice Priestess, Priestess, Medicinist, Clergywoman, Priestess Warrior, Witch, Priestess Holy Witch

**Passive skills:**

Mental Resistance: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)

Augmented Defensive Power when equipped with a Shield: Small (Awakened from Strengthened Defensive Power when equipped with a Shield!)

Strengthened Attribute Values: Night: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)

Strengthened Attribute Values: Guidance: Level 3 (NEW!)

Mana Enlargement: Level 1 (NEW!)

Night Vision (NEW!)

Allure: Level 1 (NEW!)

**Active skills:**

Clergywoman: Level 5

Medicinist: Level 5

Housework: Level 4

No-Attribute Magic: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)

Life-Attribute Magic: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)

Water-Attribute Magic: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)

Mana Control: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)

Shield Technique: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)

Club Technique: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)

Familiar Spirit Descent: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)

Surpass Limits: Level 1 (NEW!)

Coordination: Level 2 (NEW!)

Dancing: Level 1 (NEW!)

Singing: Level 1 (NEW!)

**Unique Skills:**

Zelzeria's Divine Protection

Vandalieu's Divine Protection

Vida's Divine Protection (NEW!)

**Name:** Borzofoy

**Race:** Dwarf

**Age:** 27 years old

**Title:** None

**Job:** Magical Hunter

**Level:** 70

**Job history:** Apprentice Mage, Mage, Hunter, Light-Attribute Mage, Time-Attribute Mage, Space-Attribute Mage, Staff Warrior, Space-Time-Attribute Mage, Light Dimension Mage

**Passive skills:**

Dark Vision

Mental Resistance: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)  
Disease and Poison Resistance: Level 1 (NEW!)  
Strengthened Magical Attack Power while equipped with a Staff: Medium (NEW!)  
Strengthened Attribute Values: Guidance: Level 3 (NEW!)  
Mana Enlargement: Level 2 (NEW!)

**Active skills:**

No-Attribute Magic: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)  
Mana Control: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)  
Time-Attribute Magic: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)  
Space-Attribute Magic: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)  
Earth-Attribute Magic: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)  
Fire-Attribute Magic: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)  
Light-Attribute Magic: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)  
Arms Smithing: Level 2  
Leather Crafting: Level 2  
Staff Technique: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)  
Surpass Limits: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)  
Familiar Spirit Descent: Level 3 (NEW!)  
Coordination: Level 3 (NEW!)  
Aura of Fear: Level 1 (NEW!)

**Unique Skills:**

Hamul's Divine Protection  
Vandalieu's Divine Protection  
Ricklent's Divine Protection (NEW!)  
Zuruwarn's Divine Protection (NEW!)

**Name:** Miriam

**Race:** Human

**Age:** 15 years old

**Title:** 'Demon King's Friend'

**Job:** Magic Holy Archer

**Level:** 65

**Job history:** Apprentice Thief, Thief, Archer, Magic Bow User, Dark Archer, Magic Archer, Holy Archer

**Passive skills:**

Detect Presence: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)  
Augmented Accuracy when equipped with a Bow: Medium (Awakened from Strengthened Accuracy when equipped with a Bow!)  
Augmented Agility when equipped with Non-metal Armor: Small (Awakened from Strengthened Agility when equipped with Non-metal Armor!)  
Mental Resistance: 5 (LEVEL UP!)  
Night Vision (NEW!)  
Strengthened Attribute Values: Guidance: Level 3 (NEW!)  
Disease and Poison Resistance: Level 2 (NEW!)

**Active skills:**

Farming: Level 1  
Housework: Level 1  
Dagger Technique: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)  
Archery: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)  
Lockpicking: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)  
Trap: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)  
Surpass Limits: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)  
Armor Technique: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)  
Surpass Limits: Magic Bow: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)  
Assassin Technique: Level 3 (NEW!)  
Familiar Spirit Demonfall: Level 2 (NEW!)  
Coordination: Level 5 (NEW!)

Commanding: Level 1 (NEW!)

Dancing: Level 1 (NEW!)

Singing: Level 1 (NEW!)

### **Unique Skills:**

Vandalieu's Divine Protection

Bashas's Divine Protection

Zelzeria's Divine Protection

Hamul's Divine Protection

Vida's Divine Protection (NEW!)

Skill explanation (Written by Luciliano): Strengthened Attribute Values: Eating Demigods

A Skill acquired by Borkus some time after he ate the meat of Radatel's heart. The effect itself is the same as any other 'Strengthened Attribute Values' Skill in that it temporarily increases Attribute Values once its condition is met, but this particular condition would ordinarily be considerably difficult to meet. Demigod meat is not a widely-circulating item, after all... though it has become rather abundant in the Demon Empire as of late.

I also supplied parts that were unneeded for the remodeling of Radatel to the market and used it as barbecue meat.

Incidentally, it is a known fact that the more difficult the condition is to meet for 'Strengthened Attribute Values' and 'Self-Strengthening' Skills, the longer the duration of the Attribute Value bonus provided is. The difficulty of meeting the condition is likely based on how difficult it would be for the average person, rather than how difficult it is for the owner of the Skill.

If the condition is as simple as holding a sword, then the bonus is lost as soon as the owner of the Skill lets go of his sword. If the condition is performing a certain ritual (such as performing a dance before battle), then the bonus lasts about ten minutes. When the condition is eating the meat of a demigod... I asked Borkus, and he informed me that the bonus lasts for several days.

Skill explanation (Written by Luciliano): Dancing and Singing

A Skill that has recently started to become mandatory among the women of the Demon Empire. As their names suggest, they are Skills related to dancing and singing.

Incidentally, Miriam and Kalinia have acquired them apparently because Miriam invited Kalinia to learn with her, saying: "With this, you can be a bright, cheerful, lively girl as well, can't you, Kalinia-san?!"

**Chapter 296 - An all-purpose Pandemonium and a broken war horn**

On the battlefield where Vandalieu and his allies were clashing with demigods, and the sounds of majestic war horns and drums could be heard, perhaps the busiest were Knochen, Zozogante, and Legion.

Several of the demigods and a portion of the monsters were targeting the fleet, including Cuatro.

"Now! Destroy the ship!"

"It doesn't matter if they're fakes!"

Even Gorn and his allies had realized that the flying ships, though they were a base and a means of transport for Vandalieu and his companions, were not that important.

But all of the fake Cuatros had a means of attacking; they were weapons that were dealing great damage to their forces.

Thus, as Brateo had drawn Vandalieu away and the other enemies were fighting elsewhere as well, the demigods had decided to sink as many of the ships as possible while they were occupied.

Of course, Cuatro and the two remaining fake Cuatros were not just sitting targets. They screeched as they made evasive maneuvers to evade the demigods' spells and Breath attacks while counter-attacking with cannon-fire.

And Knochen groaned as he used his body to stop the attacks that couldn't be evaded as well as the fast-moving monsters that were trying to approach.

"Damn it, it's so solid! Even flames and lightning are having little effect! What in the world *is* that swarm of bones?!" one of the demigods shouted in frustration.

Knochen, who had awakened 'Long-distance Control' into the 'Bone Swarm Control,' had separated the swarm of bones that comprised his body into multiple groups.

His main body had gone to support Bone Man and Luciliano, while three of his split entities remained to

defend Cuatro and the fake Cuatros. Each of them was about as large as one of the hundred-meter-tall demigods.

The monsters that flew into Knochen screamed as they were crushed by the storm of bones, and their bones became a part of him. Knochen had apparently acquired the 'Dismantling' Skill recently, which had improved the speed and precision with which he extracted bones from enemies on his own.

"Ah, you are of much help, Knochen-dono!" said Zozogante in thanks as the countless eyeball-like fruits hanging from his branches fired black beams of light, keeping the demigods at bay.

Knochen gave a questioning groan.

"I am not so good at close-quarters combat!" Zozogante explained. "My strength and defense are weaker than they look! And those guys know that! After all, we fought against the Demon King together a hundred thousand years ago!"

The Evil God of the Dark Forest Zozogante had been considered among the weaker gods of the Demon King's army, like the Dragon God of Five Sins Fidirg. He had the repulsive appearance of an enormous black tree with eyeballs hanging from its branches like fruits, and one might think that he had a lot of Vitality, like plant-type monsters.

He did indeed have a lot of Vitality. But his strength and defense were weak for a god, and close-quarters combat was his weak point. That was true even for this vessel, which he had made after his complete revival, as it was almost identical to his main body.

"Don't let your guard down just because it's a weaker evil god! Keep your distance!" one of the demigods shouted in warning.

"He might power up like Fidirg did. Let the monsters stand in front!" said another.

"Gah, to think that we would need to be so wary of the likes of him! That cunning fox, borrowing the Demon King's power!" muttered a third in frustration.

The demigods had received word that during the battle against the forces defending Peria, the Dragon God of Five Sins Fidirg had summoned a familiar spirit upon his vessel, powering up greatly, and defeated a demigod with a single attack.

Thus, they did not let their guard down against Zozogante, who had been revived like Fidirg, and several demigods took aim at him from afar.

This did result in the fleet behind Zozogante being protected, however.

"Curse you! Saying whatever you want! Even if it is true, I shall not forgive you!" said Zozogante, irritated at the demigods' insults.

Knochen groaned in warning.

"I know! I will not lose my mind from their provocations and go closer to them! Here, catch!"

Zozogante was not rash like Brateo. He extended his roots to grab an approaching black Giant that was significantly smaller than the Satan Giant, then tossed it into Knochen's whirlpool of bones.

He aimed his black beams of light to destroy materialized spirits that had been driven mad by the miasma of the Demon King's continent... these monsters had temporarily been named 'Evil Spirit Berserkers.'

There were more of the eight-legged bear-like monsters like the one that the 'Heart Warrior Brigade' had defeated... These monsters had temporarily been named 'Satanic Grizzly.' Zozogante deliberately cut his roots and vines to cover the monsters in his sap, which dried and became as hard as Adamantite. Once they were immobilized, he threw them into the air with his branches, exposing them to the cannon-fire of the fake Cuatros.

There were monsters of an unknown kind, resembling one-eyed tigers that were covered in scales...

These were presumably a superior race of the Raptor Cats that lived in the Devil's Nests and Dungeons around Talosheim. Zozogante drove these monsters away by throwing his eyeball-fruits and making them explode.

All of these monsters were Rank 10 or above, and Zozogante, who was equivalent to Rank 13, would normally be able to defeat them with certainty – in one-on-one combat.

Knochen groaned again.

"Indeed, if I were alone, I would have been overwhelmed by their numbers and unable to prevent them from approaching, and then the demigods behind them would have finished me," said Zozogante.

He could defeat these monsters with certainty, but that didn't mean that he could do it in a single instant. Compared to Fidirg, he had better defense, durability, and most of all, regeneration. But his attack power and speed were inferior.

That didn't change even after summoning Vandalieu's familiar spirit upon his vessel. If he didn't have the familiar spirit and the support of the fake Cuatros and Knochen, he would have been defeated quickly, just as he said.

Indeed, even as Zozogante defeated the monsters, the demigods were continuing their long-range

attacks. Zozogante could regenerate the damage from one or two of these attacks quickly, but without the support of Knochen and the fake Cuatros, he might have met a watery grave without being given the chance to regenerate.

Fidirg had gotten carried away and fought at full strength, causing the enemy to be on maximum alert.

*I'll give him a punch when I return,* Zozogante thought.

Knochen groaned three times in succession.

"Yes... I shall continue to buy time and wait for the next stage. I know," said Zozogante.

Knochen groaned again.

"Yes, now that you mention it, I do feel some pity for them."

Once the second stage of the plan began, those demigods would be slaughtered by Vandalieu when he fought all-out, and their meat would be used for food and their bones would be used to make stock and then added to Knochen. It was not even worth holding a grudge against them.

Incidentally, Zozogante was able to understand Knochen's groans because Vandalieu's familiar spirit inside him was performing simultaneous interpretation.

The demigods fighting Zozogante and Knochen were not the only ones targeting the three remaining ships in the fleet.

A group led by the Great Ocean Dragon God Madroza, who was burning with a desire for vengeance like Brateo, was also aiming for the fleet. But unlike Brateo, who was acting on his own, this was an order from the Boulder Colossus Gorn.

"We must not allow any more of them to self-destruct or release that mist of blood! We must bring them down at all costs!" Madroza shouted.

At her command, the demigods unleashed a Breath attack of compressed water. This was followed up by attacks from the Ice Colossus Mугan, the Crab Beast-King Gabildes, and the Light Dragon God Ryularyus.

Following that, the demigods sent the monsters that were riding on their backs towards the ships. They had been reluctant to carry the monsters on their backs, but the monsters lacked the mobility to get past Zozogante and Knochen to attack Vandalieu's fleet, so they had no choice.

The real Cuatro, as well as the fake Cuatros that looked identical but were actually being steered by Demon King Familiars, creaked as they began making evasive maneuvers.

But perhaps deciding that it was impossible to keep evading, one of the ships did a hard turn and positioned itself as a shield for the other two.

Breath attacks of compressed water, icicles, acidic bubbles and light exploded against the side of the ship.

*One ship down,* Madroza thought.

"Impossible!" she shouted in the next moment as he saw through the light and water sprays that the fake Cuatro was unscathed. "Why is it not sinking after our attacks landed?! Fakes like the ones we have seen so far should fall apart easily, or explode!"

"Madroza-dono! Look at the side of that ship! It's made of Orichalcum!" said Mугan, pointing at the fake Cuatro's side.

Its wooden exterior had broken apart, revealing the Orichalcum beneath.

"I didn't think I'd have to end up showing the Orichalcum ship that I built just in case," said the Demon King Familiar that was steering the ship.

Vandalieu and his companions had acquired a large quantity of Orichalcum by capturing the Orichalcum Golems used by the forces defending Peria. Vandalieu had armored one of the fake Cuatros with this god-created metal that could trade blows with fragments of the Demon King.

His companions that were taking part in this plan were already equipped with equipment made from Demon King fragments. Thus, he had decided to use the Orichalcum to build a ship to act as a shield for the other ships, and it had been a great success.

"With this, even our long-range attacks will not work!" Madroza muttered.

Orichalcum was magic-repellant, but it was also exceptionally hard, and possessed an elastic property and shape-memory. Thus, the attacks of Madroza and the other demigods had almost no effect on it. And with its elastic property and shape-memory, the small scratches and dents they *did* make were erased as the Orichalcum returned to its original shape.

"Now that things have come to this, we have no choice but to leap into the fray!" shouted Madroza. She knew that she would be subject to some attacks, but she believed that there was no other way.



Orichalcum was not indestructible. She was one of the most skilled demigods, and with her close-quarters fighting ability, it would not be impossible to sink this ship.

But at that moment, a voice accompanied by the sound of a horn reached Madroza's ears.

"Wait! Don't focus solely on that Orichalcum ship!" it said. "Our objective is the ships that explode or release 'Bloodlust.' The Orichalcum ship is a shield to protect the others. Spending all of our strength to break that shield is foolish."

"... Mugan, you and the monsters pin that Orichalcum ship down. The rest of you, we will be aiming for the other ships," said Madroza, regaining her composure and giving orders. "Let's go!"

With that, the demigods began attempting to take down the fleet of ships once more. The fake Cuatro made of Orichalcum attempted to stop them, but as Madroza had ordered, the Colossus

Mugan equipped with weapons and armor made of ice, along with the monsters at his command, kept it at bay and limited its movements.

The Demon King Familiars, which were split entities of Vandalieu, realized that something was amiss as they saw Madroza behaving more like a proper commander than she had previously.

"Oh. I was sure she was going to come charging in."

"I thought she'd at least realize that the Orichalcum armor makes the ship too hard to explode."

They immediately activated the 'Super Rapid Thought Processing' Skill, then began a discussion through 'Group Thought Processing.'

At first, Vandalieu had thought that Madroza had learned from her past mistakes. Although Elder Dragons rarely spent time among others, perhaps she had come out of her shell and developed as a commander.

But even if that was the case, her behavior was odd, and Brateo's remaining just as he was before was also odd. Vandalieu felt that if Madroza really had developed, then she would have cooperated with Gorn to keep Brateo in check.

So Vandalieu wondered, what was it then? ... And then he realized something.

*Just now... Just as Madroza was about to say something, I have a feeling that there was an unnatural change in the sound of the war horn.*

The Vandalieu of the past would likely not have paid much attention to the sounds of the war horn and drums playing on the battlefield. He would simply think that this was the God of War Horns and the God of War Drums supporting Gorn and the others.

*Considering the tune up to that point, it was a little unnatural.*

*He tried to cover it up, but it wasn't in harmony. Remembering all of the notes that came before, and comparing them, it's definitely strange.*

*Come to think of it, the melody changed when Brateo came leaping in as well.*

The current Vandalieu was a performer of instrumental music himself, and had learned dancing from Kanako. That didn't mean that his talent had bloomed. He'd never had a talent for music.

However, he had acquired 'Perfect Record Technique.' He could accurately record all information he perceived through his sensory organs, essentially giving him an artificial absolute pitch.

It was artificial, so it was dubious to compare it to someone with a true absolute pitch, but... it had allowed him to sense that something was off.

*If the God of War Horns Sirius is giving commands in Gorn's place, that's troublesome.*

*It's not exactly a fatal problem to the plan, but it'll catch us off guard if we leave him be.*

*But with that said, I don't know where he's hiding. It would be too sloppy to just fire 'World Piercing Destructive Hollow Cannon' like I did before... Let's have someone investigate.*

Having finished the discussion with himself in his head, Vandalieu ordered Kimberley and the space-attribute Ghosts to search for the God of War Horns Sirius.

"... 'Soul Destruction Fighting Technique,' 'Monster Flesh.'"

Naturally, Vandalieu was continuing to fight a fierce battle against Brateo at the same time so that his plan would not be noticed by the enemy. With his fist expanded and covered in an armor created by using 'Materialization' on his soul, he struck Brateo hard.

"You bastard... Do you not fear my counter-attacks?!" Brateo snarled in frustration.

"No. My limbs grow back right away, after all," Vandalieu said in reply.

Brateo's fist, covered by his bronze gauntlet, had broken through Vandalieu's thin, extended soul armor and pierced through his arm. Brateo's electricity was passing directly into it, scorching it from within.

But it was all for naught.

"You bastard! You cut off your own arm before attacking me?!" Brateo shouted as he came to that realization.

Vandalieu had chopped off his own arm before activating 'Monster Flesh.' Brateo's counter-attack on his arm, which was being controlled through 'Group Control,' didn't cause Vandalieu so much as an itch as it

was no longer connected to him.

He just needed to recover the part of his soul that was covering its surface afterwards.

The black pieces of Vandalieu's soul stripped themselves off his now-shrunken arm and reattached to his newly-grown arm. Seeing this, anger and panic flashed in Brateo's eyes, and he gathered even more Mana for his next attack. But in the next moment, a particularly loud note from the war horn echoed across the battlefield.

Brateo clicked his tongue and released more lightning, keeping himself ready for opportunities for more counter-attacks and refraining from committing to a large punching or kicking attack.

*Just now, he was clearly thinking, 'Now that it comes to this, I need to finish things with a large move.' And yet, he's continuing to attack in the same way as before in order to draw me in. A strange level of patience.*

*The war horn's notes are giving commands after all. If possible, I would like to destroy it, but...*

"Vandalieu, with the assistance of Kimberley and the other Ghosts, I would be able to find him quickly, but I will not be able to continue gathering materials. Should I?" asked Gufadgarn.

"... Yes, please. I'm fine, but if we take too long, Zozogante, Simon and the others will struggle."

Zozogante's mental endurance and the stamina of Simon and the others were a concern. Before the battle began, Vandalieu had intended to return Simon and the others to Cuatro if things became difficult, but... given the state of the fleet, it didn't seem like he would be able to do that.

The fact that Madroza and Brateo were remaining calm, though not a critical factor, was making the plan considerably more difficult to carry out.

"As you wish. Excuse me for a short while," Gufadgarn said as her presence vanished from behind Vandalieu.

Madroza, who was attacking the two remaining ships other than the Orichalcum one along with her subordinates, noticed silhouettes on the ships' decks... and that the silhouettes were varied and different from one another.

There were silhouettes on the decks of both ships. Given that, she believed that neither was an exploding fake ship.

Though Zombie Radatel was clearly being used as bait, Vandalieu did not use those he considered his companions as disposable pawns. Madroza knew that he would not sacrifice them.

*In other words, one is the real one, and the other is a fake that is for a purpose other than exploding. So, which is the real one?*

The objective of Madroza and her subordinates was to take down the fake Cuatro before it could explode, in order to minimize the damage and losses suffered by her allies. But if there were no exploding ships, then the real Cuatro was what they should focus on.

If they tried to destroy the fake Cuatro and it ended up being an Orichalcum ship as well, it would just be a waste of time and Mana. So naturally, the real Cuatro was the better target.

The silhouettes on the ships' decks were the clues needed to determine which ship was which.

*One has Legion and Skeletons that look like pirates and sailors. The other has pirate and sailor Skeletons only... the latter is the real one!*

Madroza was aware of the 'Counter' ability of Ereshkigal, one of the personalities that formed Legion. She suspected that the ship with Legion aboard was a fake for the purpose of drawing attacks and making use of 'Counter.'

If the Undead aboard with Legion were entities that were split off from Knochen, then this would not result in Vandalieu sacrificing his allies.

"Cover me!" Madroza commanded her subordinates.

Firing a barrage of spells towards the ship she was certain was the real Cuatro, she attempted to close the distance, steeling herself for the cannon fire that she would inevitably be exposed to.

"M-Madroza-dono?! Stop her, Ryularyus!" shouted Gabildes, alarmed by the sudden change in Madroza's tactics.

"I can't! We have no choice but to cover her!" said Ryularyus.

With no choice other than to obey, and pressed on by the notes of the war horn, they unleashed Breath attacks of acidic bubbles and light, and forced the remaining monsters to charge.

The Orichalcum ship immediately attempted to put itself in the path of these attacks, but icebergs conjured by Mugan blocked its movement.

Much of the cannon-fire was shot down by Ryularyus's Breaths of light, which were fast and accurate, but

even so, several projectiles landed directly on Madroza's body.

Channeling her pain into anger, she roared and let out a Breath attack at point-blank range, then used all of her strength to swing her tail at the ship that was now off-balance.

This was a combination of attacks that had repelled many evil gods during the war against the Demon King a hundred thousand years ago. If they landed, even an Orichalcum Golem wouldn't escape unscathed.

But a moment before Madroza's tail struck its target, a Skeleton wearing a captain's hat leapt out from the deck. Perhaps it was trying to block the tail at the cost of its own life?

*Futile*, Madroza thought.

But in the next moment, pieces of meat spilled out of the Skeleton's hat and grew larger. And then it turned into the shape of a woman.

"Got you," said the woman... Ereshkigal.

With a violent noise, her body was brutally pulverized by Madroza's tail.

Madroza coughed and groaned. The deafening noise of her bones crumbling and her organs being crushed filled the air, and blood poured freely from wounds all over her face as she fell towards the sea. Ereshkigal had separated from Legion, who was with the real Cuatro, and used the 'Size Alteration' Skill to hide inside the Skeleton's hat – in order to apply 'Counter' to any lethal attacks used by the enemy demigods.

Knochen let out a satisfied groan.

The Undead sailors on the ship with Ereshkigal were all split entities of Knochen, so Madroza's analysis of the situation had not been completely wrong.

She had simply mistaken which was the real Cuatro and which was the fake.

"Madroza-dono!"

Moving faster than his appearance suggested was possible, Gabildes rushed forward to aid Madroza, while Ryularyus kept Cuatro and the fake Cuatro in check with continuous Breath attacks.

"Wait, isn't that one of the ones we were supposed to leave alive?" said Pluto. "Do you think she's okay?"

"She seems to be heavily wounded and on the verge of death, but I don't think it can be helped. If Ereshkigal hadn't used 'Counter' there, the fake Cuatro would have exploded at point-blank range," said Shade.

"It's important not to mistake boldness for recklessness!" said Valkyrie.

Even as this conversation was taking place, the war horn sounded multiple times.

It seemed that Gorn and Sirius were shaken by Madroza's critical state as well.

And from the war horn's notes, Kimberley and Gufadgarn were able to successfully locate the pseudo-Divine Realm where Sirius was hiding.

"We've found where the target's hiding!" Kimberley said.

"I can... make a connection, at a moment's notice. Just give the word," said Gufadgarn.

"Then let's destroy him and then leave," said Vandalieu, gathering Mana to cast a spell.

"I won't let you!" shouted Brateo, taking notice of this and using the opening to unleash a lethal attack.

It was a maximum-speed punch, with his muscles and nerves forcibly strengthened by lightning.

Brateo's fist broke the sound barrier and crashed into Vandalieu head-on, and Vandalieu was sent flying away, unable to resist the force at all.

But in the next moment –

"World Piercing Destructive Hollow Cannon."

A jet-black ray of light that was capable of destroying even a god appeared from behind Brateo.

"Wha – ?! You used the arm that you cut off?!"

The arm that Vandalieu had cut off to prevent Brateo's counter-attack earlier – Vandalieu had recycled it by using 'Group Control' to manipulate and regenerate it.

And the 'World Piercing Destructive Hollow Cannon' passed through a 'Teleportation Gate' that appeared in its path, altering its trajectory.

The sound of something breaking could be heard, along with a dying scream.

"I-I leave the rest to you..." a voice groaned.

And with that, the sounds of the war horn ceased.

**Name:** Knochen

**Titles:** All Bone Palace, Concert Venue

**Rank:** 14

**Race:**Bone Pandemonium Gigant

**Level:** 85

**Passive skills:**

Dark Vision

Monstrous Strength: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)

Spirit Form: Level 10

Precise Bone Form Manipulation: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)

Physical Resistance: Level 10

Super Absorption Healing (Bone): Level 1 (Awakened from Absorption Healing (Bone)!)

Fortress Form: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)

Strengthened Attribute Values: Fortress Form: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)

Strengthened Attribute Values: Creator: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)

Self-Strengthening: Guidance: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)

Magic Resistance: Level 3 (NEW!)

**Active skills:**

Silent Steps: Level 2

Breath (Poison): Level 10

High-speed Flight: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)

Projectile Fire: Level 10

Parallel Thought Processing: Level 10

Construction: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)

Musical Performance: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)

Dance: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)

Familiar Spirit Demonfall: Level 1 (NEW!)

Dismantling: Level 3 (NEW!)

Size Alteration: Level 2 (NEW!)

**Unique skills:**

Vandalieu's Divine Protection

Bone Swarm Control: Level 3

Group Body: Level 2 (Awakened from Fission!)

Vida's Divine Protection (NEW!)

**Name:** Cuatro

**Title:** Ship of Despair (NEW!)

**Rank:** 11

**Race:** Phobia Ghost War Battleship

**Level:** 88

**Passive Skills:**

Special Five Senses

Physical Resistance: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)

Mental Corruption: Level 7

Strengthened Attribute Values: Sailing: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)

Strengthened Attribute Values: Creator: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)

Self-Strengthening: On Water: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)

Self-Strengthening: Guidance: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)

Impact Resistance: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)

Superhuman Strength: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)

Airborne Sailing: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)

Underwater Sailing: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)

Rapid Regeneration: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)

Water Attribute Resistance: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)

Self-Strengthening: Airborne: Level 3 (NEW!)

Space Expansion: Level 1 (NEW!)

**Active Skills:**

Transcend Limits: Level 2 (Awakened from Surpass Limits!)

High-Speed Cruising: Level 9 (LEVEL UP!)  
Projectile Fire: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)  
Scream: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)  
Aura of Fear: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)  
Artillery Technique: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)  
Silent Steps: Level 1  
Familiar Spirit Demonfall: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)  
Precise Steering: Level 1 (NEW!)

**Unique Skills:**

Vandalieu's Divine Protection

Monster explanation (Written by Luciliano):

Bone Pandemonium Gigant

Likely the largest Undead in the world. If all of his bones were gathered in one place, he could create a room in which even the Sun Giant Talos could relax in.

Perhaps due to his 'Construction' Skill Level increasing, the quality and designs of interiors and furniture of the rooms he creates has improved (although they are all made of bone).

And as he has acquired the 'Size Alteration' Skill, he has become able to reduce his size, and this allowed him to be carried inside Cuatro in order to participate in this battle.

As for his strength in battle... he could crush a human army simply by advancing forward. Fighting him would be like trying to fight a mountain that is capable of flying at great speeds. A-class adventurers are capable of splitting small hills, but... using a single attack against a mountain of bones with a Level 10 'Physical Resistance' Skill and turning them all to dust would likely be impossible even for Master – though he would be able to do so with multiple attacks.

Monster explanation (Written by Luciliano):

Phobia Ghost War Battleship

A monster that was a Rank 8 Terror Ghost Chimera Battleship, a Rank 9 Phobia Ghost Battleship, and a Rank 10 Phobia Ghost Warship before reaching its current state.

Perhaps due to experiencing battles against demigods, Cuatro's growth has progressed at a spectacular rate. Its rapid evolution makes it difficult to believe that it started out as a collection of inorganic matter.

And because it has acquired the 'Space Expansion' Skill, it has become capable of housing a great number of objects and personnel.

Like Sam, any nation that learned of Cuatro's existence would desire it as a means of transportation... though unlike Sam, it is crewed by Undead sailors, making it rather undesirable to the Amid Empire.

Incidentally, 'Ship of Despair' is thought to be a Title that the forces defending Botin and Peria created.

Well, I cannot blame them. The exploding fake Cuatros had the same appearance as the real one, after all.

Skill explanation (Written by Luciliano):

Strengthened All Attribute Values

A Skill that strengthens Strength, Agility, Stamina, and Intelligence. Despite stating 'All Attribute Values,' Vitality and Mana are not included.

Apparently, many who attain the status of S-class adventurer possess this Skill.

Incidentally, Master has acquired this Skill while retaining his 'Monstrous Strength' Skill, but... one has no choice but to accept that such a thing is possible.

**Chapter 297 - The second stage begins**

Going back in time a little – shortly before Madroza was heavily wounded by Ereshkigal's 'Counter.' Juliana and her allies were fighting inside the crimson mist of 'Bloodlust.'

A monster resembling a two-and-a-half-meter-tall Goblin, of a race which had been temporarily named 'Goblin-like', was being forced in Juliana's direction by the arrows of the half-Minotaur girls.

"Commander... I mean, Nee-san! It's headed your way!" one of them said in warning.

"This is a technique that was passed onto me by Saria-san – Great Deadly Slash!" shouted Juliana.

The halberd in her right hand came crashing down upon the Goblin-like's skull, splitting its head and chest in half. The Goblin-like fell towards the sea with an unpleasant scream, its blue blood spraying all around it, before being caught by the tail by Bellmond.

"Are we taking that with us? It doesn't look very appetizing," said Juliana, aware that Goblins didn't taste good unless they were made into Gobu-gobu.

"Juliana, I understand that you are in your growth period, but you do not have to adopt Danna-sama's way of determining the value of prey. This is for research, not for eating," said Bellmond with a wry smile as she dealt a finishing blow to the Goblin-like and stored its body in an Item Box. "That large attack – did you fail to perform a martial skill?"

"Yes. My 'Spear Axe Technique' still has a long way to go."

Juliana had trained in 'Spear Technique' as a knight in her previous life, but after being pseudo-reincarnated as a half-Minotaur, she had trained using axes, clubs, and halberds.

'Spear Technique' was focused on speed, and did not make use of the superhuman strength she had now. And because her body was developing quickly, it had been easier for her to train with weapons focused on strength than 'Spear Technique,' which required dexterity.

Perhaps it was wise for her to learn a form of 'Spear Technique' that matched her body once it was fully developed, but... learning new Skills was never a waste, so Juliana and her new sisters had been training with new weapons together.

"More importantly, how is the strength of the enemies you are fighting? Perhaps you would be fine with fighting monsters that are a little stronger?" suggested Zadiris, who had been clearing monsters outside the mist of 'Bloodlust.'

"No, we would not be fine with that!" said Juliana, shaking her head. "We are less skilled overall than Natania-san's group, so the ones we are fighting now are just right."

Juliana was leading ten of her half-Minotaur sisters, who had been birthed by the body that was Juliana's in her previous life.

She herself was just as skilled as Simon and his group, but her sisters were still below the level of a B-class adventurer, so they were being allocated weaker monsters than Simon's group.

As for their transformation equipment, they were using an all-purpose liquid-metal one as their bodies were not fully developed yet, and they were wearing armor on top of it.

The reason they were able to fight in the crimson mist of 'Bloodlust' was because the monsters were weakened from having to use their Mana and abilities to withstand 'Bloodlust.'

"Stronger monsters than this... Rank 10 and above would be too much for us," said Juliana.

"Mmm, I see," said Zadiris. "Ah, oops," she said, turning around to see a purple Slime appearing from inside the 'Bloodlust.'

This monster seemed to have charged through by relying on its innate durability and the structure of its body, which was unhindered as long as the 'Bloodlust' didn't damage its core.

"Everyone, stay back," Bellmond warned. "'Petrifying Demon Eye' is not working. I have no other choice. 'Eight Cutting Blade Threads.'"

The Slime's highly viscous body was cut into nine pieces by Bellmond's threads. It seemed to have been fortunate enough to avoid damage to its core, or perhaps it had multiple cores because it was an advanced race of Slime – the separated pieces of purple slime were still wriggling and trying to rejoin into one piece.

But before it could do so –

"'Fierce Shining Blades: Chaotic Dance!'"

Blades of light conjured by Zadiris's 'Light Princess Magic' cut the Slime into even smaller pieces.

Seemingly unable to regenerate this much damage, it was engulfed by the 'Bloodlust' and disappeared.

"... We cannot recover that," said Bellmond.

"It is not a problem, is it? I believe there are more of these Slimes where Simon and the others are," said Zadiris.

"Then it is alright. Danna-sama did say that we don't have to recover materials if it is too difficult."

The monster-collecting that Bellmond was doing was not a particularly high-priority task. Vandalieu had just asked her to collect what she could when Gufadgarn and the space-attribute Ghosts were busy.

"If we do anything dangerous to try and secure monster corpses, Danna-sama would scold me rather than be pleased," said Bellmond.

"... Whether it is to reward or scold you, I believe the boy simply ends up brushing your tail, does he not?" said Zadiris.

"... Did he tell you something, *Princess*?"

Bellmond and Zadiris glared at each other, smiling, but with more tension than when they had been

attacking the Slime. Though it was probably just a coincidence, even the crimson mist of 'Bloodlust' squirmed as if afraid.

But this air of tension was swept away by compliments and questions from Juliana and her sisters.

"As expected of you two! Even Simon-san and the others had difficulty with those Slimes; they are likely at least Rank 10! And yet you defeated it without even giving it a chance to strike back!"

"Your thread technique and your spells were beautiful to see!"

"Just how did you even notice the Slime's approach? It made no sound and gave off no presence!"

The half-Minotaur girls were fanatical worshippers of Vandalieu, so Zadiris and Bellmond were like idols to them, as they were Vandalieu's close allies.

"Th-thank you," said Bellmond, blushing as she moved back.

Zadiris did the opposite, moving forward towards the girls. "Indeed. However, you have also been guided by the boy and received his divine protection. If you continue working hard, you will become able to defeat monsters like that as well."

Zadiris had once served as chief of her tribe, and she had performed on stages many times this year, so she was used to receiving compliments.

"And you should work hard in your singing and dancing training," Zadiris added. "Our religious activities are important as well, after all."

"Yes, Ma'am!" the half-Minotaur girls said.

Zadiris was careful not to forget to utilize their respect for her to make them become magical girls... and eventually princesses.

*Miriam and Kalinia just need a little more time as well. And once Juliana and her sisters join, my deepest desire will be fulfilled!*

Zadiris's deepest desire was to rid herself of the status of princess. The names of her Jobs and Skills would not change, but if there were more women using transformation equipment, becoming magical girls, and becoming princesses, she would become less special and the 'Princess' would disappear from her Title.

And Zadiris believed that this would also remove 'Princess' from her race title.

*The benefits it provides to my Attribute Value growth are satisfactory, but... I am an adult, after all. But with that said, at this rate, it will take another year or two for my desire to be fulfilled,* she thought, thinking of a brighter future for herself.

But Bellmond gave a sigh. "If you go too far, you might get a Job like 'Princess Guider,' you know," she said, crushing her hopes.

"P... Princess Guider?! S-Such a horrifying Job could not possibly exist, could it?!" Zadiris said in a half-scream, her face pale, having never imagined such a possibility.

"Someone who leads princesses... It would match you perfectly, Zadiris-san!" said Juliana cheerfully.

This was true, and Zadiris fell silent, unable to say anything in response.

"Kanakano awakened her 'Artistic Guider' Job, so it really could happen," said Bellmond.

"Gah! Guiders have an ideology, don't they?! Why would 'princess' be an ideology! It is just a position and title!" argued Zadiris.

"It isn't of much use to try and convince *me*... Even if it did happen, Danna-sama would probably be pleased, so wouldn't it be a good thing?"

"The boy simply enjoys making a fool of me! And I think you should rethink the idea that there is no problem as long as the boy is pleased! Besides, the battle is still ongoing! Do not let your guard down. Where have Eleanora and Basdia gone?!"

Having forcibly changed the unpleasant subject of the conversation, Zadiris looked around at her surroundings. The battle was indeed still ongoing, but many of the monsters that she and her allies were in charge of culling had left the vicinity of the 'Bloodlust.'

The weaker monsters and those without the intelligence or ability to stop 'Bloodlust' were devoured by it, and the stronger ones were to be defeated by Juliana's group, Simon's group, and Zadiris.

It seemed that the only ones left were the few being commanded directly by the demigods.

But Eleanora and her group were nowhere to be found.

"Eleanora was enveloped in the 'Bloodlust' during battle a little earlier, and is on something of a high..." said Bellmond.

'Bloodlust' consisted of very tiny split entities of Vandalieu. In other words, being enveloped in 'Bloodlust' meant being enveloped in Vandalieu. Eleanora had become intoxicated at the thought of being surrounded by a countless number of Vandalieus.

Perhaps this could be considered brave of her, even if her divine protection did make the 'Bloodlust' harmless to her.

“Hmm, if she is still on a high, finding her will be troublesome,” said Zadiris. “Hmm? This is...”

The ‘Bloodlust’ grew thinner, as there were now less nutrients for it to feed on and multiply with, and a shout that sounded like a roar came from the other side of the mist.

Then there was a great gust of wind, scattering the ‘Bloodlust’ in the direction of Juliana and her sisters, causing them to let out a startled cry.

“This is a wind-attribute spell or a Breath attack! Brace yourselves!” shouted Zadiris.

They prepared themselves for their last formidable foe. Realizing that she would not be able to use her threads in this wind, Bellmond frowned and raised her other weapon, her tail.

But what they saw in the direction the wind was coming from was not a powerful foe heading their way. It was a pair of fleeing, wounded demigods.

“GAAAH! My eyes, MY EYES!” the Colossus bellowed, his hands covering his bleeding face.

“I won’t forget this! Next time, I’ll definitely kill you next time!” shouted the Elder Dragon, who had lost half of its tail.

Vigaro and Eleanora were there as well.

“Hmph,” Vigaro snorted. “Such boring threats!”

“You’re entirely right,” said Eleanora, bemused. “All bark and no bite.”

But it wasn’t that the battle had been easy.

“No, it was quite a hard battle. We couldn’t call for aid, either,” said Basdia.

“The split entity of His-Majesty-kun was just saying, ‘This is just right for everyone,’ too. Well, it was hard, but we did manage to repel them without suffering any major damage,” said Zandia.

They had no wounds, but there were traces of blood on their bodies.

“Basdia! I have a vague idea, but... what have you been doing?” asked Zadiris.

“Mother, it’s good to see that you’re alright,” said Basdia. “We were fighting the ‘Gale Colossus’ Pozeri and the ‘Whirlwind Dragon God’ Zanaffar, the ones that just ran away.”

“While we were dealing with the monsters that are too strong for leveling Simon and the others, we saw them trying to blow the ‘Bloodlust’ away with wind,” added Zandia.

Pozeri and Zanaffar, a Colossus and Elder Dragon of the wind attribute, had manipulated the wind to cut them off from the others. Thus, the four of them had been forced to fight against two demigods on their own.

But as the four of them had been able to use the ‘Familiar Spirit Demonfall’ Skill to summon split entities of Vandalieu, they had not actually been cut off from help.

However, Vandalieu’s split entities had determined that the four of them would be able to defeat the two demigods, so no other reinforcements had been sent their way. As a result, the battle had taken place as Pozeri and Zanaffar had intended, but Basdia and her allies had been victorious.

“You look surprised,” said Eleanora. “Did you really think I would stay obsessed with the ‘Bloodlust’ forever? Even Van-sama’s split entity said: ‘Bloodlust’ doesn’t act like doctor fish, so please stop.’ So I stopped after a while.”

“... You correctly guessed why I am surprised, but what is a ‘doctor fish?’” said Zadiris.

“Based on its name, it seems to be a venomous fish,” said Bellmond.

“I haven’t a clue,” said Eleanora. “The effects of ‘Familiar Spirit Demonfall’ have worn off, so let’s ask Van-sama when we meet up with him.”

As this conversation was taking place, a demigod’s scream and a shrieked “Retreat!” came from the direction where Borkus, Jeena, Bone Man, and Luciliano were fighting.

“I think our time to retreat will come soon as well. I wonder when the order will be given?” said Zandia.

A few seconds later, ‘World Piercing Destructive Hollow Cannon’ was fired from Vandalieu’s severed arm, and the God of War Horns Sirius, who had been kept hidden by the God of Mirror Images Larpan, was destroyed.

Immediately after that, Vandalieu, who had been struck by Brateo’s fist, was sent flying like a football.

“His-Majesty-kun?!”

“Van-sama?!”

But there was no time for Zandia and the others to be surprised. Twisting space so that her voice would reach them, Gufadgarn spoke.

“We are retreating. Please follow Vandalieu and swiftly make your way to the real Cuatro.”

“Alright,” said Basdia with a small nod.

With that, everyone hurriedly made their way towards Cuatro. This gave the appearance that they were retreating because they were shaken by the sight of Vandalieu being sent flying.

Meanwhile, Vandalieu, who had allowed himself to be punched on purpose, allowed his momentum to carry him some distance before deciding to stop.



But before he could, Cuatro gave a screech as it flew into his flight path, and Legion provided a soft landing for him.

“Alright, nice catch.”

“How bold of you to fly directly into our chest.”

“Chest...?”

“Chest...?” Vandalieu echoed, just as confused as Enma. “Yes, well, thank you,” he said, enveloped by Legion’s soft flesh. “Now then, let’s begin our retreat. I’m going to have the fake Cuatros charge forward and self-destruct, so gather everyone together. I’ll undo ‘Bloodlust’ as well. The four captains, fire your signal flares just in case.”

“Aye-aye, sir! Give the signal to retreat!”

Soon after the Four Dead Sea Captains repeated the order, signal flares rose into the air. As the fake Cuatro left, everyone returned. Many of the demigods had suffered wounds that were by no means light, and they were in a state of chaos with the loss of Sirius, who had been relaying Gorn’s orders across the whole battlefield, so they were in no state to give chase.

“No! Bring down that ship! Bring it down at any cost!” shouted Brateo.

He and most of the other demigods were in a state of disarray, and they were now forced to desperately attempt to bring down the fake Cuatro that was charging at them.

If Sirius were still alive, and if both Madroza and Brateo were still here to lead the others in battle rather than Brateo alone, Gorn would have likely divided his forces into two groups. He would have had himself and those around him deal with the fake Cuatro while sending Brateo and Madroza to pursue Vandalieu and his allies.

But the only thing they were capable of doing now was sinking the fake Cuatro.

“Ugh... Even though we have dealt considerable damage to them and reclaimed Radatel’s ashes... we have lost almost all of the monsters we sent, as well as Sirius and Lubug. Alda, if you do not finish nurturing your treasured Heinz, things will come to an end before he becomes more than your treasure...!” Gorn murmured, staring at the sky from which the smoke had now cleared, but there was no sign of Vandalieu and his allies, nor of his fleet of ships.

《The Levels of the ‘Monstrous Strength,’ ‘Super Rapid Regeneration,’ ‘Underworld King Magic,’ ‘Super Strengthen Subordinates,’ ‘Augmented Vitality,’ ‘Murder Healing,’ ‘Self-Strengthening: Murder,’ ‘Transcend Limits,’ ‘Hollow King Magic,’ ‘Soul Destruction Fighting Technique,’ ‘Musical Instrument Performance,’ ‘Muscle Technique,’ ‘Magic Fighting Technique,’ ‘God Devourer,’ and ‘Surpass Limits: Soul’ Skills have increased!》

《‘Strengthened Attack Power while activating a Magic Cannon’ has awakened to ‘Augmented Attack Power while activating a Magic Cannon,’ and ‘Coordination’ has awakened to ‘Group Coordination!’》

《You have acquired ‘Divinity: God of Music!’》

《‘Divinity: God of Music’ has combined with ‘Demigod!’》

An incident occurred across the human societies of the Bahn Gaia continent and everywhere else in the world, in which statues and carvings of the God of War Horns Sirius crumbled and broke, and the priests and shamans that worshiped him cried out and lost consciousness.

In the Amid Empire, a knight who was said to have received Sirius’s divine protection suddenly collapsed mid-meal, his face falling straight into his plate of stew.

Fortunately, he was wearing a talisman that reduced damage caused by the fire attribute, so his face did not suffer burns, but... as he had been eating in the corner of a shop, it was some time before he was discovered, and he had almost drowned in the stew.

Entirely unconcerned by such tragedies, Vandalieu and his companions teleported to Gartland, the underground region beneath the Demon King’s Continent.

They were beginning the second stage of the plan.

“Most of the preparations have been done in advance, but we still need to change Jobs,” said Vandalieu. Although they had not defeated many demigods this time, they had slain around a hundred monsters of Rank 10 and above. Thus, the Jobs of the members of the ‘Heart Warrior Brigade’ had naturally reached Level 100, as had those of Zadiris and the others, which allowed them to change Jobs.

Thus, the Job-changing rooms aboard Cuatro, in Sam’s carriage, and in Gartland were currently being

used at maximum capacity.

The second stage of the plan would begin after some rest to recover from fatigue and restore Mana, and after a meal, so there was time for everyone to change Jobs. However, there was little time for them to get accustomed to their new Jobs.

Ordinarily, changing Jobs would not require one to drastically change the way they fought in battle unless they acquired a very strange Job, but... there weren't any Jobs for Vandalieu that weren't strange.

"Lately, Zadiris and the others are seeing strange Jobs as well. I think 'Princess Guider' was just said as a joke, but... Kanako became an 'Artistic Guider' through her idol activities, so it could be possible," Vandalieu said to himself as he reached out to touch the crystal ball.

《Jobs that can be selected: Fallen Warrior, Insect Ninja, Chaos Guider, Hollow King Mage, Eclipse Cursecaster, Demon Ruler, Creator, Tartarus, Wild Spirit, Dark Battery Cannoneer, Magic Staff Creator, Soul Fighter, God Destroyer, Qliphoth, Dark Beast User, Spirit Therapist, Artisan: Transformation Equipment, Hollow Shadow Caster, Balor, Apollyon, Demigorgon, Soul Devourer, God Devourer, Nergal, Ravana, Shaitan, Chi You, God Spirit Mage, Ouroboros, Rudra, Blood Ruler, Demon Electricity User, Yin Guider, Divine Guider, Juggernaut, Underworld God Mage, Berserk Muscle User (NEW!)》

"Hmm, as I expected, a new Job related to 'Muscle Technique' has appeared."

It was a different Job from that of Zorcodrio, his teacher, but Vandalieu's 'Muscle Technique' was something of his own, so there wasn't anything unexpected about a different Job appearing... and it was impossible for him to acquire the same Job as Zorcodrio anyway, due to his 'Cannot learn existing Jobs' curse.

"Well then, I select 'Chaos Guider.'"

The second stage of the plan would likely involve defeating multiple demigods... Brateo, Madroza if she was still alive, and Gorn at the very least.

Thus, it was likely that Vandalieu's Job would reach Level 100 once more by the time it was over.

That was why he had decided to use this opportunity to take a Guider Job... If he took a Job with the name of a different god, it was possible that it would affect the plan. 'Pale Rider' had been useful in restricting the enemy's movements, but there was no guarantee that the other Jobs would be beneficial.

《You have selected 'Chaos Guider!'》

《You have acquired the 'Guidance: Chaos Path' and 'Chaos Path Enticement' Skills!》

《'Chaos Path Enticement has combined with 'Dark Dream Demon Creation Destruction Path Enticement' to become 'Dark Chaos Dream Demon Creation Destruction Path Enticement,' and 'Guidance: Chaos Path' has combined with 'Guidance: Dark Dream Demon Creation Destruction Path!' to become 'Guidance: Dark Chaos Dream Demon Creation Destruction Path!' 》

《The 'Body Expansion: Tongue' Skill has awakened to 'Limitless Body Expansion: Tongue!'》

《The Levels of the 'Group Commander,' 'Group Coordination,' 'Deadly Venom Secretion: Claws, Fangs, Tongue,' 'Demon King Artillery Technique,' and 'Shadow Group Binding Technique' Skills have increased!》

**Name:** Vandalieu Zakkart

**Race:** Dhampir (Mother: Goddess)

**Age:** 12 years old

**Title:** Ghoulish Emperor, Eclipse Emperor, Guardian of the Cultivation Villages, Holy Son of Vida, Scaled Emperor, Tentacle Emperor, Champion, Demon King, Oni Emperor, Trial Conqueror, Transgressor, Black Blood Emperor, Elder Dragon Emperor, Food Cart King, Genius Tamer, True Ruler of the Red-light District, Patron Saint of Transformation Equipment

**Job:** Chaos Guider

**Level:** 0

**Job history:** Death-Attribute Mage, Golem Transmuter, Undead Tamer, Soul Breaker, Venom Fist User, Insect User, Tree Caster, Demon Guider, Archenemy, Zombie Maker, Golem Creator, Corpse Demon Commander, Demon King User, Dark Guider, Labyrinth Creator, Creation Guider, Dark Healer, Disease Demon, Magic Cannoneer, Spirit Warrior, Bestower, Dream Guider, Demon King, Demiurge, Whip Tongue Calamity, Divine Enemy, Dead Spirit Mage, String User, Great Demon King, Vengeful Berserker, Destruction Guider, Dark King Mage, Pale Rider

**Attributes:**

Vitality: 602,195 (+24,087) (Increased by 22,396!)

Mana: 10,436,996,698 (+10,436,996,698) (Increased by 310,893,476 in total!)

Strength: 62,931 (Increased by 1,522!)

Agility: 56,357 (Increased by 2,065!)

Stamina: 68,164 (Increased by 1,753!)

Intelligence: 80,864 (Increased by 1,768!)

**Passive skills:**

Monstrous Strength: Level 9 (LEVEL UP!)

Super Rapid Regeneration: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)

Underworld God Magic: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)

Status Effect Immunity

Magic Resistance: Level 10

Dark Vision

Dark Chaos Dream Demon Creation Destruction Path Enticement: Level 10 (Transformed from Dark Dream Demon Creation Destruction Path Enticement!)

Chant Revocation: Level 10

Guidance: Dark Chaos Dream Demon Creation Destruction Path: Level 10 (Transformed from Guidance: Dark Dream Demon Creation Destruction Path!)

Constant Mana Recovery: Level 5

Super Strengthen Subordinates: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)

Deadly Venom Secretion (Claws, Fangs, Tongue): Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)

Limitless Body Expansion (Tongue) (Awakened from Body Expansion (Tongue)!)

Augmented Attack Power while Unarmed: Small

Strengthened Body Part (Hair, Claws, Tongue, Fangs): Level 10

Demon Thread Refining: Level 1

Mana Enlargement: Level 10

Increased Mana Recovery Rate: Level 10

Augmented Attack Power while activating a Magic Cannon: Small(Awakened from Strengthened Attack Power while activating a Magic Cannon!)

Augmented Vitality: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)

Strengthened Attribute Values: Reigning: Level 9 (LEVEL UP!)

Strengthened Attribute Values: Worshiped: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)

Strengthened Attribute Values: Demon Empire of Vidal: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)

Self-Regeneration: Cannibalism: Level 3

Augmented Attribute Values: Cannibalism: Level 3

Strengthened Attribute Values when Enveloped in a Soul: Medium

Murder Healing: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)

Self-Strengthening: Murder: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)

Increased Magical Power while equipped with a Staff: Small

Strengthened All Attribute Values: Large (NEW! Combined with Strengthened Agility. LEVEL UP!)

**Active skills:**

Blood Rule: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)

Transcend Limits: Level 9 (LEVEL UP!)

Golem Creation: Level 8

Hollow King Magic: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)

Precise Mana Control: Level 3

Cooking: Level 9 (LEVEL UP!)

Divine Alchemy: Level 2

Soul Destruction Fighting Technique: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)

Greater Multi-cast: Level 6  
Surgery: Level 8  
Embodiment: Level 5  
Group Coordination: Level 2 (Awakened from Coordination!)  
Super High-speed Thought Processing: Level 7  
Group Commander: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)  
Thread-reeling: Level 8  
Throwing: Level 10  
Scream: Level 8  
God Spirit Magic: Level 3  
Demon King Artillery Technique: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)  
Armor Technique: Level 10  
Shield Technique: Level 10  
Shadow Group Binding Technique: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)  
Transcend Limits: Fragments: Level 2  
Spirit Therapy: Level 2  
Whip Technique: Level 3  
Spirit Form Transformation: Lightning  
Staff Technique: Level 3  
High-speed Flight: Level 2  
Musical Instrument Performance: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)  
Dancing: Level 2 (NEW! LEVEL UP!)  
Muscle Technique: Level 3 (NEW! LEVEL UP!)  
Magic Fighting Technique: Level 2 (NEW! LEVEL UP!)

**Unique skills:**

God Devourer: Level 9 (LEVEL UP!)  
Deformed Multiple Souls  
Mental Encroachment: Level 9  
Labyrinth Creation: Level 5  
Great Demon King  
Root Source  
Divine Enemy  
Soul Devour: Level 10  
Vida's Divine Protection  
Earth's Gods' Divine Protection  
Group Thought Processing: Level 8  
Zantark's Divine Protection  
Group Control: Level 8  
Soul Form: Level 4  
Demon King's Demon Eyes  
Origin's Gods' Divine Protection  
Ricklent's Divine Protection  
Zuruwarn's Divine Protection  
Perfect Record Technique  
Surpass Limits: Soul: Level 3  
Mutation Induction  
Demon King's Body  
Demigod (Combined with Divinity: God of Music!)

**Curses**

Experience gained in previous life not carried over  
Cannot learn existing jobs  
Unable to gain experience independently

"... Why has my tongue become able to expand infinitely?" Vandalieu wondered as he checked his Status.

But he left the room behind, going over his plans in his head once more – absorbing the Demon King's

spiracles and spurs, eating a hamburger made using the fresh meat of a Colossus, having a short rest, and making sure there was nothing unusual with his body before the second stage of the plan.

Half a day later, just before dawn, as the sky above the continent began to grow lighter, Vandalieu and his companions stood at the end of the tunnel inside Gartland – just a short distance away from where Botin was sealed away.

“Now then, we will begin the second stage of the plan,” Vandalieu announced. “Gufadgarn, please take care of Mom, my child, and everyone else.”

There was a long pause, and then Gufadgarn finally said, “Very well.”

And with that, the ‘Evil God Behind Vandalieu’ left him and teleported to Cuatro’s deck.

“Press on. To the goddess!” said Juliana.

“Yes, Ma’am,” said Vandalieu as he began digging the last part of the tunnel.

Job explanation (Written by Luciliano):

Pale Rider

A Job with the name from a legend of another world, one of the four horsemen who bring about the apocalypse. It is apparently a horseman who spreads death and disease where it goes, and Job’s name suggests that it might have an effect or two that would cause concerns regarding hygiene, but that doesn’t seem to be the case.

The Job’s actual effects turned out to make it possible to spread disease with a discriminatory function, allowing Master to add some degree of control to diseases he creates with ‘Underworld King Magic’ and ‘Bloodlust.’

It is unclear as to what would happen if someone other than Master were to acquire this Job, but... I would presume that it is impossible for one to do so without the ability to use death-attribute magic. Incidentally, I shall also record that for some time after Master acquired this Job, he did not allow anyone who is not Undead or does not possess ‘Status Effect Immunity’ or ‘Status Effect Resistance’ near him.

Chapter 298 - Time for food

The Boulder Colossus Gorn and his allies felt relieved after the battle of the previous day, which could only be described as fierce.

Vandalieu and his allies had attacked with such force, and yet, they had managed to drive them off. All of the force defending Botin believed that there would be some time before Vandalieu’s next attack.

During that time, they would have to heal their wounds and replenish their fighting forces. Their strategy of using sound to relay commands across the battlefield, which had been seen through by Vandalieu, needed to be improved or replaced by a new strategy.

Madroza had narrowly avoided death, thanks to the vast Vitality of an Elder Dragon, as well as the healing magic of her allies.

99% of the monsters that were capable of flight had been lost, but Gorn and his allies could always gather more.

The gaps created by the loss of the God of War Horns Sirius and the Bronze Colossus Lubug could not be filled as easily. A request for reinforcements had been sent to Alda, the God of Law and Fate.

However, Alda had sent word that he was still talking to the demigods who were busy with the maintenance of the world and culling monsters, trying to convince them to join Gorn’s forces, and that Gorn should not expect any significant reinforcements.

As a result of the request for reinforcements, Alda had sent the Orichalcum Golems that had been created by Botin and her subordinate gods and then destroyed by the Demon King’s army a hundred thousand years ago. The successor of the title of ‘Starfish Beast-King’ and the children of the Shellfish Beast-King Harinsheb had also answered the call, seeking to avenge their parents, as well as the siblings of the Sea Bird Beast-King, seeking to avenge their brother.

But it was difficult to say that their forces had been replenished.

Although the Orichalcum Golems had been created by one known as ‘Mother of the Earth and Goddess of Craftsmanship’ and the gods who served her, they were objects that had already been destroyed once and then restored. They would not perform much better than the Golems used by the forces defending Peria, which had not been of much use other than as shields against Vandalieu and his allies.

The succeeding Starfish Beast-King was still young and by no means stronger than Repobilis had been, and needless to say, Harinsheb’s children were not comparable to their father. The same could be said for Valfaz’s siblings.

The demigods’ numbers were recovering, but their overall fighting strength had dropped.

They had no choice but to make up for that difference as best they could by using monsters. Gathering these monsters was a simple task, as the Demon King’s Continent was a treasure trove of monsters.

There were even plenty of monsters that the demigods themselves could be wounded by, if they let their

guard down.

The difficult part was taming them, but...

Still, given enough time, it was possible to rebuild and recover.

Currently, the gods of Alda's forces had three kinds of important locations that they needed to defend. The first was Alda's Dungeon of Trials, where Heinz was – the one who had the potential to defeat Vandalieu and revive Bellwood. The second was the Demon King Continent where Botin was sealed, as well as the ocean where Peria slumbered.

In addition to those were the Churches of the gods of Alda's forces located in the Amid Empire and the Orbaume Kingdom, though these were unlikely to be targeted by Vandalieu.

The last category of important locations was the Devil's Nests and high-difficulty Dungeons that had appeared in places where humans could not reach. Places like the locations where evil gods and the gods of Alda's forces were sealed away would be no problem in the short-term if left alone.

Even if the demigods who protected these locations left them, monster rampages would not occur immediately. Powerful monsters had more limited reproductive capabilities, so these locations would not become problematic for at least a few decades.

If the gods protecting these locations could be persuaded to join Gorn's forces, they could bolster not only their numbers, but their overall average strength.

All of that would be possible, but...

"Impossible! There is a fleet of ten flying ships approaching?!" shouted Gorn, his eyes open wide in shock upon hearing the worst possible news.

"Impossible... Do those ships not take time to build?!"

There had been periods of several days or even up to a month between Vandalieu's previous attacks, so Gorn and his allies had suspected that the fake Cuatros took time to build.

They hadn't imagined that Vandalieu was capable of building a fake ship every few hours as long as he had the wood.

"Isn't it some kind of illusion?!" Gorn muttered.

"Unfortunately, all ten of the ships are real...!"

"... So that means they are finally bringing their full strength. Yesterday's attack... and all of the attacks before it, were pretenses to make us let our guard down!"

Gorn believed that Vandalieu and his allies had deliberately left significant lengths of time between their attacks in order to fool him into thinking that the fake Cuatros took a considerable time to build.

He believed that his forces would now need to bring out their own full strength in order to repel the enemy fleet of ten ships. However, at the same time, he understood that this would be difficult.

His allies, who were weaker than yesterday, would need to defeat an enemy that was stronger than yesterday. Among the ten enemy ships, perhaps some were carrying some enormous being, and the self-destructing ships... perhaps they contained 'Bloodlust.'

The monsters, which had played the role of exhausting the enemy in yesterday's battle, were now too few in number to carry out that role in this battle. It was possible to use magic to forcibly allow the normally flightless monsters to fly, in order to make up for the monsters that had been lost yesterday, but... would that be of any use?

*Even if we repel this attack at the cost of many of my brethren, what will we do after that? Gorn asked himself. Vandalieu has brought his full strength upon us. There will be no rest; he will attack again tomorrow... or even tonight. Will reinforcements arrive before then?*

Given the difference in fighting strength and the ability to replenish that strength that had been shown thus far, was there even any point in fighting? Wasn't it better to retreat and focus on the defense of Peria, even if that meant allowing Botin's soul to be devoured here?

Such defeated thoughts ran through Gorn's mind.

"Don't tell me you're thinking of making an escape," Brateo said provocatively, as if he had read Gorn's mind.

"Brateo," said Gorn. "Even if we fight here -"

"If we flee here, he will devour Botin, becoming even more powerful, and then he will come to the sea where Peria slumbers. Or perhaps he will target the mortals inside Alda's Dungeon of Trials, and Bellwood who slumbers within," said Brateo, cutting Gorn off before he could voice how hopeless the upcoming battle was. "We will remain standing, but with no hope of victory against the army of the Great Demon King Vandalieu, whose evil surpasses that of the Demon King Guduranis. They will bury us, and then transform this world into an underworld dominated by 'new races' created through breeding with evil gods, along with Undead, and monsters. No, there is no guarantee that they will stop at this world. According to Rodcorte, he is able to move between this world and another world, after all."

“... What do you mean to say, Brateo?” Gorn muttered. “Are you saying that we should charge in mindlessly, as there is no hope either way?”

“Don’t be foolish. I am saying that it will be better for us to stand our ground here and believe that Alda will send us reinforcements, rather than flee. Though I must admit, it is partly because I cannot stand the thought of fleeing without a fight.”

Gorn and the other demigods saw some sense in Brateo’s words, agreeing with all but the last part. This battle would not be fought to achieve victory, but to avoid defeat. This was not the first such battle that they had faced. They had already experienced countless hopeless battles in the past, against the Demon King’s army a hundred thousand years ago.

“Very well. Let us meet the enemy. Send word to Alda-sama for more reinforcements! And until they arrive, we shall endure their attacks as many times as we must!” Gorn declared, having regained his vigor.

The other demigods gave a spirited roar in response.

However, no matter how much morale they recovered, there was a difference that could not be made up for through sheer will.

It was common sense among mortals that in battle, an attacking force could only defeat a defending force if they outnumbered the enemy by at least three to one. But such logic did not apply in this battle.

The defending force in this case were enormous demigods, so they could not use defensive structures such as fortresses and castles.

Doing battle in the air with no strategy was no different from suicide.

That was why Gorn came up with a new strategy.

“But we shall fight on a lower battlefield! Rather than fight the enemy in the skies over the shores and seas of the continent, let us use one of the pseudo-Divine Realms as a defensive position!”

“Hmph... That will allow us to utilize the flightless monsters and the Orichalcum Golems that have no flight ability beyond floating in place, but we will be suppressed from above,” said Brateo.

“He is right!” said Madroza, who had still not healed from her wounds from the previous day. “And even if we do not take myself into account, as I am not in any state to fight properly, our water-attribute Elder Dragons and Colossi will lose strength!”

“There is no need to worry about that,” said Gorn. “Our fortress will be the pseudo-Divine Realm at the base of that lake. It will be a double-edged sword, but... if we do not use it, then this battle will be over before it even begins.”

Gufadgarn, who had told herself that leaving Vandalieu’s side was necessary to carry out the plan, looked at her surroundings with confusion appearing on her usually expressionless face.

From the bow of the real Cuatro, the flagship of the ten-ship fleet, the chaos of the Demon King’s Continent could be clearly seen below. But there was not a single demigod blocking the fleet’s path.

“They should have taken notice of our approach...”

The eyes of Gufadgarn’s vessel, which had the form of a beautiful Elf girl, wavered with bewilderment. It was problematic if the enemy forces that were supposed to block the fleet’s path did not appear.

“The second stage of the plan is for the ten-ship fleet to act as a decoy to draw Gorn and his allies out.

Meanwhile, the great Vandalieu undoes the seal on Botin, and then assaults Gorn and his allies from behind, creating a pincer attack with the fleet. We must draw Gorn and his allies as far away from Botin as possible, but...”

The Four Dead Sea Captains began offering their opinions on the situation.

“Perhaps they are too exhausted from yesterday’s battle to launch an assault on us?”

“Maybe they’re so scared that they’re huddling around each other near Botin.”

“Just in case, should we fire some cannons as a greeting? They might panic and start coming out.”

Gufadgarn took these opinions into account as she decided upon their plan of action.

“... Continue on this path. Stay alert for any surprise attacks from directly below,” she ordered.

There was not even a need to consult with Vandalieu through a Demon King Familiar.

With a creaking noise, Cuatro resumed its advance, accompanied by the nine fake Cuatros.

On the ground’s surface, there were deserts with tornadoes raging freely across them and volcanic zones with magma floating around, defying gravity. But at a height of a thousand meters above ground, the ships could proceed safely.

If they continued towards the place where Botin was sealed away, they would likely reach it within half a day. Gufadgarn believed that Gorn and his allies would certainly make their move before then.

But against her expectations, it was not demigods, but monsters that attacked them.

“Enemy attack! Multiple monsters, approaching from the sky above!”

“There’s no need for the Demon King Familiar masters to come out! Look lively, you scurvy dogs! Nock your arrows!”

The approaching enemies were Rank 5 or 6 monsters, the likes of which would be considered small fry on this continent; the cannon-type Demon King Familiars weren’t necessary to deal with them – the Undead sailors with their bows and arrows were more than enough.

These monsters descended from beyond the clouds above the fleet, one after another.

“Those clouds must be a Devil’s Sky,” Gufadgarn murmured.

Devil’s Skies were regions of sky that had transformed into Devil’s Nests. At a glance, it was just an ordinary white cloud, but it seemed that it was actually a white nest of monsters.

“Gufadgarn-san, what should we do?” asked Darcia’s voice, which was being transmitted via Goblin-head communicator. “Also, Godwin-san has started doing warm-up exercises. Maybe I should stop him?”

Darcia was aboard one of the fake Cuatros, which was also carrying Vandalieu and Tiamat’s son... in other words, her grandchild.

“Let us decrease our altitude and proceed onwards. And please do whatever you see fit to stop Godwin. As long as he stays alive, that’s all that matters,” said Gufadgarn.

There were only weak monsters like Wyverns for now, but if the fleet continued on this path at this altitude, it was possible that they would encounter monsters of around Rank 13, which could not be defeated so easily.

If Gorn and his allies were to attack while the fleet was busy dealing with monsters, the fleet would find itself in a disadvantageous situation. It was good to put on a pretense of being vulnerable in order to draw the enemy out, but it would not be good to actually be vulnerable and suffer damage.

“Aren’t you treating me a little too carelessly?!” Godwin protested through the Goblin-head communicator. “... Is there a problem with that?” asked Gufadgarn.

Having seen the Majin King Godwin attempt to conquer the ‘Trial of Zakkart’ using methods that were appropriate but reckless, Gufadgarn knew that Godwin would not break even if treated roughly.

In any case, the fleet lowered its altitude by several hundred meters in accordance with Gufadgarn’s orders, and the monster attacks stopped immediately, almost as if they had never happened at all. It seemed that they had indeed appeared from around the Devil’s Sky.

“It seems that there are numerous Devil’s Skies above the continent,” said Gufadgarn. “Proceed while maintaining this altitude, and be wary of attacks from the ground – so, they have made their appearance.” As Gufadgarn was giving orders to the Four Dead Sea Captains, the space near a lake wavered and distorted.

In the next instant, lightning attacks, boulders, masses of ice, as well as acidic bubbles and Breath attacks of water and light, were launched towards the fleet.

“Commencing cannon attacks. Fire,” said one of the large-cannon-type Demon King Familiars.

In response to the enemy attacks, the large-cannon-type Demon King Familiars on each ship began firing. This cannon-fire was aimed to strike the demigods beyond the distorted space, but they exploded in mid-air as they collided with the boulders and Breath attacks, causing no damage to the enemy.

However, the enemy had also failed to inflict any damage.

“Release the monsters! Leave the close-quarters fighting to them! We will keep up our long-ranged attacks! Do not let the enemy approach!” shouted Gorn.

With the destruction of the God of War Horns Sirius, it was once again Gorn’s voice that was giving orders. The beating drums of Zepaon, the God of War Drums, could also be heard, but perhaps he was unable to relay commands through the sounds of his drums.

As this thought occurred to Gufadgarn, a countless number of monsters emerged from the forests around the lake. From the mirror-like surface of the lake came Giant Gillmen, Gigant Flying Sharks, and water spirit kings that had lost their sanity, and from the forests came mutant Chimeras with the limbs of various animals protruding from their bodies and Chaos Basilisk Kings that possessed countless eyes. In the past, these monsters had been used as front-line fighters by the evil gods of the Demon King’s army and inflicted much suffering on the champions’ army.

What these monsters all had in common was a limited or non-existent ability to fly.

“I see. They used the Devil’s Skies above the continent to make us lower our altitude,” said Gufadgarn.

“Then does that mean we fell right into the enemy’s trap?!” one of the Four Dead Sea Captains shouted in alarm.

“No, that is not the case,” Gufadgarn said, pointing at the horde of monsters.

Some of the monsters were heading in the direction of the pseudo-Divine Realm, whose space-distorting



camouflage was fading away.

These were not pet dogs running to greet their master, but carnivorous beasts attacking prey that had shown itself.

“By attacking from within the pseudo-Divine Realm, they revealed the connection between it and the outside, and the monsters took notice,” said Gufadgarn.

“I see. But still, there are more than twice the number of monsters than what we faced yesterday, coming our way now,” said the Dead Sea Captain.

“It is time for the honorable son to make an appearance. Darcia-sama, please go ahead,” said Gufadgarn, giving the signal through the Goblin-head communicator.

One of the fleet’s ships stopped its cannon-fire, then fell into pieces as if exploding from within.

What emerged from the ship’s falling wreckage was what appeared to be an ordinary Elder Dragon. Its overall appearance was more similar to an enormous Lizardman than a Dragon. It had dark-blue scales, four golden eyes, four limbs, two pairs of gray wings protruding from its back, and a long tail with a sharp spike on its tip.

“What is that Elder Dragon?” said the Ice Colossus Mugan, shocked that it was not an Undead or evil god inside the crumbling ship. “I am not aware of any Elder Dragon like that existing on Vida’s side.”

“It must be a young one that was born sometime in these past hundred thousand years! Tiamat is on the enemy’s side, so it would not be strange for the enemy to have a dozen or two of her brats!” said Brateo, unrelenting in his continuous attacks.

Darcia was standing on the shoulder of Vandalieu and Tiamat’s child, her first grandchild.

“It’s time to wake up, Bakunawa-chan,” she said gently to the sleepy child. “Look, it’s time for food.”

“Food...?” said a rumbling, drowsy-sounding voice, coming from beneath Darcia’s feet. “Food... which one?”

“All of the moving things in front of you are food. You can eat as much as you want, until your tummy is nice and full.”

“All of them... are food?! Really?!”

Bakunawa’s eyes opened wide in excitement as he took in the sight of the monsters and the demigods behind them.

A vertical split appeared from his neck to his abdomen, and the front of his body opened wide.

“YAAAAY! *Itadakimasu!*”

‘*Itadakimasu*’ – a word spoken before a meal – followed by the appearance of a red tongue. Bakunawa’s mouth was located not on his face, but on his torso.

Seeing Bakunawa’s true form, the monsters stopped their approach and turned around to flee, acting on an instinctual fear. But their attempt to escape was in vain; they let out screams and shrieks of terror as they were sucked into Bakunawa’s mouth.

Bakunawa was inhaling to suck up his ‘food.’ The monsters, the trees and dirt in his surroundings, and even the lightning attacks and acidic bubbles being unleashed by Brateo and his allies, were all torn to pieces by his teeth, crushed by his tongue, dissolved in his saliva, and then swallowed.

This insatiable appetite was the power of Bakunawa, who had been named after a dragon in earth’s mythology who was said to have eaten the moon.

“Deliciiiiious!” Bakunawa said happily.

The taste of blood and entrails filling his mouth! The crunchy texture of the bones and trees! The rich feeling of living creatures passing through his throat! The numbing aftertaste of lightning! Bakunawa was completely immersed in these sensations.

“Impossible! He *ate* my lightning?!” exclaimed Brateo, shaken by what he had just witnessed.

“Stay calm! Aim for its head and limbs rather than its body! Don’t use magic that produces physical attacks; use lightning and light attacks!” shouted Gorn, giving orders to Brateo and the other demigods, having realized that attacking the enormous mouth on Bakunawa’s torso would be futile.

The demigods’ attacks began focusing on Bakunawa’s head and limbs.

“I will not let you!” said Darcia.

“Indeed. We have already transformed, after all,” said Zadiris.

The two of them repelled the demigods’ attacks with their own spells. Meanwhile, the nine remaining ships were continuing their cannon-fire. The monsters that had escaped from Bakunawa’s suction, as well as Gorn and his allies who had remained safe from it due to being far away from him, were now being aimed at.

“Oh dear,” said one of the Demon King Familiars.

“Ah, sorry, Papa. But you’re delicious,” said Bakunawa.

“I’m glad to hear that,” said the Demon King Familiar.

“Vandalieu, be careful! Don’t go out in front of Bakunawa-chan!” Darcia warned.

But several cannonball-type Demon King Familiars had already disappeared into Bakunawa’s mouth. ... The fake Cuatro that had been carrying the Demon King Familiars had long since been swallowed as well.

“As expected of the son of the great Vandalieu. He is dominating the battlefield single-handedly,” said Gufadgarn, emotionally moved by the sight before her.

Meanwhile, the Four Dead Sea Captains were wearing strained expressions.

“... It’s true that the enemy seems to be unable to move, but we’re not able to move either,” said one of the Four Dead Sea Captains.

“If we accidentally go out in front of Young Master Bakunawa, we’ll get turned into food as well.”

But Gufadgarn didn’t seem to be particularly concerned. “That is not a problem. There is no need for us to defeat the enemy on our own.”

In fact, it would be even more of a problem if they attacked too strongly, causing the enemy to retreat to where Botin was sealed away.

“The seal has not yet been undone, after all,” said Gufadgarn.

Having finished digging the last length of the tunnel, Vandalieu was now examining the black wall that was in his path.

“This seems to be physically manifested Mana. I see. Botin and the subordinate gods who were near her when she was sealed away are likely inside here.”

Botin had been sealed away by the Demon King Guduranis during the battle against his army. Botin and her subordinate gods had served as the rear guard for the champions’ army, who were in a disadvantageous situation, and Guduranis had appeared and sealed them away before they could withdraw.

Vandalieu had heard this from Vida and the other gods when he was summoned to her Divine Realm. It was a testament to the Demon King’s power that he had been able to seal one of Lambda’s great gods away with no sealing equipment or magic circle drawn on the ground, using nothing but his own Mana.

“Do you think you can remove it?” asked Juliana, looking worried.

“It does seem like I will be able to, but... it might be harder than I expected,” Vandalieu replied honestly as he began the task of removing the seal.

The parts of the wall that came into contact with his Mana began melting away and vanishing, but progress was slow.

“Unlike the seals used by the champions and their allies, which can be broken by destroying the sealing equipment, I must destroy the entire seal that the Demon King created,” said Vandalieu.

The seals used by the champions and their allies on Demon King fragments and evil gods were like complicated machines. Such seals lost their effect and were removed if several of their crucial components were undone.

But this seal, which had been created by the Demon King, was like a mass of coal tar. There were no crucial or non-crucial components; the entire seal had to be removed.

“Can’t you use a fragment of the Demon King to break the whole thing in one go?” asked Borkus.

“That may cause harm to Botin, who is slumbering inside, so I’ll keep that method as a backup,” said Vandalieu, not outright rejecting Borkus’s reckless suggestion.

It seemed that this method could be used once enough of the seal had been removed.

“But let’s try this direct method first,” Vandalieu added.

Several clones of Vandalieu emerged from his shadow. Now, there were multiple Vandalieus removing the curse, not just one.

“Is this really the direct method?” one of them asked.

“When doing it alone isn’t good enough, doing it together is surely the direct method,” said another.

This seemed to work; the removal of the curse was proceeding smoothly.

“To think that it would take this much time... Could it be that the miasma of the Demon King’s Continent is having an undesirable effect on the seal?” said the Pure-breed Vampire Zorcodrio, who had accompanied Vandalieu and the others here because he was acquainted with Botin, giving his own hypothesis.

The miasma of the Demon King’s Continent was potent enough to distort even space and gravity, and gave rise to monsters that were as powerful as demigods. Perhaps it was not so strange to think that this

miasma had strengthened the Demon King's seal.

But Vandalieu shook his head. "That's unlikely. The Demon King's Mana, which created this seal, has completely different properties from the miasma of the Demon King's Continent. Even if the miasma did have an effect on the seal, it would be very slight."

The miasma corrupting the Demon King's Continent had spread *after* the Demon King Guduranis was defeated and the continent was destroyed by Bellwood and his allies.

In other words, this continent was called the Demon King's Continent, but the miasma corrupting it was completely unrelated to the Demon King Guduranis.

"With that being the case, the fact that Alda's forces apparently gathered the miasma of the entire world on this continent has likely had no negative effect on Botin's seal. That is a relief. I was a little worried about how Botin might have been affected by the miasma," said Zod.

"There's no need to worry about that, is there? If gods were so easily affected by miasma, the gods on Vida's side inside the Boundary Mountain Range and on the Demon Continent would have all gone crazy ages ago," said Borkus.

"Yes. I think gods generally stay sane as long as they don't fuse with an evil god," said Vandalieu.

Though not to the extent of the Demon King's Continent, the region within the Boundary Mountain Range and the Demon Continent were also corrupted by miasma. Gods had resided in those regions for over a hundred thousand years, so if miasma was capable of influencing gods, it would have influenced those gods long ago. That was especially true of Vida, who had been slumbering in a wounded state, even more vulnerable than Botin, who was completely covered by a seal.

"Indeed, you are entirely correct," said Zod.

"I'm glad you're convinced," said Vandalieu. "... But it seems that I should make more clones. I would like to remove the seal before Bakunawa finishes his meal... ah," he said in surprise as a part of the black wall collapsed, revealing a white mist-like substance.

The main Vandalieu was completely engulfed by it without a sound.

"V-Vandalieu-sama!" Juliana cried in panic.

She immediately tried to follow him inside the white mist, but Kimberley and Princess Levia appeared and held her back.

"Now, now, calm yourself," said Kimberley.

"His Majesty is fine. Orbia-san has gone with him."

"Indeed. The clones are still continuing their task, which means that he is fine," said Zod.

Indeed, the clones of Vandalieu were still continuing to remove the seal. These clones shared the memories and personality of the real Vandalieu, so the fact that they were behaving as if nothing was wrong meant that Vandalieu was perfectly safe.

"... Well, he would behave like he's fine even if one of his arms or legs is torn off, so I wouldn't put too much trust in them," Zod added.

This slightly-too-plausible hypothetical scenario caused the Vandalieu clones to hastily make things clear.

"I'm really okay this time."

"My real body doesn't have a single wound on it."

"I'm in front of Botin right now."

**Chapter 299 - The goddess's revival and the Great Demon King who carries the names of the champions**

Botin, Mother of the Earth and Goddess of Craftsmanship, gazed upon the thing that had appeared before her.

*What is this thing? With an appearance that is clearly even more sinister than evil gods... There are things that look like parts of the Demon King here and there on its surface! But for some reason...*

Unable to move, she stared upon the grotesque being that possessed a countless number of eyes and limbs. Although she couldn't see them, her subordinate gods were likely in the same state.

The grotesque being had what were clearly parts of the Demon King Guduranis, embedded and fused with its own body. The Mana emanating from it was similar to Guduranis's as well.

Considering that, perhaps it was an underling or descendant of one of the creatures that Guduranis had created. But for some reason, she felt something resembling a sense of familiarity towards this grotesque being.

*For some reason, looking at this thing calms me.*

The grotesque being showed no killing intent or hostility towards Botin and her subordinate gods; it was just wriggling back and forth, and Botin felt like it was saying something.

Even now, she could remember the situation she had been in just before she was sealed away. As for what had happened after she was sealed away, there was nothing to speak of.

While she was sealed away, Botin's thinking had been frozen. This was likely a measure that had been taken to prevent her from undoing the seal from within.

However, it seemed that the seal had not been powerful enough to actually stop time inside it. Botin had recovered all of her expended strength and all of the damage she had suffered.

*It seems that a long time has passed since then. What happened after that?*

The moment this question ran through her mind, Botin was suddenly flooded with a vast quantity of information.

Or to be more precise, Vandalieu's undoing of the seal caused her thinking to become unfrozen, and she became conscious of all of the prayers of her worshippers over the past hundred thousand years.

She learned of the outcome of the war against the Demon King Guduranis, the discord and subsequent war between Vida and Alda, and all of the events that had led up to the present day.

Having understood all of that information, Botin finally became able to hear the voice of the grotesque being... Vandalieu.

"Hello? Can you hear me?"

"I'm terribly sorry, it seems that I was in a bit of a daze. You must be Vandalieu?"

"Yes. Nice to meet you. My name is Vandalieu Zakkart."

Hearing the 'Holy Son of Vida' greet her with a politeness that one would never expect from his grotesque appearance, Botin let out a sigh that bore all sorts of emotion.

"Vida, Ricklent, Zuruwarn, and Zantark have chosen quite the strange one. No, I suppose that's not right. You were like that from the very beginning," she said.

Vida and the others had not chosen Vandalieu. Botin realized this and told herself that they had merely accepted him.

It was not by the gods' choice that Vandalieu's soul was made of the fragments of Zakkart, Hillwillow and the other creation-oriented champions.

Vida and the others had simply become aware of Vandalieu and acknowledged him as the successor to the champions they had chosen.

He possessed none of the abilities that the champions had received from Botin and the other gods, nor did he possess their memories. The gods had acknowledged this soul... a soul that was no different from any other currently living mortal, in that he was merely a reincarnation of other individuals who had lived in the past.

"Mortal child Vandalieu, who has been acknowledged by Vida and the others. You are the one who undid the seal, aren't you?"

"Yes. Or to be more precise, I'm currently still undoing it."

"Right now?"

"Yes, my clones are. And I'm also controlling my physical body while I'm in here."

Botin looked to one side to see a small, white-haired boy releasing Mana towards a black wall... the seal that had been created by the Demon King.

"... This place is something like a Divine Realm, so normally, when a human enters it, their souls leave their body and they become unable to move," said Botin.

"I'm using Skills to control my body. It seems that I'm a little different from normal," said Vandalieu.

"Good grief. It seems that you're still the hard worker, even after being reincarnated. How are you so remarkably similar when you don't share any memories?"

"I believe it's probably a coincidence."

Hearing Vandalieu say something so simple and thoughtless in such a polite tone, Botin gave a cheery laughter. "I see, I see! So, what is it you wanted me to do? Did you want me to help you in your fisticuffs with Alda? Was there something that made you so certain that I would become Vida's ally?" she questioned, as if testing him.

If she were to be perfectly honest, Botin had no intention to complain about the events that had taken place after she was sealed away, the events leading up to the war between Vida and Alda a hundred thousand years ago. Not the fact that the champion she had chosen was destroyed, not the state the world had been in when Bellwood and the other remaining champions defeated the Demon King, and not the discord that had occurred between Vida and Alda after that.

The gods were the ones who had chosen their champions, and the loss of four of the champions was the gods' failure.

Following that, when the remaining three champions fought at the forefront, the gods were the ones at fault for being unable to point out strategic errors.

And in the end, when the rift between Vida and Alda grew to the point of no return, Botin had been inside this seal due to her own lack of strength.

Did such powerless gods have the right to complain about anything?

To begin with, the gods were irresponsible and shameless from the very moment when, with their world

on the verge of destruction, they asked mortals from another, completely unrelated world to fight for them.

If Botin and the other gods were truly worthy gods, they would never have had to choose champions in the first place. They would have repelled the Demon King Guduranis's army on their own.

But the reality was that they had chosen to do this irresponsible and shameless thing for the sake of the continued existence of this world. That was how desperate they had been.

That was why Botin had no intention to complain. She could not claim that she was the only one in a desperate situation.

Bellwood and Alda's blunders were also because they had been in desperate situations.

"It's not something that made me feel certain, but... there is a girl among my companions who received a Divine Message from Peria. I followed that Divine Message to reach this place," said Vandalieu.

"Ah, I know about that. I learned it just now, in fact. I'm grateful that you undid the seal. I really am. If you didn't, I'd probably have stayed sealed away for another hundred thousand years or more," said Botin.

This much was undeniable... not that Botin intended to deny it, but it was a fact. It was such a great favor that, under normal circumstances, she would grant her savior her divine protection, a Title, and dozens of weapons that she made herself, and it would still not be enough to repay her debt.

Vandalieu had resurrected a great god by undoing a seal that Alda had not been able to put a single scratch on for over a hundred thousand years. To say that it was a great deed that would leave a mark on history would be an understatement.

"But that doesn't necessarily mean that I'm going to become an ally of Vida and fight against Alda. Nor does it mean that I will approve of every aspect of the way your nation is," said Botin. "My great savior, would you permit me to express my opinion?"

"I am humble and listening."

"To put it briefly... or rather, to be frank, it seems to me that you are in a state of peril... despite the fact that in that nation of yours, your continued existence is necessary for the Undead and Monsters to retain their ability to reason."

The reason given by Botin was the same one given by the 'Blue-flamed Sword' Heinz.

"Mmm, that's painful criticism," said Vandalieu, accepting these words without opposing them this time now that they were being spoken by Botin, and not the murderer of his mother.

In truth, Vandalieu was aware that the current Demon Empire of Vidal, whose citizens included Undead and certain kinds of monsters, was entirely dependent on his existence.

That was why he grew strong so that he would not die, and why he killed enemies so that he would not be killed by them, but he was also aware that when he fought with his full strength, he often did so in a way that caused injury to himself.

That and other factors made it seem to Botin and the other gods that Vandalieu was in a state of peril in a variety of ways, but there was nothing that could be done about that.

Though Botin was concerned about whether things would be alright in the future, there was nothing he could do to fix or stop the current situation. Even if he replied that it was fine because this was the way things were, Botin would not be convinced by this, so he didn't know what to do.

"I would at least like you to not become an ally of Alda," Vandalieu said.

Though Vandalieu didn't think it was likely, if Botin were to become an ally of Alda, that would mean that he had made this plan spanning over half a year just for him to gain one more enemy.

He wanted to avoid this, but –

"Hmm? Don't be ridiculous. You'll find me dead before you see me being a friend of Alda's," Botin said simply.

"Huh?"

"What do you mean, 'huh.' It goes without saying, doesn't it? It's true that I might have been on Alda's side a hundred thousand years ago. I might have done things like scolding Vida for what she did and trying to placate Alda to not be so hasty. But given how Alda has been from the beginning of his war against Vida up until now, there isn't a single reason for me to be an ally of his."

Until the war between Vida and Alda began, Botin wouldn't have been able to say which of them was in the right. After all, everyone had lacked power and everyone had been wrong, including Botin herself.

But from the point where the war between the two gods began, it was simple. Alda was clearly at fault.

"I would never have agreed to begin a deadly war when Vida and those on her side had no intention of fighting. No matter how rash Vida's actions were, they were not such a great problem that the world would be destroyed if we did not stop her as soon as possible," said Botin.

From her perspective, it was Alda who was at fault for striking the first blow.

Vida had turned Zakkart into an Undead, and created a variety of new races including Vampires and

Ghouls. Botin was aware that Alda was very displeased with this.

At the time, most Undead were enemies of the living, with perhaps one exception in a trillion, and Alda had also been opposed to Zakkart's act of accepting some of the evil gods of the Demon King's army as allies.

But that wasn't a reason for him to begin a war. The Demon King had been sealed away, so they could have taken some more time to talk things out... perhaps even a century or two.

And Alda had committed errors as well. The champions were supposed to teach and guide the people, and yet he had allowed them to behave recklessly, and he should have given more respect to Vida's words.

"And the fact that he's trying to exterminate the new races doesn't sit well with me! I don't really approve of Vida's way of thinking, but exterminating her races still doesn't sit well with me!" Botin said heatedly.

"... Why is that?" Vandalieu asked.

"It's obvious, isn't it?! I'm a mother-goddess, you know? There's no way I could accept exterminating entire races, no matter the good or evil of it, no matter what circumstances there may or may not be!"

Botin was a great god of the earth attribute, and a goddess who ruled over craftsmen and mothers. To her, exterminating a child that had been born was an unforgivable sin, no matter the circumstances.

This was one of her qualities as a god, something that even she herself could not change.

But even gods were far from all-knowing and all-powerful, and mortals were even more powerless than them. Botin knew that their societies were not perfect. That didn't mean that she tolerated all conflicts between mortals unconditionally, but she would watch and not intervene as long as they had the will to atone for their sins.

But Alda was a god, not a mortal.

"I would keep my distance from mortals, but there is no reason for me to do so with Alda, as we're both great gods. Of course, I have a word or two for that fool Zantark, and Vida, too," said Botin.

"I see."

Vandalieu was convinced by this explanation. He understood that gods ruled over different things and preached different doctrines, so they each had different standards by which they decided whether things were acceptable or not.

Not a single one of Botin's subordinate gods had interjected in their conversation thus far. Their frozen thinking had only just been unfrozen, so they were currently focused on organizing the information that had just entered their minds, and all of them were in agreement with her, so there was no need for them to speak.

"What happened after the war doesn't sit well with me either. It's true that the world has made a great recovery in the past hundred thousand years. There were all kinds of oversights here and there, but I've only just woken from a slumber, so it isn't like I can talk," said Botin. "However... I do have to question the fact that people have been in continued conflict with Vida's races for the past hundred thousand years. You'd have to be truly hopeless if even *I* think that you're too stubborn. It's unbelievable."

Botin was stubborn and conservative, just like the Dwarves. But even from her perspective, Alda's behavior was absurd.

*But that's probably just him being flustered and acting rashly, resulting in him becoming more close-minded and unable to see anything other than his own thoughts... Why does he trust Rodcorte so much? Even if Rodcorte does today the same as he did yesterday, there is no guarantee that he will do the same again tomorrow. Or perhaps Alda is under the assumption that he is left with no other choice?* Botin contemplated.

"Well, that's how it is," she said in conclusion. "But I can't approve of everything about you. So, because you're in a state of peril, I shall be your ally."

Vandalieu was extremely confused by this. "I don't see the connection between the first part and the second part of that."

"Do you not? I thought this would be the most effective way to go about things with someone like you."

The events of the past and the current situation didn't sit well with Botin, and there were many things that she could not approve of. But conflict was not the only available option in the world. Standing in opposition to each other and shouting at one another was one option, but there was also the option of standing alongside one another while exchanging opinions.

Botin had decided quite a while ago that this would be the most effective option to take in dealing with Vandalieu.

"Plus, since it seems that you're in a state of peril to me, I just need to support you. Even though I've been sleeping for the past hundred thousand years, I'm still a god, you know. You're a mortal, so I'll lend you a hand or a shoulder whenever you need it," Botin said.

Her answer to Vandalieu's state of peril was to lend him her strength. Rather than oppose him due to his situation, she would lend him her strength because of it.

After all, Botin was a god. She was fully accustomed to mortals praying to her for help when they were in trouble.

"But keep in mind that I'm not becoming an ally of Vida or fighting against Alda. I'm just supporting you as a god should. Understood?" she said, touching Vandalieu's soul, whose appearance could only be described as grotesque, as if patting a child's head.

"I understand, I think. Thank you," said Vandalieu.

But it was at this point that some of Botin's subordinate gods began to voice their objections.

"Please wait! This decision is too hasty. The thoughts of our worshippers alone do not give us an understanding of the gods' situation."

"We should speak with Alda-dono and the others first!"

Indeed, the information they had learned from their worshippers' thoughts told them nothing of what Alda and his allies were thinking or what their current situation was. Vandalieu had come to meet Botin directly, but it was entirely reasonable to suggest it would be unwise to make a decision after hearing only his side of the story.

But Botin shook her head. "I don't want to do that. As he is now, I don't think we'll be able to have any kind of discussion. And seeing his face will probably make me want to punch it. I don't think I'll be able to agree with what he's doing anyway, no matter what his circumstances are."

"P-please do not say such things... Alda-dono is your brother, is he not, Honorable Mother!" one of the subordinate gods protested.

"Impossible. This is my nature as a god," Botin said simply.

"What are you saying... Are you not just being biased to that mortal because his soul contains the remains of Hillwillow's?!" the subordinate god shouted accusingly, denouncing this decision.

Botin nodded. "I am. What's wrong with that?"

"Huh...?" the subordinate god uttered, taken aback.

One of the other subordinate gods, who had remained silent up until now, put a hand on his shoulder and made him step back.

"Did you think that gods are fair and impartial beings? That is a misunderstanding," Botin said.

Gods had their biases. They granted their divine protections to a handful of individuals among those they had taken a liking to, those who were exceptionally talented, or those that were devoted to them, and they did not grant their divine protections to those not among these individuals.

To begin with, each god ruled over different things and taught different doctrines; they had different standards by which they measured and decided what was good and evil. That fact alone meant that they were not impartial or anything of the sort.

The remains of the soul of the champion Botin had chosen now resided in Vandalieu. That was more than enough of a reason for her to grant him her divine protection.

"Although you are subordinate gods, you don't actually have to be in service to me. If you truly detest this child no matter what anyone says, then it cannot be helped," Botin said. "But I just have one little request. Please don't make this child... Please don't make me your enemy."

These words sent violent tremors through the subordinate gods who had voiced their objections. They were a declaration that her previous statement of being neither an ally of Vida nor an enemy of Alda was merely for the sake of appearances. And they were also a declaration that any ally of Alda would be seen as an enemy of hers, even if they were her own subordinate gods.

"If you *still* insist on taking Alda's side, at least make sure you have the willpower to convince him or do whatever is needed to make him stop seeing Vida as an enemy," Botin continued. "If you can do that, then I won't stop you."

The subordinate gods dropped their shoulders and stepped back. Vandalieu watched them, but did nothing, allowing Botin to save face.

"Now then, to thank you for removing this seal, I'd like to grant you a divine protection and Title –"

"Ah, would you mind refraining from giving me a Title?" Vandalieu interjected. "I already have quite a lot of them... Too many, honestly. There's enough statues, wall paintings, and drawings on the ground of me as it is."

"... It seems that you're worshiped more than I am. But I think that's even more of a reason for me to give you a Title. After all, you'll probably get a new Title anyway after word gets around that you freed me from the seal. With that being the case, wouldn't it be better to accept a Title from me now so that you can at least choose what it is?"

Ordinarily, Titles were chosen not by the owner of the Title, but by the masses that used the Title. And in

many cases, not everyone used the same Title at first.

For example, if there was a swordsman who achieved something great, some might call him the 'Strongest Swordsman,' to praise his strength while others might call him the 'Fastest Swordsman' to praise his speed. Others still might praise him for his appearance, or the fortitude and valor he displayed in achieving his great feat.

It wasn't the gods who ruled over the Status System that determined which of those Titles would be displayed on his Status. His Status would simply display the Title that had the most support. Thus, it was impossible for anyone to know what Title would be displayed on their Status until it happened.

However, that wasn't true when the Title in question was granted by someone who was greatly influential... such as the ruler of a nation, or a god. When a Title was granted through such authority, the masses would use the Title that had been granted.

"I see. Then yes, please give me a Title," Vandalieu said, changing his mind after hearing this explanation.

"Then let's make it 'Liberator of Goddesses,' shall we? You freed Vida as well, so it's not too grand a Title for you. And let's add 'Great Demon King' while we're at it. Having the same 'Demon King' Title as Guduranis doesn't leave a great impression."

"I get the feeling that it doesn't make a lot of difference... but thank you."

"And this one is a request from me, but... will you take up the name of another champion... will you take up Hillwillow's name, as you have taken Zakkart's? As a middle name, you know."

Vandalieu had been reincarnated too many times since Hillwillow's death to really be called a reincarnation of Hillwillow. And although he was a descendant of Zakkart, who was one of the parents of the Vampire ancestor, not a drop of Hillwillow's blood ran through his veins.

But even so, Botin could not help herself from making this request.

Sensing the emotion behind Botin's words, Vandalieu nodded.

"If you're sure that I am worthy of it," he said.

He had already taken the name of one champion. Taking the name of a second didn't bother him at all.

"I can't thank you enough for everything. Thank you," said Botin. "Now then, I think it's time you went back outside. Your body and clones will work faster if the soul is working with them, won't they?"

Vandalieu's soul and physical body vanished silently – presumably, they had gone back outside the seal. As if replacing him, a familiar face appeared.

"Bo –" the familiar figure began to speak.

But Botin cut him off with a spirited battle cry as she punched this familiar face. She had the feeling that he was trying to say something but gave him no chance to do so; she sank her fist into his cheek and followed through on her punch to complete the motion.

The subordinate gods began shouting in alarm.

"Zantark-sama has been sent flying!"

"H-honorable Mother! Please calm yourself, Honorable Mother! Although he seems to have combined with various things, it is likely Zantark-sama!"

"Madness! Botin-sama has gone mad!"

The subordinate gods that had remained silent while Vandalieu was here all began trying to suppress Botin. In this, they were united and acting as one.

"I'm well aware of who it is!" Botin said angrily.

Dragging the subordinate gods that were grappling with her to hold her back, she turned to face her brothers and sisters that had appeared in this space.

"Wow... Zantark came prepared, but he became a ragdoll in an instant," said Zuruwarn, the God of Space and Creation, astounded by Botin's strike.

"I would like you to show some restraint. We would certainly like to avoid Zantark being forced into a slumber by your hand," said Ricklent, the Genie of Time and Magic, expressionless as ever.

"Umm... I'm sorry!" said Vida, the Goddess of Life and Love, bowing her head.

In Lambda's mythology, Zantark was regarded as Botin's husband, with whom she had given birth to the Dwarf race.

Botin smiled at Vida... her sister who had mated with Zantark to create the Majin and Kijin races.

And then she strongly pinched both her cheeks.

"Ow, ow, ow! Tha' 'urts!" Vida cried out in pain.

"There. Alright, I forgive you!" said Botin.

"Hyuh? Rea'y?" said Vida in surprise.



Botin let go of her cheeks and nodded with a laugh. "It's fine, all's forgiven. I know that there were all kinds of circumstances."

"If Botin were to keep arguing with Vida and Zantark, it's possible that it would cause problems for Vida's races. It is not her intention to make the Majin and Kijin feel shame for that, I suppose," said Ricklent. "The concept of marriage was pretty vague back then, anyway. And according to myths and legends, pairing was quite different for us gods," said Zuruwarn.

Ricklent and Zuruwarn had been in a state of slumber at the time Vida mated with Zantark; they were discussing it in a matter-of-fact manner as if it had nothing to do with them.

"You two haven't changed, always saying unnecessary things... but, well, you're completely right. I've punched Zantark and pinched Vida's cheeks, but I'm not truly angry. And that's that for this topic," said Botin, shaking Vida's hand. "It seems like you've had a tough time, too," she said, looking in the direction Zantark had flown.

"... Thanks, Botin," groaned the god of war, who was struggling to get back on his feet.

Ricklent couldn't help but mutter "pitiful" under his breath.

"Leaving that aside, let's talk about the fact that you've all come here at a time like this. Surely you didn't come here just to say hello to an old friend?" said Botin.

"Of course not. In its intact state, this seal would be utterly untouchable from the inside or outside by anyone other than Vandalieu Ark Zakkart, but... now that a tear has been made, we are able to assist in undoing it," said Ricklent.

The seal in which Guduranis sealed Botin and her subordinates had been so perfect that neither Alda nor Bellwood had been able to make a mark on it, and it had even shut out the effects of the dense miasma of the Demon King's Continent. But as Ricklent said, there was now a tear in it, large enough for the great gods to enter.

Now, it was possible for them to undo the seal.

Botin gave a quizzical frown. "Vandalieu... Ark? Don't you mean Vandalieu Hillwillow Zakkart?"

"I acknowledge that he has agreed to take the names of other champions. Thus, he will likely agree to taking Ark's name as well, not just Hillwillow's," said Ricklent.

"I mean, I did ask him to do that, but... you're just going to jump on the bandwagon, then?! Is this normal?!" Botin exclaimed, surprised at Ricklent doing this without even asking for Vandalieu's consent. Still expressionless, Ricklent nodded. "Now is not the time to be quibbling amongst ourselves.

Vandalieu's companions are in the midst of battle, at this very moment."

This was his manner of speaking.

"I should have punched you along with Zantark," Botin muttered in complaint.

But Ricklent spoke the truth, so she and her subordinate gods gathered their strength to help undo the seal as well.

"But if we do that, then poor Solder will be left out, won't she?" said Vida as she put her strength into attacking the seal as well.

With Vandalieu's power, the wall of Mana was melting, and a large fissure appeared in the seal that was now starting to become undone.

"I don't think we need to be concerned about that. She's a tough one," said Botin.

And with a noise that sounded like a porcelain piece being broken, the seal was undone and Botin was freed.

《Your name has changed to Vandalieu Ark Hillwillow Solder Zakkart!》

《You have acquired the 'Liberator of Goddesses' Title!》

《The 'Demon King' Title has become 'Great Demon King!'》

#### Chapter 300 - The Mother-Goddess's declaration

The battle against the forces defending Botin was in a deadlock now due to Bakunawa's astounding consuming ability.

The enemy demigods could not make any attempt to advance, as they would be devoured by Bakunawa, but Gufadgarn and her allies could not advance in front of him either. Even the monsters that were essentially beasts with low intelligence did not dare to draw near, feeling a primal fear of Bakunawa.

Thus, the battle was being fought entirely through light and lightning-based attacks that were not affected by Bakunawa's vacuuming ability, and long-ranged attacks such as manipulating the ground beneath the enemy at a distance.

The only exception was the cannonball-type Demon King Familiars. Vandalieu didn't mind these being

devoured by Bakunawa, so they were fired by the cannon-type Demon King Familiars (in other words, himself), and around a third of them were devoured.

“Oh dear,” one of them said as it got caught up in Bakunawa’s vacuum.

“Make sure you chew properly,” said another as it followed the same path.

“Papa, you’re very deliciooooooous!” said Bakunawa.

The demigods defending Botin couldn’t be blamed for feeling a chill at the sight of Bakunawa mercilessly chewing and crushing the flesh-and-blood split entities of his father.

From the perspective of Gorn and his allies, it was simply bizarre to see Bakunawa eating his own father without hesitation, even if it was just his split entities, and Vandalieu being absolutely unconcerned about being chewed and killed by his own son. Even Darcia and the others who were protecting Bakunawa were watching with strained smiles, with no intention of actually trying to stop him.

This situation could only be described as utter madness, and Gorn and his allies wanted to defeat Bakunawa as soon as possible, but they were unable to inflict a single scratch on him as he was under the protection of Darcia and the others.

Meanwhile, Bakunawa... or rather, Darcia, was staying wary of the demigods’ long-ranged attacks and had no intention of making an approach.

Thus, time was simply going by in this deadlock situation, but... Gorn and his allies were the only ones who were getting impatient.

“We are simply bait to hold the enemy in place while the great Vandalieu frees Botin. Our objective is to simply buy time like this, rather than defeat the enemy,” said Gufadgarn.

It was desirable to defeat the enemy if possible, but she had no intention of doing anything reckless in order to do so. Thus, she was calmly observing Gorn and his allies.

Meanwhile, the Four Dead Sea Captains provided reports on the current situation.

“Master Godwin is complaining through the Goblin-head communicators: ‘Hurry up and let me fight.’”

“There are also complaints about the fake Cuatros being too small.”

“W-what shall we do?”

... It seemed that Gorn and his allies were not the only ones getting impatient.

“If Godwin makes too much noise, have the great Vandalieu placate him. As for everyone else, tell them that we must endure and persevere for a while longer,” said Gufadgarn, speaking into one of the Goblin-head communicators.

“Aye, aye! I’ll get the Demon King Familiar masters on it right away!” said one of the Four Dead Sea Captains on the other end.

Godwin’s voice was audible through the communicator for a moment, but it was suddenly cut off in an unnatural manner.

It seemed that he had been dragged away by the Demon King Familiars who were on the same ship as him.

*As expected of the great Vandalieu*, Gufadgarn thought as she nodded to herself several times.

However, the effort put into forcibly calming Godwin down were not rewarded; the battle began to progress once more.

“Ugh... I’m full,” said Bakunawa.

His vacuuming had stopped. Judging from the current size of his body, he had eaten such a vast quantity of matter that the word ‘glutton’ would not be sufficient to describe him, but it seemed that he did indeed have his limits.

With labored breaths, he curled his body up. Seeing this, excitement boiled within Gorn and his allies.

“Now is our chance!” Gorn shouted. “Close the distance, with the monsters and Golems at the front!”

Brateo, Madroza, don’t make a move yet!”

Brateo clicked his tongue. “Fine.”

Though he and Madroza had ignored Gorn’s orders to rush to the frontlines in previous battles, both of them were now standing by, and a horde of monsters that they had kept in reserve began advancing, alongside Orichalcum Golems with prominent marks where they had been repaired.

Most of the wild monsters that had attacked Gorn and his allies had already been defeated or fled.

Seemingly understanding that Gorn and his allies were stronger than them, they showed no desire of trying to attack them again.

In their impatience, Gorn and his allies mistakenly believed that this was a good opportunity for them.

As a horde of monsters of all shapes and sizes advanced alongside the Orichalcum Golems, Basdia, one of the people defending Bakunawa, made her move.

Making use of the enhancement of her physical abilities by her transformation equipment, she performed a single flip in mid-air before delivering a kick onto Bakunawa’s back with a spirited shout.

A moment after Basdia's kick, Bakunawa burped loudly and a beam of light erupted from his mouth, incinerating the monsters that were leading the charge and turning them into ash.

"Ah, I feel better now!" Bakunawa said happily.

"Great job, Basdia-san!" said Darcia.

"Yeah, I'm getting used to helping Bakunawa burp," said Basdia.

"I know *where* to hit. But his scales are so hard that it is impossible for someone of my strength..." lamented Zadiris.

It seemed that Bakunawa had unleashed a Breath attack with his burp.

"That wasn't a light-attribute Breath attack! It's similar to Marduke's 'Long Breath of the Dragon-Emperor'..." one of the demigods shouted.

"What?!" exclaimed another. "Impossible! Is he not merely an Elder Dragon birthed by Tiamat?!"

The Breath attack that Bakunawa had unleashed with his burp was the one that was unique to the Dragon-Emperor God Marduke, the ancestor of all Elder Dragons.

Vandalieu and his companions had been told as much by Tiamat when she first saw him burping and unleashing this Breath, but the gods of Gorn's forces were shocked by this unexpected sight... especially Madroza and the other Elder Dragons.

Given Bakunawa's bizarre appearance and the fact that he had called split entities of Vandalieu 'Papa,' Gorn and his allies had surmised that Vandalieu and Tiamat had mated in some way, and Bakunawa was the Elder Dragon that was born as a result.

This was indeed true, but... Bakunawa had demonstrated the ability to use the 'Long Breath of the Dragon-Emperor,' an ability that none other than Marduke himself possessed... Even Tiamat and Madroza, who belonged to the generation of Elder Dragons that Marduke had created himself, had not inherited this ability. This fact made the demigods instinctually believe that Bakunawa was some secretly-hidden direct descendant of Marduke.

"Damn it! Keep your wits about you! So what if he's some orphan of Marduke's! He is an enemy! Nothing more, nothing less!" shouted Brateo.

"Brateo! You'll anger Madroza and the others!" Gorn warned him. "But you speak the truth. Listen, Madroza and my Elder Dragon allies. This is not Marduke. This is an atavistic descendant or something that has inherited a part of Marduke's power. He is no different from you, as you have Marduke's blood running through your veins as well!"

Though the demigods were greatly shaken, Gorn's words quickly put them at ease... even though cannon-fire and beams of light were still pouring from the enemy fleet, leaving them no room for hesitation.

Gufadgarn put her mind to work, paying no attention to what Gorn and his allies were doing. To begin with, she hadn't expected Bakunawa's Breath attack to cause major unrest – ten seconds of hesitation was more than enough.

During that time, her allies had succeeded in cleaning up the monsters that were leading the charge and applying damage to the Orichalcum Golems.

But it seemed that buying any further time would be difficult.

Gorn and his allies, having regained their composure, were on the attack once more. They were keeping their distance and using long-ranged attacks, while leaving the remaining monsters, the Orichalcum Golems, and their own summoned beasts to fight on the frontlines.

"Dessert!" Bakunawa said gleefully.

A blood-red tentacle... or rather, tongue, extended from inside his mouth, looping around in a circle that surrounded the monsters, and in the next moment, he swallowed them whole.

"The blood is so sweet! But I can't eat any more," Bakunawa said.

"Then what about your 'second stomach,' Bakunawa-chan?" said Darcia.

What she referred to as a second stomach was not the same as the one often spoken of by women with sweet desserts before them. It was an organ that existed in Bakunawa's body, one that served as a food storage space.

In addition to the stomach that digested his food, Bakunawa also had a 'second stomach' that was capable of storing excess food. But due to the location of this organ, he could not fill it with the tremendous vacuuming force that he had previously demonstrated.

"Yeah, Mama told me to empty it before I came here, and I listened to her," said Bakunawa.

"Good boy," said Darcia. "Then if you see any delicious-looking enemies, don't hesitate to store them in your second stomach. After chewing thoroughly, of course."

"Got it!" said Bakunawa.

Following her instructions, he produced several tongues from his mouth that stretched out to grab

monsters one after another.

The monsters screeched as they attempted to escape by severing the tongues that were entwined around them, but their sharp claws and teeth that were harder than Mythril or Adamantite could not inflict even a single scratch on the stretchy tongues.

But the tongues were not as powerful as Bakunawa's vacuuming ability. A ten-meter-tall three-eyed Minotaur was one of the monsters that Bakunawa had targeted as delicious-looking, but rather than being pulled into Bakunawa's mouth, it roared loudly as it pulled away, stretching out the tongue that was wrapped around its torso.

Bakunawa groaned as he sent a second and a third tongue at the three-eyed Minotaur, but the other monsters got in the way.

The monsters had no coordination or teamwork, but this was the first time Bakunawa had shown any sign of weakness; they repelled the tongues with spells and rammed their bodies into them from the side with all their strength, preventing them from reaching their target.

No matter how stretchy the tongues were, they were beginning to take damage from being attacked by these high-Rank monsters.

Darcia and Zadiris stepped in with spells to send the monsters scattering.

“Life Beast Pack Assault!”

“Chaotic Light Flash Blade Dance!”

Basdia and Vigaro leapt in to help clear the monsters as well, along with advice on things for Bakunawa to look out for when using his tongue.

“Bakunawa! When you use your tongues, don't go for enemies that are too far away! And I know there's a lot of choices, but eat them one by one, slowly but surely!” said Vigaro.

“If you don't do that, it'll hurt, you know. Got it?” said Basdia.

“Yeah, got it! Thanks, Grandpa Vigaro and Auntie Basdia!” said Bakunawa with an earnest nod.

Like a child learning from falling over, Bakunawa had gained experience from this failure. Incidentally, the wounds on his tongue had already healed.

“Don't... DON'T MESS WITH US!” roared Brateo, realizing that this battle to the death was being used as an educational experience for this baby (Elder Dragon).

In his rage, he brought a particularly large bolt of lightning that split into multiple to rain upon Bakunawa and the others.

However, Legion suddenly appeared using Teleportation and used their body to block some of the lightning. The rest was blocked by the barrier produced by Zadiris and the 'Moonlight Magical Girl' Zandia, and the shield of the 'Saint of Healing' Jeena.

“The Zombie Titans were with you as well!” Brateo groaned as he received the damage of his own lightning, reflected by Legion's 'Counter.'

But because they possessed the 'Fire and Lightning Resistance' Skill, they received almost no damage from such insignificant lightning attacks. The damage reflected to Brateo was only slight.

“Keep it up, Brateo!” said Gorn, praising his actions in battle for the first time. “Keep attacking, splitting your lightning attacks into multiple, and be careful that they aren't reflected by that mass of meat's 'Counter' or Gufadgarn's spells!”

“G-Gorn-dono! Are you sure about this?!” said the Crab Beast-King Gabildes, wondering if Gorn had lost his mind.

“Yes,” said Gorn with a nod. “The fact that they are defending this Elder Dragon named Bakunawa works in our favor – we can make sure that some fraction of their fighting strength is going into defending that creature! Continue your attacks, Brateo!”

“I don't need you to tell me!” Brateo shouted back at Gorn as he brought more lightning attacks raining down.

But naturally, Legion and the others defended Bakunawa. Meanwhile, long-ranged attacks from Madroza and Gabildes targeted the nine remaining ships, including the real Cuatro, causing the cannon-fire and beams of light from the fleet to be sent in their direction.

“We are in a deadlock once more, but... it may seem too unnatural for there to be so little progress. Unleash Godwin. And send word for Knochen-dono and Bone-Man-dono to be deployed as well,” said Gufadgarn.

In response to these orders, another of the fake Cuatros exploded from within, and Knochen emerged. This swarm of bones also carried Godwin and Bone Man, who were heading right at Gorn and his allies. Just as the battle looked like it would progress further, a shockwave came from far behind Gorn and his allies, as if something had exploded.

Bakunawa gave a startled cry and immediately used his wings to protect Darcia and the others around

him.  
“What is that?!” said Darcia, surprised by this sudden development.

“It doesn’t seem like an enemy attack!” said Zandia.

“This is... Could it be that Vandalieu had devoured Botin?!” shouted the Light Dragon God Ryularyus, his voice filled with fear.

But Gorn replied, “No!” with a satisfied smile. “Botin, the great god of the earth attribute, has been revived! A true miracle! We are victorious!”

Meanwhile, Vandalieu was standing in the middle of the area from which the shockwave had originated. “I didn’t imagine that I’d end up on this side of it,” he said.

He had been sent back outside the seal that Guduranis had placed on Botin, but rather than ending up back inside his underground tunnel, he was now on the surface.

The backup forces stationed near Botin, who had been sent flying a short distance by the shockwave, stared in astonishment as they became aware of Vandalieu’s presence.

“Impossible! Why is Vandalieu here?!” one of them exclaimed.

“Has Botin-sama not been revived?!” shouted another.

“This is no time to be flustered! Kill the bastard, kill him!” roared a third, as he and his comrades began attacking Vandalieu.

《You have acquired ‘Botin’s Divine Protection’ and ‘Peria’s Divine Protection!’》

“I understand receiving Botin’s Divine Protection, but why Peria’s as well? Is she watching through Juliana?” Vandalieu wondered as he deflected the backup forces’ panicked Breath attacks and spells with ‘Barrier Bullet.’

Leaving this matter aside, he realized that it would be difficult to withstand a one-sided battle with these gods with him staying on the defense, so he produced an eyeball of the Demon King on the back of his head to examine the situation.

*The seal has vanished without a trace, but it seems that it was quite big. About one minute until Borkus and the others arrive. The enemy won’t give me the moment I need to let Sam out of my shadow, but... well, I suppose I can do one minute.*

“Everyone, I have finished freeing Botin. All that there is left to do now is call on the enemy to surrender, and kill those who still insist on fighting,” said Vandalieu.

He relayed this information to Gufadgarn and the others as well through the Demon King Familiars.

The attacks suddenly stopped.

“B-Botin?! No, she’s not alone!”

“Zantark, Ricklent, Zuruwarn... and Vida! Why are they here?!”

Botin, leading her subordinate gods, had placed themselves in between Vandalieu and the backup forces, followed by Vida and the other gods as well.

The mother-goddess was dark-skinned and had a build that looked sturdy, rather than elegant. Her brows gave off the impression of having a strong will.

She stared at the gods facing her as if glaring at them. “I thank you for all the work you have done so far – Alda, the God of Light and Law, and the rest of you, have all tried to protect the world in your own way while I was sealed away... But! So long as I am known as mother-goddess, I will never accept Alda, the God of Law and Fate!”

This declaration echoed far and wide, reaching Gorn and his allies as well, and they opened their eyes wide in shock.

“B-Botin, what are you saying?” one of the demigods stammered. “Please, clear your mind and –”

“My mind has never been clearer than it is now! This is my last warning for all of you. Demigods, return to your homes, and gods, devote your efforts to the maintenance of the world! If you do not... be very aware that you will become my enemy, as I am an ally of Vandalieu!” Botin shouted, her voice fiercer than any Elder Dragon’s roar, striking a heavy blow in the hearts of Gorn and the gods he commanded.

**Name:** Juliana Alcrem

**Titles:** Princess Knight of the Demon Empire of Vidal, Leader of Morksi's Mascot Squad, Cow Princess General

**Rank:** 9

**Race:** Hathor Princess Knight

**Level:** 0

**Passive skills:**

Enhanced Attribute Values: Under Command: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)

Enhanced Attribute Values: Mounted: Level 3

Strengthened Attack Power when Equipped with a Spear: Large (LEVEL UP!)

Augmented Defensive Power when Equipped with Metal Armor: Medium (Awakened from Strengthened Defensive Power when Equipped with Metal Armor!)

Mental Corruption: Level 4 (NEW!)

Dark Vision (NEW!)

Superhuman Strength: Level 10 (NEW!)

Strengthened Attribute Values: Creator: Level 5 (NEW!)

Self-Strengthening: Guidance: Level 5 (NEW!)

Physical Resistance: Level 3 (NEW!)

Disease and Poison Resistance: Level 3 (NEW!)

Mana Enlargement: Level 1 (NEW!)

Strengthened Attribute Values: Transformation: Level 4 (NEW!)

Vitality Enlargement: Level 1 (NEW!)

Allure: Level 1 (NEW!)

**Active skills:**

Spear Technique: Level 5

Armor Technique: Level 9 (LEVEL UP!)

Shield Technique: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)

Mount: Level 3

Coordination: Level 9 (LEVEL UP!)

Etiquette: Level 3

Command: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)

Transcend Limits: Level 1 (NEW!)

Archery: Level 5 (NEW!)

Halberd Technique: Level 6 (NEW!)

Familiar Spirit Demonfall: Level 3 (NEW!)

Dancing: Level 4 (NEW!)

Singing: Level 4 (NEW!)

**Unique Skills:**

Vandalieu's Divine Protection (NEW!)

Peria's Divine Protection (NEW!)

Vida's Divine Protection (NEW!)

Botin's Divine Protection (NEW!)

Monster explanation (written by Luciliano):

Hathor

A race produced by changes in a half-Minotaur triggered by the acquisition of Botin's divine protection. I had hypothesized several possible causes of these changes, but... half-Minotaurs themselves are an unstable race, as they were created through pseudo-reincarnation, so I believe the changes were caused by this divine protection that was acquired after their birth.

It is also possible that in the half-Minotaur state, the mutation brought about by the death-attribute Mana has stopped halfway, and acquiring this divine protection caused the mutation process to reach completion.

Either way, there is no mistake in saying that Master is the cause for all of this.

These monsters have the appearance of dark-skinned females that are beautiful but are significantly larger than human females, with the horns of a cow. As this race has only just been created, it is unclear as to whether it is possible for males or individuals with different skin color to exist.

At the very least, Juliana and all of her sisters match the above description.

Incidentally, at this stage, the smallest of them seems to be a meter and seventy centimeters tall, while the largest is a little over two meters tall. It can be presumed that once they have finished maturing, some of them will be more than three meters tall.

They are exceptionally physically gifted, even more so than Minotaurs. Current known race variants are Rank 6 Hathors; Rank 7 Hathor Fighters, Archers, and Mages; Rank 8 Hathor Knights; and finally, the Rank 9 Hathor Princess Knight, Juliana.

It is unclear as to whether Juliana's race title is a result of Zadiris's curse, or because she was a princess knight in her previous life.

... Perhaps it would be wise to conduct an experiment where we isolate female monsters and members of Vida's races from Zadiris as they receive lessons from Kanako and increase their Rank, and observe if 'Princess' still appears in their race or Job titles.

#### Chapter 301 Peria's resurrection and the resumption of battle

Following Botin's declaration, the Demon King's Continent fell into complete silence, as if time itself had stopped.

It was Vandalieu and his allies that made the first move. Vandalieu's main body remained stationary by the feet of Botin and the other gods, but through the Demon King Familiars, he gave orders for everyone to fully focus on defending themselves.

Naturally, those orders didn't directly reach Knochen, Bone Man, and Godwin who had only just started fighting on the frontlines and hadn't yet activated 'Familiar Spirit Demonfall' or 'Familiar Spirit Descent,' but Gufadgarn made sure to relay them.

The monsters on the Demon King's Continent that had been tamed by Gorn and his allies were unable to move, but the untamed wild monsters fled as fast as they could upon seeing the appearance of the great gods.

Even the monsters that possessed strength rivaling that of gods could not help but tremble in fear at the overwhelming, intimidating aura that the great gods radiated. And they had no reason to resist the fear that they felt – without hesitation, they obeyed the warnings of their survival instinct.

Thus, the gods that had been defending Botin, the ones that revered the God of Law and Fate Alda as their leader, were uninterrupted by anyone as they stood in place, utterly dumbfounded.

"That's... impossible..."

"What... have we been fighting for?"

"Th-this can't be happening. A hallucination... I must be hallucinating, right?!"

They did not even have the composure to think about how Vandalieu could have possibly evaded their watchful eyes to reach the place where Botin was sealed away. There was no chance for them to come to the realization that there was an enormous underground cavern named Gartland inhabited by members of Vida's races, and a tunnel had been dug from it.

That was how shocked they were.

They had formed this force and fought these battles to defend Botin at the orders of Alda, who had assumed that Vandalieu was determined to reach her in order to devour her soul.

They had believed that if the Mother of the Earth and Goddess of Craftsmanship were to be released from her seal... she would join them to fight against Vida's faction.

"Could it be that they were aiming to release Botin the entire time? But then, all of those attacks... they were distractions to misdirect us, rather than attacks of invasion?" muttered Gorn, the leader of the forces that had defended Botin.

He was not in a complete state of stupefaction – though with half of his mind working furiously to process these events, he also became aware that it would have been easier for him to not realize the truth.

He and his allies had perceived these battles as fierce, and they had believed that they were "repelling" the enemy despite taking casualties. But all of those battles had been nothing but distractions. A farce.

Coming to that realization, Gorn tasted a despair so deep that it felt as if his entire body was rotting away.

"But why... There is no way you could have reached a mutual understanding with Botin while she was still sealed away. How were you so certain that she would side with you?" Gorn muttered, still in a daze. But thinking about it calmly, he realized that the belief that Botin would side with Alda's forces had been an illusion.

"Wait. Botin was freed from her seal only moments ago. Perhaps this is only a temporary confusion. If she is persuaded... not by us, but by Alda directly, then she should come to her senses –"

“That is unlikely,” said the God of Mirror Images Larpan, extinguishing the last ray of hope... or rather, the delusion, that Gorn was clinging onto. “Gorn, it may be difficult to imagine for you demigods, but us gods have access to everything that is seen and heard by our believers. Botin-sama... Botin’s decision is presumably based on the information that she has learned from her worshippers, everything from a hundred thousand years ago up until the present day. Even if Alda-sama himself were to try and persuade her, it is unlikely that she would retract the declaration that she just made.”

Upon hearing these words, Gorn felt a shock so sharp that the world started spinning. In her declaration, Botin had indeed praised Alda’s actions as the ruling leader of the gods to protect the world and restore it little by little. But even so, she did not accept Alda, the God of Law and Fate.

Her declaration was as good as a declaration to sever all ties with him.

Gorn had held hope that the resurrection of Botin and her subordinate gods would change the disadvantageous situation they were in and turn the battle around, and that made his shock at this outcome all the worse.

Gorn fell to his knees, and all semblance of order among the demigods was lost.

The first to flee were the gods who had descended upon the area around Botin’s seal.

“... Retreat. We must retreat!”

“Run! Everyone, flee!”

“We have no hope of winning now! We have been defeated!”

These gods and demigods had turned the area surrounding Botin’s seal into a pseudo-Divine Realm to use as their final line of defense; other than Vandalieu, they were the ones that had been physically closest to Botin when they witnessed her resurrection and her declaration.

Having been pushed outside of the pseudo-Divine Realm by the shockwave created by the undoing of Botin’s seal, they were continuously expending power at a tremendous rate.

Botin, the one whom Gorn and his allies had been trying to protect, had sided with Vandalieu and was now their enemy. There was no hope of victory for them, not in terms of the sizes of each side’s fighting forces, nor in terms of an objective to achieve.

If they were able to defeat Vandalieu, that would be a victory, but... the battle thus far had proved that this was impossible for Gorn and his allies in their current state.

Botin and the others watched in silence as Gorn and his allies fled. There was no telling as to whether they would do as Botin had told them to – leave Alda’s forces and be neutral in the conflict.

In fact, it was highly likely that they would return to Alda, continue nurturing their developing heroes, focus on recovering their power, and come back as enemies once more.

“Just to be perfectly clear, let them go if they want to flee,” Vandalieu said, despite knowing this.

He felt no urge to attack them from behind – because doing so would harm Botin’s reputation.

Taking the opportunity to destroy a handful of lesser gods who had already expended a significant amount of power to fire projectiles from their pseudo-Divine Realm was too small a reward in exchange for displeasing Botin.

And Botin had said: “Demigods, return to your homes, and gods, devote your efforts to the maintenance of the world!” In other words, if these enemies did not do as she said and came back to fight another day, Vandalieu would not have to spare them next time. If they presented themselves as enemies once more, he would simply devour their souls or seal them away then.

And Vandalieu had another purpose for sparing them... a hopeful expectation.

*Now that Botin has become my ally, other gods among Alda’s forces might change their way of thinking as well. If gods allied to Alda that aren’t here right now change their stance to a neutral one, the enemy will have less fighting forces, and it will be possible to create cracks in their unity,* he thought.

Alda’s forces were likely already shaken by the Goddess of Rain Clouds Bashas and two other gods betraying them to join Vida’s faction, but Botin joining Vandalieu as an ally would be even more impossible for the gods serving Alda to accept calmly.

Some gods would certainly leave Alda’s forces to take a stance of neutrality, if not join Vida’s faction like Bashas had.

*These ones might do that as well,* Vandalieu thought as he watched the gods leave.

“Bocchan, may I come out now?” asked a voice from Vandalieu’s shadow.

“Ah, Sam. Yes. And please let me use the Job-changing room,” Vandalieu replied.

No demigods had been defeated during this battle, but Bakunawa had devoured a large quantity of monsters, causing Vandalieu’s ‘Chaos Guider’ Job to reach Level 100.

They were technically currently still in battle, but the enemy was still in a state of shock, and they were showing no signs of recovering. And besides, they were literally standing at the feet of the gods. In a way, this was the safest place in the entire world.



“Ah, so you have mastered yet another Job! Congratulations, Bocchan!” said Sam as he emerged from within Vandalieu’s shadow.

Mähne and Hof came out of the carriage, and their harnesses began assembling themselves.

“Come on in, Bocchan,” said Rita as she and Saria welcomed Vandalieu into the carriage.

Vandalieu changed Jobs quickly. The Job he chose was ‘Divine Guider.’

It was yet another Guider Job, but given the current state of Gorn and his allies, it was possible that the battle would end here, so it seemed to be a more appropriate choice for the situation than ‘God Destroyer.’ And besides –

“I’ve just gained the ‘Great Demon King’ Title, after all,” Vandalieu said to himself.

Several seconds after Vandalieu disappeared into Sam’s carriage, Gorn and his allies stirred.

“I shall take my leave. Everyone, let us flee.”

“There is no use in fighting any further in this situation.”

“I’m telling you this for your own good: Gorn-dono, and everyone else, we must escape now.”

None of the demigods wished to resume the battle; they followed in the footsteps of the gods who had already fled.

They fled, as there was no purpose in them fighting any longer, and many of them were thinking of immediately joining up with the forces defending Peria.

They intended to meet Vandalieu in battle once more if he were to come to them with the intent of reaching Peria, but... such thinking was too naïve.

Still, perhaps it would be too harsh to blame them for their thoughts not yet having caught up to the reality that Botin had joined Vandalieu’s side.

Meanwhile, chaos was unfolding in the seas where a portion of the forces defending Peria were preparing to join the forces defending Botin.

The holy grounds were shaking, and the underwater dome looked as if it were on the verge of collapsing.

“What in the world is the meaning of this?!” shouted one of the younger gods. “Someone, please answer me! Pargtarta-dono, Goddess of Flow! What is happening?!”

These questions were directed at Pargtarta, a goddess who had long served Peria as one of her closely trusted subordinate gods. Her beautiful long hair resembled Peria’s, and she had the appearance of a warrior, wearing blue armor and holding a trident in her hand.

Pargtarta laughed, as if with joy.

Her expression was not the gentle smile that she always had. It was a laughter of genuine delight, with the corners of her mouth rising high into her cheeks.

“What are you flustered about?” she asked, still wearing this overjoyed grin. “We have been waiting more than a hundred thousand years to witness this moment, and it is finally upon us. The time has come for our master Peria to show herself and cease her pretense of slumber!”

The gods defending Peria opened their eyes wide in astonishment at the words ‘pretense of slumber,’ learning for the first time that Peria had actually been awake.

But they did not have the time to confirm if what Pargtarta said was true or not.

“This... Peria-sama’s resurrection is what we have all been hoping for! I am most overjoyed! But why is Peria attempting to remove us?!” the young god shouted.

The water flowing through the holy grounds had turned into a raging current that threatened to sweep the gods away.

As the holy grounds were underwater, many of those defending Peria were gods and demigods of the water attribute. Together, they were trying to stop the flow of the seawater around them, but it was taking all of their effort just to remain in place.

The young god suspected that the only one capable of creating such a raging current was Peria, the Goddess of Water and Knowledge – and he was right.

“Why is Peria trying to remove you, you ask? The answer to that is obvious. It is because you are the enemy, and she cannot simply leave you at her side,” said Pargtarta.

“W-we are the enemy?!” the young god uttered in shock. “Th-then, Peria-sama... it cannot be!”

“Very clever of you to realize the truth,” said Pargtarta, her smile growing even wider. “Now then, it is about time I bid you goodbye. But depending on what paths you choose for yourselves, perhaps we may see each other again sooner than expected.”

In the next moment, the raging flow of the water became even more violent.

“What do you mean by that?! Are you saying that we should join Vida’s side?!” shouted the young god,

on the verge of being swept away.

But before he could hear Pargtarta's answer, the current swallowed him and carried him away.

"... I am urging you to make a choice on which flow you will choose to follow. You should be grateful that you are so fortunate. After all, no matter where the flows may lead, you are able to choose with your own free will. And Botin-dono has even granted you the choice to sit on the fence, if you so wish. My master would not have allowed that."

As if hearing these words spoken by her close servant, the violent current burst forth and swallowed Pargtarta as well, becoming a pillar of water that reached over the sea's surface and pierced the sky. And so, Peria awakened.

Peria descended from the sky along with a pillar of water in the pseudo-Divine Realm that had been created just on the edge of Botin's seal on the Demon King's Continent... the place that she had described to Juliana in a Divine Message – From above, the surroundings looked like a pair of unpleasantly-colored jaws.

With Pargtarta accompanying her, she had manifested in a form as enormous as a Colossus or Elder Dragon, just like the other great gods. Her hair and eyes were as blue as the sea, and her beauty was flawless.

"It appears that I have kept you waiting," she said, quietly greeting her brothers and sisters.

"It's been a long time, Peria," said Vida, happily smiling back at her.

"... It seems that your power has returned," said Zantark with a stiff expression on his face, which now had a prominent blue bruise.

"Yes, we have been waiting. We have been waiting for a very long time," said Ricklent.

"I heard that you were pretending to be asleep – even ignoring Ricklent and Zuruwarn. Bit of a bad prank, isn't it?" said Botin.

"Peria, allow me to offer some words to commemorate your awakening. 'Hah, Peria, you were dead last!'" said Zuruwarn, taunting her with a serious expression.

"Yes, yes, I'll listen to your words of joy at our reunion, as well as your scolding and complaints, later. But I had no choice, did I? When I came to, Alda had gone all crazy, and as for Vida and Zantark, I had no idea what had happened to them or where they were. Botin was still sealed away. Ricklent and Zuruwarn were still just barely alive when they were moving around. The only thing I could do in that situation was to pretend to be asleep," said Peria.

She had completely recovered her power – but complete only in relation to her power as it had been a hundred thousand years ago. On the other hand, Alda, the God of Law and Fate, had eliminated Vida and Zantark, and received the worship of humanity as the sole remaining great god.

The people had prayed to the subordinate gods, as well as Botin in her seal and Ricklent, Zuruwarn, and Peria as they slumbered. But heavy impressions were made on their hearts by Alda, who acted as the leader of the gods, and the priests who praised Alda.

Thus, even though people worshiped all of the gods, it was under the premise of Alda being their leader, so a part of all worship went to Alda, causing Alda to gain greater power than he had possessed a hundred thousand years ago. The only exceptions were the worship of Vida and Zantark, which had been revived in later generations by those who opposed the worship of Alda, and the worship from the residents of the Boundary Mountain Range, the Demon Continent, and Gartland.

... But even with such power, Alda had likely struggled with ruling over not only the light attribute but the life attribute as well, in addition to the messy battles with the remnants of the Demon King's army and remaining alert and wary of Vida's faction.

Still, when Peria awoke and found herself in this situation, she had faced no choice other than to work with Alda or pretend to still be slumbering.

Due to the barrier over the Boundary Mountain Range, she had been unable to enter it or send Divine Messages inside it. She had been unaware of Gartland's existence. And even if she had made her way to the Demon Continent, if Zantark was still in a state of insanity, she would have been in a difficult position. Ricklent and Zuruwarn had sought to contact her, making their moves in the shadows despite still being powerless, but following them would have been risky. Trying to respond to them in secret would have been a poor idea, as Ricklent and Zuruwarn would have been at risk if Alda and his servants were to find out.

Thus, she had simply waited until Vandalieu was born and for him to accomplish what he did. After learning of Vida's resurrection, she had waited for her chance.

If Peria had joined Vida straight away, Alda would have focused the forces that had been guarding her to guard the still-sealed Botin instead. It was even possible that he would have gathered additional forces to strengthen Botin's guard.

If this had happened, then even Vandalieu would have had to fight a difficult battle to reach her.

Thus, she had sent a Divine Message to Juliana and led Vandalieu to remove Botin's seal first. After that, all she'd needed to do was wait until Botin's resurrection before making her move.

*Still, Vida's new races and the former members of the Demon King's army... they're sturdier than I thought. It seems that Zakkart was right to have the enemy join us as allies, and Vida was right to create these new races,* Peria thought.

She hadn't known about Gartland's existence; she was impressed with the gods of Gartland and the people living there who had allowed things to progress even faster than she had anticipated.

"Of course, all of that might have been unnecessary," Peria remarked.

In the distance, she could see a fleet of flying ships, as well as several beings who had stepped into the realm of godhood – including the incarnation of Vida. She could also see Tiamat's child, who had inherited the power of Marduke and the blood of the 'Great Demon King.'

And then there was the 'Great Demon King' himself, who was standing by Peria's feet. Peria had the feeling that he could have simultaneously fought both the forces that had been defending her and those that had been defending Botin, and won on both fronts.

"You are giving me too much praise. A simple doubling in the enemy's numbers would have been a great threat; my Mana isn't unlimited. And... the first battle was dangerous," said Vandalieu as he stepped out of Sam's carriage, having heard Peria talking.

《The Levels of the 'Constant Mana Recovery,' 'Deadly Venom Secretion (Claws, Fangs, Tongue),' 'Augmented Attack Power while Unarmed,' 'Augmented Vitality,' 'Strengthened All Attribute Values,' 'Cooking,' 'Group Coordination,' 'Group Commander,' 'Transcend Limits: Fragments,' 'Group Thought Processing,' 'Group Control,' and 'Soul Form' Skills have increased!》

《You have acquired the 'Divine Path Enticement' and 'Guidance: Divine Path' Skills!》

《'Divine Path Enticement' has combined with 'Dark Dream Demon Creation Destruction Path Enticement' and awakened to 'Manas-vijnana Enticement!' 'Guidance: Divine Path' has combined with 'Guidance: Dark Dream Demon Creation Destruction Path' and awakened to 'Guidance: Manas-vijnana!'》

Vandalieu had changed Jobs to 'Divine Guider,' but he didn't have any sense that it had affected any of the shocked gods and demigods who had been defending Botin.

In fact, he felt like his guidance's effect on Sam, Rita, Saria, Borkus, and Juliana had grown.

*Come to think of it, what is Manas-vijnana?* Vandalieu wondered.

With 'Divine Path' combining with his guidance and enticement Skills for a total of seven components each, they had awakened into Skills with a name whose meaning Vandalieu didn't understand. Even with the 'Perfect Record Technique' Skill, there was no way for him to recall something that he didn't know.

'Manas-vijnana' refers to something deeper than one's consciousness, the self that is aware of oneself. It was possible that the awakening of this Skill was appropriate for Vandalieu because he possessed the 'Root Source' Skill and a soul with a strange form... though Vandalieu himself was unaware of this.

"Oh really?" said Peria, taking Vandalieu's focus away from his Skills and back to reality. "I think that your claim that your Mana isn't unlimited is particularly questionable. You use a lot of big spells that consume a lot of Mana, but I feel like you can manage even if that causes a Mana shortage for you."

Indeed, even if Vandalieu were to cast multiple large spells in rapid succession, he had numerous ways to get by in battle.

However –

"However, even if he is able to manage through some methods, he should not fight under the presumption that he can afford to run out of Mana," said Ricklent, before Vandalieu could refute Peria's assertion. "In a situation where he actually does run out of Mana, it is uncertain as to whether he will still be in a state where he can use such methods."

"It seems that battles where the general fights on the frontlines aren't very common these days, even though I personally like such battles. Generals tend to look down on the battlefield from a safe place and

flee for their lives at the first sign of danger, though I think it is questionable as to whether such generals can really be called generals,” said Zantark.

“Ricklent is being reasonable – so reasonable that it’s funny, in fact,” said Peria. “But Zantark’s opinion is too similar to those of Vida’s races. Or maybe it’s just outdated.”

“That can’t be helped, Peria. More than half of human society now thinks of Zantark as an evil god, and most of his worshippers are members of Vida’s races. The mortals that he considers to be unworthy of being called generals don’t worship him,” said Zuruwarn.

“I think Vandalieu is fine, though,” said Vida.

“... Zuruwarn, you haven’t changed, but Vida, you’ve been influenced by your new incarnation too much. Vandalieu, don’t worry about us and do what you need to do. If there’s anything you want to ask me, we can talk later,” said Peria.

“Alright,” said Vandalieu.

“Bocchan, everyone is here,” Saria informed him. “Juliana-chan is... kinda brown, isn’t she?”

“It’s winter, but we’ve been at sea, so maybe she got a tan? I’m a little jealous,” said Rita.

With the conversation taking place above his head coming to an end, Vandalieu returned his eyes to ground level to see Borkus, Juliana, Princess Levia, and Kimberley, who had traversed the entire length of the underground tunnel and the space that had been occupied by Botin’s seal.

“Hey, kid! The little girl’s Rank suddenly increased!” said Borkus.

Juliana was sitting on his shoulders, and her skin had become a dark brown color that contrasted with the waxy skin of Saria and Rita.

“Vandalieu-sama! After receiving Botin-sama’s divine protection, my race has changed from half-Minotaur to ‘Hathor!’” said Juliana.

“Oh, that’s a good thing... right?”

“Yes!”

Juliana was beaming happily, showing no signs of concern at the change. Perhaps the changing of her skin’s color was a small thing to her.

Somewhere in Vandalieu’s memory was the knowledge that ‘Hathor’ was a goddess in Egyptian mythology with the head of a cow. That did offer some explanation in regards to the race’s name, but... it was still something of a mystery as to why acquiring the divine protection of this world’s goddess of the earth attribute would cause Juliana to become a Hathor.

*I have a strong suspicion... Could it be that it’s because of me, rather than Botin?*

In the Demon Empire of Vidal lived Anubises, which had transformed from Kobolds, and the new generation of Lizardmen, Ammits. Both were gods from Egyptian mythology, and what both races had in common was Vandalieu’s death-attribute magic.

It was likely that Vandalieu himself was the cause. When he changed Jobs a few moments ago, he had seen a new Job, ‘Apep’... There was also a new one called ‘Azathoth,’ but he planned to not think about that one for now.

Incidentally, Botin was secretly a little surprised. *It seems that her body is more similar to a monster’s than a human’s, but I didn’t think my divine protection would cause her to mutate!* she thought.

“So, Peria has joined Vida as well... It is hopeless! We have no choice but to flee!” shouted one of the last of the fleeing demigods.

They had paused once more in shock upon seeing Peria’s descent, but as their minds started working again, they had remembered their fear once more.

The bird-type beast-kings had joined the battle to avenge the Sea Bird Beast-King Valfaz, but they were now fleeing while leaving their backs defenseless. If Vandalieu’s fleet had any intention of attacking them, they would certainly be struck down.

But at Vandalieu’s orders, no cannon-fire met the backs of the beast-kings. With their enormous wings, they flew to try and leave the Demon King’s Continent as quickly as they could. Some of the other demigods began moving as well, to follow them.

But one of the beast-kings screeched as he was struck down – not by cannon-fire, but by lightning.

“You cowards!” Brateo – the one who had fired the lightning attack – spat in disgust.

“B-Brateo, why are you attacking our allies? Have you lost your mind?!” Gorn shouted, dumbfounded.

“These cowards are fleeing in the face of the enemy! I am simply dealing with them in your place!”

“Fleeing? In the face of the enemy? You fool, do you still intend to fight?! There is no hope for victory!”

“Then are you telling me to run? Are you going to tell me to flee here, and look for another opportunity?”

Answer me, Gorn!”

The two Colossi began arguing. Brateo had attacked one of the beast-kings rather than any of

Vandalieu's allies; Gufadgarn and the others were bewildered, but continued watching the enemy while maintaining a defensive stance.

"If we flee here and look for another opportunity, what will we do then?! Will the situation become any better than it is now?! Any better than it is now, where every single living great god other than Alda has joined Vida's side as an ally of Vandalieu?!" Brateo roared. "It is true that we may have hope for victory if Bellwood is resurrected. But will that resurrection happen before the enemy has the world in the palm of his hand?!"

What Brateo spoke was tragic, but the truth. Vandalieu had the support of six great gods, but Ricklent and Zuruwarn's power had not yet returned. If the champion and heroic god Bellwood were to be resurrected and fought against Vandalieu, victory was possible.

After all, no matter what else could be said about Vandalieu, he did not yet match the Demon King Guduranis in pure fighting strength.

But despite the dangerous situation Alda and his allies found themselves in, Bellwood's resurrection was yet to come. Brateo couldn't be blamed for losing faith that it would ever come at all.

"Can you answer me, Gorn?!" Brateo demanded. "If you can't, then now is our best chance for victory! Zuruwarn and Ricklent have not yet recovered all of their power, and Botin has only just been resurrected! And most importantly, they can't leave the pseudo-Divine Realm that we created!"

The other demigods began showing signs of agreement. The more time they gave to Vandalieu, the more power the great gods on his side would recover, the more the worshipers of the gods of Alda's forces would dwindle, the more allies Vandalieu would gain, and the stronger Vandalieu's allies would become. No matter how small or non-existent their chance of victory was now, it was the best chance they would have. This argument was convincing to the demigods, who knew how rapidly the strength of Vandalieu and his allies grew, and had experienced the threat represented by the latest addition to Vandalieu's fighting forces – Bakunawa.

"... Yes. It is exactly as you say," agreed Madroza, who was still in a heavily wounded state. "Calm yourselves. If we try to escape this place with the intention of distancing ourselves from Alda, do you think they will spare us as Botin claims? It's obvious that they will wait for us to separate from one another as we flee and then strike us down one by one!"

The demigods who had been defending Botin opened their eyes wide at this realization.

Vandalieu and his allies frowned. They knew that Madroza's claims were nothing more than paranoid delusion. But the demigods that had been defending Botin had been assaulted repeatedly, and they had just learned that all of those assaults had been distractions to trick them. To them, Madroza's paranoid delusion sounded very much like reality.

If he were to be completely honest, Vandalieu didn't know if he would believe that he would be shown mercy if he were in their position.

*I suppose I can't be called an honest, proud enemy who keeps my promises, with my past deeds being what they are,* Vandalieu thought.

He couldn't recall ever having used any clearly dirty attacks or cowardly traps, but he had frequently used surprise attacks to catch his enemy off-guard. And even though he and his companions had always intended to fight head-on with all of their strength, their enemies would have surely perceived them as using tricky plans and foul tactics.

Of course, Vandalieu was not particularly dissatisfied with this. Alda's forces already saw Vandalieu as negatively as they possibly could, just from the fact that he had absorbed fragments of the Demon King and commanded Undead and monsters as allies. And given that these demigods had decided that they couldn't trust him due to the battles that had taken place thus far, he didn't want to make them his allies, as they would obviously oppose him later.

"You are right... Fighting until we are broken and turned to dust is the only path to our future!" declared Gorn, agreeing with Brateo and Madroza as well.

Botin gave a heavy sigh, and Peria shook her head. Vida gave a sad smile of resignation.

"I see. So, they had already chosen a different path, without me realizing it," Botin said, taking half a step back.

"Well then, please leave the rest to me," said Vandalieu. "Resume battle."

And with that, the cannons began firing once more.

Master only held this Job for a short period of time, so there is nothing that I can say about it for certain... It is unclear as to whether it is a Job for guiding others into chaos, or whether the chaos guides them. My guess is that perhaps the chaos (Master) is the Guider who guides those who have lost their names and forms (spirits), and those who have not decided where they will go, into chaos. Though this is just a suspicion, I believe that this Job cannot be obtained by anyone who is sane, nor by anyone who is insane. They would need to be both sane and insane at the same time, like Master is.

Fin del capítulo 301