

Chapter 342 – Ciel

Dusk is around the corner. As the blood chain is floating in the air, pointing in the direction of Arry's blood...a sudden gust blows. My bangs sway in the wind.

I look at the cave which continues through the meandering ravine. The shape of the claw-like rock in the upper part doesn't change. A faint trace of blood smell hangs in the air.

But, the great number of blood pools as they were visible at the cave's entrance don't exist anymore. It's because I've absorbed all of it, without leaving a single drop behind.

Layers of vegetation wreath decayed trees and rock surfaces. Vines transporting water for the plants create bridges that connect one rock with another.

At a glance, it's a peculiar sight, as if the cave's surface is wearing thin clothes. The white sand, green pines, and the web of green aspen stand out as they climb a slope on the other end. Those trees creak, groan, and grate. White aspens and orange trees sway, colliding against each other, as if dancing, causing a unique, natural orchestra of percussion instruments. Multi-colored leaves spread across the Sea of Trees as if to encourage and vitalize that melody. The coloring has a touch of elegance.

But, a destruction of that very environment, carried out with a force that only suggests it's trying to wipe out that display of abundant nature...spreads from the battle between Hoffmann and Jody. Hoffmann is a <Head Servant> belonging to the Valmask family.

I've felt so before as well, but to be honest, the way he fights has shocked me. The <Servant Leader> Yuo used an old-styled swordsmanship and footwork clearly favoring close combat. His techniques were well above average.

However, the darkness techniques using Hoffmann's <Blood Mana>...are entirely different in quality when compared to the <Servant Leaders> I fought in the past. It's a combat style built on unique techniques which match up with his abnormal movements.

You could call it nonhuman, but...I don't feel like I can steal his techniques since half of Hoffmann's body is steeped in the world of darkness. Still, there are many things I can use as reference.

——That right now is a skill derived from <Blood Path - Open Third Gate>. Maybe an Extra skill.

The world of darkness expands in all directions like a wave, just to contract right away. As if breathing. It's a rather novel ability. As if having carelessly assembled a blood aura, eyeballs, fragments from another world, black clouds, bat wings, a crooked blood mantle, and jet-black human arms... The mantle even looks as if it's bulging after catching the wind.

Hoffmann with his bizarre body half. Is it a blood body half, a blood world? Or maybe a blood isekai?

An abnormal arm suddenly appears from within that blood mantle. It looks like Hoffmann can freely summon his arms from it. Anyway, the swordsmanship he performs with the five black blade claws at the tip of that arm's fingers is very skillful. The tubes embedded in the back of his hand

gleam at the same time.

The small bugs squirming in those tubes seem to be doing fine.

Moreover, the human half of Hoffmann's body is fast as well. Does it weigh less because it's just one leg and arm?

You could describe the martial arts performed by his human and blood world body halves as very polished vampire techniques. Are those movements based on him having adapted ancient sword styles into new ones? Like, the manifestation of "Review the old to consider new challenges"?

It sure is amazing to look at.

Pax, the kin of Evil God Hyuriox, and Naromivas, the apostle of Goddess of Nightmares Varmina; both were terribly strong as nonhuman beings, but you can't compare them with Hoffmann. That means the <Head Servant> Lunz, who's targeting Veronica, is just as strong?

Well, I think she'll be alright since Magit is with her as well, but...watching the tricky and precise fighting of Hoffmann...I believe it was completely right of me to welcome Veronica as <Head Servant Leader>.

Hoffmann might simply possess a special, hidden strength which doesn't just stem from him being a <Head Servant> of the Valmask family - descendants of Vampire God Lugnad...

Well, the current Veronica should be strong as she's in the same position as their empress, Familia. No wait, it's dangerous to believe that my Light Demon Lucival is equal to Vampire God Lugnad. There are no absolutes in this world.

For this reason, I must recognize Hoffmann's strength.

But, Veronica has her powers that capitalize on her <Blood Mana>, and her new <Head Servants> Mel and Benett will be at her side as well. Those three should be capable of easily dealing with any opponent, no matter how strong they might be. They'll probably be able to hold their ground against Lunz as well.

Moreover, it's not just those three. There's the members of **【Remains of the Moon】** like Paulsen and Angie. My precious family, Eva and Rebecca are over there as well. Same applies for my <Servant Leaders> Mamani and her team. Also, Ajul is working as a guard of my mansion in Pelneet.

I think all of them would be fine even if the Valmask family as a whole launched a general offensive on my home, and not just Lunz alone.

Though, I must say I'm kinda curious what their empress, Familia, looks like. Going by just her name, she might be a beauty. There's also that place called Blood Court...but well, for the moment I've got other things I need to prioritize.

Seeing how my thoughts wandered off, I forced them back to the battle between Hoffmann and Jody. Jody has transformed her big scythe. Its blade has grown alongside the handle.

Is that weapon capable of changing its shape as it pleases just like her butterfly body?

Suddenly the scythe splits apart, giving Jody more options to attack and defend. Her moths scatter as weird laughter becomes audible. Increasing her force, Jody corners Hoffmann.

Hoffmann fights back, of course. As if looking deep into each other's eyes...they fight at very close quarter, just to start a ranged battle after jumping back.

Next, Jody extends black strings from both her hands. I don't think that she's used those for a surprise attack, but Hoffmann can't dodge and gets entwined by the strings.

After showing a reaction similar to having been stunned, his body takes heavy damage. But, Hoffmann easily heals his wounds by using the blood of his human body half. That half still emits black blood waves as before.

He's in the middle of <Walpurgis Night>. He summons a darkness giant alongside a coffin from within that blood world which reminds me of an original, mental world. Next, he summons crows, skeleton arms, and a headless knight again.

At the same time, Hoffmann's body finishes to completely recover. —It's a battle of potentially endless moves...their violent struggle is going to continue for a while longer.

And their battle also makes the peculiar air in the Sea of Trees vibrate. Even the sunlight sways. The creatures inhabiting the forest all scurry away.

I feel like I heard their screams and also as if space itself screeches like a banshee.

Both combatants are powerful, so it seems like this battle will take a long time... They are equal as fellow nonhuman beings?

While pondering about that, I return my look to Ciel.

Reddish violet butterflies are fluttering around Ciel. Once our eyes meet, she speaks up.

"...Spearmaster, why do you possess the key of our Great Lord?" Ciel-chan asks me with a somewhat sad voice.

Going by her calling him "Great Lord", I suspect Golgonshura might be one of the main gods of the ancient gods such as an old god, a demigod, a cursed god, or a wild god. Though he might also be a being similar to the forgotten Kokbruuundozoo-sama.

Ciel's body is deformed with her small, teary-eyed eyes trembling. She looks like a child who pleads to her parents with a sad look. But, it's fishy...

Her figure has shrunken down, but the quality of the butterflies around here is clearly different now. Thick mana amasses inside Ciel's body, disperses, and immediately accumulates again. Oh, is she splitting herself?

I think incRNA-like genes form butterflies and moths, but it's like they are transcribed through alternative splicing by moving as if time speeds up and slows down. There's also movement apparently controlling the genetic manifestation of particles and mana, containing suppressive elements. It's abnormal.

It's not a black hole, but its mass appears to be crazy. Even the Schwarzschild radius might actually exist within her.

Her eyes are glowing ominously, too. I feel like I'm being drawn into them. It's a sensation as if being under the influence of charm.

Well, if she doesn't intend to fight, I'll give her an explanation. But before that...

I've become curious about those small Death Butterfly People who boast such a quality of mana. I think I'll investigate them a bit. That said, I touch the metallic cross-shaped attachment next to my right eye with a finger — booting up the Kaleidoscope.

As usual, the attachment transforms into a 卍, and frames are added to my sight. As soon as I think that it's become bluish-white, I see that my visual field has become more distinct now. The resolution might have gone up instantly.

I stare at the butterflies in that bluish-white view. What the fuck...?

The individual amassing mana is Ciel...that much I can tell... But, for the countless butterflies buzzing around her to have cursors appear on their borderlines...are all the butterflies around possibly part of her main body?

"Are all those butterflies possibly you, Ciel?"

"...Oh my, you even possess Demonic Eyes?"

"No, well...the wrinkles on their skin and their appearances faintly resemble you. They have no face, but those are mysterious butterflies...I'd say..."

"Calling me wrinkled is rude. Even though I look like this, time flows for me in the same way, you know? I'm not Space-Time God Crosseivis after all. Golgonshura-sama's power is distorted...chaotic, so he has been sealed away by his many enemies, but I'm remaining such a timeless beauty because of him~♪"

It's the name of a god I've heard somewhere before.

For starter's I'll examine just the central part of Ciel's appearance. I focus on the triangular cursor between the lines bordering her body. Immediately following——

?????High Dimensional Variant Child Body e × 002 ##
Brain Waves: immeasurable

Body: immeasurable
Gender: female??
Overall Physical Strength: immeasurable
Elenium Integration: 423???
Weapons: immeasurable

Her stats have been displayed, but...it looks like an appraisal is impossible, yep. All I can tell from this is that she's strong.

I touch the metallic attachment next to my right eye once more. The instant I do, it wriggles while feeling soft to the touch, like a squid. And then it returns to its previous, cross-shaped state.

"...What is that eye of yours, spearmaster?" Ciel closely stares at my right eye with a confused expression.

It seems she can't tell what it is. Well, it makes sense since this Kaleidoscope isn't any normal magic tool. It's a sorcery engineered device produced by a civilization not from this planet, just like the Tiny Orbital I got on the 20th floor with Mamani and the others. It's no wonder that a Death Butterfly woman knows nothing about it.

—— Confirming Dr. Hoekaleido Island Accelerator Magina... – Unable to confirm simple AI.

Dr. Hoekaleido is the one who made the Kaleidoscope? Or maybe someone involved with its development?

However, for now I'm going to ignore what's going on outside this planet.

Ciel's eyes are still fixed on my right eye. Right now she's looking at the cross-shaped attachment, which is different from normal accessories, as if asking herself what it might be.

...Now then, I guess I'll explain the key to her.

"...Anyway, are you going to listen to my explanation about the key?"

"Yes!"

"...The key was inside the buckle of a belt. An excellent appraiser found it."

"...I'd like you to show me the key of the Great Lord if you possess it..." Ciel mutters.

Her attitude has completely changed from a while ago. Accordingly, I turn my eyes at Higlia, trying to question her about this.

In response, she lightly shakes her head, informing me with her eyes and behavior that she doesn't have a clue either. I had expected an ancient wolf woman to be well-informed about Death Butterfly People, but it looks like that's not the case either, huh?

While wondering about this, I return my eyes to Ciel.

"...I don't mind showing it to you. But, you won't get in my way, okay?"

"I'm not confident that I can promise you that, but I'll try!"

The deformed, small Ciel makes a small scythe appear in her right hand. She enjoys herself by whirling it around on her palm. Since she has changed the scythe into a min-version, the whole scene looks kinda cute.

As I bring my right hand up to my chest, I look at my item box. The design of the item box's edge reminds me of the sun's corona. In the middle of it exists a watch-cover-like glass crystal. But, this item box is a very important item in itself.

I operate it by lightly touching the panel's surface with a fingertip. A semi-transparent window is projected from the panel. Just like before, the four-eyed alien is displayed inside that window. The alien holds Baldok and Ganghis in its hands.

Previously, there was a third arm added to the figure, but I've left Catiza behind in Quiche's village for defense duty. In other words, this system is quite detailed when it comes to such aspects. Nothing less of a special item capable of summoning an item in an instant. And just as you'd expect from a device of the Na Palm Integrated Planetary Military Alliance which seems to be one of the space civilizations, I suppose.

As I'm admiring the item box Kuna possessed before me...I fiddle around with the glass panel, checking the item types. Selecting Golgonshura's Key from among many options, I retrieve it, and show it to Ciel, who looks like she wants it, by stretching out my hand and holding it up. Tadah!

"...Just as I thought! It's Golgonshura-sama's key to open the Sealed Door of the Sealing Evil!"

Going by the name, this got to be the place where Golgonshura has been locked away.

"Please give it to me."

"I don't want to." I reject her request clearly.

This causes Ciel to look enraged. And in response, the butterflies around her squirm strangely as if doing clay work. Once they independently create heads resembling that of Ciel, their faces distort flabbily while groaning,

"Eh~"

"Eh~"

"Eh~"

"I'm pissed."

"Kill."

"Eh~~"

"Kill."

"I'm pissed."

"But~ that spearmaster is clad in the aura of a god slayer, you see?"

"Eh~"

"Eh~"

"Eh~"

"Steal it."

"Right~"

The faces talk with their compound eyes restlessly rotating...horrifying anyone seeing them. The butterflies and Ciel's main body talk with each other, causing multiple vocal sounds to overlap. And then, those scary butterflies start to move.

They pile up on top of each other, combining their bodies and thus turning huge in no time. Ciel returns to her original size.

Since I feel a bad premonition as Ciel looks somewhat weird, I throw the key back into the item box while telling her, "I've only promised you to show it."

Immediately following, Ciel's pretty facial expression changes. Many rifts as if her facial skin is being divided vertically at several spots appear. Flashes teeming with mana surge out of those rifts. Ciel smirks at that.

Her skin had been as beautiful as a lake surface reflecting the moon, but now it looks like it's oozing with evil. Her lips tear apart diagonally in a disgusting manner, just to squirm once more.

"...The playing starts from now on."

Not only words come out of that mouth, but also a swarm of evil butterflies looking like particles-shaped poison gas.

While spitting out that gas, she closes in on me while sliding her feet. As the poisonous particles billow out of her mouth like smoke, she purses her lips instantly, and vanishes as if fading with the background.

"She vanished?"

And then, Ciel reappears right in front of me with a roar, "——I just need to take that bracelet

alongside your arm♪"

She swings her scythe at me while laughing. Her scythe moves in a fan-shaped form.

MY arm and the item box are dear to me. I clad my whole body in <Magic Combat Style>, and while snarling, "What a whimsical butterfly...", I thrust Baldok out to diagonally above, blocking the scythe's blade with the upper part of Baldok's handle.

Scythe and Baldok clash loudly. Countless sparks fly into the vicinity. And a heavy bass sound, similar to the roar of the Evil Dragon King, reverberates.

While the sparks dance through the air, I use the fact that my eyes have met with Ciel's, and while tilting my body's weight slightly forward, I feint with my look.

I make Ciel wonder whether I'll shift to a weapons-pushing contest after having felt the weight behind her weapon. But, in the next moment, I perform a half-rotation to the side with my right foot's toes as axis, messing up Ciel's footing due to the sudden vector change.

I've aimed at that opening. Focusing on my trunk, I twist my waist to the right, and unleash a middle karate kick against Ciel's torso with my left leg after adding the momentum of the twisting into it.

My foot hits her as intended.

"Kyaa——"

Her stance falls apart as her body folds, causing her to quickly retreat. Her scream sounded adorable. But, the kick's feedback was rather lacking.

The kicking power of Arzen's Boots shouldn't be anything to scoff at...but somehow...I guess, as expected of a body consisting of butterflies...

While sliding across the ground, Ciel stabs the scythe and the toes of her feet into the ground, killing the power of my kick while leaving scars on the rock surface. At last, she comes to a stop. And then, after suddenly fixing her posture, she lifts her face.

"...That hurts, you know?"

"Considering that, you look quite calm, don't you?" I reply with a faint smile, not mean as scorn.

Seeing my smile, she looks at me as if trying to shoot me to death with her eyes. Is her tapering her lips an expression of being irritated? She starts to hit the ground with her scythe in frustration.

Angrily, she repeatedly whines, "How annoying...", like a child while rotating her body sideways. Just like that, she scatters butterflies all around her, and then comes charging at me once again. At the same time, the scythe in her hand teems with mana. That mana forms blades. One glassy blade after the other surfaces from the metallic staff part of her scythe.

——Those are projectile weapons. Their shape is different, but they remind me of the projectiles

Great Knight Sariel used in the past.

"Rollo, you know what to do, right? Higlia, stay behind us."

"Nya~"

"G-Got it."

Although she's an ancient wolf, it doesn't change the fact that she's a woman. Because of that, I'll protect her with all my strength. I think it's possible to intercept the blades with multiple spells, but you fight fire with fire.

I shoot <Chain> from the <Chain Factors> on both wrists while the blood chain is also extending from my arm. With this, three <Chains> are extending from my body in total. While letting the blood chain, which resembles a snake head as it points in Arry's blood's direction, float in the air, I quickly create a huge <Chain> shield to protect Higlia. The image I use is the usual Aegis Shield from Greek mythology.

At the moment, Rollodeen, who's finished taking refuge by distancing herself, makes her move. She enters my sight as she runs up to Higlia. It looks like Rollodeen also wants to protect Higlia. Or maybe she just wants to fawn on her by pumping her head against Higlia's leg because she likes its scent.

As if to erase those insignificant thoughts, Ciel laughs while showing off her pretty teeth, "——Kihihi."

She charges while continuing to whirl around in a weird way, flying at a low altitude. Reddish violet mana blades are born from her scythe as if oozing out. The countless blades transform into a spiral, flying out direction.

I won't have any time to use <Ancient Magic>, so I'll deal with them by using multiple spells. I cast 《Ice Sphere》 without chanting. Moreover, 《Ice Arrow》.

The tear-drop-shaped 《Ice Spheres》 and the arm-sized 《Ice Arrows》 fly off energetically.

Next I shoot three instances of <Chain Spear of the Ray System>.

The countless mana blades and ice spells collide in the air space between Ciel and me, causing multiple explosions. Traces and fragments of mana scatter fleetingly.

With a slight delay, my light spears try to hit Ciel's head by weaving through the space where spells and blades offset each other. Ciel abruptly stops her charge, and powerfully glares at the approaching light spears with her eyes which have grown huge.

I wonder whether she's going to shoot some mysterious light beam from those eyes, but it's actually something else.