

Chapter 199 - Underground Volcano City Devil's Mountain

As we left two steep, big caves piercing through mountains while defeating a big number of large ant and spider monsters, the walls' color changed to iron navy blue. The ground turned into something like a leaf stalk fiber similar to hemp palm wool.

Dwarf or gnome soldiers were fighting skeleton soldiers with that fiber ground as footing. Monsters that looked as if colon bacteria with flagella had turned huge were visible in the distance, too. However, once those disgusting monsters disappeared into the ground, their presences vanished as well.

Still, there were many mysterious stone monuments here. And also some translucent objects extending to the ceiling.

Is water passing through them?

Gorgeous, huge fish were swimming upwards. The translucent objects seemed to be water tunnels. Our group's gnomes made sure to not touch the mysterious water tunnels.

The number of roads with hedgehog sculptures lining up at the sides was growing.

One could see many dwarves and gnomes looking like soldiers and merchants. This seemed to be a relatively safe place.

The gnomes kowtowed towards the hedgehog sculptures. They might be altars of a god or something like a guardian deity. It didn't look like there were any black rings around this area. I had heard stories, but...I strongly experienced that the underground had relatively safe roads just like the surface. The reason for there to be so extremely few monsters were likely the dwarf & gnome soldier units.

Just now a gnome soldier passed while looking cheerful. He wore a luxurious armor and rode a saddled magic beast characteristic of the underground.

Dwarves with lanterns were leading darkness tigers (Dohle). They were walking heavily with the big knapsacks on their backs swaying.

"It's peddlers with darkness tigers as mules." Amu explained.

"Those are pets, eh?" I asked while looking surprised.

"Yes. I think they might be a group of expert monster user peddlers heading towards 【Underground City Lind】." Amu answered.

I had been properly listening to her explanation, but in the back of my mind I recalled the events with Rollo.

I'm really lonely...I want to see her...

I want to see my <Head Servant Leaders> as well, but...this time's travel through the underground allowed it to fully sink in that Rollo was a really important existence to me.

I will go back to Rollo after getting my reward and taking a little break...

Her cute nostrils, poking and nudging her with my fingers, the warmth of her blissful black fur... Anyway, this place is hot.

"Helme, are you okay? You can also go into my eye, if you want." I offered Helme.

"It's alright. I will stay close to you instead of your chosen bloodkin. Besides, your cherished partner, Rollo-sama, isn't with you right now either." Helme answered.

She smiled, but...she was increasingly looking paler as the temperature increased. Before long, I caught sight of a scene making it obvious that the underground city was using the volcano. A huge, tall wall made out of a huge bedrock continued endlessly. There were gutters at fixed intervals in the wall. Lava poured out through the gutters' holes, running down the wall.

Molten lava...?

The sight of the molten lava advancing with bubbling sounds while drying the outer moat of the fortress bright red made me think of the purgatory.

I suppose **【Underground Volcano City Devil's Mountain】** is inside that wall of rock.

As to be expected from those living in the underground, the excavation technologies were fairly advanced. Separated through the groove below the wall, there was a bright road in front of us. Magic light sources illuminating the travelers and caravans.

"It's no wonder that it's so hot." I commented.

"Yes." Amu confirmed.

A peculiar, bad smell penetrated and provoked my nose while heating up my lungs.

While experiencing the unique climate of the underground city, we advanced along the bright road together with other dwarves and gnomes.

Before long a huge gate flanked by two big sculptures that resembled sphinxes entered my sight.

I think those sculptures were carved out of the rock wall. They possess overwhelming presences. Is it an underground god? Or one of the familiar gods of Earth God Gaia?

While feeling a peculiar pressure, I walked up to the huge gate together with the Religious Organization Halfmalida.

The number of gnomian and grim-faced, dwarven soldiers had increased. Those gnomes and dwarves looked at Helme's and my faces with startled expressions. The faces of the gnomes, who wore twisted headbands, were funny.

『Hey, what's this guy?』

『Geeh, it's a magul.』

『Ueaaah.』

I felt like I could hear them saying such things.

As I walked onwards while thinking such things, Amu's voice reached my ears, "...This is the entrance to the Underground Volcano City Devil's Mountain. We will pass through the lower city and head to the upper city." Amu extended one of her small arms upwards. And while looking at my face, she added with a smile, "I think it will become noisy at the lower market as it's never peaceful and extremely hectic over there, but please bear with it and follow us. I'm sure you're tired from the trip, but please come to the temple in the upper city first. I will have our exclusive inn prepared for you."

Dirt was visible on her eyebrows, but her blue, almost transparent, eyes were beautiful.

Yeah, I really wanna see her lovely lips, which were hidden by the mask, once more. However, I guess I have no choice but to give up for now since all the soldiers of the Religious Organization Halfmalida had their mouths covered with black cloth masks.

"...Got it, we will follow you." I replied.

Helme and I passed through the gate alongside the Religious Organization Halfmalida, stepping into the underground city.

In front of me was a vast, round plaza using a stone paving which might have been made out of special, melted minerals.

Beyond that plaza, inside the city...I saw a small, castle-like building that seemed to be the city hall. Large stone pillars lined up in the vicinity. They acted as huge light sources and at the same time supported the dark dome of the huge cave as a colonnade with entablatures which extended shining branches.

It was a brightness exceeding that of LEDs.

How amazing...

Ahead of that castle, deeper into the city, there was a huge mountain that seemed to have the shape of a demon. Lava overflowed from the peak of that mountain, flowing down to the lower regions.

Magic stone-like objects were set up on the left and right of the streaming lava. Big magic crests were floating while overlapping with the lava.

From the lava, countless magic lines accompanied by flashes were connected to one big, floating magic crest.

Are they using some kind of geothermal energy in the infrastructure of this city through the powers of the lava and magic?

The Religious Organization Halfmalida went through the plaza with Amu in the lead. I follow them while continuing my sightseeing.

The surrounding area of the market was not only covered by a flat curtain roof, but had wooden houses lining up. Various things were put up for sale at the sundries merchants such as ropes, bundles of bristle, tanned animal hides, leather cloths, lizard species, spices, seed potatoes, thin slices of frog meat, meat of big mammoths, other kinds of meat, various mushrooms, various potion jars, alcohol, khaki bottles, soap, combs, paintings, wistaria flower decorations, year-end-gift-styled boxes, skins with written poems.

Mammoth meat reminded me of the game masterpiece 『Tail of the Sun』.

Mmh? For some reason frogs and bleached corals were sold as well. And, although there were tags similar to price tags with silver and gold coin prices written on them, I didn't find any shell names I knew of.

I guess that means there's an underground lake or such monsters that live in the underground.

Merchants and customers were haggling with each other, and coins switched hands. Those coins were gold, silver, copper, and iron.

At the edge of the market's canopy's eaves, smoke was rising from smithies, and the loud voices of dentists, barbers, oil merchants, candle sellers, and cleaners reverberated into the vicinity.

Armors, scissors, kitchen knives, khukuri, short spears, small axes, small shields, scaled armors, garter belt-like armors allowing to store knives, and semi-long boots were sold.

The market was noisy and lively, but extreme. There didn't seem to be any announcement booths.

Nor could I find any dwarves or gnomes shouting the news.

We advanced through that market. As we did, small gnome citizens similar to female bantams gathered.

Their looks towards Helme and me were slightly different from the previous frowning...they were filled with curiosity.

"It's a magul——"

"Oooh, you're right."

"Were they arrested by the religious organization?"

"They're big, those magul."

"The skin color is white or yellow? The other resembles a magul, but she has a leafy skin and wears beautiful clothes made out of a material I have never seen before! Let's have a closer look."

"Yeah!"

"Their physique is similar to that of dark elves. The man is wearing a strange armor I have never seen before. It's mysterious."

"Inform boss Orik!"

After passing the market plaza, we went through a mixed area of private houses and companies. Accompanying us from behind were groups of curious dwarves and gnomes. And then we, who had become like a shady religious sect, came out at a hill road with stone houses built on both sides. There were only very few wooden houses blended in among them. The slope gently continued upwards while drawing a curve. It headed towards the Devil's Mountain which had been visible from the city's entrance. We didn't go towards the castle-like place located inside the residential area. It looks like the Religious Organization Halfmalida isn't part of the government. There were many round, stone houses among the ones lining up next to the slope. It was only houses with round entrance doors where small gnomes and dwarves seemed to live. They slightly resembled the characteristic houses appearing in that famous ring saga. I felt a deep affinity with them. While excited, I looked at the appearance of those traveling the slope's road. As expected I couldn't find any human-sized people. Most of them were gnomes and lightly-dressed dwarves. Small races, basically. Many had burned skins as they had been continuously exposed to the lava's heat for an extended period. There were also some gnomes and dwarves with light complexions among them. There were nil humans, magul. Well, I guess that's only natural. Suddenly I recalled the words of a bald soccer player. Each time you climb a hill, the inclination increases. At the same time...

"——It's a magul."

"It's a magul——"

...such voices were raised around me. The number of curious onlookers was growing.

"...Amu, somehow the number of gnomes keeps growing..." I told her hesitatingly.

"Fufu, it's fine. They won't be able to enter the facilities of our organization. The people living in the lower city are probably thinking that we caught magul." Amu explained.

"I see..." I felt slightly anxious, but decided to believe in Amu's words.

The Religious Organization Halfmalida and us, alongside a great number of onlookers, advanced along the steep hill road with an inclination of around twenty degrees.

I thought that it was a road that would cut through the underground's bedrock, but it seemed to head to the mountain's foot. And then we arrived at a high place allowing us to overlook the cityscape.

I understood why it was called the lower city. We were on a vast vantage point.

Deeper inside, on the opposite side of the vantage point, there was a temple-like building that might have been built by drilling through the bedrock. In front there was a small gateway continuing until the temple. The floor around the gateway was blanketed by steel with a nice glaze.

On the left and right of the gate stood soldiers wearing the same uniforms as Amu and the others.

On the right side there was also a place where the soldiers of the adjoining land were stationed, and bedrock with a similarly small gateway.

"Captain Amu, good work on accomplishing your mission."

"Captain Amu!"

The religious organization's soldiers politely greeted Amu.

"Yes, long time no see. We will enter now, so please warn the onlookers behind us." Amu answered their greetings.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Okay!"

The soldiers protecting the small gate stepped forward. They advanced to the open space in front of the gate in order to protect us. The onlooking gnomes and dwarves were kept in check by the soldiers, and couldn't follow us any longer.

"Come on, Shuuya. Let's go inside." Amu encouraged me.

"Sure." I gave her a curt confirmation.

I passed through the small gate together with the guys with whom I had traveled up to here, entering the temple.

Another town awaited me inside the temple. It was a colony. The center extended upwards in a spiral while square houses gathered there.

It's my impression by appearance, but I guess it's a huge pillar or tower.

And, there were unique light sources. Evening flowers with a hue that seemed to stand out within the dusk. I felt a refreshing wind tickling my skin.

This is the atmosphere of the upper city, huh? Although it's connected to the lower city, the structures and the atmospheric pressure appear to be somehow different.

Since the temperature fell as well, Helme's complexion returned to its original state.

We advanced while I observed the upper city in the same way as the lower city.

The extent of the vicinity was...even at the lowest estimation, a vast space that was at least 300 meters wide, I think?

The enclosed space had been cut out of the bedrock in a spherical shape. There was a steep slope. Many houses stood in rows in a place similar to the audience seats surrounding a stadium.

Amu and the others walked towards a huge pillar located in the middle of that stadium-like space. On the stone-paved plaza having almost no inclination...brightly colored laundry was being dried. Meat was being dried here as well.

It was no carp banner, but the flag of the religious organization fluttered in the wind.

On the left side of the plaza, there was a spot where copious underground water gushed out. Gnome children cheerfully played around while being showered by the splashing water.

I could also see children playing with bey blade-like toys. Others were playing "Hopscotch."

Amu's group headed towards that plaza.

In front of the big pillar was an oblong epitaph which had huge chalcedonies inserted in-between.

"This huge pillar is the headquarter of the Religious Organization Halfmalida." Without discussing the epitaph in detail, Amu pointed at the headquarter inside the pillar.

I guess the huge pillar, or rather, the huge tower is the headquarter's building.

There were places where the paint had come off at parts of the huge tower's outer wall.

We went towards that tower and passed through the stone entranceway.

I think the Religious Organization Halfmalida must be an enormous organization.

"Welcome back, Captain Amu."

"Welcome home!"

"Welcome back."

The religious organization's soldiers greeted Amu at the entranceway of the temple's gate. Then an elderly woman wearing a toga-like, cloth attire appeared from a hallway leading deeper inside the headquarter. Accompanying her were servants or maids wearing mini-skirt uniforms. All of them greeted Amu.

"Wiza, Komo, I'm home. The person behind me is called Shuuya-san. He's the lifesaver of the Religious Organization Halfmalida, and an extraordinary lancer of valor. Make sure to treat him politely." Amu ordered.

"Yes!" The elderly woman and the beautiful maids bowed their heads while acknowledging.

They had startled and surprised expressions as they observed Helme and me. However, they immediately went back to maintaining proper attitudes without shouting "Magul, magul" like the gnomes that had kicked up a fuss in the lower city.

"Shuuya, I will pass you your reward on another occasion, so please take a rest for now." Amu told me.

"Yes, sure." I answered.

"See you later then." Amu turned on her heels after smiling gently at me.

With refined movements she walked through the hallway made out of wrought iron with complex patterns, heading towards a balcony-like place.

"Strong warrior, Shuuya-dono, it was fun. Farewell."

"Remarkable lad and pretty sorceress, until we meet again somewhere."

"For the captain to show you such a smile, I'm jealous!"

"Hahaha, Jim, that ain't nothing you say with a dwarf face."

"Humph! Come on, let's go."

The soldiers, who traveled with me, walked into the hallway while laughing.

"Shuuya-sama, please come this way." The toga-wearing woman guided Helme and me to a corridor on the right side. We were led to a big, parlor-like room at the end of the corridor.

It was a stylish room with cream and onyx-black pillars. An umbrella holder, err no, the sculpture of a hedgehog had been placed in front of the door. Tapestry decorated with embroideries of the organization's symbol filled the walls. There were elaborate engravings supplemented with gems on the window frame.

The gems are magic gems? Magic tools?

The frame itself contained mana, and it had a barrier-like, soothing effect.

I wonder, maybe there are magic tools with a thyristor function embedded in the walls. The room is illuminated softly by a faintly variable light. It has a feel as if even LEDs, which had been added in a DIY project, had been embedded into the frame.

A transparent, strange tablecloth had been placed on a square table with inlays. Water jugs and big plates full of delicious food were lining up on top of the tablecloth.

On the left side you could see four big beds lining up parallel to each other against the wall. On the right side next to the beds, a room, which had a tiled floor making it obvious that it was a bathroom, was visible.

"Visitors, please use this room as you like. See you." The elderly woman left while looking nervous.

"I can use your water for cleaning myself, but since there's an exclusive bathroom anyway, we might as well hop in together. What do you think, Helme?" I asked.

"Yes." Helme confirmed.

I stepped inside with my bare feet touching the tiled floor. They felt cold.

There was a big, bath stove, apparently made out of steel, in the middle of the room. It looks like lightly-dressed maids had been preparing the bath heater. Once they realized that Helme and I entered, the maids, whose boobs interested me, quickly stood up and bowed their heads.

"The bath has been heated up. Please, enter as you see fit." The girls with their nice boobs on display through their transparent clothing said and left through a door on the right.

Certainly, there's steam rising from the bath heater deeper inside the room. Alright, I guess I will go in.

I released the summer-clothing version of my blood chain armor, becoming stark naked. I ascended

a set of small, wooden stairs continuing to the bath heater together with Helme.

It wasn't a hell kettle, but the bathtub, where I dipped in my feet, sure had such a shape. Apparently wooden planks covered the tub's bottom.

The bath's temperature was good...

While experiencing a smooth, soft sensation on my skin...I submerged into the water up to the shoulders together with Helme, and for a while...we enjoyed a relaxed bathing time.

"Your Excellency, I will clean you up." Helme said.

"Please take care of me." Hearing my words, Helme immediately turned into a liquid state.

She has vanished as if dissolving into the hot water. The instant I thought that, my skin was enveloped by something like a liquid. My body was covered by a thin water film in no time. My eyes, mouth, and ears were blocked, but somehow it felt gentle.

Seemingly having finished the cleaning of my body, the liquefied Helme blended into the hot water while emitting water sprays into the air in the shape of a fan after shooting water at my dick at the very end, and then disappeared. And then she reappeared while embracing me.

"Your Excellency..." Helme said passionately.

Hot water dribbled down from Helme and her long eyelashes with their cuticles were likewise wet. She stared into my eyes with her beautiful, blue eyes trembling, and then shifted her look to my lips. The leaves on her cheeks were swaying seductively, and were dyed slightly red.

"I know..." I replied and covered her blue lips which had a tinge of pink, just as she had hoped.

I kissed her deeply, making sure to gently and slowly caress all of her lips.

Once I audibly separated my face from her soft face, strings of saliva hung between our mouths.

"...It's been a really long time since it has just been the two of us." I whispered.

"Yes. I'm happy..." Helme whispered back.

We kissed once more as I tightly embraced the soft and supple body of Helme.

While smelling a faint flowery scent from her, I enjoyed an amazing, passionate liaison with her, despite Rollo not being with me.



Waking up, I tapped the head of the realistic hedgehog sculpture, and while eating some fruit, which was a combination of banana and mushroom, that had been placed on the table, I told Helme my impressions about the tasty banana mushroom with its soft texture, wasting some time together with her.

While doing such things, I kept in touch with my <Head Servant Leaders> through blood messages. They had apparently assisted my dark guild and killed some of the enemy leaders.

Yui, Eva, and Rebecca only talked about what kind of giant it was, the demonic writings Mel recovered, or how easy it was to kill the Darkness Beheading Threads User.

Viine continued to investigate the shady company, but she was apparently spending a long time at home, worrying about me. She told me that she often passed her time together with Rollo and Balmint.

Mysty informed me about it being difficult to take care of her students, that she had almost been confessed to by a female student, and that she succeeded in improving the emerald emperor steel used by Eva's metallic legs even further.

No way, she's not planning to combine wheelchair no. 1 with the head of a golem, is she?

I contacted Kaldo while praising him for his work at the dark guild going by what I heard from Yui. Once I finished my usual messages, Helme was meditating in a corner of the room while floating. At that moment I sensed a magic source response.

"Shuuya-sama, you have been called by Amu-sama about the matter with the reward. Please come this way." It was the elderly woman wearing a toga.

"Got it. Helme, keep meditating. I'm going to meet Amu." I informed her.

"Okay, allow me to accept your kind offer then." Helme replied.

"Sure." I confirmed.

I talked with Helme, and then followed the elderly woman telling me the direction with her eyes while lightly inclining her head.

Passing through hallways with a wrought iron floor, I was guided to a place with an idol that seemed to be a burial chamber.

"Shuuya, over here." Amu called out to me with her golden hair now visible.

She stood up from her chair next to the idol while holding a bag.

That idol was the same as the wood crafted figure Amu carried with her.

Her head wasn't covered by a black hood anymore, and she didn't wear the black mask either. She boldly wore an emerald outer garment, which was open at the chest, exposing her snow-white skin, and a black-dyed leather bra hiding her moderately big chest. She freely revealed her lovely abs. It was a perfect bare midriff.

She had put on green short pants, and wore black, scaled boots reaching up to around her knees. I'm pretty sure that's her private attire.

"...Amu. You're really beautiful." I praised her.

"Auu...Shuuya, thank you." After averting her face as she was seemingly blushing in embarrassment, she thanked me with a sidelong glance, apparently having noticed my perverted stare.

It looks like her figure hasn't been praised much.

"...Shuuya, your heroic strength as you slaughtered the monsters was magnificent. This is the promised reward." She handed a big pouch to me.

Once I checked inside, I saw a round, eyeball-like crystal that was buried inside a light brown fiber, and a fine powder that seemed to blend the colors red and silver.

"It's a belbaque's core and the powder of a firebird's horn." She explained.

The value of these items is unknown to me. Therefore I think I will show them to everyone or Mysty once I get home.

I tossed the pouch into my item box.

"...Thanks. I have received the reward." I confirmed the fulfillment of the promise.

"Yes. Ah, my dwarf friend whom I mentioned the other day is right now in the refined gold room next to this one. Do you want to meet him?" Amu asked.

"Yes, please."

"Let's go then. It's this way." The small Amu started to run cheerfully.

I followed her in a trot.

The place she led me to was a room crammed with various items like a storage shed.

"——Roa, are you there?" Amu called out.

Eh? Roa, she said!? No way!

"What is it? Did you discover a rare item again?" Roa answered.

For real? This voice, this characteristic, deep, raspy voice...even I wouldn't forget it.

The one who communicated with me first in this world...it's the voice of the dwarf Roa!

"No, no, not this time. Please come here since we can't see you. I'm sure you will be startled as well, Roa. Fufu. Even you, who loves wandering, should have never seen something like that." Amu lured Roa out.

"...It's quite rare for you to say something like that to me, Amu. Alright, I will clean up here now and head over." Roa answered.

Once Roa showed up while moving a book and a knapsack aside, he took one glance, and shock immediately dyed his expression while his lips trembled.

"N-N-N-N-Nooo waaaaaaaaaaaay, the magul Shuuya? You're Shuuya, right?" Roa screamed.

"Oh?" Amu was surprised by Roa's reaction.

"Indeed. I was surprised as well, but for it to be that Roa..." I said.

I felt like his scraggly beard had grown, but it was definitely Roa.

"Oooooooh, that voice, there's no mistake. Even though it was by coincidence, how to say it...but, it's great that you survived..." Roa drew near. He looked up to me at my feet, staring fixedly.

"Yeah, "various stuff" happened after that." I replied.

"I can imagine...however, I wonder whether it's the guidance of Paddock-sama..." Roa raised the index fingers on both his small hands, and crossed them at his chest after looking up to the dome.

It seems to be a pose of praying to his god.

"...So you knew each other already. Even though I wanted to surprise you, it was me who got surprised." Amu complained lightly while making a gesture with both her hands.

"Gahaha, Amu, I was really surprised. To reunite with the magul Shuuya whom I met while wandering the underground...that's certainly beyond expectations." Roa said happily.

"...Roa, I was pretty certain that you had returned to a dwarven city, so why are you in this city?" I asked out of curiosity.

Roa answered while looking awkward, "...Ah, yeah, that is...at first the liliun production was on track as I used the black longevity grass well, and I was able to make a huge fortune. However, I was set up by the underlings of the 【Deputy King Assembly】..."

While looking said, Roa recounted how the greedy 【Deputy King Assembly】 completely stole the interests of the black longevity grass because his groundwork had been insufficient.

"I was really outwitted by Padoloro, the leader of the 【Deputy King Assembly】 which is the strongest faction of the elder council..." He brought his long explanation to an end.

"...Was that so?" I asked back.

"Yeah. Shuuya, you said "various things happened," but you certainly haven't been wandering the underground all the time, have you?" Roa inquired.

"No, after that I lived in the same place for a while. But, thinking that it would be bad for me to continue like that, I made my resolve, and departed to the sea of bones, Glanba's territory, resuming my travel throughout the underground. Over there I got attacked by Glanba, but after killing it, I met Rollo, was saved by a horned race that could use a ritual device, and returned to the surface. Afterwards I called the person, who saved me, master, and after living at his place on the surface for a while, I wandered the surface world. And then, while leading the 【Special Exploration Party Mutsu Guroumaru】, I once again set out to explore the underground world." I explained while mixing lies and truth a bit.

"Yes, and then Shuuya saved our lives." Amu chipped in after silently listening to my story.

"Just now you casually mentioned that you killed Glanba, but is that true?" Roa tried to confirm.

"Yes, I defeated it. It's the guy with the white armor and the extending arms, right?" I replied.

"No doubt, that monster is Glanba." Roa answered while shifting his eyes to Amu.

"If it's Shuuya, I'm sure he can definitely defeat it. On the way back here we fought against many

monsters, including queznarl, but we could defeat them easily because of Shuuya and Helme-san." Amu added.

"What, those queznarl of the Demonoid Empire?" Roa was shocked.

"Yes, they defeated them in a breeze. Shuuya possesses a heroic power." Amu raved.

"I didn't know about it being heroic...if I had taken Shuuya with me back then, my future might have been a different one..." Roa looked mortified.

"Don't pull such a face. We were able to meet after a long time. How about having a chat while eating or drinking some booze together, though it won't be "giggi"?" I invited Roa.

"Gahahaha, giggi, eh...? How nostalgic. Why not." Roa accepted.

"Ah, I will treat you." Amu offered.

"Oh, it's rare for Amu to offer something like that..." Roa scrutinized Amu's face.

"J-Jeez, Roa. Please don't bring your face close!" Amu yelled.

"Aah...so that's how it is." Roa grinned broadly with a knowing expression, looking alternatively at Amu's and my faces.

"Hurry up, it's this way. Please come——" Amu said while embarrassed, and moved quickly to the door to keep her face at a distance from Roa.

She grabbed the knob with her small hand, and swiftly opened the door.

"Good grief. Damn you, Shuuya. You are a smooth operator." Roa hit my backside while laughing.

If Helme had been here, Roa might have lost his life. That means, Amu is interested in me, I suppose?

The place we were led to by a smiling Amu was an oblong dining hall. Gnomes and dwarves were sitting at tables that had just the right height for them. There were alcoves deeper inside. A gnome cook was cooking something at the counter.

"Please take a seat." Amu encouraged Roa and me.

"Sure." I did as told.

"High-class peak sake, six fish, and boiled mushroom for me." Roa made his order

Amu glared at Roa for an instant at the mention of the sake's name.

"...High-class, okay, only because it's this time." Amu agreed.

"Aye, nothing less of you, Amu." Roa donned an expression stating, "Fine, fine."

"——Shuuya, do you have any wishes in regards to your food?" Amu asked after turning her eyes towards me without minding Roa.

"I don't know what's available, so it's fine for you to choose, Amu." I answered.

"Okay!" Amu ran to the place with the counter, and then chatted up the cook that had been preparing the food.

"However, for Amu to make the face of a woman...you must have performed quite well in battle, Shuuya." Roa said.

"You say so, but I just defeated the monsters normally." I answered back.

"Humph, I know from just hearing about it that that normally of yours is nowhere near normal." Roa refuted.

"You think? Well, I'm confident in my spearmanship." I said.

"Oh, you're a lancer? It seems Paddock-sama used the spear, too. Although it might be a coincidence, it's nice that we could meet again. It really might be the guidance of Paddock-sama." Roa said reverently.

"You're right. It might be coincidence, but it means that some kind of fate was at work here." I replied.

Hearing my words, Roa placed his hand on his chin as if pondering a bit, "...Come to think of it, you previously said something that bothered me. A horned race that used a ritual device..."

"Yeah, he's from the Goldiba race." I truthfully answered.

At that point gnomes carrying food came over together with Amu. They lined up fish, boiled mushrooms and sake atop the table. Red vegetables and a meat stir-fry were put down as well.

"Here's the food. Now let's eat." Amu said cheerfully.

"Goldiba race...never heard of them. It's not the aquatic Pure race, is it?" Roa pondered.

He doesn't know, huh? And, what's that Pure race? Kin of the mermaids?

"Roa, what are you mumbling there? Come on, I'm even treating you to expensive sake!" Amu urged Roa to start eating.

"Ah, sorry. I gladly accept." Roa heartily drank from his sake cup which was filled to the brim.

We spent our time happily sitting together for a long time while eating and chatting.

"...I see." I affirmed.

"That's why the Demonoid Empire is a threat. The other day they had been repelled through Amu's

great efforts, though." Roa explained.

"Yes, we managed to defend against them somehow, but...the names of many soldiers had to be carved into the epitaph again." Amu answered sadly.

After that the topic shifted towards stories about the war against the Demonoid Empire. Amu said they were in the middle of trying to form a resistance by forming a genuine alliance with each of the independent cities. Apparently Amu carried out talks with the higher ups of the **【Independent Underground City Farzan Dome】** for that reason.

Next, we talked about the distribution of mushrooms brought in by peddlers, the cultivation of special mushrooms that used the volcano's heat, a stupid story how a gnome and dwarf fell into the volcano due to a fight and about how they came out as ghosts, about a woman jumping into the volcano to pursue her lover who died in a war, and the legend of Paddock-sama's beloved spear Sola sleeping in the underground lake. Roa asked me once more about the ritual device with a red face, before we reached the questions about life on the surface.

At the time when I started to think that I should go back soon after having a long and deep talk, Amu asked with red cheeks, "Shuuya, are you going to explore the depths of the earth from now on as well?"

Since she had been drinking sake, she might be drunk.

"Yeah, that's right. I reunited with Roa after a long time and got to drink sake with you, Amu, so I'm reluctant to part, but...this will be our farewell." I said.