

## Chapter 38

106th day after I became a Demon King.

Just as they had declared, Kanazawa's officially recognized hero party appeared in my Domain. The heroes began their invasion from the entrance of the First Domain.

At present my Domain is composed of four floors. However, given that the fourth floor (underground floor 4) is set as outside field and residential area, it's only possible to repel invaders until the third floor.

I transformed my Domain into a special anti-hero party dungeon.

The concept of the first floor is — exhaustion of the mind.

The deployed subordinates are just giant bats and rats, whose numbers had been increased excessively. Half-baked combat forces will be no more than a waste of CP. Furthermore it's quite possible that it would boost the hero party's confidence.

Giant bats that determinedly continue unleashing ultrasonic waves from the sky. Swiftly moving rats that focus on running around meaninglessly on the ground.

And, traps that were set up in great numbers at surprisingly low cost while freely spending DP and CP — 【Wood Arrows】 that don't have the aim to cause injuries or casualties, but only exist as harassment. And I believe even the 【Poison Arrows】 traps that have been laid out with a rate of 5% will wear down their mental durability at a good pace.

Well then, I guess it's time to observe the hero party which is in the middle of working their way through the first floor.



### ~ PoV Sayama Rina ~

We started the second invasion of the domain I had challenged in the past as my first dungeon raid. One hour after the beginning of the invasion.

"Tsk! The hell! This shitty dungeeeeeoon!" (Yuuya)

Walking in front of us in his role as shield bearer while capitalizing on his large frame and his dignified equipment, Yuuya angrily shouts out of irritation.

"Yuuya, please calm down." (Hideya)

The always-calm Andou-senpai rebukes Yuuya.

"Hideya! Ain't the information completely wrong!? It's not ghouls that appear! What's appearing since a while ago are only fuckin' annoyingly squeaking big bats, and rats that squirm around our feet, right!?" (Yuuya)

"Yay lol Yuuya, calm down. At least that's what I want to say, but you're certainly right, this is unpleasant." (Masakado)

Irritation flickers across Masakado's face who usually only messes around in an aloof manner.

"Domains are always changing...nowadays that's common knowledge." (Hideya)

Andou-senpai cautions while pressing a finger against the frames of his glasses.

"That's surely true, but...Andou-senpai, the crying of those bats is really nasty... Somehow my mood is getting worse and worse." (Saori)

Even Saori, who walks in the back, protests.

As a matter of fact, the crying of those big bats induces a light headache. It's an extremely annoying attack.

"Yay lol, look! It's a treasure chest! If I remember correctly, one can look forward to the treasure chest's contents in this Domain, ya know? I obtained my Silver Spear-chan in this Domain, too!" (Masakado)

A treasure chest was set up in the direction where Masakado pointed his finger.

The weapon which became the main reason for me being called 『Jet Black Hero』— the 『Black Iron Sword』, was also a weapon obtained in this Domain.

Everyone's expectations rise, and they focus their eyes on Masakado who's about to open the treasure chest.

Masakado opens it with careful hand movements.

"——Fuck!!" (Masakado)

——!?

Masakado yelled angrily all of a sudden and threw the object in his hand on the ground.

"What's wrong?" (Hideya)

Andou-senpai rushes over to the object Masakado had thrown and picked it up.

"I see... Certainly, what troublesome Domain." (Hideya)

What Andou-senpai was holding in his hand while smiling bitterly was a wooden sword.

On the way we took two breaks at rest areas. The big bats continue to cry as if harassing us, and the rats scurry about without any apparent value to their existence. And then, 12 hours after starting the invasion of the Domain despite all the stress caused by the frequent 【Wood Arrow】 traps and the occasional 【Poison Arrow】 traps, the stairs leading to the second floor appeared in front of us.

12 hours. Or to reword it, we cleared the floor in a mere 12 hours. Even for us selection members this was a speed record we hadn't experienced so far.

Normally we would repeatedly map out the area...and clear a floor by repeatedly going back and forth many times over.

However, nothing that could remotely be called battle has taken place in this Domain. As result of the attacks being limited to only harassing actions, we conquered the floor in no more than a half day.

Conquered the floor — it might be slightly too early to use those words.

That's because a single monster that ought to be called guardian stood in front of the stairs.

"Hey...say, that's..." (Yuuya)

Yuuya readies his shield while staying cautious.

"Be on your guard... 《Analyze》 has identified it as slime, but...it's very likely a trap." (Hideya)

Andou-senpai tells us to focus our minds on the monster — the slime, in front of our eyes with a nervous voice.

The monster blocking the way in front of us was a huge, muddy pool of water — a slime that wobbles around.

"All members, please get into formation. Saitou-san, please launch a preemptive magic attack!" (Hideya)

"Got it!" (Saitou)

The magician manipulating crimson flames — Saitou Ruriko, concentrates on the wand in her hands. All members including me grip the weapons in our hands and prepare for a combat against a formidable enemy.

The fire spear — 【Fire Lance】 that was released without any chanting pierces the slime and magnificently scatters its flames.

——!?

Nothing remains at the place which was stabbed by the fire spear. I'm confused by the scenery in front of my eyes, but grasp the situation quickly.

"No way...it was really a simple slime?" (Hideya)

Andou-senpai says with a befuddled voice.

The monster, which we arbitrarily decided to be a strong enemy, is not even worth mentioning. It was a plain slime. Andou-senpai's analyze identifies them as Rank F. A monster that's commonly called small fry.

"Yay lol, what a messed up Domain." (Masakado)

"Bah, what's with this place!?" (Yuuya)

Masakado, who feels disappointed, and Yuuya, who trembles in anger.

The domain, which I had supposedly declared as liberation target according to society, was not the 『Farm』 as it's called by the public, but an idiosyncratic Domain.

◇

~ *PoV Shion* ~

"Oh!? They are finally charging into the second floor?" (Shion)

While watching the live video on my smartphone, I think back on the hero party's invasion.

"The highlight was definitely Yay lol throwing away the wooden sword." (Shion)

"As I hate that man, I felt refreshed." (Kanon)

We were able to enjoy Ya lol's expression quite a bit as he opened the treasure chest with eyes full of expectation and then became angry after feeling heartbroken. The runner up is the hero party being wrapped in tension in front of the slime.

"Whoa! Don't be so cruel. Yay lol is an important source of information, okay?" (Shion)

"I know that, but...it's physically impossible." (Kanon)

Having had the experience of being almost killed by Yay lol, Kanon reveals a happy smile.

"Did they get properly irritated?" (Shion)

"As far as visible through the screen, it's a success, I believe?" (Kanon)

Kanon and I look evilly at each other.

"Next, the second floor's concept is——" (Shion)

The losses on the first floor were light. I, who had preserved more than enough combat forces, enjoyed watching the hero party with its grim prospects.

## **Chapter 39**

The concept of the second floor is — exhaustion of stamina.

Once they step onto the second floor, a huge room of 2 km x 2 km size will be visible in front of the invaders' eyes.

The subordinates I had deployed in that huge space are swarms of ghouls with the best cost performance value, boasting of a tenacious durability and overwhelming power that lacks intelligence, a wolf pack led by a black wolf, which toys with their enemies while relying on their superb teamwork and their swift movements, and goblin archers who readied their bows in the back.

A huge torch brightly illuminating the rear of my subordinates shone upon the stairs continuing to the third floor.

This setup was a message from me to to the invaders.

—— "Something like mapping is unnecessary. Don't hold back and come at me."

Repeatedly invading a Domain many times over while mapping out the area has turned into a standard approach for humans to liberate Domains.

In reality, even the hero party liberated four Domains with the same method.

This method was really logical. In the eyes of a Demon King, you might call it the worst move, though.

While securing a safety margin by repeatedly invading over and over again, the intruders level up by defeating monsters.

Securing a safety margin equals to no experience points for the Demon King. The intruders defeating monsters equals to CP being wasted pointlessly. It's truly the worst downward spiral. That's why I showed them the way, telling them "Don't hold back and come at me."

In case this time's intruders — the hero party didn't follow my invitation, in other words, in case they were to pull back, I would shift my countermeasures to Plan B.

Plan B. To put it shortly: a mudslinging war of attrition.

The enemy would deplete my CP by repeatedly invading and defeating my subordinates. In opposition, I would whittle down the enemy's combat assets by reliably crushing their members separately.

The battle would lengthen, and the obtainable experience points would drop sharply in contrast to the consumed CP. In order to match the enemy's growth speed with a growth of my own, it would produce the necessity to deploy my bloodkin from the Second Domain to earn as many experience points as possible.

"Well, there's also the possibility that I could repel them at no costs if I myself fought at the front line like a certain **【Body】** specialized Oni from someplace, but...the risks would be really big." (Shion)

I sigh while watching the hero party that's taking a rest in front of the stairs continuing to the second floor.

"But, Shion-san, if it's you, you could gain strength at the same level as a specialized build by allotting BP into **【Body】** or **【Mana】**, couldn't you?" (Kanon)

Kanon asks me.

"Yeah, but if possible, I'd like to keep saving my BP to raise Creation to Rank B, you know?" (Shion)

I saved the BP which I gained when I reached level 4. The reason is to allow Creation to rise from C to B.

"Well, depending on the situation, I guess I might raise **【Body】**..." (Shion)

Stopping the idle chat, I return my focus to the live video of the hero party reflected on the smartphone.

The path Kanezawa's officially recognized hero party chose is——



*~ PoV Sayama Rina ~*

After we took a short break, we descended the stairs leading to the second floor.

"—Ha?"

An silly voice escaped the lips of Yuuya who walked in front and stepped onto the second floor

before us.

Next I entered the second floor.

——!?

I was overwhelmed by the scene unfolding in front of me.

A ridiculously wide room. I wonder, what's its width? Once I look to the left, I can faintly see the wall in the distance. I think it easily surpasses 1 km in distance. Even when looking to the right, it's the same. The length is even bigger...2 km? No, it's probably a little bit more?

Countless monsters wandered around within that overwhelmingly vast space that lacks any obstacles or passages.

The first floor has a maze-like structure with frequent crossroads and dead ends, and swarms of rats and big bats which apparently serve no use other than irritating us. And, a huge number of planted, childish traps. It was a labyrinth-like setup which made me think that its sole goal was to make our minds go insane.

According to the words of a perished Demon King, 『Domains are created by Demon Kings』. This isn't a theory, but a fact we heard from a dying Demon King.

In that case, it means that the maze-like first floor that made fools out of us, and the second floor spreading in front of us, which makes one think that we are expected to break through with brute force, were created by the same Demon King.

A Domain that's composed of exactly opposite floors. I wonder, what kind of being is that Demon King who rules this Domain.

"Yay lol, what's this? A monster house!?" (Masakado)

Masakado, who stands next to me, raises a stumped voice.

"So, Hideya, what are we going to do?" (Yuuya)

Yuuya asks Andou-senpai.

It has become common knowledge to capture a Domain while mapping and noting the features of the floor and the composition of the appearing monsters down. Usually one lightly investigates the next floor after clearing the previous one, and then returns.

"Yay lol Megane-kun? You see that as well, right?" (Masakado)

Ahead of where Masakado is pointing you can see the stairs leading to the third floor — indicated by the light of a brightly burning, huge torch.

The stairs' existence was pointed out — as if inviting us.

"With this there's no need to map the area. Is it really the same Domain as before? If you consider it logically, we should go back once and review our strategy, but..." (Hideya)

"Yay lol Megane-kun? You're kidding, right? I don't want to pass through that first floor over and over again, okay?" (Masakado)

"Hideya, I also think that we should advance now. Fortunately no one is injured, although we got irritated on the first floor. In regards to our conditions, it shouldn't be any problem." (Yuuya)

"Andou-senpai... I would also hate passing through the first floor many times over." (Saori)

Masakado, Yuuya and Saori suggest to Andou-senpai, who shrugs his shoulders as if troubled, to continue advancing.

"Certainly... Given that we would finish the mapping if we started over, resulting in a shortening of the time for breaking through the first floor, we might recover our fatigue more than now. However, even now we have enough stamina left to continue the capture. Above all — many people wish for a quick liberation, anticipating our great exploits, thus let's continue onwards!" (Hideya)

"Yay lol." (Masakado)

"Sure!" (Yuuya)

"Yes!"

"Understood."

"Roger."

Hearing Andou-senpai's words, all of the selection members approve of his proposal in succession. I also go with the flow, and agree with a continuation of the capture.



3 hours after starting the clearing of the second floor.

Powerful and tough ghouls despite their dull movements. Wolves that excel at group combat and swift movements albeit it being simple to defeat them if an attack hits. And countless arrows fired from the rear. We steadily accumulated fatigue while suffering more and more injuries. I think about 1 km is left until the stairs leading to the third floor. It will be a long way.

6 hours after starting the clearing of the second floor.

One of our supporters lost his life along the way. I wonder, do the monsters follow some goal? As if aiming for our comrades waiting in the back and our supporters, they went around to our rear from the left and right.

Right now we are at the halfway point to the third floor stairs, I think. It feels as if the distances to the stairs leading to the second floor, from where we came, and the stairs continuing to the third floor, which are illuminated by the big torch, are the same.

At this rate proceeding is dangerous, but once we look back at the path we passed, even the way back to the second floor stairs is filled with monsters. Advancing is hell, and same applies for returning. We might have misjudged the point when to retreat.

"Hideya! What should we do? Go back?" (Yuuya)

"Let's see...in this situation..." (Hideya)

"Yay lol, spare me from having wasted all the effort in having come up until here! Let's aim for a rest area!" (Masakado)

Yuuya who seeks a decision. Andou-senpai who hesitates to reply. In the end we headed for the third floor stairs in accordance with Masakado's words.

10 hours after starting the clearing of the second floor.  
Two more supporters lost their lives.

"That's why I said that we should have turned back back then!"

"Ha? You never even once mentioned something like that, you know!?"

Yuuya and Masakado argue with each other even while fighting off the ghouls. His usual composure had left Masakado by now.

"Kya!? Hey, Rina! Protect me a bit better, okay!?" (Saori)

Saori, who was bitten by a wolf, vents her anger at me.

"I said it! I'm sure I did!"

"Haa? In the first place, do you think that we can retreat in this situation!? Look around you!"

"Both of you, please calm down!" (Hideya)

""Hah? To begin with, Hideya (Megane-kun), it's your damn fault for being so wishy-washy, don't you think!?" (Yuuya & Masakado)

The quarreling Yuuya and Masakado vent their frustration on Andou-senpai who tried to restrain them.

Our fatigue has reached its peak. The number of serious situations, where we insulted each other, increased.

It's the worst... We were highly praised as 『Heroes』 and 『Braves』 by our surroundings, but...in reality we were children who got carried away as we wallowed in the dream of being called heroes. There's 500 m left until the stairs to the third floor. Is it hope that awaits us after reaching that place, or——