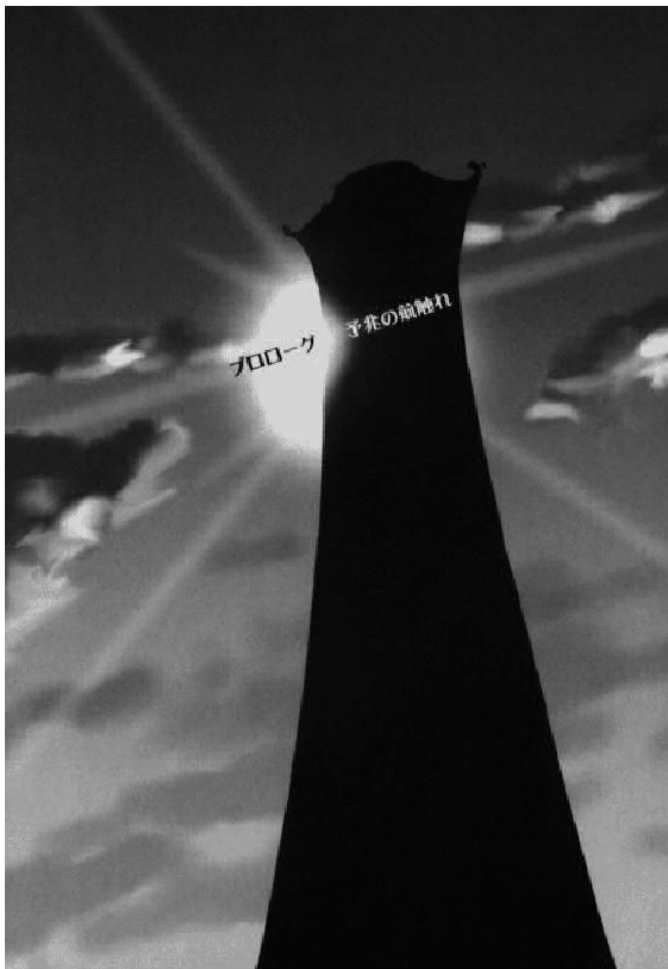


Is It Wrong To Pick Up Girls In Dungen?

# Prologue

## Warning from Contact



The sun was currently shining brightly.

The sun rising from the east passed through the city walls and illuminated Orario's streets and alleys. Whether it was the huge white walled tower standing in the center of the city, the majestic Pantheon that crowds of Adventurers flowed through, or the wide circular coliseum arena, all of it was bathed in the warm colors of the early morning. From the beginning of the day, the residents were already energetic, many humans and demi-humans were walking on the street. The entire atmosphere of the street was gradually becoming more bustling.

"I'm really sorry for calling you out this early, Hephae-tan. I forcibly dragged you out."

"Well, that's alright. Anyways, I am usually by myself, occasionally it is not bad to eat breakfast with someone else."

From the bustling sounds of the crowd came what seemed to be two Goddesses having a happy conversation as they ate inside a restaurant that was built between the North-West and West main Street Area.

Loki, the Goddess with a vermillion-colored hair, eased her willow-like eyes, and Hephaestus, the Goddess with bright red hair and an eye patch on her eye, was also showing a slight smile.

"I have to say it once again, I am thankful for you to lend Blacksmiths to our Familia's <Expedition>, Hephae-tan. It is a big help."

"There is no need to be polite. Allowing us to have priority to the materials for weapons in the Deep Floors Area, this side is also willing. Speaking of which, what about your side? Is there any development for this time's <Expedition>?"

After receiving Loki's thanks, Hephaestus asked a question towards her.

The wooden restaurant was a four-story high building. Loki and her were eating breakfast on the top floor. Besides the beastman waiter, there were no other customers in their surroundings. In this restaurant where they seemed to have it completely booked for private use, Loki and Hephaestus were currently moving their forks and knives, and were sitting across a table with white tablecloth.

"It seems that they ran into a lot of trouble last time, I do not know whether if they will reach a new achieved floor this time. However, my Familia's children were all boasting that they will <Absolutely update their record!> Oh, and Aizu also levelled up to Lv.6, so I feel that there is a chance."

*Puge*, Loki stabbed her fork into the meat and brought it to her mouth. She then picked up a cup with water and drained it. On the contrary, Hephaestus was carefully eating her breakfast, there was absolutely no area that was without manners.

".....Anyways, Hephae-tan. Did you hear any information about the Shorty's <Familia>'s child?"

"Ah? Fufu, what, are you concerned about Hestia now?"

"I am very concerned.....It seems like she was getting a little carried away, even though she is only a Shorty. Thinking about how she holds her head high above me with those overly big useless boobs, my temper always cannot be stopped....."

Looking at Loki, who was grumbling nonstop, Hephaestus could not help but laugh.

"There is a child in my Familia that formed a team with Hestia's child. It seems that they are planning to go down to the Middle Floors today."

"Eh, not only to me, but Hephae-tan also lent a Blacksmith to Shorty?"

"He directly formed a contract with <Little Rookie>. The child in my Familia seems to be interested in Hestia's child."

From Hephaestus's voice, you could hear that she was elated. She said whilst she leisurely placed food into her mouth.

Sitting on the opposite side of her, Loki revealed a bored expression when she heard her say that.

"That's too much, Hephae-tan, not only to me, but you actually have an affair with Shorty."

“Hey, if you let others hear it, there will be a misunderstanding.”

Loki and her seemed to be joking as they talked—Then, all of a sudden

Subtle vibrations seemed to be transmitted to their bodies, causing them to stop their actions.

“.....Another earthquake.”

“It is only a small shock.....But, it seems that recently there are more of them.”

The glass cup that was filled with water only rippled a bit on the surface.

It was an extremely small earthquake that was hard for people to even feel it. It is also why that people, who do not calm down and carefully feel it, will not notice it.

The slight shocks continued to be produced, Loki and Hephaestus both temporarily entered a state of silence.

“Normally, this will only be treated as a simple earthquake, but.....below this place is the extremely dangerous existence of a dungeon.....Hephae-tan, what do you think?”

“The guild had already given their prayers, so this should only be by chance.....Having said that, what happened in the end?”

Loki and Hephaestus slowly turned to look at the scenery outside of the windows. The flow of people on the streets did not change, it seemed to be even livelier than before.

The scene of normal everyday lives was laid out before them, Loki suddenly issued an “Eh?” sound and turned her gaze to a corner.

Following her sight, you could see a certain <Familia>'s few members gathering in the corner of the street.

“.....”

A male God, Takemikazuchi seems to be looking at his feet.

Towards the shock passing through his boots, which came from the ground, he frowned.

“Then , we’re heading out, Takemikazuchi-sama!”

He was suddenly being talked to by a high-pitched voice, he turned his gaze away from the ground and raised his head.

Standing in front of him was a beautiful girl. She had shiny black long hair and purplish-blue eyes, her back was also unquestionably straight. Looking through her purple-colored battle clothing, you could see her soft and beautiful limbs, her appearance was also to the extent that the Gods would issue out that she was overly perfect.

Takemikazuchi revealed a smiled directed to the girl in his own Familia.

“Yes. Remember not to be careless, Mikoto. I have always said it, remember not to forget about your original intentions.”

“Okay!”

After the girl called Mikoto nodded, he turned to the surrounding people and said “All of you as well”.

This was a small party comprised of humans.

Including Mikoto, there were a total of 6 Adventurers, this was also all the members of the <Takemikazuchi’s Familia>.

<Takemikazuchi’s Familia> is one of the many Exploration <Familia> in Orario. The so-called Exploration <Familia> were literally the same meaning, it was a faction that explores the dungeon and brings back <Magic Stones> and <Drop Loot> as a living.



Mikoto, as a legendary rookie, was a topic amongst the Low-Grade Adventurers. It was also because of her <Level Up>, that <Takemikazuchi's Familia> was also slightly influential among the lowly factions.

The male that was acting as the leader said "Takemikazuchi-sama, we're heading out". Takemikazuchi heard his words, "Yes, go ahead", and sent them away.

In the end, they still placed Mikoto, who was still saying her farewell, at the back of the party and Takemikazuchi watched the group leave.

"Nobody wants anybody less when you come back, Nnnnn....."

When their figures disappeared from his field of vision, Takemikazuchi once again looked at the ground.

Shortly after, he twirled his hair that had turned into horns, and breathe out a short sigh.

".....Then I should also go to work."

He twisted his neck, turned around, and walked. In order to reduce the burden of his group members, he should also work hard to make potato croquettes, while he was thinking about this, he was planning to head back to his headquarters to prepare. "Recently, our businesses wasn't as good as the shop (Hestia's) on the North", he muttered this nonsense on the way.

"——Hey, Takemikazuchi!"

Just when he was about to push open the doors to his headquarters, Takemikazuchi suddenly stopped his actions.

From behind him came a hearty voice, his eyes also rolled around a few times.

Takemikazuchi could not help but feel a headache while he crooked his mouth. He turned aggressively towards his back.

"Hermes.....!"

“Yes, that is correct, I am Hermes! I haven’t seen you in a week, Takemikazuchi!”

In the end, a slender male God was sitting there.

He had a slim build and had average height. His hands and legs were wrapped by travelling clothes. Although it is expected from Gods, his appearance made people speechless. He removed the feather hat that he was originally wearing on his head and his yellowish-orange hair poured out.

It was completely opposite of the stern-looking beautiful appearance of Takemikazuchi, he was an elegant male, revealing a mischievous atmosphere.

Hermes, who had a smile on his face, used a finger to twirl the hat while he walked over.

You, why have you come here.....?”

“Hey hey, don’t reveal such a disgusted expression. In order to meet you Takemikazuchi, I specifically came over.”

“Even if it is just a joke, please do not say such a scary thing!? It was those Gods that you lead that teases me!!”

“Hahaha, sorry, sorry! Whenever I see Takemikazuchi, I always have the urge to tease you!”

Looking at Hermes with an idiotic attitude, Takemikazuchi frowned even more.

Even although the Gods had strange tempers, Hermes could be nicknamed as Free-Willed. This was something that everybody knew.

Although the headquarters inside the <Familia> was set up inside Orario, the Main God himself would often leave this bustling city and run all over the world, was something common. It was unknown whether he was a travelling expert, or his own nature was that he was unwilling to stay at one place. Anyways, Takemikazuchi had not heard of Hermes staying in the same spot for more than 6 months. Of course, the operations of





## 1章 中層



After walking on the slope that extended from the [Upper Floors]'s 12th floor, Bell and his team came across what seemed to be a natural cave that exists on the mountainside. Since they didn't know anything, perhaps this was a believable

statement. As they looked at the 13th floor of the dungeon that stretched out before their eyes..... so this is the place that was nicknamed the first deadline of the [Middle Floors], it suddenly flashed in their minds.

“So these are the Middle Floors .....

“Although they had heard rumors, that this place really was dimmer than the previous floors.”

With Welf, who had already equipped his sword and Lily, who was deftly scanning around, what awaited them was a rocky path that extended to the depths. This also was one of the pathways that led to the [Rooms]. It was obviously a single bend, but they still couldn't see the end. This was the first time they had come across such a long passageway. Also, near the corner's of the wall there was a vertical cave opening that looked like —— a pit that was connected to the lower levels. Along with the dim glow, all of it was a sight that they had never seen before in the upper floors. The special characteristics of the 13th floor were connected rooms, and the passages to the rooms were extremely long. Even if they had to fight to secure their safety, they should still reach their first room as soon as possible. Listening to Lily's suggestion, both Welf and Bell nodded, as if expressing their mutual confirmation. At first glance, the pathway of the 13th floor seemed to be wider than those of the upper floors, however unlike most cases, engaging in battle with the monsters on the pathway here was not a good decision. In such a narrow space, their actions will be limited and it would be difficult to effectively work with the team. If they were to be surrounded by large monsters, they would be even more powerless. A pathway packed with monsters — there only escape route blocked, forcing them to make a Last Stand — Thinking of such a scene only caused them to break out in a cold sweat. Using the ample space in the large rooms, relying on the entire team to defeat each monster separately. Relying on numbers and teamwork to fight, that was what formed a refined team.

“Let's move before the monsters appear. Welf-sama, since there aren't any forks in the road, it should be fine to keep walking straight.”

“Understood.”

Maybe it was due to the sake of gaining the Guild's disclosure of insider intelligence, but Lili seemed to have already imprinted the entire 13th floor's map into her head. Not only a luggage carrier, Lily was doing her best in literally becoming an adventurer's supporter. While holding feelings of absolute trust in her Bell stepped towards Welf's back to catch up to him. While maintaining an appropriate distance, the three of them formed a three-man file as they moved deeper into the dungeon.

“Speaking of which, this really is amazing.”

“You mean the [Salamander's Coat] ?”

“Nunn. Wearing it leaves me at a loss for words.”

The eerie silence of the dungeon created an atmosphere that made bell's hair stand on end. His nerves gradually tensed up — at that point Welf threw out a topic casually and Lily readily answered. This sort of rambling to ease the tension, perhaps, was the good point of a team. If he would have explored the dungeon alone while enduring the suffering loneliness, the endless stream of tension and pain would accumulate in Bell's heart. (Which would have been bad!)

“Lili would have never thought that one day she could wear such stylish clothing. Bell-sama, Lili is really grateful. Lili will treasure it well.”

“haha..... it was just discounted goods.”

Lili looked over from behind, happily smiling at Bell. Looking at her, Bell couldn't help but smile wryly, at the same time moving his sight towards his surrounding team

members' attire. The coat's red cloth had a shiny luster. It's somewhat flattery, slim texture felt weightless even in the eyes of others. Inner wear, equipment, and coat; although their forms were different, the clothes they were wearing were all made from the same material.

"Elf's Guardian Cloth."

A Magician imbues their own magic into it to make a treasure..... In other words, it's a special equipment that held the Elves' protection.

"Even if you say that you bought it discounted... At any rate, elves were also involved in the production of the equipment. Surely it's not cheap, right? How much did you spend in total?"

"That ..... it was followed by five zeros ....."

"Welf-sama, never forget the money Bell-sama spent on you. Okay?"

Following Eina-sans conditions on entering the [Middle Floor], Bell had bought three "Elf's Guardian Cloth". After the two thanked Bell, they put them on before entering the dungeon. Welf and Bell wore their inner wear and equipment below their armor — Lily, above her garments, wore a coat big enough to cover her whole body. The protective cloth shone with grains of light and adding on the vivid colors... maybe it could be called lavishly stylish attire.

"Taking this sort of weightless clothing — This kind of high-level blacksmith's work can't even compare to the anti-heat equipment I am wearing ..... Doesn't this make me lose face? Really, what should I say about the elves..."

Welf-san, who harbored a slight sense of exclusion, pulled at the hem of his equipment while muttering. The elves were similar to the beast men — Which were different types like the Salamander, Sylph, Undine, Gnome, and so on — This was the result of their different attributes and places of residence. The "Elves Guardian Cloth" was the same — Having different varying properties. (Note: The above order follows the Fire elemental, Wind elemental, Water elemental and Earth elemental scheme.)

The Fire elemental (Salamander) to which the [Salamander's Coat] is related to have a high defense against flames and fire-based attacks. In other words, it has a [Flame Resistance] property. It seems to also have warming properties. It is said that the Water elemental (Undine)'s clothing, besides having water resistance, can also eliminate the terrible Heat-stroke effect. Hosting the name of "God's Avatar", it's clothing that received the blessing of the elves. It may lack universal use, but it's still strong in specializing against a certain property. As Welf-san said, being restricted to only having that uncultivated property could indeed override the works of high-level blacksmiths.

"So it's like this, but I still am very grateful. With this, our chances of being completely wiped out really dropped in an instant."

"..... A [Cerberus (hell-hound)], right?"

What Bell said was a monster's name. Synonymous to [Fire Magic (Baskerville)], it's the canine-type monster Cerberus. The reason Eina-san so strictly required us to buy the [Salamander's Coat] was precisely because of this monster that appears on the 13th floor. Of course, its physical ability was powerful enough not to disgrace the reputation of the [Middle Floor] monsters, but its real threat lay in the flame attacks it released from its jaws. Its flames were extremely powerful and could easily melt ordinary armor. To the point that some even say, in the face of a pack of Cerberus and their flame volley, only ashes would be left behind. The reason that entire teams entering the 13th and 14th floors were being wiped out was almost entirely due to the

Cerberus. Even adventurers that already [Level Up] were powerless in the face of the flames that the Cerberus spit out, and could only helplessly be burnt into ashes.

“Welf-sama, you should be clear of .....

“Ah, you don’t need to tell me. After the Cerberus appears, we need to take the initiative and attack, right? I don’t want to be cremated, you know.”

This was just my personal opinion: I felt that the [Middle Floors] were a turning point in the underground city.

“The Upper Floors and Middle Floors are different.”

This line, that Ryuu-san once said, was deeply engraved in my heart. In short, what I want to express is: The Cerberus is a monster in the [Middle Floors] that we have to pay special attention to.

“.....!”

We continued to walk on the same path in the cave for a few more minutes. Until our constantly moving mouths and feet almost froze at the same time. Using our hearing ability that was strengthened by the [Grace], we could hear the — “taptaptap” — sound of footsteps of something moving in this direction. Facing the sound that resounded from the darkness, we silently entered our battle positions.

“..... Speak of the devil.”

Welf-sans muttering echoed in the wet pathway. The shadows that the phosphorescence illuminated two of them. While waiting until they had completely left the depths of the path, the monsters’ figures were gradually exposed. Their rough, leather bodies were entirely black. In the dark, with only two eyes shining scarlet, the monster’s creepy atmosphere was reflected quite vividly. Dogs, though their bodies had become much too large — Cerberus. And their faces, similar to a dire wolf’s, twisted violently as they issued two monstrous, low howls.

“Hey, how about this distance...? Or is it better to stick with what we know?”

“Don’t underestimate their range. My serving officer (adviser) told me so, but .....

“Then — attack like usual!!”

After the battle’s starting signal was issued, Welf rushed ahead with his sword in hand. Bell quickly followed him by running up the right rear. The Cerberus was appalling and after barking for a while, they also charged violently. The fifty meters between us was gone in an instant.

“OOOOOOOOHHHHHHH! “

Welf jumped at a Cerberus. It seems like a large body drew an arc through the air. Don’t let it finish as I quickly broke the two apart with the front of my shield. Left hand holding a small shield — right hand holding a fifty centimeter dagger. In the first 11 to 12 hours in the Floors this week, Welf prepared an armed defender for me. Used for defense, as well as to contain the enemy’s weapons, a shield. I deliberately lured the Cerberus’s gaping jaws to my shield.

“GOO — HUM!”

Heavy. However, Bell remained steadfast.

Sharp teeth latched onto his small shield and he bore the shock while finally establishing a foothold.

The Cerberus was stopped and left floating in the air. Then, as if waiting for this moment, Welf bravely jumped at the unsuspecting enemy and delivered a ruthless blow.

“GUO!?”



Along the center of the body, a clean-cut. Along the sword's path, the Cerberus's body was cut in two. A rhythmically corresponding defense and counterattack with an experimental offense and defense that actually works! With the Cerberus still biting onto the shield, its mouth spitting out red and black blood, the upper and lower body separation caused the monster to suddenly fall to the ground.

“OOOOHHH HUM! “

The final Cerberus, some distance away from where we are, lowered its behind and raised its upper body.

[Low Volts]

Bell soon realized that “it” was used in this position:

[Flame Volley]

“– Too slow!”

“Shoot it!?”

However, before the release of the flame, Cerberus's right eye was pierced by a metal arrow. It was Lily's hand crossbow. Although its power is small, accurately hitting a vital area and hindering the enemy is more than enough. Tired and out of breath, and wanting to rest with each other, Welf hesitated to slice the monster's face with his sword. The sword was dyed with blood as the Cerberus groaned and collapsed.

“These bodies well..... seems good?”

“Although it's only a run through for grinding EXP, if another horrendous pack comes, it may get harder. Oh. This level can't be taken for granted.”

“Though... I feel good. Ah.”

Because the battle was temporarily over, the team was gradually wrapped in a soothing atmosphere. Although the tension had not disappeared completely, yet taking into account the blessing of being able to defeat the Cerberus so easily, I felt relieved. Even if Cerberus is one of the major obstacles on the 13th floor, as long as its “heart” is alright, it'll be worth it. To clarify, the profit from harvesting a Cerberus is not small. Additionally we discovered that the flame volley needed charging ..... so perhaps we could form a plan. Looking at Lily who was in the process of removing the monsters' magic stones, I tentatively felt assured

“Oh. Here they come again.”

“!”

I quickly respond to Welf's warning. This time, out from the depths of the pathway appeared three monsters that looked like rabbits. Long ears that kept twitching up and down, white and yellow fur, plus a bushy tail. On its forehead grew a sharp horn; they are standing on the floor on their hind legs. Their body sizes were like Lily's. Simply put, they were like a (Needle Rabbit) that could walk on two legs.

“That's ..... Bell-sama!?”

“That can't be!?”

“What are you talking about!?” I said to the wide-eyed Lily. Rabbit-type monster, [Horned rabbit (Al-mi'raj)]. Unlike its naive appearance, it was very accustomed to battle, a monster that first appeared on the 13th floor.

“To have to fight Bell-san ..... this joke takes it too far.”

“No, no, no, this isn't a joke at all!?”

Welf also had a profound expression while talking in a half-tearful voice. The horned rabbits standing in front of Welf-san and me, who was being bullied, shattered the rocks beside them, and from it removed their new natural weapons. A small stone axe that could be used one-handed. So the rocks on this path were all part of the

[Dungeon's Arsenal]. All three of the Horned Rabbits have been equipped. Cutely lifting their wet red eyes, they were now glaring at us.

"Three versus three, huh."

"I will say this first; ultimately this is repeating a 3 vs 1 three times yeah? It is simply stupid for each of us to fight our own opponent. Putting Lily aside, even if it is Bell, a single mistake will cost you a lot."

"aaaaaaa...."

Among the monsters of the Middle Floors, the Horned rabbit was considered a relatively weaker monster. As long as we paid close attention to their high agility that even outclassed the Silverbacks, even Lv.1 adventurers who had mid to high-class stats wouldn't have trouble putting up a fight against them. Even so, the reason why their threat assessment would classify them as a Lv.2 monster ..... was because they were extremely strong when fighting in a group.

Not long after, The Horned Rabbits issue a high-pitched cry and rush forward together.

"Take the one on the right first!"

"O, Okay!"

"Then again, this is the first time I feel resistant to beat down the monsters..... they're too cute."

"Pi! Pii, yii yiii!" (?)

Three people a group, three in the other. A total of six shadows confronted one another directly.

---

"Hermes came back?"

While handing the potato croquettes to a customer, Hestia looked to the visiting Takemikazuchi.

"Why so fast this time? He didn't even attend the previous God's meeting."

"I'm not too sure. That guy wouldn't return without reason."

"Thank you for your patronage," Hestia politely said to the customer while Takemikazuchi leaned his elbow on the counter and frowned. Located North of the open-air shops in the main street, Hestia continued to work, and, while disregarding that the shop was already open, "I have something to tell you," spoke the God who had come to visit her.

"Say ..... business is booming."

"Heh heh, but of course. After all, there's me!"

"Damn, is having a mascot really that important ....."

Watching the guests flocking to the store, the lively scene of the open-air store where even long queues occasionally form, Takemikazuchi unenthusiastic-ally added. Hestia then put her hands on her hips, lifting her enormous jugs. Wearing aprons meant for work, the two of them fits perfectly into the scenery of the shop.

"Then, why did Hermes come? Didn't he went directly to find about his Familia's position?"

"Ah ..... didn't Hestia met with that guy?"

"Nn, not yet. I didn't even knew Hermes had come back before you told me."

Taking the fried potato croquettes the female beastman worker worked hard to fry, Hestia skillfully packaged it and handed it to the customer. Whether it was a benefit or not, the customer who bought the potato croquettes smiled while patting Hestia's head before leaving the shop.

“He said before that he was interested in your Familia’s child, Bell Cranel, however..... what a headache. He seems to be trying to do something.”

“Uu..... maybe you’re thinking too deeply? That Hermes, no matter how I think, wouldn’t cause trouble by himself.”

Hermes wasn’t a God who would take the initiative to start a fight. Whether or not he should be called an intelligent god, he, who was better than other Gods at [exploiting any opening], was always amiable, to the point of even saying “now, now” while acting as a peacemaker between Gods. A sensitive god and a Compatibility Package, this was what Hestia knew of the god Hermes.

“Hermes wasn’t the only one who came to harass Bell-kun..... just this week, the other gods really gave us a lot of trouble, you know?”

“Still protecting Hermes, huh, Hestia. Let’s not mention me first, but it isn’t okay for Hermes. What that guy says definitely cannot be trusted.”

“haha. After all, Takemikazuchi is usually toyed with by Hermes.”

Having adjacent territories in heaven ..... in other words, a so-called “neighbor” relationship, Hestia and Hermes had greeted each other before; their relationship wasn’t really bad. Hestia was rubbed on the head by an elf girl smaller than her and soon took her back to her mother while smiling.

“I really do not understand what you are saying Hestia..... but only this time, the feeling is different.”

“.....and your reason?”

“God’s intuition.”

While being watched by Takemikazuchi’s violet eyes, Hestia slightly lowered her chin and began to ponder deeply. A God’s intuition— this kind of thing lacked persuasiveness — a basis that was not confirmed.

“— Takemikazuchi-dono, is this place really okay for you to slack off, you little .....

“Ah, sorry for that manager. It’s a little matter ..... no, I will definitely bring sales up, that’s right. I will work harder, yes.”

“I have already repeated many times, you should also learn more from Hestia-dono .....

“Got it, my apologies. No, I will work harder in the future. Tomorrow, I will unleash my real skills.”

Hestia, who was beside them, was still in deep thought while Takemikazuchi continuously bowed to the Potato croquettes shop manager who just appeared. Looking at the scene of a God lowering his head to his “child”, Hestia could not help but think ‘Armageddon is not far off now.’ Of course, at this moment, she did not take herself — who had worked hard part-time — into account.

“So be it, Hestia. Be careful, although saying this may not mean much, but you should be more cautious of Hermes’s movements.”

“Un, thanks, Takemikazuchi .”

Takemikazuchi, who thought he had finally fooled the store manager, waved to Hestia before returning to his own stand. Holding grateful feelings for her friend’s care, Hestia watched his back as he left.

“Hermes, was it .....

Hestia stuck her face out of the store, looking up at the blue sky. She thought of her acquaintance, Hermes, and that amiable smile. Suddenly, Hestia recalled a certain god.

“..... No way, right.”

Her murmurs were simply carried by the wind and faded away. The beautiful, convoluted clouds formed stacked layers in the blue sky under direct sunlight. Warm sunlight bathed the entire Western Main Street and as people and numerous carriages passed the streets, that certain god walked along the bustling street with his servant.

“And then, ASifei, how has he been doing?”

“According to official information provided by the Guild, he has already reached the 11th Floor. In these few days, he was able to clear the 12th floor. “

Despite being right in the middle of the noisy crowd, the God—Hermes—was still calmly speaking. He let ASifei, his conversation partner which he nicknamed — a human woman — follow behind him as they walked along the Western Main Street. The female, who was donning a white cloak, had dainty feet and wore boots decorated with golden wings — a unique but stylish look.

“Also, according to the skyscraper facility (Babel)’s internal staff .....today, he seemed to have bought enough [Salamander’s Coat]s for his team. “

“Eh, you mean he went to the middle Floors?”

“I am afraid that is the case.” ASifei replied. Upon hearing that, Hermes let out a smile.

“Only ten days after [Level Up]. Indeed the world’s fastest rabbit, so fast, so fast.”

“In addition, we also found out that he possesses a “powerful” magic. On the 11th floor, he seemed to have used a long-chant high-class magic and managed to repel a dragon with a single strike. There are a lot of witnesses. “

Her appearance, as she conversed with her main God (Hermes), would not even seem off in a group of gods standing together. In her prim gaze were eyes that shone with an intellectual brilliance and coupled with a pair of silver-rimmed glasses, together they complemented each other to display her wit. Between her water-blue hair was a bunch of white and the surrounding hair color was a gradient that gradually shifted from light blue to white. The stares of the beastmen and dwarves passing by were attracted to her, but at the same time ASifei continued her report:

“..... So, it’s not a fluke?”

“Hm?”

“Bell beating a [Minotaur] was only because of the magic you mentioned earlier saved him in a stroke of luck — is how the other adventurer’s seem to understand it. They even said the Minotaur he encountered was already severely weakened by the [Loki’s · Familia], just a weak scoundrel. Even to the point of slandering him as [Cheating Newcomer].”

“Ahahaha, [Cheating Newcomer]! What a joke!”

Hermes laughed heartily.

Ignoring the looks of surprise that gathered due to the sound of his laughter, his shoulders were trembling in happiness.

“However, just relying on magic, just slaying the monster that was already nearly dead — to think of using cheaply obtained experience points to level up, the gods’ [Grace] is not such a simple thing ..... no matter, I already understand what they are trying to put across. “

After the laughter subsided, he narrowed his slender eyes.

“So you think, what they’re insinuating, is that all the days he spent to [Level Up] were fake.....”

“Ahhh, I see. The perspective of Adventurers towards others is quite stringent after all.”

“The matter regarding Bell Cranel would not seem interesting in the eyes of the other adventurers, after all.”

The noise that flooded the streets, as if taking advantage of the stop in the conversation between Hermes and ASifei, surrounded them again. In front of some shops, the bards and minstrels that had traveled to Orario took out various musical instruments and gave a performance to the residents under the blue sky. Also travelers who had traversed the world, they would compile all they had seen and heard into songs, and, accompanied with the echoes of stringed instruments, they would dedicate their sometimes cheerful, sometimes intense voices to passers-by. People clustered around them in a semicircle; streets lined with buildings, whose residents living in them were sitting on the windowsill, or leaning out of the windows, did so only to listen to their tunes. Hermes stopped and watched until the end of a song before clapping and threw gold at them. Looking at the God who sent his blessings with his smile, the travelers' gratitude were written all over their faces, and upon seeing this, as if congratulating them, the audience heated up again.

“What have you planned for the [Little Rookie]?”

After Hermes again takes a step, ASifei asks.

Feeling the gaze she directs to his back at the rear, Hermes continues to listen to her.

“I wasn't told a reason to justify an order to collect intelligence; it seems that you seem to be quite concerned about him .....

“Is ASifei jealous of it?”

“Who?”

ASifei, as if pierced by sharp anger, instantly toughened her tone before rubbing her temples with her fingers. Listening to the voice of the Kami-Sama's teasing tone, her countenance, which originally was rational, couldn't help but express a little of the fatigue she had saved up over many years.

That is due to the Gods messing around with people, causing great headaches.

“No thank you to troublesome matters', wasn't this said by you? Then please include me in your playing around!”

“The other members are quite grateful to you, saying this is all thanks to the leader (ASifei), they are living a nice comfortable life. I am also relying heavily on you. Having won the trust of your peers and the Lord God – Haha, the benefits of work must refer to this! “

“..... I don't want it.”

Hermes clapped his hands together in a laugh that sounded similar to crying, before revealing a side of him that only his Familia have seen (\*not sure about this one). The silver glasses slightly slid down ASifei's face.

“..... You've already contacted Hestia?”

Before long, ASifei asked her Lord God a different question while sighing. Not understanding the pranks of the God nor his intentions, she turned the topic in a different direction. Hearing the question from his Familia, Hermes smiled while replying “Not yet.”

“Before that, there are certain topics that cannot be discussed with her.”

To ASifei's surprise, Hermes stopped in front of a store. It is along the road west of the main building blocks next to a market. Hanging on the shop door was a sign in a



common language that read “mistress of abundance” in large letters. It seemed to be very busy as Hermes and ASifei walked into the shop.

“Welcome nyan! ..... Hey, wait nyan? Hermes Sama nyan?”

“Yeah, long time no see, little Chloe! Could I ask you to go get Mia?”

Hermes asked the cat girl who had come to greet him to convey the message. After Chloe had observed Hermes and ASifei who stood behind him, respectfully responded with “no problem nyan, please wait for a moment nyan” and accepted his request. A short while after she disappeared inside the shop, a large female dwarf appeared in front of Hermes accompanied by a “woooo..” sound of exhaustion.

“Really, on such a big day, kami-sama what are you doing here?”

“You don’t need to put on such a disgusted expression. Well, Mia. It’s rare for you to look so cute.”

“If you had come up with a flashy one, I would have cut your heads off. We’re very busy, if you have something to say then hurry up”.

The female dwarf boss of the bar, “Mistress of Abundance”, without the slightest fear of Kami-sama’s meaning should had been more afraid than just this, she’s even verbally threatening him. Looking like she did behind Hermes, ASifei cheek couldn’t help but spasm a little. Hermes on the other hand, countered the threat with a smile, leaning his elbow on the counter top.

“Well, I just wanted to say hello, and was hoping you could spare some of your time to join me in a meeting with Freya-sama?” Hermes said, offering his request to her in a whisper while leaning over the front counter. Mia without blinking her eye, and lifting an eyebrow looked directly at him. The orange eyes of God stared back into hers. After a few seconds Mia let out a loud “Humph!”, with disgust towards Hermes question.

“I don’t want to be some brainless follower, dictated by a God. If that’s all you had to say, go find someone else to go meet that goddess.”

Mia out rightly rejected Hermes’s request posing her fearless attitude. Mia simply grunted again, and went back inside the shop. Hermes glanced back at Asifei, as if to say , “it failed” while flashing a smile. The kind of thing I can stop, his face tired from those who say women.

“..... Hermes Sama?”

“Ah? Oh, little Seal! Long time no see, how are you?!”

Dressed in a maid uniform with her gorgeous light gray hair flowing behind her, Seal, gave a slight wave and smiled as she walked up to Hermes. “Long time no see, Hermes-sama. Are you enjoying your drink?”

“Ah yes, it’s really good quality. Wonderful to see Mia and Seal doing so well, I came by to check up on the place and ask Mia for a favor; however she turned me down instantly! -!?! Ow, that really hurts!? Hey stop, ah!” Asifei started pulling on Hermes’ ear in disgust.

Watching this dialogue as an excuse for their elegant male god to just complain, Seal couldn’t help but smile. As she stood there, Hermes was pleading for Asifei to stop it. “That really hurts, don’t you care!?” But she simply ignored him. Afterwards, Asifei stood beside Hermes, ready to pull his ear again if need arises, while Seal was leading them to their seats.

“So, please sit here .....

However, Hermes ignored the girl’s offer, and walked straight to the seat on the corner of the counter. The male god sat down heavily, choosing a seat which he can

watch the door in case his target so happens to walk through it. Seal's face revealing a shocked expression, Asifei still standing behind him, Hermes smiled.

"Any chance I could inquire a little on a certain adventurer, Seal-san?"

"Sure ..... What would you like to know?"

"About the child, Bell Cranel, can you tell me about him?"

The girl's shoulders, for just a moment, shook. Within the store, multiple conversations were taking place amongst the guests. Staff sometimes walking by or the sideways glances from the guests; the two began their own private conversation. In order to cope with Hermes' elegant smile, Seal leisurely, like someone deliberately trying to hide their own feelings, feigned a laugh.

"Why would you want to find out those kind of things?"

"I just heard that he frequently visited this bar, so figured I would ask."

Hermes glanced behind Asifei, hoping to see the child again.

"I also heard rumors of this <Little Rookie> so I'm very interested in hearing about him. What was it again I wanted to ask... I was just thinking of it, Oh yeah." Then he asked: "How?"

Seal ponders the topic for a moment, then gradually approaches Hermes, whom is still wearing his smile and says:

"Even if I follow you, Hermes-sama, I still do not wish to say anything."

With her line of sight not wavering, Seal clearly expressed her refusal. Like to protect Bells and her own personal information. Hermes shrugged like a clown.

"I don't seem trustworthy to you?"

Seal's offered a wry smile.

"Yes, you are not worthy of my trust."

---

"- Chigusa!"

A male companion called out a name in anguish. His voice echoed loudly throughout the long cavern, while a girl with an axe stuck in her shoulder silently fell toward the ground. A boom sounded along with a dry grinding as someone fell across the gravel floor. Under swaying as if the torch general phosphorescence, fresh blood splashed around it. Roaring monsters let out a victorious cry as there massacred prey fell.

"Move up a vanguard! Fill the gap!"

"Quick" Someone yelled, "Quick, she's hurt, get her some first aid!"

On the Dungeon's 13th Floor a battle was going on, fighting several adventurers is a group of monsters. Engraved on all the equipment of the adventurers is a [sword stuck in the ground] pattern sign. The six people – now five, with the person who collapsed – are doing their best to defend against the seven [Horned Rabbit]'s irregular attack patterns. Now, the "horned rabbit" saw through this moment of vulnerability. With agile movements, the rabbit-type monsters jumped around, disrupting the vision of the team members. Then, in that fleeting moment, a stone axe flew rather abruptly, hitting a person on the vanguard. It was in the rear of the group a horned rabbit had resorted to a throwing attack. Knowing the natural weapon connected. They began to jump and stormed endlessly towards the . On the [Upper Floors] the movement and patterns of an enemy were easy to interpret. However, here on the [middle floors], monsters are quick-witted and have a far higher intelligence. Thus, they can end up being a threat far superior to those on the previous 12 levels. Weapons and axes banging, uninterrupted echoed and adventurers' moans were heard. Horned rabbits bounded in

surrounding the whole team by gradually circling them, slowly closing in, painting the scene with a sense of crisis.

“- Ha!”

Under the onslaught of many monsters, the team of adventurer's footing gradually messed up. Despite this, a single black-haired girl sped to the front lines of the battlefield. In order to protect her vanguard, who can no longer fight, she began to confront the monsters. Swinging her sword so fast, that the only trace of her blade were the flashes of light left behind as she began to behead one of the horned rabbits.

“Sakura Hall, quick retreat! Rear handed to the next!”

“I'm sorry, please!”

A Girl, wearing purple toned armor, issued orders with an awe-inspiring voice. Following acknowledgement of the command, the group had quickly pulled back to allow troops to retreat, reorganizing their formation. Doing her best to fulfill her promise, and seeing in her peripheral vision that her fellow adventurers had fallen back she prepared herself to start fighting the monsters. With a slightly curved, about ninety centimeter knife in one hand. and the other hand holding the scabbard of her weapon, Mikoto began to engage the monsters.

“..... Ha ah ah ah ah!”

Accompanied by a loud roar, she rushed into the arms of a horned rabbit, without hesitation brandished the knife and beheaded it, while also easily seeing through all the attacks the monsters around her dished out, avoiding them all. They should have had the advantage of numbers but that did not get in her way. Her acuity and yet gorgeous action, whether with fellow adventurers, alone, or compared with the monsters blossomed. Without a doubt, she got through these first 13 levels and reached Lv. 2 on her own strength. She was a person of action, even in the entire middle floors, where agility is one of the favored stats-horned rabbits can't even catch up. If they carelessly approach her from the front, they will be cut down to the ground shortly.

“- Ooo-ooo-ooo! “

“!”

As the fighting continued, hideous sounds could be heard from the depths of the dungeon's many passages. Mikoto and the horned rabbits stopped and stared.

(“Kenny A”!)

An overgrown rat-like monster, which boasts the highest defense rating among the 13th floor's various monsters. Reaching up to Mikoto's waist, “Kenny A” is covered with shells as tough as iron. Mikoto looked towards the two aggressive newcomers, speechless. She glanced behind her, to fellow members trying to protect the wounded, who have not yet escaped to a safe distance. Their bodies curled into a ball of hard armor, which is nearly invincible to physical attacks. The hard shell attack's rotation speed is an issue since everything just bounces off of them.

If I let them through here, defenseless companions will be open to a clean hit. Only I can stop it!

Mikoto, along with the rest of the team, were slowly moving back step by step. Before the last remaining horned rabbits frantically fled into the channels on both sides, forming an A to enhance their speed. The sight of those monsters running away can make any adventurer begin to feel nervous. Mikoto equipped the shield that was fastened to her waist with her left arm, as if to express her determination to take control of the situation. She suddenly sank her waist, then took the initiative to rush

towards the two monsters. Readying herself for the collision, she shouldered her shield and rushed forward to meet the two shielded monster first.

“Smash!” An ear-splitting sound rang throughout the room from the collision of Mikoto’s armor and both of the monster’s shells.

Due to the monster’s rotational speed, Mikoto started to feel the pressure, as her entire body began to vibrate and her vision soon started to dampen with each passing moment. In order to regain control of the situation, Mikoto squeezed her shield tight, dug her heel into the ground, and made every effort to endure, waiting for her moment.

(- That is, now!)

Now, Mikoto chose to rely on more than just brute force. In an all out attempt, she abruptly changed her initial forward momentum and flew towards the side, causing the off-balanced monsters to crash straight into each other violently. The two monsters flew into each other like a bullet, the impact creating a shock wave that even got Mikoto, blowing her back, as the two monsters smash into the wall simultaneously. However, it was rewarding to see them finally out for the count, embedded in the wall, their bodies spread out, motionless.

“Mikoto, enough, come back!”

“Sorry!”

The adventurers retreated a fair amount, and called out to Mikoto to do the same. After Mikoto stopped rolling wildly, she stood up in her now destroyed armor. However, the horned rabbits that previously fled began to charge back at them.

“Are you okay!?”

“I’m fine, I can fight! Don’t worry about me, how is Chigusa’s situation?”

While defending a member of her party as she finishes her flame magic chant, she inquire about the well-being of the injured. At the same time, she is trying to reorganize the formations so we can make a swift escape.. Mikoto finally reached the rear guard, where she then advanced to the front lines.

“Not looking good. Relying only on the drugs at hand, treatment is just a temporary fix, we have to get her to a safe environment where she can rest and is easier to treat her.”

If it was a minor injury we could have fixed her up pretty quick with a potion. However, taking an axe in the shoulder requires time to heal, as well as being difficult to fix in the first place.. In the dungeon, there is no telling when monsters will attack or pop out from the walls. Starting treatment in such a dangerous location unprepared could mean the end for Adventurers. To protect the injured companion, as well as to dedicate to protect the staff who is treating, taking into account the degree of combat and danger on each floor for a team of adventurers, and being able to ensure a safe enough area is especially important.

“You mean to say .....

“Yes, back on the 12th floor. .... Sorry to burden you. “

“Please do not say that nonsense! We’re a team!”

Here is Sakura, one of the adventurer’s leaders. Mikoto, being the other leader, is fine with it since in her view, they are together to help each other.. The sound of trampling boots echoed through the halls, as the were being chased through the long, cave like channels. Monsters were endlessly howling at them as they patiently chased, waiting for the moment an adventurer takes a misstep. Mikoto cautiously took the rear, ensuring the other members did not stop or else end up paying the price. While doing

this, she looked towards her injured companion. She was holding on to her injured arm, while being dragged away by the other female members. A coarse stone axe still embedded in her shoulder, spewing out so much blood that her armor was painted red. The only sign that she was still alive was the subtle movement of her chest as she heaved for every breath as if it was her last. Looking at her miserable state, Mikoto's face twisted up in pain. It didn't look good, what's worse was however just looking into her eyes and seeing her dying, her fellow adventurer just looked back at her with those dying eyes. She usually behaved honestly, her eyes always revealed her feelings. Chigusa's eyes were tearful, she could only wordlessly apologize. Mikoto shook her head as if to say it wasn't her fault.

"..... Not good."

"How so?"

"The monsters are increasing, even [Cerberus] have begun to chase us ....."!

After one of the rear guards gave the report, everyone gasped. Mikoto suddenly turned her head up and looked back, what broke into her field of vision were massive shadows that jumped alongside the four horned rabbits currently in pursuit. Those are undoubtedly Cerberus, with their bright red eyes gleaming at us. Releasing from their mouth was a searing flame, which was able to turn anyone into charcoal. Everyone knew that this was a very likely possibility. A sense of despair arose from the depths of the labyrinth, and finally in front of them Mikoto quietly emerged a prototype.

"Hurry!"

Urgency ensued giving the members energy to pick up the pace in desperation. Mikoto kicked at the ground desperately. Soon they reached the end of the tunnel and arrived at a room. Not square, but a dome-shaped area. The cavern had a very high ceiling. At the highest point in the central part of the ceiling, was a sharp rock which stretched down giving off the feeling that if it was given a tap once, it would fall. One Can't tell if monsters are born from the unstable rock; however, the remaining walls are all blown out with debris scattered everywhere. Sure enough, multiple groups could fight in this huge area without interfering with each other. Even now, someone's fight was going on at the other end of the room.

(That's a new development ..... a <Familia>?)

In a corner of the room, a team of adventurers and monsters were fighting. A trio of adventures, made up of what looked like two human males, plus a little female hobbit. Mikoto, while exploring her 13 levels, had never seen such a combination.

Mikoto came to a conclusion: they were the first to enter the middle .

"..... Into The Show."

"!?"

Sakura ushered with softly spoken words, Mikoto looked to him in surprise. Even if not everyone understands, she correctly understood the meaning behind his statement.

"[Monster into the show]."

It was an operation carried out in the dungeons. In a tactical retreat, using any means to get away from the monsters with emergency avoiding a primary concern. Although the maze has a basic unwritten rule of non-interference, people who have to abandon a dire situation still occurred. In the accident-prone underground city, the "monster into the show," is a common tactic where another team is used as bait.

"Please wait, Sakura!? If we do that kind of thing right now, those people ....."

(To lose these monsters now, we will essentially be sacrificing that other team's lives.)



“Those expecting adventurers, we are just like them. Fighting against multiple horned rabbits with all their effort, just to stay alive.”

Obviously, even just a little interference from the outside could make a balanced battle collapse. If a bunch of new monsters joined into their battle.

“Compared to a guy I don’t know, I care more about you, Mikoto.”

“.....!”

“If you’re still not happy then you can curse me afterwards.” Looking at the team leader, Sakura had to make a judgment call. Killing all the emotion in his face, Mikoto realized that she has the same expression as a parent protecting his children. She turned around to go. Looking back at their dying partner, Chigusa; any time now, her faint breathing could subside. Her blood dyed armor even covers the familia logo, as blood spurts out. There is not much time, before fate takes her away.

(..... Sorry!)

Unable to change Sakura’s decision, we approached the group of adventurers with monsters in tow. As we get closer to the bold, white-haired adventurer, all I can do is apologize to myself for what’s about to happen. Nothing else I can do....

---

Horned rabbit screams could be heard from all directions heading towards Bell’s group. No matter how many monsters the trio killed, it seemed like they couldn’t even put a dent in the number of monsters.

“Not even giving us a chance to breathe, eh!?”

Letting out a loud “phew” Bell shouted, “They’re not giving us any time at all!” Encircled by the monsters, as sweat drenched Welf who is swinging his long sword and with Lily constantly in the rear supporting with archery, the trio were carefully fending them off. Excluding the agility of the horned rabbits, Welf’s strength and endurance values exceeded their own, enabling him to fight on an even playing field. He is responsible for the maintenance of the vanguard in the front under Lily’s assistance while Bell is tasked with killing the monsters. Even though the monsters on the middle floors are stronger than before, since Bell has increased to Lv. 2, almost all the horned rabbits are instantly killed by his [Fire Bolt].

“Welf, get down!”

“Oh!?”

Bell shouted to Welf to get the two-horned rabbits lined up. Welf shouted back and began readying their usual combo attack. After they closed in, Welf squatted low and released a lateral slash toward the first monster, and then beat the one behind it with a shield. They release a relentless series of attacks in a moment so that the two-horned rabbits could no longer fight.

(A little bad ah .....!)

From the outside, it looks like the fighting is never-ending; and Bell’s heart is not as calm as usual. Fatigue gradually began to spread throughout his entire body. When in the upper floors the weight of his limbs was not of concern, however Bell came to a different conclusion at this time. When in a group exploring the maze, naturally the strongest of the group have to protect the weak. However, in the [Middle Floors] where the dangers of the maze can become outstanding, the worst kind of environment for that gap in strength becomes all the more prominent and heavy a burden. As the fight went on, his body’s stamina began to decline. Both Bell and Welf felt the onrush of constant sweat pouring off them, knowing that a rest is long overdue.

(.....?)

Bell, with his peripheral vision, saw past Welf cutting down the last horned rabbit, to see a peculiar scene greet his eyes. Five people, no, six individuals compiled from a single <Familia>. Another team of adventurers seemed to be getting closer to this side. Bell's forehead scrunched in confusion as he tried to comprehend the situation. Adventurers usually avoided each other, to prevent misunderstandings or conflicts. This group might have simply been trying to pass Bell's team, but their course led directly to Bell's party.

Just like that, they were aimed at Bell's group.

└-

The group of adventurers which also mingled with the wounded, they specifically went to a nearby combat zone, while passing. In an instant they passed a short distance away, Bell and the brunette haired girl, Mikoto's sight intersect. As their purple and crimson eyes meet, Bell feels like the brunette girl could cry out at any moment.

"- !? This is bad, we had strong monsters pushed onto us!"

On the other side. Watching the stranger's team's antics, only one person in the group could see just how bad a situation this is, Lily. In her age of thieving, she had repeatedly done the same thing in order to get revenge on adventurers. Her statement means a lot since she is familiar with the actions of adventurers and is able to act quickly in such circumstances.

"Hey .....?"

"We were made into bait! Monsters would be coming soon!"

However, Bell did not feel the pressure at that time, as he looked down the empty corridor; even as Lily continuously warned them. Then, Lily's words became true. The next moment, a group of monsters began entering the room. The trio, after just fending off multiple monsters and in dire need of a break, saw the numerous horned rabbits and cerebri rushing towards them. Looking at this unexpected scene, Bell and Welf's expressions changed instantly. Bell, realized what happened, and suddenly looked behind the adventurers who have disappeared into the depths of the channel.

"Retreat! Welf Sama, go to the right channel, fast !!" Lily shouted.

"Hey, are you kidding me!?"

Bell then scrambled to take action. Welf, full of anxiety suddenly waved his sword. He put it through one of the horned rabbits, then followed Lily's instructions and fled into the closest channel. Bell and Lily followed.

(Bit of a tight squeeze.....!)

The farther we go, the narrower the channel gets. Lily's face filled with fear, Bell knew what was waiting for them wasn't good. Chasing behind, the monsters seemed to be faster than the adventurers. Leaving aside Bell, whose [Agility] value easily surpassed them, he stayed behind to support Welf and Lily who were having trouble escaping. Monsters lined up, gradually shortening the distance between them and Bell. There were so many monsters packed together without even a foothold to place an attack. Bell's vision was overwhelmed with the ascent; he even wanted to collapse to the ground due to fatigue. Lily and Bell ran side by side, while behind them a nightmarish scenario was taking place, truly a serious dilemma.

"!? Bell-sama!?"

"Hey, Bell"

(.....?)

Bell, with his peripheral vision, saw past Welf cutting down the last horned rabbit, to see a peculiar scene greet his eyes. Five people, no, six individuals compiled from a single <Familia>. Another team of adventurers seemed to be getting closer to this side. Bell's forehead scrunched in confusion as he tried to comprehend the situation. Adventurers usually avoided each other, to prevent misunderstandings or conflicts. This group might have simply been trying to pass Bell's team, but their course led directly to Bell's party.

Just like that, they were aimed at Bell's group.

└-

The group of adventurers which also mingled with the wounded, they specifically went to a nearby combat zone, while passing. In an instant they passed a short distance away, Bell and the brunette haired girl, Mikoto's sight intersect. As their purple and crimson eyes meet, Bell feels like the brunette girl could cry out at any moment.

"- !? This is bad, we had strong monsters pushed onto us!"

On the other side. Watching the stranger's team's antics, only one person in the group could see just how bad a situation this is, Lily. In her age of thieving, she had repeatedly done the same thing in order to get revenge on adventurers. Her statement means a lot since she is familiar with the actions of adventurers and is able to act quickly in such circumstances.

"Hey .....?"

"We were made into bait! Monsters would be coming soon!"

However, Bell did not feel the pressure at that time, as he looked down the empty corridor; even as Lily continuously warned them. Then, Lily's words became true. The next moment, a group of monsters began entering the room. The trio, after just fending off multiple monsters and in dire need of a break, saw the numerous horned rabbits and cerebri rushing towards them. Looking at this unexpected scene, Bell and Welf's expressions changed instantly. Bell, realized what happened, and suddenly looked behind the adventurers who have disappeared into the depths of the channel.

"Retreat! Welf Sama, go to the right channel, fast !!" Lily shouted.

"Hey, are you kidding me!?"

Bell then scrambled to take action. Welf, full of anxiety suddenly waved his sword. He put it through one of the horned rabbits, then followed Lily's instructions and fled into the closest channel. Bell and Lily followed.

(Bit of a tight squeeze.....!)

The farther we go, the narrower the channel gets. Lily's face filled with fear, Bell knew what was waiting for them wasn't good. Chasing behind, the monsters seemed to be faster than the adventurers. Leaving aside Bell, whose [Agility] value easily surpassed them, he stayed behind to support Welf and Lily who were having trouble escaping. Monsters lined up, gradually shortening the distance between them and Bell. There were so many monsters packed together without even a foothold to place an attack. Bell's vision was overwhelmed with the ascent; he even wanted to collapse to the ground due to fatigue. Lily and Bell ran side by side, while behind them a nightmarish scenario was taking place, truly a serious dilemma.

"!? Bell-sama!?"

"Hey, Bell"

“You two go first!”

It only took a moment for Bell to make a judgment. He ignored Lily and Welf's voices, knowing he had to take care of them in this situation. That is, he had to turn back. Numerous monsters all loomed over Bell, at this point, he wasn't sure if turning around was such a great idea. With his shield equipped to his left arm, he straightened it out, and a sound like a cannon reverberated throughout the hall.

“[Fire bolt]!”

Towards the channel resorted three “magic” bursts. Instantly, the hallway was filled with a wall of flame without any gaps. When the flames impacted, many screams from the front row of monsters could be heard. The flames let off massive amounts of heat.

(If there is a presence of other adventurers, we must do what we can to avoid them and injury; however, in our situation we have little freedom to think of others.)

Bell stood before the vigorously rising flames. His face was red with the shine from the flames – but in an instant, his eyes began to tremble. Four shadows, began breaking through the wall of flame.

(Did it not work!?)

Swooping out of the flames, came four Cerberus. The monsters were burning, even with their [Flame resistant skin] they have burns all over. Large amounts of the burnt skin flakes off their body like ash. The cerebri have yet to notice their burning bodies, possibly due to their innate control over fire; however, no matter how badly damaged they are, the monsters are still alive. Red eyes burned by flames, their rationality lost, the hounds with their burned throats simultaneously roared:

“Ooo ooo ooo ooo ooo!!”

“!”

Bell with a dagger furiously lunged forward trying to eliminate the first of the cerebri. After simply throwing it off-balance, with his shield in his other arm, blocking an attack from the second monster. However, the remaining two Cerberus ran past his sides.

“Lily, Welf!?”

The Cerberus looked straight ahead, past Bell, and ran straight to Lily and Welf. Bell turned around, screaming their names; both of them were stunned, unable to move. At the last moment, Lily turned around. In order to resist the assault of the monster, she pulled out Bells' large sword from her backpack and uses it as a shield. While Welf, started wildly waving his long sword around.

“- Ga ah ah ah ah ah! ! “

“Aww!?”

“Don't underestimate me!”

Staggering over. The big sword's which was used as a shield lived up, but because bell wasn't fast enough to use his magic Lili who used the sword as shield took the overwhelming impact from the cerebrum to the ground . Welf waved his sword at any monster that comes close. Cerberus with paws pressing against Lily who was carrying a backpack, kept biting. Bell after clearing away their opponents swiftly used his kick like an arrow to move the monsters away from them. The monster the bell kicked as well the one that Welf slashed quickly fell to the ground.

“Are either of you hurt!?”

“No, no .....”

“Finally, nothing ..... damn that was seriously close.”

Lily stood up unsteadily; Welf was clutching his arm, ashamed while revealing a contemptuous smile. His arm seemed to be the target of an enemy's claws, as blood starts pouring out the wound. After failing to protect a good companion, Bell's heart was filled with remorse, but after seeing the scene behind Lily, immediately his face became pale.

"Again, again!"

Seeing more than just a monster figure who came towards them from the depths of the channel, Bell issued a warning. At the same time, they were glued to the rear of Lily. Bell said the plan:

"Pincer ....."

"Now is not the time to be depressed....."

In passages where the fire weakened, with just different, there were new approach towards the side of horned rabbit jumping. Bell soon put them back to back like a triangles battle. Four cerebri corpses were on the ground still burning, their faces a charred mess.

"It's insane how fast these monsters are now. How are even the big monsters so fast on this floor ."

"So that's why everyone's afraid of the [Middle Floors]."

"Ha, ha ha ....."

Finally able to rest, Lily handed Bell and Welf a potion from her backpack. Although Potions will heal them, they didn't have anything for getting rid of mental fatigue. Bell still felt uncomfortable; as his brain was completely exhausted from all that magic.

"Bell-sama, Welf-sama, Lily knows the best way to escape here as to first take a break, we need to regain our composure, since it could be an endless fight from here on in."

"But how can we get out of this situation?"

"..... Breaking through the side by force?"

"Yes, Lily thinks it's the best way."

After listening to the views of Bell, Lily agreed. Before long, the monsters gradually began approaching them from the front. Bell lowered his voice to discuss their plan, waiting for the opportunity while readying his body.

"Then ....."

"Oh."

"..... It's on!"

Slowly going through the passage step by step, Bell was the first to end the peace. With only one miscalculation, this could end in misfortune for the adventurers; the dungeon was an unforgiving place. The dungeons monsters were extremely cunning. Even while licking their lips this feeling will never reveal anything, it silently, in a roundabout way, only thinks to plunder and prey on physical efforts. Sometimes the monsters roared in the distance. Sometimes shake people's foothold, so that people produce the illusion of an earthquake. Sometimes ferocious abnormal offspring bred, which stopped in front of people. Even just a seemingly trivial matter, when they gradually accumulate, the burden will become breathless while surfaced. Even walking to make a person fall away like the destruction of unstable sand like a breeze. It was difficult to recover the body which was out of balance immediately. And before strangely people could notice their body, it was already too late. Wait until the prey began panting, began moaning in pain, weakness on one side

began to expose their own moment, dungeon will open its bloody mouth wide open like a sacrificial bowl, revealing a mouthful of fangs.

[-

Whispering Miles. Bell was about to reach the top of its fatigue as he hears a strange sound. Even in his way to escape, and the monsters which were forcing to continue fighting forced them from immediately glancing around. Echoing in his mind the dungeon walls started to give birth to the monsters that resided there. However, Whispering Miles Whispering Miles. Declaring inauspicious ill omen sound, which have not yet been interrupted.

(Gosh -)

Bell noted that the earliest. His intuition made him look up at the ceiling, Welf did that as well and they were left shocked. Like a spider's web, several intertwined cracks were engraved on the ceiling. The whole ceiling was covered, a massive array of cracks had appeared on the entirety of the passage's ceiling. The sound of the cracks began to quietly echo, until it turned into a loud roar. Stones constantly fell from the ceiling, as if to say it reached its breaking point. The group all let out a muffled groan. Bell couldn't move his body, like he was turned to a stone. Even the color rapidly faded from his face.

(- Monsters.)

Bell only thought in that moment. A huge smashing sound occurred, dozens of monsters, all "evil bats" were born from the ceiling. Evil bats emit shrill wails while the enclosed space keeps the sound from dissipating. "Ah ah ah ah — Whispering Miles!!" Within moments, the ceiling was covered with countless shadows. The adventurer's vision filled with this terrible scene, but on the flip side, due to giving birth to so many monsters, the hole-filled ceiling lost its stability.

And then, began to crumble down.

“... — !?” “...”

Bell, Lily and Welf, the three people didn't liked what was happening. After a short glance at each other, massive rocks began raining down. Under the pressure of the falling ceiling, they tried to take cover from the debris. Hitting some parts of the body were chunks of rock, earth and sand were falling like water, making a roar which roared throughout the passageway. Although something were unreasonable, but everything to no leeway momentum away from the head approached towards them They didn't had the slightest concern for remaining calm. In order to break through, the determined trio gave it their all to running, even howling loud enough to be heard throughout the dungeon.

“Woo, Ha .....”

Rocks which were raining finally stopped. The whole channel released a strong dust into the atmosphere, Not knowing where to moan over Welf passed over them. Even if not confirmed, Bell knew he was probably hurt. He seemed to hear that fat was still flowing sweat voice, and that a little obvious. In a little farther away, he could hear Lily's gasping gulps. Bell wiped his dust-covered face, trying his best to stop his forehead from bleeding. Welf then spotted something and was about to say but he became frozen at the spot.

“Hum .....”

However.

As if his throat were severely strangled, he didn't make a single sound.



The clock's hand reached evening. Hestia was waiting within the Miach Familia base, Blue Chemist. As a potion store, the wooden shop made for a convenient gathering spot for accepting quests. Currently, a meeting for rescuing Bell's party was happening.

Along with Hestia, Miach and Naaza were; the crimsoned-eyed, red-haired goddess, Hephaestus; the god with mizura styled hair, Takemikazuchi; and members of the Takemikazuchi Familia.

“Hestia, it's because of our negligence that your child hasn't returned. I'm sorry.”

“.....”

Hestia crossed her arms and shut her eyes at Takemikazuchi's apology.

Mikoto bowed her head in apology from behind Takemikazuchi.

The Takemikazuchi Familia took Bell's party by surprise on the 13th floor, and [Pass Parted] their monsters onto them.

Hestia had gone to the Takemikazuchi Familia for help. At her description of Bell and his party, Mikoto and her team members turned blue. They confessed everything to their god.

Takemikazuchi apologized for the conduct of his children. Desperation was no excuse for their actions.

Hestia's silence cut into them. For her, Bell's group not returning was enough of a nightmare. She noticed Miach watching from the side and found enlightenment within his blue eyes. She looked over the faces of the children.

“If Bell-kun and his friends don’t return, I’ll blame you until death. However, I won’t hate you. I promise.”

Her words left Mikoto and her party wide eyed.

The goddess’s compassion and generosity conveyed her resolve. The girls, for the first time, felt their hearts touched by a god other than their own.

Hestia allowed the children to make up for their mistake and requested,

“Now, won’t you please lend me your strength?”

As one, the six members of the Takemikazuchi Familia knelt and bowed their heads. Their leader, Ouka, responded to the goddess’s compassion. In place of his group, he vowed to find Bell. Bearing witness to the event,

Takemikazuchi, Miach and Naaza narrowed their eyes. Hephaestus, however, at the children's actions, gave her friend a smile.

“Let's finish this conversation. Time is precious.”

At Miach's counsel, Hestia nodded with a “Yes.”

“Hestia, are you certain your child is still alive?”

“I have no doubt. Hephaestus, how about Welf-kun?”

“Just a moment, I've offered blessings to many children.....” With Takemikazuchi confirming the status of Hestia's children, Hephaestus closed her remaining eye and tapped her forehead with a finger. She used her [God Power] and counted her Familia. “Yeah, he

should still be alive. The number hasn't reduced."

Miach, seeing Hephaestus's actions, asked:  
"Can't any of your children help?"

"Unfortunately, any such children have been entrusted to Loki for her [Expedition] to the deep floors. The ones still around aren't suited for the middle floors."

Hephaestus apologized, but Hestia energetically shook her head.

"We'll just trust in Take's Familia."

"Ouka and Mikoto have the strength. Chigusa, can you be support?"

"Ye-yes!"

The girl with bangs covering her eyes nodded at her god's instructions.

The Takemikazuchi Familia's strongest adventurers who have reached LVL 2 included their leader, the giant Ouka, and Mikoto. Chigusa, being LVL 1, was assigned the role of support with the task of carrying spare weapons and potions. The three strongest members were selected to form the search party.

“These are the only members of Ouka's party who can face the middle floors. Anyone else from the Familia will slow them down.”

“Speed is essential for a search party.”

“Naaza is right. Using children who aren't ready will only generate chaos. Don't forget the cause of this situation.”



Hephaestus frowned at the warnings Naaza and Miach give on how death lurks equally for everyone on the middle floors.

Regardless, they couldn't deny that they need more help. Going off to find Bell as they are would be dangerous. As Hestia crossed her arms before her bountiful chest, committing a lover's suicide flashed across her mind.

It was at that time,

“—Count me in too, Hestia!”

The front door opened with vigor and a gentleman god appeared.

“Hermes, why are you here!?”

“Hey there, Takemikazuchi. I came straight here upon hearing my god friend is in a pinch. Or, was I wrong?”

Hermes gave Takemikazuchi a light smile. Miach and Naazas' eyes popped open as they watched the god march himself to the center of the floor.

His Familia member, Asfi, sauntered in behind him.

“Hey, Hestia, it’s been a while.”

“Hermes... why are you here?”

Hestia wore the same expression as those around her.

Hermes approached with a grin. From his chest pocket, he pulled out a parchment commissioning a quest.

“You seem to be in trouble, ne?”

“.....”

Hermes fluttered the request to search for Bell before everyone's eyes.

Hestia was so overcome by words, she couldn't speak.

“Hermes, you're saying you want to help search for Bell Cranel?”

“Come on, Takemikazuchi. I'm Hermes! Of course I'll lend a hand if my true friend Hestia is in trouble!”

“You haven't been in touch with Hestia since descending down to Earth!”

“You've been an extremely careless friend.”

“Fu~, Hephaestus, Miach, you guys are harsh.”

Hermes eyed Takemikazuchi with caution as Hephaestus and Miach continued to chide him. Naaza, Mikoto, and her fellow Familia members watched the drama between the gods from the side.

“Listen, I truly do want to help Hestia find Bell-kun.”

Hermes kept his tone sincere until his fellow gods calmed down. With a light smile and his hands slightly parted, he appealed to each of them in turn.

“How about it, Hestia?”

“.....”

Once he reached Hestia, he arched his eyes at her with a grin.

Hestia searched Hermes's golden eyes for several second and released a sigh.

“I see....”

“Just leave it to me!”

At Hestia's reply, Hermes once more assumed the smile of a gentleman.

With the mood settled, Miach closed an eye, and grabbed Hermes's shoulder.

“Is this alright, Hestia?”

“What matters now is saving Bell-kun and his friends. We need all the help we can get.”

“...Yes, you're right.”

Hermes leaned closer to listen on Takemikazuchi and Hestias' side conversation.

Happy with what he heard, he decided not to advertise himself more.

“Then, can we add members of Hermes’s Familia to the party?”

“He’s sure to have plenty of LVL 2 adventurers.”

“Hey, Hermes, how is you Familia?”

“It’s as the rumors say. Unfortunately, they’re not here right now. You can have Asfi though. She’s our ace.”

The Hermes Familia was famous within the dungeon for its lack of integrity. They were profit opportunists who would probably help anyone for quick money. The guild ranked them as an F-grade Familia. They were believed to have reached the 19th floor.



Miach wanted to include the Familia into the search party. However, the discretion to allow Asfi into the search party elected a heavy sigh from the god.

“We’ll leave tonight once the preparations are complete.”

“We’ll go with or without you.”

“Ouka, Mikoto, Chigusa. Begin your preparations.”

“Understood!”

Hephaestus and the gods began giving out earnest instructions.

Asfi approached Hermes and asked in a whisper,

“Hermes-sama... As I’ve been saying, I’m not going...”

“Oh, come now. I’ll go with you.”

Asfi’s glasses that were about to fall down were stopped by a finger.

“Gods are forbidden from entering the dungeon.”

“Empty promises are in bad taste. After all, didn’t I say that I want to help Bell-kun. Besides, the guild will be none the wiser if I hurry back.”

“Hermes-sama, you never gave me an option from the beginning....”

“Hahaha, I entrust my safety to you, Asfi.”

Asfi ruffled her eyebrows and pulled her cheeks in agony while Hermes grinned and laughed.

Hestia overheard the private conversation with her sharp ears and craned her neck towards Asfi. Her twin tails jolted up and snaked themselves around Hermes's neck.

“What the!?”

“---I'm coming too, Hermes.”

Hermes, having had his neck entwined from behind, was pulled back. This sudden act startled Asfi.

Hestia pressured him into accepting by drawing closer to his face.

“I, too, will go save Bell-kun. I cannot leave that child to someone else while I stay here doing nothing.”

“Ho-Hold on, Hestia! Calm down!”

Hestia somehow used her jet black hair to make the disoriented Hermes face her. She locked eyes with him and persuaded him.

“The dungeon is dangerous. We can’t use our [God Power], and the monsters will attack in waves. But most of all. You. Don’t. Want. This. Exposed.”

To Hermes’ warning, Hestia said,  
“Understood.”

“Since Hermes is already going, what difference will it make for another god to go?”

“Ugh....”

“I’ll be joining you, alright?”

The situation was forcefully brought to a close by Hestia who was denying all objections.

Hermes's face became downcast as Hestia reduced him into a pawn against her will.

“You...”

“What? Is something wrong?”

Hephaestus and Takemikazuchi were amazed to realize that both Hestia and Hermes shared the same stubborn determination. Strained smiles crossed their faces. As Hestia's best friends began to worry, they shouted: “It's all right!” They renewed their fighting spirit for Bell's rescue.

Miach called out “Hestia” as he and Naaza made for the door.

“What's the matter, Naaza-kun?”

“Hestia-sama, these....”

She passed a pouch full of potions.

Hestia found various potions ranging in color from red, blue and green.

“Since I can’t go..... This is all I can do.....  
I’m sorry.”

“No, this is plenty. Thank you, Naaza-kun.”

The young Chientrope woman grimaced as she apologized. The monsters had left a deep scar across her heart. Hestia smiled as she accepted the potions.

“Here, I have something too.”

“Th-this is!?”



Hephaestus passed a long rod-like object bundled in white cloth to Hestia. Unable to bear the weight, she dropped it. She would probably manage to support it if she used her whole body. On the ground, a part of the white cloth slid off, exposing a deep crimson blade. It had a thick edge, but didn't appear to be sharp.

“Hephaestus, this is...?”

“It's one of that child's, Welf's, crafts. I've been holding on to it till now.”

Upon referring to the contents as a “craft”, Hephaestus's face alternated to the one of the red-haired blacksmith god.

“Use it if you're in danger... But, if you find Welf, give it to him and tell him: “Stop weighing your friends against your pride.” for me.”

Hestia could only nod at Hephaestus's wise words.

Hestia thanked her friends again and again for their kindness. Smiles floated across their faces as they surrounded her.

“This is bad...”

“On the other hand.”

Hermes muttered by himself aside from the group. The atmosphere surrounding Hestia dissipated as he asked his Familia member a question.

“Asfi, can you protect both Hestia and me?”

“It depends on the cooperation with the Takemikazuchi Familia. I can't make any guarantees if they get in the way.”

“Hermes alone is preferred. Allowing Hestia to go is irresponsible,” Asfi spoke honestly. “The current fighting force is insufficient.”

Hermes contemplated Asfi’s words for a moment. “Phew,” he sighed. “We need to find another person to help.”

\* \* \*

The sky reddened as the sun was setting in the west.

Explorers emerged from Babel tower. Within the city, the tavern, The Mistress of Abundance, was preparing itself to welcome adventurers for its night’s business.

A “Closed” sign hung on the wooden door. Inside the store, clerks of the cat-eared race were scurrying around. During the day, a certain person was lining the many round tables and

chairs. Another certain person went out to buy the groceries. At the moment, a fierce battle in preparation for the night was occurring.

A faint, red light shone through a window and landed on a pretty elf, illuminating her long, narrow ears. Karan, Ryuu, displaying her natural diligence, heard the doorbell ring.

“Sorry for disturbing!”

A slim god entered the store. His orange-yellow hair turned red as it reflected the setting sun’s light. Hermes, with a smile plastered on his face, entered. With him, he brought Asfi.

“I’m sorry, Hermes-sama. The shop is still closed. Please return a little later.”

“My bad, Runoa-chan. This will only be a moment.”

Hermes put the human, Runoa, out of mind and oriented himself in a certain direction. The other waitresses stopped working and walked after him. Hermes stopped in the middle of the store before Ryuu's eyes.

“.....Can I help you?”

“Ah, I have a request, sweet Ryuu-chan.”

Hermes left Asfi aside and narrowed his eyes into slits.

“There's a certain quest I'd like to accept and want the [Lion Tempest] to lend me her strength.”

That was a name Ryuu used during her time as an adventurer. It was also a name with a bad reputation.

The store's atmosphere tensed. Gishiri, one could have sworn that the air crackled as everyone aimed their killing intent at Hermes. Arnya, Chloe, and Runoa moved to cut off the god's escape.

Asfi broke into a cold sweat. Hermes was surrounded with pikes aimed at him. Threatening a member of The Mistress of Abundance resulted in getting destroyed with extreme prejudice. The dangerous atmosphere made the setting sun bleed red in the store.

“Are you threatening me?”

Ryuu stared at Hermes with raised eyebrows. She waited for him to speak in what looked like an inhumane interrogation. There should only have been a few people aware of her past that she didn't know of. The young elf looked at Hermes's face from below and said: “I won't

help you.” Hermes shrewdly raised his hands up to his face.

“Bell-kun..... Bell Cranel, my purpose is to rescue him”

“What do you mean?”

Hermes explained the situation with Bell’s party and expressed that he wanted Ryuu to join the search team.

Ryuu swallowed. Her eyes were still sharp as she repeated.

“Why are you asking me?”

“A stray, knowledgeable, adventurer not tied to a [Familia], and yet strong enough to protect two useless gods. That can only be..... you.”

Hermes directed his sight towards the tip of a sword.

“I wonder if it’s because you’re my friend, Syl-chan?”

A girl with thin, dark, grey hair stood stunned by the shop’s back door. Ryuu distorted her beautiful eyebrows. For Syl to arrive there at exactly the right time to hear Bell’s story was just like her.

Hermes mouth slightly curved upward. The situation was unnatural, but still a valid reason to release his breath.

“We leave tonight at 8:00. We’ll look forward to your help if you’re interested.”

Hermes appeared to say something into Ryuu’s ear as he left. With the sight of every waitress



on him, the god took Asfi with him and disappeared outside the store.

“Ryuu,”

“Syl.....”

Hermes had cornered Ryuu by using her friend, Syl, to place pressure on her. Syl approached Ryuu with a pale face.

“Ryuu, I’m sorry, but please, help Bell-san.”

Ryuu stared into her dark, grey eyes. Syl shivered as she made her request. Deep in her eyes was the fear and anxiety felt when one might lose a loved one. She, an elf attuned to empathy, gave a wry smile.

Ryuu stated: “Syl, I’m indebted to you. I have no reason not to accept this request,” and added: “I too do not want Cranel-san dead.”

Her words had Syl apologizing “I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” over and over until she ended with “Thank you.”

Soon, the other waitresses gathered and watched the exchange between Ryuu and Syl. Smiles floated across their mouths.

“Leave it to nya-us! We’ll tell mother that Ryuu nya, has a belly ache, nya!”

“If we say Hermes-sama requested it... then it just can’t be helped, right?”

“Nyafufu, you owe plenty to that boy after all of his kind patronage, nya.”

The happy idiot, Arnya; the grinning, Runoa; and the humble, smiling Chloe encouraged Ryuu.

The women from the kitchen came out and, altogether, gave Ryuu a thumbs up.

Ryuu, at her co-worker's encouragement, used her small lips to give Syl a feeble smile.

“Excuse me. I leave this place to you.”

Woosh, the young elf whipped off the ribbon over her chest and ran out the door.

\* \* \*

Sweat trailed down a chin and dripped off.

There was a heavy atmosphere within the middle floors. Our sweat dripped non-stop. We were the perfect example of adventures trapped in a life or death situation.

I felt a lukewarm draft against my skin as I travelled this dim maze.

Welf leaned against my shoulder as we walked, while Lili covered the rear. I was paying my utmost attention to our surroundings to keep from encountering any monsters, but... I was pathetic. I couldn't stop clinging to my memories of Kami-sama. I couldn't stop praying.

We had covered a lot of distance since deciding to go to the 18th floor. Unfortunately, we had yet to find a shaft leading to a lower floor. Impatience gushed from the bottom of my stomach. Yet, there was a certain force tranquilizing my heart.

Giri giri, bit by bit, the string holding our sanity was snapping. We were isolated in the dark labyrinths of the middle floors--- this could drive anybody mad, yet we didn't fall into panic.

After a while, a fork in the dark cave-like road appeared. I hesitated at first, but after remembering our discussion from before, decided on the right.

From the back, Lili's fatigue seemed to cling to her small breaths: "Haa, haa." Next to me, Welf's body was also very hot, but we couldn't break down. Right now, we could only clench our teeth and keep walking forward.

".....Comrade Lili, can't you do something about your smell?"

Welf looked back towards Lili and criticized her.

Lili, towards the complaint, held her eyes steady. Her eyes saw an enemy before them. Her eyes reflected a shaping spirit.

“Please be patient! Claiming Lili causes this smell is harassment!”

The “smell” Welf complained about came from a bag hanging around Lili’s neck. It made my nose cringe. It was enough that tears were ready to gush out of my eyes.

“This smell doesn’t harm us, but is poisonous to monsters. If the smell goes out, monsters will appear, so the longer it lasts, the better!”

Lili seemed to have named the bag [Monster Repellent] based off of its purpose.

Our encounter rates had gone down since we started using it. In fact, the ferocious monsters of the middle floors had been staying away. However, we were in the midsts of testing its limits.

“You got it from Naaza-san?”

“Yes, she requested Lili to search the upper floors for the ingredients.”

Naaza-san appeared to have asked Lili to create a monster encounter defense tool before we came to the middle floors. She accidentally created [Monster Repellant] by combining materials from outside the city with those from the dungeon.

“Incidentally, Lili had Naaza-sama smell the bag right in front of her as a test..... She toppled over and, goro goro, writhed on the floor very violently.”

.....That smell is instant death. How long did Naaza-san have to squirm on the floor until it dissipated? Just imagining it was painful.

Nevertheless, we had been able to avoid attacks from monsters thanks to the bag hanging around

Lili's neck. Of course, our stock was limited, but having it in our present condition as we wandered the middle floors was a godsend.

There was a monster growling ahead. We felt the hostility in its bark as it came closer.

“.....!”

There, it appeared right in front of us.

Straight down the road, several bright red eyes emerged.

The Hellhounds had a perfect understanding of our situation. Their crimson eyes shone, gira gira, in anticipation. There was three of them.

Although they distorted their ferocious appearance by shaking their heads, our [Monster Repellant] was only effective for short range.



They stopped about 3 meters away and prepared their fire breath.

This was bad. Fear clung to me.

Sniping wouldn't save us this time. Lili, who was behind me, stiffened as she realized that fact.

Should I rush them with close quarter combat, or intercept them with magic? Three meters was a difficult space to cross and Hellhounds resisted fire. I didn't know what to do.

“I got... it!”

Welf mumbled while leaning on my shoulder.

“Eh?,” I murmured as Welf thrust out his right arm.

He aimed the heel of his palm towards the flames being gathered by the three Hellhounds. As he did, a chime rang out from the cuff of his red kimono, and traveled down to his pants.

“[Burn out, illegal work!]” He said a super short chant.

Welf’s right hand made the air shake. From it burst forth a terrible heat.

The gathered flames of the Hellhounds spread and engulfed them. The heat haze chirped like birds as it flash flooded the room.

“[Will-o-Wisp!]”

Following after, the three large Hellhounds exploded.

“Ignis Fatuus!?”

Broke Lili's surprised voice.

My eyes widened upon seeing the flames of the Hellhounds explode on them. Smoke rose from their burnt black bodies. Their eyes had collapsed and were peeling.

[Ignis Fatuus]

An explosion caused from losing control over magical power.

Magic was created during ancient times long before the kami-sama descended. Elves were the first magic users. They were the ones who hypothesized, researched, and implemented magic through the use of [Aria].

Accidental discharges, just as we saw, seem to have been inherent to the practice of magic. At least, up until magic was systemized, which

they say took a continuous effort of trial and error.

Today, [Ignis Fatuus] was practically non-existent. The [Falna] given by the kami-sama showed us which magic we were most suited for.

However, the phenomena that produced monsters were still a mystery.

“A success.....”

“We-Welf, you’re laughing?”

“Looks like my magic works. It probably causes a reaction that triggers the detonation.”

Anti-fire magic, [Will-o-Wisp].

Enemies could be forced to suicide by intercepting their magic and magically

attributed attacks with an Ignis Fatuus. The higher the amount of magic being used, the larger of an explosion it created. One could say that to those who depended on magic, it was a [Magic Seal].

This revelation of magic from a certain weapon's blacksmith, Welf, showed he would deviate from just using weapons to fight.

“I never tried that on a monster before... I was completely leading with my neck on that one.”

Welf's word left me dumbfounded, blinking over and over.

As he said, this seemed like the first time that he used the magic of the monsters against them. I didn't think that there were any monsters that channeled magic through their bodies to spew flames like the Hellhounds in the upper floors. Furthermore, fire only became a danger upon

reaching the 13th floor. However, the floor collapsed on us, so I hesitated to make such claims due to lack of proof.

Welf's magic, with its ultra-short chant, seemed omnipotent.

“On a monster..... You mean you've tested it on humans?”

“Yeah, a Familia member asked me to. It was a magnificent explosion.”

“.....Calling you Welf-sama, it is.”

“It's not that bad, is it? He said: “Try it on me,” even though we didn't know what would happen. Did I really do something wrong?”

Lili and I made pensive expressions upon hearing Welf's frantic excuse for murder.

Welf's friends from then must have stared at him with white eyes. But, maybe this stemmed from the Crozzo blood line? Regardless, this saved us. Hellhounds weren't a problem anymore.

We continued past the charred demonic dogs with a sense of hope. There weren't any Hellhounds who could chase after us after being blown up.

From there, we continued past the monsters. Lili repelled surprise monster attacks by enduring the smelly bag. I drove away the monsters that did approach us with my [Firebolt]. Welf countered and neutralized the Hellhounds.

“Welf, are you.....”

“Any potions?”

I retrieved the vial with the dark blue potion from my leg holster.

Welf, upon drinking half the potion, looked surprised.

“This is a magic potion? My body is getting lighter!”

I gave him a dual potion. This item was another of Naaza-san’s inventions.

Welf’s seemed to have recovered. Travelling in his injured state while firing his spell, wore down both his stamina and mind. He laughed in relief once I summarized the details of the potion to him.

“That’s amazing! Introduce me to that store next time we’re nearby.”



“I’ll introduce you anywhere you want once we’re back home....”

As we exchanged smiles, he gave me the remainder of the dual potion. I wouldn’t say that it completely recovered me, but my stamina and mind had a simultaneous improvement.

“..... Bell-sama, please share the potion with Lili as well.”

“Eh, I drank some too. Giving it to you now would be very effective. Are you okay with that?”

“Stop trying to be sneaky, Welf-sama. That’s only your opinion!”

“What are you saying?”

Conversation helped us release out tension. Despite our vigilance, we sometimes relaxed

our spirits. With Welf leaning on my shoulder and with Lili watching my back, we continued to explore the dungeon. We continued forward without losing hope.

“That’s.....”

It was around the corner in front of us, directly in the middle of the path. Exposed on the path we took was a large, round shaft leading straight down.

Welf, who was still on my shoulder, and I got closer and peaked over the edge. Lili appeared next to us and also verified that the hole lead downward. From its depth, it probably lead to the 16th floor.

The phosphorescent lights, floating within the darkness, burned our faces. We matched gazes and nodded. Welf secured his mantle to his waist with his right hand. Lili held her backpack

with her left arm. Lili and I took a light breath and jumped down the hole.

\* \* \*

A golden moon floated. Orario's sunset had ended and a night blue was now spread across the sky. The city glittered like an overturned jewelry box from all the light stones illuminating it.

The heart of the city was full of life. Lights shone from the various stores running down the streets. Within the central plaza, a skyscraper loomed over everything. The tower erected on top of the labyrinth, [Babel].

The highest floor of the white tower was the dwelling place of a certain silver-haired goddess.

Kotsu kotsu, rang her shoes as she walked. Her hands floated to her back as she made her way down the long corridor.

“Should I just keep him waiting?” The goddess of beauty, Freya, asked upon reaching the end of the hallway. She opened a large oak door and entered. A bookshelf was the first of the magnificent furnishings within the spacious room.

“Wasting someone’s time is in poor taste, Freya-sama,” her Familia member, Ottar, answered.

At the foot of a table decorated with apple trees was Hermes. Beside the free-spirited god was the serious Asfi.

Freya noticed them before sitting in the chair Ottar drew for her.

Her gesture for her servant to sit was bewitching. Gishiri, the chair rang as it constricted her hidden waist. The two rich hills creating the firm valley within her black dress swayed slightly. Silver hair hung over the white nape of her neck.

Asfi, seduced by the goddess's beauty, tried to free herself by directing her attention to the side. Hermes, however, nico nico, smiled like a gentleman.

The two gods and their Familia members crowded the table they used to face each other.

“What’s your business with me?” Freya cut to the point with her beautiful, soprano voice. She gave a fearless smile as she crossed her glamorous legs.

Hermes opened his slit-like eyes. “I think you already know, but Bell Cranel hasn’t returned

from the dungeon. I plan to join Hestia's group to search for him, Freya-sama."

"And?"

"I thought maybe I should get permission."

"Why do you feel the need to ask me for permission?"

Freya laughed with a smile and Hermes joined her.

"Freya-sama, you seem to have covered for Bell-kun at the last [God's Meeting]."

"....."

"My presence can't be helped if the adventurer in question is held within your lovely gaze."

Ten days ago in Babel tower, Freya protected Bell during the God's Meeting. It happened during Loki's appeal where she claimed Hestia broke the rules in order to accelerate Bell's growth. However, Freya's [Beauty] gave her a strong influence during the [God's Meeting]. With it, she succeeded in turning the gods into yes-men who wouldn't question her behavior.

Hermes suspected he would also have been captivated. Having seen through Freya's plan, he raised his right hand and placed it over his chest. "I too would have been completely encaptivated by you. However, there are limits to what you can hold under my nose."

.....In the end, these were just the words of a fool. Disregarding Freya herself, everything around them was silly. The goddess acknowledged in her heart that the gentleman god before her played a cunning hand.

“This is different from the usual. Few gods ever notice.”

Freya’s hobby of collecting children was public knowledge. Once she found a child, she always greeted him personally and made. Him. Her. Own. Bell’s situation deviated from the usual. Freya would never have played such a roundabout method in the past. Not only was the target not [Fascinated] by the goddess, he was completely unaware of her existence.

“It’s fine, already,” Freya said, keeping Hermes from telling a troublesome story. To continue hiding the fact that she had her eyes on Bell, she returned to the sliver-eyed god’s reason for visiting.

“I have no intention of messing with your toys. I just want to see his strength with my own eyes.” Hermes stressed with a serious expression. He



continued his petition by making an expression that seemed to smile while crying. “So, don’t attack my Familia, Freya-sama!?”

“.....”

Hermes cried for his Familia as he threw himself at Freya’s mercy. The sight of a groveling insect spoiled Freya. It led her to smile.

The Freya Familia and Loki Familia were the strongest Familias in Orario. Freya could turn the Hermes Familia to dust the instant she became serious. Therefore, Hermes truly was begging the North Wind for mercy. Deep down, he possessed a certain affection for his Familia.

On one hand, not saying it was a lie. However, the truth couldn’t be said either.

He wanted to confirm the boy's strength. Freya saw through his divine will and started to narrow her eyes.....then stopped. She leaked a ridiculously long breath. They were wasting their time by trying to outfox each other. "Come on, I just said it's fine, already."

Freya shut her eyes to Hermes's appeal. Neither wanted Bell harmed.

"Ho," Hermes relaxed upon receiving Freya's assurance.

"Thank you, Freya-sama! If you're ever in trouble—"

"But," Hermes, who had returned to his elaborate performance, jumped at the interruption. Freya placed a hand upon his shoulder and leaned towards his ear. She whispered with her dazzling voice: "Don't forget. That child is mine. To. Play. With."

Zuu, Hermes froze upon understanding her intentions, reasons, and purposes. Goosebumps formed from her tone of voice.

“I- I understand. By the goddess, I swear....”

“Yes, I believe you.”

Hermes was sweating bullets as he nodded. Freya gave him a coquettish smile and rose to see him off. She said, “Please,” as she opened the wooden oak door.

Hermes withdrew from Freya’s presence with indecent haste. To Asfi, who had been intimidated by Ottar, he said: “I thought I was going to die....” Freya saw them off in silence.

The double oak door closed with a Batan.

“Is that fine?,” Ottar opened his mouth to ask once Hermes and Asfi left.

“His gaze reaching here is unexpected, but he won’t be interfering with us. Although, as you said, that god is suspicious.”

At Ottar's, albeit tactless, warning, Freya, “Fufu~,” leaked a smile. “All in due time, all in due time.” She moved from the middle of the room to the giant window. The rectangular glass pane composed the entire wall. The moon light wafted through and wet Freya’s feet.

“Ishtar has been keeping track of my movements, as of late. Hermes, it’s troublesome to take advantage of someone else’s poor prying. Nevertheless, it’s clever,” Freya narrated to Ottar as she recalled the jabs from that [Goddess of Beauty] during the [God’s Meeting].

Knowing that Hermes wanted no harm to come onto Bell was enough for now.

Freya looked down out the window. Babel's top floors gave a panoramic view of Orario. From there, people could only be seen as a flow of small grains flowing along the shops of Main Street. The street lights running along the sides of the street sparkled like a river in heaven.

Freya slowly tucked her narrow chin. Central Square lied at the foot of the tower. She saw a certain group gathering at Babel's gate and sent them a smile.

\* \* \*

“Hermes, you slowpoke!,” Hestia scolded Hermes who just emerged from Babel tower.

They were at the western gate of the skyscraper. The central plaza had considerably less people

in comparison to the day. The sparse amount of trees planted within the plaza helped create a certain tranquility.

The search party had finished preparing and an enthusiasm leaked from the goddess Hestia. Wrapped in a cloak and with a small backpack, she resembled a certain supporter named Lili. Mikoto and the rest of the Takemikazuchi Familia were also present and waiting to depart.

Hestia's patience had run out. Asfi wore a bitter smile as she arrived with Hermes.

“Ugh, I had various..... formalities to take care of,” Hermes apologized with a tired expression. He looked up towards the top of Babel where he had been unprofitably delayed.

Overcome by impatience, Hestia gave the order to depart.

“Hestia-sama,” Mikoto whispered into Hestia’s ear.

“!” Hestia also realized someone was approaching them.

Hermes stepped forward and met her halfway.

A deep hood hid her face, allowing only for her plump, thin lips to be seen. Attached to the hood was a cape that reached down to her waist. Below, mid-thigh shorts and long boots came together, but left an opening which revealed her long, slender legs. Appearing and disappearing around the hem of her cape were a long bokken\* and kodachi. Both were attached to her waist.

Her thin body was dressed in adventurer’s combat clothes. Without speaking, she walked up to Hestia’s search party and stopped.

Hermes placed himself in front of everyone and flashed a grin. “She’ll be coming with us, and don’t worry. She’s ultra-strong.”

Hestia turned to give Hermes a dubious look, but once again, found herself staring at the new person. Clear, sky-blue eyes peeked out from within the cape.

With the mysterious adventurer joining them, the search party entered Babel. Hestia’s search party descended into the underground labyrinth to find Bell’s party.

A beast’s ferocious roar changed into a scream.

A bokken left afterimages as it danced around the chamber. Wind was cut by the thin blade as it struck down its enemies. The extraordinary speed thundered a tempest.



The phosphorescent light illuminated her sky blue eyes hidden within the hood. Even when ten monsters surrounded her, she sliced through them like a whirlwind.

“Cui!?”

“Gah!?”

An Almirage tried to ambush her from underneath a cloak. She thrust her right foot into its chest and followed up with her tachi to blow the small creature away. With her sword already raised, she continued and felled three more beasts.

The monsters lost their initial advantage of having surrounded the party. They couldn't keep up with the cloaked adventurer's speed. A Hellhound sprayed her exposed back with saliva as it leapt at it. She spun around and smashed off the hound's lower jaw with her bokken.

“Kua!”

A high-pitched shrill rang out. Two Almirages threw stone tomahawks they got from the dungeon’s arsenal. The caped adventurer deflected one with her bokken and grabbed the second. She returned the weapon in a flash, embedding it into the Almirage’s widened eye. The impact sent the creature flying back.

The remaining Almirage remained shocked in place next to where its brethren had vanished. The critter was brought back to its senses by the hooded silhouette hanging over it, but it was too late. A bokken struck it across the forehead as it turned around. “Guu!?” The creature cried as its bright red eyes popped out from their sockets.

“St-strong.....”

“All by herself?”

“Ah-ahhh.....”

Mikoto, Ouka, and Chigusa of the Takemikazuchi Familia voiced their shock at the scene before them.

Hestia’s search party was on the 13th floor. They had broken past the [Upper Floors] for the [Middle Floors] after only a few hours. They were progressing through the dungeon much faster than they had first expected they would.

Their advance could be attributed entirely to the hooded adventurer. She repelled the monsters like a curtain without openings. The adventurer who had once attained the name [Lion Tempest] stood in a place very far from Mikoto and her familia. This adventurer had the strength of a LVL 4.

Hermes's follower, Asfi, was also impressed by her speed and strength. The hordes of monsters on the upper and middle floors were no match for her.

“Ooooooooooooooh!!”

A rumbling sound drifted in and grew louder. From behind, the armadillo monster, Hard Armored, rushed in.

The cloaked adventurer pulled out her kodachi as the giant spheres bulleted closer. The Hard Armor shifted to the side at the last moment, leaving the sword to cut horizontally through the air.

It continued to roll forward when, “Zururi”, the monster slipped. It separated into four parts in midair. Mikoto and her party's eyes widened in amazement as, “Dosa Dosa”, the parts flew by in front of them.

“Maa, so easy. We can just leave vanguard of the middle floors to her.”

Asfi turned and said to the strong vanguard. She devoted her attention to the monsters emerging to attack from behind. The startled Takemikazuchi Familia could only watch as they guarded Hestia and Hermes.

“Excuse me, here,” Asfi said, ignoring the appearance of two Hellhounds.

“Eh?” Chigusa, who was burdened with a heavy backpack, was pulled by her shoulder away from the cavern wall and placed behind Asfi. Something mole-like popped out from the wall that was behind her.

Asfi drew a dagger from within her snow white mantle.

The middle of the wall ruptured and the [Dungeon Worm] was forced out. It was a dungeon predator that travelled by digging through walls. It had no face, just a mouth with a row of fangs. The monster squirmed like the long, ugly earthworm it was, as though trying to burrow itself within the air.

Asfi sliced her blade through the monster's mouth and out the tail end. Blood sprayed as the Dungeon Worm split in two. The sight of seeing the long, equal halves flying left and right left Chigusa rigid.

Cha cha, "We're doing it!"

Asfi turned to face the Hellhounds. As she did, she circled her hand around the thick belt strapped around her slender waist. The belt was covered in holsters housing items, and bands suspending more. One such item included a sheath for her dagger.

She took small vials from one of the holsters and threw them at the Hellhounds.

“Gu!?”

“.....Tsu.....tsu tsu!?”

The small vials released a moss colored liquid as they broke against their faces. The liquid turned into a gel-like substance that covered their snouts and used high viscosity to clamp their mouths shut. The Hellhounds' flames were sealed.

The monsters left themselves open in their desperation to remove the mucus substance from their snouts. Asfi took the opportunity to spiral around them, stabbing them as she did.

The beasts died with twin pillars of fire shooting out from their punctured foreheads.

“If it’s like this, then I’m more than enough for the rear guard.”

Mikoto and her party were left staring as Asfi used her equipment to eliminate the monsters.

Asfi Al Andromeda\*

The gods had awarded this high-leveled member of the Hermes Familia with the title of [Universal Person]. Not only did she have the rare ability [Mystery], something possessed by less than five people in Orario, she also had the uncommon [Item Maker] (magic tool manufacturing).

“.....Hermes, when did your Familia get past LVL 2?,” Hestia asked, glancing towards the god.



“Hahaha, I must have forgotten to apply for a [Rank-Up]!” Hermes gave a shameless laugh as he answered.

The skill with which Asfi mowed through the monsters on the middle floors demonstrated that she had long passed LVL 2.

Discarding status and prestige, and trying to remain underneath main Familias was like a novelty to the Hermes Familia. Choosing not to stand above others, and remaining neutral, had been Hermes’s secret to success. Even when he and Hestia were in heaven, he had seemed to be keeping secrets.

“.....It’s dark,” Hestia’s said during a break between monster encounters. Her murmur echoed through the 13th floor. Unlike the upper floors, which always had a set amount of light, the illumination on the middle floors was dark

and gloomy. She wondered whether their children always dove into such a place.

The [Status] children gain by becoming a Familia member first improved their five senses. Hopefully, that, combined with the amount of illumination available, was enough for them. Gods, however, had their [Arcane Power] sealed upon descending to the mortal plane. Their bodies became indistinguishable from normal humans.

The dark and ominous underground labyrinth was too much for Hestia. Navigating it while maintaining a calm front required more courage than she had. The darkness pressured her mind and body. If not for the magic stone lamp dangling from her right hand, she would have long succumbed to claustrophobia.

A cavity within the grey rock lead to a [Dungeon Arsenal]. Inside was a compilation of

natural weapons made from large stones. A ruined sword was laying among them.

“Hmm?” Hestia noticed a blood stained Hellhound further ahead. “Gyaaa!” She bent back screaming. “Baku Baku,”, her heart quaked.

“Oi Oi!” Hermes supported Hestia by her shoulders. From behind Hestia, he made a bitter smile. The Hellhound’s eyes had already dimmed, leaving the smell from its rotting corpse to assail everyone’s noses. Its [Magic Stone] hadn’t been excavated.

Hermes seemed accustomed to traveling through the dark. The fact that he was more able to challenge the dungeon made Hestia a little hateful. Her mouth instinctively sharpened upon glancing up towards him. Fire was stemming from a fierce emotion right under her feet.

The broken sword was soaked with the corpse's blood. The outcome suggested that the adventurers and monsters had been evenly matched. If not, then adventurers must not have had time to collect the magic stone.

Hestia overlapped Bell's image with the sword and carcass, worsening her anxiety over the boy's safety. Sounds started coming from her throat.

“.....Andromeda, check it out. Not checking everywhere we can for Bell Cranel's party would be irresponsible of us,” Ouka said, despite possessing a lower level than her.

Asfi threw him a glance. He stood in place, with shoulders as wide as a 19th century man\*\*. She said: “Bell Cranel's party only took enough equipment to spend a single day exploring the middle floors..... regardless of any accidents

that could happen. Under these circumstances, we should assume they weren't able to escape."

"Accidents?"

"Yes, their movements are strange. They may have fallen through a vertical hole," she said while fixing her glasses. Mikoto and Chigusa widened their eyes at her remark.

She continued: "They were already unable to return on their own, and then they fell to a deeper floor. If they made the reckless decision to wander this vast labyrinth while exposed to the threat of monsters, they'd be annihilated in less than a day..... is what I think."

"We believe we should consider a second possibility. They may have discarded the option of returning, and instead decided to aim for the safety point on the 18th floor," Ouka said.

“.....That requires a lot of nerve. Do you really think they’d make the attempt? The dungeon isn’t a playground. Carelessly diving for a new floor could leave a person traumatized. Any who would are literally digging their own graves.”

“I would,” a voice as rich as a chime said.

Ouka couldn’t believe what he was hearing. This was the first time the masked adventure had spoken throughout the journey. He and his party members spun around to look at her. The masked adventurer had her back to them as she maintained her position as their vanguard.

“And if they- no. If he is an adventurer, he will press forward,” she spoke with her dignified voice. It’s all she said, and everyone heard her.

Asfi stared at the face hidden within the cape. She asked: “What do you think, Hermes-sama, everyone?”

“Ah, go with what everyone else says.”

“No, I..... Bell-kun is a few floors down..... I have faith.....,” Hestia said from next to Hermes. She had her hands clasped before her head. While the [Blessing] she had bestowed on her child gave her a general perception of his location, it didn’t locate him in detail. However, it was that bond that guided her towards him. It guided her even though her knowledge didn’t exceed that of a human’s.

“Yes,” she added while closing her eyes. Thump thump, her jet-black twin tails beat against the ground, almost mimicking her rapid heartbeat.

“Looks like four of us are in favor. We shall continue to the 18th floor,” Asfi said, including

herself within the count. Neither Ouka, Mikoto nor Chigusa had dissented from the agreement.

The search party organized itself and headed for the lower floor. The masked adventurer took the vanguard. Asfi and the others arranged themselves so that Hestia and Hermes were protected on all sides.

Their powerful vanguard exterminated almost every monster that assaulted them, succeeding in clearing a path though the labyrinth. Everyone else stood vigilant for surprise attacks.

Mikoto and Ouka used the lances and shields being offered by their supporter, Chigusa, to keep away the monsters that got through. Asfi took care of long and short range guerrilla warfare. Overall, their party had no holes.



“However, we just entered the middle floors, deciding to go to the 18th floor is a bit.....,” Mikoto said.

“Yeah, we have some gutsy people among us,” Asfi replied. Their conversation echoed within the labyrinth.

After struggling a great deal, they entered their desired room. How many times had they seen chambers with the same dome shaped, rock ceiling? There was an uneven staircase in the middle of the room leading downward. They could continue to the next floor.

“Wouldn’t jumping through that vertical hole we passed have been faster?”

“Not at all, my goddess Hestia. The vertical holes of the middle floors reappear at random upon repairing themselves. Foolishly dropping into one would completely disorient us. It would

be like wrapping ourselves into a mummy. Furthermore, we can't discard the possibility that Bell-kun's party is trying to return. We'd need a route mapped out to return on should we bump into them," Hermes said.

"I see." Hestia nodded in agreement.

The masked adventurer descended down the stairs, her cape fluttering behind her as she went. Hestia and everyone else followed. They were ready to face the next floor.

\*Andromeda is a star constellation. In greek mythology, she was chained to a rock naked as a sacrifice to a sea monster.

\*\* The text said 19OC (Seruchi in katakana). I think OC means century. The fact that Seruchi

sounds like century only reinforces my thought.  
If anyone knows better, let me know.