

Chapter 329 - Goose in the Azure Sky and Time Baku

I cling to Rollodeen's back while holding onto her soft fur as she raises the speed. My face can feel her throbbing pulse. The two rein tentacles stuck to my neck transmit to me just how happy she is.

"Nn, nyaoooooo." She roars.

Ahaha, Rollo~ You must be truly enjoying this.

She pulls off cutthroat maneuvers °exactly because she has me°, who trusts her, on her back. But, I can fully understand my partner for being overjoyed from the bottom of her heart...

Alright, cut across diagonally upwards, just like this, as if imitating the motion of <Water Wheel Slash>.

I pass on those feelings to Rollodeen. She doesn't change her spiraling flight trajectory, but she accelerates all of a sudden, making me feel the wind pressure's force with my body.

A blue sky without a single cloud spreads out in front of my eyes — and the sunlight is more dazzling than a while ago. It's a bundle of light that might have an adverse affect on my irises, like a gadget similar to a chandelier's glass being used to focus the light on one spot. Such sun rays pour down on Rollodeen's whole body with an intensity as if to burn it down. Rollodeen's fur is black. Usually she should feel so hot that making sunny-side-up fried eggs on her would be child's play.

However, in response to that, Rollodeen emits dazzling mana particles from her whole body, engulfing it in something similar to Earth's Van-Allen-Belt. Moreover, beneath that layer is yet another mana layer. Thanks to these two layers, the wind and heat are being blocked off, making me feel comfortable and warm right now.

Suddenly a gust of wind, which must have slipped through Rollodeen's mana particle barrier, brushes my face. Seeing how we're currently very high up in the sky, I suppose the wind has gained in strength.

At that moment, I let go of Rollodeen's back, and look behind me. Her long tail is moving just like a snake.

Is she using it to steer?

Mana particles gush out in all directions from the tail's end. The trail of mana in the wake of her tail looks beautiful. Vapor trail, a meteor's retinue, or a trail of diamond dust - it's difficult to describe the mana particle trail with an allegory. The particles disperse with a speed that's hard to trace even with Magic Observation.

The final moments of sparklers? Yep, the mana particles continue vanishing like a fleeting memory.

——How °very pretty°.

After lightly tapping Rollodeen's back as if to caress her black fur, I shift my look back to the front.

A strong headwind makes my bangs sway. With a feeling of riding the wind, I spread my arms to the sides. And then, while deeply inhaling through the nose, I widely bend my body backwards, straightening my spine as much as possible. The air in my lungs is ejected with a piercing force.

A super pleasant wind...a single goose in the azure sky. That's the very reason why she's a divine beast.

——Rollo, it's fine to relax a bit on the maneuvers. Let's enjoy this wonderful, azure sky.

"——Nya." Rollodeen lifts the back of her head, replying.

She looks like an indomitable, horse-type divine beast, but deep down she's still my cute Rollo. While gently stroking her, I keep peering down at the landscape beneath.

Even when I returned to this forest, I was gazing at it while chatting with everyone, but...it really looks like a pot's lid from above. The appearance of the Whirlpool Forest of Demonic Fog's dense mist squirming about gives me the same impression as before, but I get the feeling like it's an assembly of terrifying typhoons similar to Jupiter's Great Red Spot.

However, the sky above the fog is extremely pleasant. As I'm enjoying such a mood...I apologize to Tiny Orbital-kun, who's stored inside my item box, since I won't use him for a while.

Hmm, while stretching once more, I suddenly wonder whether this azure sky...has a pretty color reminding me of Rebecca's eyes...

She's a high elf, and a descendant of the Blue Flame God. Originally she had aimed for a combat occupation as some sort of Magic Painter, but now she's studying the Kulbul Boxing style, which fits her duty as straight man.

She was also related to the ladybug necklace I found in the underground... Her father talked about the ancient Blue Flame God, but that god was obviously a derivation of the Light God or the Light Spirit. Maybe she simply got affected by my light attribute.

And then, as if following karma, Rebecca became my <Head Servant Leader>. If she manages to develop her abilities, she might be able to acquire a skill related to <Blood Mana> and the light attribute as my chosen bloodkin... If the power of the <Torrent of Light Darkness> has flown into her, it's quite possible. At this point, it's already suspectable that the blue flame-based skills she's mainly using have turned into blue flames precisely because she's been influenced by me...

Rebecca is...in a position where she could already have a blood family just like Veronica who turned Mel and Bennett into her <Head Servants>. But, she's praiseworthy helping out at Betty-san's store.

Maybe she's going to take in Betty-san as <Head Servant>... Or bloodkin? But rather than that, it's sweets, or treasures for her, right? I guess it's highly likely that she'll tell me that she'll follow me around again with a cheerful expression.

The Rad Ridge mentioned by her...it's a mountainous region where they're cultivating black tea

leaves, isn't it? I guess it'd be fun to stop by there during my journey someday.

As a test, I shade my eyes while looking far north, but...of course I can't spot anything similar to some Rad Ridge. A path of wheel tracks winding its way through protruding hills and forests with steep, bluish-white mountain peaks as background...

Monsters and strange giraffe-like animals with long heads peeking out through the needle-leaved trees overlap. I guess all that's spreading out there is nature with a touch of being a work of art.

Next, the eyes of the pink-haired spear user Riko also surface in my mind. She also has pretty, azure sky-like eyes. And pink hair which I like. Her disciples sure are lucky bastards. They're being taught by such a beautiful spear user who also holds the seventh rank of the Eight Divine Spear Kings.

Speaking of the Eight Divine Spear King ranking, I think I should sort what I know about the eight rankers once.

I don't know the name of the first rank. Well, I think I might remember it sooner or later, but I wonder whether they're off the chart in strength.

The second-ranked ranker is Sei Arribal. Second Prince Fals mentioned that the cat-loving Great Knight Galkiv, who's currently participating in the war, was one of the second-ranked spear king's disciples in the Ruler Spear Style. Going by the fact that Galkiv is regarded as an outstanding spear fighter in the kingdom, the strength of the ranker, who taught him, should be fairly high. Well, seeing how he reached second rank, it's only natural.

The third rank is called Therese Lulouche. It's a name I've heard from the spear user Leon whom I fought in Zamalia. Going by the strength of her disciple, she should be quite powerful as well.

The fourth rank is Fizz Gerald. He's an acquaintance of Riko. Back during the jellyfish festival, I had a chance to have a duel with him, but I turned it down. I put priority on having a mock battle with my friend and catman, the third rank of the Eight Divine Sword Kings.

The fifth rank is Single Spear Acuray Achilles. I remember having talked about him with Master, but...don't tell me...

I don't remember knowing the sixth rank.

The seventh rank is my beloved, pink-haired Magic Spear Riko Madorikos.

Of course I don't know the eighth rank either, but a person in this ranking gotta be ridiculously powerful...

I'll pursue my own path of martial arts, deliberately not rising in the ranks. A superman who's training without anyone being aware of him...

I keep imagining the spear techniques unleashed by the Divine King rankers while enjoying the sky's scenery.

Suddenly stone gargoyle monsters break out of the fog below us. They're fairly large, and seeing how they're made out of stone, they should also be fairly sturdy. Monsters with two arms, legs, and wings growing on its back.

Except for the head...which reminds me of the inhabitant of the Azel Boundary, the winged person who had shouted around at the Underground Auction as merchandise of Bloody Long Ears.

Their heads have a long snout, like that of an elephant. It's a rather characteristic nose.

Speaking of elephant trunks...I've got that box I looted from Hogbar in my item box. I still haven't tested it out.

『Your Excellency, shall I come outside?』

『No, we'll fight normally. <Spirit Ball Conception> has to wait for later』

『Okay』

Once we get rid of those things, I'll release the box while testing <Spirit Ball Conception>, I think. That Baku is a being that could be a god, or a monster. To be honest, I feel anxious.

During that small time of contemplation, the flock of gargoyles spits some liquid at us from their mouths. Those stone mouths are quite crooked. Stone teeth densely clutter the mouth's interior, like a shark's. The liquid is light green, resembling the poison spit by wyverns.

At the same time, gray nails extend from their two hands. I'm pretty sure the tips of those nails are also venomous. It's a nail attack resembling that of Catiza.

Rollodeen, the target of those attacks, does a turn with me on her back. She gallantly soars through the sky, dodging the venom.

My partner moves her black horse-like head, and shoots countless tentacles out to the front from her lion-mane-like neck fur. The swarm of tentacles flies with a force that vividly reminds me of a multi-missile launch. The bone swords at the tips of the tentacles clash with the gray nails. The tentacle bone swords cut through the nail like butter

Befitting of a divine beast, she continues intercepting the incoming nails in succession, smashing them into smithereens.

My partner releases a throaty growl as her tentacles keep overlapping while blocking the nails. Bundling them together into one thick tentacle, she creates a lance similar to my Magic Destruction Spear. Then she makes the spear head for a gargoyle while letting it spiral. It looks as if she's unleashing a <Thrust> with her tentacle spear.

The thick spear drills through the tough-looking stone wings of the gargoyle.

"Nyaoooooo!"

Rollodeen-san roars something along the line of 『Success nya~』. The tentacle spear immediately

disconnects, with the swarm of smaller tentacles scattering radially. Immediately following, she pulls them back towards her nape. I had expected her to pull back the tentacles after coiling them around the gargoyle, but surprisingly she desisted from doing that. And here I thought she might heartily devour the gargoyle after reeling it in. But, it looks like asking her to eat stone might be too much after all. Though it could be that she does just that every now and then.

"I suppose it doesn't suit your taste——" While shouting that, I jump off Rollodeen.

Summoning Baldok into my right hand, I activate <Magic Hand guided by Thought> underneath me while twisting my body. Using the crooked mana hand as a foothold, I jump once more, resulting in my visual field becoming upside down.

While adjusting Baldok's angle, I catch the targeted gargoyle within my inverted visual field. And then I shoot <Chain> from my left wrist. The chain heads for the gargoyle while drawing a small arc in the air. Soon following, it stabs through the gargoyle's belly, penetrating all the way through its body, and then protrudes out through the wings on its back.

In addition to that, I manipulate <Chain> to wriggle around like a snake, and strangle its prey to death. I have the chain coil itself around the gargoyle's body to completely immobilize it. I pull on that chain, thus remotely operating the gargoyle.

At this rate, I could use it as a meat shield or meat hammer, but I won't do this today. I draw <Chain>, which is strung like a single, taut piano wire, towards the <Chain Factor> mark on my left wrist which looks like a colored, spiraling dragon. Of course, the gargoyle is being pulled over at the same time. As soon as it enters the range of my spear, I invoke <Powerful Slash>, completely swinging Baldok from the right to the left.

The red ax blade's flash catches the gargoyle's belly, cutting it apart. The gargoyle falls apart in two parts with a cracking sound coming from its belly.

Immediately following, other gargoyles extend their pointed nails at me, trying to stab my chest, with eerie sounds. The tips look venomous.

——I twist my body to the left, dodging the first approaching nail while rotating. At the same time I erase Baldok from my right hand. Following that, I summon Ganghis into my left hand. I clench down on its white handle, and extend my empty right hand at the gargoyle that had launched the nail attack while glaring at it.

Gargoyle-san, you might have thought that we'd be an easy mark if you hunt us with several of you as usual, but...Rollodeen and I are anything but usual. Bad luck for you.

While thinking so, I shoot <Chain> from my right wrist. The target is its muscle-armor-like stone belly.

The tip of the chain plunges through the air with a buzzing, and hits the gargoyle's abdomen. It easily breaks through the central part of the massive abdomen with muscles exceeding those of a six pack. A hole is pierced into the belly as if shot by a bullet, and cracks develop around the hole.

Just as I did with the previous gargoyle, I twine <Chain> around this one's body. And then, at the

same time as drawing the gargoyle close to me, I extend Ganghis to the front as I focus on twisting my left hand, welcoming the reeled-in gargoyle. The <Fang Stab> of Ganghis penetrates through the gargoyle's nether region at its lower part. The force of the reeling, and the force of <Fang Stab> add up into a counter-styled thrusting technique.

The gargoyle's lower disperses after a squishy sound. [efn_note]This has a somewhat perverted connotation since it uses a sound effect connected to the sound of a penis entering a vagina. [/efn_note] The gargoyle crashes with an expression that imitates Munch's 『Scream』.

Since <Fang Stab> is exclusively for attacking low, it's faster by one or two beats than performing a low <Thrust>. It should throw off an opponent's sense of timing when adding to <Thrust> for a chain attack.

Well, the first-class fighters, who have mastered the defensive and offensive capabilities of Magic Combat Style, will be easily able to respond, even if their sense of timing gets messed up.

As I'm considering such future tactics...Rollodeen swoops down on the other gargoyles. She continues destroying them by clawing them apart with her sharp forepaw nails. Since more gargoyles have crowded around us now, I invoke <Dusk's Stake>.

The dark stakes pour down like a rain of darkness, piercing through all the gargoyles on the left side. The gargoyles quickly become riddled with holes, just to then fall into the demonic fog with their stone bodies cracking.

On the right side, Rollodeen keeps racing about. She pulls off spiral maneuvers or barrel rolls, all while freely rampaging around by skilfully using her tail and tentacles, as if to announce that she's here. Her tentacle bone swords stitch a gargoyle into the air, sealing its movements, and with the claws on her fore and hind paws she cuts through the wings of that gargoyle, looking as if she's hanging on its back, just to brandish her tail to pulverize the head of another gargoyle.

Rollodeen and I continue mercilessly slaughtering the gargoyles, which had dominated the air space as if owning it. Eventually the number of gargoyles drops, and seemingly grasping that they're no match for us, they escape into the fog, not coming out anymore.

After erasing Ganghis from my left hand, I say, "——Rollo, although I'd love to praise you for having done such a great job, there's one more important task left."

"Nnn."

『You're going to let that pew-pew nose out of the box owned by Hogbar, right?』

The gown outfit strangely suits the tiny Helme. After she arbitrarily names the god or monster thing in the box 『pew-pew nose』, she hugs Rollodeen. Naturally Rollodeen doesn't perceive Helme's hug. However, her red eyes dart left and right as she apparently feels some kind of presence.

"I don't know whether water will come out of that elephant trunk as you hope it will...well, if something comes out from there, it'll likely be some kind of liquid attack. Since it's possible that it'll develop into a battle against that unknown being that could be monster or god, get ready, okay Helme, Rollo?"

"Nn, nya."

『Yes!』

I recall the past after urging Rollodeen and Helme to prepare themselves. Back when Hogbar used this, he poured mana into the watch, and then said,

『Soleck, we can't cooperate with Nuha, but it can't be helped now. Let's do it』

『You're right. Though, a sacrifice will be necessary later...』

『I don't care. Come, unravel <Time Baku>』 Hogbar chanted while tossing the clock into the air.

And then it turned into a box, from where a monkey with an elephant trunk riding a Genbu-like turtle appeared.

He said a sacrifice would be necessary. I'm worried what kind of sacrifice that might be. Even during the time when I was going to store it into my item box, it squirmed around. Maybe it's going to demand a large amount of souls...or some flesh and blood, or it might add some weird divinity to me like a certain cursed goddess.

It might also be some ancient devil who got sealed away by a being with the power to defeat it in battle, despite having been a powerful being in the past Spirit World like Demonic Emperor Ciphot. At the very least it's probably not part of the divine domain, but...I can't even begin to imagine what's going to happen.

And if it's right above that Whirlpool Forest of Demonic Fog...for example, if some gigantic monster or a tremendously powerful god started to rampage around in search for a sacrifice right after coming out of the box...it might result in a part of the forest vanishing. The probability that it will directly impact on the place where Mysty, Viine and Hankay are staying at...is not zero. We've traveled away from that place quite a bit due to the gargoyle crushing, but...I think it'd be better to move a little bit further away, just to make sure.

『Are you going to do the <Spirit Ball Conception> experiments before testing the box?』

『Ah true. We'll do those while traveling to the left』

I activate <Spirit Ball Conception>, causing Helme to be flushed out of my left eye as liquid while also releasing mist. A semi-transparent part of Helme, which is hard to exactly describe as liquid, gas or solid body, expands outwards as if wrapping up the left half of my face while being connected to my left eye.

『I can freely tamper with the defensive form』

『Like you did when you blocked Hogbar's stake, right?』

『Yes』

『Does it have no offensive form?』

Once I ask, the liquid Helme wriggles around with a squishy sound while transforming into folding-fan-shaped shield, a round shield, a bowl, a donut, a boob, and a full moon-shaped, faintly glowing butt... Once I retort with a 『Oi』, she transforms her shape while showing me a mysterious, jiggly sight.

『...Fufu, just as I wrapped up Kokbruuundozoo-sama's idol, it's possible for me to engulf physical objects and life-forms, but unlike with you, who's connected to me, it takes time. And, remote attacks like pebbles or ice swords are impossible at present』

Wow, Helme can correctly spell the full name of Bruuun-sama. I guess it's only natural since we're talking telepathically on a mind level.

『...Got it. It might be the same type of skill as <Magic Hand guided by Thought>, but <Spirit Ball Conception> is an elementary sage skill of the sage art family. You can't expect much from it at the beginning. Anyway, wrap me up』

『Okay!』

In an instant, Helme engulfs my whole body. A semi-transparent, happi coat feather decoration? It's short sleeved. Since Hal'Konk is also short-sleeved right now, it feels nice. Helme has skilfully adapted herself to the dark green surface of Hal'Konk, so it looks like the two have fused. Moreover, misty, small mana particles are scattered from the edges of the clothes.

I don't know what it looks like to a third party. Hal'Konk has been silent ever since his fusion with me. Someday, he might revive due to some kind of trigger. If it's now, it looks like Helme would end up sucked in alongside the shoulder dragon.

"Nn, nya, nyaa~n" Rollodeen shakes her head up and down, meowing with a cat's voice.

It seems she's curious about me being engulfed by <Spirit Ball Conception>. She brings her head close, and scrutinizes me from close-by.

"Nya."

"Go for it. You want to sniff, right?"

"Nyaa."

Rollo twitches her nose with her eyes gleaming in joy. She draws her nose close to the happi coat part, and sniffs on the delicate garment that might as well be described as swaying. semi-transparent cloth. Rollo sucks in the hair with a force that reminds me of a vacuum cleaner. Her nostrils repeatedly widen and shrink down.

Finishing her sniffing of Helme, she brings her head close to me, which I use to massage her some. After a little while she purrs throatily and separates from my chest, just like you'd expect from a cat's whimsical character, despite her looking like a horse right now.

She soars through the air like a griffon, extends several tentacles from her body into the blue sky, developing a new game where she uses those tentacles to create a loop, affixes another tentacle to it, creating a swing in the air. Dangling from that swing, she's rocking up, down, left, and right.

[efn_note]Don't ask me how that's supposed to work. Author forgot they are in midair. Brain fart idea[/efn_note]

Interesting...kinda like an amusement park, eh? But anyway, I wanted to open that creepy box.

Kicking off the mana hand, I jump...huh?

When I wonder about the missing sensation of falling down, I notice that I'm floating somewhat. Does <Spirit Ball Conception> have an effect allowing me to float in the air? Isn't that awesome, Helme?

It's not like it's allowing me to fly since I'm slightly descending, but have those misty particles scattered from the garment's edges become a propulsion? I don't really get it, but as expected of a sage skill.

It'll slightly change my tactical options during air battles. I've become able to freely move about to some extent thanks to <Magic Hand guided by Thought>, but it's still limited. Just like moment's ago, it's the vital point of any air battles for me. In the end it won't change the fact that the foothold will remain a must.

I silently chant 『Weapon, come』 to <Magic Hand guided by Thought>. In an instant, Holy Spear Arost is summoned into the mana hand.

And then, while crossing both hands at my chest...I deliberately stand stock still in midair. Focusing on just <Magic Hand guided by Thought>, I go through the motions of the Wind Spear Style with Arost.

With things being like this, it feels like I've become someone else. <Magic Hand guided by Thought> is a third or fourth arm transformed through a skill as crystallization of guidance sorcery, but if I move it now, you could even describe the feeling like having a tail...

Oh, I wonder whether it'd be also possible to mess around a bit by flying through the sky while riding Arost. Just like Veronica surfs on her blood swords.

Now then, everything's ready.

"...Rollo, playtime is over. I'll take out the box now."

"Nyaa."

I take the box with the pretty fret patterns out of my item box. After pouring mana into it, I throw it away. The box unnaturally stops mid flight. And the instant a magic source explosively gushes out of the box, a light brown cloud, like a dense cluster of mana, spews outside. Moreover, something like a small doll pops out.

——The tiny doll. It's the same as last time. Semi-transparent, and rapidly expanding.

No, wait, it's not the same as before. This time it's huge...a size vividly reminding me of the Evil Dragon King. The design of the happi coat, which seems to combine fret patterns and crupper ornaments, has become bigger as well.

But, its thick legs as it stands on the Genbu-like turtle are tied to the box through chains similar to spirit tails while being entangled in a way making movements impossible. Those chains sure look heavy. Small magic crests have appeared on the surface of the chains.

The Time Baku after having finished its enlargement, huh? Is this guy a monster? Or a god...?

Rain, which appears to be contaminated with the acidity of heavy metals, is pouring down from that cloud, which is like a divine will floating above the Baku's head. Solemnly getting showered by the rain, its head is wet, with Helme's favorite elephant trunk hanging down.

This is...a Time Baku. But, its face is ugly and crooked...

The elephant trunk is curled, and its two eerie demonic eyes above the trunk are wide open with the whites standing out. A liquid similar to impure blood - different from the rusty rain - oozes out of its demonic eyes, which have objects similar to chessmen rise to the surface, and disgustingly run down its cheeks.

Moreover, an uncanny, striped, glowing mist arises from its back.

This thing feels totally like bad news.

It lifts its snout, deforming and moving its warped, octagonal, gem-like mouth.

"...Where is the sacrifice?"