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HATARAKU MAOU-SAMA!

– The Devil Is a Part-Timer! –

- Volume 14 -

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MAYUMI KISAKI

"So? Why are you here?"

"Oh my, do you want to chase me out then suspend business so that you can reflect on that? It's hard to work in a company with so little annual leave."

Sunday morning, only one minute after opening time. For unknown reasons, the store was covered in cold air.

"L-Let me check the condition of the air-conditioning....."

Seized with fear, Maou planned to sneak away from the scene, but the source of the snowstorm did not allow him to do so.

"A superior who uses an old friend as an excuse to slack off is irritating, isn't that right, Maou?"

"Maa-kun, I was the one who set the temperature of the air-conditioning today. So there are no problems."

Having been named, Maou had no choice but to freeze on the spot in a strange position to retract his stretched out foot.

In the place where he returned to, the area manager of the Sentucky Fried Chicken West Shibuya Region, Tanaka Himeko, was showing a sharp smile resembling that of an ancient dragon which was looking forward to conquering the land, while the shop manager of the McRonalds in front of Hatagaya Station, Kiseki Mayumi, had a stern expression on her face, just like the Great Spirit born from the snowstorms, according to the legends told by the people from the polar regions.

One week had passed since the night when Maou was thrown in between the meeting of the two people who could not get along at all because of their history and a lady who controlled the two of them from the shadows.

Just as Kiseki returned to the frontlines after her reflection period and everyone thought that this period of memory could be relegated to the past, the disaster descended once more.

"Maou, didn't the conversation from earlier end when we were just having fun? In truth, how is it like working under Mayumi?"

"H-How is it like, erhm....."

"Maa-kun, if there is something you're unhappy about, just say it directly. This is also for the sake of the store."

"Ah, uh, erhm....."

Just as Maou was troubled on how to answer such a vague question, Kiseki said this with a smile.

Maou felt that he finally knew what a forced interview meant.

"Actually, I am looking for subordinates who have a strong strength of character. I heard that there is someone in this store who wants to become a permanent employee?"

Feeling the existence of an absolute god controlling the ancient dragon and the Great Spirit from the polar region with lines of destiny on some far side of the morning light, Maou was starting to get a headache.

"Hey, Mayumi. Do you know anyone who is still actively trying to become a permanent employee in the food and beverage industry in this day and age, and also has a strong strength of character?"

"Uh, do you know this kind of person, Maa-kun? It seems like I have no one I can use in my circle of friends."

"Sigh, if I am able to find such talent right now, I would definitely train him well so he would become a permanent employee immediately."

"Oh my, your responsibilities have become really heavy after becoming area manager. I only have people I trust around me, so I unfortunately cannot empathise with you at all."

Someone come quickly, it doesn't matter if it's other customers, anyone will do! Within his rapidly weakening heart, Maou prayed to the absolute god.

However, perhaps they were intimidated by the fighting spirits of the ancient deities which could be felt even from outside the store, there were no signs of customers entering the store.

Discovering that fate was not on his side, Maou could only rely on his pride as the Demon King.

"Erhm, Manager Tanaka. If the two of you do not mind, can I be allowed to attend the networking event?"

"Hrm?"

The two of them frowned at the frail voice which the King of Demons had squeezed out with all his might.

"As someone who wishes to become a permanent employee in this world, I have learned many things from Manager Tanaka in the earlier gathering. If I can receive guidance from the two of you, please allow me to attend!"

While emphasizing the term 'two of you', he finished this sentence with gusto.

After that, Himeko intentionally hummed in approval, and Kiseki showed a rather calm smile.

"Hrm, that is true, we have a duty to guide the lagging people in this industry."

"Yeah, probably. Sigh, we shouldn't say such unnecessary things."

Between Kiseki and Himeko, there were child-like feelings of resistance because of their absolute incompatibility with each other.

Therefore, as long as the two of them attended together, Kiseki would have no scruples about taking action as Maou's superior, and Himeko would be unable to use overly forceful methods as well.

"Mayumi, you have to cherish this guy well. Sigh, such a waste. This kind of person is actually staying under Mayumi!"

"You don't have to remind me. I consider myself very lucky that Sentucky opened in this area only after Maa-kun came to this store."

This should be considered a draw.

After Maou made this judgement, the automatic door opened. The long awaited second group of customers for today finally arrived.

Maou took the chance to step forward to serve the customer, Kiseki and Himeko also watched him leave without saying anything.

After that, the two of them seemed to have spoken a bit and Kiseki left Himeko's table in a peaceful manner to return to work.

An hour passed by.

"Morning everyone!"

Chiho, who came to work at eight am--

"My heart which had turned chaotic because of my deep longing for you, after the purification of dawn, my love for you has deepened ehheh!"

And Saniel, who came to find Kiseki to buy breakfast while reciting a poem, froze after seeing Himeko sitting at a table near the entrance.

"Hello, sorry for disturbing."

Himeko, who seemed to remember Chiho, waved at her with a smile, then immediately looked at Saniel.

"Sarue, it seems like you really love McRonalds huh."

"Eh, Ma-Manager Tanaka..... why....."

"Am I not allowed to eat breakfast here?"

Himeko stood up while smiling, and after returning the tray properly, she grabbed the neck of the frozen Saniel.

"This is irritating. Why is Mayumi like this, and I only have this kind of guy?"

After Himeko turned towards the frozen Saniel and Maou behind the counter in turn, she sighed deeply.

"Sorry for the disturbance. Help me tell the shop manager that I will reeducate this guy properly."

"A-Alright....."

"Ah, how can this be! At least allow me to lay my eyes on the new figure of my goddess today..... ugh!"

As both Kiseki and Maou were not nearby, after Himeko asked Chiho to pass the message, she dragged Saniel, who was crying manly tears, out of the store, and as the two of them left the store, Chiho could only stare after them, feeling stunned.

AFTER THE BUSINESS NETWORKING EVENT



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ILLUSTRATION SHORT STORY

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**THE HERO
AND THE HIGH
SCHOOL GIRL,
BECOMING FRIENDS**



SHORT STORY 1

THE HERO AND THE HIGH SCHOOL GIRL, BECOMING FRIENDS

Inside the McDonalds in front of Hatagaya Station, which did not have many customers, Sasaki Chiho had a gloomy expression on her face.

Even so, shop manager Kizaki Mayumi did not chide her, because not knowing why business had become so poor, Kizaki's expression was equally gloomy.

Yes. Kizaki did not know what had just happened in the place just a few minutes walk from this store.

"Hey, Chi-chan."

At this moment, Maou Sadao, Chiho's senior at work, spoke to her, and the latter jumped a little, instantly worrying if her thoughts were seen through.

She looked towards Maou's face nervously, but Maou did not seem to notice this, and displaying more anxiety than Chiho, he asked,

"If I use my power, erhm, I can erase those unhappy memo....."

When she heard this, Chiho suddenly felt a flare of anger.

She felt her face and ears burn, and her feelings boiled.

These seemed to show on her face, and because Maou also felt this dangerous aura--

"...ries.....?"

His tone weakened gradually.

The corners of Chiho's mouth were shaking.

Having experienced a very special day, Chiho's heart was in chaos too.

What did Maou-san mean by unhappy memories?

Is it my misunderstanding of the relationship between Maou-san and that older girl?

Maou-san and Ashiya-san are actually monsters?

Or is it.....

"I don't want that!"

"Eh?"

When she came to her senses, she had answered thus.

Thinking about it rationally, the amount of unhappy memories was too numerous to count.

Encountering scary things. Experiencing bitter things.

Many irrational things happened one after another, causing the number of things she wanted to ask and wanted to know to pile up like a mountain.

Even so.

"Maou-san, you idiot!"

Chiho shouted angrily, something which she did very rarely in her life.

"Ehhhhh?"

Maou looked truly confused, but this only frustrated Chiho even more.

The calm portion of Chiho's mind knew it very well.

Maou was worried about Chiho's mental state being negatively affected because she had been dragged into a supernatural incident.

Because he was concerned about Chiho – who had witnessed demonic magic, intense battles to the death, and demons – Maou suggested erasing her memory.

However, only one thought occupied Chiho's mind.

And with regards to this, Maou had not showed any reaction to it at all.

After that, until Chiho got off work, Maou and Chiho did not talk at all.

“Thanks for your work today, then, see you next shift.”

When Chiho left, she intentionally said this in a business-like manner, and left before Maou could reply.

Maou had looked confused until the end.

He probably did not know why Chiho was angry.

“Maou-san..... that idiot.”

Walking on Koshu Kaido illuminated by the street lights, Chiho mumbled softly to herself,

“I..... had wanted to say it myself.”

Covering her face which had turned red because of anger and her feelings that had leaked out, Chiho walked forward with huge steps.

Perhaps it was unreasonable to scold Maou only.

In fact, he had not said anything to Chiho, the ones who had let it slip were those two people from the foreign world.

However, he should have shown some reaction to it.

“The criteria we used was ‘people who thought about the Demon King 24 hours a day’”

“Oh~~ You can't make light of the Demon King after all~~”

The words said by the two people from the foreign world echoed in her mind.

What Chiho wanted erased was not the memories, amongst those unreal incidents which had occurred since morning, Chiho only wanted to erase one fact.

“I..... had wanted to express it personally, no matter what.....”



People flying in the air, battling with swords and magic, she had thought such a world only existed in storybooks.

Going to school, working, harbouring faint feelings of love for her senior at work, the normal daily life of high school student Sasaki Chiho which could be found anywhere broke down in an instant.

The senior at work who Chiho liked the most had said that he was living in a six tatami wooden apartment room in Tokyo, Sasazuka with a friend, however, her senior and that friend were demons from a foreign world.

The older salarywoman whom she knew was a Hero from a foreign world. Not only could she pull a sword out of thin air, but she could also fly in the air.

It would be fine if it was a battle between demons and the Hero – however – not only did these two work together to fight against other scary people, after the battle ended, they returned to being a MgRonalds employee and a salarywoman like it was a natural thing to do.

And they interacted with her in the same way as they did in the past.

Chiho did not dislike it. She honestly felt a little afraid when they were fighting, but after the battle ended, she also felt excited about encountering a truth she had not known about before.

Even if she did not know why everyone else besides her had no impression of what had happened at that time, after knowing the truth about these people, Chiho was unable to act like it had never happened.

She had no idea how to get along with them, and was unable to freely interact with them like how she did before this.

Because she was unable to do this, the distance between them grew. She started to grow distant from the other party.

But--

--As the distance grew, it still felt painful after all.



“.....I can’t do it after all.”

Turning around before reaching the destination, how many times has it been today?

A five minutes’ walk away from the Keio line, Sasazuka Station, Chiho turned back when she was in front of the wooden apartment Villa Rosa Sasazuka and planned to walk on the path she had come from.

The young girl stopped before taking a step, and sighed deeply.

No matter what, she could not muster up her courage to go up the stairs of the apartment.

“Maou-san is resting today, suddenly coming over and disturbing him, I’ll really feel bad about it.”

Since the day of the battle, the number of times she met up with Maou had decreased greatly.

According to the original work shift schedule, the two of them would not meet each other much within a single week, but this unavoidable reason was only half of the issue.

The remaining half was because Chiho was avoiding Maou.

It was not as if she really had no time at all, but Chiho still used guiding the new members of her club and midterms as reasons to take one whole week of leave during the preferential work shift selection stage which happened twice a month.

For the remaining shifts, to decrease the chances of meeting up with Maou as much as possible, she chose Saturday, which Maou rarely chose. In addition, on the days Maou started work at opening time and ended at eight pm, she had chosen the seven pm to ten pm shift.

Once she heard that it had something to do with school, shop manager Kisaki approved of the leave without any fuss, but she was a perceptive person.

Many signs had given her the impression that Chiho was avoiding Maou.

Kisaki even--

"I don't know what has happened, but if you feel that you cannot solve it on your own, you can discuss it with me as much as you like."

--told Chiho this before.

This matter was beyond Chiho's ability to handle.

However, different from before, this was definitely not a trouble which could be solved just by discussing it with someone.

"Uuuu....."

After Chiho groaned, she prepared to return.

However, when she walked to the place where she could see the apartment roof from afar, Chiho's steps slowed down again.

"What am I doing?"

Chiho asked herself this.

At the start, she had wanted to apologise for her bad attitude.

But more importantly, she wanted to express her feelings to Maou properly.

“I..... like Maou-san.....”

However, when she reached the public stairs of the apartment, Chiho discovered a problem.

That would be the true identity of ‘Maou Sadao’.

If everything she had seen earlier was real, then the huge abnormal appearance which did not appear human at all was the true identity of ‘Maou Sadao’.

Did that mean that the kind and dependable senior at work whom she likes was actually fake?

If the figure who was supporting Shuto Expressway as it came close to collapsing was the true form of Maou, then how should she act around ‘Maou Sadao’, who was currently staying in that apartment room?

As she thought to this point, Chiho wanted to run away to the road which she had walked back and forth on many times so far.

After the foreign dimension battle which took place at the Shuto Expressway ended, her heart had become numb and she was able to accept everything.

Even so, as time passed, Chiho became more and more clueless about how she was supposed to face Maou.

She wanted to believe in the person she liked.

She wanted to be the person to say that she liked the other party.

But what if the person she liked was different from what she imagined?

Was the one living in that apartment really the person I liked before?

As Chiho sprinted through the streets and arrived at the scene of that battle, which no longer bore any traces of it, the area below the viaduct bridge at Sasazuka Station--

“Ah, s-sorry.....”

“S-Sorry.”

She bumped into someone again.

Thinking about it carefully, on that day, because she was running away with all her might from a misunderstanding, she had bumped into that scary person, then was involved in that battle.

That memory instantaneously surfaced in Chiho’s mind, but she had bumped into a lady this time, and it was someone she had become acquainted with recently.....

“Ah.”

“Eh? You’re.....”

The other party recognised Chiho immediately as well.

Chiho hesitated, thinking how she should address that lady with beautiful long hair, eyes which showed a determined will, and left her with a deep impression.

“Yusa..... san.”

“Chiho-chan. It’s been a long time..... but it doesn’t seem to be that long either.”

Yusa Emi.

Just like Maou, she was not from any part of this Earth, but came from a foreign world, a lady known as the Hero.

In addition--

“Alberto-san, Emerada-san.....”

--standing behind Yusa Emi, the man whose build resembled that of a foreign athlete was Alberto. The lady whose stature was smaller than Chiho was Emerada.

The two of them seemed to be Emi's 'travel companions'.

Alberto's appearance was not that different compared to the last time they had met. However, Emerada, who had been originally dressed like a sorceress from a fantasy world, was currently dressed in an attire which did not stand out too much in the streets of Japan.

Not considering Emerada, with Alberto's hammer-thrower-like stature, it would be rather difficult to find clothes for him.

"Are you going to look for Maou-san?"

Chiho asked this immediately.

In their world, Emi and the two people behind her were companions who travelled together for the sake of fighting Maou.

Did they come this time so that the Hero and Demon King could have a showdown?

She had run here because she was still troubled about how to face Maou, but once Chiho saw these people who were Maou's enemies, she grew wary.

Next, for unknown reasons, the two people behind Emi looked at each other as if they felt surprised about something.

"Miss, do you still remember us?"

"Eh?"

The large man--Alberto's question, caused Chiho to feel surprised as well as unhappy.

Even if she wanted to, she could not forget.

After all, Chiho was only this troubled now because of Alberto's careless words.

"This is~~ really unexpected~~"

For unknown reasons, Emerada seemed to have gotten a shock too.

It had been less than two weeks since that battle which caused the explosion of Sasazuka Station and the collapse of the Shuto Expressway.

And that incident should be considered something which could not be forgotten for the rest of one's life.

Compared to the surprised Alberto and Emerada, Emi nodded as if she had understood.

"See, I was correct, wasn't I? She would definitely remember us."

"Even Yusa-san is like this..... what are all of you talking about?"

Wasn't it Emi who had told Chiho about the true identities of Maou and the others in the first place?

As if to answer Chiho's question, Emi looked at Chiho in the eyes and said, "I'm sorry for saying strange things. We had planned to look for Maou..... no, in front of Chiho-chan, please allow me to use 'Demon King' when referring to that guy, we did plan to check out the Demon King's situation today. However, we also plan to go the MgRonalds at Hatagaya after that. Chiho-chan, this is to check on your situation."

"Eh?"

"It is to confirm whether you still remember us or not..... remember what happened that day, and if the Demon King did anything strange to you."

"Em and I both thought that you would have definitely forgotten about us. Or more like--"

"--Was already forced to forget about us~~"

Alberto's and Emerada's words touched the uneasiness in Chiho's heart.

"Erhm..... are you referring to becoming like the people in town..... unable to remember what had happened at that time at all?"

After Chiho said this quietly--

“.....You noticed after all?”

Emi nodded with a heavy expression.

“How can I not notice? Other than Maou-san, no one had mentioned anything about it at all, even the television, newspapers, and internet did not mention anything about what happened that time. I vaguely sensed that Maou-san and Yusa-san used something like magic. And.....”

“Chi, Chiho-chan?”

“H-Hey, Miss?”

“E-Erhmm~~?”

Emi, Alberto and Emerada, who had been listening to Chiho, started to panic in their own ways.

“Ma, Maou-san, did ask me, if I wanted, my memories erased. I don’t even have, any memories, which I hated.....”

Her lips were shaking, her temples were heating up as if she was having a fever.

Tears were pouring out from her eyes.

“That idiot.....”

Seeing Chiho like this, Emi mumbled in irritation.

“I don’t understand what demons are..... or about different worlds at all..... but towards Maou-san, I still..... but, I really don’t know..... what to do..... uwah!”

Emi hugged Chiho lightly, who was crying so much that even the people walking by could not help but look back.

“Sorry, for causing you so much chaos.”

“.....”

“If you don’t mind, we can tell you everything you want to know, so, we’re sorry.”

“.....Yusa..... san..... uwahhhh!”

As if she was releasing all the chaos and anxiety which had been bottled up in her heart so far, Chiho collapsed into Emi’s arms while crying.

Alberto, who had been observing the two of them from behind--

“.....Erhm..... how should I interpret this? Maou, refers to the Demon King, right? In other words, she.....”

Alberto scratched his head and turned towards Emerada to ask this, but the latter glared at him with a cold sideways gaze.

“Saying such things in front of the person herself~~ not knowing the meaning of being considerate~~ you probably won’t understand it~~”

What Emerada was referring to were the careless words spoken by Alberto in the six tatami Demon Fortress.

Alberto and Emerada had come to Japan to search for the missing Emi.

To pinpoint Emi’s location, they used the telekinesis spell ‘Idea Link’ to try and obtain communication using the conditions ‘people who thought about the Demon King all day’.

However, Chiho, being the one who thought about ‘Demon King=Maou’ more intensely, she was more receptive to their Idea Link than Emi, and Alberto had said this in Maou’s presence.

From Chiho’s point of view, this was a huge incident where her hidden feelings were suddenly exposed by a stranger.

“Hey, don’t make it sound so bad..... then again, weren’t you very enthusiastic at that time too?”

Alberto seemed to be aware of this.

However, his explanation of thinking that he was not the only one at fault only caused Emerada to roll her eyes in response.

“I’m a girl~~ so it’s fine~~”

“Does the definition of being considerate differ between male and female? And you’re already past the age to be called a ‘girl’, *aughh!*”

The impact of Emerada’s kick penetrated through Alberto’s thick leather trousers to his shin, causing the latter to writhe in pain.

Immediately after that, from an angle unseen by the people around her, Emerada placed the edge of her hand against Alberto’s throat, then her palm started to glow because of a strange power.

Contrary to her calm tone, her eyes, illuminated by the light from below, did not contain any traces of a smile.

“Die~~”

“W-Wait, it, it’s my bad! Sorry!”

“What are they doing.....”

Emi, who was hugging Chiho, turned back to the commotion happening behind her, feeling stunned by the scene.

“We were planning to eat lunch anyway, so why don’t we bring Chiho-chan along and find a place where we can chat properly?”

“.....What are we talking about~~?”

Watching Chiho, who was still crying, Emerada asked this in surprise.

As for Alberto, he was rubbing his shin with tears in his eyes.

With a serious expression on her face, Emi said, “Everything, all of it. Things about us, about the Demon King, and Ente Isla.”



“Yusa-san, the things you were saying about being people from a foreign world, were those lies?”

“Why are you saying this so suddenly?”

Chiho’s sudden question caused Emi to ask this in confusion.

“Because.....”

Chiho had followed Emi while harbouring a sense of anticipation and unease.

Things about the foreign world. About Emi, about Alberto and Emerada, about the two people who kidnapped her, about Ashiya, and about Maou.

Because she heard that she could know about the truth behind these things, she went with Emi and the others with a tense expression on her face, but in the end, she was brought into--

“Why did you choose a revolving sushi store!?”

Within the seating compartment filled with the smell of vinegar rice and seafood, Chiho asked this while rubbing her eyes which were swollen from the crying.

“You don’t like to eat sushi?”

“It’s not like that.....”

This should not be an issue of liking sushi or not.

“Table 5, two bowls of clam soup!”

“The customer at Table 17 wants the bill!”

“Thank you for your patronage! Uh, 19 coloured plates, 3 gold plates.....”

The business within the store was flourishing and most of the seats were filled. The

empty tables were filled up quickly with new customers too.

The shouts of the employees were very lively as well, whether it was the atmosphere or environment, it did not feel suitable as a place to talk quietly.

Especially for a 'Hero from another world', actually choosing a revolving sushi store as the place to discuss secret things, how was one supposed to react?

"Don't worry, I'll pay for this meal."

"I'm not worried about that! And, I'll pay for whatever I eat!"

"Eh~~!"

For unknown reasons, after Chiho said this, Emerada shouted in surprise.

"R-Really~~?"

"W-What's wrong?"

Seeing that the other party was not looking down on her, but feeling truly surprised, Chiho could not help but feel insecure.

"Sushi is a dish made from raw fish, right~~?"

"T-That is correct....."

Never viewing sushi from this angle before, Chiho replied, feeling astonished.

"That's high class cuisine~~ I know you are wary of us~~ but it's still better to allow Emilia to pay for it~~"

"Eh, but, this is a 100 yen....."

Chiho could not help but point towards the menu set up next to the seats.

'Revolving Sushi Gyogyoen' was considered a low priced revolving sushi chain store. Basically, most of their sushi dishes only cost 100 yen per plate (tax not included).

This price did not apply to seasonal or premium ingredients, as well as miso soup and other ala carte items, however, no matter how Chiho forced herself, she would only be able to eat up to 1000 yen at most.

“Em, calm down. In this place, the four of us will be thoroughly fed at the cost of one silver Airean coin at most.”

“Oh! Really?”

Emi’s words caused Alberto to let out a cheer.

“Ehh~~? That impossible~~! Something like raw fish~~ even I who live in the palace~~ have only seen it a few times during my travels~~”

“Relax, anyway Chiho-chan, Em, Alber, just sit down first and drink some tea.”

With practiced movements, Emi poured the green tea powder into the plastic cups, poured in the hot water from the tap and passed the cups to the trio.

“The drinking water and tea is free here, that’s amazing, isn’t it?”

Alberto drank the tea cautiously.

Seeing the three of them like this, Chiho felt that this situation was getting stranger and stranger.

She did not know why they had come to a revolving sushi store to discuss the mysterious topic of a foreign world, but it felt that she had already witnessed a filming location for a show showing foreigners feeling surprised about Japanese culture.

“Then, about why I choose a revolving sushi store--”

After confirming that everyone had received their tea, wet tissues, disposable chopsticks, and plates containing soy sauce, Emi finally answered Chiho, “Not only are the surroundings noisy, the compartments here are spacious and there is a certain distance between the neighbouring seats. As the customers are focused on what to eat next, they will not focus on the conversations of the other customers next to or opposite them, so it’s still rather suitable for confidential conversations. More

unexpectedly, the field of view here is wide, so eavesdroppers can be detected immediately.”

“.....Is that so?”

Chiho could not help but look around her.

She had not taken notice before, but unless she was sitting at the counter, she could not hear what the customers at the neighbouring table were saying even if she strained her ears to listen.

The gazes of all the customers were either focused on the belt transporting the sushi or the touchscreen tablets used for ordering, no one was paying attention to what was happening at the other tables.

In addition, she also noticed that this was a shopping district close to the city, so there were a few foreign customers. This meant that Alberto and Emerada would not stand out that much.

“Everyone, let’s eat something first. The difficult questions can wait until the brain has replenished its energy.”

Noticing that Chiho was gradually accepting the situation although she still found it difficult to comprehend, Emi clapped her hands and acted first, taking a plate of sushi from the belt.

Taking the Japanese Halfbeak fish at the start, their tastes were really unique.

“You take the dishes you want from the turning conveyer belt and stack the plates on the table once you’re done eating. Finally, the bill is tallied by the type and number of plates.”

Of course, this was an explanation targeted at Emerada and Alberto.

By the way, with regards to the seating arrangement, Emi and Emerada were sitting on the side closer the belt, facing each other, while Chiho and Alberto were sitting closer to the outside, also facing each other.

“I’m still not really used to this taste~~ but is this really fish~~?”

Emerada looked at the various types of sushi moving on the belt in curiosity.

“That’s right. Slicing raw fish into this shape, then placing them on top the vinegar rice which is shaped like rice sacks.”

“What are those things which look like sliced black logs?”

Alberto pointed towards the cucumber sushi rolls which happened to pass by.

“That’s a nori roll. The black thing outside is called nori..... it’s a food item which is processed from seaweed. It’s fine to eat it together with the rice.”

“Wow, wow, wow~~! Is that a boat? It’s transporting fish eggs on top~~!”

“Ah, that’s called Gunkan sushi. Fish roe known as Ikura are placed on top. It’s delicious.”¹

“Gunkan?”

“That’s right. From the side, the shape looks like a military ship, right? That’s why it was named this way.”

“Oh~~! How exquisite~~! Now that you mentioned it~~ that green gourd type slice~~ does look a little bit like a sail~~”

With sparkling eyes, Emerada stared at the cucumber slice on top of the Gunkan fish roe sushi.

How were they supposed to discuss serious topics after this? With a cold gaze, Chiho stared at the three people who got excited on their own and left her behind.

And were Alberto and Emerada able to use chopsticks? Not considering raw fish slices, did they dare to eat wasabi?

Ignoring these questions from a Japanese person observing foreigners eat sushi for the first time--

“Sigh, some things have to be tried to know what they’re like. Emilia, just choose something for us.”

Alberto gestured towards the conveyer belt.

“No matter how much I look at them, I don’t think these things are fish. That red thing looked like raw meat.”

“Ah, you’re talking about belly meat? Do you want to try?”

In the direction Alberto gestured towards with his chin, a plate of tuna belly happened to turn towards them.

Premium ingredients such as belly meat and snow crab could be eaten at low prices here, but unlike other plates which had two pieces of sushi, the plates for this type of sushi only contained one each.

The white strands of fat which appeared to be delicious spread out beautifully on the red meat, this outer appearance did look very similar to raw meat.

Emi took the plate of belly meat and placed it in front of Alberto.

Emerada observed Emi’s every movement seriously.

“Hm..... it does look like raw meat after all..... can this really be eaten directly?”

The large sized Alberto was staring at the small belly meat sushi in front of him with a stern expression, this scene was rather amusing.

“Don’t worry. Here, this is soy sauce..... a special sauce from Japan..... dip the sushi in it and give it a try. You can eat sushi using your hands.”

“O-Okay.....”

Within the corner of Chiho’s mind, a random thought ‘so they don’t know how to use chopsticks after all’ surfaced.

With a stern expression, Alberto picked up the belly meat sushi and dipped it in the

sauce in a manner which could only be described as ‘nervous’.

It was the ingredient and not the rice which should be dipped in the soy sauce. Chiho remembered this knowledge which she had heard somewhere before, but if she mentioned it now, it would only cause them more chaos.

Alberto slowly raised the belly meat sushi, and making up his mind, he stuffed it into his mouth in one go.

He frowned in confusion because of the foreign texture, but he still chewed slowly.

Then he reacted strongly.

He widened his eyes with force as if he had realised something very important.

At this instant, Chiho noticed that Emerada, who was leaning forward beside her, jump up with fright.

It was only one piece of sushi, these two were really too tense.

After a while, Alberto’s chewing speed suddenly increased, and his gaze started to wander--

“Ugh!”

--after that, he pinched his nose and showed a stony face for unknown reasons.

Chiho and Emi immediately knew what had happened, but Emerada, unfamiliar with sushi--

“D-Did he eat something bad~~?”

Looked completely worried.

However, Alberto only frowned for a short moment.

He immediately regained his calm and continued to chew, swallowing the food in his mouth.

“.....Fu.”

Maintaining his tense expression of widened eyes, Alberto pressed his hand against his face.

Because he was too nervous, there was even sweat on his brows.

“A-Are you alright~~?”

Emerada asked with worry, but for unknown reasons, Alberto did not reply. Instead, with a serious expression, he asked Chiho, who was sitting in front of him, a question.

“Miss.....”

“Y-Yes?”

“.....This..... is really fish?”

“Eh?”

Alberto was truly trembling.

“It’s raw, yet there’s no fishy taste at all..... no, it even tastes sweet.”

“It, it’s sweet~~?”

“Y-Yeah, but it’s not like the sweetness of sugar, how should I say this, I don’t know if it’s the sweetness of the meat..... or the sweetness of the fat, but after combining with this sauce and grain, it feels as if all the tastes have concentrated in the mouth..... yeah, this is delicious.”

The terms used did not seem to be appropriate for sushi, and it seemed like he was talking to himself near the end, but Chiho still understood that Alberto wanted to emphasise that the belly meat was very delicious.

“W-What is going on~~?”

“Uh, erhm, no, Em, you have a try too, you won’t understand it without trying it first.

Until now, I still find it difficult to believe that this is fish. This is a totally different kind of food when compared to the grilled or salted things which we have ate thus far.....”

As Alberto was in the middle of speaking, he naturally grabbed his head and slumped on the table.

“Al, Alberto-san?”

“How nostalgic. When I ate sushi for the first time, that was my reaction too.”

Chiho was flustered because of Alberto’s exaggerated reaction while Emi showed a nostalgic gaze filled with understanding.

“Uuuu..... but~~ didn’t you groan in the middle~~? There’s a fishy taste after all, right.....”

Alberto advised Emerada to eat as well, but she seemed to be unable to overcome her worries because of Alberto’s vague descriptions.

The ‘groan’ Emerada mentioned was probably the action of Alberto pinching his nose.

Any Japanese would know that that was the rush brought about by fresh ‘wasabi’, and Chiho troubled over whether she should reveal this fact.

But..... what is wasabi?

Grinding the roots of a crude looking green plant into paste, making it into a green mash which includes a special blend of spiciness, sweetness, and a smell pungent to the nose, this is wasabi sauce. However, if the other party does not know of its existence or concept, how can its meaning, taste, and significance of its existence be explained?

If they explained directly without thinking it through, it felt like they would just mention terms which made others think of a poison, this troubled Chiho greatly.

Emi had picked up a small packet of wasabi which was placed there as a refill, but she seemed to be thinking of the same things as Chiho, so she ended up putting it down quietly.

Then--

“Since it’s like that, why don’t you try the fish roe one just now? It’s coming over now, and it doesn’t have that ‘thing’ which caused Alber to groan, so it will be easier to eat.”

As Alberto was expressing his impactful monologue, the conveyer belt had gone almost one full round and the Gunkan fish roe sushi Emerada had noticed first was turning towards them once more.

“If it’s fish roe, you should have eaten it before, right?”

“Y-Yeah..... but~~I have only eaten fish roes which have been simmered in fish sauce and salt~~”

“If you do not dare to eat it, I will help you to finish.”

“Uu, uuuu~~”

With a lifeless expression, Emerada stared at the approaching red Ikura Gunkan sushi.

“Didn’t Alber say that some things have to be tried to know what they’re like?”

“I-I understand~~ okay!”

For taking a plate of Ikura, it was really too energetic.

Even if it was placed in front of her, Emerada still hesitated for a long time before she held the Gunkan sushi with a force which would not break the nori and stuffed the whole Ikura Gunkan sushi into her small mouth. Then after one bite, her eyes widened.

Afterwards--

The serious conversation from the humans from a foreign world, it did not start even after two hours.

“.....Sixty five.”

Chiho mumbled to herself after counting the plates on the table.

Of course, this was the total amount of sushi plates eaten by four people.

“Em, I want to live in this country.”

“Hm~~ I don’t want to go back as well.....”

It could be understandable for the burly sized Alberto, but Emerada, who was even more petite compared to Chiho, was eating the sushi with so much vigour that it made people wonder how such a small body was able to contain so much volume.

Amongst the sixty five plates, Chiho had only eaten six plates because someone else was paying for it and she also had other concerns. For Emi, who had eaten ten plates, she was considered to have a sizable appetite for a lady, but when considering the remaining plates which were split equally between Emerada and Alberto, this was still within the margin of error.

“It doesn’t seem appropriate to ask this after finishing, but after eating so many delicious things, does it really only cost one silver Airean coin?”

Alberto asked this while drinking tea.

“It’s probably, two coins.”

Emi, who had not expected them to eat this much, replied with a wry smile.

“‘100 yen sushi’ is amazing~~”

Next to Chiho, Emerada was showing a blissful expression and leaning back against the chair.

“This is the first time I have eaten delicious cakes which are so smooth~~ yet aren’t too sweet~~ I can no longer accept those cakes in the castle that have a sugary taste~~”

Other than sushi, Emerada also ate á la carte items like french fries and karaage, as well as chawamushi and miso soup – even adding on dessert at the end.

She seemed to especially like the chocolate cake a lot and ate three by herself.

“The price of that cake is actually equivalent to five bronze Weiss coins~~ I still find that a little difficult to believe~~ if I were to eat this kind of cake in Saint Aire~~ I wonder how much it would cost~~ I would say that whether it can even be found is an uncertainty.....”

Emerada may have high praise for it, but to Chiho, the 100 yen cakes in a revolving sushi store were just 100 yen cakes.

Remembering that there was a cheap and delicious cake store near her house, Chiho tried to imagine what would happen if she brought Emerada there.

Next, Emi asked, “Chiho-chan, have you had your fill?”

“.....I feel full just watching them eat.”

Chiho’s normal appetite was not considered small, but even when not considering this, she still could not match up to Emerada and Alberto.

“That’s true.”

Emi nodded in agreement while looking at those two, drank a mouthful of tea, then straightened her posture to speak, “Then again, Chiho-chan, this question is a little sudden, but do you think that there are any differences between you and us..... not considering the capacity of the stomach.”

“.....Eh?”



Because this question was really too sudden, Chiho blinked in surprise.

“I do remember that we came here to discuss serious topics. Sigh, although we might have eaten a bit too much.”

“Haha, sorry about that.”

“Because it was too delicious~~”

Alberto and Emerada did not show any signs of guilt at all.

At this moment, Chiho finally remembered about the things that happened before they started eating sushi.

“Em, Alberto, and I are humans, just like you. Sigh, I am half angel, but at least in terms of stomach capacity, these two people are more monstrous.”

“O-Oh.....”

Noticing that Emi seemed to want to talk about serious topics, after Chiho cleansed her mouth with a mouthful of tea, she straightened her sitting posture as well.

As for Alberto and Emerada, they maintained their postures of being fully stuffed.

“The reason why they were so suspicious of raw fish is mainly because in our world, there are no chances for raw fish to appear on the dinner tables of the common folk. Their logistics and freezing technology are not as developed as Japan, so they normally eat grilled fish which has been smoked or salted. Even so, that is already considered a premium item. It can only be eaten around once a year.”

After Chiho finished listening to this, she remembered her father’s childhood home.

The childhood home of Chiho’s father was a farmer’s house located in the mountains. During New Year, there would definitely be a dish cooked from a whole Japanese amberjack.

It was said that this was a custom passed down from the times when sea fish was still a premium item.

“However, we were born in that kind of country. So you would probably understand better if I phrased it this way. We’re from a technologically backward country which Chiho-chan has never heard of and has nothing to do with Japan.”

The trio’s Japanese was too fluent for people who have no connections to Japan, but this was not the time for rebukes.

“The name of that country, that world.....”

“‘Continents of the Holy Cross, Ente Isla’. We came to this country by chasing after the Demon King, who committed brutal acts in Ente Isla. And that Demon King is the ‘Maou Sadao’ you know.”

At this instant, Chiho felt her stomach become heavy.

This was probably not because she was affected by the eating mannerisms of Alberto sitting opposite her, who ate a plate of seafood salad followed by a plate of Gunkan sushi.

For unknown reasons, it felt as if Maou’s name had become very distant to her.

“Yusa-san..... er, erhm, then again, the name ‘Yusa Emi’.....”

After she said it, Chiho recalled that this name was not the actual name of the lady in front of her.

She had started to stammer--

“You can just continue to address me the same way. I still intend to stay in Japan for the time being, so I would feel troubled if someone addressed me as ‘Emilia’ when I meet them outside.”

But Emi shrugged after replying this--

“Chiho-chan. To a certain extent..... I know what you’re troubling over right now. However, from my standpoint, I am unable to decide if I should solve your troubles for you.”

--and spoke with a stern tone.

"I came to Sasazuka today partly to check on the Demon King and the others, but most importantly, I want to confirm one thing with Chiho-chan."

"Confirm one thing?"

"Yes. You know ours and Maou Sadao's true identities. And in this Japan, you're the only one who has not gotten your memories erased by the Demon King."

Chiho sucked in a breath.

This fact was one of the cases which had been lingering in Chiho's heart.

Why did Maou treat her, treat her memories differently from others?

"After pondering the meaning behind this, I want to explain the reasons why the Demon King and I came to Japan. This will definitely be a painful topic for you. I understand if you do not wish to listen to this."

In an instant, Emi signalled to Emerada and Alberto with her gaze.

The two of them were still holding their full stomachs, but their stares were so serious that it was intimidating.

"What do you think? Are you willing to listen to our battle with Maou..... with the Demon King, and the reasons behind that guy appearing in our world as the Demon King, me rising up as the Hero, and why we have continued this up to today? I need to emphasise once again that this topic is definitely not easy to absorb. If you don't want to listen....."

Chiho interrupted Emi.

"Please tell me."

".....Is that alright?"

"I want to know. If the person I know called Maou Sadao..... is real or fake."

Hearing Chiho reply this way, Emerada and Alberto glanced at one another.

“What has he done so far, where is he from..... and what kind of person he actually is.”

“Sigh, from our standpoint, just seeing that Demon King Satan working in a restaurant and being commanded by humans, we don’t want to admit that this guy is the same person.”

“Alber, don’t interrupt so carelessly.”

As Alberto frivolously said what Emi intentionally left out and did not mention, Chiho’s expression turned stiff.

“Then let me explain in sequence. I have said so many times already, but if you do not want to listen, you can ask me to stop anytime. The topic I am going to talk about next is that heavy.”

“I understand.”

Chiho nodded determinedly.

“.....Then, I’m going to start.”

Having seemed to have sensed Chiho’s determination, Emi started to speak in a clear tone.

“The Demon King led huge numbers of demons and came to Ente Isla, that was seven years ago..... when I was still ten years old.”

“Eh? Yusa-san and I are only one year apart?”

The truth which was revealed from the contents of what Emi said shocked Chiho, and she interrupted in the beginning.

Emi, who had planned to continue speaking, froze with her mouth still open, and she pressed her hand against her forehead.

“.....I’m not going to inquire which part you feel shocked about for now. With regards

to the relation between my current age and job, I will explain in detail later, so please listen to me properly first.”

“Ah, s-sorry.”

After discovering that her words and the fact she was shocked was equivalent to her thinking that Emi’s appearance was a lot older than her actual age, Chiho immediately reflected on it.

“A-Anyway.”

Emi cleared her throat and continued.

“The whole world had fought against the Demon King Army and lost, and the various countries were conquered one after another, in the end, the day Lucifer’s..... that shorty who kidnapped you..... army came to the village I lived in, I bore the mission to become the Hero to defeat the Demon King. At that time, I was just a girl from a farming family who did not know anything.”

Surprisingly to Chiho, her mental state did not change that much after listening to the whole truth.

Emi intentionally carried out her explanations without including any emotions.

Other than the fact that her father died under the hands of the Demon King, following a chronological order, she tried her best to explain what she had seen and heard during her journey in a simple and concise manner.

The war between the humans of the foreign world Ente Isla and the demons.

About the Four Kings of the Demon King Army, which included Alsiel, the things about the Demon Generals invading the human world.

The Demon King Satan who commanded these demons.

The tragic events which she had witnessed during her journey.

The counterattack of the human world.

The confrontation between the Hero's party and Demon King Satan and Alsiel in the Demon Fortress, that last battle.

As well Emi's experience of drifting to Japan because of an accident (what she had originally assumed it was).

The re-encounter of the Hero and Demon King at Sasazuka.....

"Thinking about it calmly~~" Emerada, at the side, said this guiltily, "Perhaps this might not be suitable for an after meal topic~~"

Emerada and Alberto were carefully observing Chiho's expressions from the beginning until the end.

They were probably worried that such an intense topic would affect Chiho's feelings.

However, she had surprisingly accepted all these facts in a more composed manner than they had imagined, and did not receive any huge shocks at all.

"Are you alright? Did you become depressed because of this?"

Alberto's tone was kind, but Chiho shook her head naturally.

"I'm alright. Thank you for the concern."

Chiho took a deep breath with force.

"Can I ask questions now?"

"Please go ahead."

"Was it only during the final battle at the Demon Fortress that Yusa-san and the others saw Demon King Satan for the first time?"

""?"

Emi, Alberto, and Emerada momentarily looked at each other.

It seemed like this question was not what they had expected.

Representing the three of them, Emi answered, “No. The earliest we have seen him was when we were liberating the Eastern Continent of Ente Isla. He appeared at that time to allow Alsiel to retreat, that was when we met for the first time.”

“Then, the final battle at the Demon Fortress was the second time?”

“.....That’s right.”

Chiho nodded in understanding.

The trio were confused by her expression.

They probably could not guess what Chiho had understood.

Chiho ignored the three of them, and continued to speak, “Thank you for telling me so many things. Honestly speaking, it doesn’t feel real to me yet, but thinking back on what happened back then, I know Yusa-san and the rest of you are not telling lies.”

Courage was needed to say things out loud.

However, with things as they are now, feeling conscious in front of these people was meaningless.

Chiho suppressed her excited heart, opened her mouth, and spoke, “Lastly, can I ask another question?”

After looking at the trio in the eyes one after another, Chiho breathed in.

“Can I..... continue to like Maou-san?”



“Wowwww~~!”

Emerada’s eyes shone like a child’s, and she let out a rather embarrassing sound while plastering her face against the display counter.

Various cakes were displayed within the counter, and when cakes were mentioned in Chiho's home, this 'Pâtissier Tyrone' store would be the first one they thought of.

"This--is--so--cute~~!"

Other than the fixed selection of sliced cakes, chocolate cakes, and Mont-Blanc, many cakes would be changed out every day, offering so many types that it was difficult to believe that this was a privately owned business.

The store was not large, so it could not display that many types per day, for today, however, it seemed to mostly consist of fruit tarts and chocolate cakes.

"E-E-Emilia~~ how many of these can I buy~~?"

"You're not a child."

Alberto criticised Emerada who was being overexcited, but the latter was not bothered by this kind of thing at all.

"Since the uncle said that he didn't need any~~ then I can buy his portion too~~"

"Uncle....."

"Em, calm down a little. It's impossible to buy everything, Chiho-chan, are there any flavours you would recommend?"

Emi asked this, acting like a mother with common sense, but before Chiho could reply, Emerada had already shouted unhappily,

"Ehhhhhhh~~! Let's buy everything~~?"

"My wallet has a limit!"

"So~~ when I return, I will send many things over~~"

"If you send me money which cannot be used in Japan or jewels which do not match my identity as a salarywoman, I will only feel troubled."

She had heard that contrary to their appearances, Emerada was older than Emi, but after observing the interactions between them, Emi was definitely acting like the older sister.

Using the opening sentence, ‘This is based on my personal tastes’, Chiho spoke--

“.....Uh, the swiss rolls are definitely not a problem, but there are many kinds of cream filling. In addition, the more interesting one would be the raccoon cakes.....”

And pointed at a few cakes in order.

“Raccoon~~? Was raccoon meat added in~~?”

“No. It’s just using chocolate and almond paste to create a raccoon’s appearance. It’s the one placed in that corner.....”

“Ahhh~~! How cuteeeee~! Emilia~~!”

“.....Alright, alright, then let’s buy that one. There’s still one left. Alber really doesn’t want one?”

“Yeah. I’ll just give my share to that brat.”

Alberto had called Emerada a brat in revenge for being called an uncle, but the latter was not bothered at all--

“Uh~~ one more..... hm.....”

--and only stared at the display counter with a serious expression on her face.

This was the shopping street at Sasazuka 100th Street, and it was evening time.

The four of them left the revolving sushi store, and under Chiho’s lead, they came to buy cakes as souvenirs.

It might be rude to the sushi store, but if Emerada thought that Japan’s cakes were only of that standard, it would be troubling as well.

Because of this, Emerada's attention had been totally occupied by the different types of cakes.

"But, I'm very surprised."

"You're referring to?"

Emi spoke as she watched Emerada's back.

"I did not expect you to ask that kind of question, I had thought that once I spoke about the truth, you would no longer want to have anything to do with us. You even brought us to a cake store for Em's benefit."

"If Yusa-san and the others did not give that kind of answer, I would probably not do this."

Emi's eyes widened momentarily in surprise.

"But, we are unable to give you any other answers?"

"Because Yusa-san and the rest are like this, I thought that I must introduce delicious cake stores to all of you," Chiho said enthusiastically.



"Can I..... continue liking Maou-san?"

Faced with Chiho's question, after hesitating for a while, she replied, "We are unable to sever these feelings from you."

Alberto also spoke after Emi, "When Emilia said that she wasn't going to return and did not plan to kill the Demon King, I was shocked. However, dragging you into our affairs in a one-sided manner, this is also very unfair to you, we also have the leeway to think about this matter. Honestly speaking, if you can forget everything, we would be able to defeat the Demon King without saddening anyone, thus ending everything."

"Alber is saying too much again~~"

Emerada chided Alberto who was too direct in various ways.

“Of course~~ we are unable to cheer you on~~ if the Demon King does something dangerous~~ rather than Chiho-chan’s feelings~~ we will prioritise the lives and safety of the surrounding people~~”

“Whether it’s me, Em, or Alber..... we do not like to make our friends cry. Allowing the Demon King to escape to this world is our responsibility, this has nothing to do with you. Therefore, after you have heard us out, heard about everything in Ente Isla, and still like that guy,” In an organised manner, Emi stacked the sushi plates into groups of ten, “then there is no need to be concerned about us. In the future, your feelings will always be decided by you.”



“Then~~ we’ll be returning to Ente Isla tomorrow~~”

“We’ll leave Emilia in your care.”

The ticketing gate at Sasazuka.

Emerada, who was hugging a huge box with a blissful expression after finally buying lots of cake through pleading with Emi, and Alberto, who was watching this scene with a wry smile, said goodbye to Chiho.

“This is a good country. Not only is there good food here, there is a lot of money and resources. There are also good people like you, Miss. It would be better for Emilia to leisurely stay here for a while.”

Emerada turned back to look towards Emi who was staring at the ticketing price chart as she helped Emerada and Alberto buy tickets.

“This is her first time making ‘friends’ other than us, I feel very happy about this.”

“Eh?”

Emerada’s way of speaking suddenly turned normal, giving Chiho a shock.

“Ignoring the Demon King makes us uneasy, but for unknown reasons, I am strangely able to agree with why the Demon King would decide to preserve your memories.”

“The reason why Emilia’s expressions have become so cheerful~~ must be because she met Chiho-chan and the Demon King in this country known as Japan~~ we might have said many stern words to you~~ but please continue being good friends with Emilia~~”

Emerada reverted to her usual self immediately.

Chiho was unable to perceive the hidden meaning behind these emotional words.

She may have lied about her age, saying that she was twenty years old for the sake of working in Japan, but Emi’s actual age was seventeen, one year apart from Chiho.

A seventeen year old girl being forced to carry the fate of the whole world on her shoulders, fighting across different worlds. With nothing but these facts, Chiho could sense the weakness of the human world of Ente Isla, who had no choice but to make a young girl carry this destiny alone.

Emerada, noticing that Chiho did not react much, did not say any more. She smiled thinly and, after getting rid of her stern expression, she moved her face closer to Chiho.

“And~~ it seems like even if you do not worry so much~~ there won’t be much problems~~?”

“Emerada-san?”

“The Demon King definitely~~ is hoping that Chiho-chan can remember him as well~~ so~~ there’s no need to be so troubled~~ you just need to understand each other little by little~~”

“Is, is that so?”

“Uh, you shouldn’t view what Em says so seriously. This person basically doesn’t take responsibility for what she says, *ugh!*”

Without speaking, Emerada used the tip of her foot to kick Alberto, just as the latter

was writhing in pain, and Chiho was trembling from the power behind that kick--

“Sorry for the wait, I wanted to pay with my card, then realised that there weren’t enough funds, so it took some effort to settle it.”

Emi returned with the train tickets.

“What were all of you talking about?”

“Uh, nothing..... owowow.”

“We were only asking her to help look out for Emilia~~”

“Is that so? Then it’s about time for us to return. Chiho-chan, sorry for taking up your time today.”

“Don’t say that,” Chiho replied, shaking her head. Then for reasons unknown, her line of sight met with Emerada’s, who had been walking to the ticketing gate with Emi.

“Ah, t-that’s right, Yusa-san!”

“Hm? What is it?”

Chiho still did not know what Emerada’s earlier words meant.

However, based on her own life experience which was vastly different from Emi’s, Chiho suggested conducting a ceremony which was natural between ‘friends’.

“Mobile phone.....”

Chiho took out her own flip phone--

“Ah, that’s DoCoDeMo’s PN-04iS pink model, right?”

As expected of someone working in a company related to mobile phones, by just seeing the shape of the back, Emi was able to accurately point out Chiho’s phone model and colour.

It was difficult to believe that this person was a Hero from another world after all.

Chiho, who was mentally giving a troubled smile, breathed in lightly while gripping her phone. Then she looked straight at Emi in the eyes and spoke, "Are you willing to exchange numbers and mail addresses?"

".....Eh?"

".....I am still unable to judge, and am unable to make decisions. I will probably continue feeling lost and continuously trouble you. Even so, I still want to know more, listen to you speak about various things, and talk to you even more. With regards to Ente Isla, things about Maou-san, and things about Yusa-san, about Emilia Justina....."

"Chiho-chan....."

Chiho's unexpected suggestion stunned Emi and caused her to stop where she stood.

Emerada and Alberto, who were behind her, looked at each other with smiles which were a mix of relief and puzzlement.

"If you do not mind....."

Fearing demons at night and craving revenge in the day, Emilia Justina, who hid her true self for the sake of preparing for battle and obtaining food--

"Can you be friends with me?"

And Sasaki Chiho, who lived in a world where she was naturally protected, taking one step towards an unknown world which no one on Earth knew about--

"I should be learning from you instead."

The hands of two girls from different worlds clasped together tightly.



THE DEMON KING, THINKING BACK ON A THRIFTY LIFE

SHORT STORY 2

THE DEMON KING,

THINKING BACK ON A THRIFTY LIFE

The 100th Shopping Street in the evening instantly became lively due to the crowds coming from Sasazuka station. All of them had come here to buy things, and some of them were going home from work or school.

Kamazuki Suzuno, nimbly avoiding the flow of the crowd, browsing the stores, and thinking about ingredients for dinner today, suddenly spotted someone familiar in the crowd. A person who was a head taller than anyone else in the crowd such that even someone as petite as her could see that person easily.

They did coincidentally meet each other on the streets, but their relationship was not so close to warrant an exchange of greetings. The other party was a neighbour living in the same apartment. And his ability to pick up a good bargain should not be underestimated.

“I should just go and greet him.”

Staring at the back of the head of a resident from Sasazuka Villa Rosa Room 201, Ashiya Shiro, Suzuno slowly approached him, then noticed something strange.

“Hm? I remember that that store stopped operating some time ago..... what is he doing?”

Ashiya was standing in front of the shuttered store in a daze.

Because he was standing at the side of the road, he did not block anyone’s way, however the usual Ashiya would never stand at the side of the road and blank out.

“Hey, Shiro-dono, is there something wrong?”

Suzuno approached Ashiya and, while initiating the conversation, observed the other party.

In Ashiya's hands were two shopping bags which seemed to contain some products. One was the reusable bag that he frequently used, while the other was an unusually large paper bag which seemed to contain something very heavy.

".....Hey, Shiro-dono, Shiro..... Alsiel!"

It was unknown if he had heard Suzuno's voice or not, but Ashiya did not turn back at all.

As Suzuno was usually the only one who would address him with his Japanese name 'Shiro', worrying that he had not noticed Suzuno because of this reason, Suzuno tried shouting his real name within the crowd.

".....Oh, it's Crestia Bell."

Ashiya finally turned around. But his appearance was strange.

His eyes were dazed, and he even used Suzuno's real name while in the streets. Ashiya, who was a cautious person, would never act this way.

"What, what happened? Are you feeling unwell?"

Recently, the two of them had forgotten their respective positions and purely interacted with each other as neighbours. Seeing Ashiya's abnormal behaviour, Suzuno simply felt worried.

"This....."

With a trembling voice, Ashiya lifted the heavy bag which was in his right hand.

"Hm? What is inside this....."

Suzuno looked into the opened paper bag.

And inside, there was.....

“I won.”

“Huh?”

Ashiya's dazed voice was heard from above, and Suzuno looked up before she could understand what was written on the box within the paper bag.

“I had thought that this kind of thing would not happen in reality..... just a fool's fantasy.....”

Ashiya, whose existence was considered close to fantasy to the Japanese, no, to the humans of Earth, slowly shifted his gaze to a certain direction.

After looking in that direction as well, Suzuno saw the words ‘100th Shopping Street Lucky Draw’ on a white tent.

“.....Hey, Alsiel, the reason why you're standing here in a daze, could it be because of.....”

Suzuno, who had been worrying about Ashiya, suddenly had a feeling that she was wasting her time.

Then she looked within the paper bag once more.

There were the large words ‘Defal Pressure Cooker 4L’ written on the study looking cardboard box.

Suzuno sighed deeply.

Seeing how Ashiya acted as if he wanted to rub his face against that hard and sturdy silver outer surface, everyone who gathered in Room 201 of Villa Rosa Sasazuka felt a sense of pity.

The Demon General Alsiel, who had conquered a huge continent in the foreign world Ente Isla, was elated because he had won a pressure cooker in a lucky draw.

Even Hero Emilia--Yusa Emi--who had come to Japan in order to fight them, felt a sense of pity towards that figure.

“Demon King, Lucifer. Seeing him become like this, don’t you feel embarrassed about this?”

“Uh, erhm.....”

In front of Emi’s stern gaze, the Demon King Satan, Maou Sadao, bit his lip and lowered his head.

“In order to support your livelihoods, he has exerted himself so much that he lost himself completely just because he won a pressure cooker in a lucky draw, shouldn’t all of you reward him a little?”

“Feh~uh..... hm.”

The Demon General Lucifer, Urushihara Hanzo, who was being lectured by Suzuno, let out a sound of irritation.

“Ashiya-san is really happy.”

“Pot, very happy?”

“Yeah, that pressure cooker, it’s costly if it’s bought from the store.”

As for the only human on Earth who knew about Maou’s and Emi’s true identities, Sasaki Chiho, she attempted to explain to the Demon King’s and Hero’s ‘daughter’, Alas=Ramus, why Ashiya was so happy.

Pressured by Emi’s and Suzuno’s reproachful gazes, Maou forced out a smile and said to Ashiya, “E-Erhm, how should I say this, I’m sorry, putting you through such hardships all this time.”

“What are you saying, Demon King-sama!? As long as I think about what happened today, the hardships up to now are nothing!”

Perhaps he had accepted Maou’s consolation, Ashiya showed an even brighter smile and took the sparkling new pressure cooker to the sink, and then started washing it with flowing water.

It seemed like he planned to use it immediately to cook dinner.

“I don’t know what kind of hardship he has experienced, but it appears that the hard times experienced by a Demon General can be negated by a pressure cooker.”

Seeing Ashiya’s back, it was not strange for Emi to rebuke in this manner.

To people who knew about Ashiya’s situation in daily life, they would understand the huge impact one pressure cooker would bring to his househusband life.

However, to the people who knew about Ashiya’s true identity, if a pressure cooker could negate all the hardships experienced so far, it was difficult to judge if the amount of hardship experienced was considered significant or not.

“It’s said to be expensive, but in fact, how much is that pot worth?”

Also watching Ashiya’s back like what Emi was doing and showing a doubtful expression, Urushihara pulled the empty pressure cooker box next to him to study it.

Just as Maou looked in the same direction, Chiho answered Urushihara’s question nonchalantly.

“Even a small one can cost more than 10,000 yen.”

““10,000 yen?””

The box instantly dropped from Urushihara’s hands, and Maou was so shocked that it seemed like his chin will hit the floor.

“One, one pot costs 10,000 yen? What is this?”

“T-This thing is that expensive?”

Emi picked up the box from the shocked Fallen Angel and Demon King and said,

“10,000 yen is considered a cheap one already. The capacity 4L is written on top, so it’s probably more than 20,000 yen?”

“20,000 yen?”

Maou shouted again, and was so shocked that he got up from the tatami.

“If, if so, we might as well sell it for money.....”

“No!”

Perhaps because he had been paying attention to what everyone was saying, Ashiya sensitively reacted to what Maou said on a whim.

“Home appliances are not worth much even if they have not been used before! I will definitely not give up on this!”

“I know that! I was just joking.....”

Faced with an agitated Ashiya, Maou hastily retracted his comment.

“I have wanted to make Chashu since a long time ago! And with this size, there will be no problems making stewed meat or stewed vegetables..... ahh! This is getting more and more exciting!”

The dreams Ashiya harboured for this pot keep increasing, and in contrast--

“I wonder if he could just restrict his dreams to the pot and give up on conquering the world.”

“Ashiya-san is shining so brightly!”

“Alsiel..... you have really been through a lot.”

--Emi, Chiho and Suzuno expressed their feelings of pity and other emotions one after another.

"Hey, Urushihara, you'd better not touch that pot. If you spoil it by accident, we'll be killed."

"How can I touch that pot? Ashiya is scary today."

On the other hand, Maou and Urushihara did not dare to comment positively on this side of Ashiya which they had never seen before.

"However, Ashiya-san is able to cook using a pressure cooker immediately even though he just got it huh."

"Yeah, he seems to have done quite some research on it through recipe books some time back. Then again, there is a pot which actually costs 20,000 yen."

Maou looked at the kitchen which was filled with cooking equipment from afar.

"I remember that a pan only costs 700 yen at the supermarket?"

"That's right. A kitchen knife only costs around 1500 yen. And because it has been sharpened too many times, it's already a lot thinner than before. I had thought that a pressure cooker was a distant dream."

After washing the pressure cooker, Ashiya used a dry cloth to remove any water which was left inside.

"A place to put it has to be found, but when I first bought the oil filtering¹ machine, I had thought that it would be impossible to increase the amount of culinary equipment. Today is a really good day."



Everything Ashiya spoke clearly showed his happiness towards the pressure cooker.

“When we first arrived in Japan and were restricted by the cooking equipment, we weren’t even able to make economic dishes.”

“Unable to make economic dishes? What does that mean?”

Feeling perplexed, Suzuno asked this, and Emi raised her head as well.

“Simply put, economic food is taking the sprouts or similar ingredients which are normally thrown away after eating and replanting or reusing them, right? Alas=Ramus likes drinking onion tea, so I have been keeping the onion skins recently.”

“Onion tea?”

Maou frowned after hearing Emi join two terms which did not have much relation to each other, but either unexpectedly or naturally, the one who continued the topic was Ashiya.

“You’re referring to cooking the brown outer skin? I heard that you can add sugar or honey to it.”

“Is it really alright for young children to drink this kind of thing? I remember that honey isn’t good for young children.”

“Ahm, I don’t like Papa scratchy scratchy.”

Once Maou stroked Alas=Ramus’s hair, the latter smiled as if she felt that it tickled.

“You don’t have to point it out to me. I do pay attention and not give her too much, also botulinum poisoning only occurs in children younger than one year old, when their intestines are not fully developed.”

“Sigh, sprouts and onion tea are considered easy things to do. However, proper economic cooking would mostly require complete cooking facilities. For example..... fried Edamame pods are a classic example.”

“Edamame pods can be eaten?”

The example Ashiya raised caused Chiho's eyes to widen in surprise--

"You're not questioning the fact that demons eat Edamame?"

--while Emi was surprised about other things.

"Usually, they cannot be eaten. However, most of the economic dishes teach people how to cook things which would normally be thrown away into something which is edible."

As Ashiya explained this, he quickly peeled the onion skins which he had mentioned earlier using his hands.

"I heard that the method is simple, just remove the stem and seam from the top and bottom of the pod, split the pod into half, coat it with flour, and fry it. However....."

Ashiya then cut the potatoes, carrots, and other vegetables into chunks.

"To us in the past, since large amounts of flour and oil need to be used, this could not be considered economic cooking."

When they had just drifted to Japan, to the penniless Maou and Ashiya, to perform economic cooking, other than cheap ingredients, other conditions of not requiring additional seasoning and not needing to spend money on buying cooking equipment had to be fulfilled.

Large amount of cooking oil was needed to deep fry food. In addition, used oil would oxidise quickly due to the presence of the impurities such as flour and other factors, so it could not be reusable if it was not stored properly.

Considering the living conditions of the Demon Fortress, it was unacceptable to throw away frying oil after one use. If they wanted to fry something, they had to first prepare an environment which could reuse large amounts of frying oil.

However, for this purpose, other than preparing heat resistant oil filtering equipment and kitchen towels for the filtering, they had to prepare dishes which would make use of the oil which was saved after filtering before it went bad, a complete strategy was needed for this.

Cooking Edamame pods, making something which would be thrown away edible fit the definition of economic cooking on the surface.

However, if they were already financially tight, it would be impossible to create an environment which could use this method to save money.

“In addition, the pots used for deep frying have to be separate from the pots used for pan frying, else not only will it shorten the lifespan of the pots, more dish washing liquid will be needed when washing them. If you buy new seasonings for the sake of making economic dishes, then it will be truly foolish. Making the best use of the leftover ingredients and recipes which does not require a large amount of money in the long term is what is known as home cooking.....”

“Enough! I know all that! I was wrong!”

Emi did not do anything wrong, but to prevent Ashiya from going on and on about economic cooking, she apologised immediately.

“Seriously, it’s rare for me to want to teach you about making economic dishes with just a pan and a knife.”

“Thank you, I don’t need it! See, Alas=Ramus knows you’re making something new and is looking forward to it, hurry up and cook something for her.”

“Hm, I see. Please wait for a while. Because it is my first time challenging this, I need to be more cautious. As for the stock powder..... it will be a better idea to add a little for a start.”

Noticing Alas=Ramus’s gaze, Ashiya nodded and started to focus on his cooking.

“Sigh.....”

Before Ashiya’s excitement completely cooled down, Maou smiled wryly, “During that time, we spent all our effort just to make it through every day. Ashiya probably started to research cooking seriously only after I obtained the job at MgRonalds.”

When Maou and Ashiya were defeated by Emi and fled to Japan, they truly had nothing.

If not for the kind aid of Sasazuka Villa Rosa's landlady Shiba Miki, it would not have been strange for them to die from malnutrition.

"At that time, we would eat broccoli cores and ask supermarkets for cabbage leaves which they did not want. In addition, we would always, always be eating bean sprouts!"

As long as the hard skin of the broccoli cores were cut away and diced and the spoiled parts of the outer cabbage leaves were carefully removed, they would become versatile ingredients for stir frying, making soups or salad.

By going to the supermarket on the right days, bean sprouts could be bought for around 10 yen. Not only was there a significant amount, it was packed with nutrition.

Of course they have also eaten many replanted vegetables which Emi had mentioned and tried to buy bread ends from the bread store or tofu curdles from the tofu store, using various methods to obtain cheap ingredients.

All this effort paid off and they went hungry less and less frequently.

".....I don't want to lead this kind of life."

Maou lightly kicked Urushihara who had complained.

"Thank him properly, you rice weevil. You can live such a leisurely life now thanks to Ashiya's thrifty lifestyle."

Maou said this, as if to remind Urushihara who only knew of the current life of the Demon Fortress.

".....Ashiya-san, can I help you in any way?"

After that, Chiho, who had been listening to the demon's conversation, got up slowly and spoke to Ashiya.

Ashiya turned back with a smile--

"Is it okay? Then there are two tomatoes at the bottom of the fridge, please help me

blanch them in hot water and peel them. You can use that pot.”

--and used to gaze to point out the location of the pot.

“.....I’ll go and slice some pickles. It’s something I bought from the supermarket, but I recently found a delicious brand which I like a lot.”

Suzuno also got up quickly and notified that she was returning to her room to add a dish to the dinner table.

“W-What is it, Alas=Ramus?”

Seeing how everyone was acting, Alas=Ramus also looked up at Emi.

“How about Mama?”

“Eh?”

“You’re not helping?”

“Ugh.....”

Emi was silenced by her daughter’s innocent eyes.

Because Chiho and Suzuno started to help Ashiya, the girl thought that Emi would do something as well.

Unfortunately, Emi had not made any preparations which could add anything to today’s dinner table.

“.....What’s wrong?”

“Uh? Nothing.”

Maou showed an expression as if he felt that Emi being unable to respond to Alas=Ramus’s innocent gaze was interesting. Seeing this out of the corner of her eye, Emi pushed down the anger which was rushing up--

“.....Next time, I will cook something and bring it over.”

--and said something which was more like an announcement to everyone present rather than just saying it to Alas=Ramus.

“Sigh, there’s no need to force yourself. You normally come here after work after all.”

Emi normally came after work to join the Demon Fortress’s dinner gathering made up of a mix of humans and demons. This had naturally become a routine.

Even if she were to prepare something at home beforehand, whether it was bringing it to her company or going home to get it first, a lot of effort was needed to do this.

“Hey, Alas=Ramus, Mama is actually unexpectedly hardworking, you know?”

“What do you mean by unexpectedly!?”

Maou picked up Alas=Ramus and put in a word for Emi.

“Rather than that, Alas=Ramus. You should say something to Lucifer. Ask him why he isn’t helping.”

“Don’t drag me into this.”

After Alas=Ramus stared at the irritated Urushihara with wide eyes for a while, she shook her small head.

Then she looked up at Maou with a perplexed expression and said, “Papa, Lucifer won’t help!”

“.....Uh.”

“What?”

Besides Maou and Emi, even Ashiya and Chiho who had heard this sucked in a breath. As for Urushihara, he quickly turned towards Alas=Ramus.

Then--

“What is it, what happened?”

When Suzuno returned after placing the cut pickles on a small plate, she noticed that everyone in Room 201, with the exception of Urushihara, was doubled over in laughter.

She saw that Urushihara was shaking while blushing madly, the other four were holding their stomachs and laughing, and only Alas=Ramus had a confused expression on her face.

She did not know the details, but Suzuno knew that she had missed out on something interesting.

“Hey, hey, Lucifer, are you okay with Alas=Ramus saying that about you? Kukuku.”

“~~!”

Urushihara, whose face turned even redder because of what Emi said, first glared at Suzuno who entered the room--

“Don’t ask about unnecessary things!”

After giving a warning--

“.....Alright, I’ll wash the dishes, okay? Anything other than the pressure cooker.....”

He said this in a very small voice.

“It seems like I have really missed out on something interesting. I regret missing it, but please fill me in on the details.”

Urushihara actually said that he would help out, causing Suzuno to show an expression of curiosity--

“I already told you not to ask about unnecessary things!”

As for Urushihara, he was acting as if he would lose his temper on anyone if he was

triggered again.

“A child’s eyes are amazing.”

“They really are.”

Maou and Emi nodded at Alas=Ramus’s keen eyes in admiration.

“Ashiya-san, I have peeled the skins. Ahaha.....”

Chiho was smiling as she confirmed that she has finished her task, but still could not resist letting out a laugh.

“Thank you, Sasaki-san. Oh yes, Urushihara, you don’t have to wash the dishes, but help me press the power button on the rice cooker. You should know how to do that.”

“Don’t underestimate me! I’m going to get angry!”

Urushihara may have lost his temper at Ashiya’s instructions, but he still obediently walked over and pressed the power button for the rice cooker.

The rice cooker made a noise, and then started to cook rice for all the humans and demons gathered in this room.

After a while, the room was filled with the heat and fragrance coming from the pressure cooker and rice cooker, and after the noisy dinner preparations were completed, a day in Sasazuka passed by normally.

**THE DEMON KING,
BUYING A NEW MOBILE
PHONE WITH THE
HERO'S MONEY**



SHORT STORY 3

THE DEMON KING, BUYING A NEW MOBILE PHONE WITH THE HERO'S MONEY

“Welcome! How can I be of.....”

“Erhm, can this be fixed?”

“Ser... eh?”

Emi noticed that the store employee's smile and professional tone instantly froze after the sentence ended in a strange way.

However, this could not be helped. After all, what Maou took out was a battered piece of metal which barely looked like it had been a mobile phone.

Even so, because of her sense of responsibility to the brand and her strong will, the frontline employee, who was in charge of serving the customers at the *ae* direct retail store in the city centre, still managed to recover her smile.

Emi mentally praised the professionalism of the other party.

“Uh, erhm, I'm sorry, may I know if you wish to repair this?”

“Yeah, if it can be fixed. Because it can still be turned on, I thought there might still be some hope.”

“.....How is that possible?”

Emi grumbled in a volume no one else could hear, as for the employee--

“E-Erhm, it's very dangerous to turn on the power in this state, it's best to avoid doing so!”

--she frantically advised Maou not to do so.

“A-Anyway, since you want to conduct repairs, please take this number tag here and wait in the waiting area for a while.”

“Ah, alright. So it can’t be done after all.”

“Didn’t I tell you that it’s too ridiculous already?”

“Eh? Y-Yeah.....”

Having his clothes tugged by Emi, Maou seemed to have given up making things difficult for the employee in front of them for the time being.

Holding the number tag, Maou did not even look at the display cases in the direct retail store showing the newest models of the mobile phone company *ae* and sat on the sofa at the waiting area.

“Mama, there, that’s Mama’s job!”

After that, the personification of the ‘Yesod’ Sephirah, Emi and Maou’s ‘daughter’, Alas=Ramus, who was in Emi’s arms, patted Emi’s shoulder and pointed in the direction of the counter.

Looking in that direction, wearing the uniform of the *ae* direct retail store which had a large ribbon across the chest area, the employees were serving the customers in separated counters.

“.....That’s right.”

Her heart felt a little bitter, but Emi still nodded with a smile.

The company and type of service provided were different, but some time back, she was the same as those people working behind the counter, providing mobile phone related services in another company within the same industry.

Thinking back on her job like this, she noticed that having worked as a call centre customer service officer at DoCoDeMo although she was a Hero was just as strange as Maou working at MgRonalds even though he was the Demon King. Therefore, she had no right to criticise his job.

“Mama? Going to work tomorrow?”

Alas=Ramus’s nonchalant question hurt Emi’s mental wound slightly.

Emi’s ‘daughter’ Alas=Ramus could not be separated from the Emi’s holy sword, so when Emi was working at DoCoDeMo, Alas=Ramus was merged within Emi.

Therefore, Alas=Ramus knew about Emi’s work situation.

“.....There’s no need, the work at DoCoDeMo, I’m taking a break for the time being.”

As a ‘mother’, Emi lied in response to Alas=Ramus’s innocent question.

Emi had been fired by her previous workplace.

This was a result caused by her own actions and was something which could not be helped, but losing a place of belonging in Japan still left a scar within her heart.

Thinking about it, since the day she crossed worlds to kill the Demon King, in terms of time and situation, she had arrived at a faraway point.

“Hey, Emi, you didn’t have to come with me.”

Perhaps he had noticed Emi’s gaze, sitting on the sofa, Maou said this without looking in her direction.

“.....Eh?”

“What I mean is, I will get a receipt from the store then pass it to you, so, you just have to give me money later.....”

Maou said this while intentionally showing an unhappy expression, but Emi knew he was worrying about her thinking of being fired from her previous job.

It’s irritating, I wished he did not worry about unnecessary things.

After all, she was aware that she owed him a favour.

“.....I can’t do that.”

Emi smiled slightly, and sat on the same sofa, keeping a short distance away from Maou.

“I haven’t decided on my next job yet. I might be a call customer service officer or an employee at *ae* or SoftTank¹ in the future. I have to observe the situation in the other stores.”

“I-I see. Yeah.”

Maou nodded and replied vaguely, then did not say anything more.

He looked a little awkward, but as two of them felt the same way, they were in similar positions.

“So which mobile phone do you plan to buy next?”

“Eh? Uh~ erhm.....”

Maou looked at the battered piece of metal in his hand on reflex. Seeing through the meaning of his gaze, Emi took the initiative and spoke first, “I said that definitely cannot be fixed. It’s already an old model. Actually charging it when the outer shell is broken and not intact, unbelievable.”

“Eh.....”

Maou looked sadly at his mobile phone which had become a battered piece of metal.

The *ae* mobile phone Maou was using was a model released by a company called Thu-ka. However, that company was merged under *ae* afterwards.

Thu-ka had merged under *ae* when Maou and the others arrived in Japan. Being able to buy a new model from Thu-ka Telecommunications before the brand disappeared was considered a miracle, however, it was not so great a model that it was worth creating a miracle to buy it.

Then, this mobile phone Maou bought in a miraculous manner and used lovingly

became battered during the journey to Ente Isla.

In order to rescue Ashiya, Alas=Ramus, and Emi who had been imprisoned because they were dragged into the plans of Heaven, the Demon World, and Ente Isla, Maou journeyed to Ente Isla.

During this time, whether it was falling into the water, being caught in an explosion and motor accident, or battling with the angels, this mobile phone had been in Maou's pocket the whole time.

The left half of the LCD screen had completely malfunctioned, and the surface of the keypad had disappeared completely, revealing the base plate below. Originally, the phone could be folded, but because the joint area had completely shattered and exposed the underlying circuitry, it could no longer be folded.

According to Maou, the phone could still be charged and phone calls could still be made. However, allowing electricity to pass through a mobile phone which has been dunked in water and has its underlying circuitry exposed was an extremely dangerous act which could result in electrocution or explosions causing injury or death.

Amongst the items Maou proposed to Emi in the 'Fees and Compensations for the Journey to Ente Isla', the highest priority item to settle was this mobile phone.

Unlike in the past, Emi was no longer able to fight Maou, the Demon King, while harbouring simple feelings, but if he met with a huge accident because of inappropriate mobile phone usage, it would be very perplexing.

Demon King Satan, died in a fire caused by an electricity leakage incident because he continued to use a damaged phone, even if such a thing happened, this incident would not even appear in the Society section of the newspapers.

"H-Hey....."

Maou had asked for a large amount of money, but Emi seemed to agree without any protest.

Maou, who had initially asked Emi for compensation with an arrogant attitude, might

have felt surprised about this, and his attitude towards Emi after that was strangely unnatural.

Emi sighed deeply.

“What?”

“Let, let me say this first, I’m going to buy the model I want.”

“Do whatever you want.”

“Is, is that alright? Even if you say no, I’m not going to listen. Because we already agreed, the request document also.....”

“I know that. Didn’t I say do whatever you want? I won’t complain even if you buy the newest Slimphone, so please give up on fixing it.”

“O-Oh..... uh, erhm.....”

Emi was composed from beginning to end, causing Maou to become more flustered. He intentionally picked up the small booklet introducing the newest *ae* models from the magazine rack beside him and started to read it.

“.....Mama?”

Alas=Ramus, in Emi’s arms, asked in curiosity after looking up at Emi’s expression as Emi watched the side of Maou’s face.

“Mama, looks a little happy?”

“Hm~ I wonder how that is?”

Emi answered Alas=Ramus without looking at her, then spoke to Maou who was sweating strangely within a store with strong air-conditioning.

“Hey.”

“Hmm?”

If Maou, who was so spooked that he almost jumped up, reacted in a troublesome way, it would also be bothersome, so Emi pointed in a certain direction before Maou could open his mouth.

“Is it alright for you to not stop her?”

“Huh? What do you mean?”

“Acies-chan.”

“Hmm?”

Maou got up with widened eyes.

In the direction Emi pointed at, Alas=Ramus’s ‘younger sister’, Acies=Ara, was bugging a store employee and asking endless questions.

“Hey, Acies!”

Maou frantically ran towards Acies, who was standing in front of the display counter filled with the newest models of jaw dropping price, her eyes sparkling.

“Ah, Maou! Hey, which one do you think is better?”

“What are you referring to?!”

“Mobile phone! Maou, didn’t you say that you would buy me one as well?”

“I have never said anything like that! Ah, s-sorry, there’s no need to pay attention to this person!”

Maou apologised to the store employee Acies was bothering and pulled Acies to the sofa.

“You said so before! When meeting Alberto in Ente Isla!”

What Acies was talking about seemed to have happened during the journey in Ente Isla.

Acies and Alas=Ramus were the same kind of existence, personifications of the 'Yesod' Sephirah, and just like how Alas=Ramus and Emi were merged together, Acies and Maou were also merged together.

When Emi and Alas=Ramus were imprisoned in their foreign hometown Ente Isla, Acies and Maou went to rescue them together. At that time, not only did Emi reunite with her father, Nord, whom she thought had died, Acies also successfully met her older sister, Alas=Ramus, once again.

Because he felt that such a thing would happen, Maou believed that it would be troublesome if he went with Acies.

"I never said that I would buy one for you! I just said that even if you wanted to use one, you could only use a child's model!"

"I object! Doesn't that equate to you saying that you would buy one for me!"

"Objection overruled!"

Maou rejected Acies's opinions, forced her to sit next to Emi, and watched her closely so that she would not cause any trouble.

"Acies, cannot be stubborn."

"Nee-sama, I'm not being stubborn! Don't you want a mobile phone?"

"Mobile phone?"

"Please do not feed strange information to Alas=Ramus....."

With a troubled look on her face, Emi changed her posture to gently separate Alas=Ramus and Acies.

"It's fine! I don't plan to rip off Emi! I'm only asking Maou to fulfill his promise....."

"Whether that promise exists or not is questionable! Take this as a request from me, please behave yourself! I only let you out because you said that you wouldn't be noisy!"

“S-She really can’t quiet down.....”

“Hey, Maou! You caused Emi’s evaluation of me to decrease!”

“You caused that yourself!”

Maou’s shoulder’s sagged in frustration.

Because Acies would definitely cause trouble if she was let out, Maou did not want to bring her along in the first place.

However, the rule that Emi and Alas=Ramus could not be separated beyond a certain distance seemed to apply to Maou and Acies too.

And that distance limit was the same as Emi and Alas=Ramus, just going from Sasazuka to Shinjuku would exceed the limit.

So when Maou travelled to the city centre, he would be forced to bring Acies with him.

However, Acies was different from Alas=Ramus, her physical and mental states were similar to a middle schooler in Japan and she was more disobedient than Alas=Ramus.

When going out, she definitely would not merge with Maou obediently, however, as long as she was let out, Maou would end up being led around in circles by her. He was already used to it now, but it was still equally tiring.

On the other hand, Emi had only met Acies recently, but since Acies had been living with Nord Justina, the father Emi had lost contact with for many years, Emi was unable to judge the distance between them.

However, the only one who seemed to be unable to grasp the distance was Emi. Since the beginning, Acies did not avoid Emi and her attitude towards Emi was similar to the way she treated others.

“.....”

Harbouring complex feelings, Emi watched the girl who kept bothering Maou to buy a mobile phone for her.

This emotion was slightly different from jealousy.

Since the girl was the same kind of existence as Alas=Ramus, she must have protected Emi's father many times.

Emi had never heard the details, but she knew that her father had thought of ways to reunite with her after they were separated.

Even so, for unknown reasons, Emi strangely felt that she could not raise her head in front of Acies.

"Hm? Emi, what's wrong?"

Noticing Emi's gaze, Acies suddenly turned over.

Huge purple eyes, a streak of purple hair in the midst of silver hair, and that face which resembled Alas=Ramus.

"Uh....."

Emi, who did not have a special reason to look at the other party, did not know what to say, and at this moment--

"The customer with number fifty five!"

"Ah, coming! Hey, Acies! I'm not going to buy one for you today! Sorry, Emi! Please help me watch this idiot!"

"Eh? Ah, wait a moment....."

--it was Maou's turn, and without waiting for Emi to reply, he left Acies behind and headed for the counter.

"Maou, who are you calling an idiot!?"

After Acies protested towards Maou's back, she immediately turned back towards Emi.

“Ah, so what is the matter?”

“Eh? Uh, erhm.....”

“Then again, Emi.....”

“H-Hmm?”

“You are Father’s daughter, right?”

“.....That is, correct.....”

What is this girl saying all of a sudden? Ignoring the surprised Emi, Acies continued to speak with the same tone of voice.

What she said next dealt a heavy blow to a place deep within Emi’s heart.

“Sorry. I have always been acting as Father’s daughter.”

“.....Eh?”

“Next to the father whom you were separated from for many years, a person who called herself his daughter and acted very close to him suddenly appeared, you probably dislike that.”

Acies spoke no differently from before, using a cheerful tone and saying this directly, causing Emi to become speechless momentarily because she could not sense any underlying motive.



“However, there is one thing I hope you can understand. Ever since I became aware of my surroundings, Father..... Nord had always been by my side. When we were living in Japan, acting as family was more convenient in various ways, so.....”

As if she was trying to reassure Emi, Acies patted Emi’s shoulder while smiling widely.

“Nord has never forgotten Emi, please forgive the fact that he called me his daughter.”

“Acies-chan.....”

Emi finally understood. The reason behind the strange feeling she had felt from Acies.

“I don’t like being treated too formally, just address me by my name directly. Maou called me by name since the beginning!”

“.....Yeah.”

Emi nodded.

“Does Acies..... like Father?”

“Yeah.”

Acies replied directly.

“Your older sister..... is Alas=Ramus.”

“Uh?”

“Hmm?”

Suddenly having her name called, Alas=Ramus looked up at Emi.

“.....This child, is not related to the Demon King or me by blood, but I treasure her a lot. To be called Mama by his child, I feel very proud of it. The Demon King must feel the same.”

“Yeah.”

“Father, must also feel that being called ‘Father’ by you is something to feel proud of. He is my father after all. Regardless of the circumstances which led to this, he must treasure you the same way he treasures me.”

“Hm? Is that so? Doesn’t Emi feel that it’s strange?”

Acies said this in a relaxed manner. Her heart was filled with honesty and frankness, no melancholic feelings could be sensed.

There was only one answer to the distance Emi felt between the girl and her, that was worry.

“If you lose your place of belonging because you’re too considerate towards me, then it will be really ‘strange’. Acies, you seem to be living in the Demon Fortress now, there is supposed to be another resident living there. What will you do after that guy returns? That place can’t fit four people, right?”

“You’re referring to Urushihara, Lucifer. Hmm~ that is currently a problem.”

Acies crossed her arms with a serious expression on her face, while watching her, Emi thought back on what happened the past few days.

Since returning from the journey to Ente Isla, Acies rarely approached Villa Rosa Room 101 where Emi was watching over Nord.

If she was truly being considerate to Emi who was Nord’s daughter just like what she said earlier, then Emi felt bad for Acies.

Just like how Alas=Ramus looked up to Emi and Maou as ‘Papa’ and ‘Mama’, Acies was addressing Nord as Father from the bottom of her heart, the one who created this situation must have been Emi’s mother.

“Do you want to live with me?”

When she had come to her senses, Emi said this naturally.

“Eh?”

Acies looked towards Emi in surprise.

“.....Many things have happened, but considering your ‘parents’, you’re like my ‘younger sister’. We have the same father after all, let’s just live together.”

“Ooh.....”

Acies mumbled, feeling very touched.

“Such a magnanimous heart.....”

“Is, is that so? Thank you.....”

“But, this suggestion isn’t realistic right now. Since I am unable to leave Maou.”

“Ah, that’s true.”

Emi looked towards the back of Maou who was at the counter on reflex.

He seemed to be debating with the store employee while holding the battered phone, but he should be close to giving up.

“It’s impossible for Emi and Maou to live together, and Suzuno said that you don’t plan to move to Sasazuka, right?”

“.....Yeah.”

Emi and Alas=Ramus lived in an apartment located in Eifuku, three train stations away from Sasazuka, completely exceeding the distance which Maou and Acies could stay apart.

“I cannot go to Emi’s place like this, and.....”

Acies looked at Maou’s back, Alas=Ramus in Emi’s arms, and Emi in turn.

“I am happy that Emi is willing to see me as a younger sister, but the family relationships will become very complex like this, don’t you think?”

“.....Y-You do have a point.”

Emi understood what Acies wanted to express and showed a wry smile.

Assuming that Acies, who had an older sister Alas=Ramus who was Emi's daughter, became Emi's younger sister, although Emi and Acies were both Nord's daughters, Acies's older sister was Emi and Maou's daughter, in addition, Alas=Ramus's and Acies's true 'Mama' should be Nord's wife Lailah.

“Just thinking about it is dizzying. Depending on the situation, perhaps even the descendants will continue to sink into this swamp of family conflict.”

“That's true.”

In the sky at Azure Sky Canopy, Maou mentioned a 'grand family meeting', but how would it turn out in reality? Unable to imagine this, Emi and Acies started to feel that it was amusing.

“But how should I say this, everyone's relations are truly complicated, but to me and Nee-sama, what we feel happy about the most is that everyone cherishes each other, so it probably will not be a problem even if quarrels occur. This includes Maou.”

“.....Is that so?”

Without noticing it, Maou's original standpoint of not wanting to back down changed to being lectured by the store employee.

Perhaps allowing electricity to pass through a mobile phone in that state made the store employee angry.

Seeing that figure, Emi's pursed her lips.

“Yeah. Because Maou loves to lie and isn't straightforward, it's hard to tell.”

Acies said with a cheerful smile.

“However, when riding on the Moped and charging towards Azure Sky Canopy, Maou did shout Emilia's name. I'm not sure if you and Maou were enemies in the past, but

Maou cherishes everyone a lot. I am very sure of that.”

If it was Emi in the past, she would definitely deny it on the spot.

However, Emi could no longer find a trace of ‘Hero Emilia’ in her heart.

“Acies, Papa doesn’t lie!”

“Eh~ Nee-sama should be a little more suspicious of other people. Maou is actually very bad, you know?”

“Cannot say Papa is bad!”

Emilia Justina, who did not show any signs that she was listening to the two ‘Yesod’ sisters bickering--

“.....I know.”

--absorbed Acies’s words after a subtle show of hesitation.

“Hm? What? Are you referring to Maou being bad?”

Emi shook her head while showing an indecipherable expression, then opened her mouth to reply, “Not just about that, the things you said before are also correct..... but, I cannot accept this.”

“Hmph~”

Acies did not continue to ask about Emi’s intentions behind her words, Emi did not know if this was due to being considerate or simply being disinterested, but she felt that it would probably a bit of both.

At this moment, both of them saw Maou get up from his seat, so they also stopped chatting.

“Seeing this, it looks like he hasn’t bought it.”

“Perhaps.”

Emi showed a wry smile, Maou appeared to be obviously depressed.

It was probably because the other party was unwilling to repair it.

“.....They said I can only buy a new one.”

“Is that so, then you had better choose one.”

“.....Sigh.”

He could change to a new phone with another person’s money, yet Maou’s face was still dark.

“What’s wrong with him? Isn’t Emi buying a new mobile phone for him?”

Acies asked Emi this, and the latter answered nonchalantly, “He’s probably grown attached to the one before, so he doesn’t want to let it go.”

“Is that so?”

“It is his first mobile phone after all, it probably went through many hard times with him.”

This deduction was accurate.

The time Emi and Maou had spent together was long enough for her to easily guess Maou’s thoughts.

And the reason for not wanting to change to a new mobile phone although he was the one who suggested it, Emi had roughly guessed the reason too.

“Papa, not happy.”

“Eh, Emi?”

Emi got up and walked towards the counter Maou just sat at.

“The data inside cannot be backed up too?”

She asked this.

“It may be a little dangerous, but since it can be powered, then the data probably can be extracted. It is currently turned on after all.”

Perhaps he did not know the relationship between Emi and Maou, the store employee showed a surprised expression.

Since a child was with them, they were probably a family, but like this, Acies’s presence would be strange.

However, Emi was not bothered by this.

“His mobile phone might be an old model which does not support an external connection to its storage, but *ae* probably provides a service to help backup the messages, photos, and contacts of these old models, right? I will have him sign the indemnity form for missing data, so can I ask you to help with this?”

“.....Please wait a moment.”

A store employee who looked very troubled left his seat, probably to consult his supervisor.

Plugging in a data connection line to a heavily damaged phone was a dangerous thing to do, considering this, Emi’s request was pushier.

However, Emi knew clearly that in this situation the customer was allowed to make more unreasonable requests.

Current mobile phones usually were equipped with features and memories exceeding that of telecommunication equipment.

Especially the photos and videos taken via the camera and video functions, they frequently contain more of the user’s memories than a normal camera.

“Emi.....?”

Maou watched Emi’s actions with surprise, but Emi did not look back.

Because once she looked back, she would definitely say something strange.

Fortunately, before Maou asked why Emi did such a thing, the store employee returned.

“Sorry for the wait. We cannot guarantee that all data will be transferred, but we can help you to carry out the extraction of the data. If this is alright.....”

“I understand. This is fine. Hey, Maou.”

“Eh, uh.....”

“They are willing to help you extract the data from your battered old phone. If everything goes well, the new mobile phone can accept the data from the old mobile phone directly. However, that means that you had better not choose a Slimphone as your new mobile phone.”

Recently, many companies have provided the same brand and same model of Slimphone, but Maou’s old phone was probably using the operating system of an independent telecommunications company, so the extracted data might not be able to transfer because it was not compatible with Slimphones.

Therefore, it would be better to change to a mobile phone which is a similar model and has the same operating system as the independent telecommunications company.

“Hey, come over here. You need to sign the indemnity form for missing data before they can help you handle this.”

“O-Oh.”

Emi waved her hand to summon Maou to the counter.

After Maou followed the instructions and filled in the form the other party took out, the store employee bowed and took Maou’s mobile phone to the back to the store.

Seeing the store employee leave, Maou looked up at Emi with a dazed expression, as if he could not keep up with the situation.

“What kind of expression is that?”

“Uh, erhm..... why.....”

Maou’s gaze seemed to say ‘Why are you willing to help me do this kind of thing even if I did not say anything?’

“The bike you are using right now has a reflector light installed in a strange place.”

“Eh?”

That was referring to Maou’s treasured bicycle, Dullahan II.

Maou did use glue to stick the reflector of the previous generation of Dullahan which Suzuno had broken onto the front basket, but he naturally did not tell Emi about this.

Just as Maou wanted to ask how Emi knew about this, Emi answered first,

“Do you think I will not properly investigate what Alas=Ramus will sit on?”

“Uh, erhm.....”

Emi had not noticed it yet, but she did not dislike herself who could clearly understand Maou’s thoughts all that much.

Therefore, she interpreted Maou’s feelings and continued to speak,

“The phone book and messages are like the mobile phone’s soul. If these things can be transferred, it will feel much better, right? In reality, many customers are like this.....”

Emi, who suddenly felt that she had spoken too much, increased the distance between her and Maou slightly, and intentionally showed an unhappy expression.

“.....It’s rare for me to buy you a mobile phone, if you’re unhappy about it and the requested amount increases, it would be irritating, wouldn’t it?”

Of course, Emi knew that Maou would definitely not do such a thing.

However, she did not say this for Maou's sake only, it was for her own sake as well.

"So, what do you plan to do? It's almost time for Alas=Ramus's afternoon nap, if you want to make a decision, and do so quickly."

"O-Oh."

As if being controlled by Emi's forceful tone, Maou ran to the display and took a silver mobile phone which was closest to him.

Acies, sitting on the sofa and watching the two of them, leaned back with a smile--

".....These two are troublesome."

--and said this bluntly, even so--

"It seems like the family meeting later on will be fraught with troubles."

That mumbling voice appeared to sound a little happy.

THE HERO, ADMIRING THE ABILITY OF THE ENEMY OFFICIALS



SHORT STORY 4

THE HERO, ADMIRING THE ABILITY OF THE ENEMY OFFICIALS

Suzuno sensed something amiss from the back of the figure she had gotten used to seeing recently, and it was truly just a coincidence.

Perhaps it was because the morning sun just happened to shine into the public corridor, or because she accidentally dropped her keys when she planned to lock the porch door and moved her eyesight downwards in order to pick it up.....

“D-Demon King.....”

“Hm? Oh, you’re going out so early?”

Living in the room next door, the King of Demons who had almost successfully conquered the world and was now staying in his human form, Maou Sadao, replied in his usual tone of voice.

“Why did you freeze in such a strange position?”

“Uh, no, erhm.....”

Suzuno, who maintained her position of bending at the waist to pick up the keys, accidentally had her gaze drift to a certain area, causing her to blush.

“It, it’s nothing.....”

Of course it was impossible for it to be nothing.

Although it was not nothing, what could the current Suzuno do after pointing it out?

Considering her relationship with Maou, it was not so good that she would actively tell him what was wrong.

As neighbours, their relationship did become closer, and he even appointed her as one of his army's officials, so it could not be denied that their relationship had recently deviated from what it had originally been.

However, according to their original relationship, if there was really a problem with him, Suzuno's role should be to point it out and laugh at him.

However, even then, the problem Suzuno saw just now was truly at a scale so small that doing so would only be embarrassing.

Even if he was the enemy, no, because he was the enemy, she did not want to hurt the other party because of the problems caused by this abnormality.

Therefore, after weighing Maou's reputation and her own sense of shame on a scale, Suzuno chose not to point it out directly.

"D-Demon King, erhm, where is Alsiel?"

Her second plan was to ask if Maou's loyal servant, capable of all housework and self-proclaimed professional househusband, Demon General Alsiel, a.k.a Ashiya Shiro, was at home.

"Oh, he accepted a rare job which needs him to stay outside, so he will only return very late tonight."

"W-What?"

As Suzuno felt a sense of despair, she fully understood why that thing would be shown outside in this state.

Ashiya, who always worried about his master's life in society, would definitely not miss that kind of thing.

"Are you looking for Ashiya for something?"

"No, uh, erhm, I planned to go to the morning market at the supermarket today, and only planned to tell him as well, but--"

Suzuno was not lying.

Her original plan was to mention if they had met by coincidence, so it was not considered a lie.

However, it still became a lie to be used as a means of 'escape'.

"D-Demon King, are you going to work now?"

"Yeah, it's only half day today..... oh my, it's this time already. See you."

"Ah....."

Maou looked at his watch and turned to leave without waiting for Suzuno to reply.

While still maintaining her position of bending at the waist, in a dazed manner, she listened as the sound of Maou's beloved steed Dullahan II faded into the distance and disappeared.



"Chi-chan..... that, I think it's better for you to tell him after all?"

"No way! I can't do that.....!"

This was probably the first time the high school girl, Sasaki Chiho, who had good morals, was polite, and wore a veil of justice, resisted the orders from the shop manager.

Maou, who wore a refreshing cheerful smile while working behind the counter as usual, did not appear to be acting strange.

However, from the standpoint of Kisaki Mayumi, the shop manager of the MgRonalds in front of Hatagaya Station, and Sasaki Chiho, who knew about Maou's true identity, private life and various parts which could not be spoken of, they had something which they must tell Maou today.

However, the topic which they originally discussed was to tell the person about it

directly, but is that really a considerate way to go about it??

“No, I feel that it should be said by you, it would cause him the least harm.....”

“No, no way, I can’t say it..... b-because I would have to explain why I saw it.....”

“You might put it that way, but even someone at my height noticed it, so there shouldn’t be anything suspicious about it.....”

“B-But Maou-san is a guy, he would probably feel hurt if a girl said this..... at this time Kisaki-san should tell him using authority as shop manager, minimising the harm to him.....!”

“That’s what you think. There will be no issue ‘right now’. I do not have the right to lecture him about private matters which have nothing to do with the store’s business..... it should be better for someone with a personal friendship with him to tell him secretly.”

“Er, erhm, b-but.....”

The two kept shirking their responsibility—a meaningless conversation which did not match Chiho’s and Kisaki’s personality at all.

They may have interacted in private, but to point out a sensitive problem so directly, it would make anyone feel hesitant.

However, amongst these ‘private interactions’, Chiho was recently appointed to an important position by Maou, this caused her to think of a ‘senior’ who was related to this position.

“This is too strange. If such a thing happened, Ashiya-san..... ah, that would be the friend living together with Maou-san.....”

“I know. He came to the store a few times. It’s that tall guy who came together before, right?”

Chiho mentioned the name of Maou’s close top loyal subordinate, Ashiya Shiro.

Chiho was unable to understand, Maou had someone around him who took care of all household matters to the last detail and called himself the model househusband, how did such a thing happen?

“Ah, yes, that person should have noticed it. All housework, including the laundry, is done by Ashiya-san, so it is impossible for him to miss this.”

“No, that’s hard to say. This is the first time I’ve seen that place become like this. If you don’t know, you won’t look at that place in particular.”

“But when folding it and placing it into the cupboard, you would see it no matter how much you don’t want to see it, right?”

“It might not become like this until you wear it? If only the white part is sticking out, it can be missed out.....”

It seemed as if the two of them were discussing Maou’s clothes.

Like usual, Maou was wearing the MgRonalds’ red shirt, black straight cut trousers, red visor cap, and cheap black shoes.

For a MgRonalds male employee found in Japan and all over the world, there was nothing to criticise about this attire.

“A-Anyway, I will not express my opinion about any things unrelated to the store. Please, Chi-chan. If you value Maa-kun, then tell him directly, or tell his friend Ashiya-san, solve it while trying your best not to hurt Maa-kun’s feelings.”

“Ki, Kisaki-san! How can you say this..... ugh!”

“I have things I can do and things I cannot do!”

“Uuuu, I can’t do it..... how should I say it.....”

Chiho looked like she was going to cry while Kisaki prepared to leave with a complex expression on her face.

Seeing these two, Maou--

“How rare, did Chi-chan make Kisaki-san angry?”

--thought about this in a leisurely manner.



At Sasazuka bathed in the evening light, Emi planned to call out because she discovered that figure, but her voice stopped at her throat.

“It’s Pa-uphmm!”

On reflex, she covered the mouth of her ‘daughter’ who had also recognised that figure.

“.....Mama?”

Alas=Ramus, in Emi’s arms, expressed her confusion at Emi’s unnatural actions, but Emi did not have the leisure to reply.

The person who was pushing a bicycle and walking in front of her was definitely Maou, and the one walking next to him was Chiho.

Emi had heard from Chiho beforehand that two of them were working from morning until evening today, so it was not strange to see them walking together on the streets.

Chiho was wearing casual clothes and was carrying something like an insulating bag in her arms.

That must be the dish which Chiho planned to bring to the Demon Fortress today.

However, no matter what, that is too difficult to comprehend.

Emi knew that Maou’s finances were tight, but did he not feel embarrassed going out like that?

Even if it was him, he should have the self-respect of a Demon King. With his personality, he would probably still make the minimum effort to dress up properly.

Perhaps he had not noticed it.

It was impossible for someone to notice that kind of place on their own. Unless it was folded beautifully, that area would probably not be noticed at all.

As she thought to this point, a question surfaced in Emi's mind.

What was Ashiya, his loyal subordinate Demon General Alsiel, doing?

Having his master dressed like this, didn't that guy feel ashamed?

Of course, Emi was not bothered about how embarrassed he would be.

In Emi's position as the Hero who saved the world which was almost conquered by him, she should be mocking him from behind and stabbing the holy sword into his back while she was at it.

Of course, having stayed in Japan for some time, she did not plan to do that kind of thing in a place with human traffic, Maou did not think that he would experience such a thing as well.

However, as a human, as a Hero, she did not wish for the Demon King to lose society's trust because of the accumulation of these small faults.

Logically, it should be like this.

However, that fault was truly too insignificant and tragic, causing feelings of pity to rise within Emi.

She could not help but harbour feelings of sympathy which were close to pity.

"Chi, Chiho-chan!"

However, the first one to save should still be Chiho.

She could not allow Chiho to be hurt by walking next to Maou when he was in this state.

Anyone who knew Chiho well would know that Chiho had a crush on Maou.

Before her identity as a Hero, as a woman, as Chiho's friend, Emi could not allow the girl's pure feelings to be hurt because of the idiotic actions of the Demon King.

Thinking these thoughts, Emi quickly caught up to the two of them.

"Ah, Yusa-san, Alas=Ramus-chan."

"Papa, Chi nee-chan, 'allo!"

Emi, who was unable to act like Alas=Ramus and look at the two of them directly, could not help but shift her gaze away.

"Oh, Alas=Ramus, you came..... what's wrong, Emi."

Even so, Emi had decided that no matter how unnatural it was, she needed to preserve the dignity of Chiho who was walking together with this man.

Until they reached the apartment, she must block Maou's back.

For a Hero to continue staying behind him, Maou would definitely feel uneasy.

With things as they were, Maou understood that Emi would not suddenly stab him in the back, but the position Emi chose was really too unnatural.

However, Emi had exerted all her effort.

In fact, she did not wish to walk using this method.

But if Chiho had not noticed 'this state', Emi decided that she was to protect this friend with her body.

The idea that she should push the bike and have Maou carry Alas=Ramus flashed through her mind, but she realised that not only would she be unable to cover that place, it would be more difficult to circle behind Maou, so she could only give up on that.

"Yusa..... san."

At this moment, Chiho turned back and smiled sadly at Emi.

“Chiho-chan..... you.....”

Seeing that expression, Emi was convinced.

Chiho knew the truth.

She knew, yet she chose to walk next to Maou.

That was expected. After all, it would be too unnatural if Chiho walked behind Maou when the two of them were together.

This fact caused Emi to understand that Maou did not know about his current state.

A wave of anger surged up within Emi.

She knew that Maou cherished Chiho, but it was meaningless if he was unable to manage this small detail.

And Chiho’s behaviour which provoked feelings of fondness also caused Emi to feel upset.

It was impossible to obtain happiness from liking this dense and shameless Demon King.....

“We’re almost there.....”

“Y-Yeah.”

“Wha, what’s wrong with the both of you?”

Maou, who looked like he did not understand what these two females were thinking, felt that the way Chiho and Emi spoke was strange.

In Chiho’s and Emi’s position, they hoped he could hurry up and notice the other places which were strange.

However, the area around Villa Rosa Sasazuka was a residential area without much human traffic, so the probability of being seen by a stranger was not high.

“Eh? Isn’t that Suzuno-san?”

After noticing Suzuno standing at the staircase landing of the apartment’s external staircase, Chiho pointed in that direction.

Suzuno seemed to have noticed Chiho as well, and the moment she noticed Chiho’s and Emi’s positions, she sucked in a breath.

From that expression, Chiho and Emi were convinced.

Suzuno knew as well.

“Suzu nee-chan, ‘allo!”

Only Alas=Ramus showed an innocent smile which seemed like it could get rid of all the troubles in the world and waved at Suzuno.

“Why didn’t you say anything when you saw it in the morning.....!? Such an unsightly.....!”

“See, seeing such a thing so suddenly, I could not think of any considerate words.....!”

“I-I didn’t say anything in the end..... I, didn’t know how to say it.....”

Such a thing had not happened before, it was only today that Suzuno came downstairs to welcome the trio (or more accurately, to welcome Chiho and Emi).

At a location some distance away from Maou, the three of them huddled together and started to whisper to each other.

“I don’t know what all of you are doing, but I’m going in first.”

Feeling perplexed, Maou climbed up the stairs.

Chiho, Emi, and Suzuno could not help but look towards his back.

When Maou's figure disappeared within the door of the public corridor, the trio huddled together once more.

"What is Alsiel doing!? That guy should notice something of that standard!"

"T-That's right. It's impossible for Ashiya-san to miss this out....."

"According to the Demon King, Alsiel seemed to have accepted a dispatching job which required him to stay outside....."

"....."

The information Suzuno revealed caused Chiho and Emi to press their hands against their foreheads.

"It was like that with the door to door merchant too, what is this? Is that guy unable to live normally if he doesn't have Alsiel with him?"

"Ashiya-san has been supporting everyone from behind all this time....."

"A-Anyway, Chiho-dono, is 'that' very obvious?"

"Kisaki-san and I noticed it just by walking past him in the employee room....."

"When I saw that figure on the streets, my line of sight drifted there in an instant..... it looked so unsightly that I wanted to cry."

"Is, is it that bad? But he did not notice it, right?"

"Kisaki-san said that the cloth might have torn after wearing it....."

"Ah, I see....."

"No, no matter what, since he has not noticed it, then we should try our best to point it out naturally without hurting his feelings, that would be the most sensible thing to do."

“T-That’s right. We have to be gentle, like sugar coating.....”

“.....Who’s going to do it? I’m not doing it.”

“.....Like I said, we just have to phrase it like it was not that obvious and we only noticed it just now.....”

Just as Suzuno was saying this--

“Uwahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh?”

Maou’s tragic shout was heard from the second floor of the apartment, causing the three of them to flinch.

Then at the same time, the three of them knew what had happened.

He finally found out.

In addition, the trio had forgotten something.

Around Maou, there was a guy who basically did not know the concept of being considerate.

“Hey~ sorry about this.”

At this moment, the window of Room 201 opened, and the sleepy looking Urushihara Hanzo leaned out and shouted.

The three of them looked up, showing expressions of understanding.

“Can all of you wait for a while? Because Maou is digging through the closet now and making a mess of the room.”

After Urushihara pulled his head back indoors, the three of them looked at each other with empty gazes.

“He said it.”

“He probably said it.”

“Urushihara-san.....”

“Uh?”

Their sighs dissipated into the darkening skies.

Suzuno, Kisaki, Chiho, and Emi had noticed it in an instant.

Urushihara, who must have been sleeping in the morning and finally woken up also noticed it just like Suzuno, Chiho, and Emi.

Then, he must have naturally said this directly.

The fact that Maou’s pants had two holes at the thigh area underneath the butt.



“T-This, this kind of place.....”

Maou looked at his pants which were spread out on the tatami, trembling as he did so.

“Why would it tear in such a place?”

The cloth of the trouser legs, the joining point of both the trouser legs and the bottom of the butt area of the jeans Maou normally wore as casual clothing had turned white, and examining them carefully, the vertical seams have already been worn down and come off, only the horizontal stitches were barely holding them together. When someone wears them, the skin below would be seen through those holes.

“And all three of them are like this!”

The three pairs of jeans spread out on the tatami had similar holes in them.

“You only have three sets of casual clothes huh.....”

From Emi’s perspective, even if she had known that Maou lived a life of poverty, this

greatly insufficient quantity of clothes still gave her a shock.

“I still have three pairs of pants for work!”

“Are those pants alright?”

Chiho answered Suzuno’s question.

“The pair I saw at work was not that bad.”

When she glanced at Maou’s long pants at work because she was concerned, it had not turned out like this.

Nothing seemed unusual with the other pair of work pants which was folded nicely and kept too.

Maou had changed into a pair of work pants due to this emergency.

“E-Erh, Chi-chan.”

“Y-Yes?”

Maou looked down at the damaged pairs of jeans with a sad expression and asked Chiho, using a tone as if it was the end of the world.

“Erm, since Chi-chan noticed, that means.....”

With an honest personality, Chiho was unable to lie to Maou, so she bitterly admitted it.

“Kisaki-san, was worried about you as well.....”

“Uwahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

Maou grabbed his head and slumped on the floor.

“So exaggerated.”

Urushihara mumbled this as he glanced sideways at how Maou was acting, and having been badly traumatised, Maou rebuked immediately in an agitated manner.

“Idiot! Don’t compare me with you who doesn’t go outside! Clothes are a direct reflection of someone’s personality! Are you alright with other people thinking that you’re a person who nonchalantly walks around wearing pants with holes in them?”

“I live a life where I do not care about the opinions of others.”

“M-Maou-san, it’s alright! All of us know that it was an accident!”

Chiho tried to put in a good word--

“But from the viewpoint of the humans of Ente Isla, the fact that the Demon King who tried to take over the world walked around wearing pants which had holes in the rear end area would be an interesting story worthy of being recorded in the history of the world.”

“Uwahhhhhhhhhhhh! Having Emi see this is making me regret it so much, damn itttttt!”

“A new page has been added to the bible.....”

“Suzunooooo! Don’t joke about it, I’m really depressed right nowww!”

“Maou-san..... I’m sorry. If only Kisaki-san and I gathered up the courage and said it.....”

“Chiho-chan is not at fault. Tracing it back to the source of the problem, the greatest sinner in some sense should be Alsiel who had not noticed this, right?”

“That’s right, I was the most surprised about that.”

Urushihara responded to Emi’s words.

“When I first saw it, I thought bugs had caused those holes.”

When Emi and the rest were waiting outside, Maou and Urushihara did an overall inspection on all their clothes in the room, other than being worn out, only Maou’s

pants had such interesting holes.

“However, there shouldn’t be clothes which are this old amongst all the clothes, right? Why have so many pairs of pants become like this?”

Without showing any signs of anger, Maou nodded to acknowledge Chiho’s question.

It had been less than two years since Maou and Ashiya arrived in Japan.

That meant no matter how old the clothes were, the clothes Maou and Ashiya bought after they arrived in Japan could not have been older than two years.

There were some second-hand clothes, but according to Maou’s explanation, two of his jeans were bought from the UNiXLO at Sasazuka Station and one pair was bought at a clothes store at the shopping street during a sale.

“The reason doesn’t matter anymore..... hey, all of you can eat first if you want. UNiXLO should still be open now, I’m going to buy some pants.”

As if he was a spirit, Maou got up listlessly, picked up his wallet, and prepared to go out.

“Maou, wouldn’t it be better to check with Ashiya first?”

Urushihara shouted to Maou from behind.

Urushihara must have pointed out the holes in Maou’s pants in the same direct manner earlier.

With regards to this, the three females were thinking the same thing, but they avoided mentioning it because Maou was really too pitiful.

Maou turned around with an angry gaze and said with a low tone, “This is an emergency. Ashiya is not so merciless that he would nag about one or two pairs of pants.”

“But Ashiya would say ‘Don’t judge a book by its cover’, right?”

“How would there be any inner good to talk about for adults wearing pants with holes when they live a normal social life in modern Japan!?”

After Maou spat this out, he opened the door with a bang.

“M-Maou-san!”

Chiho, feeling restless, chased behind Maou who was feeling sad.

Suzuno, Emi, and Urushihara silently watched both of them leave.

“However..... why did it tear this way, this is so strange.”

After a short while, Suzuno spoke and picked up Maou’s torn pants.

“You normally wear kimonos so you probably don’t have to worry about this. I should inspect my own clothes later. I have not paid attention to such areas before, but if our clothes become like this, the damage would be something the Demon King cannot even compare to.”

“I don’t think Maou’s heart is so fragile that he would be hurt by such a thing.”

“For the Demon King’s pants to tear at the rear end area, it should be us (humans) who are hurt more by this.”

“Where did Papa and Chi nee-chan go?”

Alas=Ramus looked at the door where Maou and Chiho left through in curiosity and asked Emi this.

“Hmm..... they went to buy clothes together.”

“Not eating?”

“About that.”

Emi and Suzuno looked at each other, and spoke as if to placate her.

Alas=Ramus would not understand even if they told her the truth, and if she did understand, Maou would feel even more embarrassed.

“We’ll eat together when everyone is here, can you wait a while longer?”

Since Chiho had left, it would feel awkward to eat the food Chiho brought over on their own, and because Maou was too pitiful, Emi could only reply this way--

“Okay.”

--Alas=Ramus nodded without complaint--

“Ehhh.”

--but another overgrown child protested instead.

“Didn’t Maou say that we can eat first?”

“Seriously, you.....”

“Lucifer..... you.....”

Emi and Suzuno glared at Urushihara disdainfully.

“Something like that happened to the master of the house who takes care of you, don’t you sympathise with him at all?”

“Even Alas=Ramus is this obedient, don’t you feel embarrassed about it?”

“W-Why are both of you so biased towards Maou? This feels a little strange to me. No matter how much Maou embarrasses himself, it shouldn’t matter to the both of you?”

Urushihara’s unexpected comeback shocked Emi and Suzuno, but the two of them shouted at the same time, ““There should be a limit to everything!””

Getting traumatised just by holes appearing at the rear area of the pants, to the citizens of the world who were conquered by this kind of Demon King, that was almost as much as they could take.



“Maou-san, erhm, please do not be too depressed..... we are at fault too, we noticed it yet we did not know how to tell you about this, erhm.....”

“.....No, I’m the one who feels sorry, I was a little too agitated.”

On the way to the UNiXLO at Sasazuka Station, Chiho tried her best to cheer up the depressed Maou.

“Yeah, from a perspective of a female, they would have no idea how to go about saying it. If the positions were reversed, I wouldn’t know what to do either. I was the only male amongst the employees today too.”

Of course, if someone did tell Maou, he could at least wear his work pants when going home.

However, this is just consequentialism, since he had already worn pants with holes to work, Maou knew that everyone was unable to say it because they were concerned about his feelings.

“Sigh, having holes is embarrassing, but it’s not as if the whole butt or underwear was showing. I just have to buy a pair of pants and change, so I am depending on you to help choose one.”

It seemed like he had forced himself to cheer up, but since Maou had already cheered up, Chiho no longer mentioned that hole.

The two of them arrived at Sasazuka Station like this.

Luckily, every store in the shopping centre at Sasazuka Station was still open, and UNiXLO was filled up with customers who were commuting or going home.

“The budget..... I can squeeze out 5000 yen.....”

Maou opened his wallet in front of the store and groaned.

Chiho felt that the budget being only 5000 yen after losing three pairs of jeans was too

tight--

“Summer is almost over, it should be cheaper after they start selling autumn and winter clothes.”

“I see, that’s true.”

As the scale of the UNiXLO store at Sasazuka Station was not large, they would frequently change their products every season.

At this time when summer was almost over, Maou predicted that the leftover summer clothes would be sold at stock clearance or bundle promotions.

“But can jeans be sold at such a cheap price?”

“It’s not a must to buy jeans, so it’s fine to get cheap pants where the design isn’t too strange.”

After Chiho understood this, the two of them entered the store.

“Ah, Maou-san, look over there.”

Within the store which was not that spacious.

Chiho pointed at a clothes shelf filled with summer clothing. Such as a T-shirt being sold at 590 yen, or a short-sleeved shirt at 790 yen, as long as they could be properly stored and cared of until next year, these clothes were being sold at worthwhile prices.

In the same corner, many pairs of pants with thinner materials with their selling points as being sweat absorbent and quick drying were placed there.

Chiho picked up the product next to her and confirmed the price tag.

“It’s really cheap.”

The double pleated cotton pants were considered cheap when decreased to 1500 yen.

“But..... since they are summer pants, won’t they be too thin?”

“It would be better than not wearing one, right?”

“Uh, that’s true, but not what I meant.....”

Maou’s extreme conclusion caused Chiho to show a troubled smile.

Thinking about it carefully, Maou was the type of person who would wear a hoodie outdoors if he did not have any thick clothes even if winter had not ended yet.

“Let me see..... ah, no good, the waist is too large.”

“I’m not too sure about men’s sizes, but what size does Maou-san wear?”

The tag on the pants which Chiho picked up at the start had ‘87’ written on it.

“The ones I am wearing right now had ‘76’ written on them when I looked just now. Sigh, if I use a belt, I can still accept it if it’s a little bigger.”

Maou patted the knee portion of his work pants as he said this.

To the Demon Army where cheap prices are first priority, the clothes and shoes did not have to fit.

As long as the measurements were within an acceptable range, the body would have to go along with the clothes and shoes.

Maou took a few pants from the shelf and put it back, repeating this action.....

“.....There’s none.”

“.....Yeah.”

Maou’s expression gradually turned stern.

There were many summer pants here, but could it be the fate of promotional products, it was difficult to find normal sizes which were close to Maou’s size.

The smallest size was ‘73’, then it jumped to ‘81’ at one go, the remaining were pants

around size '85'.

"Ah, Maou-san, this is '79'..... let's just forget about this one."

"Yeah, that's a bit, you know."

What Chiho picked up by only looking at the label was a pair of pants covered in a pattern of the flags of various countries as if it was sewn from the cloth of flags of many countries, giving others the impression that it had mistaken the concept of internationalism.

"Hm~ if I wear a belt, '81' should still be okay. Chi-chan, please pass the one just now to me, that one as well. I will go try them on first, help me take a look later."

"Ah, al, alright."

Chiho handed the double pleated long pants from just now to Maou, and Maou picked up another pair of cotton pants, then he entered the fitting room after greeting the store employee.

"Then, if there are any problems, please let me know."

After the store employee said this, he brought Maou to the fitting room and helped him close the door.

In front of that door, Chiho leaned against the wall--

".....Heh heh."

--she could not help but show a smile despite it being this kind of situation.

She had nothing to do during this time, but didn't this feel a little like a date?

"I wonder if there will be a day in the future where our positions will be reversed."

Daydreaming, Chiho imagined this.

She was the one entering the fitting room while Maou commented on whether it was

cute or not.

Just this felt like a dream.

Of course, since Maou received a serious blow to his mental state, she could not just feel happy on her own. In addition, Emi and the rest were still waiting at the apartment.

Even so, just as Chiho was hoping that this would last a little longer--

“Chi-chan, what do you think?”

“Y-Yes?”

Chiho, blushing a little, looking at Maou in the fitting room, then.....

“Uh.....”

.....she became speechless.

Simply put, it was unfashionable.

This pair of double pleated pants is a no go. Chiho was convinced of this.

Maou’s rather firm upper body could still be vaguely seen from the T-shirt, but the bottom half ended up resembling a wide kite, and there was so much extra cloth at the waist that it could not be explained away by calling it loose and comfortable.

The pair of pants he had originally worn was thin as well, but since it had a narrow cutting, this pair appeared to be thicker and heavier in contrast, so Chiho shook her head immediately.

“It’s best not to wear that one, try on the other one and see.”

“It’s strange after all?”

“It’s very strange. It doesn’t suit your body shape at all, and it feels like it won’t match any of Maou-san’s current clothes.”

She was not at the level where she knew Maou's closet inside out, but the few pieces of clothing Chiho had seen Maou wear so far felt like it would not match this pair of pants in front of her.

"I understand. Please wait a while."

Maou nodded without protest and closed the door once more.

However, this time, what was immediately heard from the fitting room--

"No good."

--was this voice.

Then a series of sounds of clothes rubbing against each other were heard and Maou walked out wearing the pair of pants he was wearing originally.

"It's too large at the waist, even if I use a belt, the hook at the front protrudes out and makes it look ugly. '81' is too large after all."

"I see..... then....."

Chiho looked to a different shelf than before, Maou also shifted his gaze.

"We can only buy those over there. But my budget."

Chiho knew what Maou wanted to say.

The two of them were looking at the shelf containing gentleman pants.

There were various colours and sizes, but there was already a switch to autumn and winter styles, so the price would be comparatively more expensive than the summer clothes.

"3990 yen, my eyes hurt just seeing this number....."

Maou squeezed this out.

The budget was only 5000 yen, if the pants to be bought cost close to 4000 yen, then they could only buy one pair.

To Maou, this budget of 5000 yen was something he squeezed out while harbouring a determination strong enough to cause the Kiyomizu Stage to collapse.¹

Of course, Ashiya was not an evil Oni, he would not make it such that his master had no pants to wear.

It was still possible to buy one pair now and then buy the other two pairs after negotiations.

However, to use up more than half of the budget before the negotiations because they assumed that the negotiations would end well was a very poor strategy in negotiation technique.

“Now what.....?”

“Y-Yeah.....”

Chiho could understand the dilemma Maou was facing even without asking, so she could not rush Maou irresponsibly.



“I’m home..... what are all of you doing?”

Eight o’clock at night.

After Ashiya returned home, he realised that his master was not in the room. In place of that, Emi, Alas=Ramus, Suzuno, and Urushihara welcomed him with strange expressions on their faces, causing him to think that the Demon Fortress had been overrun by the Hero’s forces and that Urushihara had surrendered to the enemy.

This could not be helped.

After all, a few containers of food wrapped in cling film which could be eaten after being heated in the microwave were placed on the kotatsu.

Emi and Suzuno were sitting next to the kotatsu as if they were the owners of the dinner table. As for Urushihara, he had allowed Alas=Ramus to sit on his back as if he was a horse.

“Urushihara, what kind of situation is this? Where did Demon King-sama go?”

After placing his large backpack on the tatami, Ashiya sighed.

“Before that, Alsiel! We have something we want to ask you! Where did you go during this emergency?”

“W-What, Emilia? You said emergency?”

Hearing this sentence once he returned, Ashiya received a huge shock.

“I did not go anywhere specific, I just accepted a job which required me to stay somewhere else. I only left home for a day because someone introduced me to a job with rather good welfare, why do I have to be lectured by you for that.”

“I knew you weren’t at home yesterday, but you should at least explain what kind of job it was. Where did you go?”

After hearing the horse say this, Ashiya nodded.

“Thinking about it, I did not tell Lucifer about this. It was a drug trial.”

“Drug.....? Hey, Alsiel?”

After hearing this answer, Emi was the one who felt shocked.

“Drug trial refers to becoming a tester in the research for new drugs and allowing people to take data, right? Is that a wise thing to do?”

“Oh my, you worry about my health as well?”

“Impossible. I was thinking that if there are wrong results from having you demons take human drugs, how are you going to plan to take responsibility for that!?”

“We have taken human medicines in the past and no negative side effects have appeared so far.”

“That’s not what I meant!”

Emi shouted agitatedly. Shaking his head, Ashiya opened the backpack which was on the tatami floor and threw the information contained inside at Emi.

“What is this?”

“The drug used in the drug trial I participated in.”

Frowning, Emi looked at the title of the first document filed inside the information folder.

“.....Transdermal Anti-inflammatory Analgesic Patch?”

“It’s a drug production test for a topical drug. The idea of the product was an easy to use transdermal anti-inflammatory analgesic for eliminating the soreness from housework. Simply put, it’s a pain relief patch.”

“Is it that thing used to sooth stiff shoulders and sore waists that occasionally appears in television commercials?” Suzuno asked as she looked at the folder.

“You just have to think of it as a weaker version of that. This is not used to get rid of serious pains, but to sooth minor soreness and pains, a medicine which needs to be used continuously.”

Ashiya started to explain with the information he obtained from the description of the product.

The products which would appear on the television commercials Suzuno had described would normally claim that the product was fast acting and effective, and would give people the impression of being too strong when used to treat minor ailments.

Therefore, there were people who proposed this plan of selling medicines with weaker effects used to sooth more minor symptoms, and Ashiya was one of the people

taking part in the final test of this medicine.

“Oh, if it’s just applying medicine, then I can do.....”

“Impossible.”

Urushihara mumbled this softly after hearing it, but Ashiya rejected this.

“A strict examination must be passed to take part in this drug trial. This may sound rude, but not just Urushihara, even Demon King-sama will find it difficult to pass this examination.”

“Huh? What is this?”

“I said this earlier. This weaker drug is used for minor symptoms. In other words, this target of this drug are not the athletes who normally go through vigorous training, but housewives.”

Ashiya said the term ‘housewives’ with a stern expression on his face, causing Urushihara and Emi to feel perplexed, but Suzuno nodded as if she agreed.

“Oh, I see. That would be taking a strong acting drug perceived to be for males and developing a version suitable for females to use.”

“That’s right. As the testing period was short, only people who could complete the household chores with high standards could take part in this drug trial. There were many testing segments. Just the cooking department alone can be split into five segments. In my situation, I was hired because I could obtain a high score for caring for young children in the childcare segment although I was a guy.”

““Childcare.....””

Emi and Suzuno looked at Alas=Ramus at the same time.

The one who took care of Alas=Ramus the most when she stayed at the Demon Fortress was definitely Ashiya.

Excluding the fact that he had accepted Chiho’s guidance and would occasionally

trouble Suzuno for help, since he was this good at taking care of young children, that meant that other than Emi, Ashiya was currently the one most capable of taking care of Alas=Ramus.

As everyone recently started to gather frequently for dinner, Ashiya also learned the skills of cooking dishes while considering the needs of young children.

“Other than cooking and childcare, there was still cleaning, laundry, and other chores which require the moving of the body. The drug tests can only be conducted after finishing six hours of doing these tasks. Because that place was spacious and had the newest tools, regardless of cooking or cleaning, I found it easier to do than normal. The sixty year old madam who remained in the test even praised me saying that my skills were so good that it was difficult to believe that I was a young man.”

Seeing Ashiya say it rather proudly, Emi and Suzuno felt bored for the first time in a long while.

“Alsiel..... isn’t it about time you question yourself on your identity as a demon?”

“Honestly, being this capable, I feel a little jealous as a female.”

“People must really have one speciality huh.”

Even Urushihara heaved a sigh from either surprise or amazement.

“That’s how it is. This should be enough explanation on the reason I was not at home. Let me say this first, this information cannot be spread. If it’s leaked, I will not let you off.”

From Emi and Suzuno’s standpoint, rather than this information, they wanted to tell the world about other things.

“So, what are all of you doing here? Where did Demon King-sama go? Emilia, did you take the chance to occupy the Demon Fortress while Demon King-sama is not around?”

“Who wants to conquer this room? Compared to this, I would rather stay in Bell’s room.”

After going through this meaningless argument, Emi pointed to the three pairs of pants on the tatami.

“Hm? Aren’t those the pants Demon King-sama wears when he’s resting? Why were all three pairs taken out.”

“You’ll know when you see them. Thanks to that pair of pants, not just us, even Chiho-dono and Shop Manager Kisaki felt very awkward today.”

“What?”

Ashiya frowned and finally took off his shoes, entering the room.

“Alsiel, welcome back! You wowked hawd!”

“.....Yeah. I’m back, Alas=Ramus.”

Alas=Ramus greeted him and showed her appreciation in a refreshing manner, causing Ashiya to show a small smile.

Ashiya, who would normally show a hostile attitude towards Emi and Suzuno, seemed to be bad at resisting the mannerisms of the innocent Alas=Ramus.

“Sit quietly on top of that for a while.”

“Oh!”

“Ashiya..... what do you mean by ‘on top of that’, hey!”

Urushihara, who was strangely close to Alas=Ramus, would normally play with her like this. It was not that uncommon of an occurrence, but his efforts would normally go unrecognised.

Ashiya knelt on the tatami and picked up one of the jeans.

“Hm, this is.....”

Ashiya immediately noticed the holes from before.

“All three of them are torn.”

“That’s right. The Demon King wore that pair of pants today and walked around in it.”

“What?”

Emi’s words caused Ashiya to show a serious expression.

“I don’t want to say things like this, and I am not obligated to do so, but I really feel that this is disgraceful. My enemy, or more like the enemy of the humans was actually walking around outside wearing pants with holes in the rear end area, then felt very embarrassed because this was pointed out by Alas=Ramus’s horse. Aren’t you a Demon General serving under the Demon King? I know that your finances are tight, but allowing your master to wear something this old and worn out, don’t you feel ashamed?”

“U-Ugh.....”

Ashiya was unable to retort Emi at all--

“Since when have I been demoted to Alas=Ramus’s steed?!”

--and Urushihara protested.

“B-But for these pairs of jeans, two of them were bought at UNIxLO. I also bought my own pants at that time, but none of those pants had this kind of problem.”

“That’s true. Only Maou’s pants turned out like this.”

Alas=Ramus’s horse said this, and Ashiya became lost in thought.

“Then, where did Demon King-sama go?”

“After seeing such a disastrous situation, he ran to the UNIxLO at the station, crying as he did so.”

“Ugh.....”

Ashiya showed a gloomy expression.

“Alsiel, forgive him this time. The Demon King is really too pitiful. Chiho-dono went with the Demon King too, so they won’t buy anything too expensive.”

“No, it can’t be helped since such a thing happened..... hm. Hey, that horse over there.”

“I should be getting mad around now, right?”

“Call Demon King-sama. I will mend this pair of pants. Tell him to please consider this when he is buying the new pair of pants.”

“Why do I..... hm?”

“Eh?”

“Huh?”

Urushihara crawled reluctantly towards the computer, then widened his eyes because he noticed that Ashiya had said something strange just now.

Emi and Suzuno appeared to have noticed it as well, and expressed their confusion at the same time.

“You just said..... mend? That.....”

“Yeah, for this kind of hole, it can probably be mended without looking unnatural.”

Ashiya said this nonchalantly, stunning the trio.

Ashiya opened the closet and took out a cupboard box.

“Is, is that?”

Suzuno shouted in surprise.

Many needles and string were contained within, making it obvious that it was Ashiya’s sewing kit.

Maou mentioned in the past that Ashiya had mended torn socks using a spoilt light bulb, but actually seeing the sewing kit caused Suzuno to feel dizzy.

“For patching..... I’ll use this piece of cloth.”

Next, Ashiya took out a few pieces of blue cloth which were of similar colours to the pair of jeans.

“W-Wait a moment, Alsiel, that is made of different material, right?”

Emi, who had not recovered from the shock of Ashiya’s actions, asked this.

The cloth Ashiya was holding may have been blue in colour, but the shade was completely different and it wasn’t denim material as well.

If that was used for the patching, it would only make that place look more obvious.

“What are you saying? It’s being used in a place which cannot be seen, so it’s fine.”

“Cannot be seen..... even if it’s under the rear end area, the difference in material should still be obvious.”

“What did you say?”

Ashiya was the one who sounded surprised at what Emi said instead, looked at her and the pair of jeans repeatedly--

“That’s stupid. It’s impossible to use this to patch the hole directly.”

And after saying this, Ashiya turned the pair of jeans inside out, and started to cut out the area above the hole--the inner cloth of the back pocket.

“H-Hey?”

“When mending clothes which have been worn for a long time, finding a patch at an unseen area of the same piece of clothing is the basic thing to do. Because the degradation over time such as the fading of colour happens at a similar rate, the external appearance will not be that unnatural. To avoid the cut-out area causing

discomfort when worn, it has to be patched with cloth of similar thickness..... only this much blue string is left huh. It seems like I can't cut out too large of a piece."

While Ashiya was answering, other than nimbly threading the string with his large hands, he was also adjusting the size of the cloth.

There was a tool called a needle threader, but it seemed like this sewing kit did not have any.

"A cloth with similar thickness..... is it that one?"

"This piece of cloth? Could it be that you have an impression of this..... that's impossible. It did happen a long time ago."

"Eh?"

"This is the pair of pants which Demon King-sama tore when he reverted back to his demon form for the first time. You were present at that time, right?"

"Eh? It, it's from that time?"

Emi shouted.

This happened before Suzuno started to live in Japan.

At that time, only a few days had passed since Emi and Maou met again, and Chiho still did not know about the true identities of Maou and the others.

Urushihara, who was still Maou's enemy at that time, caused the Shinjuku underpass where Maou, Emi, Chiho, and Ashiya were to collapse.

When that happened, Maou turned back into his demon form for the first time. However, the statures of human Maou Sadao and Demon King Satan were significantly different.

Thanks to that, the clothes Ashiya bought on a rare occasion, which were of higher quality than normal, were so torn up that they could not be worn again.

“T-The clothes the Demon King wore at that time? That piece of clothing which was slightly better than the clothes he normally wore.....”

“It was of significantly better quality. Seriously, since before Urushihara came to the Demon Fortress, he has been the enemy of our household finances.”

“Sigh, I was seriously being your enemy at that time, you know?”

Urushihara was totally unrepentant, and because Alas=Ramus refused to get off his back, he could only remain on all fours while opening the computer and activating Skyphone.

“Because the material was good, I was reluctant to throw it away. When I was thinking about its uses, I discovered a type of craft called ‘embroidery’ described in books I found in the library, so I kept these pieces of cloth as material.”

In an era in the past where clothes were not as cheap and plentiful compared to modern times, embroidery was developed as a craft where cotton cloth was sewn together with cotton string for warmth and patching.

“The description mentioned that it was a technique which can be used on cherished cloths and clothes to make them last longer. At that time, my pants were torn as well. After using it as practice, the process was unexpectedly smooth. After that I used socks or other things to train my skills.”

“Ah.....”

Ashiya’s demon form had tails.

If he wore human clothes when transforming, his tails would pierce through his pants to go outside, Ashiya had also used his tails to tear his pants once in Emi’s presence.

Emi and Suzuno could only stare in a stunned manner while watching the jeans in front of them gradually being patched, one stitch at a time.

“Ah, hello, Maou? Ashiya just returned, he said he will mend your pants and asked you to keep this in mind while buying a new one..... eh? Yeah, that’s right, it can be mended, and it seems like it can be patched up very nicely too. Yeah, bye. Ah, hey,

Alas=Ramus, return those earphones!"

Urushihara spoke while trying to get his earphones from Alas=Ramus, who still refused to get off his back.

"He felt surprised, but he seemed to understand. He even said that he's coming back."

"I-I see, then it's about time to prepare dinner."

Suzuno abruptly came back to her senses after hearing this, pulled up the hem of her clothing to get up, then returned to Room 202 to use the microwave to heat up the plates wrapped in clingwrap.

"Alsiel..... do you really not question the fact that you're a demon?"

Emi, who had nothing to do, could only ask this.

"I don't."

Ashiya answered immediately.

"The demons in the Demon World do not depend on machinery or others, we are beings who are independent even while having demonic magic as a medium. If not, we will not be able to survive in the Demon World. When I arrived in Japan, I learned cooking, laundry, cleaning, and sewing on my own because I felt that there was a need to do so for daily living. That is all. The skills I know are basic things which can be learned by normal people as long as they practice diligently for a week."

"I feel that phrasing it that way is a little too extreme....."

Even so, Emi could not deny it completely.

When other people were asked to do something a person could not do themselves, there would be a price. The human world was gradually built up like this, but it was an undeniable fact that some skills would be lost in the end because everyone kept pushing the things which they could do as long as they put effort into it onto other people.

“Then again, how did these holes come about in the first place?”

“T-That’s true.”

The first question Urushihara asked caused Emi to remember that this question had not been answered yet.

“You still don’t understand even after becoming a horse?”

Ashiya answered nonchalantly while looking at the needle and string in his hands.

“Amongst all of us, only Demon King-sama rides a bicycle.”

““Ah.””

Emi and Urushihara exclaimed as if they finally understood.

“It’s like that when commuting as well, but Demon King-sama frequently uses his bicycle no matter where he goes. He seems to normally cycle very fast too. Because he applies more force on the pedals, this area which rubs against the seat will tear.”

““Oh.....””

“If Alas=Ramus gets too agitated while playing on your back, her diapers would shift. Be careful, okay.”

“Eh? Hey, A-Alas=Ramus, you haven’t done anything yet, right? C-Come down for a bit.....”

“Uhm, no, I still want to play! More!”

“Uh, if there’s nothing, I will play with you for a little longer, please come down first.....”

Freezing in place, Urushihara tried to coax Alas=Ramus off his back.

“Alas=Ramus, it’s about time to eat, get off Horse Lucifer now. Be obedient.”

“Emilia! You just said ‘Horse Lucifer’ right, actually calling me a horse!”

“If he could work as hard as the horses which pull horse carriages, he might be a little cuter.”

“What is Ashiya saying without even looking up?”

“Hey, that useless horse over there, Chiho-dono and the Demon King are coming home soon. Help out a little.”

“I’m definitely not helping!”

With Suzuno saying this as she returned with new plates, Urushihara determinedly refused to help.

After that, just like what Suzuno said, the sounds of someone climbing the stairs were heard from the public staircase outside.

“I’m back.”

“I heard Ashiya-san has returned? Can the pants really be mended?”

Chiho returned with Maou, who had happily bought the new pair of 3990 yen pants once he heard that Ashiya could mend his pants.

“Ashiya-san..... is amazing..... it’s really patched up.”

After Chiho saw the pants which Ashiya mended with needle and thread, she seemed to have received a huge blow.

Even when she was sitting down at the table, Chiho kept staring at Ashiya’s hands.

“I just practiced some clumsy techniques before. It’s nothing much.”

Ashiya answered Chiho in a humble manner, and to Emi who witnessed the whole process, she was unable to believe that mending torn pants in just twenty minutes was considered a clumsy technique.

After that, though Ashiya temporarily stopped his mending operations because he had to eat, when it was time for Chiho to return, he had already mended all three pants to the point that it was difficult to immediately tell that they had been torn before.



Because of the rule which was unknowingly established over time that at least two people had to accompany Chiho home if she stayed until a later time, Emi and Suzuno were Chiho's companions on the return trip today.

"Chiho-chan, you seem rather listless, is something wrong?"

Chiho kept looking down and not speaking, and Emi asked this in concern.

".....Sorry, I just lost some of my self-confidence."

Chiho replied with a rather distracted gaze.

"Eh?"

"Because the wall I have to surpass is a little too high, I don't know what to do....."

"I don't really want to confirm this, but is this referring to Alsiel?"

Suzuno asked in a cautious manner, and Chiho nodded immediately.

"I have never felt that I 'could not win' against a certain person as much as today."

"....."

Emi and Suzuno were speechless.

Wanting to stay around the guy she liked was a natural feeling of a girl in love.

"I had thought that I would be barely meeting standards for cleaning, laundry, and cooking..... but sewing, was a blind spot....."

"Uh, but..... yeah, that's true."

Emi had wanted to say that people who still thought that way were in the minority, but she swallowed her words before she said it.

Even if Chiho's feelings overcame all barriers and were transmitted to Maou successfully, if her skills in daily living were not at least good enough to replace Ashiya, it could inconvenience Maou instead.

".....But Chiho-dono. No matter what, Alsiel is the Demon King's 'subordinate', their relationship isn't equal....."

"I, am still not confident that I can be a human who is an equal to the 'Demon King'....."

".....Yeah."

Chiho's skills in daily living were definitely not as poor as she described.

It was just that the person she was comparing against was too strong.

But even if they said this, Chiho would not accept it.

If so, there was only one method left which could cheer her up.

"I can teach you a little bit about sewing, do you want to try?"

Chiho immediately showed a strong interest in Suzuno's suggestion.

"Please teach me! I have only used needle and thread in home economics classes in the past and my mum rarely does any sewing work, there's no one else I can depend on!"

"Y-Yeah, Chiho-dono, I understand, please step back a bit. E-Even so, I can only teach you Ente Isla styles, which simply put, would be the style of the priests of the Church. The terms and techniques are completely different from here, and you will still have to practice on your own after that."

"Of course!"

"I-I am not too sure about that, but that's great..... thinking about it, Bell has quite a

number of skills.”

“Due to the nature of my occupation, I will learn it even if I don’t wish to.”

Suzuno was an Inquisitor in the past, and she was an Inquisitor responsible for handling underground jobs. If she was not familiar with spying and disguising techniques, she would probably be unable to complete many jobs.

These skills would be very convenient techniques when used in daily life, but after seeing Chiho burn with a strange competitive spirit towards Ashiya, Emi suddenly thought of something.

“.....If it was in Japan, other people would think that this is outdated.....”

Recently, most people did not see cooking, laundry, and cleaning as female only tasks.

However, compared to not being good at it, people who are good at housework would be viewed more highly and their lives would definitely become more fruitful.

For Emi, since she had been doing it since she was young, she was confident that she could perform various household chores. However, it was undeniable that she had recently become sloppier at it since Japan was truly too convenient.

“.....Hey, Alas=Ramus.”

As Suzuno and Chiho were speaking enthusiastically with one another, Emi called out to Alas=Ramus in a volume which both of them could not hear.

Because she could not bring out Alas=Ramus in front of Chiho’s mother, they would normally be in a merged state when they walked Chiho home. At this moment, Alas=Ramus seemed to be a little sleepy because she played too much with Urushihara.

“Hm..... what is it, Mama?”

Hearing the slightly dazed voice, Emi smiled.

“Sorry to disturb you from your sleep. Alas=Ramus, what do you want to eat

tomorrow?”

“.....Corn soup..... fwah.”

“Cream of corn soup huh, I understand.”

Emi nodded, took out her Slimphone, and started to search for ways to make cream of corn which did not use the canned versions.

Then she confirmed that the ingredients she needed could be bought from the convenience stores and supermarkets on the way home.

Emi thought to herself as she watched Suzuno and Chiho who were walking in front of her.

As long as it was for Maou’s sake, Chiho was willing to put in all her effort.

This was the same for Ashiya as well.

Suzuno learned these skills based off of her religious beliefs because she wanted to contribute something to the world.

“Luckily I still have Alas=Ramus.”

If Emi wanted to work hard for someone other than herself, the first one she would think of would be her ‘daughter’ Alas=Ramus.

To Emi, who had always charged forward for the sake of the things she had lost early on, this was the first time she wanted to work hard for someone.

This was what she thought.

**THE
DEMON KING,
LEARNING
ABOUT HIS
SUPERIOR'S
PAST**



SHORT STORY 5

DEMON KING, LEARNING ABOUT HIS SUPERIOR'S PAST

The highest temperature shown on the weather reports should have been decreasing, but it was still the period when people missed air-conditioning.

Maou, who had arrived at the MgRonaldds in front of Hatagaya Station for work, discovered Kisasi behind the counter, flipping through a pile of documents with a frown.

“Good morning, Kisasi-san. Is something wrong?”

“Hm? Oh, good morning, Maa-kun. Uh, there is a slight problem.”

Kisasi only glanced at Maou before immediately returning to the documents.

As Maou peered from the side, he realised that it was mostly a stack of handwritten receipts.

“What’s wrong with these receipts?”

“No, it’s nothing much..... Maa-kun, have you seen Sarue recently?”

“Eh?”

This unexpected question surprised Maou.

The competitor of the MgRonaldds in front of Hatagaya Station--the Hatagaya Sentucky Fried Chicken store--its manager Sarue Mitsuki was actually not an inhabitant of Earth.

Archangel Sariel, who was from Ente Isla's heaven, was an enemy of and had fought against both Maou, and the one targeting Maou, Hero Emilia a.k.a Yusa Emi.

At the end of the fierce battle, after Sariel met Kisasi Mayumi, the MgRonalds Shop Manager, by chance, he fell in love with her at first sight.

From that day on, having completely turned into Kisasi's slave, he threw his duty as an archangel to the other end of the universe and began to carry out outrageous methods of courting Kisasi to capture her heart.

"Shop Manager Sarue huh..... no, thinking about it, I have not seen him for a long time."

Maou would normally address him as 'Sariel' directly, but in front of Kisasi who did not know about the situation of Maou and the others, he still had to treat him as the shop manager of a competitor store.

According to Maou's memory, Sariel a.k.a Sarue Mitsuki had not come to the store recently.

"Yeah. I had thought that he had come to the store while I was not around, but that does not seem to be the case. If I'm not in the store, he will always ask for handwritten receipts, right?"

So that was why Kisasi was flipping through that stack of receipts.

Considering the inappropriate advances on Emi and Chiho in the past, the way Sariel courted Kisasi was truly unbelievably shameless.

Of course, it was not as if he could do anything he wanted as long as he did not break the law, but if the other party was magnanimous enough, they would just laugh it off, his actions were within that limit.

Sarue would only carry out his courting actions within the business hours of the two stores and would not interfere with Kisasi's private life.

He would normally bring extravagant gifts when coming to the store, recite mysterious love poems loudly, order abnormal amounts of food, and would leave after thirty minutes at most.

The problem would be that he would come a maximum of three times per day, which would be eating all three meals there per day. However, if he did not cause trouble for

the other customers, he was then only a customer with a more unique personality.

He had been banned from the store in the past because of various misunderstandings, but that restriction had now been lifted.

After that he would occasionally visit the store noisily, then return after ordering a normal amount of food.....

“But that’s unexpected. Kisaki-san is actually concerned about whether Shop Manager Sarue came or not.”

“Of course I’m concerned. Aren’t you?”

“Eh, erhm.....”

Maou was surprised by what Kisaki said instead.

Sarue liked Kisaki a lot, this fact was known by Kisaki, all the MgRonalds employees, their regular customers, and even the employees from the nearby stores.

Maou felt it was impossible, but could it be that Sarue not visiting the store had some special meaning in Kisaki’s heart.....

“That guy has been passionate so far, yet he disappeared suddenly, it would be concerning if he found a new target. Isn’t that guy very lecherous?”

“Y-Yeah, probably..... b-but it’s a concern?”

“I’m not being egoistic, but other than myself, not many people are able to handle that guy’s irritating and strange way of courting. If that guy is allowed to do this an unspecified number of females, depending on the situation, he might be arrested immediately by the police.

Maou could only look at Kisaki in surprise as she said this with a serious look on her face.

“He is a comrade of this shopping street after all, if a criminal appeared in this shopping street, it would be a huge loss to the shopping street and us.”

“Oh..... so it was that kind of concern.....”

Maou finally understood.

Maou was momentarily worried that Kisaki had felt moved by Sariel's courting actions, but it seemed like what Kisaki was worried about was more realistic than what Maou had thought.

“But he really didn't come after all.”

Kisaki sighed lightly and kept the receipts into the drawer under the cashier machine.

“I should go over occasionally and check out the situation of the enemy. Then get information from the employees over there, if that person's actions are strange, I will discuss this with the chairman of the shopping street.....”

“Uh, I feel that it's too early to be considering these things?”

It seemed like that in Kisaki's mind, Sarue was either breaking the law somewhere,= or was going to commit a crime.

“E-Erhm, perhaps he suddenly became busy because of something like a business profit strengthening month. Manager Sarue has been slowly understanding Kisaki-san's methods recently and starting to work hard, right?”

Maou was thinking why he even bothered to defend his enemy so seriously, but it would be troubling if the situation blew up and caused Sariel to become depressed again, so Maou continued to advise Kisaki against it.

“Hm, that's true.”

Perhaps she had accepted Maou's explanation, Kisaki nodded lightly.

“We'll handle it when something really happens then. For starters, let's distribute the phone number of the nearby police stations to all the employees.”

It appears that the presumption that Sarue would cause trouble had not changed.

“Ah, oh yeah, Maa-kun, I have something I need to make clear to you first.”

“Yes?”

“If you misunderstand that I am looking forward to that guy’s visits, I will feel troubled. From the business point of view, Sarue may be a good customer, but whether he can be considered a good customer to the shops cannot be judged by profit.”

“I know that.”

Kisaki was probably the only one who would not feel moved at all by Sarue’s courting.

In the first place, Kisaki rarely expressed feelings of like and dislike towards others.

Of course, Kisaki was human and it would be impossible for her to treat everyone equally, but at least Maou had never seen Kisaki comment on other people if it was not related to work.....

“No, I wonder if that counts.”

Only once in the past did Kisaki mention someone Maou did not know, calling that person ‘an eternal nemesis’ and showing a terrifying competitive will.

By coincidence, that person seemed to be working for Sentucky Fried Chicken.

The reason for Kisaki’s bad mood when Sentucky Fried Chicken opened and wanting to compete with Sentucky’s business profits for no reason might have been mainly because of that person.

To be seen as ‘an eternal nemesis’ by Kisaki, what kind of person was that?

That person should have been appointed as the shop manager for the Hatagaya store, but it had ended up as this current situation.

“Eh?”

Then, Maou suddenly realised something strange.

How did Kisaki know that this ‘nemesis’ would be appointed as the shop manager of the store opposite them?

They may be situated in the same shopping street, but before the Sentucky Hatagaya branch opened, no one had come over to greet them. In addition, as an MgRonalds employee, how did Kisaki know about Sentucky’s staffing information?

At this moment.

“Erhm, Kisaki-san.”

“Hm, what is it, Chi-chan?”

Chiho, who had been cleaning tables in the main dining area, came to the counter while showing a troubled expression.

“There’s a customer, erhm, it’s Manager Sarue from the store opposite and.....”

Kisaki momentarily showed Maou a wry smile.

“Speak of the devil.”

“Yeah.”

“Is something wrong? Just bring him to the counter.....”

“No, erhm, the customer who came with Manager Sarue, erhm.....”

Chiho looked back at the store entrance with a perplexed expression on her face.

“Said ‘Ask Manager Kisaki Mayumi to come out’.....”

““Hmm?””

Kisaki and Maou showed a confused expression at the same time.

Chiho’s message contained an air of danger.

Firstly, if Sarue had really come, the store would not be this quiet.

He would proclaim his love to Kisaki almost every day, and amongst the regular customers at the store in front of Hatagaya station, they had even given him the nickname of ‘one person flash mob’.

“Who did Sarue come with?”

Kisaki showed a doubtful expression, but since a customer had come to find her, it was not as if she could refuse to go.

Maou followed Kisaki out of the service area on reflex and Chiho walked in front to lead the way.

Archangel Sarii--Manager Sarue Mitsuki of Sentucky Hatagaya--was standing at the entrance.

However, different from normal, he was standing at that spot in a strangely quiet manner.

It seemed that this was because of the petite lady who had come with Sarue.

Because of the glare from the sunlight shining into the store, Maou could not see the face of that person clearly--

“.....Hmm?”

--but Kisaki suddenly stopped walking, giving Maou a shock.

“Ki, Kisaki-san?”

Not just that, Kisaki’s back actually started to emit a unique air of anger.

Because he was a demon who could convert negative feelings to demonic magic, Maou shuddered when he sensed this change in atmosphere.

Maou had seen the various ways Kisaki shown her anger so far, but this never seen before extremely abrasive feeling, was called hatred towards the enemy.

It was something which would never be seen in the usual Kisaki, but she was showing an obvious animosity towards the visitor.

Seeing this now, it was difficult to believe that this was the same Kisaki who had said 'Unless Sarue comes to the store completely naked, I won't call the police' in a half joking manner.

Kisaki would even serve demanding customers in a sincere manner, why did she become like this?

Chiho, who was leading the way in front, must have felt that aura more strongly than Maou did.

Maou did not miss seeing Chiho looking back at Kisaki because she felt the dangerous aura, her expression twisted in fear.

".....Why are you here?"

Maou thought, could it be that the Earth would end tomorrow?

That Kisaki actually spoke to a customer in this manner.

Maou and Chiho froze because of the unexpected situation and could only silently observe the developing situation. They only noticed it now, but for Sarue to say nothing was also very strange.

Sarue, who would start dancing once he saw Kisaki, was curled up in the corner as if he was helping someone take care of a cat.

This suffocating atmosphere only lasted a moment.

"We have not seen each other for a long time, and you're acting so cold?"

This voice did not come from Kisaki, Chiho or, Sarue, and of course, it did not come from Maou.

That was the voice of the 'visitor'.

“I didn’t come here for any special reason. This is only a greeting.”

It was only now that Maou clearly saw the face of the woman who had a sarcastic way of speaking.

Her medium length hair was tied back, she had a work bag slung over the shoulder, and she was wearing a shirt and long pants which could also be worn as casual wear.

Her age appeared to be about the same as Kisaki.

Phrased in a nicer way, she had a strong desire to excel, but this lady who appeared to be showing a friendly smile was also directing a strong aura of animosity towards Kisaki.

“Greeting?”

Kisaki shot the first heavy bullet, causing Maou and Chiho to flinch in fright.

“Yeah, since there are other industry players near the area I am in charge of, I thought it would be better to come and greet them first.”

The sentence from this mystery lady caused Kisaki’s orcish expression to turn into something more sinister.

“The area you’re in charge of?”

“That’s right! When I was preparing to become a shop manager, the order was rescinded, I am currently the area manager of the West Shibuya area.”

“You’re an area manager? This joke isn’t funny.”

“This isn’t a joke. My principle is not to do drawn out and troublesome things like how you do it, so I get promoted faster.”

“.....!”

“““Eeep!”””

Maou, Chiho and Sarue screamed at the same time.

Kisaki had a model like lean figure, and good looks to attract many fixed supporters which included Sarue, but when all these factors were used to express the emotion known as anger, it caused an indescribable terror to the surroundings.

“Since this Sarue.....”

The mystery woman used her work bag to bump Sarue who was standing beside her--

“Ugoh!”

--and having seemed to have hit a strange place, Sarue cried out in a strange way.

“.....kept talking about how capable and beautiful you were, being as irritatingly noisy as a cicada, I thought to look for you since it had been a long time. I really miss the days when I was competing with you. Thinking about it carefully, the last time I competed seriously with you was during that event in university.”

“Oh, I never thought that you would still be so hung up on that boring event.”

I don't want to know anything about that mysterious activity which the two of them experienced together.

Maou and Chiho's thoughts were the same.

I hope this hell will end soon.

For the first time, Maou understood the feelings of the humans who suffered when they were exposed to demonic magic.

As long as he stayed next to Kisaki who did not hide her anger, Maou sweated cold sweat, and it was difficult to breathe.

“I am different from you, I'm not so twisted that I am unable to honestly accept praise from other people, so to me, this was one of my cherished memories from my school days.”

“.....Ughhh!”

“Ma, Maou-san!”

Finally, while being close to tears, Chiho ran to Maou for refuge.

Chiho was different from Maou and Sarue, she was a normal human.

Even the King of the Demon World and an Archangel from Heaven felt uncomfortable staying here.

To Chiho, who was just a normal highschool girl, keeping herself together under this atmosphere was very difficult.

They could not allow the two of them to continue chatting while staying here. Or else something bad might happen.

Maou spoke out to encourage himself, “E-Erhmm..... other customers will be obstructed like this, if you don’t mind, please move to the employee’s room.....”

The voice Maou managed to squeeze out, unlike his determination, was so weak that he thought it was pathetic, but this was still a sentence Maou said after gathering his courage and intelligence.

However, the mystery woman rejected Maou’s suggestion without even looking at him.

“It’s fine standing here. It won’t take much time and you don’t look like you have that many customers.”

““Eh?””

“Uwahh!”

Maou and Sarue groaned at the same time and Chiho finally ran off while crying.

This lady, whose identity was unknown, just said something which definitely should not have been said in front of Kisaki.

No, it could be deduced from the conversation just now that the woman was actually a Sentucky employee, and she was also Sarue's superior, but why did that person keep saying things which would provoke Kisaki?

Kisaki's back appeared to swell up from anger, just like a balloon which was about to burst.

"Then again, according to the rumours, you guys seemed to have pushed out new business models one after another? Doing that although your average visitor numbers are lower than ours."

"Wahhhhhhh?"

"M-Manager! D-Don't say anymore! Ugopuh?"

Maou, who understood Kisaki's personality very well, started to panic, and with things as they are now, even Sarue frantically tried to stop that lady, but the lady pushed Sarue back, not planning to stop at all.

"Rather than that, how long do you plan to keep that recruitment notice there? You're just going to exhibit your meaningless sense of perfection and pick the employees based on your own preferences in the end anyway."

""Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah!""

"Considering the scale of the store, your profits appear to be on the good side, but with this, you're just going to continue working under someone forever. The dreams you spoke of during your student days were very great, but are you going to be buried in a large corporation forever....."

The idiotic inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, the ancient cities recorded in the Bible, must have seen this before.

That light of despair and the shockwave of the explosion.

"Scram!"

Kisaki shouted with such anger that it felt like all the glass in the store was going to

shatter, causing Maou and Sarue escaped the scene as quickly as possible.

That night at Room 201 of Villa Rosa Sasazuka.

The mixed human and demon dinner gathering at the Demon Fortress which recently had been held more frequently was covered in a tragically sad atmosphere.

“Uu..... uu.....”

“Are you alright? Chiho-chan.”

“Y-Yeah..... uuuuuuuuu.”

Emi kindly comforted Chiho who was lying on her lap and crying, and glared at Maou at the same time.

“You really didn’t do anything to her?”

“It’s more like I was unable to do anything at all.....”

Chiho, whose tears continued to fall into the tatami, shook her head and said, “Maou-san didn’t go anything wrong..... but thinking back on what happened in that instant, it was so scary..... so scary..... uwahhhhh.....”

Chiho, who had shown her brave side even when dragged into a battle fierce enough to cause the collapse of the Shuto Expressway, or challenging an archangel directly, or being kidnapped by a demon, was this afraid.

Seeing Chiho like this, Maou felt pained as well.

“Chiho-chan is crying this much..... it seems like she encountered something very terrifying.”

“Chi nee-chan, pain, fly away!”

Alas=Ramus also tried her best to comfort Chiho from the side.

“However, the more I hear, the harder it is to believe, Shop Manager Kisaki actually.....”

After Suzuno heard the reason Chiho had come crying here from beginning to end, she crossed her arms and mumbled to herself.

To Suzuno and Emi who knew Kisaki Mayumi’s personality, this fact was too surprising.

In an inappropriate manner, Kisaki actually shouted at a customer and forcefully chased the other party away.

That was the summary of the situation from an outsider’s point of view.

Then without omitting any details, Kisaki reported what had happened to her superior-- the manager in charge of the area where the McDonalds in front of Hatagaya Station was situated.

The manager, who understood Kisaki very well, did not believe it at first, even Maou and the others who had been present at the scene with Kisaki still did not believe what they had seen.

However, Kisaki apologised to the superior for her own blunder and asked the superior for an internal penalty.

“Honestly speaking, I don’t know the details either.”

“Making that report herself, did Manager Kisaki get penalised?”

“Erhm.....”

Faced with Ashiya’s question as he efficiently prepared dinner, Maou shook his head, speaking in a heavy tone.

Ten percent deduction in salary for one month.

Suspended for three days to reflect.

That was the penalty given to Kisaki for the incident she had caused.

To be frank, it was a very harsh penalty.

Over the phone, Maou heard from the manager that he had planned to just scold her verbally, but Kisaki insisted that she would be unable to accept it.

“So, who was that Sentucky manager in the end?”

In response to Suzuno’s question, Maou could only shake his head.

“If that idiot Sariel had not come, that lady would have been the shop manager opposite, I only know that much.”

“Wait a moment. Why would you know about the staffing situation of the Sentucky shop manager?”

As expected, Emi felt suspicious about the fact that Kisaki knew about the Sentucky’s staffing situation beforehand.

“Uh, Kisaki-san told me this before.”

“That’s not what I meant.”

“You want to say that it’s strange that Kisaki-san would know about this, right? I’m the one who wants to know what’s going on with that.”

However, the information they had right now was too scarce.

What’s wrong with Kisaki?

After the suspension ended, could they ask her for the details?

When he thought about these things, Maou could only confirm one thing.

That Sentucky manager must be Kisaki’s ‘eternal nemesis’.

“Hey, is it this person?”

At this moment, Urushihara called out to Maou from behind.

“Eh?”

“This is Sentucky’s staff list. I mentioned this to you before.”

“Yeah, that did happen before.”

When Sarue’s true identity was still unclear, Urushihara had illegally connected to Sentucky’s human resources database and pointed out the strange part about Sarue’s identity.

At that point of time, the name of the ‘shop manager who should have come over’ which Urushihara mentioned was.....

“Uwahhhh!”

“Sa, Sasaki-san? Please get a hold of yourself!”

Urushihara showed a photo on the screen and Chiho descended into panic once more. Ashiya, who was not used to seeing Chiho like this, became flustered.

“T-That’s her! That’s the lady!”

Standing behind Urushihara, Maou stared at the screen.

““Tanaka Himeko’ huh.....”

This lady, who gave the impression that she had a strong desire to excel just from her photo, was definitely the one who quarrelled with Kisaki directly.

“Hey, I just remembered from seeing this, but there should be another ‘Sarue Mitsuki’ right? Where is that guy now, can it be seen from here?”

“Yeah, there is such a person. Uh, give me a moment.”

Urushihara operated the computer once more--

“Ah~ he’s still at Sentucky. It appears that he has not been fired because of Sarii. However, he is at a department unrelated to the store operations.”

“I see.....”

He was someone they did not know at all, but they were still worried if Sariel had harmed the original Sarue Mitsuki and stolen his experience.

“But from this, Sariel clearly used abnormal methods to become a Sentucky employee, after Maou regains his demonic magic, he should be able to do the same thing, right?”

“Hey, what I want to obtain isn’t just money and power. What I want to learn is the process of working, not just the title of full time employee.”

“Even if you tell me about these things, do you think I can understand?”

“What do you see my trust in my subordinates as?”

“Futile effort.”

“Urushiharaaaa! You actually treated Demon King-sama’s good intentions in this way!”

Ashiya, standing at the side, reacted strongly to Urushihara’s completely self-centred comment.

“That’s why I said it was futile effort!”

“You rice bucket! Using the money earned by Demon King-sama to support a guy like you is what I call futile effort!”

Ignoring Urushihara and Ashiya who started a meaningless argument, Maou sat in front of the computer.

“Tanaka Himeko..... she doesn’t have any work experience which stands out. Hey, Chi-chan.”

“Y-Yes.....”

“Do you know how old Kisaki-san is?”

“Eh? I remember that she had vaguely mentioned it before..... that she’s ten years

older than me.....”

“If it’s twenty six or twenty seven, then that person is about Kisaki-san’s age. They seem to know each other from before, but we don’t know what happened in the past. And their relationship is so bad that it feels like this nemesis topic isn’t a joke at all.”

“What do you mean by nemesis?”

“Yeah, when I chatted with Kisaki-san before, she had used the exaggerated term ‘my eternal nemesis’ to describe that person called Tanaka.”

“Uuuu..... this might be rude to Tanaka-san, but I keep thinking back to that scene just from seeing her picture.....”

Chiho’s position as she tried her best not to look at the computer screen as if she was a vampire afraid of the sunlight was a little funny, but from Maou’s standpoint, he could not laugh at all.

“What if that person is going to stay at the Sentucky opposite for the time being?”

In the end, Maou did not have a proper conversation with Tanaka Himeko at all.

Because Kisaki had chased Tanaka out before Maou had the chance to take any action, and Sarue had left together with her, he never found out why she had come to the store.

Not being around at all when they do not come, then appearing a lot when they come, that was the existence known as a store manager. Therefore, there was a high chance Maou would encounter Tanaka when Kisaki was not around.

“If she comes again, we can only nonchalantly respond to her in a normal manner.”

Maou supported his cheek with his hand and sighed.

“So passive. Since Chiho-chan is this afraid, you should actively think of some defensive measures such as investigating more about the opposing party.”

“Investigating the enemy? Investigating Sentucky?”

Maou carefully thought about the suggestion Emi gave while she consoled Chiho.....

The next day, during the lunch break, Maou stood in front of Sentucky.

He peeked into the store from outside and did not see any sign of that manager.

“Sariel seems to be around.”

Making up his mind, Maou opened the Sentucky’s door, then noticed one thing.

“Thinking about it, this seems to be the first time I am entering this store.”

This was a store in the same industry and an archangel from Heaven was its store manager. In both ways, this place was Maou’s business competitor, so he was surprised that he had not come to this store before.

The trendy interior design created a comfortable atmosphere in the store, giving others the impression that it was more high class when compared to MgRonalds, so that was why their prices were so expensive.

Because he had chosen a time when there was less people, it was Maou’s turn very quickly, and as planned, Maou successfully stood in front of the counter where Sarue was standing.

“Welcome..... what, it’s the Demon King?”

Once Sarue recognised Maou’s face, he dropped his business smile and his gazed lowered as if he was tired.

“Do you need anything? I don’t have the energy to chat with you right now.”

“Because your superior made Kisaki-san angry?”

“Ugh.....”

Sarue groaned as if he was poked in a painful place, then asked Maou in an uneasy

tone.

“.....After that, was Shop Manager Kisaki alright?”

“Hm. Because she crudely chased all of you away, the company gave her a severe punishment.”

“Pun, punishment? Ahh, how can this be! Although I was there.....”

Sarue started to shake as if he was going to fall to his knees any moment.

“You were there at that time, but you were totally useless.”

“I-I don’t want to be said that by you! Weren’t you also unable to intervene between Manager Tanaka and Shop Manager Kisaki!”

An archangel and the Demon King had gathered, yet they were unable to intervene in a quarrel between two fast food store employees, it was truly embarrassing.

“Then, you can’t handle that manager at all?”

“I basically cannot resist all beautiful ladies.”

“I’m not asking you about that kind of thing, you idiot!”

Maou could not help but punch the counter with his fist.

Sarue’s preferences were unknown, but if Kisaki’s beauty could be compared with the moon, ice, or night, then what Tanaka Himeko had was the opposite, a beauty like the sun or the summer fields.

Without considering if Tanaka Himeko could be considered someone of the opposite gender who people would want to approach, she was a beauty Sarue would praise even if his heart firmly belonged to Kisaki.

“Uh~ simply put..... Manager Tanaka..... seemed to be Shop Manager Kisaki’s classmate during their student days.”

“So that’s how it is. I knew that they had known each other in the past.”

Of course, Maou did not mention that they had illegally obtained the employee list.

“Then, after I mentioned that I have interacted with Shop Manager Kisaki, she became strangely interested, and because I thought that I would hear some things about Shop Manager Kisaki, I exchanged various bits of information with her. After that, she suddenly came here yesterday and said that she wanted to greet Shop Manager Kisaki.....”

“Hmm.....?”

Tanaka Himeko was the one who wanted to see Kisaki, what he heard could be interpreted this way.

“But what does this have to do with you being bad at handling that manager?”

“Didn’t I say that I am unable to resist beautiful ladies?”

“Are you being serious or not?”

“Demon King, I’m the one who wants to ask what you’re planning. If you’re not here to buy food, hurry up and return. Once I think about the feelings of Shop Manager Kisaki who was punished by her company, my heart feels like it’s going to tear apart!”

Maou wished that Sarii would just explode and end everything, but it was not as if it would truly happen.

“Uh, I want to have three pieces of chicken, original, takeaway.”

“.....I understand.”

As long as they pay money, that person was a customer.

Currently, the situation and position was different from usual, and Sarue helped Maou take his order in a serious manner.

“Then, what kind of information did the two of you exchange?”

“You’re still talking about that, huh.”

Sarue showed an obviously unhappy expression but still continued to speak honestly.

“It’s nothing much. Only things like Manager Tanaka and Shop Manager Kisaki knowing each other for a very long time and that I am very infatuated with Shop Manager Kisaki.”

“You deserve respect when it’s about this kind of thing.”

“Also, about what happened some time back.”

“What happened some time back?”

“When I helped Sasaki Chiho with her Idea Link training, didn’t we meet Shop Manager Kisaki on the way back?”

“.....Yeah.”

To be able to get help from Maou and the others during emergency situations, Chiho had undergone training to learn the spell ‘Idea Link’.

During this process, Chiho also asked Sarii for help, but on the way back after one of the training sessions, they met Kisaki by coincidence.

Thinking back to the conversation at that time, Maou had a realisation.

“Did you tell her? Kisaki-san’s.....”

“Don’t look down on me. I won’t reveal the dreams of others so easily. However, I did mention vaguely that Shop Manager Kisaki was thinking of being independent in the future.”

Maou felt that just saying this was already saying a lot, but this was still within acceptable levels when chatting about common acquaintances.

“Alright, it’s done.”

At this time, the fried chicken Maou ordered had been packed and sent to the counter, Sarue politely handed the bag containing the fried chicken to Maou.

“Anyway, I have not seen Manager Tanaka for some time. Therefore, nothing which you need to worry about happened. Rather than that, once I think about Shop Manager Kisaki staying at home and worrying about the store..... ahhhhh!”

Maou was convinced that if they continued speaking, Sarue’s abnormal behaviour would only cause trouble to the other Sentucky employees--

“Excuse me.”

--and since he had obtained a lot of information, Maou decided it would be better to leave early.

“S-So how was it?”

Once he returned to the store, Chiho ran over to ask about the situation, and Maou shook his head with a serious expression.

“I seemed to have learned quite a few things, but at the same time, it was nothing much at all.”

Maou briefly explained what he had heard from Sarii.

Tanaka Himeko and Kisaki have known each other for a long time, the other party was also very concerned about Kisaki.

In addition, Sarii had told Tanaka Himeko about Kisaki’s recent developments.

However, all this information did not explain why Kisaki would act that way.

“Sigh, they knew each other for a long time, but it didn’t mean that their relationship is good, perhaps they are just incompatible existences.”

“Incompatible..... existences?”

Maou's analysis may have been correct, but hearing this sentence, Chiho thought about two completely different people instead.

"Hm? Chi-chan, what are you smiling about?"

"It's nothing, I was just thinking that there are such people around me too."

"?"

"It's really nothing. Then, that Manager Tanaka....."

"Yeah, according to that idiot Sariel, she has not appeared for some time."

"I-I see."

Chiho showed an obviously relieved expression, placing her hand against her chest.

"If that person comes to the store again after Kisaki-san returns, I might be scared to death."

"Being able to face Kisaki-san head on at that time, I don't think I would be able to win that Manager Tanaka."

These were the true thoughts from the King of Demons.

However, the incident occurred that evening.



"That Sariel....."

"Hm? Did you say anything?"

"No, nothing at all."

Maou silently swore to take revenge against Archangel Sariel.

In the day, Maou had said that they would not meet Tanaka Himeko for the time being,

but currently, she was in the store.

With Chiho taking the lead, all the employees who knew what happened that day nervously observed the conversation between Maou and Tanaka.

“Uh, I want a teriyaki burger meal with fries and orange juice. In addition, I want to order an ala-carte burger. I don’t want ice in my drink but give me the normal amount.”

Tanaka Himeko came to the store in the same attire she had worn during the commotion a few days ago, and stopped Maou, who was acting frantically and about to walk to the other side of the counter. Then she started ordering as a normal customer.

“I understand. That would be 650 yen in total.”

“Yeah, I’m sorry, it’s all coins.”

Tanaka Himeko placed the coins into the tray and Maou checked the amount.

“Excuse me, miss. This.....”

Four 100 yen coins, four 50 yen coins. Maou almost missed it, but he still picked out a strange coin from the remaining five bronze coins.

“Oh my, I’m sorry.”

In an unapologetic manner, Tanaka took out another 10 yen coin to replace that coin.

“I forgot to remove that when I returned from Britain earlier.”

A two pence coin. Its colour was very close to the old 10 yen coin, but the size was totally different.

However, when a lot of coins were taken out at once, it could be missed out.

“.....You were on a holiday?”

“Yeah.”

When Maou asked this, Tanaka Himeko nodded naturally.

During this time, the food she had ordered arrived, Maou placed those orders on the tray and handed them to her.

“Thank you for waiting. Enjoy.”

“Alright, thanks.”

Then Tanaka walked towards a seat next to the window which could not be easily seen from the counter.

Maou confirmed her position from the corner of his eye--

“Maa-kun, you’re amazing.”

--then his colleague, Kawada Takefumi, known as ‘Kawa-cchi’ by Kisaki and the other employees, talked to him from behind.

“Chi-chan and I were shivering in fright..... hm?”

Kawada noticed that Maou had shown a signal with his right hand, positioning it such that it could not be seen from the customer seating area.

That was the signal to stop.

After confirming that Kawada had stopped talking, Maou approached Kawada with natural movements and spoke as he walked past Kawada, “Wait until she leaves.”

With just this, Kawada nonchalantly returned to his workstation.

Maou said the same thing to Chiho later, then continued working as normal.

After around one hour had passed, Tanaka Himeko got up from her seat and, after throwing away the rubbish on her tray, waved to Maou lightly and left the store.

Maou did not let down his guard even after being unable to see her from where he was in the store.

Only when thirty minutes had passed since Tanaka Himeko's departure did Maou finally relax.

"Maou-san, what was that just now?"

Chiho and Kawada, who noticed that Maou had stopped being tense, quickly went to Maou's side.

"That was probably a test."

"Eh?"

"What do you mean?"

"She ordered a teriyaki burger which is troublesome to make and also easily affected by the condition of the grill."

The grill mentioned here was the covered grill used to grill the burger patties.

To make the teriyaki burger, a special sauce needs to be brushed on the burger patty when it is being grilled, so it was difficult to make it together with the other burger patties.

If the condition of the grill was poor, not only the burger patty, even the taste of the sauce would degrade, easily decreasing the completeness level of the burger.

Not only that, when assembling the teriyaki burger, if the patty sauce and mayonnaise were not added properly, it was easily to dirty the burger bun or paper during the wrapping, making it inconvenient for the customers to eat. Therefore, it was considered a product which needed to be prepared with a lot of care.

And Tanaka Himeko added on their signature product which could not be prepared one the same grill, the normal burger.

Luckily, they had undergone a renovation when introducing the MdCafe, and in the current situation where there was an increase in the number of grills, Maou and the others were able to prepare the teriyaki burger and the other burgers at the same time, but from this, the other party might have deduced the state of their facilities.

“In addition, it’s concerning that she ordered orange juice as the drink. And she also chose that seat specifically.”

For the drinks in MgRonalds, other than coffee and red tea, the rest were dispensed from specialised drink machines.

This drink dispensing machine was designed to mix the concentrated syrup, water, or carbonated water beforehand, but the ways to process concentrated carbonated drink syrup and concentrated orange juice or oolong tea were very different.

“Was she trying to check the condition of the machines?”

“Yeah, and she even asked for no ice.”

The syrup and carbonated water for the carbonated drinks flowed into the machine from a dedicated sink outside the machine, but the syrup for orange juice and oolong tea were contained in a specialised concentrated syrup bag contained within the sink. In addition, the orange juice concentrated syrup bag had a high concentration of fructose, so the amount dispensed was less compared to the carbonated drinks, if maintenance was not done regularly, it would be more prone to solidifying in the pipe or the dispensing outlet.

“Specifically sitting at the seat at the back of the store, it was probably because she would be able to assess the cleanliness of the store from there. Sigh..... I don’t have any evidence to support it though.”

Maou continued to speak with a stern expression.

“I heard Shop Manager Sarue say that this Manager Tanaka seemed to have known Kisaki-san in the past. I don’t know what has happened between them, but we are Kisaki-san’s employees. If so, we should not show any openings in front of the other party.”

“Kawacchi-san made the hamburgers, so it should be fine.”

“Only in this, I am confident that I will not lose to anyone.”

“I cleaned the floor thoroughly after lunch time, so there’s no need to worry!”

Full of confidence, Kawada and Chiho thumped their chest, and believing in them, Maou nodded.

“I think so too. I also checked the drink dispensing machine yesterday. Since it was handled by us, then this store shouldn’t have any problems.”

As Maou said this, he was still unable to put aside his feelings of worry because he did not know Tanaka Himeko was thinking.

Even so, whether it was Kisaki or Tanaka Himeko, the two of them were considered young for someone working in society.

Because they oversaw on-site activities, they would have many opportunities for conflict; the other party was only in the lead at this time.

“Sigh, no matter what.”

Maou spoke as he looked towards the shift timetable hung on the wall.

“Before Kisaki-san returns, we have to work hard to protect this store.”

That night, thirty minutes before closing time.

Maou called the area manager (using McGonalds’ phone, of course) to report that the store closing activities were going smoothly.

This happened rarely, but Maou was responsible for locking the store doors today, and the next morning, the area manager would be responsible for opening the store for business.

Maou surveyed the store and confirmed that the work which had to be performed at store closing was mostly done.

Eleven thirty at night.

Considering the location, it was not strange for customers to come in when it was

almost midnight, but this did not happen today, the customers in the store decreased gradually, and just as Maou thought that the store could be closed without any problems today.

The bell of the automatic door rang, and Maou shouted, “Welcome..... eh?”

Maou, who greeted the customer in a more cheerful voice because they were about to close, saw a visitor who gave him an equal amount of shock like when he saw Tanaka Himeko, though in a different kind of way.

“You are?”

After recognising the visitor, Maou could not help but gasp.

“It’s been a while, you seem to be working hard.”

It was a lady around Maou’s height, with a refreshing bob cut hairstyle and appearance of a dependable person.

In contrast to her kind voice and elegant appearance, the woman was very nimble at work, but this was the first time Maou saw her in casual clothing.

“Are you..... Mizushima-san?”

“Hello, sorry for disturbing you this late.”

The lady walked up to the counter with a calm smile.

Mizushima Yuki was an employee in the same batch as Kisaki and was the shop manager of the MgRonalds in Fushima Park, an amusement park in the city.

The store belonged in a different area from the store in front of Hatagaya Station, which was part of the West Shibuya area, but Kisaki and Mizushima would frequently support each other when they were shorthanded, and Maou had gone over to Fushima Park to help out many times.

However, this was the first time Mizushima appeared at the store in front of Hatagaya station.

“Erhm, I’m sorry, Mizushima-san. Actually, today, Kisaki-san is.....”

From her attire, Mizushima appeared to have just finished work and was on the way home. If so, the reason why she came to the store in front of Hatagaya station must have been to visit Kisaki.

However, Mizushima stopped Maou and spoke.

“I know. She is on a self-inflicted suspension, right?”

“Self-inflicted..... uh, erhm, this is still considered a formal punishment ordered by the company’s internal department.....”

“Don’t you think she’s really stubborn? The management did not plan to punish her in the first place.”

“I did hear about that. However, I can understand Kisaki-san’s feelings, since she chased away a customer in front of us.....”

Kisaki touted the principle of treating every customer equally no matter who they were, and expected the employees to do the same.

However, she went against this principle herself, standing in Kisaki’s position, she probably felt like digging a hole and burying herself.

As Maou thought this, and for unknown reasons, Mizushima showed a meaningful smile and leaned against the counter.

“Thinking about it.....”

“Yes?”

“Is Maou free after work?”

“.....Eh?”

Mizushima spoke in an unusually charming manner, giving Maou a shock.

“Do you want to eat dinner with Onee-san?”

“Huh?”

“E-Erhm, may I know where we are going.....”

“There’s no need to be concerned about that. Just follow me.”

At the carpark behind the store, Maou asked Mizushima this in an uneasy voice, but the latter ignored him and started to walk.

Without any choice, Maou pushed his bicycle after her, but Mizushima stopped quickly.

“Here.”

“Eh? Ah, o-oh. Eh?”

It was normal for Maou to feel shocked.

Mizushima stopped in front of a mixed residential and commercial building where an Izakaya store chain was located, but this place was located less than fifty meters from the store in front of Hatagaya Station, and was a store located in the same street.

Mizushima immediately walked up the steps of the building and opened the door of the store.

Because it was late at night on a Sunday, there were a lot of empty seats, Mizushima did not speak with any of the employees and walked into an area deep within the store.

Perplexed, Maou followed behind her--

“Sorry for the wait.”

After seeing who was sitting in the seat which Mizushima stopped in front of, Maou could not help but jump in fright.

“Ki, Kisasi-san.....?”

Sitting at a four person seat with an emotionless expression and arms crossed was Kisasi wearing casual clothes.

“Hi..... Maa-kun. Thank you for the hard work. Apologies for calling you here when you just got off work.”

“I watched him close the store in Kii-chan’s place, there aren’t any problems.”

“Ki, Kii-chan?”

From this situation, the ‘Kii-chan’ Mizushima spoke of must be Kisasi’s nickname.

However, to address Kisasi Mayumi who could make the Demon King and an Archangel submit to her as ‘Kii-chan’, Maou did not know how to react at all.

Acutely sensing that Maou was wavering, Kisasi spoke to Mizushima in an unhappier tone,

“Yuki, don’t call me that in front of other people. I’m not a child anymore.”

“Just like in the past, Kii-chan will get angry from just seeing Hime’s face, so you don’t sound convincing at all, right, Maou!”

“Eh? Uh? Huh? No, e-erhm? It’s been like that since a long time ago?”

Mizushima suddenly swung her arm over Maou’s shoulders from the side, causing the latter’s heart to almost jump out of his throat in fright.

Whether it was Kisasi or Mizushima, it was difficult to understand them.

Their behaviour was completely different from when they were working.

“Hey, Yuki, you’re troubling Maa-kun acting like this. Let go of him..... sigh, anyway, sit down first, Maa-kun.”

“Sure.”

“Alright, erhm, ex, excuse me.”

Mizushima sat next to Kisaki who was sitting at the window seat from the start while Maou sat opposite Mizushima, in a chair next to the walkway.

Mizushima placed the menu in front of Maou, whose mind was in chaos because he did not know what would happen next.

“We’re treating today, there’s no need to worry. Maou, do you drink?”

Whether it was based on the law, his actual age or Japan’s position on this, Maou would not cause problems if he drank alcohol.

However, the conditioned reflex from living a thrifty lifestyle for a long time and the mysterious situation with Kisaki and Mizushima in front of him--

“No, erhm, I still have to wake up early tomorrow, so I’ll just drink oolong tea.”

--caused Maou to reply this way.

“Is it because you have a serious personality? Nervousness? Or you’re just being polite.”

Maou started to suspect that Mizushima had drunk alcohol before she came to this store.

“Considering Maa-kun’s situation, it should be a little of everything.”

“Kisaki-san.”

Maou could not help but protest, but after Kisaki ignored this, she suddenly bowed her head towards Maou in apology.

“Sorry. Because of my negligence, I caused trouble for you.”

“Uh, not, not at all.”

“Kii-chan is still under probation, so she won’t drink alcohol, there’s no need to worry.

So, what about it? You just got off work, so you should be hungry. I already ordered a lot of main dishes.”

“.....Mizushima-san, are you drinking?”

“I don’t need to reflect on things, so it’s not a problem.”

In the cup placed in front of Mizushima who said this openly, there was diluted Taro Soju.

“Then, the reason why we called you here was to talk about the past.”

“Talk about the past?”

Once Maou showed a perplexed expression, Kiseki said unhappily, “The lady Sarue brought is called Tanaka Himeko.”

“Actually, I got some information from Shop Manager Sarue. I heard that she is Kiseki-san’s old acquaintance.”

“That’s right, and we have known each other for a long time.”

Mizushima chewed on the ice cube in the Taro Soju and smiled happily.

“They have known each other since kindergarten after all.”

“Eh?”

Mizushima’s shocking statement caused Maou to suck in a breath.

With this kind of level, rather than saying that they were old acquaintances, it would be more accurate to say that they were childhood friends.

“Eh, could it be that Mizushima-san is the same?”

Since she knew about this, that meant that Mizushima has probably known Kiseki and Tanaka Himeko for a very long time.

“No, I knew them starting from elementary school. We did go to the same kindergarten, but we were in different classes.”

“That makes no difference at all.”

In response to Maou’s rebuke, Mizushima smiled quietly.

“Then, the extent in which the two of them did not get along had become a legend since elementary school.”

“Oh.....”

“According to the friends around them, they have been quarrelling frequently since kindergarten.”

It seemed like their incompatibility was very extreme.

“If so, then why are they still keeping in contact with each other?”

“We’re not keeping in contact at all. The reason why I can’t cut off contact with her completely is due to Yuki’s interference.”

“Oh my, you really said it.”

As if to tease the angry Kisaki, Mizushima poked Kisaki’s upper arm a few times.

“Anyway, one of the reasons why the competitive spirit between Kii-chan and Hime is so strong is because they were put in the same class for all six years of elementary school and all three years of middle school.”

“T-That’s rare.”

Maou had never attended a Japanese school, but he knew about the class shuffling policy.

Being in the same class for a total of nine years in elementary and middle school was something close to the miracle.

“From what I remember, Kii-chan was good in drawing and calligraphy and would always get awards in the school. Then Hime would always turn red and hate it so much. Using modern terms to describe it, Hime is a ‘Master Artist.’”¹

“Master Artist?”

“She doesn’t have any artistic talent at all. Not only was her handwriting very ugly, even if Himeko was asked to draw a dog, bird, and fish, I could not tell the difference between them.”

“T-That’s really extreme.....”

“On the other hand, the pictures I drew in art class have been submitted in district competition.”

Kisaki spoke about the past in a slightly proud manner, but Mizushima quickly burst her glorious memories.

“However, Kii-chan has never won in sports.”

“Eh?”

“Ugh.....!”

From the difference in statures of Kisaki and Tanaka Himeko right now, it was really difficult to believe, but seeing Kisaki’s reaction, this must have been true.

“Kii-chan’s sporting talents aren’t bad at all, it’s just that Hime is too good at sports, and she would always get first place in marathons and physical tests. So every time Kii-chan lost to Hime in marathons, she would always cry in regret and say that she would definitely win next year while crying.”

“I was really frustrated! I’m obviously taller and stronger than her! But Maa-kun, I don’t lose every single time! I won against her once in a long distance run competition in second year of middle school!”

“O-Oh.....”

It was something which happened when they were young, but Maou was unable to imagine Kisaki crying in regret. In addition, Kisaki actually displayed a competitive spirit towards someone outside the work environment, and not knowing how to respond, Maou could only reply while feeling stunned.

“That was because Hime had a flu and a fever. Did you forget that she forced herself to participate while saying ‘I don’t want to forfeit. I don’t want to turn my back on a competition with Kii-chan’ and ended up being in bed for one week?”

“Taking care of one’s physical condition is part of the competition too!”

“.....”

What caused Maou to become speechless was not the contents of the conversation.

But the unexpected personality shown by Kisaki and Mizushima when they were not working.

Noticing Maou’s perplexed mood, Kisaki cleared her throat and said to him, “It’s not like I sold my soul to work. When I am with friends, I will still say random things like a normal person or show emotions.”

“T-That’s true.”

Kisaki made sense, but the disparity when compared with the usual aloof Kisaki was too huge, so it was difficult not to feel perplexed about the situation.

“B-But, why did your relationship become so bad.....? And it even started from kindergarten.”

“I don’t really remember it, but according to my parents.....”

“Even your parents recognise that the relationship between both of you are bad?”

Maou was speechless.

“During kindergarten, there was a male teacher who was very popular with the girls. The opposition between us seemed to have started from deciding who that male teacher will play house with.”

“Just because of that?”

If only this part was heard, it would only be seen as an amusing child’s quarrel. However, this small ember developed into a long, draggy, swampish war.

“Uh, then, how does Mizushima fit into this situation.....”

“I am the buffer between Kii-chan and Hime. When Kii-chan lost to Hime, I would console Kii-chan when she’s crying; when Hime lost to Kii-chan, I would accompany Hime when she’s relieving her stress due to her feelings of regret.”

Maou, who almost said ‘Why do you have to do such troublesome and unappreciated things’, swallowed his words frantically.

However, he was unable to conceal his expression.

“Ignoring my personal feelings, it won’t be boring when two of them are together. It might be trouble if they are left alone, but with expert guidance, a lot of class related matters can proceed smoothly. I became the class monitor very frequently.”

“O-Oh.....”

That meant Mizushima was responsible for pulling the strings behind Kisaki and Tanaka Himeko.

He sensed it vaguely but Mizushima was an amazing person after all.

“With regards to exam results, because they are the hardworking type, they always ranked highly. When the top twenty ranks were announced, my stomach would hurt. Because no matter who won, Kii-chan and Hime would quarrel.”

“Hearing Yuki talk about results is really ironic. Whether it was me or Hime, none of us have beaten Yuki before graduation.”

“If I want to continue being around both of you, of course I have to work harder.”

Kisaki showed an unhappy expression while Mizushima had a calm expression.

“But no matter what, I feel that the three of us are considered very good friends? Although we don’t feel very close and we don’t do things other normal girls do, like going to the washroom together.”

“That’s such a bad joke. I have never thought of that person as a friend. I worked with her occasionally only because of Yuki.”

This sentence convinced Maou that Mizushima, who could pull Kisaki and Tanaka Himeko together by herself despite their stubborn personalities, was a terrifying person.

After the three of them graduated from middle school, they went to different high schools.

It was believed that the long battle between the two had finally ended, but unexpectedly, the three of them reunited at the same university three years later.

“This is already past the level of karma.”

Maou, gradually getting used to the atmosphere, started to respond to what was said.

“Because our homes were nearby. Then, thinking about it normally, you would think that a person would become more mature after becoming a university student and learn how to compromise, right? However, it was not like that at all.”

Kisaki and Himeko, who studied Business Management in Meiji university, started to compete against each other in battles which were on an entirely different level in comparison to their childhood.

“When we were studying in university, the employment rate was so low that even calling it an Employment Ice Age seemed stupid, and because we understood that, the three of us worked hard. However, at this time, things happened.”

“To today, I still suspect that something is wrong with the professor who gave Himeko

an 'Excellent' on her Educational Management Thesis. Systematically discussing about education without considering the unpredictable factor of the employees' personality, what is the meaning in doing such a thing?"

".....They started to be at odds with each other on this kind of level."

"I see."

At this point, Maou could only show an awkward smile.

At this stage, Kisaki and Himeko no longer fought with each other based on the results alone, but also on the process and discussions, the amount of complexity increased day by day.

"The most fatal one should be that event. The beauty contest."

"Beauty contest..... is it that thing which is occasionally shown on television?"

"The scale of our university's cultural festival is not that big, so that beauty contest is just like playing house, no celebrity-like impact will occur even if you win. Anyway, they happened to organise a beauty contest that year. A friend from the same research society registered all three of us."

"Ah....."

At this moment, Maou remembered the conversation between Kisaki and Himeko.

"Oh, I never thought that you would still be so hung up on that boring event."

"Because I am different from you, I'm not so twisted that I am unable to honestly accept praise from other people, so to me, this was one of my cherished memories from my school days."

"Could it be, that Manager Tanaka, in that beauty contest....."

"So what if she won in that kind of frivolous event!"

Kisaki's easy to understand reaction helped Maou understand everything. Not

considering the scale, Kisaki had lost to Himeko in a competition where females competed with each other in terms of beauty.

It seemed like that loss had left a scar in Kisaki's heart, and it was more serious than what she had described. If he said something to console her without proper consideration, an endless hell was in store for Maou.

"And she's acting so arrogant although she only got second place, that's so immature! Without getting first place, there's not much difference between the second and third place!"

In a depressed manner, Kisaki gulped down the oolong tea as if it was alcohol, and slammed the empty cup on the table.

Simply put, Himeko must have been second place, and Kisaki was third place.

"By the way, I'm the champion."

"Please don't supply me with any more unnecessary information."

Maou had a feeling that Mizushima would be in first place, but just knowing his superior's complicated relationships in the past was shocking enough, he would be incapable of reacting even if he was given a chance to be a Tsukkomi.

"Anyway, with this, you should know what the relationship between Kii-chan and Hime is like now."

"Yeah, I already know too much."

Starting from the third year of university, not just in terms of capability and the validity of their theses, the contrast between their principles in their careers and future was really striking.

In a half-joking manner, their classmates termed their behaviour as 'War of the In-Laws: Hime and Kisaki edition'.

"Using career as an example, Kisaki believes in the principle 'Better to be the head of a chicken than a tail of an ox'.² As for Hime, she thinks that it would be alright to hide

on the ox's back as long as she is in the lead at the finish line.”

Even so, with Mizushima as the shield, the two of them maintained a certain level of friendship. However, after getting employed, a definitive split appeared on both their paths in life.

After entering McRonalds and Sencucky respectively, these two very similar large companies, the actions they took were completely opposite of each other.

Because she treasured every single employee too much, Kiseki would frequently get into conflicts with the people around her, so although she produced excellent results and was highly popular, she also gave others the impression that she would not be able to scale the corporate ladder quickly.

On the other hand, Himeko's personality was not well liked by the employees, but she completed her store manager activities efficiently and walked down the path of accomplishment with steady results.

Of course, it was impossible for Kiseki and Himeko to tell each other this.

All this information was conveyed through Mizushima.

After meeting with Kiseki, Mizushima would tell Himeko what had happened in a tactful manner, leaving out anything which may cause problems.

After meeting with Himeko, Mizushima would tell Kiseki about the process in a casual chat, not leaving any trace.

This was the strange triangle relationship they had cultivated since they were children.

Himeko probably told Mizushima that she was getting transferred and that news was conveyed to Kiseki.

Either way, Maou finally understood the sour relationship between Kiseki and Himeko and the reason behind Kiseki's actions.

“In the end, this relationship did not change at all, but because things kept

accumulating, after seeing Himeko's face after such a long time, I became agitated..... I really caused you a lot of trouble. I'm sorry."

Kisaki bowed her head deeply towards Maou once again.

"No, erhm..... but, why are you telling me these things? We don't think that Kisaki-san would do that kind of thing without a reason, so there should be some reason which you can't tell others....."

"Honestly, I didn't not expect that Yuki would reveal so much to you. My initial intention was just to explain the circumstances and apologise to Maa-kun, whom I caused the most trouble to. As for Chi-chan and the rest, I plan to apologise to them properly later."

"Kii-chan couldn't stop talking either."

Shaking the glass with only ice cubes left, Mizushima supported her chin with her hand.

"But from this, it does seem like we have said too much. However, I do have a reason to believe that I can tell Maou all of this."

Mizushima showed a smile with mixed emotions and looked at Maou.

"Because Kii-chan seems to really trust Maou, this is a rare thing."

"Trust?"

From Maou's viewpoint, he felt that Kisaki trusted every employee, but that was not what Mizushima was trying to convey.

"Until now, only Hime and I knew about Kii-chan's dream. So when I heard that she spoke about it to you, I got a shock."

Kisaki's dream was to become a professional in the food and beverage industry--a barman.

She wanted to know how far she could fight on in Japan's food and beverage industry

with just her own power.

Kisaki had mentioned this in front of Maou and Chiho.

“.....It’s not like I am giving special treatment to Maa-kun. It’s just that there was an opportunity to talk about it.”

Kisaki retorted this way, but it could not be denied that her tone was evasive.

Kisaki was not saying what she truly thought.

And Mizushima sensed this.

“Is that so?”

Mizushima looked towards Kisaki’s face as if she was probing, then spoke while raising her head slowly.

“I have never heard Kii-chan mention this thing to anyone else besides us. Isn’t that right, Hime!?”

““Eh?””

Maou and Kisaki expressed surprise at the same time.

“.....That’s right, this is the first time I have heard of this.”

With a partition between them, a lady got up slowly from the seat behind Maou.

There was no need to confirm this. That person was Tanaka Himeko, wearing the same attire from when she came to the store in the afternoon.

“Yuki..... you tricked me?”

Strong flames of animosity burned within Kisaki.

“When you made a rare move of acting serious and proposing that I apologise to Maa-kun, it was to allow Himeko hear everything just now?”

“Because if I did not do that, the both of you would definitely not meet.”

“That’s true, if I sat in front of Mayumi and drank alcohol, that alcohol would not taste nice.”

Himeko said this and naturally sat down in the empty seat next to Maou.

“I won’t drink Taro Soju which only old men would drink. I want to order Kahlua.”

“Hmph, you like to drink sweet alcohol as usual. Your taste is like a child.”

“I don’t want to be said this by you, Mayumi, who would turn so red just from one cup of beer.”

“It’s only my face turning red! I won’t become drunk just from that!”

“Stop it, both of you. Can’t you see that Maou is going to get scared off? The food is here, hurry up and eat.”

“Uh..... s-sorry.”

“Hmph.”

Kisaki and Himeko looked towards Maou’s face as if they had suddenly noticed Maou’s presence and slowly leaned back against their chairs.

During this time, the store had served up Izakaya style dishes which were strong in flavour and high in carbohydrates such as Teppanyaki and fried rice. Mizushima efficiently served the food to everyone.

“I went to your store in the evening.”

“What did you say?”

Sipping the Kahlua which was just served to her, Himeko suddenly said this.

“It was amazing. In the area I am in charge of, none of the branches are at such a high standard. All the employees are very energetic and despite not talking to each other

more than what was minimally required, their communication was still perfect. Not only were the products presented well, the store was spotless.”

“I don’t feel happy being praised by Himeko, but those are my employees. Being able to do such a thing is expected.”

“My, employees huh.”

She had just praised Kisaki, but Himeko immediately expressed her unhappiness at Kisaki’s words.

“Mayumi, do you plan to continue staying in MgRonalds and immerse yourself in such cheap self-satisfaction?”

After showing a mocking smile, Himeko continued to speak.

“When I heard that you joined the huge company MgRonalds, I already thought it was strange. In such a big company, you won’t be able to learn any skills or ideals needed for a bar. Why haven’t you become independent?”

“What did you say?”

“The thing you want to do now isn’t just opening a bar, right? If you only wanted to open a bar, you can resign immediately, rent an empty store, and open your own store. If it’s you, you will succeed as long as you work hard. Why aren’t you doing this immediately? Are you lacking money or a guarantor? A branch store is the lowest tier of a huge corporation. Being a ruler in such a small society, how will it benefit the current you? Even if you do perform well, if you get promoted at a slower rate than me, what is the meaning in doing so?”

“Himeko, are you looking down at the work done at MgRonalds?”

Kisaki’s tone was dangerous--

“No. I am looking down on you who does not use your talents on accomplishing great things, shutting yourself up in a small store, and dragging your feet.”

--but Himeko shook her glass impatiently.

“It would have been acceptable if you climbed up the corporate ladder to be in charge of one or two districts and made revolutionary changes, but is your current job so worthwhile that you can stay in the same branch and invest your passion in it? Or is there any opportunity for you to change your path?”

“.....”

Faced with Himeko’s consecutive questions, Kisaki had nothing to say in response.

This proved that Kisaki mostly agreed with what Himeko said.

“Chase after two rabbits and you will end up with none. As long as you stay in a large corporation, no matter how much you struggle, you will always encounter moments where you have to abandon something, you aren’t so naïve to not understand this, right?”

“I.....”

“What, if you have any thoughts, then hurry up and say it.”

Kisaki almost followed Himeko’s lead in the conversation, but immediately glared at the latter.

“What I want to do is my choice. You have no right to interfere.”

Maou was afraid that the two of them would quarrel again, but Himeko smiled unexpectedly.

“That’s great. I don’t want to hear about your future plans in the first place. If you plan to continue hesitating and play a game of ‘Get along, everyone’ in the store, I’m fine with that, you know? I will quickly achieve great things then laugh at you from high up in the industry.”

“You’re just the same, not respecting those comrades who are working with you.”

“Because they are mostly people who aren’t worthy of respect. If so, I might as well treat everyone equally from the beginning. This is also a rule cultivated by Japan’s industries over a long period of time.”

Himeko looked towards Maou.

“Sigh, I don’t know if this inconspicuous guy is worth respecting, but I just want to clearly let you know this. If you want to surpass me in the future, it will be impossible based on your current situation.”

“Inconspicuous guy.....”

Maou felt unhappy at being pointed out suddenly, but since they were from different companies, he could not act too aggressively.

Himeko was from another company in the same industry, but her standing in society was still much higher than Maou.

“If you could retort or do something other than backing down in this situation, you’ll definitely benefit in the future.”

“.....Oh.”

“Remember this. There are many enemies within and outside an organisation. Other companies in the industry who want to make you fail once they see an opening. Or superiors, colleagues and juniors who are black hearted, incapable and would only be a hindrance. There are many people in the world who are like this. If you stay under Mayumi who cares about a harmonious atmosphere within and outside, you will never learn the skills needed to handle these people.”

Maou glanced at Kiseki out of the corner of his eye.

However, Kiseki, who would reach her tipping point just by seeing Himeko, had fallen silent with a serious expression on her face after hearing those words from just now.

“If you plan to be a soldier forever, you probably feel very comfortable working under Mayumi, but if you plan to climb upwards, then I can only say that you’re really unfortunate. Because you can’t accumulate any experience with regards to fighting enemies.”

“But, by working under Kii-chan, you can work with colleagues who are much better when compared to those from other places, you can improve yourself this way too?”

“That’s the difference in viewpoints. I think comrades who you find while getting hurt in a battlefield full of enemies are the comrades who can truly help each other improve.”

Himeko’s words were correct. And Mizushima’s interpretation was not wrong. And of course, Kisasi’s way which Maou had always believed to be correct was also not wrong.

However, these things cannot happen at the same time.

“I think.....”

Without troubling over this for long, Maou expressed his thoughts directly.

“Since there are still things which cannot be done in the current framework, then just think of ways to change oneself such that it would be possible to build a larger framework from the beginning, wouldn’t that be enough?”

“!”

“Oh~”

“Hmph.”

Kisasi raised her head quickly, Mizushima clapped her hands together in awe, Himeko hmphed once, but it did not seem like she was looking down on Maou.

“It’s not as if it’s just Mayumi’s dream, are you planning to start a business? Compared to people who cannot even reach normal working standards and will only feel uneasiness, grievance and dissatisfaction, I like foolhardy people better, but it’s easier said than done, it’s not that easy in reality, you know.”

“I know that. Money, educational qualifications, and talent, the more of these things, the better. However, what I have right now, is only this mouth and body.”

After Maou said this, Himeko blinked once in surprise, then nodded with force for unknown reasons.

“.....I see. Mayumi.”

“.....What is it?”

“I kind of know why you have high expectations for this guy.”

“Right? I did say he was good.”

Strangely, it was Mizushima who agreed with Himeko.

“Eh? Eh?”

Maou looked at each of them in turn, feeling perplexed.

“.....Maa-kun.”

Kisaki spoke, interrupting Maou who felt perplexed.

“Y.Yes.”

“Is the time alright for you? If you don’t go back soon, your friend will worry, right?”

“Eh? Ah! It, it’s already 1:30am?”

Maou jumped up after seeing the clock. Thinking about it, he did not tell the people at home that he was returning later than usual.

“What, you have to go already? Things were becoming interesting too.”

“Ah~ Maou, we can’t finish so much by ourselves, can you help to eat some?”

“Ah, al, alright, then.....”

Following Mizushima’s instructions, Maou quickly ate the sumptuous food in front of him.

“You’re living together with your girlfriend? Acting like this at such a young age.”

“Himeko, Maa-kun is just renting a room with someone else. He’s staying with a male

friend.”

“What? He has such interests?”

“Eh? Maou is someone from that world?”

“I didn’t ask because I felt that it would be better not to probe too much into it. However, it’s not what both of you think it is.”

Since Mizushima and Himeko had been drinking alcohol, it felt that he would just be teased no matter how he explained it, so after that, Maou focused fully on eating.

Mizushima and Himeko bade Kisasi and Maou farewell in front of the store.

“The more the better?”

“Hime?”

“For money, educational qualifications, and talent, the more a person has the better, but these are not absolutely needed. Someone who knows this is very strong at heart. Because they are strong at heart, they will challenge many things, and will cause more harm to the people around them when they fail or self-destruct.”

“That’s right. However.....”

Mizushima could not see Maou and Kisasi anymore, but she still smiled in the direction which they had left in.

“It looks dangerous when it is one person, but it gives off an impression of being very strong when there are two people.”

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“Hmm~”

Himeko asked in curiosity, and Mizushima smiled lightly in reply.

“We’re talking about that Kii-chan, you know? So I meant that literally of course.”



“Sorry about that. Because of Yuki, you were dragged into a strange situation again.”

Walking on Koshu Kaido after leaving the Izakaya, Kisaki apologised to Maou again.

“No, it’s fine. I’ll just treat it as a business networking event made up of my seniors.”

“A business networking event? That’s true, thinking about it carefully, the three of us have not gathered like this since we graduated from university.”

Kisaki sighed as if she was feeling nostalgic.

“Kisaki-san?”

“.....Maa-kun, please don’t form any strange misunderstandings and just listen to me. Just treat it as joking remarks said after drinking alcohol.”

The two of them did not drink any alcohol, but Maou still nodded seriously.

“When working in a company, what Himeko said is a lot more correct than my stance. However, even so, I cannot abandon my ideals now. Because someone like you appeared.”

“.....Eh?”

“If you had not appeared, I would have taken action much earlier for the sake of opening my own store just like what Himeko said. However, one year ago, you appeared in my store and started working, causing my thoughts to change.”

“E-Erhmm?”

“You had said that you wanted to be a permanent employee. This wish of yours still hasn’t changed at all?”

“About that..... let me think.”

Compared to one year ago, huge changes had occurred in Maou's surrounding environment.

Not only was there progress in his goal of returning to the Demon World, troubling things had been occurring continuously.

Even so, Maou still strongly wished to continue staying in the human world to learn.

"It has not changed. For the sake of my goal, becoming a permanent employee is a path which cannot be avoided."

"Yeah. I have never doubted your sincerity and philosophy towards work. I have never met anyone else like you who can mix their work and private lives so perfectly. Which was why I felt so troubled. Should I....."

"Eh?"

Maou got a huge shock because this sounded a little like a confession between a man and a woman, but what Kisasi said next was even more unexpected.

"Treat you as a trusted subordinate and climb to the top of MgRonalds to change this industry, or treat you as my right-hand man and bring you to a new world, I have seriously debated with myself over this."

".....Huh?"

"To change or create a world, other than power, it is more important to have comrades whom you can trust from your heart."

Without Kisasi saying this, Maou knew this better than anyone.

Because when Maou took the first step towards unifying the Demon World, all he had was the knowledge passed down to him by that angel.

"Then amongst the employees in my store, you have the biggest chance of working with me for a long time in the future."

After saying this in one go, Kisasi paused.

“.....Sigh, just like what I said earlier, these are just joking remarks said after drinking alcohol. You have no obligation to go along with my dreams, I don't plan to restrict your future either. Just treat it like you were hounded by a young person who had gotten drunk because she was trying to capture her bright future early and is currently facing the prospects of a bubble industry. You can forget about this for now.”

In a dazed manner, Maou stared at the back of this female who only lived for work, wearing only casual clothes and not arming herself by wearing work clothes.

“However.....”

Kisaki turned back and smiled at Maou with her usual refreshing expression.

“I have a principle of not telling jokes which are not funny. You should know that already. Then, I'll take my leave here. I'll have to trouble you to take care of the store for a while.”

At the intersection where their paths to go home deviated, Kisaki waved at Maou, and walked towards the streets at night in a cool manner.

After watching that figure leave until Maou could not see her anymore, Maou scratched his head and looked up towards the sky.

“What a headache.....”



“D-D-D-D-Demon Kingggggg, youuuuuuuuuuuuuuu?”

The next day, the usual dinner gathering at the Demon Fortress was invaded by an archangel.

“Demon King, damn you! You, you actually walked with my Goddess on the streets at night, just the two of you? W-What exactly happenedddd? Depending on the circumstances, I might just kill you on the spot--!”

“Pufft!”

Hearing Sarii's words, Chiho spit out the wheat tea in her mouth.

It was not known how Sarii obtained this information, but Maou and Kisaki were probably seen by someone when they were going home from the Izakaya.

"Ma, Ma, Ma, Ma, Maou-san? Being alone with Kisaki-san at night..... w-w-what, is going on?"

"Uh, no, it's nothing..... I just had drinks for an hour at an Izakaya....."

"D-Drinking? Maou-san and Kisaki-san, drinking together at night? An, an adult's world?"

No one knew what Chiho was imagining, but her face had turned red despite not drinking any alcohol.

"Demon King-sama, you said Izakaya just now?"

"A-Ashiya? You ignored the atmosphere and reacted to a specific term again?"

"How much money did you spend? I was thinking why you had returned so late, and unexpectedly, you spent unnecessarily....."

In order to run away from his trusted general who approached with a low voice, Maou backed up to the wall.

"N-None, someone else was treating! Because someone else treated, I didn't spend any money, and when I said drinking, I meant a drinking party, I didn't drink any alcohol....."

"My Goddess paid for it..... and she drank while f-f-face to face with you? I'm going to kill you! I'll definitely kill you today!"

This time, it was Sarii who grabbed the front of Maou's shirt to interrogate him, and the latter roughly pushed the archangel's hand away.

"I didn't sit opposite Kisaki-san! I was with your manager and the shop manager of Fushima Park, the four of us....."

“The shop manager of Fushima Park is that well-known beauty..... Ma, Maou-san let himself get treated by three beautiful ladies, drinking at night..... fuwahh.”

Maou continued explaining, but this time, it was Chiho who collapsed lifelessly--

“Chi, Chiho-chan, get a hold of yourself!”

--Emi hurriedly supported Chiho from the side.

“There were other ladies besides Manager Tanaka and my Goddess? Demon King, damn you! What evil tactics did you use to end up in such a great, envious situation!? Hurry up and tell me! What should I do to encounter that kind of situation!? Tell me quickly! Tell me alreadyyy!”

Crying while grabbing the front of Maou’s shirt, Sariel shouted things which sounded like threats and pleas at the same time.

“Like I said, I didn’t do anything..... we were only talking about work.....”

This was not a lie.

But while they were talking about work that day, they did interact at a more meaningful level compared to the usual working day.

Of course, Maou knew that if he said this, it would only worsen the hell in front of him, so he could not say it, but everyone seemed to have acutely sensed the deeper meaning hidden in Maou’s words, so they did not stop interrogating him.

“Demon King, can you not do something like drinking until late at night, you’ll affect Alas=Ramus’s education.”

“I believe you, Maou-san! You were really just talking about work related things, right?”

“It’s not alright just because someone treated you! If your superior treated you, then you have to return the favour properly! Demon King-sama, have you considered this?”

“Demon Kinggggggg! Admit itttttt! What happenedddddddd!?”

“Didn’t I say nothing happened!?”

Unable to tolerate the hellish summons echoing within the small room--

“Can’t all you be quieter when eating!?”

--Suzuno finally shouted angrily--

“Suzu nee-chan is scary wahhhh!”

--Alas=Ramus, who got scared, started to cry--

“.....So noisy.”

--and Urushihara, some distance away from the hellish noise, was the only one who focused on eating.



**THE HERO
BEFORE SHE
FOUND A JOB!
—A FEW DAYS AGO—**

SHORT STORY 6

THE HERO BEFORE SHE FOUND A JOB!

—A FEW DAYS AGO—

Just after three pm in the afternoon, Alas=Ramus was snoring steadily in bed.

Normally it would just be 'Mama' Yusa Emi in Room 501 of Urban Heights Eifuku, but there were two visitors today.

Perhaps the young girl was exhausted because she had interacted with people she was not familiar with.

Some distance away from the bed, someone watched Emi enviously.

"That's so nice~~ I want to coax her to sleep too~~"

"Alas=Ramus probably needs a little more time before she is familiar with Em."

"Uuuu~~"

Emi's good friend, one of the visitors, Emerada Etuva, grit her teeth in regret.

"This might sound strange, but you have completely turned into a mother."

Suzuki Rika, another good friend of Emi, smiled evilly.

"Yeah, because this child and I have spent a long time together."

Emi intentionally responded with a composed attitude.

"Oh, not affected at all."

Rika appeared to be a little happy.

"Then again, you haven't been officially hired yet, but Emi is actually going to work at

that McGonalds huh. I am not teasing you, but is it because you want Alas=Ramus to be together with 'Papa'?"

"That's not possible. It's not like I can bring a toddler to work. It's either we stay in a merged state during working hours, or asking Suzuno to help take care of her if it does not cause Suzuno too much trouble."

Emi replied with a shrug.

"If so~~ it feels like you should just move house~~"

"Emi seemed to have developed some attachment to this apartment, so she can't do such a thing. Considering the quality of this room and the rent, I can sort of understand this feeling. Sigh, I am more curious about how Emi managed to find this house and settled down here."

Room 501 of Urban Heights Eifuku was a suite targeted at tenants who were single, but not only did this two room eight tatami apartment have a fully electric powered kitchen, it had a separate bathroom.

Considering that Emi's and Emerada's enemy, the Demon King a.k.a. Maou Sadao, was living in a space where three guys were squeezed into a six tatami sized room, this environment was truly much better.

There was even a penthouse on the highest floor, so its appearance truly matched the term condominium.

However, the rent here was only 50,000 yen, this was difficult to comprehend. Anyone, not just Rika, would be bothered by this.

"That's true~~ I have not heard the story behind how you chose to stay in this apartment~~"

Because Rika and Emerada expressed their interest, Emi turned towards the two of them after arranging the blankets around Alas=Ramus.

"These may be memories, but they aren't really good memories. It's just that this room was the first place in Japan which gave me a safe and secure environment. By the way,

I was able to continue chasing after the Demon King because this room existed.”

“Did you become more lively and energetic because the living environment was good?”

“No, it was a more direct reason. This was something which happened when I first arrived in Japan, when I knew nothing about what I saw and understood nothing.”

Speaking softly, Emi described the events which happened recently, even though it seemed like years ago.

This was something which happened in recent history, when she had arrived in Japan, a country in a ‘foreign world’ after going through a ‘Gate’ to chase after Maou Sadao, no, to chase after Demon King Satan.



That tall building was erected there, resembling a huge gravestone.

Standing in a city filled with lights, only that place had a black exterior.

The dim lights which could be seen everywhere only served to make that place look darker, resembling the candles flickering weakly in the wind after being lit by people attending a funeral to pay respects to the dead.

“.....If it’s that place..... I probably will not get discovered by anyone.....”

Her mental and physical states had reached their limits.

In this world filled with light, she was the only one constantly looking for darkness, finding caves which no one would take notice of.

“The door..... is locked after all.”

The front door illuminated by yellow lights was naturally locked and could not be opened.

However, at this point in time, she could confirm one thing.

Within this building in front of her, there were no signs of humans.

During these past few days, she had already encountered countless huge buildings which she had never seen before.

Inorganic in appearance, all these buildings had an impressive height which easily surpassed those of the royal cities in her home country, with every single window reflecting dazzling light.

Many people were living within them.

Living lives she had never seen before.

The building in front of her may have looked similar to the buildings she had seen so far, but no signs of people could be felt.

Just like how torches will be lit at the city forts to guard against intruders, there were also rows of dim lights here. However, it could be felt that there was no one patrolling these illuminated areas.

For a full five minutes, she stood there in a dazed manner.

“Please allow me to borrow this place for a bit.”

She did not know who she was asking for permission, and allowed herself to lightly float into the air.

After flying over the gate, she landed in a place which looked like courtyard. She still did not feel any other presences.

The unmaintained grass patch which surrounded that building had already grown until it was level with her line of sight, so it appeared that she would not have to worry about being seen by the people outside.

“These don’t look like ruins.....”

Looking closely, this building was made from material she did not know about.

It looked like stone or brick, but the feeling when she touched it was significantly different from the feeling she knew about.

Smooth, glossy, hard, and also felt very light.

“It would be better to go higher.”

She looked up at the higher levels which blended into the darkness, made her body float again, and slowly rose, following the walls of the building.

When she was rising, she turned her head lightly, and in front of her was a huge area of lights dispelling the darkness.

As if the stars in the sky had fallen, colourful lights covered the ground.

The shock she had received when she understood that they were people living under all these lights would never be forgotten regardless of what may happen in the future.

“Demon King Satan..... where did he go?”

She mumbled weakly.

He should be here. The existence she was chasing was somewhere in this land of light.

Perhaps, at this moment, he was even plotting how to bring darkness to the land of light in front of him, using his demonic wings to cause the night sky to descend on the land.

She had to find that evil existence quickly, and eliminate him before this brilliance gets harmed in any way.

“I can’t, find him anywhere. I can’t even feel his presence.....”

Such a thing should not be possible.

No matter how injured she was, no matter how much power she had lost, she would not misidentify that evil aura, however, as if he had been sucked into this light tornado, the existence she had been chasing had disappeared.

“.....This place, should be fine.”

She stepped onto the balcony which was built at the windows on every floor.

Standing on the balcony, she then peeked into the room through the extremely transparent window made of glass.

Inside was a room with paved floors, but she could not sense any people.

The floor of the level above was the roof of the balcony, so it seemed like she could take shelter from the rain here.

“Sigh.....”

Once she thought that she was in a space where no one could see her, her fatigue suddenly rose within her body, causing her to sit down on the spot.

A balcony built on ruins which were brand new.

She was so tired that such a narrow space could provide her with a sense of safety.

“If I had killed the Demon King there..... things would not have turned out like this.”

She clenched her fist and said this in regret.

As if responding to her will, light appeared in her palm and something which was originally not there appeared.

An intricately decorated sword which emitted holy light.

“.....Holy sword..... why aren't you emitting the guiding light and telling me the location of the Demon King. Could it be that you have lost that power because of the fierce fighting?”

Even the voice she squeezed out with all her might sounded weak.

“Or is it..... because I was unable to successfully kill the Demon King..... you don't recognise me as the Hero anymore?”

The sword did not reply.

In a night where the moon and stars could not be seen, the lights from afar shone slightly on the purple gem on the hilt.

“.....Em.....”

She hugged her legs and groaned.

“Alber..... Olba.....”

Then she buried her face in her legs, speaking weakly.

“.....Save me.”

Five days had passed since Hero Emilia Justina took part in the final battle with the fate of the whole of Ente Isla on the line and failed to kill the Demon King after coming close to doing so.

Emilia chased after the Demon King and one of the Four Kings Alsiel who had escaped through the ‘Gate’ and arrived at this mysterious world which had an advanced civilisation.

It felt as if she was one blow away from defeating the Demon King. Even so, the Demon King’s power was still so strong that she could not be careless.

Therefore, Emilia believed that the true final battle would take place in the world on the other side of the ‘Gate’.

However, after arriving in this world, she could no longer sense the ominous energy of the Demon King.

Since she went through the same ‘Gate’ as the Demon King and Alsiel, she should not have arrived in a different world.

The Demon King and Alsiel must be somewhere in this world.

However, the aura of the Demon King which Emilia was familiar with had disappeared.

Without being bothered by her sword disappearing the instant she fell, Emilia got up immediately and looked at the window she was just leaning against with a surprised gaze.

It opened.

As if it was inviting Emilia inside, the window opened.

Just like before, there was no one inside, and it was quiet.

However, when she came to her senses, Emilia had already walked into the room as if she was attracted by this empty space.

Emilia felt that she had not let her guard down at all, but she was unsure of how calm she was feeling.

This may have been an abandoned area, but it did not mean that she could just enter without permission, and from how the floor was spotless, there must have been people entering and leaving regularly.

Even so, with Emilia's mental state reaching its limits due to loneliness and fatigue, she could not resist the temptation of this isolated space which could not be seen by anyone from the outside.

After jumping indoors and closing the window, this became a completely quiet room.

"Ah....."

Emilia lay down, spread-eagled on the hard floor.

She was still calm enough to keep her armour on, but this inorganic sealed space still provided Emilia with a sense of liberation which she had not felt in days.

At the same time, a strong sense of drowsiness welled up within her.

That was natural. Because during these few days, she could not find a place where she could close her eyes and sleep soundly.

Whether it was her body or brain, she had reached her limits.

The moment she closed her eyes, Emilia's consciousness fell into darkness.

The young girl dreamed.

She dreamed that she was still living in her hometown, Sloan Village.

She 'had never seen it before', but Emilia knew that this was what the village looked like after she was taken to the Theocracy as the 'Hero'.

Since it was Sloan Village, her father should be around. With steps which were not really taken, Emilia ran around the village with all her might.

However, no matter how much she searched, forget about her father, she could not find anyone.

She had searched inside her dream for more than one day, but she could not even find any signs of habitation.

At a certain point of time, the appearance of the village changed drastically.

A huge explosion occurred behind Emilia, looking back, she discovered a huge demon standing in front of the flames.

In the demon's arms was the body of a person Emilia recognised.

Emilia immediately summoned the holy sword, intending to cut down the demon, but the holy sword did not appear in her hands, not only that, the demon turned around as if it had not seen Emilia.

She wanted to shout, "Stop!" but her mouth did not obey.

During this point, fires started to appear around the village and screams echoed within the village which was supposed to be empty.

The winged demons danced in the air.

The demons with abnormal appearances started to destroy the homes.

She had to stop them, and she had the power to stop them, but the holy sword did not appear, and no matter how she struggled, her feet would not advance and she could not make any sound.

At this moment, a familiar figure descended in front of Emilia.

The size of the one who came was small for a demon, but it possessed demonic magic which exceeded the levels of normal demons.

“Lucifer!”

One of the Four Kings of the Demon King Army, Demon General Lucifer, showed a cruel smile, and on reflex, Emilia planned to fight him barehanded.

Emilia’s fists had hit Lucifer’s face, but as if everything was an illusion, they just went through.

No, based on this situation, Emilia might be the one who was the illusion.

Why, why was she unable to fight?

Despite the fact that she had to stop this tragedy.

“Kyahhhhh?”

At this moment, a shrill scream was heard.

Was it from the village, from behind Lucifer, from the sky, or from the land, none of them sounded right.....

“Huh?”

The strangely vivid scream caused Emilia to get up abruptly.

What she saw after opening her eyes was not Sloan Village being attacked by demons, but an unfamiliar and deserted square room.

The interior was not lit by flames or demonic magic, but sunlight, after Emilia got up, she only took a second to remember that she had sneaked into a mysterious abandoned ruin.

“Ugh!”

She immediately realised that she had encountered an emergency.

Someone was around. It was a lady. And from how the other party was wearing well-tailored grey clothes commonly seen in this country, it could be confirmed that she was a human from this world.

Opposite the window Emilia sneaked in from was the door of this room, and with her back facing the sun, Emilia could clearly see the face of the lady who was standing by the door.

That face was filled with surprise and fear.

In this current situation, she was definitely an intruder, and the lady who entered was likely someone who was connected to this building.

Emilia instantaneously analysed these things, and immediately regretted her failure from last night.

She had closed the window and locked it.

The structure of the lock was very similar to the one Emilia knew, so the fact that she was able to lock it had come back to bite her in the end.

If she broke the window and escaped, traces would be left behind.

If so.....!

“Light Mirror Coat!”

A spell of invisibility.

She did not have many opportunities to use it, but when sneaking into a fort overtaken by demons, this spell would help them avoid unnecessary battles.

Because holy magic had to be used, it would be easily detected by high level demons, Emilia was not very good with the spell too, but if her comrade Emerada Etuva used it, the level of concealment was good enough to fool human sorcerers.

If they had already encountered the enemy, using it would be meaningless because the other party had already discovered their existence, but they could still run away while the enemy was still confused.

The way out was not the window, but the door behind the lady.

However, the situation developed in a way which Emilia did not expect.

“Eek?”

The surprise in the lady’s expression and tone gradually disappeared and it was her fear which increased instead, her legs also started shaking.

“It..... it.....it disa.....ppeared..... disappeared..... kyahhhhhh!”

“Eh? Wait.....?”

“There really is oneeeeeeeeeeeeeee!”

Looking pale, the lady gave a strange scream and slamming the door open, she ran out.

Emilia had planned to slam into the lady to push her back, but she did not expect that the other party would just run off after seeing her invisibility spell.

In fact, the invisibility spell used by Emilia was not that perfect, so if the person focused, it could be seen through even if the person was not a sorcerer.

Or could it be that the other party was worried about a sneak attack and chose to fight her in a more spacious area?

Emilia could not help but run towards the door, chasing after the lady--

“Uwah!”

--then a sound which sounded very painful was heard from outside.

Emilia looked outside and realised that the lady from before was crouching in the middle of the long corridor.

A stick-like object had fallen at the end of the corridor, and upon closer inspection, the shape of the heel area of the left and right shoes worn by the lady was different.

She knew that there was a type of shoes known as high heels, but Emilia, who had only worn it a few times, realised that the lady in front of her probably fell after the heel on her shoe broke.

She should have been able to get up immediately even if she had fallen down, but for unknown reasons, the lady was shivering all over and was unable to get up successfully.

“Eek, ah, no!”

It was only after seeing the lady was still moving her hand forward and trying to escape the room from just now did Emilia realise that the lady was trying to run away from her.

The other party did not look like a warrior or sorcerer, and Emilia, who had wandered around the city in this world for five days, had also seen many similarly dressed ladies.

The lady was probably in charge of managing this building, or a normal person living in one of the rooms which Emi had overlooked.

Sneaking in just because the window was unlocked, and even wearing armour to scare others, she was the bad person in this situation.

Emilia opened the door slowly.

The door looked like it was made of gold or stone, but contrary to its heavy looking appearance, the door was much lighter than she had thought.

The hinge area of the door let out a 'creak'.

"Eh..... eh, eh, no, no way, eh?"

Hearing that sound, the lady who fell on the ground looked back, and even started crying.

She had to apologise for scaring the lady and entering the room without permission.

Emilia, wearing her armour, slowly approached the lady.

The armour's metal boots gave off a 'ka ka ka' sound on the scarily long corridor which was only made with one piece of stone.

"N-No, what? What is that? Is someone there? D-Don't, don't come over!"

The lady, who ruined her makeup from crying, seemed to be looking for something and did not look at Emilia at all.

Emilia did not understand the language of this country, so she did not know what the lady was saying, but at least she knew that those were not tears of welcome.

Then the lady crouched and nervously said something which Emi had heard many times in this country and deduced as a form of greeting.

"T.....th.....thanks....."

"Eek!"

"Th, thanks, thanks for the hard work."

This time, the lady produced a scream from deep within her throat which did not sound human.

“Nooooooooooooooooo, a sound was heard from a place with no one presennntttttttt!”

“Eh? Ah, wait, wait a moment!”

When Emi called out, it was already too late.

The lady took off her shoes and escaped frantically.

“W-Wait a moment! It, it’s dangerous like this.....”

“Noooooooo.....!”

There seemed to be a flight of stairs in the place Emi could not see.

The lady appeared to be weak at the knees from fright, yet once she took off her shoes, she emitted an exaggerated scream and ran further and further away until her voice could not be heard.

“T-There’s no need to be that afraid.”

She was a trespasser, but she should have properly shown that she had wanted to talk.

Feeling slightly hurt, Emi pouted, but she suddenly realised that a large object had fallen at her feet.

It looked like a bag. The lady must have left it behind.

The material seemed to be high grade leather, and the gold frame opening gave off a golden sheen of a new product.

“.....Uh, eh?”

Emilia looked at that smooth metal surface, then noticed one thing.

She quickly raised her hand to her eye level, and her shoulders drooped as she sighed heavily.

“No wonder she was afraid. She heard the sound of the door opening and footsteps,

but could not see anything.”

Emilia used the invisibility spell beforehand but forgot to dispel it when approaching the lady.

Upon closer examination, a person would have noticed Emilia’s swaying silhouette, resembling that of a mirage, but the panicked lady probably did not notice it at all.

Regardless, with this, this building was neither an abandoned place or a place where Emi could settle down.

She felt bad about the lady, but it was not a good idea to continue staying here.

The other party might call the police or the soldiers, and if that happened, Emi would have to employ forceful methods against the humans.

This was not what Emilia wanted.

“If I leave that here, the person will probably come back for it..... but.....”

Emilia frowned and looked up at the sky.

She did not notice this when she had woken up, but the light shining in through the windows seemed to come from a setting sun.

Looking up from where she was in the corridor, she realised that the sky had turned into a faint purple colour, and night was approaching once more.

After noticing how tired she had been, Emilia realised deeply that she had committed many mistakes.

“I don’t know who that person is, if there are other people in this building, it might be stolen if I just carelessly leave it here.....”

Emilia picked up the bag while talking to herself, planning to place it at the end of the corridor--

“.....”

--but after seeing many pieces of paper through the opening in the bag, she stopped.

From how it felt in her hands, there were probably many things inside.

“.....”

After Emilia hesitated a little--

“.....Ugh!”

--she surveyed the surroundings, took the bag and returned to the room she had originally came from.

Locking the door with much effort, she sat in the middle of the empty room and stared at the bag, and after looking at her face reflected in the gold frame for a while, Emilia sighed forcefully.

“I swear to the Gods, Evolving Holy Sword, One Wing (Better Half), and on my father’s name. I will definitely not steal your things. I will not tell anyone else about the information I have obtained and will not use it to commit evil deeds. So please lend it to me..... to learn more about this world.”

She started to search through the other person’s belongings.

Even if she was not a Hero, this was still a shameful action.

However, at the same time, these things were also a necessary source of information to help Emilia find the Demon King and survive in this country.

Armed with the conviction that she would have to accept any scolding and punishment if she was questioned by anyone about her guilt, Emilia made up her mind and reached towards the bag.

She probably sat in that room for half a day.

It was already late at night, and the room was covered in darkness.

However, Emilia made an illumination spell float in the middle of the room and focused on checking that lady's bag. Before that, she never had a chance to make direct contact with the items owned by the normal people of this country.

That lady probably wanted to have the bag back as soon as possible. She had to return the bag and all its contents after the lady returned, then leave this room.

The time limit was almost up.

“This is money after all. A coin having a hole is really rare.”

Emilia took out coins and pieces of paper from a small leather bag, and after carefully placing each piece of paper on the floor, she nodded and said this.

Diagrams of what looked like temples, flowers, trees, and an ear of rice were engraved on the coins, and although the contents of gold, silver, and bronze did not seem to be that high, it was not difficult to deduce that these coins were currency.

There were beautiful background patterns and exquisite human portraits and landscape drawings on the pieces of paper. In addition, there was also a system of characters recorded on them, similar to that used on the coins.



For these characters, there was '1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 0', these ten types.

If these are numbers, these pieces of paper should be 'banknotes'.

She could understand the concept of banknotes, but this was the second time Emilia had seen a country where banknotes were in circulation.

The first time was at the harbour city in the Central Continent, but because of the Demon King Army, the currency value circulating in the Central Continent at that time had fallen greatly, she even remembered one of her comrades saying that there was no need to force herself to exchange money.

Anyway, when banknotes are used as currency, to the countries who distributes them, these banknotes need to be absolutely trustworthy, and because they are so light, these banknotes have a very high currency value.

The lady who was the owner of this bag seemed to be close to Emi's age, was this country so prosperous and strong that such a young person could carry so many banknotes?

"Either way, it seems like the gold and silver coins I have with me cannot be used that easily here."

Emilia did not have any banknotes on her, and although the coins in this country were silver coloured, they did not look like they were crafted from silver.

She could understand that these characters were numbers, but she did not know the numeric sequence, so it was meaningless to continue thinking about money matters.

The next thing Emilia noticed was the large map.

Spreading it open, she realised that this was a large map made from western style paper.

It looked like a white map, but after examining it carefully, there were many small characters which appeared to be numbers written on it.

Before coming to this building, Emilia roughly knew that this country's printing

technology was very advanced, but this technique which could write wheat grain sized words on maps still surprised her greatly.

“These series of numbers might not necessarily refer to amounts of money. It might refer to distance, or assign numbers to roads..... but, there is a fixed pattern. Roads are arrow symbols with four characters. Blocks would be two characters written within a circle symbol. This..... this is four characters, but it can't be determined if this is a very wide road or a river..... as for the other characters, they're not written within circle symbols. Hm..... the red characters were probably written by hand.”

On the map where only roads, blocks and numbers, there were also some red characters written on it.

“The red mark in the middle, is it this building?”

Her consciousness was fuzzy because of fatigue, but Emilia roughly remembered the geographical situation of her surroundings.

Emilia discovered that this white map was a map with very limited range, expanding out with this building as the centre.

“Even so, the numbers between these arrows should be a distance. These units represented by four digit numbers, should be the distance from the beginning to the end of the arrow! These ten characters are numbers after all!”

If these ten characters ‘1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 0’ were numbers, it meant that the numbers used by this country were in base 10, just knowing this was already considered significant progress.

Other than that, if she could arrange these numbers in order, she would roughly know the values of money and distance.

“But, the distance here and here look the same, so why are the numbers different.....?”

Because the characters printed on the map were very small, Emilia brightened the light of the spell slightly and stared at the map.

“The places around the areas where many red characters were written have similar

groupings. There are also numbers written around this building which are different from the other places. If I do not confirm this properly..... eh? This is.....”

At this moment, Emilia discovered that there was another map inside the bag.

“Hm? This is a map showing a similar location?”

This map was printed in blue and red, and the characters printed on it were much more than the white map from before.

The white map only roughly drew out where the blocks were located, but on this map, it was divided in a more detailed manner and various types of characters were densely written.

In addition, there was a frame of diagrams and large words around the layout, this design reminded Emi of a shop sign.

“This..... this map looks more like the maps I am familiar with.”

As the Merchant Association would often publish advertisements about the stores and other important facilities on the area guide maps in the large cities, Emilia deduced that this was something similar.

At the same time, Emilia noticed a certain problem.

“This..... looks rather bad.”

She looked towards the blue map, and noticed that not only were there many different varieties of characters, the shape of each character was complex.

After coming to this world, she immediately noticed that there were many types of characters in this country.

Skimming through the blue map, three to five systems of characters could be identified, if all of them were phonograms, then it would be bad, and even if they were ideographs, she would not understand all of them in one or two days.

“It seems like if I do not use Idea Link, it might be very troublesome.....”

When they did not know the language of the land which they were travelling to for the first time, Idea Link was a very important spell, but it did not mean that everything would be translated completely.

For example, when both sides did not have a common concept or when they interpreted things differently, they would not be able to communicate at all, this was something which happened often.

When travelling in Ente Isla, there would definitely be someone among Emilia's comrades who would be able to speak the language of the country they were travelling to next. Of course, they could hire a translator, but she could not do so in the country.

"If I could have the opportunity to slowly chat with someone....."

Since she came to this country, Emilia had not talked to anyone.

The people walking past would clearly avoid Emilia once they saw her attire, and being chased by the police was not counted as talking.

What Emilia understood about this country's language was what she had heard from the streets.

When people met each other, they would use 'Thank you for the hard work' to greet each other.

When store employees called out to the people walking by, they would use 'Welcome'.

For the parents walking on the streets, they would use 'Come over here' and 'Be good' when trying to calm down a child who would not settle down.

When the police were chasing after a suspicious person, they would shout 'Stop', 'Wait', 'Stop right there'.

".....This is."

Emilia suddenly realised that a series of characters with the same shapes were written on both sides of the white and blue maps using the same handwriting.

About this series of characters, Emilia had the impression that she had seen it on something else inside the bag.

“Found it, it’s this.”

That was the small leather pouch which held the currency, inside the wallet.

There were various cards made from different materials inside, but similarly shaped characters were written or engraved on them.

“Here too.”

In addition, inside the small leather card box, she found a stack of cards which had the same design and characters.

A refined portrait more detailed and brightly coloured than the drawings on the banknotes was drawn on the stack of cards, and after seeing the face drawn on it, Emilia confirmed one thing.

“It’s that lady..... the owner of this bag. So..... this is her name.”

Writing her own name on the maps was probably to signify that she was the owner.

She did not know the purpose of these cards which came in many varieties, but a shield symbol was drawn on one of the cards, it was a type of shield known as the kite shield, and a red cross was drawn in the middle of that shield.

Perhaps it meant that the owner of the card belonged to a certain knight group.

“If only I knew how to read this person’s name..... are there any clues?”

In the room which had turned dark, Emilia continued to search the bag, hoping to find more clues about that lady or this country.

“Hm~ this stack of paper should be some work documents. This should be a handkerchief, the colours are so pretty..... there are numbers and a name on this card as well. This is a glass bottle containing water..... no. What is this light and transparent bottle? There is a drawing of a mountain and words written on it, but I can’t

understand it..... the rest of the things are almost the same..... this is?"

Emilia discovered a strange object in the side pocket.

It was a palm-sized hard rectangular object, a board painted in a magnificent colour. It was heavy for its size and there was a cloth strap hanging from the corner.

There were many small bumps around the board and there was a hole which looked like something could be stuck inside.

"What is this..... is it a button..... kya?"

After Emilia accidentally pressed on one of the bumps, the surface of the board lit up, causing her to drop the board onto the floor in surprise.

Not knowing if it was going to explode next, or give off a blinding light, Emilia would rather treat it as a trap set to guard against people stealing the bag and backed up quickly.

However, other than emitting a light, the board did nothing else.

She nervously looked towards the glowing surface--

"Ah, how cute....."

--and noticed that there was a super simplified diagram of a bear on the surface.

Other than showing a diagram of a bear hugging a pillow and lying down sideways, a four digit number was also shown.

"T-The numbers are moving?"

The moment Emilia looked towards the screen, the right most digit of the four digits changed from '1' to '2'.

Just as Emilia reached for the glowing board because she had discovered a new mystery.

“Eeek?”

“Eh?”

The door facing the corridor had been opened without Emilia noticing.

The door which had been locked was opened, Emilia looked up and discovered a person standing there.

It was impossible for Emilia to forget that fear filled face under the glow of the magic light. It was that lady who dropped her bag and ran.

Emilia did not plan to run away this time.

She had to apologise for entering without permission and going through the other party’s belongings. The moment she reached out to do this--

“Uwahh!”

--the lady shouted strangely and ran into the corridor once more.

“Ah, please wait, uh, no, let me think!”

Emilia tried to recall what happened when she was being chased by the police and shouted loudly, “Wait! Stop!”

However, despite Emilia not turning invisible this time, the lady did not stop.

“Kyaaahhhhhhhhhhh! There are spirit lights and an armoured Samurai!”

“.....Spirit lights and armoured Samurai?”

Emilia frowned because she heard a few terms which made no sense to her, but she still had to return the bag to the other party, if the lady escaped again, Emilia did not know when they would meet again.

Emilia chased after the lady to make her stop.

“Wait! Be good!”

“Kyahhhhhh!”

“Welcome, welcome.”

“Don’t come overrrrrr!”

“Come here! Come here!”

“I don’t want to dieeee! This apartment is cursed after allll!”

Emilia’s shouts echoed lowly in the building and the screams the lady made when running away were so high pitched that it overwhelmed Emilia’s voice.

Emilia chased after the lady with all her might, but the lady still disappeared somewhere further up the corridor, Emilia had lost her again.

She heard the sounds of someone going down the stairs, but Emilia did not know where the stairs were.

The other party got away again. And she had scared the lady again.

Emilia knew that wearing a suit full of armour was considered something very strange in this country, but she felt that the lady’s scared behaviour was too abnormal.

And the term ‘spirit light and armoured Samurai’ gave off an ominous feeling.

Had she been mistaken as a vicious criminal?

“Hm~ seems like I shouldn’t wear armour.”

Thinking about it carefully, she did possess some characteristics of a suspicious person.

And because she had come here immediately after the final battle with the Demon King, the armour was damaged in various places.

Since she had come to this country, Emilia had not seen any knights wearing armour.

“The armour is the issue after all.....”

If she had the Evil Repelling Armour, a proof that she was the Hero, she would not need this full body armour, but it might be an issue with her total holy magic capacity, Emilia was unable to use the full potential of the holy sword and the Evil Repelling Armour at the same time.

If she could guard against the Demon King’s attacks but was unable to cut him, it would be meaningless.

With these thoughts in mind, Emilia decided not to use the Evil Repelling Armour during the final battle and chose to pour all her power into the holy sword.

“.....There shouldn’t be any strange odor.”

Feeling bothered all of a sudden, Emilia sniffed her long hair.

After fighting the final battle with the Demon King, she was immediately thrown into this foreign world and wandered around for a few days.

After experiencing a fierce battle and not bathing for a few days, this was really a scenario which a girl would not want to face, but Emilia actually had a trick for this.

“I transformed yesterday..... so there shouldn’t be any smell.”

Angel blood lay dormant in Emilia’s body.

When she awakened the bloodline from her mother who she did not remember at all and only knew about on that faithful day, Emilia’s whole body would ‘completely’ refresh.

For example, if she got hurt after a vigorous battle, she just had to ‘transform’ once using her angel blood, and the wounds would heal immediately.

The injuries she had received in her transformed state would gradually recover over time, and if she was unable to recover fully, the injuries would not suddenly worsen

when she dispelled her transformation.

Therefore, Emilia only needed to transform once to obtain the same effect as having a thorough bath.

When travelling in the Eastern Continent where the average temperature and humidity were high and clear streams were scarce, even after encountering many battles, Emilia was the only one amongst her comrades who could stay clean.

The difference between her and her three comrades was actually just this.

Because of the benefits of this power, Emilia could avoid some things which normally could not be avoided during war, causing Emerada Etuva, a female like her, to feel very envious.

However, transforming required a lot of holy magic, so the efficiency was not very high, and the effect of the transformation would not extend to what she wore.

“The smell should be coming from here.”

No one was watching, but Emilia still blushed.

Based on previous experience, if she did not take care of her appearance in peaceful and flourishing countries, it would be embarrassing and lead to many inconveniences.

“I wonder if there is a place to wash clothes..... it’s not like drinking water where I can use the water machine at the plaza. In addition, in this country, there are also many pedestrians at night, so even if I use the Light Mirror Coat, it will still be suspicious. Moreover, even if people cannot see me, I cannot bring myself to do this kind of thing.....”

Emilia, who suddenly became bothered about many things, started thinking about this, but of course, she had no solution.

Perhaps the lady’s maps contained this information, but if she could not understand the words on it, she could not do anything in the end.

She had to use the last resort after all. Just as Emilia was thinking this.

“.....What is that sound?”

A faint low pitched rhythmic sound was heard from a certain place.

It sounded like a large insect was flapping its wings, but that sound seemed to be coming from somewhere within the room.

Emilia looked around the interior of the room which was still unlocked--

“It’s that board again.....”

--and noticed the glowing board just now was now vibrating lightly on the floor while flashing.

“W-What’s happening?”

Emilia approached nervously, keeping up her guard.

Just as she peeked at the glowing surface while being worried that the board would suddenly fly over, the place which had the bear diagram earlier now had a red rectangle diagram and a green rectangle diagram, there was nothing like that before.

Confused by the situation, Emilia stared at the glowing board, it stopped vibrating a short while later and the picture changed back to the bear which was there originally.

“W-W-What was that..... kyah?”

Then the board started to produce the same vibration and glow again.

This time, it showed no signs of stopping at all. After one minute had passed, Emilia finally decided to pick up the board.

The board vibrated gently in her hand, but it did not appear to be harmful.

The red rectangle and green rectangle from before appeared again, and upon closer examination, a new diagram had appeared in the rectangle.

“W-What is this circle..... eek!”

Emilia touched the green rectangle jitterly, the vibration stopped immediately and the surface of the board changed diagrams again.

Next, the board produced a blunt sound like when it was dropped on the floor, then silence.

“W-W-What?”

However, the next change occurred immediately.

“H-Hello..... is anyone there?”

“?”

It was a voice.

A voice came out from the board.

Background noise which Emilia had not heard before was mixed within, but could it be that lady’s voice?

Emilia could not help but search her surroundings, but she did not feel any other presences nearby.

Could this board be the same as the Idea Link magical tools in Ente Isla used for long distance communication?

“Did, did anyone pick up? Hello..... hello.”

“Voices can be transmitted..... this means.....”

Idea Link for long distance communication, Emilia used it frequently during her journey.

Since there was a person on the other side of the board, there might be a chance!

“Perhaps I can use..... Idea Link.”

After coming to this country, this was Emilia's first chance to quietly talk with someone.

This could not scare the other party this time. For this purpose, she could only use this technique.

“.....”

Emilia focused on the board in front of her.

Then she connected more easily than expected. The other party was that lady after all.

Emilia sat down in front of the glowing board, slowly reading the other party's consciousness using Idea Link and spoke.

“H.....hello?”

This seemed to be a term for greeting during long distance communication.

“Hello? It, it connected? This means that my phone and bag were dropped in different places! Hello?”

Phone?

Because they did not have a common concept, Emilia was unable to understand the meaning of this term.

“Phone.....”

“Y-Yes. Erhm..... I am the owner of that phone, I'm currently at the police station at Eifuku station.”

Based on her impression, Eifuku was the name of this area.

Police station must have been referring to the building the policemen use when they were on standby. Emilia quickly unfolded the blue map, and confirmed the location of the concept that could have in common.

Station referred to the stopping place of the transport vehicles, so Emilia roughly knew the current location of the lady.

It did not seem that far away.

“Erhm, then.....”

“T-Thanks, for the hard work.”

“Eh? Uh, yes, erhm.....”

“What’s your name?”

It seemed like she was still unable to receive everything about the language and its concepts.

Basically, if they did not share common concepts, they were unable to carry out ‘Idea Link’.

Even so, to continue talking with the other party, Emilia judged that it would be better to communicate in the language of this country.

She did not realise that it was a fatal mistake.

“Eh? Name, erhm, I’m YUSAKEIKO.”

“YUSA?”

“Ah, yes, the ‘Yu’ from ‘Oyu’¹, and the ‘Sa’ from ‘Satou’, Yusa Keiko.....”

“YUSA..... KEIKO.....”

She finally knew the lady’s name.

The ‘Yu’ and ‘Sa’ written on the objects in the bag must be read as ‘YUSA’.

She did not know if the two characters ‘恵’ and ‘子’ were read as ‘KEIKO’, but with this, Emilia finally knew how to read the other party’s name.

Emilia replied excitedly, “Your, things..... are, with me.”

“Eh?”

The other party’s voice transmitted by Idea Link became stiff after Emilia replied.

Emilia, realising that she had become too hasty after understanding the other party’s name, said frantically, “Come..... to..... the room.”

“.....Kyah!”

“Eh? Strange?”

The call and the Idea Link was suddenly cut off.

Emilia had some impression of this feeling, this was a disconnection which frequently happened when the other party fell asleep or lost consciousness.

The glowing board seemed to have sensed that the connection was cut off and the surface turned back to the bear diagram again.

Did she do something to scare the other party again.

However, picking up the other party’s words while using long distance Idea Link was a very mentally draining task.

If she could return the things to the other party face to face, she could use Idea Link easily, and more importantly, she could return the bag to its owner and apologise to the lady.

However, during the series of questions and answers just now, she had used the language of this country, so there should not be any problems.

“.....It should be, fine like this.....”

Since she did not know the exact location of the other party, she could only ask the lady to come over. Because she did not know the correct way of operating the board, it was difficult for her to take the initiative to contact the other party using Idea Link.

“I can only wait.”

Wait for the lady to come back here.

There were many rooms in this building, so someone who had no connections to this building was unlikely to keep coming to the same place.

She had to properly welcome the other party next time, and apologise to the lady for many things.

Although it could lead to her being arrested by the police, she could only react to the situation when the time comes.

From the short conversation with the lady who called herself Yusa Keiko, Emilia obtained significant results. The things she learned this time would probably enable her to converse much better with the police if she met them again.

“Thinking about it..... this armour is not a good idea after all.”

Emilia now knew the meaning of ‘armoured samurai’.

Armoured Samurai. It was true that she was a warrior wearing armour.

The lady, who could see through this at once, was amazing, but to show that she was not hostile, it would be better to take off the armour when they next met.

However, with this.....

“Ugh.”

Once Emilia took off her shoulder armour, she noticed the smell of rotting food underneath.

“I-I have to wash it..... it’ll be impossible the other party to listen to me like this..... ah! Talking about that!”

During the Idea Link earlier, Emilia realised that the white and blue map were highly important in Yusa Keiko’s life.

The 'Yu' in Yusa Keiko's name seemed to refer to the concept of hot springs and bathing pools.

"Found it!"

Carefully examining the map filled with unfamiliar words, Emilia let out her first cheer since she came to this country.

".....I'm alive again."

Five days after her departure, Emilia walked down the streets of the foreign world, feeling physically and mentally refreshed.

Her clothes and undergarments under the armour, which had absorbed the sweat from the fierce battles, were currently clean and smelled like soap.

There was a facility known as a 'paid public bath' near the building.

Emilia did not know what 'paid' was until she reached the location, but after eavesdropping on the conversations of the people there, she realised that it meant a small amount of money.

The usage of public bathing facilities would not differ as much across different worlds.

However, as she had to conform with the unique culture of this country, Emilia mustered up her courage and spoke to the middle-aged woman who appeared to be a staff.

If she could have a quiet conversation face to face, the concentration of the information gathered over Idea Link will increase greatly.

The middle-aged woman seemed to have assumed that Emilia was a foreigner who could not speak the language, so she spoke to Emilia kindly with carefully chosen words.

There were still many things she did not know, but Emilia had learned many words.

The problem was with the money Emilia had.

She had sworn not to use Yusa Keiko's money.

Before the final battle with the Demon King, with the hope of 'wanting to return to a peaceful world', she had placed one gold coin, one silver coin, and one bronze coin into a cloth bag and hid it under her armour. At this time, she tore open that amulet and took out the highest value coin from it.

Just as the female staff showed a surprised and perplexed expression, an unexpected source of help appeared.

"Oh..... such a rare coin."

The one who spoke to Emilia from behind was an old lady wearing spectacles.

"Rare?"

"Pass it over, let me have a look."

"Sure, please have a look."

The old lady took out a monocle used by watchmakers and closely examined the surface of the gold coin.

"Hm..... at the very least, this is not currency being used in modern Japan or the world, I have also never seen the engraving on the surface before..... but it seems like the gold portion is real."

"But Madam Kimura, though she did take out a real gold coin, we'll still be troubled as well."

The female staff shrugged and said this to the old lady known as Kimura, but the latter did not answer her.

"If you wish, I can buy this. Let me help you pay for this first. Come with me to my store after the bath. I'll pay you money after I have carefully appraised it."

She did not understand it completely, but Emilia understood that this old lady she met by coincidence was willing to exchange the gold coin for this country's currency.

After that, thanks to the old lady Kimura, Emilia entered the paid public bath successfully. Including how to use the facilities in the paid public bath, Kimura taught many things to Emilia, who did not know the method.

Unexpectedly, without wearing any armour, she could talk with other people so easily.

This was a huge shock for Emilia.

With this, she painfully realised that her unwillingness to put down her weapon and take off her defensive equipment because she did not know when she would encounter the Demon King had caused such a negative effect.

Emilia used a liquid which would produce a lot of bubbles to wash her hair, experienced a tap which could freely dispense cold water and hot water, a round cylinder which could blow hot air, and a smooth, shiny mirror. After obtaining many new experiences, she finally finished her bath after many days of not doing so.

Kimura also taught her how to use the equipment for washing clothes which was installed within the paid public bath.

"A foreigner not bringing a change of clothes, I admire your courage, but I don't commend it. The money used for buying things here, I will deduct it from the amount after I buy the coin from you."

After knowing that Emilia did not bring a change of clothes, though she felt a little exasperated, Kimura still helped Emilia buy underwear made from a material Emilia had never touched before from the vending machine in the changing room.

After putting on the underwear, Emilia waited in front of the equipment for washing clothes for twenty minutes.

Smelling of soap, her long sleeved shirt and pants made from hemp restored their dry state.

"Do you come from..... a country without any washing machines?"

Seeing that Emilia was so touched that she became speechless, Kimura showed a troubled smile.

Emilia, worried that the other party would become suspicious, quickly put on her clothes which had become clean, and was taken to Kimura's store.

Inside the store, a sign with the words 'Watches, Antiques, Precious Metals' was hung.

Kimura fixed the coin on top of a strange looking box and examined the coin with two cylinders.

"Hmm..... it looks similar to the ancient coins in Spain, but the purity of the gold is much higher..... five..... no, I'm willing to pay 70,000 yen. What do you think?"

She did not know if 70,000 was considered large or not, but she knew that Kimura had 'increased' from five to seven.

Once Emilia nodded, the old lady showed a rather strange smile and passed seven of the bank notes Emilia saw earlier to her.

"Thank you for the business. If you're facing any more troubles, you can come and find me."

Emilia, who continued using Idea Link during this time, understood in this instant that Kimura was a capable merchant.

"Thank you for the business."

This sentence contained the meaning of 'I made a good deal'.

To Kimura, being able to buy this coin with 70,000 was a very profitable transaction. This old lady would definitely sell the coin at a much higher price.

Other than that, Emilia obviously did not know this, but this transaction must be recorded regardless of how valuable the items were, but she had never seen such a document before.

However, this was fine.

Emilia never planned to stay in this country for that long in the first place, and talking with Kimura helped her accumulate many words and terms.

Most importantly, she understood that this amount of 70,000 yen would allow her to live in this country for some time.

After learning this much, she would have the ability to apologise to Yusa Keiko.

In addition, she had obtained money which could be used in this country.

After this, she could eat, bathe and wash her clothes whenever she wanted.

She needed to thank Kimura based on this fact alone.

Of course, this did not mean that everything had been solved.

Emilia still needed to return the bag to Yusa Keiko, apologise for entering without permission, and with regards to her original purpose of killing the Demon King, she had no clues at all.

The fact that she could not sense any demonic magic after this long was worrying.

Where were Demon King Satan and Demon General Alsiel hiding, and what were they planning?

“It should be impossible..... but perhaps a human is sheltering them.”

Even if the Demon King was injured, not many people could come into contact with his demonic magic and be completely unaffected. Although they had drifted to the same world, it was possible that the two of them were sent to locations far away from each other.

“I should find a method to obtain extensive information about this world.”

I might be staying here longer than I expected. Just as Emilia felt melancholic when she had this feeling.

“W-What is this smell?”

As Emilia, in a shameless manner, prepared to return to the room which she had entered illegally from Kimura's store, a smell drifted from an unknown location which strongly activated her feeling of hunger.

It smelled like chilli spices, but the instant her nose picked up this smell, her stomach, which only received water in the past few days, started to rumble loudly.

"What is..... this smell.....where is it coming from.....?"

Emilia walked forward, following the smell and, in the end, stood in front of a particular building.

It looked like a restaurant.

There was a ventilator opening outside the store, allowing the smells to drift out and whet the appetite, and there were products which looked like food shown within the store's display case.

There were many varieties on display, some were scenes of chopsticks picking up some noodles out of the bowl, and some scenes of spoons scooping up grains which had been stir fried or pan fried.

Emilia deduced that the numbers on top probably referred to the price, and compared it to the amount she had on her.

"I-I don't think I will be able to afford it!"

She could not keep it in anymore.

Emilia's body was craving 'cuisine'.

Not just any casually prepared cuisine which could fill the stomach, but cuisine seriously prepared by chefs which would bring happiness to her stomach.

"Chinese..... cuisine..... let's go!"

Emilia opened the glass door bravely.

“Welcome!”

A sound which she had heard many times was heard from within the store, and after close to two hours, Emilia had not left the store.

After filling her stomach with a lot of food she had never eaten before at the place known as a Chinese cuisine store, Emilia naturally returned to that room in the apartment.

That’s right, during this journey outdoors, Emilia learned the term ‘apartment’.

Normally, after obtaining money which could be used in this country, she would find an inn, but Emilia’s feet walked towards that apartment naturally.

Room 501 of ‘Urban Heights Eifuku’, that was the room Emilia had entered illegally.

Just like before, the window was not locked, Yusa Keiko’s bag and belongings were also intact.

Emilia, who felt like she had come home although she was an intruder, felt a tinge of guilt, but she still decided that she was going to sleep here today as well.

“Thinking about it.....”

Emilia casually surveyed the room.

For a building, this apartment was obviously newer than the paid public bath, Kimura’s precious metal store, and the Chinese cuisine store from before.

This was brand new amalgamated dwelling on such a large scale, why was no one living here?

Before returning to the room, she walked around the surrounding area once, but there were no signs of it being incomplete or damaged.

Thanks to that, Emilia obtained a place to stay for two days and temporary funds for

her activities, so she had no right to complain, but she was still bothered by this all the same.

Yusa Keiko's actual identity was still a mystery.

With regards to this, perhaps she should have chatted more with the old lady known as Kimura.

However, that old lady was an opponent who could not be underestimated.

Emilia still felt grateful to Kimura for the events at the paid public bath and the exchanging of money, but that old lady had seen through her, knowing that she was a suspicious person with an unclear identity.

Emilia had come to defeat the Demon King, she had no plans to, and no need to actively build a relationship with the people of this country, and if this country was a peaceful country, it was more important that she did not do so.

Based on this, Emilia should not build too close of a relationship with Yusa Keiko, either way, on moral principle, she had to apologise for scaring the other party and return the things which she had shamelessly borrowed.

"If only I could learn more about this country. Hmm~"

Sufficient sleep, a clean bath, and delicious cuisine.

A mind and body fully satisfied after such a long time, Emilia lay spread eagled on the floor and closed her eyes.

She may be ambushed in the morning, but currently, Emilia would be able to sense if anyone was approaching no matter how deeply she slept.

After she had closed her eyes, various memories of what happened after she had arrived in this country surfaced in the dark.

The shock she felt when she first arrived in this land filled with light with many stone towers concentrated together.

The first time she was approached by the police when walking on the street and running away when she was close to getting arrested.

Unable to enter any buildings, spending a few hours flying around the roofs of the stone towers (also known as skyscrapers) to look for shelter from the cold rain.

Spending three days outside, only drinking water from the public fountains.

She was discovered by the police again on the third day, and could not go to the same park anymore.

Because she could not hold in her hunger, she wanted to enter a store and use her gold and silver coins to buy something, but because she could not speak the language, the police were called again.

Talking about the food she had eaten the past few days, it was only the bread ends distributed by the bread stores (even so, it was at a level of deliciousness which was difficult to find in Ente Isla), and the mash distributed by the stores selling soft white cubes which seemed to be mashed cooked beans and did not have much taste (but could fill her stomach).

And where she arrived in the end was this apartment which she was staying illegally.

“It feels like I have not encountered anything good.....”

They were all memories which were more tragic than expected.

Emilia could not help but crouch over to hold back her tears.

When she first arrived here, she only had the thought that she had got something good by being able to lie down and rest in the balcony, but because the window happened to be unlocked, she was able to enter the room.

She was able to learn some things about this country in the end, but it was really just a coincidence.

She had strayed from her comrades in the new lands during the journey around Ente Isla, but she had never encountered a situation where she was completely unable to

communicate with anyone when arriving at a land for the first time.

Basically, no matter where they went, they were welcomed as the Hero and company who defeated Demon General Lucifer, Emilia only knew now, even if that part was not considered, the reason why she was able to avoid the many troubles during travelling was because of her comrades' experience and rank.

In the Western Continent protected by the Theocracy, there was no one who did not know Olba Meyer, one of the six Archbishops, the highest decision-making body in the Theocracy, and in countries on bad relations with the Theocracy, the reputation of the Court Sorceress of Saint Aire Empire, Emerada Etuva, was also a strong influence.

After leaving the Western Continent, having many mysterious connections all over the world, as long as Alberto was around, there was no problem they could not solve.

“Olba..... Em..... Alber.....”

Emilia called out her comrades' names softly.

Strong, kind, dependable, important comrades whom she could entrust her life and heart to.

None of them were around now.

“I want to see all of you.....”

Emilia sighed lightly and one tear flowed down her cheek, and without being aware of it, she fell asleep like this.

“.....Hmm?”

Emilia woke up because she felt a strange aura approaching.

Many humans were approaching. Emilia got up quickly, opened the door at the porch, and looked down from the corridor.

Close to ten men wearing blue and gray were gathered at the entrance of the apartment, and a vehicle carrying a large metal box was parked on the road in front of the apartment.

“That is?”

There was a lady mixed within the group of men. Yusa Keiko.

Feeling a dangerous aura, Emilia returned to the room. It seemed like this encounter would be different from before.

The men around her did not look like policemen, but these could be reinforcements Yusa Keiko found to chase her away.

“.....No matter what, I cannot stay here anymore.”

She wanted to apologise to the other party directly, but this was not the time to say these things.

Emilia placed Yusa Keiko's bag which she had packed last night in front of the porch, put on her armour again, and after turning around and glancing at the room once more as if she could not bear to leave it behind, Emi opened the window and flipped over the balcony.



“There really is one! There's a spirit! It would be better to exorcise every single room!”

“Idiot! Didn't I tell you not to say such unnecessary things in front of the renovators!?”

“But, there really is.....”

“Stop this already! You should clearly know the situation of Urban Heights Eifuku! Alarming the police because of a strange reason of spirit haunting during the time we need to increase the occupancy rate. What are we supposed to do if strange rumours spread!?”

“B-But..... before I came here, the surrounding neighbours have been making

enquiries at the company because they saw strange things.....”

“That’s enough! Just open the first rooms from the first to fifth floor!”

“U-Until the fifth floor? Won’t we be entering room 501 then! The spirit appeared there!”

“Just go already! What spirit will appear during the daytime!?”

“H-How can this be.....”

At the entry hall of Urban Heights Eifuku, a man and woman were having a heated discussion in low voices.

The woman was Yusa Keiko whom Emilia had met before, the man seemed to be her superior.

In front of the two people, a few employees who were wearing uniforms from the decorating company were looking at a large pile of documents to confirm the tasks they had to carry out later.

“I’m sorry! Can we start now?”

“You see!? They’re asking about it! Hurry and unlock the doors! We’re coming! I’m asking her to open the doors! Hey! Hurry up and go!”

The superior showed a huge smile at the manager from the other side, and ordered Keiko with an ogre-like expression.

“I’m returning to the agency at three o’clock in the afternoon, if you continue to delay this, I’m going to make you settle everything on your own.”

“I-I understand, I’ll, I’ll do it.”

Keiko, who looked like she was close to crying, ran up the stairs while holding a uniquely shaped key.

“Uuuu, why am I in charge of this kind of project.....”

Because the elevator was reserved for the renovators, wearing flat shoes which had no heels, Keiko ran up the stairs while complaining.

Urban Heights Eifuku was the worst performing apartment project in the history of the company 'Omura City Area Real Estate Pte Ltd', which Keiko worked for.

During the economic slump in the recent five years, the condominium sales within the city centre were still rising steadily.

The unorganised building of high rise condominiums at Tokyo Bay was representative of this trend, however, the competition of the condominium industry to attract customers in the city centre outskirts was getting more and more intense.

The unit value within Tokyo District 23 was on an increasing trend because of the transportation convenience with Ikebukuro Station, Shinjuku Station, Shibuya Station, Meguro Station, Osaki Station, Shinagawa Station, Tokyo Station and Ueno Station.

The key was not because of the area surrounding these various stations but the lands which were within the range of several stations leading to the JR, private, and underground trains.

From the Showa Era to the early years of the Heisei Era, people have avoided the city centre where the land was expensive, and the population in the suburbs and satellite cities such as Saitama, Chiba, and Kanagawa kept increasing, causing an obvious doughnut phenomenon. However, people were slowly returning to the city centre, creating a small doughnut phenomenon² to form around the terminal stations.

Amongst this, built at this perfect location, Urban Heights Eifuku was a large project with the fate of the company on the line, and everyone believed that it would be successful.

There was a Rapid Train station on the Keio Inokashira line, and it was also easy to go to Shibuya, Kichijoji and Shijuku, three areas within the city where people liked to gather.

The bus stop for the Keio bus in the Eifuku subdivision was also the bus stop for the first and last bus, it was easy to go anywhere in the city.

There were medium scale commercial facilities and a large-scale shopping street nearby, and the surroundings were made up of many old and quiet residual residential areas, so not only was it an area with many amenities nearby, the scenery from the high floors was amazing.

However, in reality, although Urban Heights Eifuku was only three years old, the occupancy rate was still a shocking zero percent, a ghost apartment.

Honestly speaking, there were no factors for failure in this project.

However, rather than walking on the path towards success, Urban Heights Eifuku had failed before standing on the starting point.

“In fact, this isn’t our fault. Sigh.....”

After opening room 401, Keiko looked up at the ceiling melancholically.

‘Eifuku’s futuristic living environment, beginning soon’, was the slogan for Urban Heights Eifuku.

The parent company of Omura City Area Real Estate Pte Ltd, Omura Group General Trading Company, had been pushing this project strongly since the construction began, so only half a year after the advertising began, including the penthouses on the top floors, the sales for the high floors had reached eighty percent.

The rental portions of the middle and low floors have also received many enquiries.

When everyone was sure that this project was going to succeed, Urban Heights Eifuku suddenly stepped off the red carpet to success.

The reason was because of some minor errors in the documents.

Because one part of the land which was bought was a land containing buried cultural property, there was a need to conduct development surveys before building a high rise building at that location.

This was a very normal procedure, but after that, the district agency pointed out that according to the records, the application should be filed sixty days before the

construction start date. The filing was submitted fifty nine days before the construction start date.

It had been a few months after the application was filed, and saying this when the construction was almost completed would only trouble others, but rules are rules.

To eliminate any problems before the completion, the city district company followed the law and conducted an investigation within the company.

This was when Hell began.

After conducting a large-scale investigation, many truths were discovered one after another which could not be explained away as an error in paperwork.

Close to completion, Urban Heights Eifuku was, simply put, an estate where many shortcuts were taken.

The constructions materials differed from the original plans and the structural calculations were watered down, leading to less materials than required being ordered. Both were huge problems enough to overturn the company, but after that they discovered scandals such as the insulation and earthquake resistance grades being tampered with, and that some employees had tampered with and falsified receipts, pocketing the excess budget. The problems had grown to such a large scale that it could not be solved by the company's internal department.

Since the successful sales had already reached eighty percent, the company had to accept criticism from various parties and face the prospects of damage compensations and legal proceedings. It was not just Omura City Area Real Estate Pte Ltd, their parent company Omura Group also suffered a rare huge drop in stock market.

The board members of Omura City Area Real Estate Pte Ltd were all changed. A board member on the Omura Merchant Association, the highest level of the Omura Group was also forced to resign. Having just entered the working society, Yusa Keiko could not imagine the number of people who had lost their jobs during this period.

Keiko experienced a stormy year after entering the working society, and two years after this nightmarish completion, she was assigned to the 'Urban Heights Eifuku

Restoration Project’.

They wanted to resume the promotion of Urban Heights Eifuku which had fallen into Hell.

As long as they did not sell the land and the building, and restored the building back to the state it should have been in by their own efforts, they would regain the trust they had lost, this was the direction pushed down by the group.

The group picked out all the falsehoods which caused issues at that time and spent three years to renovate one apartment building.

The project and company had failed, but there should still be value in the location.

They were probably unable to reach the commercial scale of the original plan, but if they could recover some of the trust they had lost, that would be the best result.

“So I know that it will be really bad if rumours of spirits get out..... but there really is one.....”

In the corridor illuminated by the morning sun, Keiko gulped as she stood in front of Room 501.

Keiko saw it.

A human disappeared before her eyes. A stench she had never smelled before. A door which opened by itself. A faint and terrifying voice although there was not one around. A voice calling out to her, chasing her. A spirit light floating in the air, and a figure of an armoured Samurai behind that spirit fire.

“Uuuu, I hate this, I don’t want to go in.”

Nothing had happened yet, but Keiko looked like she was going to cry. However, she did not want to get scolded by her superior.

A spirit in front of her and her supervisor behind her. How did she end up in such an unreasonable situation?

Even so, her superior and company were working very hard.

In a slightly different way from before, Urban Heights Eifuku would affect the fate of their company. For the sake of carrying out the promotion plans to the customers today, Keiko also survived a harsh journey.

She could not stop here.

“Spirits do not exist spirits do not exist spirits do not exist spirits do not exist!”

Remembering all the hard times she had experienced until now, and the fact that it was still morning, Keiko made up her mind and opened the door to Room 501.

“.....Ugh.”

There was nothing.

No unusual stench.

Of course there was no spirit fire or armoured Samurai.

“Fuuuu.”

Keiko exhaled the breath she had been holding.

She must have been too tense and saw an illusion. She tried to convince herself with this, but Keiko still walked into the room nervously.

“Ah! My bag!”

She noticed that her bag was in the middle of the room.

Last night, when she ran out of the police station in fright after hearing a spirit’s voice, it was only then did she realise that she had dropped her bag.

Keiko definitely knew that her bag, filled with the important tools for her job, had dropped here, but she did not dare to go back last night to get it.

“Ah~ thank god! It’s here after all. Yeah, seems like the things inside are fine.”

Keiko rushed into the room and roughly confirmed the contents of the bag.

“.....Eh?”

Then immediately realised that something was strange.

“.....Eh?”

She turned back to look at the porch door which she had just opened.

Last night, once she entered the porch, she immediately ran away from the spirit fire and armoured Samurai.

Why was her bag in a room which had been locked?

“S-S-Strange? Eh, this is, what is going on?”

Could it be that she did not see a spirit, but a suspicious person who had sneaked into the room?

However, if the other party was a human, then it would be more difficult to understand. How did the intruder enter this room, and how did the person escape after the porch door was locked?

This was the fifth floor.

To guard against burglars, there were no emergency stairs or pipes on the external wall, the emergency ladder was designed in such a way that it would not be controlled from the lower floors.

“.....Ugh!”

Keiko rushed to the balcony and discovered that the windows were not locked.

However, the emergency ladder in Room 501 was still folded neatly.

“W-Who put my bag into the room?”

If this was done by a human, how did that person enter, and how did the person leave the room?

“Could it be, that the person’s still around?”

Considering that her superior and the renovators were downstairs, Keiko surveyed the room resolutely.

The toilet, bathroom, and closet did not show any signs of anyone entering them.

If so, only the balcony next door was left.

“There’s no one.”

Even if normal people ignored the rules, the structure of Urban Heights Eifuku was such that people could only use the external balcony to move around. Between the two balconies, there was a few meters of wall with no place which could be grabbed, but this distance could be crossed via jumping.

“How, how was it.....”

Keiko, who decided to tell Kazumura downstairs that all the rooms have been opened, subconsciously reached into her bag--

“.....Strange?”

After realising she was missing something which should normally be there, she sucked in a breath.

“~~Ugh!”

Some distance away from the apartment, Emilia was troubled.

She was holding a strange board with a glowing surface.

“I took it out accidentally.....”



The evening sun caused Urban Heights Eifuku to cast a long shadow in the city.

Pale faced and holding a DSLR camera, Keiko watched evening sun.

Currently, she was the only person in the apartment.

Her supervisor and the renovators who moved the furniture in have already left, but Keiko’s work was just beginning.

After the sun had set, she had to film and take photos of the appearance of the first rooms from the first and fifth floor at night.

Photos which could be used for the promotional materials would then be chosen from the recorded material.

Normally, advertising agencies or professional photographers would be hired to take the photos used in advertisements, but in the Urban Heights Restoration Project, other than things which could only be obtained by outsourcing, all sales related tasks had to be done by an employee of the company.

The upper management had said that this was something which had to be done to regain their reputation, comply with business standards, and reduce costs, but to the people doing it, this was only a method for one person to take on more tasks, decreasing the overall efficiency.

Keiko, who had just gotten used to her job and was considered a newbie in her department, happened to be the most suitable person for this kind of job.

Keiko would normally convince herself that it could not be helped in this situation, but it was completely different this time.

There was an unexplainable existence in this apartment.

She did not know if it was a spirit or an intruder, but Keiko experienced many strange

things.

For example, the strange incident where her bag was placed in an impossible location.

She did not hear any sounds from unidentified origins, but her newly bought Slimphone had disappeared from her bag, causing her to feel uneasy.

Her mobile phone and bag had disappeared for two days, but she had been so busy that she had been unable to go to the mobile phone store to report the loss.

Work related calls could be handled with the phones distributed by the company, but as Keiko frequently used her own phone during work, this was very inconvenient.

Therefore, she called her own Slimphone last night, and an unknown person picked up the call.

It felt as if the voice from the phone and the voice which called out to her at the apartment were very similar, but because the voice sounded very far away, she could not confirm it. In the first place, her memories were vague because she had been scared out of her mind.

“When it’s night, I’m going to quickly take some pictures and go home!”

Keiko shouted as if to get rid of her terrifying memories, and took the chance to revise the shooting locations which had been picked beforehand in the various rooms, changing her camera mode to night time indoor shooting.

“Hm~ this lighting is an issue after all. It would be better to move it a little.”

The renovators which Keiko and her supervisor found placed the various furniture in each room in a magnificent manner.

It was not just for one night, Room 201, catering to families and Room 501, catering to people living alone, would be used as display rooms and would be opened to the public for some time.

“The water usage area is a focal point too. Since we used the newest model this year for the taps, it would be a waste not to take a photo of it.”

She was seen as a newbie in her department, but having worked for three years, she still accumulated three years of pride and knowledge.

As long as she switched her attitude, she would focus on her work and forget about everything else.

During this time, the night scenery outside the window darkened.

Keiko turned on the interior lighting one after another and started to prepare for the photo shooting.

At this moment, someone knocked on the door of Room 501 from outside.

“Uh?”

Keiko almost dropped the camera in her hands.

Who was that?

It was probably her superior or someone from the company. It might also be the renovators who forgot something.

However, no matter who it was, why were they not using master key to enter?

Just as Keiko froze, the knocking was heard again.

At this moment, she remembered that the porch door was not locked.

So this was no longer an issue of not having a master key. If it was someone from the company, they would just open the door and enter.

“Who, is that.....”

Being careful not to make any sound while walking, Keiko activated the intercom in the living room which had a screen.

“.....?”

The image captured by the high definition wide angle camera was shown on the screen, and a long-haired lady who she had never seen before was standing there.

The casually dressed lady was wearing a simple white shirt and long pants, and a huge cloth bag was placed at her feet.

At least that figure who was looking left and right with a troubled expression did not look like a spirit.

Keiko touched her chest and breathed out in relief.

Her attire was concerning, but it felt like the rental furniture vendor had bought over something she forgot.

If they knew that it was an apartment which was going to be sold, it would be reasonable not to use the intercom.

“Sorry, I’m opening the door now.”

Keiko pressed down on her pounding chest and shouted towards the intercom.

After that, for unknown reasons, the lady in the video suddenly started to survey the surroundings in a bewildered manner.

She probably shocked the other party because she replied too late. Keiko opened the porch door while thinking this--

“Eh?”

--then froze on the spot, speechless.

The lady had disappeared. And only the cloth bag was left.

“.....Ehh?”

Keiko looked left and right, but there was no one on the long corridor.

It was less than ten seconds from the time she answered the intercom to the time she

opened the door.

Were humans able to suddenly disappear in less than ten seconds without any sound of footsteps being heard?

“What is this?”

Keiko, who could not comprehend the situation, mumbled this, and as she took one step out of the room, she kicked the cloth bag at her feet.

“Clank?”

The sound of hard objects hitting each other was heard.

Keiko opened the cloth bag, and inside, she discovered--

“A-Armour? Eh, ah?”

Keiko could not help but jump backwards, falling to the ground.

This looked like western style armour.

This differed slightly from the description of an armoured Samurai, but it was still enough to make Keiko remember the spirit from that night.

“What, what is going on?”

No matter how much she rubbed her eyes, or how much time passed, the armour in the cloth bag did not disappear.

Keiko sat down on the floor in fright, unable to move.

On the other hand, Emilia kept watch on that apartment so she could return the glowing board to Yusa Keiko.

As Yusa Keiko had not shown signs of coming out after the men had returned, Emilia

had thought that she could grasp Yusa Keiko's movements if she continued waiting.

Coincidentally, the lights of that room lit up, Emilia ran over quickly and knocked on the door to return the glowing board.

However, as the voice which responded did not seem to come from within the room but a completely unrelated direction, Emilia thought that Yusa Keiko had prepared troops to ambush her, so she could not help but hide herself.

By the way, Emilia was hiding outside the corridor.

In other words, she had stuck herself on the exterior wall of the apartment.

However, after hiding herself, she realised that not only were there no reinforcements, Yusa Keiko was the only person in the room.

What is going on?

After a short period of suffocating silence.

".....Uwahhhhh."

"Eh?"

Suddenly hearing Yusa Keiko's crying, Emilia got a shock.

"I hate this, I had enough..... what is going on..... did I do something wrong..... uawhhhh!"

"Eh? Eh?"

"I didn't do anything wrong..... it's all the fault of those people who took shortcuts in the first place! Why do I have to encounter such things!?"

Emilia, who was stuck on the wall, could not understand this.

"I had no responsibility in this, why do I have to be scolded, spend so much time and experience such terrifying things for something which happened a few years ago....."

I've had enough!"

Emilia felt a surge of guilt which she had never felt before.

She came to apologise and she made the other party cry instead.

She did not understand half of what Yusa Keiko said, but she could confirm that her actions had scared the other party again.

Emilia, who decided that she must apologise directly this time, peeked out and said, “Er, erhm, I’m sorry, for scaring you.....”

[illegible]

Naturally, Yusa Keiko let out a scream and, abandoning the company camera, she ran into the room.

[illegible]

While screaming, Keiko fell over in the room.

There was no place to stand on the exterior side of the corridor, yet a lady's face appeared there.

Only spirits could show their face in that kind of place, for Yusa Keiko who had experienced strange things the past few days, it was impossible to tell her not to be afraid.

“Stay away stay awayyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy!”

“Er, erhm, please wait a moment! I’m not a suspicious person.”

If this was known as not suspicious, then the world would be peaceful forever.

“Evil spirits begone evil spirits begone!”

“E-Evil spirit? No..... I’m just.....”

“Noooooooo, someone save meeeeeeee!”

“.....◇◇◇◇! ◇◇◇◇!”

“Eep!”

At this instant, Keiko’s was surrounded by a warm air bubble.



“Evil spirts begone evil spirits begone!”

“E-Evil spirit? No..... I’m just.....”

“Noooooooo, someone save meeeeeeee!”

“.....Oh seriously! Take it as a plea from me, just listen to me already!”

Emilia walked towards Yusa Keiko who was hugging her head and crouching over, placing her fingers on Keiko’s forehead--

“Connect!”

“Eep!”

--and transmitted the telekinetic wave for Idea Link.

At this moment, Emilia’s and Keiko’s ideas connected.

“.....Do you understand, what I’m saying?”

“Y-Yeah?”

Yusa Keiko replied in a dazed manner.

The instant Keiko’s focus began to return after swept away by fear and met Emilia’s

eyes--

“Who..... are you?”

“.....Long story short, I.....”

“The spirit of an employee who had to take responsibility and was forced to resign because the apartment failed?”

“.....am from a place different from this world..... eh?”

It was too late to find out now, but Emilia confirmed that she had been misunderstood to be a spirit and the expression on her face changed subtly.

The concept of ‘spirits’ in Ente Isla was different from Japan, but both refer to the dead wandering in the world of the living.

“A different world..... refers to which world?”

That world was probably referred to Heaven mentioned by the Theocracy.

It felt a place where spirits would be guided to after death of their living body.

“Uh, it’s not like that..... anyway, I wanted to meet you and apologise to you directly.”

“Apologise.....”

“I entered this place without permission and scared you, I’m really sorry. I don’t have any bad intentions. I was just unclear about the rules of this world.”

“Are..... you human?”

“Y-Yes, so I’m not some spirit.....”

“Even if you can suddenly disappear, or float on the exterior wall of the corridor?”

“Uh, to someone who can use spells, this is something very normal..... this country doesn’t have these kinds of techniques?”

After Emilia thought about it for a while, and used a spell which would not be that shocking.

“Floating in the air like this.....”

“This is a dream this is a dream that’s right this must be a dream there are many spirits with legs in this world in the first place it’s a dream dream dream.....”

“Sorry. I won’t ask strange things anymore.”

Emilia did not expect that just having her body float above the floor a little was enough to frighten Keiko that much.

From this, even if Yusa Keiko died from shock and fright the day Emilia produced the illumination or flame, Emilia could not complain.

“Then, I came today to return this.”

“Dream dream dream dream dream.....”

“Please accept this.”

“Ah, yes, eh? Ahhh! My mobile phone!”

Emilia held out the Slimphone and after seeing it, Keiko got a huge shock.

“Is this..... known as a mobile phone?”

Emilia handed the glowing board which was known as a mobile phone back to Keiko.

“What tool is this?”

Emilia scrutinised it carefully in surprise, and asked this to Keiko who was mumbling softly ‘it feels like things have turned a little strange’, the latter responded in a dumbfounded manner.

“Mobile phones did not exist in your era?”

“Hmm?”

Emilia was troubled for a while, then immediately understood what Keiko meant.

“Seriously, I’m not an ancient spirit, so stop misunderstanding already.”

“I heard that some spirits are not aware that they have died.”

“I already said I’m not a spirit! Just treat me as a foreigner who is in this country for the first time!”

“But your Japanese is so good?”

“That is also because of spells..... seriously! This is so troublesome!”

Emilia was very troubled, but at this time, she knew clearly that Keiko knew nothing about spells. However, if spells did not exist here, this meant that the cultural background which Emilia had grew up in could not be used in this country at all.

“Anyway! I always wanted to apologise to you! I’m sorry for scaring you so many times, and entering this room without permission!”

“T-That’s it! Since you admitted intruding into this room, and, and you’re not a spirit, then how did you come in here!?”

“Didn’t you see it just now!? I used the flying spell you saw just now and came up to the balcony to rest, then I discovered that the windows to this room were not locked!”

During this time, Emilia was continuously learning the language of this country which was used by the other party, but she was still unable to fully grasp the various things she truly wanted to know about this country.

While it was easier to obtain concepts from Keiko than old lady Kimura, if she wanted to pull out the information she wanted, she would need to spend more time.

However, if she interacted with Keiko for too long, it was difficult to guarantee that her existence would not affect Keiko’s life unnecessarily.

Worrying about her future, Emilia became moody.



“I already said I’m not a spirit! Just treat me as a foreigner who is in this country for the first time!”

The whole time, Keiko felt something was off.

“But your Japanese is so good?”

She had already spoken with the lady who had suddenly appeared for a few minutes, but the voice of the lady in front of her seemed to echo in her cranium from a faraway place like a radio, making her feel that something was strange.

The words said by the other party did reach her ears. However, these sounds and the content of what she understood were a little different. Keiko, unable to understand what was going on, began to feel more and more confused.

“That is also because of ◇◇..... seriously! This is so troublesome!”

And in what the lady said, there were occasionally some terms which she did not understand.

When she heard terms she could not understand, the strangeness felt in her brain would produce noise like a radio tuned to a wrong frequency, and this noise would grow louder and louder.

“Anyway! I always wanted to apologise to you! I’m sorry for scaring you so many times, and entering this room without permission!”

“T-That’s it! Since you admitted intruding into this room, and, and you’re not a spirit, then how did you come in here!?”

“Didn’t you see it just now!? I used the ◇◇◇◇◇ you saw just now and came up to the balcony to rest, then I discovered that the windows to this room were not locked!”

“Even if you said that the window was unlocked, you wouldn’t be able to come up to

the fifth floor directly.....!"

The information transmitted by the lady was difficult to absorb.

Sometimes, even if the other party was talking about some familiar things, it still felt as if she was hearing it for the first time.

Just before waking up, the dream world and reality would intersect, Keiko felt that she was stuck in this state, and at this moment, the lady spoke.

"Anyway, I swear that I will not appear in this room anymore, and I will not cause you any trouble anymore!"

"Oh....."

"So..... at the end, I want to ask you something..... no, I hope you can tell me this."

"Yes?"

"This mobile phone, what tool is this? I heard your voice yesterday through this mobile phone, is this like the ◇◇◇◇ of ◇◇◇◇, a tool used to talk to someone far away?"

What is a mobile phone? Was the other party actually asking this seriously?

"Rather than a mobile phone..... this is a Slimphone.....but....."

A Slimphone was a type of mobile phone, other than making calls, using the technology of big data communication, it has the function to serve as a mobile communication endpoint device. These Slimphones were being sold at the three large telecommunication companies and some internet providers in Japan.

If a person wanted to buy a Slimphone, they had to go to a mobile phone seller or an electronics store to choose a model and a plan, then buy it by paying in one go or in installments.

"Eh, what is this?"

The mobile phone Keiko used was the newest model released by DoCoDeMo. She had

decided to buy a new phone because her old feature phone had broken, but Keiko was not good with electronics in the first place, so she only got used to it only recently.

“Wait, wait a minute, I didn’t plan to ask about this in the first place.....”

When changing mobile phones, because her old phone contract was signed under her father whose home was in Aomori, in order to change the contract to her own name, she even asked her family to send proof that they were father and daughter. Because she only needed her identification documents when she wanted to change her mobile phone in high school, there was a period of time when she did not know what to do at all.

“S-Strange! Even these kinds of things.....”

It was only at that time did Keiko find out that her parents had been helping her pay her phone bills during the first two years she had been working, and when she saw the bank account transcript which was sent to her, she cried because she hit her deeply that she was truly staying very far away from her parents.

At the beginning, when she was hired by the famous and reputable Omura Group, her parents were happy for her, however Keiko was immediately involved in the commotion surrounding Urban Heights Eifuku, and in her first year after entering working society, her mental state had become very fatigued.

Within the chaotic company, newbies were thrown onto the scenes to face many issues without finishing their training. Many of her comrades in the same batch had disappeared during the first year. However, Keiko had lived alone in the city when she was studying, and at that time, when she was working as the customer service agent at DoCoDeMo’s call centre, she had pulled through in the end regardless of how much she had been scolded by others, or how many unreasonable inquiries she had received. Because she had this kind of experience, she could survive through that period.

When the Urban Heights Eifuku Restoration Project ended, she had planned to go home and visit her family, something which she had not done in three years since she started working.

“No..... if this goes on.....!”

At this instant, Keiko’s consciousness was momentarily surrounded by darkness.



Keiko’s thoughts rushed in like an angry wave.

“Eh, what is this?”

Emilia felt troubled, she only asked about the tool called a mobile phone, but before Keiko opened her mouth, her thoughts and memories related to the ‘mobile phone’ flowed continuously into Emilia’s brain, as if both their brains had connected.

“Wait, wait a minute, I didn’t plan to ask about this in the first place.....”

Even the series of events detailing how Keiko ended up being involved with this building unfolded in Emilia’s brain with such clarity that it felt like she was seeing everything in person.

At the same time, everything Keiko needed to know to study, work, and survive in this country called Japan spread to Emilia’s brain.

“S-Strange! Even these kinds of things.....”

The face of a middle-aged man she had never seen before, was it the face of Keiko’s father? The snow build-up in her hometown of Aomori was very deep, that stern expression and deep-set features was very similar to the men living deep in the mountains of the Northern Continent of Ente Isla.

That father seemed like he did not talk much, but he loved Keiko deeply, and Keiko understood this, so to not humiliate her father, she did not slack off and studied hard.

The work at DoCoDeMo was difficult but the hourly pay was high, allowing Keiko to earn enough money to support herself during her job search without relying that much on her family.

After the work related to the apartment was done, she wanted to return home to visit

her parents.

“No..... if this goes on.....!”

Emilia grabbed her head and shouted.

“Dispel connection! Ah!”

Emilia forcefully broke off the Idea Link, stopping her connection with Keiko.

Keiko panted lightly, and closed her eyes.

As for Emilia, her eyes were wide open, she was sweating cold sweat, and gasping for air.

“Just now..... that..... I never thought Idea Link, would have this kind of effect.....”

Emilia looked at her shaking palm, and shuddered because of the unbelievable situation.

That was definitely Idea Link going out of control. Her forehead was burning as if she had a fever, her mind was blank and her heart was beating too vigorously.

Most importantly, she realised that she had used up a lot of stamina in a relatively short amount of time.

“My holy magic..... went out of control?”

Only this possibility was left.

A corresponding amount of holy magic had to be consumed when using spells, but Idea Link should not require that much holy magic.

Moreover, this was to establish communication between her mind and another person. If the holy magic reversed flow accidentally, not only would it hurt the other party, her mind would also be in danger.

However, Emilia had never failed in her control of Idea Link before.

This was just like the memory release spell used during criminal investigations where they extracted the contents of the other party's mind.

Any spells related to memories were advanced spells, Emilia only knew the existence of such spells but had never learned them. At most, she only knew the spell to temporarily seal memories.

And she had only succeeded when sealing the recent memories of children who had been traumatised by the disasters caused by the Demon King Army. If it had to be done on adults with strong sense of self, only Emerada or Olba could carry it out.

“What is going on? Magic control..... ugh.....”

Emilia felt a wave of dizziness and had to sit on the floor.

“Why..... even when losing control, Idea Link shouldn't tire out someone this much.....”

After Emilia said this, she immediately looked towards Keiko who had closed her eyes and hung her head.

This country had no concept of spells. This country did not have spells. No spells meant.....

“No holy magic?”

Once she said it, the fear brought about by this fact tightened around Emilia's heart.

The holy magic in Ente Isla's atmosphere was an important energy source for spells.

The humans in Ente Isla all absorbed holy magic in varying amounts throughout their lives.

However, there was no holy magic in this country known as Japan. No, perhaps this world, the whole Earth had no holy magic.

Holy magic capacity varied from person to person, and it was not rare to have people who could not use spells at all.

Even so, everyone would still absorb holy magic, Emilia did not know what would happen when a person ran out of holy magic completely.

“There..... really is none?”

Emilia touched Keiko’s hand and emitted a weak sonar into her body.

“.....Yah!”

At this moment, as if she had been injected with stimulants, Keiko opened her eyes.

“T-There really isn’t any.....”

Keiko’s body did not return any holy magic response at all.

The reaction from Keiko just now was due to holy magic accumulating in the heart, a normal characteristic.

“S-Strange, why am I..... ah, Spirit-san.....”

She understood the term spirit, but because she had not accumulated enough vocabulary, Emilia could not even understand half of what Keiko was saying if she did not use Idea Link.

However, if she continued to connect with Keiko, not only was she unable to guarantee Keiko’s safety, she did not know how it would affect her as well.

Perhaps she was unable to replenish holy magic in this country.

Before she could confirm if her conclusion was correct, continuing to stay here was not a good idea.

Emilia judged that it was time to leave.

“Keiko-san.”

“Eh? Strange? Ah, yes.”

Keiko replied after touching her ears.

“I’m sorry. I still caused you trouble in the end. However, I swear to you again. I will definitely not steal your things. And I will not leak out or abuse the knowledge I have gained from you. I will never..... have you encounter terrifying experiences because of me.”

“O-Oh.....”

“You will forget me afterwards, but while harbouring feelings of gratitude and guilt, I will still tell you my name. My name is Emilia Justina. I am a Hero from another world..... who will bring calamity to this world.”

“He.....ro?”

“Please do your best at work. I will support you..... goodbye, I’m really, sorry.”



“Keiko-san.”

“Eh? Strange? Ah, yes.”

Keiko, who was unaware that she had lost consciousness, got a shock from the voice which, unlike before, transmitted clearly into her ears, then replied on reflex.

“I’m sorry. I still caused you trouble in the end. However, I swear to you again. I will definitely not steal your things. And I will not leak out or abuse the knowledge I have gained from you. I will never..... have you encounter terrifying experiences because of me.”

“O-Oh.....”

“You will forget me afterwards, but while harbouring feelings of gratitude and guilt, I will still tell you my name. My name is Emilia Justina. I am a Hero from another world..... who will bring calamity to this world.”

“He.....ro?”

Feeling perplexed, Keiko blinked, then the lady who seemed to be called Emilia, stretched her hand in front of Keiko's face.

"Please do your best at work. I will support you..... goodbye, I'm really, sorry."

Something like a breeze blew out from Emilia's palm--

When she came to her senses, Keiko was already lying on a hospital bed.



One month after that, when Urban Heights Eifuku went on sale again, the signing of the contracts for the sale and rent portions had reached twenty percent of the total. It was only twenty percent, but they had to admit that this was already considered a very good result.

This caused everyone in the company to painfully realise that the world had not forgotten the bad reviews on this place.

Most importantly, what happened to Yusa Keiko at the apartment was leaked to the public, then this incident lumped together with other incidents which were hotly discussed at that time, causing Urban Heights Eifuku's past to be reported by some media outlets, greatly damaging the project.

The morning following that incident, a colleague had visited Urban Heights Eifuku because they were worried about Keiko who had not returned, and they discovered her unconscious form.

There was no life-threatening danger, but the fact that an employee of the apartment's management company had fainted for unknown reasons and was taken away by an ambulance was viewed as a serious matter.

During the same period, near Harajuku, Yoyogi, and Hatsudai, there were many cases of pedestrians suddenly losing consciousness because of unknown reasons.

Because the cause was unknown, irresponsible conjectures such as gas leakage or

terrorist attacks started to spread, and Keiko's incident was also exaggerated using these conjectures.

Furthermore, it was exposed that the company did not do anything when the surrounding residents had repeatedly reported to the agency managing Urban Heights Eifuku about a suspicious person and strange happenings, and Yusa Keiko had continuously reported the strange occurrences on the scene when she investigated, forcing the City Area Real Estate to improve on its internal procedures.

Keiko did not know what had happened to her at all, and it felt as if something was stuck in her heart even after she was discharged from the hospital.

Keiko still remembered that she had been scared by a spirit, but strangely, she was convinced that the spirit would never appear again.

This was about her, yet she did not know anything.

When she woke up in the hospital, she had been asked many questions by the police and firefighters about the incident where she had lost consciousness, but Keiko, who did not remember and had no impression of anything, was unable to give any clear answers.

She had something which could be used as a clue, but that thing was no longer with Keiko.

That was the DSLR camera Keiko brought with her for work.

The day before Keiko was found, the last photo she took was the upside-down picture of the porch of Room 501.

There was a photo of a bag like thing placed in front of the open door and an image of what seemed like a human face looking in from the exterior wall of the corridor, but it was too blurred to make anything out.

Keiko was asked about what those things were, but she could only show a perplexed expression.

In the end, Keiko was the last victim of the incidents where people were losing

consciousness in various parts of the city, and the incident was slowly forgotten when there were no more strange occurrences at Urban Heights Eifuku. Keiko was also transferred to the retail department.

“What exactly had happened?”

She was one of the people involved in the incident which had shaken society, and Keiko found this intriguing, but she had a feeling that the series of incidents reported on the news did not match what she had experienced.

The ‘Fainting Incidents’ which were reported earlier were all suddenly feeling a wave of cold air while walking on the streets and immediately losing consciousness, and the victims did not remember what had happened afterwards.

But Keiko did not remember feeling unwell, and she was not walking on the streets then.

Amongst those people identified as the ‘victims’, Keiko was the only person who was found indoors.

All the rooms on the fifth floor where Keiko was found were all seen as haunted rooms, and the rent was less than half the price compared to the rooms on the other floors, but to today, no clients were willing to stay on the fifth floor.

The reviews on the apartment had already dropped to rock bottom, but the reason Keiko went to Urban Heights Eifuku in the first place was because the nearby residents reported that ‘they saw a strange light’ or ‘it seems like someone entered’.

In addition, an employee of the management company was involved in a mysterious incident, the fact that there were clients was already a strange occurrence.

This in-between building age of three years was already enough for someone to want to investigate the background of the apartment, if someone interested in this incident did a search on the internet, they could even find websites set up by bored people who had arranged the past scandals and this incident into an easy to understand format.

Especially all the rooms on the fifth floor where Keiko was found, even if their rent

was significantly lower, forget about people moving in, no one had called to ask about them.

Until yesterday.

“Oh, it’s almost time for the appointment.”

Yesterday, a client contacted the retail department and said that they wanted to move in to Urban Heights Eifuku, requesting for Yusa Keiko to be the one responsible for the liaising.

This was not done through the Omura Group or an estate agency, this person had called the retail department directly.

The other party seemed to be a young lady, and she had specified Room 501, the room with the problems.

Keiko had felt confused when she picked up the phone.

No one had died there before, yet all advertisements and documents related to the rooms on the fifth floor were recorded as ‘needing special explanation’.

She did not know if the lady had seen those advertisements, but since the rooms were labelled as ‘needing special explanation’, according to the procedures, the staff responsible would have to notify the client about the related content.

Keiko was the person involved, so it was a little awkward to say it, but work was work.

Just as Keiko gathered her courage and planned to talk about the various facts surrounding Room 501, the lady interrupted her on the phone--

“I know all about it. I understand everything about this, but I still want to rent this room.”

--and said this.

Since the other party had said this much, Keiko had no reason to reject her.

The other rooms getting rented out quickly after a person started to stay in one of the rooms was also something which happened frequently.

Keiko immediately made preparations for the signing of the contract and waited for the lady to visit at the appointed time.

In the end, the person that came was a young lady with long hair, wearing a suit and carrying a shoulder bag.

She should have been around the same age as Keiko, or younger than her. Her appearance seemed to be that of a person who had just entered working society, but her expression contained an aura of a person who had seen much of the world.

Her client had come, but Keiko suddenly forgot how to react. When she saw the lady's face, her brain reacted to something.

I seem to have seen that person somewhere before.....?

"Hello. I made an appointment before, my name is Yusa."

".....Ah, my apologies. Welcome. Please take a seat."

After hearing the other party's voice, Keiko came back to her senses.

That's right, the client's last name was 'Yusa'.

The kanji was different, but the pronunciation was similar to her own last name, perhaps she had accidentally confused herself with other things because of this.

"Thank you for taking the time to come down today..... erhm, I picked up your call from before, my last name is also 'YUSA', just that it's written this way."

"Yes. Nice to meet you."

The client who called herself Yusa bowed slightly. On a second thought, since the other party specifically asked for her when contacting the company, Keiko did not need to emphasise that their last names were pronounced similarly.

“Then, with regards to the room you want to rent, Room 501 of Urban Heights Eifuku, have you seen the actual room before?”

“Yeah, I saw it a few times. I viewed it when it was opened to public as a sample room setup.”

Not only had she seen the room a few times, she even planned to stay in it? Keiko was shocked once again.

“With regards to this room, there are some things I have to explain to you first, if you change your mind afterwards, we can introduce other rooms to you later, please confirm this first.”

“Alright. But I wish to confirm something first, if I do not mind those things, I can rent it, right?”

“Eh? Y-Yes, you are correct.”

It appeared that this Yusa-san had a strong determination.

There were people in the world who did not care about haunted houses at all, but Room 501 was a room meant for singles. Yusa-san also mentioned that she was living by herself when she was renting.

A lady living alone on a problematic floor where there were no other residents, this made others feel that she was a very brave person.

“As long as it is not a situation where the floor has holes, the porch has no door, or the water and electricity is not connected, I plan to rent that room.”

After Keiko finished explaining everything, Yusa-san’s choice did not change.

It was the room at the core of the hauntings, but the person’s intentions to move in was still this strong, this was of course the most ideal situation.

From Keiko’s standpoint, she had no reason to say anything more to a person who still wanted to rent the room after knowing it was haunted, so she initiated the procedure to sign the contract.

“Then please fill in the number we can use to contact you in the bolded box here, and fill in your workplace here too..... oh my.”

Keiko had an impression of the lady’s mobile phone and workplace.

Most importantly, after seeing the name below the leaser’s field, she started to suspect if it was really just a coincidence.

“Is something wrong?”

“Ah, no. Erhm, your mobile phone is the same as mine..... and, I actually worked here before.”

“Is that so?”

As if she felt surprised, the female client smiled.

“Not only that.....”

“Yes.”

“Your name is very similar to mine, so it feels like I can’t see you as a total stranger..... I’m sorry, saying such unnecessary things.”

“No. Now that you mentioned it, it is very similar. Perhaps we have meet each other someplace before.”

That smile touched a deep part of Keiko’s memories, but the other party was someone she was meeting for the first time after all.

“.....Then, because you wish to move in tomorrow, I will now explain the various facilities to you. There is no management staff there, so we will conduct an onsite tour now.”

Keiko took the key to Room 501 and stood up, driving to Urban Heights Eifuku, which was just a few minutes’ drive away from the sales office.

Passing through the hall which had an autolock and taking the elevator to the fifth

floor, the two reached the quiet corridor.

“.....”

After reaching this place, Keiko was still unable to shake off the feeling that she knew this lady.

Did she see something in this corridor at that time? However, the more she tried to recall anything, the more she was unable to grasp those odd memory fragments, like a dream she could not recall after waking up.

After unlocking the room and entering, Keiko realised that the room was empty.

Keiko then remembered something.

This room was only used as a sample display for one week. Because placing furniture in a haunted house no one was living in was not ideal, the renovators had already collected the furniture.

“Yusa-san.....”

“Yes?”

“The first time you came here, when was that?”

“When was it, I wonder?”

The lady did not answer, and only smiled slightly.

“However, I feel that this is a good room. I like it a lot. There are rumours of spirits haunting the place, but seeing how the situation is, the spirits might just feel bad about it and not appear anymore.”

“Uh.....”

Unable to keep up with the situation, Keiko showed a perplexed expression, and after entering the room, the client who exuded a mysterious aura closed her eyes in the middle of the living room and breathed in.

“The things about this room..... I will never forget it. In this country, this room was the first place which provided me with a sense of peace.....”

“Eh?”

The lady spoke in a language Keiko had not heard before, surprising her.

“Anyway, I have caused you a lot of trouble, thank you for your care. Yusa-san, thanks to you, I was able to find a way to stay here. Really, thank you very much.”

The lady known as Yusa Emi, who gave the impression that they had met before, ignored Keiko’s confusion and bowed deeply to her.



“Thinking back on it now, it’s not enough no matter how much I thank Keiko-san.”

Yusa Emi said this while sitting with her two friends around the black tea and cream puffs.

“Oh~ so Emi’s last name of ‘Yusa’ comes from that person?”

Emi nodded and answered Rika’s question vaguely.

“Half half I guess. Part of it came from the pronunciation of Justina, but there was some influence after all.”

“But~~ according to the story just now~~ you might have taken ‘Kimura’ too, right~~?”

After eating all the cream puffs Rika had brought over as a visiting gift, Emerada asked this with an expression of realisation.

“Yeah, you’re referring to the old lady at the Kimura Watch shop. I didn’t plan to stay long at that time, so I was very guarded and made an effort not to get too involved with her, but after I started living here, I patronised her shop a few times. After chatting with her, I realised that she was just a normal old lady who ran her business passionately. I didn’t ask her how much she sold the Irihem gold coin for though.”

The alarm clock in Emi's room and the watch she wore at work were bought at Kimura's watch shop, but since Madam Kimura served her enthusiastically at that time, she must have sold it for more than 70,000 yen.

"Anyway, not only did Keiko-san link me to this room..... she created an opportunity for me to find the Demon King."

"Eh~~ what is that supposed to mean~~"

"Summarising the story just now, Emi only acted as a ghost and forcefully brought down the rent of the room, there was no way for Maou-san to play a role in this."

Faced with Rika's merciless commentary, Emi stood up with a troubled smile and returned after taking a scrapbook from the closet.

"These are the newspaper articles from that time. This is the city map."

Rika and Emerada looked towards the page Emi opened to.

"Ah..... thinking about it, something like that did happen before. I happened to move here at that time, so I had felt that it was a little scary."

After seeing the newspaper articles, Rika remembered the past events and nodded.

"When Keiko-san..... fainted because of me and became one of the victims in the fainting incidents, it became huge news. This is the sequence and locations of the victims who lost consciousness. The scenes of the incidents began from Harajuku, and moved to Sasazuka gradually, do you understand now?"

"Oh~~! So it was like that~~!"

Emerada was the first to realise what Emi wanted to say.

"The Idea Link initiated with Keiko-san~~ caused Emilia to realise that this world did not have any holy magic~~ and that it would flow out if it was not controlled~~"

"Exactly."

“Hmm? Hmm?”

As Rika looked like she still did not understand, Emi elaborated further,

“In other words, it was then did I realise that the Demon King and the others might be in the same situation too. This world does not have demonic magic. Being injured, they might have lost a huge amount of demonic magic after they arrived, becoming too weak to be detected..... sigh, but I never expected that he would be working at MgRonalds in a human form.”

With a troubled smile, Emi pointed out the location of the first incident.

“The Demon King and Alsiel lost their demonic magic after coming to Japan. However, the demonic magic they lost did not just dissipate into thin air. The troubling thing is that the demonic magic still remains in Japan.”

Satan and Alsiel, who got injured and were weakened in the battle with Emi, could not absorb the demonic magic flowing out from their bodies.

It could be deduced that the two of them had begun losing their demonic magic immediately after leaving the ‘gate’, but just like Emi’s situation, the exit of the ‘gate’ was in the air.

If they lost their demonic magic once they left the ‘gate’, then where did Satan and Alsiel’s demonic magic disappear to? There was only one answer, the sky where the ‘gate’ was located.

Humans who have no resistance to demonic magic will experience discomfort once they come into contact with demonic magic.

The reason for the consecutive fainting incidents was the demonic magic lost by Maou and Ashiya.

“Eh? How does that work? This means that the demonic magic of Maou-san and the others slowly descended from the sky like PM2.5 or flower pollen, causing those incidents?”

“Of course it’s not just that. Because those guys can move around, before reaching that

apartment, they must have emitted a lot of demonic magic on the way there.”

“The way you’re describing it feels a little dirty~~”

Emerada smiled wryly.

“And because they have really turned weak, it only caused this level of damage. Anyway, I deduced that they must have been near the location where the incidents stopped, so when I had the time, I investigated the areas around the private railways from Shinjuku to Shibuya. Sigh..... because I was by myself and also busy with work, it was a very time-consuming task.”

“Sorry~~ for being unable to help during your toughest times~~”

“It’s not like that. All of you have your reasons, and I have always believed that Em would definitely come to get me.”

“Uuuu~~ Emilia~~!”

Feeling touched, Emerada hugged Emi.

“Hey, Emerada-chan, you’ll wake up Alas=Ramus-chan if you’re this loud.”

Rika raised her index finger, and Emerada covered her mouth frantically.

“In addition, the maps I read carefully when inspecting Keiko-san’s belongings without permission became a hint as well.”

“You’re referring to the white map and blue map? The blue one probably has the residents’ last names or the advertisements of the nearby shops printed on them. But in the end, what did the numbers on the white map refer to?”

“Yeah. You can’t see those now, but they’re called ‘Route Price Diagrams.’”

““Route Price Diagrams?””

Rika and Emerada expressed their confusion at this foreign term.

Route Price Diagrams showed the local routes which make up the city area, in other words, it was a map which showed the price per square meter of the houses facing the road.

It was the standard value used in the calculations of inheritance tax and fixed assets tax, because it was the most accurate reflection of the official land valuation value, it could also be used as a guide for the local estate value.

“Other than the time with Keiko-san, three more fainting incidents occurred after that, one was in the hospital, one was near Koshu Kaido, and one was in a residential area near the Oda Rapid Line. Connecting those three locations together, one would get a piece of cheap land which does not face any main roads, in other words, an area filled with amalgamated dwellings with cheap rent. It was difficult to imagine that the Demon King, having lost his demonic magic, would have any items which could be easily exchanged for money, so I thought he might have been hiding in this area.”

In reality, Maou still had a bit of demonic magic left, and obtained money using their methods.

In the end, Villa Rosa Sasazuka, where Maou and the others lived, was located outside of that triangle, but Maou’s workplace, the MgRonalds in front of Hatagaya station which Emi also applied for, was within that area.

“So you weren’t just wandering aimlessly in Sasazuka huh. However, you still spent a lot time before actually meeting Maou-san.”

“This can’t be helped. It seems as if I had limited the area, but I did not have any definitive evidence, and although it looks small on the map, the actual area is very big when walking through it. It’s not like I could scout the area every day. Moreover, every time I felt uneasy, I would try to take the train to a further location, or research if similar incidents have occurred in other areas of Japan, taking many detours..... sigh.”

Emi showed a nostalgic gaze, thinking back on the events at that time.

“At that time, I never expected that things would turn out like this.”

This sentence included the many unbelievable things which happened from the time

she reunited with Maou until now.

She did not kill the Demon King, kill Maou. She even met him almost every day, eating together with him, and after their 'daughter' appeared, she started to trust him and received his help.

"I never expected things to become like this..... since I came to Japan, I was always thinking this."

"With regards to that~~ do you feel any regrets~~?"

Emi replied immediately to Emerada's question, "I don't regret it that much."

What surprised her the most was that she had changed so much that she could say this.



Almost one year after Emilia arrived in Japan, when she was close to completing her search of the area drawn on the map.

With no one else fainting, that incident was slowly being forgotten by the public.

Unlike the time when she first arrived in Japan, her living environment was very complete, not only was she used to living in Japan, she had obtained a good job and friends, but Emi's loneliness was still increasing.

She was still unable to find any traces of Demon King Satan and Demon General Alsiel, Ente Isla did not send anyone to rescue her, and time just passed by.

As she got used to living as a Japanese, and acted like a Japanese, unlike the time with Yusa Keiko, Emilia no longer encountered a situation where she had to reveal her true identity to someone.

Of course, that was because if she carelessly admitted her origins, she might scare someone, just like how she scared Keiko.

At this moment, someone noticed Emilia's situation and started to show concern for

her.

“.....Hey, Emi. Are you feeling unwell recently? Have you been eating well?”

“Yeah, I’ve been a little tired recently, so I don’t have much appetite.”

“You seem to be busy with something important, but you can’t do anything if you collapse. You need to eat properly.”

“.....Yeah, you’re right..... thank you..... Rika.”

“Yep, you need to take care of your body first. If you want to exercise your brain and worry, you need to eat!”

Without knowing anything, Rika filled in Emi’s loneliness.

Rika would not pry into the private matters of others, as if she knew from the start how to make Emilia relax.

Not long after, Emilia gained many juniors at work, and as she guided others on the job she obtained in Japan, she suddenly remembered things about Keiko.

After Emilia moved into Urban Heights Eifuku, Keiko had contacted her once.

Keiko sent a name card, saying that she would return to her hometown after getting married and that the contact person had to be changed.

She was the one who had sealed Keiko’s memories, and Emilia also knew that these feelings were unreasonable, but someone who had known her true identity going some place far away was still a huge blow to her.

After that, she had troubled over whether she should tell Rika her true identity a few times.

However, Emilia did not want to lose this girl who was her friend in Japan, someone who had been continuously patching up her feelings of loneliness in her daily life, so Emilia could only continue lying.

The days when she did not have to lie, when would they arrive?

In the future, would she have to interact with others in a situation where she could declare her origins and true identity without hiding anything?

Emilia really wanted to meet a person whom she did not have to hide things from, who knew about her past and could patch up her loneliness.

She thought about these things as she walked on the streets of Sasazuka she was already familiar with, and encountered heavy rain which was not mentioned in the weather forecast.

“Damn it! Why is it raining all of a sudden!?”

She glared at the sky and complained, and ran under the eaves of a nearby restaurant for shelter, and at this moment--

“If you don’t mind, please use this.”

“Eh?”

A battered plastic umbrella was pushed towards her.

AUTHOR, AFTERWORD –AND YOU–

The afterword this time will reveal some plot in this volume.

Readers who start reading from the afterword, please take note of this.

In the afterword of the previous volume “Hataraku Maou-sama!” Volume 13, I made the declaration that I would ‘compile the short stories which have not been published in a volume and deliver it into everyone’s hands as soon as possible’.

As declared, I have delivered it at the fastest speed! This volume, the fourteenth volume of “Hataraku Maou-sama!”, is the second volume of short stories after the seventh volume of “Hataraku Maou-sama!”.

There is no rule that a short story volume will be published every seven volumes, and because “Volume 0” was also published in between, this should be considered the eighth volume, but as long as you read this volume, you will gain a deeper understanding of the world of “Hataraku Maou-sama!”..... but it does not seem to be that way either.

This volume does not narrate this kind of story. All you can see is their financial situation.

Everyone, please focus on those who are living their normal daily lives, and the stories which are weaved from this.

“The Hero and the High School Girl, Becoming Friends”

This is something which occurs a few days after the end of Volume 1.

This is a story for everyone to know that this child was already a very mentally strong person when she was still ‘a normal person who could be seen everywhere’. Everyone is still so green here. The setting that Emerada’s appetite is much larger than her stature was also revealed for the first time.

However, when I went to a revolving sushi store recently, it felt as if the sushi was not revolving at all, everyone seemed to be more inclined towards ordering through the electronic menu?

“The Demon King, Thinking Back on a Thrifty Life”

Using this story, I wish to give him, who has been under a large amount of stress, a small reward.

In addition, it was mentioned in the story, if you allow children under one year old who have not completely developed their digestive immune system to eat honey, this might cause botulinum poisoning.

The reason is that botulinum is a type of bacteria which will not be killed under high heat, everyone please pay attention not to feed children under one year old any processed foods which have honey as an ingredient.

“The Demon King, Buying a New Mobile Phone with the Hero’s Money”

I mentioned this in the afterword of the fifth volume of “Hataraku Maou-sama!”, the era of the world in this series is equivalent to 2010 in the real world.

This is because I wrote the prototype for “Hataraku Maou-sama!” during that time, but because of this, the real models of many of the stores, businesses, services, and systems do not exist in 2015 anymore.

In the current era where ‘Smartphones’ and ‘Smart devices’ are very common, it might not be long before no one uses terms like ‘mobile phone’ or ‘handphone’.

“The Hero, Admiring the Ability of the Enemy Officials”

This kind of hole does exist. It’s strange, right? It’s really really rare. There are things

like ripped jeans, but if it's not ripped at the knees or the edges, it's just a pair of torn jeans.

When Wagahara discovered a hole at the bottom of the pockets, he felt it was time to change his pants.

“The Demon King, Learning about his Superior’s Past”

The mystery since the second volume has been revealed! This is a story of fate which has continued from a long time ago! I’m not lying!

The shop manager of Fushima Park’s store, Mizushima Yuki, just like Kawada Takefumi, Ooki Akiko, and Nakayama Kotarou, they are all characters which have been imported from the anime.

I personally like this kind of character, but since she was an original character in the anime and there were shocking factors such as the female characters wearing swimsuits and true horrors, she did not stand out that much. Considering that this was the only way to write more about her, she appeared in this story.

For people who normally wear smart uniforms, having them wear casual clothing occasionally will leave a strong impression.

“The Hero Before She Found a Job! –a few days ago–”

Writing about Yusa Emi a.k.a Emilia Justina when she just arrived in Japan, a prequel following the timeline around the first volume of “Hataraku! Maou-sama”.

This is an entirely new story written for this volume.

Everyone, thank you for waiting. The reason why the rent for Emi’s apartment is this low is due to these events.

Because she is the Hero, because she was alone, she encountered many troubles which

Maou and Ashiya had never experienced.

It is difficult living in this world, but if you die, nothing can be accomplished.

For these characters who are struggling to live, this volume is for them to relax and show their true personalities.

I hope these stories become a freshener for all the readers, relaxing everyone a little.

Then, see you next volume!



TRANSLATOR'S NOTES AND REFERENCES

Short Story 1

[1] Gunkan means military ship. Ikura refers to salmon roe.

Short Story 2

[1] An oil filter is a device that some Japanese households get to allow them to reuse cooking oil. Environmentally friendly.

Short Story 3

[1] SoftTank is a parody of SoftBank.

Short Story 4

[1] This is derived from the phrase 'jumping off the Kiyomizu Stage' which describes a person's determination. Relevant link: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiyomizudera#Present>

Short Story 5

[1] 'Master Artist': Originally used to refer to someone who is skilled at drawing, but on the internet, it is normally used to taunt those people with such a unique drawing style that the drawings are extremely bad.

[2] 'Better to be the head of a chicken than a tail of an ox': It's better to run a small business than be a part of someone else's larger business. 'Hiding on the ox's back' is

a reference to the Japanese/Chinese zodiac race where the mouse hid on the ox's back the whole race and jumped off just before the finish line to end up in first place.

Short Story 6

[1] Oyu means hot water.

[2] Doughnut phenomenon is where there are less people in the city centre and more people in the suburbs. Drawing the concentration will cause the diagram to look like a doughnut.



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