

Chapter 4 - It seems to be a Battle of Losts

'With all his strength is great,' Renya thought while dodging the bullet by leaping widely to the left. 'Given that guns are basically weapons that can send bullets flying in the direction their muzzle points at, you can somewhat predict a bullet's flight path as long as you know the muzzle's alignment. If you see through the timing of the trigger being pulled on top of that, just evading the bullet isn't that much of an issue. However, if it comes to anti-material rifles, just shifting your body a bit after perceiving the line of fire won't cut it. Since it has too much firepower as a weapon, barely dodging the bullet will still cause damage through the after-effect.'

Renya wasn't an idiot who would evade an attack, where getting grazed was already plenty dangerous, at hair's breadth. He had jumped widely while thinking all that, but feeling a solid touch and hearing a click at his landing point, he immediately leaped far back.

Half a beat later, flames explosively erupted from the ground. With the time to understand that he had stepped on a land mine being already a waste, he knocked down the approaching fragments after immediately drawing his katana, but got immediately attacked by another shot of the anti-material rifle as he escaped the range of the mine.

After Renya knocked down this bullet, using the back of his katana, without dodging while thinking that something was quite wrong here, he observed Kazuya who had been shooting his rifle from the hip without even looking through the scope.

There were several parts that appeared weird to Renya. First off, the bullets came straight at Renya despite Kazuya's way of using his sniper rifle was completely nuts. Moreover, despite using an anti-material rifle with a big caliber, a normal high school student to all appearances was not only easily handling such a heavy gun, but didn't care at all about the recoil at the moment of shooting.

Renya wasn't an expert on guns and thus he didn't know the exact details, but no matter how much countermeasures against recoil were applied, it'd be weird for the snipers in Renya's knowledge to adopt sniping positions of kneeling or laying down on the ground, if a rifle allowed one to hit a target while being shot from the hip.

Second, the planting points of the planted bombs were way too precise. Especially the land mines had been deployed as if Kazuya had completely seen through Renya's movements. Renya was about to get slightly depressed over the fact that an ordinary student could possibly understand all his actions to such an extent that it was plain as day, but even if he were to account for that, the buried bombs were still too precise.

"Considering that you told me that you'd let me go if I pulled back, you seem rather gung-ho about this, don't you?"

"It's because you're so uncontrollable that I've got to go at it with at least this much of an effort." While saying so, Kazuya casually dropped his rifle.

Dropping on the ground with a heavy, metallic thunk, the anti-material rifle vanished in the next instant after shining faintly.

"A materialization ability..."

"Next up's this guy!"

What appeared in Kazuya's aloft right hand, also accompanied by a faint light, was something that seemed rather short and stout for being called a gun. Setting it up by holding it in his arms, the visible gun barrel appeared to be awfully short.

"A P90 SMG!?"

"Oh, you know your stuff! That's a smart guy for you! However, it ain't called SMG, but PDW!" Kazu pulled the trigger while prattling on about insignificant trivia knowledge.

The bullets, which were spit out of its muzzle alongside a rhythmic firing sound, would completely run out in several dozen seconds according to Renya's knowledge. Renya, who dodged the bullets while running around and planning to aim for the instant of the magazine swap, attempted to close the distance in the moment the barrage stopped, but immediately jumped to the side when he spotted the object that had suddenly appeared at Kazuya's feet.

At almost the same time, the directional anti-personnel landmine, which had been planted at Kazuya's feet, scattered iron shrapnel as it exploded, devastating the spot where Renya had been moments ago.

"Somethin' like a katana is trash if I don't allow you to get close!"

Renya ground his teeth, thinking that the little bastard was getting carried away with the barrage that had started up again, but he definitely didn't feel like he could get close enough with just his katana. Going by Renya's analysis, Kazuya's cheat ability allowed him to materialize any weapon he knew of in a specified place.

'Since I doubt that a mere student knows about the precise structure of all those weapons, his ability is probably set up in a lean way of making the corresponding weaponry appear as long as he somewhat knows its name and shape. It's obvious that some kind of restriction has been attached to it since there were traces of the C4 detonation field having been set up in advance by burying the explosives, but even considering all that, you can still call it a rather handy ability if he can set up a weapon at his desired timing at his desired location.

"Going by my knowledge, stuff like a satellite cannon hadn't been implemented, though!?" Renya asked during a pause in the barrage while adding, "I feel like there existed the concept of a similar weapon though."

Kazuya made another directional landmine appear at his feet so as to hold back Renya while proudly answering, "I can create anything as long as it's a weapon I register as being usable by me!"

Even while feeling somewhat suspicious about Renya not approaching him, Kazuya readied his P90 once more, and unleashed yet another barrage.

While dealing with the shots by just dodging without even considering defending against them, Renya said with a fed-up voice, "Wouldn't things be done quickly if you simply created strategic

weapons then?"

"You an idiot!? If I created stuff like that, it'd be a pain to clean up afterwards, don't you think?"

Renya ended up positively surprised about Kazuya surprisingly possessing common sense at this part.

'Certainly, it was normal to hesitate on the usage of a weapon that would make it impossible for people to live in its effective area for several decades if created once, no matter how reliable its effectiveness might be.' But then again, someone like Renya was the kind of human who would think that Kazuya had still a long way to go if this much was enough to let him hesitate.

"Besides, it'd be crazy as fuck for a protagonist to destroy the princess' country after responded to her call for help, aight?"

"Just who has actually summoned that protagonist or whatsoever? The demon king?"

Renya didn't really care whether the weapon was called SMG, PDW, or whatever, but it was much easier to deal with than the anti-material rifle. The power of the bullets fell remarkably short while the preamble that the bullets would be fired in the direction of the muzzle didn't change at all. It could be used to lay a screen because of its quick firing, but it wasn't as though there was that much of a difference between dodging its rapid fire and a slashing attack over a bigger distance. For Renya it was nothing he wasn't familiar with.

"It looks like the one summoning me was the demon king, but it was god who gave me my cheat power."

"The god of the demons?"

"No, no. They introduced themselves as the god of this world."

Renya felt like he simultaneously heard two screams claiming this to be untrue in his mind, but he readily ignored them. In the first place, Renya didn't suspect that little goddess or her subordinate angels to be behind this. If they, or rather, those girls felt like hurting him, they'd just need to deprive him of his powers, give those to someone else, and have that person attack Renya. And even without putting so much effort into this, Renya believed that the little goddess should be able to erase him in an instant if she felt like it.

While experiencing an auditory hallucination, telling him, "I-It's not like that," Renya judged that the god mentioned by Kazuya had to be the guy referred to as demon supervisor by those who were the reason for him coming to the demon country.

'If there's something that's outside expectation, it's probably the fact that the demon supervisor had an ability allowing them to grant abilities somewhat similar to mine,' Renya assessed. 'Since it looks like Losts have fallen into this world in rather big numbers over time, it seems like they can somehow use the summoning spell to call people here intentionally.'

"What a diligent god. It almost wakes the wish in me for the god of our world to follow their example."

'Leaving aside whether the action itself is right or wrong, the god of this world or whatever they are is far more hard-working as they're doing their work by making various moves', Renya judged, and Kazuya appeared to have the same opinion.

"No kiddin'! If our god had simply summoned elves or some such, our world would've become a fantasy world too!"

"You're quite hung up on this...if it becomes impossible to distinguish reality and illusion, you wouldn't be able to tell apart what's fantasy and what's not, right?"

"Oh, fair point!"

Renya casually dodged another barrage. He wondered whether Kazuya would soon realize that his barrages didn't bear much meaning, but since their absence would allow Renya to get close, Kazuya probably couldn't afford to ease up on this.

"If you can create any weapon you know about, why not go with something like a tank?"

"You think I'd bring out a tank without any infantry to man it!?" Kazuya quickly shot down Renya's suggestion.

This caused Renya to elevate his assessment of him a bit since Kazuya didn't seem to be that much of a boundless idiot as he had expected. If he could have gotten him to go along with the suggestion and board some kind of tank, Renya would have baked him with fire magic from outside, but it seemed as if things wouldn't proceed so conveniently.

"What about a fighter plane?"

"I hate high places!"

'That's regrettable,' Renya shrugged his shoulders. A fighter plane was a bit of an overkill to take on a single person, but since the pilot would almost definitely die if it got shot down, a fighter plane would be easier to handle for Renya, who could use magic arts, than plain barrages of bullets.

"How about you bring your friends along? That SMG, PDW or whatever thing won't be able to bring me down, you know?"

"I'm all that's needed to deal with a bastard like you! The other two are completely unnecessary for this!"

'So, three people have been summoned in total. I'm truly thankful for him being such a blabbermouth to honestly divulge information that's of importance for our side', Renya laughed in his mind without showing it on his face. 'It'd be godsend if we knew what abilities they were given before getting summoned here, but I kinda doubt that he's that much of an idiot to tell me all that.'

In front of Renya, Kazuya violently threw the P90 in his hands on the ground.

"Fuck, this ain't goin' nowhere!"

Apparently he had finally noticed that the P90 couldn't keep up with Renya's movements. As Renya wondered whether he'd give up and go back, Kazuya's body was wrapped up in a faint light, and another weapon materialized. Just when Renya started to ask himself what would come out next, he saw a huge, unrefined gun with six barrels tied together appear at Kazuya's waist, causing Renya to look up to the sky in sheer disbelief.

"A M134 Heavy Machine Gun...that's nothing you'd aim at people..."

"Haha! The number of bullets and firepower of this guy is incomparable to the peashooters from before!"

Even if Renya's abilities might be far removed from any human standard, there was no way that he'd be able to deal with a barrage of 4,000 shots per minute with a single katana. You could say he'd be in quite a bind if Kazuya was capable of handling the machine gun decently.

Though, that only applied if he could actually handle it decently.

"Hmm?"

Renya saw that Kazuya could operate it more or less. Kazuya pointed the muzzle of the machine gun, which should be unthinkable because no human would normally be able to suppress the gun's weight and its recoil, at Renya, and used the machine gun, which looked like it was spraying fire out of its muzzle because of the bullets' high speed, as a weapon without being trashed around by the recoil. But, Kazuya's capability wasn't at a level allowing him to freely turn the machine gun around.

That gun wasn't a weapon intended to be held in the hands of an individual to begin with, but because there existed many scenes in movies and similar where individuals actually held it, people generally misunderstood how the machine gun actually worked.

"You're not getting a lock on me with this thing, are you?" Compared to the barrages by the P90, this one was even easier to dodge for Renya.

The barrage of the M134 couldn't keep up with his movements at all. Certainly, its number of bullets and firepower was in a completely different league than the P90, but since the bullets didn't even come close to flying towards their target, it was no more than a noisy device continuing to flashily shoot at empty space.

"Fuck it! Stop scurryin' around from one place to another!"

"I don't really think that I'm moving around that much, though...are you telling me, the other two are also at your level?"

"Shut the fuck up! As if I'd answer that!"

Having obtained rough information about people having been summoned, the person who gave them their abilities, the number of summoned people, and moreover the ability of Kazuya, Renya gathered his thoughts while gazing at the barrage that couldn't catch up to him at all.

'If possible I'd like to also gain some information about the abilities of the other two, but as might be expected, that'd be asking for too much.' Renya didn't know whether Kazuya actually knew about their abilities in the first place, but he didn't seem to intent on telling him, going by his earlier light questioning.

"In that case, I've got a final question." Once Renya asked while pouring a faint amount of bloodlust into his voice as he lowered his voice and placed a hand on his katana's hilt, Kazuya stopped moving, and eased the finger on the trigger.

Renya believed that it might also be fine to use that chance to attack Kazuya, but desisted from doing so since he had to at least ask this one question which he hurled at Kazuya while staring at Kazuya's movements.

"You're a student, right? Don't you feel like returning to your former world? If you actually want to go back, I think that it'd somehow be possible to arrange for that."

After being pulled over here without understanding a thing, and being fed lies on top of that, Kazuya fought on the side of the demons. It wasn't as if Renya had enough sympathy to actually pity Kazuya who had been easily deceived, but he wouldn't be able to kill him as long as he didn't at least make sure of this in advance.

For just an instant Kazuya's finger trembled as it rested on the trigger while Renya waited for the answer to his question.



"I can...go back?" Kazuya muttered dumbfounded as if having heard something unbelievable, and let go of the heavy machine gun, causing it to drop to the ground with a thud.

While watching it turn into light particles and vanish as Kazuya apparently stopped focusing on its materialization, Renya nodded, "There's that goddess who sent me here. If you go by her words, she's apparently the boss of the goddess or whatever who dragged you into this world, so I believe she should be able to somehow do something about this?"

It wasn't as though Renya doubted the words of that little goddess, but he didn't have any intention to simply swallow everything she said either.

'In the first place, if she calls herself a superior goddess, she should manage her subordinates properly. At the point when she's incapable of that, it's evident that her administrative ability ought to be called into question. Still, going by the fact that she labels herself like that, I think that she should have at least that much power at hand.

"Though I won't be able to contact her, right?"

"I'll get her to contact you if you come to our side."

Upon Renya's reply, accompanied by him muttering in his mind that he didn't use that ability overly often as a retort, Kazuya raised his voice, obviously not believing Renya's statement.

"You're lyin'! Otherwise you'd have gone back a long time ago, no!?"

Even while believing that his doubt was very reasonable, Renya had already prepared an answer. While smiling bitterly, Renya replied, "As you know...I exhausted my life span over there. I don't know how you were summoned to this world, but my former body was cremated and buried."

Since he now had a young body, Renya felt like it'd be possible for him to go back if he wanted to, but even if he tried to return while keeping in mind his current self, he'd be stumped as to what to do over there at this point. That was yet another reason why Renya didn't intend to return to his former world. Given that he possessed no memories, Renya didn't know how much of an ability his former self possessed.

However, if he returned in his current state, he'd be a person with supernatural powers, to put it nicely. Alternatively, in the worst case, he might be treated as a simple monster. Renya wasn't aware whether the world over there had reached a point allowing people to use mana like in this world, but even if he disregarded that part, Renya's current physical abilities would go far beyond the best in the world across the board.

Renya was confident that he'd be able to set new world records in most track-and-field sports, be it short or long distance running, high jump, or long jump. In addition, he should be able to set new world records in all recorded sports. Even when it came to martial arts, he would likely be able to treat the world champions in judo, karate, wrestling and many other martial arts which he had no experience with, let alone his own discipline of kendo, like children. Even if he took on military forces outside of sports, he should be able to assassinate the leaders of all nations while unconcernedly humming a melody in the act.

"There's no way that a monster like me would be able to return to our former world, is there?"

As Renya revealed a smile that mocked himself, Kazuya apparently grasped what Renya was trying to tell him.

"That's..."

"Besides, my family register has already been deleted, I'm sure. Even if I went back there now, I'm pretty certain that I won't find a place to call home anymore."

"Can I...can I really, really go back?" While asking with a trembling voice, Kazuya extended a hand as if asking for help, and walked towards Renya with an unsteady gait.

Since it'd be pitiful to give him false hope, Renya turned his focus towards the little goddess believing that he should confirm with her first by getting in touch with her. Just when Renya was about to reach out to the goddess while thinking that it felt too odd to actually describe it as calling out to her, Kazuya in front of him vanished from his consciousness for an instant.

"Just kiddin'." A levelheaded voice somewhat filled with sneer.

When Renya pulled back his awareness to the movements of Kazuya in front of him, Kazuya's right hand grasped a glowing, black mass of metal, holding it out in Renya's direction. At the moment Renya realized that it was a pistol, two bullets were loudly spat out of its muzzle.

"Guuh!?"

They weren't aimed at a small target like Renya's head, but instead his abdomen which wouldn't move much even if Renya evaded in a hurry.

The bullets, which were fired from a relatively close proximity, usually should be avoidable at this range even for Renya. But, as Renya had been focusing his consciousness on contacting the little goddess, and moreover just started to believe that Kazuya actually wanted to go back to his former world, his movements were too late to dodge the bullets at this distance.

Renya, who had two bullets drilled into his abdomen without even the time to twist his body, groaned lowly, and immediately went down on his knees while suppressing the location of the impacts with his right arm.

While cackling madly, Kazuya thrust the gun he had just now used to shoot at Renya's head, which Renya had apparently lowered because of the pain assailing him.

"Are you an idiot to fall for such crap?"

"...So you...didn't want to go back?" Renya asked while not lifting his face.

Kazuya laughed loudly at that question, answering, "You retarded? Even if I went back to my former world, only boring days would await me there, you know? In this world I can use my cheat, and as long as I kill you, I'll be honored as a hero by everyone! I'll be able to have my fun with that pretty princess! As if I'd go back to that shitty world when I can have such a stimulating life over here thanks to my peerless ability to use modern weaponry in a fantasy world!"

"Peaceful, normal days...that's hard to obtain and precious...I believe?"

"You can have your fill of that! I mean, if you croak here after being shot by me, you'll be able to spend those beloved peaceful days of yours in the other world, whether you like it or not!" Kazuya curved his lips upwards and bluntly declared full of composure, while pointing the pistol at Renya's head with his finger placed on the trigger. "A Colorado Kill of two shots in the belly and two in the head. No matter what abilities you fucker might possess, you'll definitely kick the bucket from that."

"As long as you manage to hit me, right?" Renya's words were filled with a calm, freezing bloodlust.

While terrified by that excessive coldness, Kazuya saw a silver flash sweep right beneath the wrist of his right hand as he tried to pull the trigger. Before his brain even registered that he had been attacked, his body, boosted by body strengthening, retreated to dodge the attack.

Kazuya succeeded in barely dodging the silver flash that was swung down after reverting its trajectory from being swung up beforehand while limiting the damage to a shallow cut on his chest, but he had to witness how only the hand gripping the pistol, which had been slashed first, fell down towards the ground where he stood a moment ago as if watching some comedy act.



"Drawing and cutting in one stroke while kneeling? That's what you'd call iai, right?" Renya said while standing up into a seigan stance.

At that moment, finally, Kazuya's right hand flopped down to the ground, and Kazuya himself was assailed by an intense pain as blood sprayed out of the cross-section.

"Iih!?! Gaaah!?"

"You see, these clothes are a special make by Frau, and you can easily compare them to the Kevlar of our former world. It makes breathing a bit hard, but there ain't no way for little crap like pistol bullets to penetrate it."

Renya sheathed his katana and dusted off his clothes, causing two warped bullets to drop to the ground with a clattering.

Undoubtedly Renya had been attacked in an unguarded moment. Renya had believed that Kazuya wanted to go back to his world until he actually shot at him. After all, Kazuya was a victim in Renya's eyes. He had been dragged into this world against his own wishes, and was demanded to fight Renya under the pretext of some kind of slogan. He was a victim who got screwed over on many accounts.

That's why Renya thought Kazuya was going along with the possibility of going back, but it was quite clear that he had erred on this quite dramatically.

"You see, I don't really want to describe it with the term of 'nowadays' youth'."

"F-Fuck..."

Kazuya tried to somehow stop the blood gushing out of his right arm by pinning it down with his left hand, but it was next to impossible to stop the bleeding of a wound that involved completely losing one's hand by just holding it down with the other hand. While Kazuya's face twisted due to the continuously occurring pangs of intense pain, he glared at Renya with eyes full of hatred.

"How dare you do that to my right hand!"

"I don't think you've got any right to complain after shooting two bullets at my abdomen first, though?"

Renya didn't reveal it, but he actually felt quite a shudder when it happened. Certainly, Renya wore Frau's special combat clothing, and its toughness was guaranteed by Frau herself. But, it wasn't as though Frau knew the force of gunshots as there didn't exist anything comparable in this world. And yet, until Renya got shot, he optimistically believed that it might work out one way or another, even if it'd hurt a lot, as long as he had his recovery skill, and operated under the baseless assumption that it wouldn't lead to a fatal injury either way.

In reality, Frau's clothes negated the pistol bullets' penetrative force almost completely. Not only didn't allow her clothing the bullets to pierce through the fiber, but even the impacts from the shots were limited to the level of a slightly stronger body blow by a male adult.

"You shithead...that ain't the same at all. I'll fuckin' slaughter you!"

"I think you should consider the possibility of getting slaughtered before worrying about slaughtering others, though?"

The distance Kazuya had leaped back to evade the return slash of Renya was just a few steps away from the spot where he had been when he shot at Renya. However, for Renya it was a distance that might as well not exist in the first place. And even if Kazuya were to be able to materialize weaponry while his bleeding didn't show any signs of stopping, it'd be impossible for him to use them skilfully.

"Do you understand that you're cornered here?"

As soon as Renya took a step forward, Kazuya retreated the same distance. After taking one more step forward, Renya slowly bent down and picked up Kazuya's right hand. Pinching it with his left hand, he shook it around.

"You don't really believe that I'm going to forgive you for shooting at my abdomen, do you?"

Renya casually tossed Kazuya's hand away, just for it to dance through air and fall to the ground in four pieces. The katana he should have drawn just now, looked like it had never left its scabbard. Due to the completely invisible slashing attack, Kazuya's face paled for a completely different reason than his constant blood loss.

After having completely destroyed the hand that might have been stuck back on the arm if Kazuya had picked it up and applied healing on it, Renya kept walking.

"Have you resolved yourself?"

"Kuuh...stop..."

If nothing were to happen, those should become Kazuya's final words in this world. He extended his bloodstained left hand after stopping to hold down his wound, appealing to Renya to not come any closer.

Without minding that, Renya advanced and was just about to slash up diagonally. But someone jumped between the two men, and fended off Renya's slash.

"Oh?"

"Tsk."

The one being surprised was Renya, whereas the one clicking his tongue was the intruder. Renya widened his eyes after seeing the thing that blocked his attack while causing sparks to scatter between both parties.

"A katana?"

The intruder's whole body was covered by a cloak with the hood lowered so that the face remained

invisible. The clothes peeking out beneath the cloak were something similar to a khaki military uniform. The legs were covered by something like boots up to the knees.

Even more so than the clothes which gave Renya the impression of having seen them somewhere before, the item, which had blocked his attack, made Renya perplexed as he wondered whether such a weapon actually existed in this world.

To Renya it looked like something he'd call a saber. It had a plain, round guard, and a black, matted hilt. Even the blackened scabbard hanging at their waist was of an extremely frugal make. And yet, the blade, which had stopped Renya's blow, was clearly a very sharp one. It also didn't look like it got damaged in any way after blocking Renya's katana which had always one-sidedly damaged the opponents' weapons, even when facing a great sword handled by a demon.

"The second one?"

As Renya asked since he predicted that the newcomer wasn't an inhabitant of this world, going by their clothes and weaponry, the answer of the intruder sounded aloof and so calm that you wouldn't believe that they had exchanged slashes just now.

"Who knows. I, for once, don't know how many others besides me exist." It was the voice of a young man.

Due to his voice that got stuck in his ears for some reason, Renya cracked a joke, "Oh well, I guess we'll just go with you being the third then?"

"I don't really care about the order you assign to me."

Renya evaded the sweeping kick, unleashed by the young man while answering, by jumping backwards. While alertly thrusting his saber out at Renya, who had widened the distance while strengthening his wariness of this mysterious intruder, the young man said to Kazuya without looking back, "Hurry up and get lost. You're in the way."

"Shut up...but, thanks for the help." Kazuya honestly thanked the newcomer despite insulting him at first.

While suppressing the blood which was still dripping out of his wound, he withdrew while making sure to stay behind the intruder. Renya planned to go after him to finish the job if there was an opportunity to do so, but unable to spot even the slightest opening in the guard of the invader in front of his eyes, he missed the timing to slay Kazuya in the end.

"What a troublesome guy..."

"The same back at you. Well, I guess I'll have you keep me company for a bit until that manages to get away."

Renya was positively surprised that there was someone among the enemies who possessed the admirable disposition to serve as shield for the sake of letting his ally escape, but without doing anything about the intruder in front of him, Renya didn't think that he'd be able to chase after Kazuya either. Seeing how Renya accepted his lot, and readjusted his katana, a bit of happiness

crept into the presence of the intruder.



Renya was the one making the first move. It wasn't a slash, but a thrusting technique boosted by a charge. As soon as he saw that it'd get dodged, he immediately flipped his wrist, altering the thrust into a side sweep. Making sure to stay hot on the heels of the intruder who had evaded his attack with a backstep, Renya unleashed a three chain-combo consisting of a descending vertical sword attack, a diagonal slash from the left, and a diagonal slash from the right within the time span of a breath.

The intruder dealt with this by evading the first and second attack, and parrying the third attack by putting blade to blade. Switching towards locking swords, he pushed back Renya's body with sheer strength.

Unable to resist, Renya temporarily opened up some distance, quickly sheathed his katana, and muttered with deep surprise while staying in a battou [efn_note]Battou is what Ruruonin Kenshin always used. Quickly drawing a sword and slashing at the same time. No English term exists for this style since Western swords didn't allow for such techniques[/efn_note] posture, "For me to be unable to cut through..."

Within his own capacity, Renya had started to realize the abnormality of his katana. He had confidence in his ability to cut through almost anything, if he added his current techniques to its sharpness.

However, the intruder didn't allow Renya's katana to dig into the blade of his own katana.

For Renya it had been very easy to cut into the blade of the great sword, used by someone like the demon general he had fought before, albeit not being able to completely cut through it in one attack.

"That means the abilities of our weapons are equal, huh?"

The invader shook his head at Renya's muttered question, "No, not at all. Mine falls behind a tiny bit."

As soon as he said the last word, the intruder went on the offense. Countering his attack, Renya unleashed his battou. On that occasion, he felt through the hand gripping the hilt how his blade dug into his opponent's blade, albeit only a bit.

Renya believed that he might be able to completely cut through at this rate, but in the next moment he felt a sensation he had never felt so far, namely, how his opponent's blade forced his katana's blade back out for as far as it had dug in. Although he felt somewhat surprised, he decided to postpone thinking about this for the moment, and tried to push his blade further into the enemy's blade.

In response, the intruder parried Renya's force by tilting his blade without even trying to enter a contest of strength, then jumped back after pulling back his blade, which got one-sidedly whittled

down while scattering sparks.

Without forcing a pursuit, Renya fixedly stared at his right hand which clasped the drawn katana.

"Repairing that katana of yours is your cheat?"

Renya couldn't spot a single trace of the cut in his opponent's blade nor the whittling, which occurred when both katana ground against each other, when the intruder readied his katana again. Due to his opponent's blade sparkling as if brand new, Renya analyzed that his opponent's skill might be to repair the weapons he possessed.

"You sure are looking closely, but I wonder if your conclusion is right."

It wasn't an answer to his question. It meant his opponent had no intention to reveal his hand. Renya grimaced as this guy was a trickier opponent than Kazuya who had escaped moments ago.

'But, if I assume that my opponent's skill is to automatically repair his weapon, I can deal with that,' believing so, Renya powerfully stepped forward, placed the second hand on his katana's hilt, obviously not planning to use chain attacks at all, and released a descending vertical sword attack with all his power. With him strengthening his body and his blade through mana at the same time, a dazzlingly white slash came down at the intruder's head.

Initially the intruder moved to block with his own katana, but apparently perceiving within a moment that he wouldn't be able to parry this slash, he evaded by widely leaping to the right. Because his response was delayed as he had considered blocking for an instant, the tip of the intruder's katana met with the trajectory of the pure white slash in the middle of his jump, resulting in a small part being completely cut off.

With just a tiny amount of a sword's point gone, the wielder's perception of the combat distance would go amiss.

The invader's katana, which was thrust out under Renya's nose just as he tried to go for the kill after perceiving this as a golden opportunity, recovered its missing part in an instant, returning to its former length.

"Uoohh!?"

If a shortened blade were to return to its original length, it'd produce an effect as if it had extended. The intruder slashed at Renya, who had stumbled in the middle of thrusting, but Renya dodged this by jumping back. Then he held up his katana in order to constrain any follow-up attacks.

"See, it's inferior, right?" Without even attempting to chase after Renya, the intruder fixed his stance.

The part of the blade that had been cut off crumbled into light particles at his feet, and vanished as if dissolving.

The fact that his opponent hadn't forcibly followed up even after he lost his balance told Renya that the intruder had absolutely no intention to defeat him here, just buying time for Kazuya's escape as

he had said at the beginning.

"Could you at least tell me your name? It looks like you know my name, but I don't know yours."

'It appears it'll require quite a bit of effort to kill this intruder who possesses an abnormal ability and yet only aims to stall for time, without any intention to kill or get killed,' Renya assessed, switching to conversation.

Defeating an opponent who solely devoted himself to escaping was fairly difficult even if there was a considerable difference in ability. Of course Renya didn't shirk on his preparations to cut his opponent down in an instant if he spotted an opportunity, but somehow he couldn't believe that he'd run into such an opportunity with this opponent.

"Name, huh...? Let's see...you can call me Karen, if you want."

"Karen, right. Are you also the type of person who believes in the story that we're persecuting the demons?"

"Take a guess."

Renya frowned at this evasive reply.

'Unlike Kazuya, the swordsman calling himself Karen somehow doesn't seem to believe in the setting that they should protect the demons from an invasion by demon-shunning humans. But, in that case, it still leaves the question why Karen assists the demons unanswered.

"A battle maniac?"

"I don't hate swordsmanship, but I'm happy with preparing food and eating it."

If he was someone with the troublesome trait of liking fighting over eating three meals, a battle against Renya would be a truly delightful event for him, and it'd be possible to think of him lending the demons a hand to achieve that goal. But, considering Karen's reply, that train of thought lacked persuasiveness.

In such a case, the question just why he was supporting the demons' side still remained completely unsolvable.

"You found some cute girl among the demons?"

"I don't feel like moving out of affection for a woman."

"Money or status?"

"Now listen, you can't eat either of those..."

It didn't seem to Renya as if he was telling lies, and since he fully understood that part, Renya ended up intensifying his questioning. This situation, where he couldn't spot a proper, underlying logic, caused Renya to get slightly irritated.

"Is it that strange for me to help the demons?"

Renya honestly nodded at the question turned at him from underneath the hood, "Going by assumption, you have been summoned from the same world as me and the guy called Kazuya, right? If you don't believe in the silly story of the demons being ostracized by humans, I don't see any reason for you to deliberately support a race responsible for playing the villain's part such as the demons."

"Do you happen to know a single whimsical man who would deliberately march into the domain of the race responsible for playing the villain's part to search for a single woman of said race?"

Once being confronted with such a retort, Renya lacked the words to respond with. Due to Renya being even unable to frown as Karen's comment struck home way too precisely, Karen leaked a throaty laughter from underneath the hood.

Renya felt that it wasn't a sarcastic laughter. It appeared to be a laughter of genuine amusement. That's how his laughter sounded to Renya.

"What an honest guy you are. In response to your honesty, I'll also answer you honestly, I guess. The reason why I'm helping the demons is curiosity. If I'm on this side, I can fight against you."

"Aren't you a battle maniac then?"

"It's slightly different. I want to avoid fighting anyone besides you."

Renya became puzzled because of this strangely limited fixation on himself. As far as he could remember, he had absolutely no memory of having encountered any opponents telling him that they only wanted to fight against him while hiding their faces.

"Some kind of fateful connection from my previous life?"

Renya believed that the reason might be found somewhere in the memories that had been erased. However, his speculation was quickly denied.

"That's...also wrong. Which reminds me, your memories were erased, weren't they? Well, even if you possessed all of your memories, you still wouldn't know me."

The only ones knowing about the erasure of Renya's memories were beings related to that little goddess. Renya believed that it shouldn't be information known by the supervisors of this world. But, since he also felt like that little goddess would treat information fairly loosely as far as he could judge her, it'd be pointless for him to worry from where the information had leaked, and moreover, it wasn't information that would trouble him even if it got leaked.

Rather than that, the issue was the opponent in front of Renya. He was no battle maniac nor did he have some fateful connection with him from Renya's previous life, and yet he insisted on targeting Renya alone. Renya had no clue about anyone like that.

Thinking it over while keeping an eye on his opponent so as to not show any openings, Renya finally reached a certain conclusion, and voiced it out.

"Are you a stalker?"

"...Stop treating others like criminals." Strong disgust was blended into his voice.

Since Renya couldn't see his face as it was hidden, he couldn't guess his opponent's expression, but Renya was sure that his face was just as disgusted as his voice.

"Violation of the Swords and Firearms Control Law..."

"What's that!?"

Retorting, Karen suddenly realized that Renya was spreading both arms. And neither of those arms held a katana.

"Wh-!?"

"<Small Fireball>!"

A reckless action of letting go of his weapon and spreading both arms while in front of an enemy. What flew out of Renya's hands, targeting Karen who expressed his feelings of disbelief were countless fireballs backed by Renya's huge amount of mana.

Renya gestured wiping the sweat on his forehead as if having done a fine job due to Karen being swallowed by a swarm of fireballs that struck down on him with a force like water gushing out of a bucket when turned upside down. It didn't go as far as registering it as a secret trick. Renya had simply tossed his katana inside his inventory, causing it to suddenly vanish out of his hands.

Karen being surprised by that without noticing the truth behind Renya's action meant that the Losts on the demons' side hadn't been granted an inventory, which was called void storage in this world.

Karen froze for a moment, wasting time on being surprised. And being able to use that small opening, Renya hit Karen with the whole lot of his <Small Fireball> spells. The reason why he chose <Small Fireball> with its low firepower stemmed from him intuitively understanding that a big spell would get blocked in addition to the spell's quick activation time.

Given that Renya managed to release a huge amount of <Small Fireballs>, even if each and every single instance possessed a low firepower, he could hope for several shots to hit, even if Karen was capable of cutting spells down like Renya could with his katana. There was also the option of evasion if defense was impossible, but Karen's reaction was delayed by his surprise over the sudden appearance of a vast amount of fireballs in front of his eyes.

As a result, he got directly swallowed by the onslaught of <Small Fireballs>, despite managing to defend against a certain extent of them by deploying some kind of defensive barrier.

For a short while Renya continued to shoot <Small Fireballs> into the raging flames, even after Karen wasn't visible anymore, believing that it'd surely be nice if he could have killed Karen with just this much, but then he saw a pillar of light suddenly shooting up into the sky.

The place it was launched from was quite a distance away from where Renya was standing. The

light ball, which was launched into the air while only leaving a white trail in its wake, couldn't be called an attack in any way, and vanished as if burning out after continuing to glow for a short time.

Thinking that it might be some kind of signal flare, Renya sensed something terribly cold the next instant, and immediately jumped aside while stopping to use his magic art.

As if following Renya, a drawn sword cut sideways through the space, where Renya had been moments ago, and Karen became visible within the raging flames, that had disappeared with Renya having stopped to use his magic art, in a stance of having slashed sideways with white smoke rising from all over his body.

"You plunged into that random shooting of fireballs while resisting the spells?"

"It must have been a surprise, right?" Karen said boastfully.

Although he had passed through such a sea of flames, not a single burn was visible on his clothes, and the hooded robe covering his whole body hadn't been burned either.

"I'm surprised. ...It's just a surprise, but still, I'm honestly surprised."

"Good grief, what would you have done if you had burned my only good suit..." Karen grumbled while dusting off his clothes that were still smoking.

It was a sight that would wake the urge in anyone watching this to retort, "Who cares about that...first tell me just why you didn't get burned, let alone turning into charcoal?"

"Well, whatever. It looks like Kazuya managed to get away. We'll leave it at that."

"You think I'll let you get away?" Renya readied his katana anew after retrieving it out of his inventory.

Apparently understanding just how the katana had vanished earlier due to Renya action, Karen looked very envious, and then said while grinning broadly, "I have a proper reason for holding you back here, you know?"

"What?"

"You see, it's about the demon woman a whimsical human man came to look for. You know that three of us have been summoned, and yet there's only two of us here. If it's you, you should understand what that means, right?"

Being told so, Renya realized that he didn't know what the second or third Lost, who wasn't here right now, was currently doing. In short, it meant that a Lost was heading towards the target of Renya's group while they were being held back here.

In other words, "You guys, Emil..."

"Take a guess? I won't chase if you run away. I also need to pick up Kazuya and heal him. Still, if you don't feel like letting me escape, it can't be helped. I'll have you keep me company until the

very last moment."

"...I'll withdraw."

While quietly clicking his tongue, Renya sheathed his katana, and slowly backed off from Karen, making sure to not expose his back, while alertly keeping an eye on Karen's every action. Karen waved a hand in an extremely carefree manner at Renya.

"It'd be nice if you get there in time, but I think it should work out one way or another if you hurry. I won't do anything so boorish as attacking you from behind, so hurry up and go, okay?"

Even though Karen's promise completely lacked any basis to be relied on, Renya was certain for some reason that Karen definitely wouldn't attack him from behind. Hence, Renya immediately spun around at the same time as Karen voiced out those words, and without looking back anymore, he started to run in the direction of the camp where Shion and the others were waiting for him.