

Chapter 266 - Club Ice

I peeked at Rebecca's situation while helping set up the place. She greeted Sanya-san's disciples, bowing towards them.

Next, Sanya-san barked an instruction, causing the disciples to line up in front of her. The number of disciples was low.

"All of you, Rebecca-san has joined us as a disciple of the Kulbul style as of today. Let's strive for new heights together."

""Yes.""

After throwing out her chest like an assistant instructor, Sanya-san began to perform karate-like movements. The disciples imitated her moves.

First came a thrusting technique, using both fists. In the middle of that, a thrusting technique that added leg movements while advancing with the arms crossed, making use of the torso. It was a walking technique mainly centered on fist strikes with only a few kick techniques added to it. They diligently continued the practice session. Rebecca imitated Sanya-san as well. However, she was so clumsy that it was funny instead. Still, Rebecca was doing it seriously.

Her attitude of doing her best to become strong also hinted at her belief that she ought to train her body.

—I've really got to do my best with my spearmanship as well.

Spearmanship isn't just about swinging and thrusting a spear either. Even just looking at the single technique of <Thrust>, it's a very deep art. It's very different depending on the way you grab the spear with the fingers. Depending on delicate strength adjustments, the precision greatly alters as well. It's also connected to the mana manipulation skill called Magic Combat Style.

Moreover, there's the movements of your muscles and bones, feints through looks and skill moves, and also reading the opponent's mental state by seeing through all of this.

It's the awesomeness of martial arts. It's extremely interesting...I think I'm going to do some spearmanship training again.

As I was thinking about all that, I finished helping with the setup. Looking in Viine's direction, I saw how she got teased by the children mischievously pulling on her ponytail.

Viine noticed my look, and came over, separating from the children.

"...The general set up is done, so I think we can go back home."

"Okay. Did you get stimulated by their training?"

"I guess I can't hide anything from you."

"No, you can't!"

"Nyao." Rollo meowed on my shoulder.

"Huh? Rollo, I don't see Alray and Hueremy..."

"Nn, nyaa."

Rollo-san had remained on standby as a cat loaf. But, seeing my face, she suddenly got up, using her forepaws, but then stopped moving in the middle of it. Her face was facing downwards. At the end of her line of sight were Alray and Hueremy.

What, so they came back?

"Nyaa."

"Nyao."

"Did you go exploring? There's dry leaves on your whiskers..."

After I removed the trash from the cats' whiskers, "Alright, let's go home."

I said, but before that I greeted Mr. Ivanovic, and then left the grounds after casting a glance at Rebecca continuing her training.

I walked along the main street with the sunlight roasting my nape. Then I arrived at the front gate of my home.

The instant I returned to our courtyard, Rollo jumped off as if showing off her belly, landing on the stone paving. Just like that, she stretched her small limbs, and then started to run.

"Nyanyao——" She headed towards the stables where Popobumu was resting while meowing.

Alray and Hueremy followed after Boss Rollo. Their appearances from behind were no inferior to Rollo in charm.

Balmint greeted them with an energetic, "Gao gao." It looks like his siesta is over.

The cat corps led by Rollo sniffed the butts of Balmint and Popobumu. The magic beasts and animals chased each other's butts while forming a line.

Haha, what a funny buttlover corps.

For a while I allowed myself to be soothed by the zoo scenery. Then I surveyed the courtyard while taking a deep breath.

Suddenly my eyes came across a bulging lawn patch. What if there was a tombstone or something similar over there...

Somehow it makes me feel something dramatic, but...well... And then I recalled the grave-marker slate we had obtained from the treasure chest. Let's cancel the training for today.

After making eye contact with Viine, we went to the bulging place located in the right corner.

"...Master, are you patrolling the grounds?"

"No, not that. I had thought that I might as well put down the grave-marker here."

"What, someone's grave..."

Viine was surprised. Her eyes were trembling.

"Look, it's the slate we obtained the other day, the one with the bountiful mana. We got it appraised, remember?"

"Oh, that slate, huh?"

"It's big, so I could read the characters on that slate. And, the slate had names recorded...that touched my heart a bit. That's why I wanted to put up that gravestone over here."

"I see..."

Viine looked as if she wanted to say something.

It looks like she's thinking 『A grave in the courtyard is too much of a bad omen』 or 『We don't have such a custom in the underground world』.

While making a prediction about her thoughts on this...I operated my item box, and took out the slate with the engraved magic characters...and then set it up by burying it in the ground.

The characters carved on the slate...Anko Kudo, Keiko Tachibana, Katy Lombard, and John Maclain.

Former Japanese, namu.

I prayed in the Buddhistic form of holding up one hand.

Next, foreigners, amen.

I made the sign of a cross at my chest, praying in a Cristian style by joining together both hands.

"Master, those prayers are..."

"Relics of my past."

...This slate with the magic imprint still contained mana. That's why...I'll try to send in my mana as a test.

With that idea, I got close to the slate, and extended my left hand towards the grave-marker. While tracing its rough stone surface with my fingers, I poured mana into it.

——In the next moment, the characters on the slate's surface started to shine.

——Ooohh.

"Master, this is..."

"...It looks like this slate has activated because of my mana..."

The light transmitted by the slates' characters created an illusion on the ground in front of it. The illusion was transparent, but colorized.

It's two black-haired women, and a single, blond Caucasian woman, and the last one is a Caucasian man. Going by their names, Anko Kudo and Keiko Tachibana should be the two black-haired women? Katy Lombard and John Maclain are the two Caucasians? Or maybe they are natives?

While continuing to pour mana into the gravestone...I asked the reflected illusion, "You guys are...?"

"Oh? Where's this place?"

"...Our figures are transparent?"

While saying that, one of the Japanese-like women tried to touch herself.

"It looks like we're still caught in Eggworld Metal."

"Katy, is this place the same labyrinth world? You can tell?"

The Caucasian man had a large build and tousled hair. His face seemed grumpy. While turning a glare at his surroundings, he called the Caucasian woman Katy.

"Going by the detection of <Revision Demonic Eye>, it's not the New World of the labyrinth. It looks like we returned to the surface..."

"...Ooohhh, so we managed to come back, huh?"

The man's stabbing look softened. He relaxed his cheeks as well. He had a weapon reminding me of a saber dangle in the string attached to his sword belt at the waist.

"...It's being repelled by the black-haired man with the pretty black eyes and the pale-colored elf, which I've never seen before, over there. I can also see a small dragon. However, it's also being repelled by the nearby black cat...? It looks like there's a mountable magic beast there, too."

The woman called Katy scanned the vicinity while squaring her shoulders. She possessed alluring, mysterious eyes that seemed to have many stars in them and had mana dwell within. It looks like she was using some kind of skill, a demonic eye's ability. Her figure is transparent, but...it appears that she can still use her demonic eyes.

"...Umm, excuse me. This is my mansion."

"Mansion...it's certainly spacious...a courtyard?"

One of the Japanese women said while furrowing her eyebrows. She let her eyes wander across the surroundings.

Let's ask the most reasonable question for starters.

"...Does that mean that you guys are caught in this gravestone-like, magic slate?"

"Seems so. It appears we were sealed by a special spell or skill released by the Demon King-class Eggworld Metal."

Eggworld Metal, that one appeared in Ca-chan's, Liliza's, memory as well, didn't it?

At that point I turned my eyes to the smart Viine next to me.

"Master..." Viine muttered while casting a look at my new finger.

"You're probably right."

Then I looked back at the group of transparent figures.

"...Let's start with introductions for the time being. My name is Shuuya. The one next to me is Viine."

"Nice to meet you." Viine bowed her head.

"Thanks, my name is Anko Kudo as it's carved in over there."

She was a lovely woman with a faint smile reaching up to her eyes. I turned my look towards the Anko part of the names on the slate.

"I'm Keiko Tachibana."

The long-haired woman had a somewhat grim expression, unlike Anko-san.

"Katy Lombard."

"John Maclain."

All of them named themselves while bowing their heads.

"If you say New World, you mean the 15th floor, right?"

Once I asked this, Keiko-san stopped looking so grim, and spoke up, "Yes, right. As expected, you know of it. Is the number of the surface adventurers embarking to the 15th floor big by now?"

"The other day, one of the top clans crossed the tenth floor, and plunged into the 11th floor, I heard."

"Oh my...I don't know how much time has passed, but I wonder whether the adventurers on the surface haven't actually gotten worse."

"Keiko, I don't think so...the black-eyed man and the elf with the bluish-white skin we're talking with have repelled my demonic eyes, you know? Moreover, that cute cat over there as well..."

Katy-san explained while sharpening the look in her long and thin eyes with their conspicuously long eyelashes, similar to Helme, like a spearhead. However, only when she looked at Rollo, her expression softened, befitting that of a woman. I guess she likes cats.

"...I wonder if there had been any other people like that until now..." Anko-san muttered with her face changing from a smiling one to one dyed full of surprise.

"There hadn't been, it's probably the first time...on top, they know of the 15th floor."

Maclain-san agreed with her words, and glared my way.

"Beings of a different quality, repelling demonic eyes...huh? In such a case, I'm kinda curious as to who they might be..."

"Yep, me too."

Keiko-san and Anko-san nodded at each other.

"...I'm a simple spear lover. I just happened to hear about the New World. In the first place, what kind of place is that New World?"

Upon my genuine question, all the transparent people, including Anko-san, nodded at each other with expressions showing that they considered it possible. They seem to confirm amongst each other whether it's fine to talk about it...

Is it some kind of harmonizing?

I sensed an aura of bountiful experience, kinda like Mamani's team, from them.

"...The New World is a place with a civilization and a long history where various races such as humans, elves, and dwarves live, just like the surface. And it has continents, oceans, and a sky. In addition, it also possesses a cosmos with stars, a moon, and two suns. Well, since we haven't been to outer space, we don't know the details, though. Of course it's a place corrupted by demons and monsters."

Stars in the sky? So it's really a planet similar to Earth. It confirms my expectations, or rather, it's quite absurd..

I guess the 15th floor is a whole different world of its own. The 20th floor also has a size similar to that of a continent, but there were no stars in the sky of that world...

"And, I think you can already guess it, but we're adventurers. Our party's name is **【Club Ice】**. Originally we came from a huge city on the surface called Labyrinth City Pelneet."

"That party name..." Viine muttered.

She had apparently heard of their party name. I did as well.

In that case...these people are the party that crossed the tenth floor of the labyrinth before Kazane. They are people from at least more than a century ago. Maybe they are celebrities, albeit old ones, to those knowledgeable in history?

"...Okay, I see. We're in the Labyrinth City Pelneet right now."

"So it's the surface after all, eh? That means we came back."

"Though it doesn't change the fact that we're caught in stone..."

"Still, it's much better than being neglected inside the baggage of someone or something like that, right?"

After that their discussion continued for a while.

I guess I'll ask them about **【Club Ice】**.

"...Had **【Club Ice】** been active in the New World?"

"Yep, we studied various things in the New World. It was tough at first because the language was different, but after using a translation item, it became possible for us to be active over there without any issues. We continued to be active in the New World for a long time. We kept it a secret that we came down through the long, huge labyrinth, passing the tenth floor. However, when we tried to exterminate Eggworld Metal, who caused the people of some areas to suffer by changing them into gravestone-like stones, we suffered that attack I mentioned earlier during the fight." Anko-san explained to me.

"...What a misfortune. It's a space where you were imprisoned, but is there a consciousness in it?"

"No way. If there had been, we would have met it. If you consider our time in here which might as well be called eternal..." Keiko-san muttered next to Anko-san with a shadow overclouding her face.

"That makes sense, I guess...I'm sorry. Let me confirm just in case, but when I poured my mana into that slate, you manifested as transparent figures, but do you know the meaning behind that?"

"...John, Katy, do you have a clue?"

"Yeah, though it's just a guess..." While looking at me, John-san further added, "Your mana might have weakened the magic barrier in this slate."

"True, your mana reacting to the barrier means that it might be operated and influenced by mana possessing the darkness or space attributes." Katy stated after having examined it with a skill or her demonic eyes.

I guess it's related to my attributes.

"I see. Can I take it as you being released from that slate sooner or later if I continued giving it mana by touching it like this?"

"I don't know, but the possibility exists." Katy-san answered with a face that seemed to have some confidence.

"No way! I'd be happy if we can get out of here."

"Yahoo."

Anko-san and Keiko-san rejoiced after hearing Katy-san's words.

"Is that true, Katy?" John asked as well, with his blue eyes widening.

"Yep."

I'm sorry to do this when you're emotionally moved, but...

"Excuse me, but I also have various things I want to do. I don't have the time to always pour mana into this. It would be a period of time to the extent of me maybe being able to give it some mana sometimes, once in a while, okay?"

"That's only natural. Time has stopped for us. We can't tell you anything, and we don't intend to restrict your actions either. However, we'd be happy if you could use a little bit of your time...we'd like to place our hopes on your noble heart."

"Yes, it's as she says. But, if you can get us out of here, I'll do anything for you!" Keiko-san winked at me with those words.

Unlike Anko-san, that gap from her initially grim expression might be cute.

"Ooh, anything..."

"Master, you mustn't." Viine retorted right away.

"I know. I just went along with the joke."

"Oh my, it's no joke though. I feel bad for Viine-san, but I'd like you to understand that my feelings go at least that far."

"Haaa..." Viine looked at Keiko-san with a displeased face.

Well, since she didn't actually glare at her, she seems to feel sympathy for their situation of being imprisoned. I guess I will lastly ask about this as well.

"Lastly, are you former inhabitants of Earth?"

"...Indeed. As you can see, we're former Japanese and Americans. Going by your name, I suspect you're a former Japanese as well?" Katy-san answered while giving me a cool impression.

"Yes. Does that mean you're transferees? Or reincarnators?"

"Reincarnators. All of us grew up on the surface where you're right now. Of course, all of us had different names in the past, but we've been active for a long time after returning to our original names."

"Is that so?"

"...Yes. Also, it might be none of my business, but be careful if you know about transferees or reincarnators. In most cases they possess superior abilities like my eyes, and other unknown skills. It's also possible that they're apostles of gods. After all you never know what someone will do...if they get intoxicated by their own infinitely expanding desires after combining power and knowledge." Katy-san warned me.

If they get intoxicated, huh? I have to...also reflect about that part.

"...Thank you very much for your kind advice. I will try to apply it on myself, and aim to become even stronger, but...you might be right about it being simple to get drunk on power."

"Yeah...it's not like I was talking about you, but as long as you can honestly assess yourself, you can't really call it being intoxicated. Doesn't it mean you're using your power while being aware of it? You might be an owner of a pragmatic thinking towards danger. I wonder whether you like Machiavelli or similar philosophers."

Katy-san has not only demonic eyes, but is also a former psychoanalyst? She's right, I've read *Il Principe*.

"...You might be right about the danger part. My policy is to show no mercy to enemies, except for women."

"...Those are your true feelings, huh? I feel slightly relieved."

It's always been my true feelings since a while ago now, though. I don't think that she owns a mind reading ability like Eva, but...let's ask her without beating around the bush.

"Do you possess a power to read someone's mind?"

"No, I don't, so don't worry. This is just my nature."

"Well, even if you had such a power, you wouldn't really talk about it much, would you?"

"Yes, it's as you say."

Katy-san looked at me with a sharp glint in her eyes. What a dangerous woman... I don't think that the chill along my spine is just my imagination.

"...Haha, for there be anyone else besides John who can talk so frankly with Katy..." Anko-san smiled wryly.

I guess it's an insider between them. Since I don't really like that, "Okay then, I'm going to remove my hand from the slate. See you again."

"A——"

The instant I removed my hand, the light vanished from the characters on the slate. The illusions I had been talking with disappeared at the same time.

"So such things are possible as well, eh?" Viine commented after having stayed silent before.

"Right? It's a weird stone. If I continue sending mana into this slate...I feel like I will be able to release them one day."

"Leaving that aside, Master...about the previous "anything," I will gladly give you that."

"Yeah, I do know that."

Viine pulled a cute face. I sensed her obstinacy as a woman dwelling deep in her smiling eyes.