

## **Chapter 125 - Troublemaker Party ③**

I slip into darkness, pass the golems at the edge of the room, and get close to the archer dwarves.

——Use 《Cursed Hatred》!

Following my order, the group of living mails simultaneous clangs their shields. In response the enemy focuses on them.

——《Flash Thrust》!

I swiftly pierce an archer dwarf with a thrust from behind.

"——!? #%\$!?"

The dwarf, who was stabbed by Gáelbolg, looks back at me with surprise written all over his face...and says something I can't understand.

Hmm? Despite it being a surprise attack from behind, killing him in one blow was impossible...?

He's definitely tough for a rear guard.

I open my palm in front of the dwarf's face who looks at me with a resentful glare as he's dying.

——《Dark Lance》!

The dark spear shoots through his face from point-blank, and the dwarf collapses on the spot like a doll that had its strings cut.

Even though their ally has gone down right close-by, the other dwarves don't even glance at me...solely concentrating on shooting arrows at the living mails. Using that opportunity, I slaughter the archer dwarves one after the other.

"Yey! It's over with this?"

Before long, the last golem turns into simple earth and crumbles away. Takaharu begins to battle against the group of dwarves without any break. As I'm killing the archer dwarves, Saburou and Cain stand at the front together with Takaharu, continuously and steadily lowering the enemy numbers.

After two hours...the only ones left standing are my subordinates and a single dwarf — Sein Akira. Our side has lost four living mails, I suppose... Well, I did use them in such a rough manner. It didn't go as far as being a flawless victory, but I think it's a result that might very well be called a complete victory.

"I will ask just in case, but do you feel like becoming our ally?" (Saburou)

"Hah! Don't jest!"

Even while being surrounded by a group that's obviously far stronger than he is, he doesn't yield. His loyalty as subordinate sure is admirable.

"Then die." (Shion)

I announce Sein's death sentence.

"Shion-sama!"

Just as I'm about to approach Sein Akira together with my subordinates with my spear at the ready,

a voice calling my name interrupts.

"What is it?" (Shion)

I look at the owner of the voice — Saburou with plain displeasure.

"If possible...I'd like you to allow me to take this guy on!" (Saburou)

"You want to have a one-on-one against him?" (Shion)

"Most humbly..."

Does he want to show off in front of Sarah? That's what I think at first, but Saburou has a serious look...with his usual sickness (ninth-grader symptoms) staying low. Looking at my other subordinates, Takaharu awaits my order with his arms folded, Sarah fiddles around with her hair by curling it up on her finger, and the other subordinates wait for my instructions with serious expressions.

I want the experience points as well, but...I'm bothered by Saburou's serious look.

"Understood. Do as you please." (Shion)

"It's deeply appreciated!" (Saburou)

When I put my spear away after accepting Saburou's request, my other subordinates also lower their weapons and watch the further outcome.

"You said you were called Sein...? I've kept you waiting. My name is Saburou Shion! Let's have a fair duel!" (Saburou)

Oh? He's unusually earnest about this. But, stick to your damn alias. Haven't you just told him that you're a former Demon King? Or rather, didn't you just reveal that I'm the Demon King with your speech just now...?

I have been swept away by Saburou's seriousness and atmosphere, but considering it calmly, the current turn of events could be called the worst. If he didn't have any reason to suggest this one-on-one...I wonder how should I punish him?

While being irritated at myself for having been influenced by the mood, I observe the duel between Saburou and Sein.

Saburou, who excels in mobility, launches magic ranged attacks against Sein who has readied his big shield and ax. Sein tries to gradually get closer to Saburou while hiding behind his shield, but Saburou doesn't permit that by freely moving around.

That's definitely a sturdy shield...it's not a unique item, is it? Is it one of the rumored dwarven shields? I think I will give it to Iron once we kill him.

Having completely switched into the mode of a spectator, I watch the battle's progress while admiring the high durability of Sein's equipment.

Saburou who delivers jabs with magic attacks, and Sein who endures with his sturdy equipment and body.

At this rate it's very likely that Saburou will take away the win, but...it looks like it will take quite a bit of time.

——Saburou, let me confirm: are you obsessed over a one-on-one?

I ask Saburou telepathically.

"Humph! I'm a loyal subordinate of yours, Shion-sama!"

Saburou answers with a tone overflowing with confidence.

"What does that mean!?"

I gather my mana while smiling bitterly at Saburou's reply.

——《Fire Blast》!

I shoot 《Fire Blast》 — the ability I have drained from Sarah — at Sein's feet.

"——!?! Wh-!?! T-That's dirty——"

——《Fire Bullet》!

Moreover, I shoot a flame bullet into Sein's face as he prattles some bullshit.

"Who said that it would be a one-on-one? Or rather, it was you guys who surrounded us with big numbers at the start, no?"

"Y-You bastaaaard——"

Saburou closes the distance on Sein, who exposes his anger towards me, in an instant and stabs Sein's neck with his rapier.

Saburou answer about him being my subordinate basically meant that he will be fine with anything I do as long as he wins.

"Hah? So I can join da fray as well?" (Takaharu)

"Let Saburou have the finishing blow."

"Gotcha." (Takaharu)

It looks like I'm not the only one who got bored from watching. Takaharu puts on a cruel smile, kicks the ground, and delivers a hearty roundhouse kick at Sein after closing the distance.

"Nn." (Kaede)

Using the opportunity of Sein swaying as he was unable to suppress the impact of Takaharu's kick, Kaede stabs her dagger into Sein's neck after drawing up on him from behind unnoticed. Takaharu kicks up the shield of Sein, who has a pained expression, and Sarah unleashes a compressed cluster of air — 《High Pressure》 onto his exposed torso.

As if concealing Sein who has fallen to the ground and lost his shield, Saburou readies his rapier.

"Do you know the reason for your defeat? ...It's because you have taken our bonds lightly."  
(Saburou)

Saburou pushes his rapier into Sein's neck alongside that mysterious signature phrase.

"B-on-ds...? I suppose the finisher was Saburou's attack after your «High Pressure». Isn't that wonderful, Sarah? It appears as though your bonds with Saburou are the reason for the victory, doesn't it?"

"Hah? What are you talking about? Like no way this creep got anything to do with me!" (Sarah)

Sarah throws a fit in response to my mean smile.  
Unfortunately the bonds mentioned by Saburou seem to be an illusion.

"Anyway, let's leave the jokes at that...Saburou." (Shion)

I call out to Saburou who looks overjoyed after having finished off Sein.

"So...what was the reason for you insisting on fighting against Sein?" (Shion)

"Yes! With all due respect, I — Saburou Shion have good news for you, Shion-sama!" (Saburou)

"What's up?" (Shion)

"My level...my level...has exceeded 50!!!!!" (Saburou)

Saburou yells very happily.

"That means...in other words?" (Shion)

"I can evoooolve!" (Saburou)

Saburou celebrates with his nose running.

"Da fuck? Yer level's higher than mine?" (Takaharu)

"You gotta be joking!" (Sarah)

After the former Demon Kings became my subordinates, the concept of their leveling has become the same as the humans'. Their stats and levels have remained as they were during their time as Demon Kings, and their growth speed has become faster than that of an average human. However, there seems to exist a weird restriction. They can only raise their levels without increasing their BP beyond a value of their former Demon King level x 5.

In short, it's unbelievable, but...Takaharu is currently level 24 despite possessing this much power. His level is less than half that of Rina.

Since the levels and stats have been kept as they were, it seems that Demon Kings with excellent initial stats have a big advantage over humans, but...given that they lost Creation and Alchemy at the point of stopping to be a Demon King, the BP allotted in those two stats have been lost. Putting aside Demon Kings, who mostly assigned their BP into Body like Takaharu or Mana, there will also be cases where former Demon Kings are actually weakened.

Saburou is the former Demon King who became my subordinate after Kanon, but...just when and where did he gather so much experience? Come to think of it...each time he went on about stupid shit, I transferred him to the front line, didn't I...? Yataro has actively deployed Saburou to the front line as well.

Former Demon Kings have a low level but high stats. Hence, they can get a lot of experience points as they can slaughter enemies by themselves. Because of that, their leveling speed goes up as well. The Knowledge-based Kanon is an exception here, though. I sense a strange feeling of being able to come to terms with that conclusion.

"So, what are you going to do about the evolution choice?"

I toss that question at the reveling Saburou.

## **Chapter 126 - Evolution (Saburou) ①**

"Oh? It's okay for me to decide myself?" (Saburou)

Saburou is surprised at my words.

"Let see... I guess we will put it on hold for now, after all." (Shion)

I tell him to postpone it, allowing me to sort my thoughts about Saburou's evolution path.

"Eh!?" (Saburou)

"Saburou, you're a part of our defense. I will consult with Yataro." (Shion)

What I would discuss with Yataro is to Saburou go with 『Nightmare Vampire』 if he says that he needs him for defense, and if he doesn't need him there, 『Daylight Vampire』 since he would be included in the invasion teams. If I'm going to borrow him occasionally like this time, 『Vampire Lord』 would be an option as well. I'm also curious about the Mana-specialized 『Vampire Elder』 and the all-rounder superior species 『Vampire Noble』.

"I guess we will join up with Yataro for now."

I transfer to the residential area, where Yataro waits, together with the subordinates who accompanied me on the invasion.



Once I arrive there, all subordinates except for Saburou go back to their respective homes.

"Oh, welcome back. Do you have some business with me?" (Yataro)

Once we head over to Yataro's place, he comes out while smiling like a good-natured old man.

"Saburou has reached level 50." (Shion)

"Hoh, that's an auspicious event." (Yataro)

"Let me ask you frankly: Is Saburoou someone you need for defense?" (Shion)

"You're asking me that in front of the person himself?" (Yataro)

Yataro glances at Saburoou and asks.

"If it's difficult for you to state your mind, I can have Saburoou step outside, if you like?" (Shion)

"——Wh-!?! My emotional suffering at that point in time will..." (Saburoou)

"Fuofuofuo, I don't mind. To be honest — he's necessary, I'd say." (Yataro)

Yataro laughs and then answers me seriously.

"In that case, Saburoou's evolution will be——" (Shion)

"Wait a moment. I'm grateful that you've come to ask for my opinion, but Saburoou — can I ask you something?" (Yataro)

"What would that be?" (Saburoou)

"Saburoou, you have taken part in an invasion for the first time. How did it go for you? Defense or invasion, which do you consider to be more suitable for yourself?" (Yataro)

"Hmm, that's a truly difficult question..." (Saburoou)

Being asked so by Yataro, Saburoou reveals a troubled expression.

"Fuofuofuo, Saburoou, I want to have a little chat over tea with Shion. Can I have you leave us alone for a bit?" (Yataro)

"As you wish." (Saburoou)

Even though he looks unhappy, Saburoou leaves in accordance with Yataro's request.

"Now then, Shion, do you know why I need Saburoou for my defense?" (Yataro)

"Simply for his strength?" (Shion)

Leaving Saburoou's character and fetishes aside, he's top-notch if you regard him as a combat asset.

"Fuofuo. You're right, Saburoou is strong. He's probably ranking second in strength to Izayoi when it comes to the defense team. However, the reason why I need him lies elsewhere." (Yataro)

"——?"

I tilt my head to the side in confusion.

"For me Saburo is what Kanon is for you, Shion." (Yataro)

"Huh? That doesn't explain anything, though?" (Shion)

"Fuofuo, certainly, putting Kanon with her adorable appearance on par with Saburo is...it might be rude towards Kanon." (Yataro)

Yataro laughs brightly.

"If it's just strength, Izayoi would be enough. Moreover, if it's about the invading humans and monster, the subordinates you have rented to me coupled with the abilities of the items given to them are more than plenty as combat force. If an irregular like Sarah-jou invades, it won't be any issue as long as I inform you of it, Shion."

"Explain it in a way that I can easily understand." (Shion)

I ask Yataro, who gives me a roundabout explanation, to give it straight to me.

"Saburo is a former Demon King like me — or to put it in another way, a former human. Izayoi is strong, the rented subordinates are strong as well — but, they are created being different from us." (Yataro)

Now I finally understand what Yataro is trying to say.

"In other words, you want Saburo as someone you can talk to?" (Shion)

"If you go with the plain, unvarnished truth, that's exactly it."

Yataro nods with a smile at the answer I have reached.

"Are you fine with Saburo...?" (Shion)

"Fuofuo. Shion, what do you think of Saburo?" (Yataro)

"A terminal chuunibyou patient, and owner of peculiar fetishes."

"Fuofuo, I want to back him up a bit, but...I fail to find words that would be able to deny this. That's also one side of Saburo, but...he has also another side to him." (Yataro)

"Another side?" (Shion)

"Yes, one that's full of human traits. Has Saburo been a bit overly enthusiastic during the invasion or something?"

Hearing his question, I try to recall Saburo's state during the invasion, but I can only come up with scenes of him clashing with Sarah in something similar to a two-person comedy act.

"Well, he did entreat me to let him defeat the last monster." (Shion)

"You know, Saburo...has been panicked after Sarah-jou and Takaharu have become your subordinates. It's just my speculation, but...he might have been panicked since the time when Izayoi was created." (Yataro)

"Panicked?" (Shion)

"Yeah... Sarah-jou and Takaharu have originally been above level 10 — evolved Demon Kings. If we speak of Izayoi, you could call him a higher version of Saburo. Saburo has become flustered after comparing himself to those colleagues of his." (Yataro)

"I see." (Shion)

I nod at Yataro's explanation.

"Don't you think that's quite human?" (Yataro)

"Well, you could say so." (Shion)

"That's the kind of Saburo I need, the human one. Shion, milord, isn't it the same for you as well?" (Yataro)

"——?"

I'm puzzled by Yataro's question.

"If something happens, you talk with Kanon, don't you Shion?" (Yataro)

"That's because of Kanon's Knowledge B..." (Shion)

"Fuofuofuo. Don't you ask Kanon about things you would know after looking them up a bit?" (Yataro)

"It's a hassle to look up things, though." (Shion)

"Also, don't you confirm whether your thoughts are correct by telling her about them?" (Yataro)

"..."

"And that's what I mean." (Yataro)

I'm somewhat pissed off that I can't confute him, but I can't find any fault in his words.

"Besides, despite appearances, Saburo gets along well with Izayoi. His relationship with the other subordinates is good as well." (Yataro)

"Oh, really?" (Shion)

"Yep. He's being shunned by the elves, though." (Yataro)

Yataro laughs loudly as if having added a punch line to his talk.

"So, in the end, you're telling me that you need Saburoou for the defense, right?" (Shion)

"That's how it is." (Yataro)

It was a long conversation, but it looks like Saburoou is needed here. At the same time I could catch a glimpse at the defense members' relationships, which I didn't care about much until now.



I call back Saburoou and we discuss his evolution.

"Saburoou, from now on we plan to have you mainly focus on defense with the occasional assistance on invasions. Do you have any wishes regarding your evolution path?" (Shion)

Yataro has left it to me, asking me to take Saburoou's opinion into consideration. Given that he will mainly focus on defense, I plan to go with Saburoou's wish as long as it's not 『Daylight Vampire』.

"I think...I'd like to evolve into 『Vampire Lord』 or 『Vampire Noble』." (Saburoou)

Saburoou names two evolved species with a lack of confidence.

"『Vampire Lord』 or 『Vampire Noble』, huh? Why?" (Shion)

"To be frank, 『Nightmare Vampire』 would suit my image more, but unfortunately I have been beaten to the punch by Izayoi for 『Nightmare Vampire』... Hence, I believe the titles that suit me next are lord or noble!" (Saburoou)

"The word impression is what you're going for...? Wait, if you were forestalled by Izayoi in regard to Nightmare, lord is my species, you know?" (Shion)

"Fufufu. By choosing the same species as you, Shion-sama, our bond with deepen...proceeding towards a relationship of sworn brothers, exceeding master and serva——" (Saburoou)

"Okay, 『Vampire Lord』 is taboo." (Shion)

I interrupt Saburoou's bullshit, and forbid him to evolve into a 『Vampire Lord』.

"——Wha-!? T-That's not the only reason! With defense as my main, Daylight has little value, and I feel like attacks through weapons work a lot better for me than magic attacks. Seeing how Nightmare is blocked, my choices are only Lord and Noble." (Saburoou)

Saburoou rattles down a list of reasons in a hurry as if making up excuses.

"Then just use that reasoning from the starts... Well, whatever. In that case your evolution is set to be 『Vampire Noble』, I'd say." (Shion)

"Y-You're deciding such an important choice that will influence my fate...so easily!?" (Saburou)

Upon my words, Saburou responds in panic while being stumped.

"Even if we keep worrying about it, it won't solve anything. Hence, believe in your intuition."  
(Shion)

"Hmm... If you say so, Shion-sama..." (Saburou)

And that's how Saburou evolved into a 『Vampire Noble』.