

Overgeared 1651

Chapter 1651

The Sword Saint of the previous generation and the teacher of Sword Saint Muller—Biban was one of the greatest figures in history. Not only did he play an active part individually, but he also taught the strongest Sword Saint of all time. He exerted a great deal of influence even before he became a tower member. He saved countless lives, either directly or indirectly. Those who knew him even a little bit respected him unconditionally.

This was until Braham put a strange framework around him. It was the framework of ‘you were overtaken by your student because you were incompetent’...

Suspicious started to sprout in the hearts of the people after Braham harshly criticized Biban. There was the suspicion that Biban might be less great than what was known to the public. In the first place, a Sword Saint wasn’t invincible. Coincidentally, Kraugel proved it. Many people had the opinion that Muller might’ve been special among the Sword Saints.

Yes, Biban might be weaker than they thought. It was understandable considering that most of the fame he built up was due to his disciple, Muller. Therefore, this was a crisis.

“Hmm, I was waiting for the Overgeared God.”

A deformed being with a human head on the body of a lion—the beast that licked his mane with his long tongue as he slowly rose up was terribly huge. He would be several times larger even when placed beside an elephant, but the head was the size of a human. It was more bizarre than funny. It was all the more so because the dark mane fluttering in the demonic energy looked like a living snake.

The 6th Great Demon, Valefor—the force of the great demon who overwhelmed Biban from his size was terrible. The ground rumbled and thunder struck in the sky with every step.

“Uwah...”

People were at a loss for words. They recalled the strength of the 4th Great Demon, Gamigin.

Gamigin, who fought evenly with Braham. Gamigin might’ve been slain and killed by the late joining Grid, but by that time, she was already suffering from many wounds. Besides, they had to take into account that it was on the surface. The demons were weakened by several times when on the surface. The 6th Great Demon in hell could be more powerful than the 4th Great Demon on the surface.

It meant that Biban had met the wrong person. The situation of the other tower members and apostles who were isolated by Baal’s henchmen looked better. Fortunately, there was a large gap in strength among Baal’s henchmen. However, the ones who got the title of a great demon were named and had more than the basics. If it was a single digit great demon, then it was right to call him one of the main forces of hell.

“You were waiting for Grid? Why? Are the two of you friends?”

“What...? Do humans play with words in this way? It isn’t funny. It is just unpleasant.”

“Then you aren’t friendly?”

“It is a natural thing..”

“Then why did you wait for Grid if you aren’t friendly?”

“Maybe it is because you are used to those who use Dragon Words. You have a knack for words based on the way I feel irritated and frustrated every time you talk.”

Valefor frowned and swung his front paw. The size of one paw was larger than Biban’s body. It stretched out into several branches and it felt like a huge iron grate was approaching Biban. It felt like his body would be split into several equal parts once he was locked up.

Was he unable to find a way to escape? Biban remained still.

It was a scene that made the viewers feel dizzy. It happened when they started to close their eyes...

Eventually, a terrible exploding sound burst out. It sounded like Biban’s body exploded to pieces. Someone’s scream permeated the ears of those who couldn’t open their eyes.

Kiyaaaaak!

It was clearly the voice of a demon. It was the scream of the 6th Great Demon, Valefor.

People’s eyes shifted to the sky again. They looked at one of the many hellish landscapes filling the sky. They saw the figure of Valefor, who was trembling while holding onto one of his severed paws.

“What would you do if you met Grid?”

Biban persistently repeated the same question. Valefor’s eyes that stared at him were filled with confusion rather than irritation and anger.

“What is this?”

Valefor’s paws were harder and sharper than any weapon. Yet it was cut. It was by a single sword that left afterimages like it was split into dozens. It was a very strange swordsmanship. Biban only swung his sword once, but he actually struck Valefor’s paw dozens of times. It vibrated, gradually dug in, and cut it off. It was also different from the famous Matchless Swordsmanship in the past.

“Isn’t it very different from Muller’s swordsmanship that I heard about through rumors?” Valefor, who completely regenerated his front paw, growled out. His voice had already stopped trembling.

“Of course, it has to be different,” Biban kindly explained, “Just as Muller developed my swordsmanship, I developed my own swordsmanship.”

The method of vibrating the blade through the high-speed operation of sword energy—this was a technique that was only possible in theory. However, Grid made it possible. It was because the dragon weapon Grid gave him could withstand the ferocity of the sword energy.

“Now, tell me.”

The landscape of hell slowly changed. Tens of thousands of silver sword energy in the form of swords moved across the ground and the sky, clearing away the darkness. Each sword energy was causing a slight vibration. As a result, silver ripples were created layer by layer.

“What...?”

The mental world of a Sword Saint—Valefor felt that every single one of these sword energies had a mighty power and he stiffened. It was foolish to fight in this place. He needed to change places. He made a quick judgment and activated the teleportation, but the process wasn't completed. The ripples of the silver sword energies interfered.

“Che...!” Valefor became a bit more nervous and started to run on all fours. He moved his heavy body like a gale and approached the end of the mental world. However, he was forced to stop along the way.

A greatsword that was bigger than a mountain—it was hard to tell if the greatsword came down from the sky or rose from the ground, but it blocked Valefor's path. Valefor was startled and immediately changed course, but another greatsword appeared in front of him. Four greatswords appeared in succession. It was only a short time before they formed a wall and imprisoned Valefor.

It was the moment when Valefor, who was several times larger than an elephant, seemed smaller than a pea. Valefor reflexively raised his head. It was a gesture to confirm the only way out. However, that place was already occupied by Biban. He stood on a sword that floated in the air and spoke with his back to the silver sky, “What would you do if you met Grid?”

“This senile old man... why do you keep asking useless things? I naturally would've killed him. It is in order to prove that I'm better than Gamigin...”

“Why are you only saying this now?”

“.....?”

“I misunderstood that you wanted to be Grid's subordinate or something.”

“Crazy guy!”

Valefor spread out his wings with demonic energy and flew up. He crossed the cliff surrounded by swords in an instant and swung his paws at Biban. The power was unstoppable. The wind pressure caused by the outstretched movement of the paw caused the five greatswords to shake violently.

Nevertheless, Biban wasn't agitated. “It is pitiful compared to dragons.”

The reason why the sky behind Biban was silver was due to the tens of thousands of sword energies gathered behind him. It was all aimed at Valefor.

The dragons—Biban's mental world was designed to bind and peel off the scales of the strongest beings who were hard to confront. It wasn't a power that a single great demon could bear.

Valefor's consciousness as he hastily crossed his arms blurred for a moment. He admitted that he couldn't win in this state after experiencing the baptism of the dragon weapon that cut off his paw and the sword energies that dug into his flesh and peeled at his skin.

He quickly compressed his body, which had been inflated enormously. It was so long ago that he couldn't remember any longer. He recovered the body he used to have when in a humanoid form. It was only now that the balance of his body was right. His face, which used to be too small for his body, was relaxed. He entered phase two.

“I will take everything away from you.”

Valefor was the demon of thievery. It didn't matter whether it was an item, ability, appearance, or lifespan. It was easy to steal as long as it belonged to someone else. It didn't matter if the target was stronger than himself.

“.....?”

Biban, who passed through a phase by putting the great demon into crisis in just a few minutes without taking even a single wound—his expression changed for the first time. It was a look of astonishment as Valefor broke through the baptism of sword energies and barely put a hand on Biban's cheek.

Valefor made a creepy smile. “It's done.”

Just then—

“.....!”

Light wrinkles started to appear around the corners of Valefor's eyes. The bridge of his nose rose and the tip came down nicely. His chin became angular and his hair shortened and turned gray. His back widened and he grew taller. His earlobes, eyes, and even the shape of his muscles changed. In short, he resembled Biban.

On the other hand, Biban became a bit ugly. His hair became sparse and dry skin cracked. The bridge of the nose sank like it was collapsing and the tip became turned up. His eyes sagged and his jaw widened. His lips were swollen and his eyebrows elongated. His height became smaller. He lost his muscles.

The handsome, middle-aged figure disappeared all of a sudden. It was the aftermath of it being taken away by Valefor. Now Biban had become Valefor.

“Hahat! What wonderful omnipotence! Is this the world that an Absolute sees?” Valefor shouted after taking away even Biban's clothes and sword. He laughed with a loot of ecstasy. The good news was that Biban's mental world hadn't been taken away.

Tens of thousands of silver sword energies pressed Valefor violently as if telling him to return the things to their master. However, Valefor had stolen Biban's swordsmanship. Every swing of the sword crushed hundreds of sword energies. The mental world quickly collapsed. Eventually, the five greatswords that stood tall started to fall one by one and countless sword energies dissipated without a trace.

‘I stepped on poo.’

It was the first time he had fought a high ranking great demon, so he wasn't wary of the great demon's powers. He had received advice many times that the great demons each had their own special nature and he shouldn't take them lightly. Then once the situation really arrived, he forgot. It was a defeat that came naturally because he kept the senses that were based off of fighting a dragon.

The moment that Biban readily admitted defeat, his mental world completely collapsed. Hell regained its original landscape.

The red light from the hell moon dimly colored the night sky. It was a red night.

“I finally found you.”

A certain figure quickly passed by Biban’s side. Even Biban recognized it one step late.

How many beings in the world could deceive the senses of the tower members? The number was even more limited if it was a human. There was only one person Biban could think of immediately.

A thief who stole from the Tower of Wisdom despite the hundreds of barriers around it.

The Great Robber of the Red Night—he broke into the scene and stole Valefor’s heart. It was as if to prove that he was the best thief in the world.

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On the surface, a red night was rare. Just because it was a red night didn’t mean that ‘he’ would always appear.

The Great Robber of the Red Night—ever since Satisfy opened, there had been only three sightings of him among the players. Few people found it strange. It would be funny if a thief was seen stealing.

People weren’t conscious of him. It was even more so because there were very few mentions of the Great Robber of the Red Night in the quests related to the thief profession. He was someone who had little weight on the worldview due to his profession of a thief. No, he was dismissed as a title rather than a person. It was because the name of the Great Robber of the Red Night had been recorded in history from a very long time ago. Of course, he didn’t just appear in the official history, but also in the behind the scenes history that could be glimpsed through hidden quests.

In any case, he was portrayed as existing in almost every era, so they had to accept it as an inherited name like Lantier. There were many people who didn’t acknowledge his existence until rumors started to spread that he was linked to Grid. At this moment, he appeared in front of everyone. Additionally —

“You...! Youu...!!”

It was an appearance that left a strong impression. He took away the heart of the great demon, who had taken away the appearance and power of a Sword Saint. He seemed to prove it. It was proof that he was the greatest thief on the surface and in hell.

“You have the same habits as a golden goblin, the petty thieves, so I can take them away. Tsk tsk.”

The heart in the hands of the Great Robber of the Red Night was different from the normal organ. It was an open circle like it was a passage to somewhere and the inside was black. It was a warehouse. It was a treasure trove full of the items and concepts that Valefor had stolen throughout his life. Therefore, it could be the target of the Great Robber of the Red Night.

“Give it to me! Give it to me!”

“You are begging without trying to steal it back? It is right for you to spread out a mat and beg.”

“Ahh...! Uwaah...!!”

Valefor's screams grew louder. The sharp scream was like the cry of a dying beast. It was an obvious noise. The faces of those who closed their eyes and frowned soon relaxed. It was because Valefor's appearance gradually became disgusting again, while Biban regained his original splendor.

A handsome, middle-aged man was eye candy for everyone, regardless of age or gender. The Great Robber of the Red Night stood beside him and had an expression like he was eating poo.

"Tsk... What guts do you have to face the 6th place alone?"

"There is only one case where a swordsman avoids fighting. We have to keep our beliefs."

"Your words are showy."

Biban had plunged Valefor into a crisis in an instant. It was purely because he opened up his mental world and this was proof to anyone that he was nervous. Opening up the mental world was an act that revealed the user's origin. It was one of the trump cards that shouldn't be used carelessly. It was because there was a high possibility the user's weakness would be discovered if they didn't kill their opponent.

However, Biban opened up his mental world from the beginning. It was naturally because he received penalties in hell. The tower members were affected by the penalties of hell, unlike the apostles who raided Hell Gao several times and bypassed them. Of course, they resisted it somewhat due to their high status, but they were much weaker than when they were on the surface. It was the reason why Biban couldn't easily cut Valefor and why he allowed Valefor's approach.

Of course, Biban had no intention of making excuses. Valefor's reserve force that allowed him to close his distance with all his might was incredible. Additionally, he exerted immense pressure. He was an opponent who couldn't be easily defeated even in a perfect state. A single digit great demon in hell was that powerful.

"...To be honest, I saw him as easy."

"There is a big flaw in your judgment, but yes."

"If you want me to help you and to not be scolded, shut up. I am holding it in a lot."

"I'm already very troubled trying to resist wanting to steal your sword."

The Great Robber of the Red Night was an individual, not an inherited name. He was a legend and a transcendent who had lived for hundreds of years. Biban vaguely noticed this fact, so he had some respect for the Great Robber of the Red Night, despite this person being the thief who robbed the tower.

It was the same for the Great Robber of the Red Night. He perceived the tower members as being essential to the world. He would rob them whenever necessary, but apart from his personal greed, he had no intention of letting them die. The thing the Great Robber of the Red Night wanted was peace. It was the development and revival of humanity. This way, he would have many things to steal.

"Give... it... back...!!"

Valefor started to run rampant. The treasure trove in the heart that was driven by absurd greed. The moment he was deprived of the power he had hidden inside it, he relentlessly released pure demonic energy. The body was transformed back into the shape of a monster. It was the sight of a giant beast running wild. It almost felt like he was unable to control his power. It was clear that he had lost his sense of reason.

"I feel sorry for that hideous thing."

"He looks like a baby compared to a dragon, but don't take him lightly."

"How can I take him lightly after seeing how you were beaten?"

A great demon—his power was clearly confirmed. Biban took a deep breath and focused. He stood side by side with the Great Robber of the Red Night. He intended to use a pincer attack in response to the movement, but the Great Robber of the Red Night took a step back.

"You want to fight with me?"

"Then do you want to fight separately here?"

"You have to fight alone. Isn't it weird to want a thief to fight with you?"

".....??"

"I have nothing to see here any longer, so I will go back."

"What nonsense is this? You can't get out of hell... don't you know about the rule that Baal has established?"

"It is a trade secret."

The Great Robber of the Red Night put his hand into Valefor's heart and soon pulled out a bottle of potion.

"This is a debt. I will come back one day to get it back by several dozen times."

".....?"

Biban received the bottle of liquid thrown at him and cocked his head.

A pink potion—it was properly sealed, but a faint scent leaked out. It was a fragrance that cleared and calmed the mind.

"This is a stimulant made by Judar."

The god of health and wisdom—Judar was one of Rebecca's two sons and a chief god. If it was the vitality agent he made, then it must be an all-rounder elixir.

"It isn't a big deal. It simply makes you feel like you are back in perfect condition. It clears the mind and helps you make the right judgment."

"It doesn't have the effect of overcoming the pressures of hell?"

"It is just a stimulant."

“.....”

Biban frowned. It was a potion made by the god of health and wisdom, yet the effect was insignificant? No, why give him something like this in the first place? He thought it was too cheap after this person stole all the treasures that Valefor had collected throughout his life.

“You could easily steal his heart thanks to this, but I owe you a debt with just this? Aren’t you an evil-minded thief?”

“It is like you are asking me to give you a package after I saved you. I am going now.”

The Great Robber of the Red Night clicked his tongue and turned around. This was the end. He disappeared from the scene. This time, Biban dimly read the traces.

‘That’s right. Was it secretive because he operated magic power in that way...? Next time, I won’t easily allow access.’

Biban nodded and drank the potion. It was surprisingly sticky and didn’t match its transparent appearance. The texture that swept through his esophagus made him feel like he was swallowing saliva. Perhaps...?

Biban was imagining terrible things when Valefor rushed right in front of his nose.

“Give it back!!”

There was an overwhelming momentum, unlike just a while ago. Valefor had nothing more to lose and cut off his own path. He concentrated all his strength and skills into breaking through and killing the target. In response, his frenzied demonic energy crushed everything it could touch and eroded it into darkness.

It was like a black sun. The moment the orbit was the same as the hell moon, the red light disappeared from the world. It was completely dark. It caused an eclipse. The collection of physical strength, magical strength, and demonic energy had the momentum to extinguish everything.

People were surprised by the fierce momentum of the ferocious demonic energy that eroded Biban’s cloak as soon as it touched it and they lamented.

“Hmm.” On the other hand, Biban was calm. He swung his sword at a distance that he thought was sufficient. It just seemed like a flash of light in people’s eyes.

Click.

It was already at its destination by the time the sound of the sword was heard.

“.....!”

Valefor’s huge body was split apart along with the demonic energy.

A sword that cut anything—the sword of Sword Saint Biban overcame the penalties of hell and slashed the 6th Great Demon with one blow. Judar’s spit... no, the stimulant helped. After taking the stimulant and awakening his consciousness, Biban showed his ‘close to perfect’ ability by calming his mind that

was shaken due to the lack of wisdom. That was simply it. It wasn't that he overcame the penalties of hell or received any buffs. Biban simply showed off his original skills.

In the distance, the Great Robber of the Red Night read the energy and sighed.

"He is destined not to live..."

Biban was using sword energy to the limit. Not only was it the sharpest energy in the world, but it constantly maintained the non-stop vibrating energy both inside and outside his body. This made it impossible to keep his mind intact. Biban himself was probably most aware that his judgment and memory were fading day by day. No, maybe it had reached a point where he wasn't aware of it.

What made the hero so obsessed and sick? It was naturally the dragons. It was clear that achieving the dragon killing sword was behind the choice in Biban making himself sick.

At this moment, the formidable swordsmanship that was developed was integrated with the wisdom that had awakened at some point. A dragon's head would fall and Biban would face his end...

"Don't die until you pay off your debt."

The eclipse lifted with Valefor's death. A dark shadow was cast over the wrinkled face of the great robber as he looked at the scenery of hell that regained the red night.

"It is a dilemma."

Agnus frowned as he was caught in the random teleportation and separated from the group. He was concerned about the group that wouldn't be free from the penalties of hell. He wasn't worried because he liked them. He just determined that all their power was needed to destroy the dimensional magic operating through the hell moon.

Step, step.

Agnus walked relentlessly through hell. The stench, heat, and nightmarish scenes spread endlessly, but he was familiar with it like it was his own home.

".....??"

The demonic creatures encountered along the way passed by Agnus with uncertain expressions. Ironically, this was the advantage of the undead. The method that demonic creatures with no intelligence used to determine enemies was the presence or absence of demonic energy. Therefore, they didn't recognize Agnus as an enemy unless he showed a special reaction.

".....!"

The memphis—they were the demonic creatures that Baal raised. They were tied up by magical chains and abused repeatedly, so that poison accumulated and they grew properly. Perhaps it was due to this influence, but there were several of them who grew up very viciously.

One of their cages was in his vicinity. He had to kill them before they were released from the chains. Agnus was moving forward while revisiting his memories with such thoughts, only to stop in place with

surprise. Hundreds of huge eyes were clinging to the barren canyon. They were wriggling horribly... upon closer inspection, they were eggs, not eyes.

The epidermis, which he thought were the whites of the eyes, glistened with mucus. They were like a frog's eggs...

Just then, a girl's voice was heard behind the puzzled Agnus. "Those things. They are Chepardea's eggs."

It was the tower member, Betty. The strange girl who had been watching Agnus from the moment they met.

"I don't know how many times Chepardea has died."

"....."

Chepardea didn't die easily. Baal's closer subordinate was so tenacious that it was said even Demon Slayer Alex couldn't kill him. Who could kill such a being over and over again? Only one person came to mind...

Agnus understood what she meant and closed his mouth. It was to suppress the urge to vomit.

Chapter 1653

Hundreds of thousands of eggs wriggled like slime. Agnus looked at the eggs, each one bigger than himself, and remembered the conversations he had with Chepardea. In fact, these were the words that Chepardea used to say.

His Highness Baal is great. I believe only in His Highness Baal. Even if I am abandoned by him, I will sing hymns for him.

What was the scope of the 'abandonment' he was talking about? Being murdered, having the memory of being murdered erased, being resurrected, living as a plaything, being killed again, forgetting, resurrected, killed...

Could Chepardea accept even this terrible reincarnation with a happy heart? He was sure this wasn't the case.

"Crazy bastard..."

Agnus stopped breathing for a moment before letting out a curse. He wasn't feeling compassion for Chepardea. He was a demon who shouldn't be sympathized with. In the first place, Agnus had no loyalty to Chepardea. It was just that Baal was too disgusting.

He imagined it spontaneously in his mind. The moment when Chepardea was in his most important phase.

Baal, who came to him as if he had been waiting, suddenly violently attacked him and slowly and painfully killed him while telling him the truth. Baal would speak very slowly while savoring it.

You have been betrayed in various ways by me. How many times have you been killed? You will be born again and forget this moment.

Then it would repeat again from the beginning. The reason? There was no need to think about anything like that. It was because giving meaning to Baal's choices and actions was the most meaningless thing in the world. He was merely seeking pleasure and the form of pleasure he desired was usually cruel.

That was all. It was like the ordinary neighbors who bullied the weak.

"It is Baal. He is going to keep killing Chepardea."

"That's right."

Betty confirmed Agnus' conclusion. What was Chepardea that he hatched and resurrected endlessly? Why did he lose his memory, what exactly was his relationship with Baal, etc.

Agnus had many questions, but he didn't bother to express them. It wasn't good for his mental health to be curious about Baal's affairs. The one thing he did want to confirm was none other than Betty's identity.

"You... who are you? Why do you know about this place?"

The road leading to the cages where the memphis were trapped—it was also the place where Chepardea's eggs were stored and it was a very secret area even in hell. Yet Agnus and Betty, who would've been teleported elsewhere, showed up here. She also knew about the relationship between Chepardea and Baal. The implications were great.

"Are you perhaps a former Baal's Contractor?"

The girl who hadn't taken her eyes off him from the first moment they met—Agnus asked while feeling it was a possibility and Betty nodded gently.

"That's right."

An abandoned toy. A failure who wasn't interesting.

Just then, Betty took off the robe she was wearing. Her bare body was immediately seen. It was a body with severe ossification from below her clavicle to her pelvis. Her condition was more serious than Agnus' one.

"I am your senior."

"...You are bragging."

Agnus looked at Betty with a confused expression for a moment before clicking his tongue.

Betty was as expressionless as usual as she threw away the robe she had taken off. She took for granted the reaction of people who showed their displeasure with this disgusting body. She just chose a quick and effective method of delivering information. She was picking up her clothes when her round eyes widened slightly.

"Are you crazy? Why is a girl so badly dressed...?" It was because she heard Agnus' dissatisfied complaints. The tone was quite harsh, but it resembled that reaction that Grid had shown. He perceived her as a human being, not a hideous monster.

She thought she knew his nature. As expected, there was a reason he was abandoned by Baal.

Betty's heart was at ease and she was convinced that she could pass her knowledge onto Agnus.

"You are my successor."

"What? What nonsense are you saying with no notice...?"

"Baal is cruel and thorough."

"Who doesn't know this...?"

"It is more than you know."

"....."

"We have to keep in mind that the moment the contract with Baal is broken, it is the soul, not the body, that has been captured."

A body that lost its soul was nothing more than a shell. The reason why Agnus suffered from the ossification was that his soul was slowly escaping from his body. It was a phenomenon caused by the loss of life in the process of his soul departing.

"Even at this moment, your soul is seeping into Baal. You will completely enter Baal's grasp one day and your body won't belong to you."

They would start to be controlled by Baal. They would be used regardless of their will. In the case of a player like Agnus, it would be in the form of forced quests. They were quests that would give a large penalty if they weren't completed within a certain period of time.

"It isn't like you have to be a priest. You just have to inherit my knowledge. Then you can stop your soul from leaving."

A fated encounter—the moment that every player dreamed of came to Agnus. Anyone would welcome it with open arms. However, Agnus wasn't pleased at all and showed wariness.

"Why look at me?"

Agnus wasn't doubting Betty, he was doubting himself. He had been wandering for many years after his twist of fate with Baal and he clearly recognized how pathetic a human being he was. He was afraid he would repeat the same mistake again after recklessly relying on someone else's helping hand.

Betty cocked her head. Her messy, short hair matched her innocent expression well. "You were abandoned by Baal."

Wasn't this enough? Agnus read the meaning of Betty's words and fell silent.

"I will find you later."

Betty made a promise about the next time before moving forward. There wasn't much point to getting rid of Chepardea's eggs, so she just passed by them and headed into the depths of the canyon. It was the direction where the memphis were.

'As expected, my judgment is right.'

The most effective way to weaken Baal's power was to kill the memphis. The memphis was a very powerful and demanding demonic creature with the fraudulent movement skill of Fluidization, the ability to steal the target's stats, and the ability to release a barrier of electricity. The memphis were monsters who lost their sense of reason after being abused by Baal. They were much more aggressive and able to withstand pain compared to Noe. Their damage to their side would increase if Baal released them in all directions.

"....."

Betty took the lead and Agnus walked behind her. Agnus thought that Betty's steps seemed heavy. Younglings who had suffered from the moment they were born—it must be painful to know she would have to hurt the memphis.

"My steps aren't heavy."

".....?"

"You are projecting your heart into my steps," Betty spoke while looking at Agnus' face that was reflected in the obsidian.

"Stop talking nonsense." Agnus was inwardly startled before turning his head away. He was unable to meet Betty's gaze through the obsidian and avoided it.

Then silence came again. They walked along the obsidian rock wall for some time before arriving at a large dungeon. The structure was like a labyrinth. There were heavily intricate, intertwined paths that caused disorientation. There seemed to be some magical power.

Agnus was confused even though it was a place he had followed Baal to a few years ago. There was a foggy sensation in his mind. Agnus hesitated a few times, but Betty just moved forward. "It isn't that you don't know the way. Your heart is hesitating."

She was still talking nonsense...

It happened as Agnus was ignoring her—

"Nyaaaaong!"

The sharp cry of a cat quickly approached. Was it a memphis that escaped?

Agnus had a shaky expression on his face as he made a shield out of bone. He couldn't quite understand himself why he made a shield instead of a sword.

The memphis came all the way to in front of his nose before stopping. It was because his head was caught in Betty's small hands, which was an amazing sight given that the memphis was in the Fluidization state.

'Did she attach magic to her body?'

Agnus admired it slightly before tilting his head. The memphis' fur was fluffy. There wasn't even a small scar on his pretty, round face. Every single memphis abused by Baal looked horrible, while this one was

completely fine. It was obvious. The memphis currently captured by Betty was Noe, not the memphis captured by Baal.

“Don’t harm my people, nyang!”

The memphis’ hometown was hell. It was only in hell that they exerted full power and their authority to be free of any restraints was strengthened. This meant they could act independently and away from their masters.

Noe, who met a good master and acted without much restrictions, gained even greater freedom in hell. It was when he arrived in hell and was affected by the teleportation. He overheard the sad cries of his kin and flew all the way here. Grid naturally allowed it.

“G-Go back, nyang! You can’t go any further, nyang!”

Noe was terribly frightened of Betty, who had decorated her room with an anatomical specimen of a memphis. Even so, he somehow squeezed out the courage. He trembled while showing signs of transforming into an adult. It was the willingness to fight. Betty stroked his round forehead. “Don’t worry. I’m here to help.”

“.....!”

Noe and Agnus flinched.

They thought that Betty was naturally going to hurt the memphis. In fact, there was no answer other than this. The memphis who had been trapped here for a long time had long lost their minds. It was not beneficial to release them. It was more likely that this would grab them in the ankle later.

Betty explained to the two of them who were puzzled, “I can save them thanks to the sacrifice of another child.”

The child naturally meant the memphis in Betty’s laboratory. The memphis became a specimen of dissection. Through that child, Betty gained a lot of knowledge and information. She figured out how to calm the frenzy of the memphis trapped in the cages and restore their sense of reason.

“Huu, nyang...”

Noe was moved to the point of tears. He wasn’t aware of it, but he had grown tremendously.

A demonic creature who rebelled against instinct and overcame fear—in the future, he would be able to endure it a bit better even if he met a dragon. Just then, Betty reached a certain location. She chanted a spell and the door to the stone chamber opened.

The huge communal landscape... it didn’t enter their eyes properly. It was too dark. A stench filled the dark space without a single point of light. They wondered if it would be like this if meat was rotting, but the sight they saw when they gradually adapted to the darkness told them the truth.

The flesh of the memphis who were trapped in iron bars were rotting in many places. They could see one who was dried up like a mummy and the two eyeballs that were plucked out were rotting. There were some who were literally hanging from the iron cage they were in because their mouth and limbs were tied.

A youngling without a few limbs was a normal thing. Younglings with arms and legs of other creatures connected to their ears or necks couldn't even rest properly because these limbs wriggled against their will.

"....."

"It will be okay," Betty whispered to Noe, who had forgotten what to say and was trembling in the air.

Chapter 1654

'Dammit.'

It was ever since being disqualified as Baal's Contractor. Agnus adapted to a peaceful life and believed that his world would change. He thought he would no longer face cruel sights. Therefore, he let down his guard.

[You have changed the presentation level to 'weak.']

Agnus hurriedly changed the game options and let out the breath he had been holding back. His face was still white. The memphis in the iron cages were now depicted as having band-aids on their cute faces or bandages on their bodies, but this didn't mean he had forgotten what he just saw. It was so horrible that it was intensely imprinted on his mind.

"....."

In his opinion, Agnus was crueler than anyone else during his time as Baal's Contractor. He harmed numerous civilians. There were many cases where it was unavoidable due to Baal's forced quests, but in the end, he was the one who chose to execute them. He wouldn't have become Baal's Contractor if he didn't have the intention of harming others in the first place.

It was during the time when his activities were possible only when the presentation level was set as weak. He saw so much blood and tears.

Agnus realized it once again. He was no different from Baal. Those who had lost their lives or family members to him were like the memphis trapped in the iron cages. He was a demon to them.

"That's right. We must not forget our sins."

"....."

"I haven't forgotten either."

Betty's appearance was definitely that of a girl. However, she read his inner thoughts like an old man who lived for a long time and Agnus couldn't adapt to it.

"Baal just gave us the strength and authority to sin. The sin is what we committed ourselves."

She took away even the excuses that remained like small embers. The name Baal, which he wrapped around his heart like a shield, slowly faded away and Agnus felt dizzy. However, he endured it, acknowledged it, and accepted it. Then he felt more at ease. He felt his already cracked heart being completely smashed and then put back together.

“We have to atone for the rest of our lives. That is our responsibility.”

So be my successor.

Betty took the opportunity to persuade him. Agnus stared at her and abandoned his stubbornness. “I understand.”

Don’t just stop at hating my past self.

Just like the woman caressing the memphis she is taking out of the iron cage, I also have many responsibilities to bear.

So I have to move forward.

“Is it really okay...?”

Noe’s face was still full of anxiety as he hovered by Betty’s side. He saw the skinny bodies of his wounded kin and hid his bulging belly with his front paws out of shame. Of course, there was no way he could cover it up. The belly that protruded from between the round paws that seemed to be wearing white gloves was eye-catching...

“Grrrung..”

“Kyaaaack!”

The memphis had long lost their words. They were unable to bear the pain of their wounds and just groaned or cried like an animal. It sounded heartbreaking.

Deep sadness and anger were felt. They hated the bodies that Baal had damaged. They hated the world they were born into. They were like Agnus in the distant past. Or perhaps they harbored only despair, just like the people Agnus had harmed.

“Yes, it is okay.”

Agnus’ face stiffened while Betty smiled. It was the first change in facial expression of a person who seemed to have lost her emotions. It was purely an effort to reassure the memphis. She might not want to smile, but she was smiling for others.

Agnus watched silently from the side. He was touched when thinking about what Betty’s actions meant. It was to learn the attitude toward life that needed to be changed in the future.

His senior—she was right.

“Let’s do surgery.”

She was an undead, so she was used to the structure of bones. She researched, experimented, and gained experience with numerous creatures. It was time to put her research into practice. She held the fiercely resistant memphis in her arms and started to pull out all sorts of tools and medicines. The sounds of bones being crushed came from her chest and waist, but she didn’t shake in the slightest.

She turned a blind eye to the pain she felt because the suffering of the memphis who experienced this type of thing would be much greater. She wasn’t in a position to express her pain in front of them.

“You, the arm...”

Agnus couldn't just watch and intervened. It was because Betty's arm shook like it was about to fall after she was bitten in the arm by the memphis.

Betty confessed, “I brought the parents of these children here.”

It was hundreds of years ago. She followed Baal's orders. She captured the memphis of hell and locked them up here. The sight of the memphis being tortured after that... it was the second of the 17 nightmares she had every night. It was infinitely repeated even though she became an undead who couldn't fall asleep. She was tormented for hundreds of years by the nightmares that emerged from her subconscious even though her eyes were open every night.

“This is what I am responsible for.”

It wasn't to end her nightmares.

“It is my duty.”

“.....”

The people who watched the landscape of hell in the sky was a small number compared to the total population. Most people still couldn't raise their heads as they walked around. It was highly likely that anyone watching the events in hell was a player and even then, they only watched the scenes with Grid, an apostle, or a tower member.

The rest of the scenes... they understandably turned away from them. It was because there was no benefit to looking. Was there anything to be gained by seeing people being horribly hunted by demons and demonic creatures other than feeling anxiety.

“Ken...? Is he the strongest one among the tower members?”

The fighter, Ken—he was one of the tower members and he produced particularly bizarre situations. The demons and demonic creatures blocking his way all had their heads exploded before they died. They exploded like a bomb had originally been installed. It was a sight they couldn't understand with their eyes.

In the end, analysis videos were uploaded throughout the communities. It had to be played hundreds of times slower before there were blurry traces.

The fighter, Ken, appeared to have 'struck' the demons with his feet or fists. It seemed he had a passive skill that added tremendous acceleration the more he linked his movements and it was assumed that the movements included even the most meaningless actions, such as small chin gestures. This explained how a constant speed was maintained.

“I think those giants are a lot stronger.”

At first, people thought Abellio was the strongest. A person who fought by manifesting Grid and Hayate through his paintings—the number of people who changed class to a painter grew exponentially and

public awareness of Picasso increased dramatically in just a few hours. The world's leading companies that were excited about the future of Picasso competed to offer sponsorships. Abellio was so great that he created a social phenomenon in a matter of seconds.

However, he had a clear weakness. There was a limit to the power that resided in a painting and the bigger problem was that it wouldn't exert much power if the act of painting itself was blocked. The evidence was that he suffered a setback once he started being sniped by the 8th Great Demon, Barbatos.

On the other hand, the giant brothers always boasted overwhelming strength. Radwolf boarded a super-large magic machine that was nearly 15 meters tall and remotely controlled 10 separate magic machines. It was literally a legion of robots. The demons couldn't exert any power over him. They even turned their backs and ran away. It was natural. It was because before the expedition to hell, Radwolf optimized the magic machine to be an anti-evil weapon rather than an anti-dragon weapon.

There was nothing to say about Fronzaltz. The seats of the Tower of Wisdom weren't in order of skill, but the 2nd Seat was the exception. The reason Fronzaltz was the 2nd Seat was because he had the right to represent Hayate. Recently, he regained almost all his strength thanks to Grid.

God's Circle—the strongest artifact of all time that symbolized perfection and led the ancient giants in their prime. It was Fronzaltz who inherited the will of the fallen giants. It would be a sin if he wasn't strong.

"I'm glad things are going well overall. There is a real chance of winning."

The power that Baal showed was overwhelming. They were convinced that Grid and the apostles wouldn't be able to deal with him even if they fought together. However, the secret society they never knew about was giving strength to Grid. The members of the Tower of Wisdom led by Dragon Slayer Hayate—they were strong as one.

Hope that never existed started to sprout. If there was just one unexpected problem...

"I'm a bit worried that Grid is struggling."

It was the existence of the 20th Great Demon, Eligos. Now people weren't stupid. They immediately recognized that Eligos possessed a strength unrelated to his rank. He fought fiercely against Grid. He was a powerful being who easily transcended a single digit great demon.

The cause seemed to lie in a special power. It was the ability to control the trajectory. For example, let's assume that Eligos was standing in a huge room. The size of the room was irrelevant. Eligos would launch any ball flying at him to the trajectory he wanted and hit it toward the desired point. Eligos also directed the direction the ball would bounce in.

Infinite trajectories—Eligos endlessly received Grid's attacks and shifted them, allowing him to maintain a favorable situation at all times. He counterattacked against Grid without receiving much damage. The still intact Grid seemed like a much scarier monster than Eligos, but in any case, Grid's feet were tied up.

Grid's first goal was to rescue the people trapped in hell, so he would be under psychological pressure. People were worried, but...

‘It will be okay. Time is on my side.’

However, Grid wasn’t anxious. He regarded the situation positively.

First of all, most of the people currently trapped in hell were players.

Secondly, a small handful of NPCs, including the different species kings, were conducting rescue operations as the top priority with Zik. The moment they fell into the magic trap, Zik had told him not to worry, so he had faith.

Third, it was Mercedes’ role to find the location of the hell moon anyway. It was a position where they had to wait until she accurately captured the location of the moon.

Fourth, the God Hands were growing rapidly. The number of God Hands had risen to 100 and they partially offset Eligos’ strength by spreading the artificial senses and using Tai Chi. At first, it was difficult to respond properly, but there was gradually a clear sense of adaptation. It was like watching and learning from Eligos.

‘This is an experience that will be hard to meet again.’

Taang, taang, taang.

Grid, who had the artificial senses broken and allowed the incoming spear to hit, laughed as he repaired his armor with a hammer.

Eligos... he was getting tired. An armor that couldn’t be pierced no matter how hard the stab—he tried hard to crack it, but it was immediately repaired. Therefore, he had no answer about what to do...

At the same time, the surface...

“.....?”

A chill went down the spines of those walking on the surface while looking at the ground. It was because a large, dark shadow covered the earth and gave the illusion that night had come. It was evidence that something ridiculously large had appeared above them. There was only one existence they could think of unless the floating castle in the legends was real.

Kurarararara!

A dragon.

[The Evil Dragon, Bunhelier, has appeared!]

It was a world message with only one line, but the ripple effect was enormous. It was even more than Grid’s epics. The minds of all the people on the surface became blank.

Chapter 1655

Almost every player would think of Bunhelier when it came to their perception of dragons.

The first dragon to make a direct appearance was Bunhelier. It was even in the National Competition watched by billions of people. His absolute stats and destructiveness were revealed to the public and

the world was filled with astonishment. Perhaps that was the quietest day on Earth since the birth of humanity.

“Hiik!”

“It’s over! It is the end!!”

“I need to log out and organize the stocks first.”

People learned that dragons were extremely powerful and ferocious. It was due to Bunhelier. Now at this moment, Bunhelier appeared again. The ripple effect was different from when he invaded the server of the National Competition. A significant number of players fled to the most hidden places they knew or logged out without hesitation.

Very few players stayed in place. They were people who had responsibilities to bear and people who were stubborn.

“The number of viewers is a jackpot.”

“This is a scoop.”

On the other hand, those who made broadcasting their business chased after the shadow of Bunhelier.

“Don’t worry. Father will protect you.”

NPCs and people who had families stayed by the side of their families and protected them.

“Take out all the dragon harpoons in the warehouse.”

“It is a war! Issue an emergency conscription notice right now!”

Knights or those with aristocratic titles led the soldiers with a more powerful voice than usual. In the sky, Bunhelier could see all the conditions of the ground with his eyes. He didn’t feel sorry for the bugs who saw him and ran away, nor did he become angry with the attitude of the bugs who held the idea of resisting him. He could annihilate them at any time with one breath.

The thing that Bunhelier wanted was a deeper anxiety. He was only slowly crossing the continent, but he expected the bugs to be crushed by themselves. There was plenty of time. If it didn’t break, flap his wings several times until it broke.

The moment the atmosphere was at its most ripe, he intended to go down and choke their necks. He would tell them to offer 1,000 males and 1,000 females each. Then he would eat them slowly while they were still alive in front of the watching bugs and despair and fear would spread. Once he finished eating them, he would ask the bugs to increase the number of offerings by two times the next day. It would be quite funny to see those who dreamed of the future in exchange for the sacrifices of their fellow people once again fall into despair.

In the end, Nevartan would wake up by the time the bugs finally chose to resist, so it wouldn’t be a bad idea to leave the finishing touches to him. He wouldn’t even give a chance to the bugs who squeezed out their courage to fight against him. Despair and fear would be mixed with anger and the chaos would be completed.

Grrrrr...

Demonic energy flowed from the gap in Bunhelier's snout as he twitched. Each particle had a destructive power that crushed magic power and sword energy, and extinguished the spark of life. The dark sky, where the scenery of hell was intertwined, turned yellow.

One century ago—would a nation's night sky be like this when there were no means to clean up air pollution?

"What is he doing?"

"He doesn't seem to want to attack...?"

Bunhelier was an Evil Dragon. They might've never experienced it themselves, but he was likely to be a villain in the setting. Many people speculated that he was the final boss in the worldview, so they naturally worried that the surface would become a sea of fire after seeing the message of his appearance.

However, it was so quiet. Bunhelier simply kept flying and took no action other than that. If there was one characteristic, it was that he was very fast...

By the time a whisper arrived saying a sight of him had been captured over Reidan, he had already been seen over Reinhardt. It was speculated that the time it would take him to cross the continent would be in minutes. If Bunhelier had just slightly lowered his trajectory as he flew, the ground would be devastated from the shockwaves of the sonic boom he generated.

He was literally a creature from another dimension—a disaster to be avoided, not something to fight against.

Those who stayed in place remembered the level and stats of Bunhelier that were revealed during the National Competition and chills went down their spines. They lost the willpower to resist. This was even though Bunhelier was just flying. The absence of Grid and the apostles played a major role. People once again realized how much they relied on Grid.

Kurarararara!

Bunhelier's roar was heard from a great height. The sound of the echo was like laughter. It was close to the feeling of laughing at them right now. Of course, this was just a delusion of persecution. There was no way Bunhelier could examine their complexions from so far away.

Moreover, the human population was in the billions. The population might've decreased significantly in the aftermath of the Great Human and Demon War, but it wasn't a number that Bunhelier could see with one glance. It meant it was physically impossible to read and laugh at their overall mood.

Of course, this was all based on human common sense. Bunhelier was too great to be bound by the common sense of insignificant humans. His senses spread across the continent. It was more closely intertwined than a spider's web and Bunhelier felt in real-time the reactions and expressions of all beings on the surface that was clearly transmitted through it.

He took it all as information and acted more effectively. For example, when passing over the sea, he deliberately raised waves to attack the nation of the water clan or he carried the smell of human flesh on the wind as he passed over the huge Chaos Mountains, causing the monsters to become frenzied.

He made people living in hot regions sick by inducing the transfer of cold, while people living in cold areas were forced to take off their clothes due to the transfer of heat. He even moved the Arctic icebergs or desert sand to the middle of the city. No magic was used. It was a confusion caused solely through the act of 'flying.'

In the midst of humanity's growing unrest and confusion...

[.....]

Bunhelier stopped flapping his wings for the first time since he appeared. The sword energy that rose past the tip of his nose stood tall like a pillar and gradually collected the demonic energy scattered around. Rather than being eroded by Bunhelier's demonic energy and disappearing, the sword energy instead reversed it. It was the only Dragon Killing Sword in the world.

[Dragon Slayer.]

Bunhelier's dark pupil's grew slightly bigger. It was so huge that it felt like seeing a thumbnail of the expansion of the universe. This was the case when being directly in front of him. There was a transcendent feeling felt through a simple change in the pupils and all this created a sense of pressure. Maybe Hayate's voice would tremble.

Hayate's figure, as he stood silently with concern, was elegant. He didn't look like someone who was trying hard not to show his fear. Therefore, Bunhelier smiled when looking at him.

[A thousand years isn't too short for me. Yet you, who have lived in hiding for longer than that, now dare to stand in front of me?]

Contrary to Hayate's thoughts, the old dragons weren't very interested in Hayate. To be precise, they gave up long ago. It was because the sword of the Dragon Slayer acted as a dragon's unique incompatibility. The seals over the tower, built by Hayate and the tower members, weren't something the dragons could handle.

The most accurate way of describing it was that they couldn't identify it because they were dragons. Putting aside their desire to eat him to nourish themselves, it meant it was impossible to search for Hayate. Now he boldly blocked the path himself.

[You seem to have something you believe in. Did you even wake up Nevartan?]

Nevartan was obsessed with Bunhelier. The cause of Nevartan's madness was Bunhelier's betrayal. Even after losing his sense of reason, faint remnants of memory remained and he seemed unable to forget Bunhelier. It meant Nevartan was one of the few beings who could threaten Bunhelier.

[It is quite a pity.]

Bunhelier's voice was mixed with harsh breathing. It was a reverberating breath. The nervous Hayate focused on why this phenomenon was occurring and barely figured it out.

'Rage.'

There was no precursor to the activation of Dragon Rage, but Hayate guessed it and trusted his judgment. He blocked Bunhelier's tail, which rushed in like a huge dam, and was vigilant as he prepared in advance for the shockwaves that would overlap. As expected, it was Dragon Rage.

Bunhelier just swung his tail once, but a total of five shockwaves occurred in a row and struck Hayate. There was no time difference at all. Hayate failed to absorb the fourth and fifth attacks properly. It was because the dragons he fought so far could only stack a maximum of three attacks. He hadn't expected five overlapping attacks.

The same Dragon Rage exerted a greater effect when used by an old dragon. Hayate immediately wiped the blood flowing down the corners of his mouth with sword energy and endured it without revealing pain. He managed to repair the organs in his body that were crushed by the shock and let out a small breath.

Hayata was the only one seen in Bunhelier's elongated pupils, which had become smaller again. It was the aftermath of erasing the landscapes of hell that filled the surrounding sky with his power.

[Certainly, it is worth it if it is you.]

Bunhelier did the calculations. Should he avoid Nevartan's pursuit and create chaos according to his original purpose? Or should he cling to the Dragon Slayer in front of him and risk getting caught by Nevartan? His judgment should be fast. After waking up, the time it would take for Nevartan to appear in front of him would be extremely short.

[I need to eat you.]

The Dragon Slayer's achievements were unique in the world. The value to be gained from killing him was comparable to the value he would get when collecting millions of chaos. Moreover, he could gather chaos at any time, but he didn't know when he would meet Hayate again. It was an opportunity that couldn't be missed.

[You will die to me.]

The Dragon Words became a prophecy. He approached with an irresistible fate and put great pressure on Hayate. Hayate was able to resist with the will of a Dragon Slayer, but he couldn't get rid of it completely due to the constant pressure. He had to be constantly focused in order to endure, and the mental power consumed here was intense.

Hayate's expression stiffened as he had a hunch that he wouldn't last long. He would die before the search magic machine he sent to wake Nevartan up from hibernation would pay off. The question to consider here was what goal to set.

How much of a blow could he inflict on Bunhelier? How long must he endure in order for the world to be safe when Grid and the tower members returned from destroying the hell moon.

The waves of the Dragon Killing Sword, that adorned the night sky more brilliantly than hundreds of constellations, started to gather at a single point. It aimed at Bunhelier's heart in response to Hayate's will.

The destruction of the dragon heart. He never dreamed of a complete destruction. The goal was to inflict enough damage to put Bunhelier into a deep sleep. The price would be Hayate's life. It was a goal that couldn't be achieved without this much sacrifice.

Kurarararara!

Bunhelier read Hayate's intentions and reacted sensitively. Perhaps his self-esteem was hurt, but he roared and cast hundreds of magic at the same time. In an instant, the Dragon Breath overlapped five times and was fired, blocking any evasion paths.

Hayate's expression darkened sharply as he slashed the Breath with the Dragon Killing Sword. The surprisingly cunning Bunhelier used human magic. Some of the magic cast simultaneously had a structure that was difficult to cut with the Dragon Killing Sword.

Through the gap in the black Breath that split apart like the Red Sea, all types of magic bombardments poured out. Only two of them constrained Hayate's movements. It was magic that worked through incompatibility. It forced him to use magic power separate from the Dragon Killing Sword, but Hayate couldn't easily generate any magic power. It was because old dragons interpreted and absorbed all energy other than that of the Dragon Killing Sword. They reversed the power that their prey used to resist them and became more powerful in an instant.

He hesitated because he couldn't overlook this. However, fleeting hesitation in a fight between Absolutes was a deadly poison. The tail that seemed to stay on the horizon was now right in front of his eyes. The area was so large that evasion was impossible.

Bunhelier's eyes flashed from the bottom of Hayate's field of view as he was forced to raise his sword. The long neck that had fallen down now swelled up to the fullest. It was a precursor to a Breath...

It was precisely aimed at a situation where it was hard to dodge. Hayate was preparing for a serious injury when someone's voice entered his ears.

The reinforcement who just arrived at the scene—he gave off a sensation that Hayate was familiar with. The Sword Saint of the present age awakened the swordsmanship of cutting the wind and cut off the Breath. It was a divine skill he gained after cutting down the Elemental King of Wind.

[The target's skill casting has been canceled.]

All the magic and Breath of the breathless Bunhelier stopped working for a moment. Hayate managed to take a breath thanks to this.

Kraugel told him, "I'm going to confess this honestly in case you expect too much of me, but all I can do is assist in this way."

The opponent was too bad. He never expected to meet a dragon at the stage where he came back after experiencing growth.

Kraugel obediently cleared his mind. However, he was aware of one truth—Hayate couldn't die. He was one of the few hopes of the world along with Grid.

"Look for an opportunity and run away."

Hayate was always in a position to show his back. Yet at this moment, he saw the back of another person. It was Kraugel who followed after Grid.

The descendants of a distant age were guarding the Absolute.

Chapter 1656

The dragon heart spun and the refined magic power was shot out into a breath that caused certain phenomena. This was a Breath. It was why it had powerful attributes.

Heart and breathing—the operation of the Dragon Breath included two concepts that were regarded as the source of life and this source was usually an attribute.

[You are a Sword Saint. However, your disposition is different from the idiot in the tower.]

There was a rumor that Biban cut the already fired Breath with physical force. On the other hand, Kraugel cut at his breathing, so this stopped the Breath itself. It meant the exercise of his willpower was blocked in advance. It was a humiliation never experienced before by the great old dragon, who had existed since the beginning.

The wavelength was huge. Kraugel's achievement that was beyond a legend caused his status to rise in real time.

However, Bunhelier didn't show any signs of uneasiness. He pleasantly evaluated the human being who developed using himself as a stepping stone.

[You are different from Muller. You forged your own path even though you had a predecessor to watch and learn from.]

“.....”

Bunhelier's attitude shook Hayate. The fact that an arrogant old dragon—it was even the Evil Dragon—showed interest in a human was an astounding event. He even mentioned Muller's name. However, it wasn't a favorable attitude at all when Hayate recalled the story that some of the old dragons treated Muller as a mutant and hated him.

Bunhelier was obviously chatting pleasantly on the surface, but he was obviously hiding a lot of killing intent in his heart.

[It isn't a very good variable. It would be better for your talent to disappear.]

Grruk, grruuk...

Bunhelier's voice spread along with his rough breathing and it shook the entire continent. A tsunami occurred in the sea, lava erupted from a volcano, and the ground where Garion was missing from had consecutive earthquakes, causing canyons to form on the plains. The voice of the Evil Dragon and the demonic energy, which contained blatant killing intent, spread and it became a disaster in itself.

The biggest victim was Kraugel. He suffered from all sorts of abnormal conditions. Among them was the most fatal abnormal condition.

[Bunhelier's Dragon Words have extinguished your talent.]

[Most passive skills are temporarily sealed.]

His passive skills were sealed. Kraugel was crushed by the sheer pressure and recalled the situation a little while ago. He hadn't been able to discern Bunhelier's huge body until Hayate stopped Bunhelier's tail and caused him to stiffen for a moment. It was due to his speed. Even though Bunhelier was in view from a distance, he kept losing sight of the movement. The limit was just faintly catching a glimpse of him using the assistance of super sensitivity. Additionally, the super sensitivity of the Sword Saint was a stat, not a passive.

Not yet—he could still fight.

“I don't think I will be as helpful as I thought. Please take that into consideration.”

It was true that his status has increased after cutting off Bunhelier's Breath once. However, for Kraugel, transcending status was a concept he had long been used to.

He fought against the half-gods of the East Continent; defeated the Elemental King of Wind and succeed in purifying a dimension; returned to the surface and was chased by a blind swordsman who claimed to be a disciple of a master swordsman; went to war with the subordinates of the leaders of the No Offspring Tomb, who controlled what was believed to be Muller's tomb; and finally, he climbed Grenier for a class quest and had to go through the trials of the Mountain King.

Kraugel had experienced and resolved major incidents one after another and had built up his own status several times. It meant he understood that rapid growth wouldn't happen just because his status rose by one level.

Irresistible—Kraugel clearly realized this fact as the presence of the Evil Dragon Bunhelier grew, and he lowered his goal. Rather than just assisting Hayate, he instead urged him to retreat immediately, “It seems wisest for you to step back while I buy some time.”

Hayate shook his head. “I must not back down.”

He was the only Dragon Slayer in the world. It was his obligation to stand up to the Evil Dragon that had started to run wild. Even if he had encountered this situation in the past when he was hiding out of a fear of death, he still most likely would've done the same as now.

Kraugel stared at Hayate's determined expression and nodded. “Do as you wish.”

It was a few months ago—by the time he cut down the Elemental King of Wind, Kraugel was in a situation he didn't understand. The Pioneer's qualifications, which should've belonged to Grid, were transferred to him. He thought there must be a reason, and now he realized why.

“However, please be sure to survive. I will die on your behalf.”

A sacrifice—it was the role that Grid should've originally played. It was just that Grid had taken on too much responsibility, so he was chosen as the next best one.

Kraugel, who grasped the situation, didn't resent it. Instead, he took it as an honor. He was willing to share Grid's responsibility.

Hayate expressed his gratitude with a nod and explained, "I am going to aim for the dragon heart. This is the only way to kill the dragon's momentum."

One of the decisive reasons for the cause of Fire Dragon Ifrit's death was the overlapping of multiple Breaths. She wasn't an old dragon, so she was in a different position from Bunhelier, who stacked up five Breaths when using Dragon Rage. The burden every time a Breath was overlapped caused the dragon heart to be overloaded. She lost her horn and suffered irreversible fatal injuries in her weak state. It was safe to say that she was virtually dead by the time she arrived at the lair of Fire Dragon Trauka.

What if a direct blow was inflicted on a dragon heart? Even an old dragon would have to devote decades to recovery. Of course, they could be active forever without worrying about their wounds, but... an old dragon's competitor was an old dragon. They didn't want to become a target of another old dragon in their incomplete state and experience a crisis.

[Aiming for my heart?]

There was no particular reason why Hayate spoke openly about his aim. The Dragon Killing Sword that looked like a galaxy condensed into a straight line. It was Hayate's sword energy and willpower. According to Hayate's intention, the direction of the blade changed in real time and it explicitly pointed at Bunhelier's heart.

This meant that Bunhelier couldn't be unaware of Hayate's intentions.

[Then why don't you give it a try?]

The smiling Bunhelier openly displayed his chest proudly. It was as if a wall had spread out in the sky.

[My heart is here.]

Just as Hayate didn't hide his thoughts, Bunhelier had no intention of hiding his heart. It was because he was strong. It was to the extent when he could thoroughly trample on Hayate's willpower.

[.....!]

Bunhelier had been talking confidently, but now his expression stiffened for a moment. It was due to the sharp blade that pierced his skull and gave him the sensation that his brain matter was being stirred.

The Heart Sword—Sword Saint Kraugel's ultimate technique. It inflicted damage proportional to the target's maximum health. Of course, it didn't have a significant effect on targets who had a higher status than him. In fact, the sensation that Bunhelier felt when he was hit by the Heart Sword was more an awareness of a foreign object, not any pain.

However, that was enough. The agitation that lasted only 0.001 seconds—there was a man who was skilled enough to take advantage of that gap.

"....."

Kraugel was fascinated. The polluted night sky had transformed into space. It was bigger than the universe in Bunhelier's pupils. Celestial bodies existed everywhere in his field of view, all of which were

the waves of Hayate's sword energy. It was a wave caused by the aftermath of slashing the dragon's chest.

By the time Kraugel recognized the changed landscape, the results had already occurred. Hayate was still standing behind Kraugel, but the Dragon Killing Sword had already split apart the chest of Bunhelier, who was hundreds of meters in front of him. It was a mystery, not swordsmanship. It seemed that the only technique that could be compared to it was the Heart Sword.

'The Dragon Slayer...'

There was no record of a dragon's skin and scale being cut by Muller. Of course, it had to be taken into account that most of the records about Muller had been lost. However, it was common sense from the beginning that a dragon's skin and scales couldn't be pierced by anything. Yet today, it was terribly split apart.

Black demonic energy poured out like blood from the cut that stretched from Bunhelier's shoulder to his abdomen. The amount was so great that it seemed like the rivers on the ground would flood.

".....?"

It was an overwhelming sight that he might never see again in his lifetime. Kraugel stared blankly at Bunhelier's body, which was tilting at an angle, only to become stunned.

His vision turned a few laps. He was drawn to Hayate. The shoulder caught in Hayate's hand couldn't be leaned back, so his body rotated like a spinning top. He couldn't react even with his super sensitivity. He didn't feel any signs at all.

Kraugel became desperately aware of the gap he had with an Absolute, but he only focused on the situation in front of him. He recalled the role he had promised Hayate and predicted the reach of his body that was spinning. He drew his sword and raised it.

At this moment, Kraugel was Hayate's shield. He was used like this. He protected Hayate from the attack of the long-haired man who emerged from the dragon's torn stomach.

'Keuk.'

He had to swallow back his screams. The shock delivered through the White Tiger Sword after it collided with the man's fist penetrated deep into his bones. The sound of wrist bones being crushed was much louder than the sound of grinding teeth. He might've managed to block it, but he lost nearly half his health.

[You have suffered the 'fracture' abnormal condition.]

[However, a Sword Saint can handle the sword perfectly in any circumstances.]

[The demonic energy of the Evil Dragon Bunhelier has penetrated into your body.]

[The health lost to Bunhelier can't be restored until the end of the battle.]

"Hahahaha! Using a human as a shield? As expected of a guy who has been hiding for over a thousand years!"

The unidentified man—Kraugel couldn't accept the identity of the laughing handsome man with black hair reaching his pelvis. He was dumbfounded even after checking the name floating above the man's head.

"It is Polymorph."

Hayate's voice echoed in his ears. It felt more like he was talking to himself than explaining to Kraugel.

Kraugel understood the situation. Bunhelier gave Hayate his chest as if to be cut and Hayate aimed at his carelessness. He fired a blow with all his strength. It was a trap. Bunhelier used Polymorph to reduce the size of his body, so the position of his heart changed dramatically. The thing that Hayate cut was just the remnant of Polymorph, not Bunhelier's heart.

'He is cunning.'

Not only was Bunhelier strong, but he also knew how to use tricks. Wouldn't he be the biggest challenge for Grid, who had a slightly simpler side?

Kraugel was suddenly worried. Kraugel put all his strength into his trembling hands. He felt that Hayate, who managed to take a breath while he was the shield, was still behind him.

"You must achieve your purpose. He is someone who shouldn't meet with Grid."

"I agree."

".....!"

Kraugel re-measured the distance to Bunhelier, who had transformed into a human, and became startled. It was because Bunhelier's hand suddenly appeared in front of him and quickly became huge. It made all his calculations useless.

Bunhelier, who used Polymorph to change to a human form—he acted by replacing part of his body with a dragon's body. It was virtually impossible to respond when he turned his outstretched fist into a dragon's claw. The forelimb, which looked infinitely small when in the form of a dragon, became abnormally large on a human body. The range of the attack was so wide that there was no way to avoid it.

Kraugel's body was pushed back as he was about to recite the poetry that praises the sword. Once again, he was drawn back to Hayate. He was grabbed by the nape of his neck and felt Hayate's hand gently pressing on his back. Kraugel understood the other person's intentions and pointed his sword forward.

This time, he was Hayate's sword. Kraugel's sword sneaked through the gap in Bunhelier's claws. He couldn't get through the skin, but he managed to widen the gap. It was in the realm of his calculations. It was the result of Hayate moving Kraugel, who couldn't show his skills in a fight between Absolutes.

The Dragon Killing Sword dug in through the gap. The startled Bunhelier returned his arm to human form. The feet he raised were in dragon form. It rushed like a great mountain.

The Dragon Killing Sword lost its target and immediately changed its trajectory. It blocked the dragon's massive feet. The wave from the Dragon Killing Sword caused Bunhelier's actions to stiffen for a moment, but it didn't have a great effect.

Bunhelier's feet seemed to become smaller again and before he knew it, the five stacked Breaths flooded in front of him. It was shot when Kraugel couldn't read it, so he couldn't stop the breathing.

"I understood it at the end of my admiration."

Kraugel used Poetry that Praises the Sword. He was convinced that Hayate couldn't use Shunpo. At present, Bunhelier's senses were spread all over the world. There was a high probability that the path of Shunpo would be read and he would be hit by a fatal counter.

As expected, Hayate didn't use Shunpo. He left the Breath to Kraugel as if he had anticipated Kraugel's judgment. At the same time, the Dragon Killing Sword was in the form of a ring. There were a total of eight rings. Each and every one gave off intense waves.

[A legend doesn't die easily.]

Poetry that Praises the Sword was practically invincible. He replaced his defense and health with the sword's attack and durability, ignoring damage and abnormal statuses in return for the sword being consumed. However, there wasn't much of an effect on Bunhelier.

Kraugel sacrificed dozens of swords but could endure only one Breath. Meanwhile, Bunhelier's stacked up five Breaths without a time difference. It completely turned Kraugel to rags. However, he managed to save Hayate. Kraugel's eyes shone even after consuming his immortality. He believed in the power of Poetry that Praises the Sword and swung the White Tiger Sword sharply.

"Space Sword."

[The effect of Poetry that Praises the Sword has increased the skill's attack power by 15 times.]

Was it pity after seeing him being trampled on all the time? After a long time, a jackpot occurred.

".....!"

Bunhelier's eyes widened slightly. Blood flowed down his cheek as he tilted his head to avoid the sword attack. His smile disappeared from his beautiful face for the first time. Bunhelier's expression crumpled like a piece of paper and his gaze as he glared at Kraugel was unusual.

'It is over.'

Even if it was a stab, it was a stab that hit the world's strongest monster. Kraugel might really have to quit the game if things went badly here.

Kraugel's expression stiffened as he clicked his tongue. He watched as the ringed Dragon Killing Sword occupied all directions around Bunhelier. They were the same Dragon Killing Sword, but they each took a different form. Some of the rings became Bunhelier's tails, claws, and legs, while others were shot with a flash like they were a Breath.

He implemented some of the deadly moves that Bunhelier showed in the last few seconds. This was the power of a Dragon Slayer. It took the dragon as its prey and completed the analysis of the prey.

“Where did your roots go? Dirty bastard with no honor.”

How dare you try to reproduce me?

The shaking Bunhelier became huge. He sensed that his state of absolute defense was intermittently nullified by the waves from the Dragon Killing Sword and abandoned his human form. He once again put on his scales. Bunhelier’s massive body shook as he allowed simultaneous blows. This was followed by a series of thunderous explosions.

It was only then that people saw Bunhelier’s image properly. It was only a few dozen seconds after he first appeared. He moved at a speed that the naked eye couldn’t keep up with and caused all types of disasters. Now that shadow stayed in place for more than one second for the first time. Exclamations burst out everywhere.

Bunhelier—it was the aftermath of discovering the Dragon Slayer fighting the monster, who had embedded great fear and anxiety in people’s hearts ever since he appeared in the National Competition’s server. Gradually, more and more people clenched their fists and chanted Hayate’s name.

However, silence soon fell again. The burning hot atmosphere cooled down like it had been a lie.

The world that the Space Sword split in half slowly collapsed. It was the greatest ever trolling. Garion’s vacant spot was painfully realized. As people glared at Kraugel, who was caught by Hayate and being swung back and forth, the situation of the battle changed in real time.

Bunhelier used Dragon Fear and blew up all the images of what seemed to be a silver dragon attacking him. Then he started a counterattack. The appearance of the dragon and Hayate once again became indistinguishable. Lights flashed throughout the battlefield where the entire sky was the stage. It looked like a scene of constellations being formed.

Rainwater fell on someone’s face. The person wiped it with curiosity and found it was blood. It was the commonly known dark red blood. It was definitely human blood. It was the blood that Hayate and Kraugel shed.

It happened as people’s anxiety was growing again...

A shadow appeared that blocked the blood. It was with a gorgeous black parasol with blue decorations.

“Not bad.” A woman wiped the blood off the parasol with her thin fingers and smiled softly. It was a beauty that transcended imagination. Could it be that the red eyes that were like rubies contained some type of magic power?

The people present were fascinated, regardless of their age or gender.

[Vampire Duke ‘Marie Rose’ has appeared.]

Chapter 1657

The act of absorbing blood wasn't inherently a means of survival. The vampires who coveted the blood of other species to live were just defective products. The proof was that Braham's actions weren't disrupted despite not partaking in the absorption of blood. He regained the power of a direct descendant and became a vampire again, but he didn't covet the blood of other species. It was because there was no need for it.

"Not bad."

The blood wiped away by slender fingers—the dark red blood that poured from the sky happened to be Hayate's blood. It implied that the Dragon Slayer, the last bastion of humanity, was struggling. However, no one knew it. They couldn't properly watch the battle between Hayate and Bunhelier.

There were some people who even saw it as a game of go. They perceived the polluted sky as a scene of the black and white stones trying to surround each other. It was because their movement was so fast that the figures could only be distinguished by color.

Bunhelier was black, while Hayate was a silver that resembled white. The series of processes where the colors chasing each other formed lines and dots, repeatedly uniting and spreading out, seemed like the process of creating constellations. At first glance, it was beautiful. They wouldn't have hesitated to enjoy it if it wasn't for the loud explosions that occurred one after another.

Every time the color and color, or light and light, appeared dozens of times, the roar that followed was so loud that it was incomparably greater than thunder. The echoes were sent through the crumbling ground and caused a bigger earthquake.

People were afraid. It felt like the world was on the verge of the end. They would've fallen into great anxiety if they discovered that Hayate, their support, was suffering serious injuries one after another.

However, the situation was rather good for Marie Rose. Unlike Braham, she inherited all of their mother's abilities and knew how to truly utilize the deed of blood absorption. Marie Rose brought her bloody finger to her lips. Her red lips shone in a bewitching manner and attracted people's attention. Her beauty caused a serious problem.

It made those who were thinking about the end of the world forget the crisis and fall into a trance. Therefore, it could be used for the purpose of leading people to euthanasia. It felt more like a curse than a blessing. In particular, it seemed to be a great curse for the person concerned.

The people who were fascinated by Marie Rose felt sorry for her. They quickly imagined that she could never truly communicate with anyone because she was so beautiful. The complicated impression she gave of being dignified yet pitiful and bewitching yet innocent naturally aroused a lot of their imagination.

Marie Rose didn't care. She was accustomed to having the eyes of others on her and just savored the blood of a Dragon Slayer.

'It isn't as sweet as my dear husband's.'

The taste was like perfume. It wasn't that it was on the level of being bad. Based on the memories of her mother that remained in her mind, it was said that the blood of a high status being was sweet. Yet

strangely, it didn't taste good. Maybe it was the aftermath of tasting Grid's blood first. She became accustomed to the taste of Grid, so she became dissatisfied with the other tastes.

'Ahh.' Marie Rose's eyes curved while her white cheeks turned red. She felt complete restraint. She was chasing Grid from her mind and spirit to her body, so she felt completely dominated. Up to now, countless beings were obsessed with her and tried to control her, but Grid, who avoided her, was the one who dominated her. It was obvious that a certain pope, who turned his back on the faith he built up all his life and locked his soul in a coffin, would lament after knowing this.

"Eh...?" The people who had been staring blankly at Marie Rose suddenly came to their senses. It was because her collar fluttered and silver waves occurred that were centered around her. It was reminiscent of the aura of a Dragon Slayer, who was fighting fiercely high in the sky.

People's bodies started tilting. The people who fell to the ground eventually realized that the spot where Marie Rose had just been standing had formed a pit. It was like the surface of the moon. A huge crater was created.

Did the aftermath of the black dragon's Breath that cut the sky in half manage to reach this far? People were filled with worries and doubts, only to realize the strange sight a moment later. A closed parasol lay neatly in the center of the crater. There were no signs of it being swept away by any explosion.

Bunhelier had reigned since the beginning. He swallowed the demonic energy of hell and developed even further, becoming an almighty being. In addition to his high magic power, he was able to utilize all types of evil energies. Therefore, he believed he was invincible and had no doubts. Of course, he had no intention of fighting with other old dragons, but he was confident that he could easily escape a crisis even when faced with an unavoidable situation.

That's right—most of the crises that Bunhelier imagined came from beings in the same level as him. He wasn't particularly conscious of anyone unless they were an old dragon or god of the beginning.

The Dragon Slayer? The only Absolute among the human beings? He believed he could easily trample on the Dragon Slayer once they met.

However, the actual situation was very different from his beliefs. This human wasn't an easy opponent to trample on. The wounds on his body would increase if he didn't maintain the proper tension. It was very unpleasant.

The absolute defense—he often felt naked when the innate power that protected him in most situations became powerless. There was a slight sense of crisis when the skin and scales that were covered by this defense were cut.

The Dragon Slayer was just as intimidating as his crazy name. It was to the extent that Bunhelier became a bit annoyed at meeting him.

'It should've been someone other than me who dealt with this guy.'

It would've been a very interesting sight. He would've enjoyed watching it. However, he was reduced to being the spectacle. His anger soared when he thought about the other old dragons who would be

watching the situation in their sleep right now. His composure was shaken by the thought that they might be laughing at him.

It was a side effect of hell's demonic energy. The source of demonic energy was chaos that was mixed with anger, hatred, sadness, and confusion. Bunhelier had been eating chaos as food for quite some time and couldn't easily control his emotions compared to other old dragons. It was a completely different situation from Trauka, who enjoyed the overt expression of emotions.

Unlike Bunhelier, who only claimed to be invincible after absorbing the demonic energy of hell and built up the confidence to escape any crisis, Trauka was crazy. He believed himself to be invincible from the moment he was born. He didn't foresee that a crisis would arise during his existence. At the same time, he was unexpectedly cautious, so he seemed to be bluffing... in any case, Bunhelier couldn't even afford to bluff.

He was often immersed in his emotions. It was a weakness that he was aware of himself. This was the reason why he was extremely reluctant to associate with the Insane Dragon Nevartan.

'Calm down. There is no reason to be anxious.'

Bunhelier controlled his heart. He struggled to stay calm even though he suffered humiliation several times by the Dragon Slayer, who dared to act recklessly. He was confident that he could get rid of Hayate before Nevartan broke into the scene. Hayate had surprisingly good skills, but he didn't pose a real threat to Bunhelier. This was the case until a moment ago.

[.....?!]

He just needed to maintain a speed that Kraugel couldn't recognize and Kraugel wouldn't be able to interrupt his activation of the Breath—Bunhelier was aware of this part and flew at the speed of light while releasing a Breath. Then he came to a sudden stop.

The Breath's trajectory wasn't completed in the aftermath of the high-speed movement, so the momentum weakened even further and it was split into branches. It wasn't something he could care about.

Bunhelier's senses were all directed downwards. Another Dragon Slayer was heading toward him. It wasn't an illusion. It was real.

[You—what is this?]

It was a situation where his absolute defense and scales alone couldn't promise complete protection. Bunhelier endured the humiliation and surrounded himself with a magic power barrier. Then he stared at Hayate as if he was going to eat this human.

This was how shocking the situation was. There were two Dragon Slayers, not one. This person had deceived the world...

Bunhelier had no choice but to think this way. It was hard to believe that no one had ever noticed the truth, so he had to be very vigilant.

That's right—Bunhelier didn't feel Marie Rose's aura at all. It was only after she drank Hayate's blood and reproduced some of the power of the Dragon Slayer that he noticed she was nearby. It was the

aftermath of accepting the demonic energy of hell. The Three Evils of the Beginning, who were in the position of dominating demonic energy, had a natural antipathy to him. The secret shackles that Baal placed on Bunhelier were working in Marie Rose's favor at this moment.

The wave of silver light flowing around the delicate hands pierced through Bunhelier's barrier from below. It was the Dragon Killing Sword, but it was different from the Dragon Killing Sword. It wasn't in the shape of a sword, but took the form of five claws. At the same time, it tore apart the magic power and the weak parts of the body.

Bunhelier's demonic energy was disturbed. The barrier of black magic power had no effect and was shattered.

[You...!]

Bunhelier trembled when he saw the face of the uninvited guest who appeared at eye level with him.

Long black hair and red eyes—the pointed fangs that gradually appeared as the corners of her mouth rose revealed her true identity.

[Beriache's...!]

Just then, the real Dragon Killing Sword fell down and cut Bunhelier's scales. It was aimed at the nape of the neck, but it ended up grazing the shoulder. It was because Bunhelier tilted his head back and his neck swelled up greatly. It was the precursor to a Breath. It was an angle that aimed at both Hayate and Marie Rose, who attacked at the same time.

A dopo fluttered behind Hayate's back as the sword that had been lowered diagonally was raised. It belonged to Kraugel.

[The target's skill casting has been canceled.]

It was the moment when the sword that cut the breathing finally came into effect. Marie Rose's unexpected intrusion presented a big opportunity.

"Hmm." The smile on Marie Rose's mouth grew even deeper. She saw Hayate rushing forward without worrying about the precursor of the Breath, so she also moved forward without hesitation. Then a human did a great job. It was a familiar person. He was the human who was most active after Grid, so she had heard a lot of rumors here and there.

"Sword Saint. You aren't bad either."

Roars occurred in succession. Hayate's Dragon Killing Sword took the lead and slashed Bunhelier. Thanks to this, Kraugel's ultimate skill was also slightly effective.

Marie Rose assisted. She used the magic power borrowed from the Dragon Slayer's energy and more effectively suppressed Bunhelier's demonic energy. This made the attacks of the two men even more powerful.

[.....!]

The evil dragon Bunhelier swallowed his scream. It wasn't just an effort to save face. It was because he was conscious of Nevartan. He deduced that Nevartan would arrive even quicker if the turmoil increased beyond this. He avoided the Dragon Killing Sword that aimed at his heart using Polymorph.

He used the details of the human body to launch a counterattack. However, a satisfactory result wasn't obtained. The demonic energy that was mixed with magic power wasn't controlled. Rather, it was fatal because it responded to Marie Rose's will.

In effect, his magic was sealed and the movements of his body became dull.

[Baal...!!]

The more he became aware of his condition, the more Bunhelier resented Baal, not the enemies in front of him. He developed a grudge against Baal.

In hell, Baal laughed.

Chapter 1658

The absolute nature of a dragon was innate. They rightfully reigned with their innate body, magic, and powers.

Then what if that innate absoluteness became useless?

'It is annoying.'

First of all, his freedom was suppressed. He couldn't show the speed of crossing the continent with just a few flaps of his wings.

Hayate responded. The Dragon Killing Sword not only often neutralized his absolute defense, but also blocked his movement. The waves contained in the blades that pierced that scales caused the body to stiffen. It was safe to say that Hayate's very existence was a contradiction to the dragons.

Rumors were usually exaggerated, but in his case, it was the complete opposite. The rumors were far short of his actual skills.

Then what about Marie Rose, who broke in one step later? She was the rightful successor of Beriache. She had an ability with a low chance of mutating, blood absorption, and was equivalent to the Three Evils of the Beginning, but she suffered no penalties on the surface. This was extremely threatening.

Did she consume some of the blood that Hayate shed to embody some of the power of a Dragon Slayer? There seemed to be no exaggeration to the rumor that Beriache exerted the power of 10,000 demons alone when she fought against Baal for supremacy of hell.

Marie Rose's intervention made Bunhelier feel like he was dealing with two Dragon Slayers. His movements were blocked more easily and his absolute defense and scales became neutralized more often. He used a Breath to try and reverse the situation, but even the result of that was disappointing. The influence exerted by the Sword Saint, who was still a child, was slightly annoying.

Was his name Kraugel? He interacted with Hayate's sword energy and read Hayate's intentions. It was like a sword that moved on its own. He was a person that Hayate wielded along with the Dragon Killing Sword.

The performance of the one who cut at Bunhelier's breathing at every moment and stopped the activation of the Breath was fatal when combined with the performances of Hayate and Marie Rose. There weren't many means Bunhelier could rely on to escape this frustrating situation.

First, magic. Dragons could cast multiple spells that they understood without any restrictions. It was a talent with a very good compatibility with Bunhelier, who was an old dragon and liked planning. By studying the magic of species inferior to him, Bunhelier could cast hundreds of thousands of spells simultaneously. He used this ability to easily put Hayate into danger.

However, Marie Rose's presence put limits on his magic. The magic power that was mixed with demonic energy failed to disobey Marie Rose's will and rebelled against Bunhelier. He couldn't complete the magic.

Second, physical strength. An old dragon was huge and fast. It was safe to say that there was no limit to the power exerted by a body that reached up to several hundred meters, including the tail. Additionally, he was like an immortal creature and had the ability to regenerate at high speed. It meant that there was no problem even if his absolute defense and scales were pierced and he got hurt. A natural disaster would occur if he wielded this invincible body and the enemy would naturally be killed.

It was only a story of when the attack hit. It had a large attack area, so the dragon's hit rate was practically close to 100%. It was just that the opponents were too bad this time. Both Hayate, who had advanced to the point of facing Martial God Zeratul head-on, and Marie Rose, who controlled the flow of magic power, didn't easily allow any attacks.

'They are like flies.'

The winged beast thought while spitting. In the end, there was only one answer.

Dragon Words—he had to reverse all the disadvantageous situations with the strongest of a dragon's powers. Of course, it wasn't easy. If Bunhelier could use powerful Dragon Words like other old dragons, then the situation wouldn't be so disadvantageous.

Unfortunately, there was a flaw in Bunhelier's Dragon Words. It was even worse than the Dragon Words of some of the top dragons. It was natural. As Cranbel had said, Dragon Words were something tempered through the fulfillment of the covenant.

It was the only power among all the powers that a dragon was born with that needed training. Bunhelier had enough problems with his heart to the point of degenerating to an evil dragon, so the number of times he fulfilled a covenant was naturally small. This meant his Dragon Words didn't grow properly.

'I have to train it this time.'

Bunhelier saw the crisis as an opportunity. He vowed to use today's humiliation as a stepping stone for transcendence.

[I will kill 10,000 humans.]

It was sudden nonsense. The moment Bunhelier spoke, Hayate's group felt their bodies becoming light. They realized that the pressure of the Dragon Words that had been crushing them was gone.

".....!"

"Hmm."

Marie Rose, Hayate, and Kraugel immediately noticed Bunhelier's intentions. Their level of understanding was the same, regardless of the level of their skills. It was their reaction that was different. Marie Rose just yawned, while Hayate immediately descended to the ground. Kraugel...

He broke the White Tiger Sword. The ultimate in growth-type items that was made with Grid—he permanently lost the myth-rated item that had developed with him over the years. It was in order to protect Hayate.

The reason why Bunhelier failed to maintain the speed of light was the Dragon Killing Sword. He was only temporarily slowed down before he became stiff whenever he collided with the Dragon Killing Sword. Outside of the range of the Dragon Killing Sword, Bunhelier was still free. The speed of the bastard who aimed at a place without Hayate couldn't be perceived by the civilians at all.

".....?"

It felt like the black dots that flashed in a dizzying manner and embroidered the sky became slightly larger. By the time the humans on the ground had this thought, Bunhelier's shadow was already covering the ground.

The sight of the giant dragon just in front of them frightened people. However, the speed of the storm was much faster than their screams. It was a storm created by Bunhelier who simply 'moved.' It swept away the crowd before people could even scream. It contained a destructive power that could easily tear apart human flesh and bones. It happened as people's skins were cracking and blood flowed...

Hayate chased after Bunhelier and landed among the crowd. He enveloped the people with the waves of the Dragon Killing Sword that was split into particles and spread. The people were protected thanks to this.

However, Hayate revealed a gap. From the perspective of Bunhelier, who was simply trying to strengthen his Dragon Words by fulfilling the covenant, it was an unexpected windfall.

Killing 10 thousand human beings—his Dragon Words wouldn't grow dramatically even if he fulfilled this covenant. In a situation that was unfortunate for him, Hayate's actions became self-defeating. This was a great fortune for Bunhelier.

He immediately slammed his foot down toward Hayate. He accurately grasped that Hayate had weakened in the aftermath of dispersing the waves of the Dragon Killing Sword and he quickly targeted it.

However, the attack failed. Fragments of something that was as transparent as glass combined with Hayate's strong self-defense. The fragments of the White Tiger Sword filled up the gaps in the sword energy.

Sword's Sacrifice—sacrifice a sword to protect a target. The utilization was low due to the restriction that the target needed to have sword energy, but the stronger the rating and power of the sacrificed sword, the greater the effect. Thanks to this, Hayate was able to hold on for a long time even after being trampled by Bunhelier's huge foot.

“There is no one normal among the old dragons.”

“.....”

People couldn't close their mouths. The dragon's foot that was bigger than a house—they stared blankly at the back of the Absolute, who lifted something that should've crushed him like he was an ant.

The scattered Dragon Killing Sword gathered again and took the form of a sword. It was held in Hayate's hand and dug into the sole of Bunhelier's foot little by little.

“You don't even know honor. It is disappointing.”

[A rat who has been hiding for over 1,000 years is talking about honor?]

Bunhelier reacted emotionally. It was proof that he had little room for relaxation in his mind. It was because the senses he spread across the continent noticed Nevartan waking up. That guy was coming soon. It was impossible to get rid of everyone in front of him.

However, simply retreating was a serious problem. There were too many witnesses. The act of fleeing would become the achievement of those who participated in the battle and he would suffer a great deal of damage to his status. He could even regress.

The point was simple. It was enough if he didn't seem to be running away.

[I will punish you.]

Bunhelier spoke with rough breathing before his momentum changed in an instant. It was the result of focusing all his senses that he had spread across the continent. Hayate, who had been pushing Bunhelier away little by little, became startled and stepped back. Then Bunhelier's gaze shifted upward.

He caught sight of Marie Rose, who had become quiet at a certain point, dozing off. Bunhelier tried to ignore it. He stared at Kraugel, who had become ragged and couldn't even breathe properly.

“.....!”

Hayate read Bunhelier's aim and was about to jump out in a hurry, only to stop. It was because Bunhelier utilized the magic power that had been freed after Marie Rose was struck by the Curse of Sloth. Hundreds of thousands of spells were cast at the same time and aimed at humans. Hayate couldn't ignore them.

In the sky, Kraugel was smiling. It was as if he was saying not to worry about him.

A dark pillar soared. The Dragon Breath turned Kraugel's body into ashes. At that same time, Hayate screamed in a desperate manner as he cut down the magic shot at the humans.

It was the moment when the winner and the loser were decided. The people who hadn't been able to read the flow of the battle in the first place perceived the winner as Bunhelier due to this moment.

[Look forward to the next punishment.]

Bunhelier turned his back, spread open his wings, and left. He was clearly running away, but in the eyes of the people, it became glorified as the winner's leisure.

Hayate couldn't chase after him. The Dragon Killing Sword might have a superior advantage over a dragon, but Hayate's body was weak when compared to Bunhelier's body. Every time he collided with Bunhelier, he felt pain as if his bones and flesh were separating and his physical strength was rapidly consumed. Even if a human transcended and became an Absolute, how could they compare to an old dragon?

Just as Bunhelier was nervous due to being conscious of Nevartan, Hayate was nervous because he knew his physical strength was limited. He realized that he couldn't buy enough time if he chased after Bunhelier in his current state.

'I would've pursued him if the vampire duke was with me.'

Unfortunately, he couldn't expect anything from her, who was already half asleep. Hopefully, Nevartan would succeed in chasing Bunhelier and they would deal devastating blows to each other.

Hayate's face was full of remorse as he stood still and looked at the horizon.

Kraugel—the present day Sword Saint and Pioneer. Hayate lamented that Kraugel sacrificed himself for Hayate while helping, rather than being able to rely on Hayate.

"I am fine. It is enough as long as you are safe."

"....."

Kraugel quickly returned to the scene thanks to the close resurrection spot and cooled the atmosphere for a moment, but there were no major problems. Hayate understood the characteristics of the players.

In any case, Kraugel's expression wasn't bad. He might've lost his sword and more than half his experience bar, but he gained a higher status and a title. It was a right that he earned by fighting an old dragon to defend Hayate. It was safe to say that it would be a benefit in the long run. Of course, this was the story when trying to interpret it positively. Unlike his outward appearance, Kraugel's insides were burning.

'My sword...'

It was the ideal sword that Grid had made according to his wishes. It was a sword that developed together with him from the normal rating and was reborn as his soul companion. It meant he had lost his most precious treasure.

Kraugel was comforted by the fact that he helped Hayate, but it was hard for him to be in a normal mental state...

Chapter 1659

People believed that Hayate was the strongest. He might be a character who only recently appeared and had never played an active role, but he was naturally recognized as the strongest. There was no doubt about it.

Dragon Slayer—the only Absolute in human history. Who would question his ability?

There was a section of Grid's 18th epic that portrayed Hayate as a frightened hermit, but people didn't care. They understood the solitude and fear of the Absolute, while naturally looking forward to the power of the Absolute. They purely welcomed Hayate and cheered for him, who relied on Grid to come out into the world.

It could be interpreted that Hayate's performance today was a response to their support. He bravely faced a dragon that caused a disaster with a single flap of the wings and in the end, he managed to protect the people. He fulfilled the responsibilities of Grid and the apostles while they were away from the surface.

"...Uwaaaaahhhh!"

The place where the dragon left—it was only after Hayate put away his dazzling sword that people started cheering. They finally realized that the hellish battle was over. They surrounded Hayate as he roughly wiped away the blood on his body that had almost been torn to shreds. It was to the extent where they seemed like they would toss him up.

There was the sound of an explosion coming from the direction Bunhelier had left in and it was quite loud. However, the noise was only heard in Kraugel's ears. People didn't sense it and were excited. For them, the outcome of winning or losing didn't matter. The fact that they survived was the important thing.

"....."

Hayate's expression was as calm as always. He was very calm as a noble aristocrat. However, he was inwardly very puzzled. He had been fighting alone for over a thousand years, so he was very unfamiliar with the cheers of people. He might be in a daze, but his heart was tickled.

He was happy... he thought this expression could be used. Suddenly, he had a certain wish. He hoped that his colleagues who were fighting in hell would be able to feel the same way he was feeling right now.

'Please come back safely.'

Now they could stand proudly in front of people. A world had arrived where Biban didn't need to be in charge of cleaning the bathroom even if he went around the neighborhood and talked about his identity. It had already happened so they should enjoy it.

A series of explosions were heard from further away than before. It was the sound coming from the fight between Bunhelier and Nevartan, who had encountered each other. Fortunately, the battle took place in a remote location. It was according to Hayate's calculations. The dragons were instinctively drawn toward the forest where the magical remnants of the dead myth predator were drifting.

“It is you who defeated the Gale of the Great Forest,” Hayate spoke to Marie Rose, who had just descended to the ground.

Marie Rose didn’t answer. Her eyes were half closed as she picked up her parasol and opened it. It was even though it was late at night now. It was a sight that proved her parasol wasn’t intended to block the sun. It was meant to cover up her beauty.

People were easily making this guess when Marie Rose merged with the darkness and disappeared. She didn’t even look at Hayate and Kraugel. She didn’t seem to feel anything even though they stopped the invasion of the old dragon together.

Hayate and Kraugel had expected her attitude. From the moment she fought Bunhelier to the present, Marie Rose’s gaze had often been turned to one direction of the sky. It was the direction where Grid was being shown. Her only concern was for Grid. They were impressed by the way she smiled brightly and looked back at Grid every time she did something, like a child longing for praise.

“I am worried about Grid,” Hayate stated after he stared at the spot where Marie Rose had disappeared. The people at the scene didn’t hear him. It was because they were all bedazzled by their fascination with Marie Rose and were crazy.

On the other hand, Kraugel wasn’t distracted and cocked his head in a puzzled manner. “Is there a need to worry? Putting aside her mature appearance, she is a woman with a pure side. I don’t think she will harm Grid.”

Kraugel was the player after Grid who had built up the most affinity with NPCs. As the former 1st ranked player, he changed his words and deeds according to the nature or circumstances of the subject. It meant he tailored his style so that he could easily get the affinity of the other person. Therefore, he spoke more politely than usual. It went well with the appearance of his dolo. He seemed like he was shooting a historical drama with Hayate.

Meanwhile, the people came to their senses and focused on the conversation between the two of them.

“You misunderstood. I am worried about Grid’s attitude, not Marie Rose.”

“What is Grid’s attitude...”

“There are so many women by his side.”

“.....”

“The momentum is enough for him to have at least 10 people.”

People listened even more intently. Grid’s colorful love life with women had been famous for a long time. People expected that Hayate, who had lived for over a thousand years, to criticize Grid’s attitude. They took the old tales as an example and believed that the more a person was a hero, the more they should give mature advice, such as to watch out for beauties or to be single-minded. They were already inwardly feeling refreshed.

However, Hayate’s next words were very unexpected. “They come from various backgrounds. All their bloodlines are unusual, so it is expected that there will be a fierce battle for succession. In order to

prevent a great disaster, it is necessary to hold the center so that the wives can get closer. However, he goes out too often.”

“.....”

“Of course, the world is also at fault for not leaving him alone, but Marie Rose isn’t weaker than Grid. It isn’t a problem to always have her with him wherever he goes. I can’t easily understand why he is neglecting her.”

Hayate was a nobleman from a thousand years ago. He might reject the custom of a man having multiple wives, but he didn’t criticize it. Perhaps he had the most open mind in the modern world.

‘Shit...’

‘Grid is the worst man. Right?’

The moment that Hayate said something completely different from their expectations, the disappointed people trembled with jealousy. It was proof that their daily life, which had collapsed overnight, was faintly returning.

In the background of the people of the surface gradually regaining a bit of their daily lives, there was naturally the activities of the hell expedition. The situation in hell flowed in real time even as Hayate and Kraugel were fighting fiercely against a dragon.

The Overgeared Guild, the apostles, and the tower members operating in various parts of hell were gradually reducing the number of demons. There was hope in a situation where there had been nothing but despair.

That was just a little while ago.

‘Ugh.’ Mercedes swallowed back a groan. She discovered the location of the body of the hell moon with her Keen Insight and unexpectedly pierced the ground rather than the sky. Then she found a great deal of demons blocking her path. They were different from the great demons or Baal’s henchmen and were closer to the original demons.

The closer she got to the hell moon and the deeper she headed underground, the more often the old demons appeared. They had gray hair and their skin was full of wrinkles. Their age could be felt just by looking at them. Maybe that was the reason they all had strong skills. It reached the point where the legs of the steadily advancing Mercedes came to a complete stop.

“”This place... can’t be reached... with that much...status...””

How long had it been since they opened their mouths? The dry voice that cracked every time they spoke gave her goosebumps.

Mercedes’ expression became even more serious. Her face, which had hardened since discovering that the identity of the hell moon was a creature made of countless souls, suddenly cooled down. “What exactly is being done in this place?”

““You... aren’t qualified... to hear it.””

Sword energy surged every time the demons waved their dry hands. It took the form of a clear sword and the color was green like the shade of a tree.

A forest of swords literally bloomed.

Mercedes’ eyes twitched. Her transparent pupils became cloudy and tears of blood flowed down.

‘This?’

The souls of the demons were overlapped. To be precise, it felt like another soul resided in the bodies of the demons. However, the souls were very similar to someone.

Biban.

‘Sword Saint?’

It was the Matchless Swordsmanship, but it was a bit different from Biban’s swordsmanship. This swordsmanship was being embodied at the fingertips of the demons.

The sword energy that formed the forest swept forward like a gust of wind as they responded to the demons’ swords and Mercedes’ blood scattered. Mercedes’ body was pierced in its vital points and she was pushed back greatly. She barely managed to stop in place by sticking the bottom of her shield into the ground. Then she glared at the demons as if she was going to kill them.

She realized that the armor Grid had made for her with great care had become a mess. The fact that the black engraving next to her left shoulder had been erased made her angry. It was because Grid’s initials there had been erased.

“It seems you have been experimenting with transplanting the souls of legends.”

On the ‘day’ she fell asleep while looking at the magnificent view of the Chaos Mountains, which had been stained red with the blood of monsters, Mercedes had heard a story while being hugged in Grid’s arms. It was a story about the Behen Archipelago. It was a great story, but Grid’s expression was very gloomy. He seemed concerned that Pagma, who contracted with Baal, used the souls of the previous legends to create the death knights.

“It is an experiment based on the experience of the contractor.”

““The order... is wrong. It is... a trivial reasoning.””

Shadows came. Mercedes responded by spreading out her silver wings and made the contrast clear. She read the path of the assassin rising from her shadow and stabbed her sword. However, she couldn’t pierce the dark shadow. The fluttering cloth dulled the blade of her sword. It was surprisingly heavy. Mercedes grasped the material of the cloth with Keen Insight and was a bit flustered. It was because it was a metal fabric.

A stab resembling Grid’s sword dance dug into Mercedes’ side. At this point, the people on the surface also noticed what the old demons of this dark and deep crypt were doing. They were embodying the legends of human beings.

“Don’t... overlook that... we are just... gatekeepers.”

They pretended to be kind, but a demon was a demon.

Seven demons completely surrounded Mercedes. They seemed to have no intention of letting her leave smoothly.

The situation of Mercedes, who was surrounded by seven legends, was serious.

“...Sigh.” Mercedes’ deep breathing stimulated the demons’ sensitive senses.

The demons attacked Mercedes almost reflexively. The sight of the seven demons simultaneously using seven types of techniques that belonged to legends was overwhelming. It felt like the greatest moments of human history were being recreated simultaneously.

This sight was clearly captured in Mercedes’ transparent eyes.

Keen Insight—the talent that even the gods were wary of fully bloomed and destroyed the legendary techniques, slashing at the demons’ throats.

Chapter 1660

An ordinary person wouldn’t know about Keen Insight. Even though Mercedes’ blue eyes sometimes shone transparently, they just thought it was beautiful rather than giving a special meaning to it. They thought of it as an optical illusion that changed depending on the angle of light. This was why they didn’t understand it.

A forest of sword energy in a narrow and long tunnel—shadow soldiers soared from the shaded space of the forest. A metal cloth that fluttered in a dizzying manner and narrowed the field of view and space. A noble sword dance that was as invisible as a demon’s dance and the arrows that were shot silently.

They couldn’t understand Mercedes’ ability to avoid and counterattack all the techniques that symbolized the legends of humanity.

It was natural. Her evasive movement was like a flowing stream. She didn’t use Shunpo, so it wasn’t fast. Hayate’s movements when fighting the dragon a little while ago were perceived as flashing lights, while her movements could be vaguely read in people’s eyes.

Nevertheless, not a single attack reached her body. It was an incomprehensible realm. It seemed like she was something beyond a legend. People dared to question if she had become a protagonist of a myth like Grid or Braham, or had reached the realm of the Absolutes.

Surprisingly, it was the same for the demons.

“What type of trick is this...?”

The red moon that was projected not only to the sky of hell, but also the sky of the surface—its body that was covered with countless eyes was sleeping here underground. If the river of reincarnation was a place associated with the essence of hell, then this was a place that contained the secrets of the corrupted hell. It meant that it was more important than the river of reincarnation for Baal.

It was the reason why the old demons were placed as gatekeepers. They had been living since close to the beginning and they were very powerful. It was to the extent that they gained Baal's trust, so they were asked to guard this place. In return, fragments of souls had been transplanted to them.

As the years passed, they became stronger and those who could be their enemies were rare. However, there was only one human being active. She was an existence who made the weight of the years accumulated by the seven demons become worthless. A woman with no wrinkles on her face read and blocked the thousands of years of experience and wisdom contained in each movement of the old monsters. She looked like a monster even in the eyes of these old monsters.

“It is a human, right...? Recite the genealogy of your bloodline.”

“I'm curious about the depth of the lineage.”

She wasn't an ordinary human. There was no way her lineage could've originated from the surface. She was most likely related to hell or heaven.

Mercedes asked the speculating demons, “Do demons know about genealogy?”

It was an attitude of dealing with an unfounded, miscellaneous thing. It wasn't particularly demeaning, but that made them even more upset.

“The fact that Baal is the son of God Yatan... it must be common sense that even humans know about... why do you think there would be no genealogy?”

“Are you an idiot who lacks common sense...? It is understandable. You were born with the talent to go against the heavens in this human body... you can't handle it...”

Was it because they were demons who had lived for a long time? They seemed particularly obsessed with bloodlines. She wondered if they were the ancestors of a great family of hell.

Mercedes couldn't understand it. “Baal betrayed Yatan. I don't know why demons who serve such an immoral being as their master are obsessed with lineage. You are the same immoral being, so you shouldn't care about lineage.”

“Immoral...? Breaking the right path? The right path is a concept that only applies to human beings...”

“You are talking about lineage without knowing about following the right path?”

Braham, Huroi, Pon, Vantner, etcetera—there were many people who spoke very harsh words next to Grid. There were also many people with a very strong ego like Lauel, Damian, and Regas. It was difficult to develop the habit of being considerate when conversing with others.

Mercedes was also affected. In the beginning, she had been the number one knight of the Saharan Empire. The first time she met Grid, she had quickly given him an order to get down on his knees. She didn't bother to consider the other person's feelings before speaking. Of course, she was kind to those she liked, but she was indifferent and cold toward her enemies.

The wrinkles on the faces of the old demons twitched ferociously.

“You are from hell.”

“.....?”

Just like that? Mercedes cocked her head as the demons came to an absurd conclusion. She had a confused expression on her face when her hair became disturbed like a gentle wave and there was the roar of an explosion.

A demon, who was silently shooting a bow from the back, attempted to openly snipe her. An arrow with an immensely powerful air wave was fired at an unprecedented speed and reached the middle of Mercedes' forehead. However, it only skimmed against the skin.

Mercedes triggered Keen Insight and dodged. The arrow flew into a wall and caused the tunnel to shake. Then the forest of green sword energy rushed like a tsunami.

From a third person perspective, the scene was chaos itself. All types of energies and techniques intertwined. The ground rose up and down as explosions occurred and the ceiling collapsed. It was clear that Mercedes' vision would be as dizzying as riding a roller coaster.

Even so, Mercedes didn't lose her balance. Even in the midst of the chaos that twisted left and right and reversed up and down, her movements were neat and tidy. She sharply operated the sword with the breath of Matchless Heart Technique and raised a huge shield like a wall to block the attacks of the demons.

It was a shield filled with Grid's care. The diagonal lines at the top of the shield weren't just for decoration, but were for the purpose of obtaining visibility. It was used by Mercedes to observe the enemy beyond the shield. The diagonal lines in the middle of the shield were intended to give an opportunity for a reversal.

Mercedes's sword protruded through the diagonal gap and pierced the abdomen of the demon who had been narrowing the distance.

That alone wasn't enough. Mercedes was a legendary knight who grew stronger every time she wrote a chivalric code. She was also an apostle of the Overgeared God who became stronger every time she armed herself with an item created by Grid. It was just that the profession of knight itself was inherently limited.

Her offense and defense balance was perfect, but there was nothing special about it. Mercedes could further increase her offensive and defensive capabilities according to the situation by using Keen Insight. However, it was difficult for her to show a distinct strength against an opponent in a higher basic weight class than her. In the first place, having a good balance only acted as a strength when overwhelming a weaker opponent. In order to defeat an enemy stronger than herself, she had to abandon her balance and deal a finishing blow.

However, Mercedes didn't have that. All her stats were equal and there was none that was extraordinary. This was why she couldn't win against the old demons. She could just hold on in a stable manner. This was both her strength and her weakness.

If only there were the other apostles or Grid by her side at this time. No, if there were the elite members of the Overgeared Guild present, then the battle would've changed greatly. They would've taken down the demons one by one while she read and stopped the offensive of the demons.

There was just little she could do alone. She couldn't move forward.

'It is hard in this state.'

Mercedes' mission was to find a way to destroy the hell moon. She was the only one who could analyze the principles that it used to project hell to the sky of the surface and come up with a solution. Now she was on the verge of stumbling right before the threshold. She would be able to get some clues if she went in a bit further, but she was overwhelmed by the lack of strength. In the end, it meant she lacked skills.

She felt a tremendous gap between her ideals and reality. Why did she openly reveal her killing intent toward Martial God Zeratul? She wanted to punish Zeratul for daring to insult Grid. Yet the reality of this moment was telling her how arrogant she was at the time.

She definitely realized it. She had the power to observe abnormalities in herself. In other words, she didn't have the ability to cut down Grid's enemies.

The level of the enemies rose abruptly. It felt like Grid's extraordinary growth rate, which overshadowed the years, raised the level of the world. The reason why Baal suddenly opened up the Asura Road must be because he was conscious of Grid. She also needed to make drastic changes to adapt to the accelerated world flow...

[Your apostle 'Mercedes' has created a new chivalric code.]

Nothing changed as the wounds on Mercedes' body increased. However, a change occurred when Mercedes' sword failed to increase the wounds on the demons' body. It was a dramatic and continuous change.

First of all, Mercedes' sword energy that formed her silver wings, changed. The feathers dispersed and became blade fragments. They rotated like a wheel and wrapped around Mercedes' body or sword. If they wrapped around her body, they exerted the power to reflect the enemy's attack. If they wrapped around her sword, they exerted the power to destroy the enemy's defenses.

The silver wings used to assist Mercedes with acceleration and agility had achieved an aggressive evolution. Mercedes' swordsmanship also changed. A sword trajectory wasn't followed by the shield, but another sword trajectory. Every time she wielded her sword, the shield that used to pressure the enemy or guard her side was now being used as a foothold. It was appropriate to say that it was being used as a topographic feature.

The position of the shield was constantly changing dynamically and it added anomalies to her swordsmanship. The shield itself was so large and strong that it had the role of blocking the enemy's movement.

"" ""

The expressions of the demons changed. They had been quite surprised by the performance of Keen Insight, but slowly regained their composure after confirming there would be no change to the final result of them winning. Now shock slowly appeared on their calm faces.

It was evidence that Mercedes had achieved a dramatic rise. She was different from before.

First of all, her mindset had changed. It was different from the awareness that she had to break through these gatekeeper demons. It wasn't due to the mission she was doing now. The reason she had to cut them to death was because they were beings who might be a threat to her master one day in the future...

"A dramatic victory."

Defeat the enemy and win the battle—the declaration that contained Mercedes' new mindset was embodied as a substantial force. The sword started to emit a brilliance as it rapidly became huge. Then it devastated the forest of sword energy. It stretched out, disturbed the demons' camp, and slammed deep into the tunnel. The entire underground area was shaken.

Mercedes' transparent eyes as she descended from the collapsed ceiling gradually turned red. It was the aftermath of the red thing lurking in the darkness.