

Chapter 343 - A Nostalgic Reunion after a Fierce Battle

"Oh, that light! I saw it once during the fight at the Dignified Heaven Shrine!" Ciel chatters away.

While keeping her arms to her sides with a joyful expression, she brandishes her scythe upwards with a golf swing. The scythe's blade seizes the lower part of the <Chain Spear of the Ray System> approaching her directly from the front. Sparks scatter at the part where the scythe and light spear collide.

However, Ciel only laughs as if regarding even that flash of light as fodder. With the scythe's blade sparkling, the <Chain Spear of the Ray System> is smoothly cut into two halves.

"Ufufu, I chopped the light down!"

Revealing a bright smile and talking happily, she rhythmically steps to the sides as if dancing while wielding the heavy-looking scythe left and right.

Her dance moves are so splendid that I feel like asking her: Are you trying to act like a dancer using the air as your stage, or what!?

She easily cuts down my second and third light spear, too.

A cloud of dust hangs over the ground around her with my light spears stabbed into the soil. The cleaved light spears are mere shadows of their former states.

Her skilled technique of handling her scythe to lightly chop the light spears apart is truly terrifying. But, Ciel has watched the fight at the Dignified Heaven Shrine, huh...?

While wondering about that part, I activate <Blood Path - Open Third Gate>, immediately followed by <Blood Acceleration>. Arzen's Boots dye crimson as blood leaks out of the skin at my feet.

In the next instant, I head straight for Ciel in a forward-bent posture. While closing the distance to her in no time, I enter my spear attack motion by twisting my waist. Although I'm doing that, <Chain> is still extended from my wrists, forming a big shield.

Seen from the sideline, I might look like a prisoner still chained to his jail. Sanskrit characters surface on the chain's surface in my field of view. It might be an effect of <Sealer's Seal>.

Without minding it, I push out Baldok after transmitting the power from my waist to my arm. The <Thrust>, accompanied by a growl as red spear and ax blade spiral, heads for Ciel's body as if to devour it.

However, the red spear is stopped by her. The scythe blocks the tip of Baldok with a screech.

Ciel is strong. While defending against Baldok, she lets her hand slide along the scythe's handle, and pushes the scythe's blade to the side. Her abnormal strength pressures me alongside Baldok. No, I guess she's aiming for my neck.

I shift the distribution of my Magic Combat Style, and while putting strength into my arms, I move Baldok to oppose Ciel's force, taking it to a locking of weapons.

Still, was her previous expression full of anger a bluff? In my eyes, she seems calm and confident in her own strength. Her scythe techniques are sophisticated as well. But, Ciel has a body consisting of butterflies. Her arms and fingers are extremely thin. On the other hand, the scythe is fairly powerful when handled by those fingers. A strength you wouldn't expect from a body made out of butterflies.

Ciel rotates the scythe sideways. While dragging Baldok along, she parries my power, and after rotating it around, tries to cut Baldok and me with the scythe's blade from the opposite side.

Responding to this, I alter the angle of Baldok while putting strength into my arm. I block Ciel's blade with the handle around the middle part of Baldok. In return, I rotate the handle of Baldok as well, causing the scythe to slow rotate as well since the upper part of Baldok's ax blade has hooked into the scythe's blade. As if drawing an arc in the air with Baldok and the scythe.

"Fufu, are you going to dance with me?"

Ciel keeps changing the angle of her blade while laughing. A unique mana sound reverberates from the area where the scythe's blade and the red ax blade scrape against each other.

The instant I add even more power, Ciel widens her eyes.

"——Spearmaster, what strength and speed you possess...is it the power of a vampire species?" She asks across the sparks manifesting where the blades clash.

Eerie magic letters are visible on the handle of her scythe. The handle is a metallic staff, but likely no normal metal.

"...As you say, it's acceleration through blood." I answer her honestly.

In the meantime, a loud screeching and grinding comes from the two weapons as they scrape against each other. Both weapons release a shower of sparks as if acting in concert. Strong shines similar to flashes occur where the two weapons touch.

"...Your physical strength and the level of mana manipulation is exceedingly high as well. It's at a level where it makes me doubt whether you're really humanoid. Would it be better for me to call you 『Magic Spearmaster』 over 『Spearmaster』?" She praises me while the flashes illuminate her face in a very disadvantageous way.

Is she luring me into getting careless?

"——I don't care."

"Fufu, this blunt way of yours is really wonderful——" Ciel talks about me with a laugh as if she knows about me.

I make my move at that moment. My objective is to make her posture fall apart. I deliberately erase Baldok from my right hand to throw the direction of her pressure off. But, unlike before, she doesn't

lose her balance.

——So she's able to cope with this, huh?

Ciel suddenly pouts as if to negate the flashes in front of her. Her mouth transforms into something like a drill. Moving her head back and forth like a dove, she thrusts her drill-shaped mouth at me. At a tremendous speed, on top of that.

It appears as if she's trying to take me by surprise in return. Is she targeting my head?

"——What the hell is that? Are you an alien!?" While snarling, I dodge by throwing by bending backwards

——Ouch, she still cut off some of my nose's tip.

As my own flesh and blood dances through the air, I use the momentum of my backwards movement. I didn't do it just to evade her attack. While performing a backward somersault, I drive the sole of my foot into her drill-mouth. In short, a somersault kick.

Ciel yelps in surprise after eating Arzen's Boot.

While continuing my somersault, I focus on my legs. The instant they both touch down on the ground, I use Magic Combat Step and the power of <Blood Acceleration> to turn my body over at an explosive rate. As I do that, I re-summon Baldok into my right hand.

Her drill-mouth hasn't broken from my earlier kick. But, that's within my estimation. I charge at Ciel in a forward-bent posture.

She twists her body while returning the drill-mouth to its original state as a recoil from suffering my somersault kick. I don't think that she'll be in time to defend with her scythe.

——My aim is her chest. Focusing on my trunk, I add the rotational force of my waist to Baldok, and unleash <Darkness Drill>.

"Kuh, you've got quite the high reaction speed. —— <Father of Time> will be whittled down, but...oh well, whatever♪" She rattles on quickly as the red spear spiral clad in darkness keeps approaching her chest as if tearing through space.

Suddenly, Ciel's gaudy chest squirms.

"Release <Almandine of Red Hearts>——"

I don't know whether it's a skill or an item, but Ciel still shouts that term. In response a part of her chest and clothes transform. String-like tentacles with their tips maintaining butterfly-shapes break out of her chest.

Those things expand towards me by drawing arcs in front of my eyes. Immediately after the tentacles spread out like waves, their central parts turn inside out. Beautiful, dark red garnets appear from there, accompanied with hearty plopping sounds. The garnets, which can also be taken as

hearts, expand explosively all of a sudden.

"——What the hell?" I shout reflexively.

The garnets expand with movements reminding me of clay. Their dull red is stretched out, transforming into concave shapes. Those concave garnets wrap up Baldok's <Darkness Drill> as if covering it with pie batters.

The momentum of <Darkness Drill> drops sharply. However, it doesn't change the fact that it's spiraling thanks to Baldok's mighty thrust technique. The dark red garnets can't hold back the red spear and ax blade which are continuing to spiral. They develop cracks at their bases, and break apart.

However, just as they start to break, the gems suddenly turn into liquid as if melting. The new liquid wriggles, and tries to cross over from Baldok's red spear to its metallic handle as if eroding Baldok in reverse.

A dark red —— weapon destruction? I won't let that happen.

After repairing Baldok in a hurry by pouring mana into it, I erased it.

The liquid, which has been trying to entwine Baldok, apparently knows that its target has vanished. As if having a special consciousness like Hoffmann's <Walpurgis Night>, it slowly sways, acting as though having let its prey get away, and then contracts back into Ciel's chest like a rewinding video.

It's a weird technique, but still dangerous as fuck. That messed up butterfly woman can't be underestimated as an opponent.

Within the short moment of paying my respect, I summon Ganghis into my left hand.

"Eh?"

I can hear her surprised yell, but I ignore it. I bend down lightly while sending mana into Ganghis, and activate <Fang Stab>, unleashing it to the lower front while making sure to keep my left elbow compact.

Ciel's reaction is slightly delayed because she has expanded her gem defense skill. Ganghis stabs into her abdomen. And unlike earlier, I can sense how Ganghis' vibrating twin-half-moon-shaped spearhead tears through something.

In the instant the blue-haired tassel bundle at Ganghis' handle trembles, it transforms into a cluster of blades similar to the petals of a sunflower. That group of blades extends towards Ciel's lower body, piercing into her slender legs and thighs.

"Ugyaa——" A pained voice escapes her lips.

However, no blood at all gushes out from the places where Ganghis stabbed her. Well, she's a butterfly, so yeah.

With Ganghis stuck in her abdomen, Ciel mutters, "...That weapon...shakes my heart?"

Words I've heard somewhere before.

"The-re-fo-re♪ I'll make a special exception and enchant you~ Ufufun." Ciel squeals with an indecent laughter.

Where did her pain fly off to?

Without putting that question into words, I stare at her torn mouth which has spat out that obscene laughter. A thick mana gas is leaking out from there.

——It gives me a bad premonition.

I pull Ganghis out of her abdomen in a hurry, causing Ganghis' tassel, which had turned into blades, to return to its place as normal handle decoration. In the meantime, I fall back while rotating, performing the Wind Spear Style's 『Scarecrow Pass』, the opposite of 『Scarecrow Draw』.

Just before finishing my rotation, I step forward with my left foot, adopting a posture of standing sideways. The dry leaves on the ground rustle due to my left foot's movements. I point Ganghis's spearhead diagonally below, taking a simple Wind Spear Style stance.

And then I glare at Ciel...just to activate <Demonic Brain Speed> with the image of emanating mana from my entire body.

...Reddish violet butterflies are in the middle of withering away and vanishing from the area around the hole at Ciel's abdomen. Her body trembles disgustingly. Then, in the next moment, her abdomen reveals something supposed to stay hidden by splitting apart to the left and right.

"——Shapluazebeaaaaah!" Ciel screams in a strange voice.

While dispersing transparent mucus and small butterflies from her open abdomen, she summ——err, gives birth to a huge butterfly.

Not from her mouth, but there!?! My bad premonition was spot on!

The huge butterfly closes in with a terrifying speed. Is this her sure-kill technique?

But, I'll be troubled if she underestimates a skill derived from an Extra skill. I'm in the middle of a hyper-acceleration due to <Demonic Brain Speed>. As if lying in wait for the newly-born butterfly, I counter it with Ganghis, invoking <Darkness Drill - Evil Destruction Lance>.

The <Darkness Drill> seizes the butterfly from the front, piercing right through its center. Following the instant a single dark hole has been created, a huge lance of darkness manifests behind Ganghis - the Spirit World's Destruction Lance Gladopalus which shines while steeped in darkness.

For an instant, I feel like the dignified music piece "Die Walküre" plays back in my mind.
[efn_note]Listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9YWvOidt24> directed by a famous conductor I adore[/efn_note]

Gladopalus keeps spiraling with a force reminiscent of the divine spear Gungnir, overtaking Ganghis which had stabbed the butterfly first, and directly clashing with the butterfly. Befitting of its name as destruction lance, Gladopalus plunges onwards while drawing the entirety of the butterfly into its spiral. And then, in the instant an eerie sound similar to a giant chewing on a skull reverberates, the huge butterfly vanishes.

A pillar of fire is born at the place in the air where Gladopalus has passed, roaring with a deep sound as if bursting open. Moreover, Gladopalus doesn't stop at that either. After robbing Ciel of half her body, it breaks through towards the empty sky, continuing to disappear.

—I'm not merely watching this either.

As if chasing after Gladopalus, I close the distance to Ciel's remaining half with the intent to teach her what <Demonic Cerebral Spine Revolution> is about. In addition, I activate <Magic Hand guided by Thought>, making it hold onto Holy Spear Arost, and summon Baldok into my right hand once more.

And then, capitalizing on the three-staged acceleration of Magic Combat Step, <Blood Acceleration>, and <Demonic Brain Speed>, I use my right, left and mana hand to unleash a raging barrage of spear attacks, stabbing, stabbing, stabbing, stabbing, and stabbing away.

I'm going to pierce through all the reddish purple butterflies!

While embracing that will, I keep hitting Ciel with a flood of spear thrusts imitating Riko's special technique I can now perform exactly because of my high-speed acceleration with three spears.

Ciel, who continues to lose her butterflies on top of having lost half her body, retreats in panic.

"...Guuuh, spearmaster...I give up!"

Having fallen back, she doesn't regenerate her body with butterflies anymore. It looks like she's expended quite a bit of mana.

"...You give up? It was you who attacked me first, no?"

Stupid butterfly woman. Should I suck that butterfly inside the Waves Gourd? I mean, my title is <Staff Master of the Demigod Sealer> after all. If those two women are demigod kin as followers of God Golgonshura, it'll fit perfectly.

"...I'm sorry. I just wanted to play around. Besides, I wanted the key because it's precious to us..."

...Even if you apologize now...

While she speaks, her butterflies gather, restoring her body. However, her aggregate mana amount seems to have dropped significantly... Her butterfly body is wounded, and something similar to a liquid is gushing out while blinking in blue and reddish purple.

"I won't give you the key."

"...Even though it might allow us to open the door of Golgonshura-sama's seal..."

"There's no way I'd cooperate with the revival of such a shady god, is there?"

"He's not shady! He's our Great Lord who created the domain where we live!" Ciel frantically explains, flapping her small mouth.

So it was Golgonshura who deliberately created the habitat of the Death Butterfly people in the Sea of Trees. I have no idea about the scale of their territory. However, I suppose he's an ancient, sealed god possessing enough power to create a domain on the surface world.

"...That's what I mean by shady. Also, if you don't retreat as promised...you'll have to face me one more time."

I want to rescue the children as quickly as possible. I'll follow her wish of letting her go, but there won't be any further negotiations.

Also serving as a final warning, I imagine Sage Art while deliberately releasing dense mana from my body in all directions. The rich amount and quality of mana causes the air to tremble. My mana expands in a spherical form as if piercing through space with a dull buzzing.

My mana might get analyzed because of this, but I don't care. In the past, Goddess of Magic Poison Misea, one of the Spirit World gods, analyzed my mana through her mirror.

"——Eh?" Ciel steps backwards while holding up her scythe to defend herself.

Her swarm of butterflies loses its unnatural shape and flies around her.

"...You're telling me...you suppressed your mana until just now...?" She frowns.

And then stars twinkle in her eyes, which have a tinge of Demonic Eyes, as if containing the cosmos. It's no offensive type of eye ability, though. She's analyzing my mana, huh?

As I thought, it might have been unwise to release my mana here.

"...Who knows?" I say gravely to apply pressure while keeping my eyes on her.

Immediately following, Ciel's body trembles with a start.

"I-I got it. I-I-I fully understand, okay? I'll withdraw." Seemingly frightened, Ciel obediently moves back.

She leaves our vicinity as if scurrying away while scattering butterflies, moving over to the other woman who's been having a fierce battle with Hoffmann.

I guess I've avoided any further pointless fighting for the moment. Honestly, if she's at the level of an evil god, I can predict that the battle would drag out...

"It was a dreadful battle..." Higlia mutters after having peeked her face out of the chain shield to watch me fighting.

"Nya." My partner delivers cat punches at her as if saying, 『That's only natural ~nya』.

Rollodeen has apparently forgotten all about her frustration over having her tentacle bone swords blocked. Stopping her cat punches, she briskly walks up to me. At the same time, I cancel the chain shield, and gaze at the black panther while at it.

Rollodeen's ears are trembling slightly. She's probably cautious about no suspicious person drawing near. That's a divine beast for you. I guess she doesn't want to miss the faintest sound.

"Nya?"

As I stare at her while admiring her dignified appearance, she meows as if asking what's wrong, and looks back at me after directing her imposing face at me.

"...Divine Beast-sama is beautiful. And I'm jealous of your bond with her, Shuuya."

Higlia appears to be envious of us as she watches how close we are, but even if she tells me...

Once I shift my eyes to her, I can see that her face is colored with relief. Rollodeen bumps her head against Higlia's shin as if saying, 『Don't worry, I'll properly protect you as well ~nya』.

Higlia loses her balance for a moment, and almost topples over, but a smile has returned to her face.

Then I check the fierce battle between Hoffmann and the white moth woman once more. It looks like Ciel has joined her kin after withdrawing from us.

At that moment, Hoffmann demonstrates his might while laughing. One half of his body consists of black blood which squirms as if possessing its own mind. I can also see a huge mantle which has countless cut ends. The other half is slim and humanoid. You could describe the whole as exceedingly bizarre vampire appearance.

The humanoid Hoffmann runs while accompanied by the black body half. After performing overwhelmingly agile movements at high speed, as if blurring to the left and right, he swings one hand. His five claw blades clash with the white moth woman's scythe.

Flashes occur each time their weapons strike each other. Moreover, a hand with five, jet-black claw blades manifests from his black blood half, and while letting those blades squirm with irregular movements, he freely chops up the white moth woman. It's a tricky combat style of unleashing and withdrawing a hand from within the black mantle as he pleases.

On top of that, he closes the distance to her while performing a slash motion with his claw blades.

However, the moth woman instantly envelops her body with moths again, regenerating her wounds in the blink of an eye. Immediately following, she deploys a tremendous amount of moths in a fan form.

A defense field of moths? She continuously opposes Hoffmann's close combat attempts. It's a battle between two monsters.

Ciel intrudes upon that fierce clash.

"Jody, the spearmaster has Golgonshura-sama's...," she starts telling the other woman with a meek expression.

At the same time, she launches her butterflies at Hoffmann. Her butterflies transform into small sickles.

Hoffmann clicks his tongue and spits out, "It's a pain if they gang up on me."

The claw blades protruding out of his black blood curtain shift towards defense, and he retreats while fending off the Death Butterfly women's combined attacks.

Jody brushes her hair up as if letting her fingers run across her scalp, exuding an air of elegance. She doesn't chase after Hoffman who has fallen back. Instead, she slowly approaches Ciel. ...It's a way of walking you'd find among models but certainly not during a battle.

And then she sends a Demonic Eyes-like look my way across Ciel's shoulder.

She carries an item similar to scales, I think, in her hand. It's definitely a Mythological item seeing how it contains a huge amount of mana. Her expression tells me that she's evaluating me while using that item.

Then she switches to an expression of comprehension, and makes an old-fashioned hat appear on her head.

"...I understand. So that spearmaster is carrying it...let's pull back for now."

"Oki♪ I wanted to play a lot more, but I'm satisfied since the mana of the <Servant Leaders> was delicious♪"

"Don't bluff. Haven't you used up most of it by now? But, for you to be the only one to play with the spearmaster...it's unfair. Still, since the spearmaster possesses the aura of a god slayer, we must be careful with the games♪"

"Yep, yep, careful is best~ Let's go home."

The butterfly women talk with chirpy, unique voices as if to confirm each other's intentions while smiling. And then they make their waists and breasts jiggle, making good use of their tight waists. They fly up into the air like those dancers who perform Hawaiian dances of happiness.

...I don't know what to say. The battlefield tension is completely gone.

"Don't fuck with me!!" Hoffmann rages.

His black blood body half sways violently after having turned into a conglomeration of wild and

mad waves of darkness. And then, an eerie crimson-eyed monster appears, blinking from within those dark waves. Hoffmann floats up while rotating, and chases after Jody and Ciel who are about to retreat.

I feel like I can understand his anger quite well. But, it's unexpected that the Death Butterfly people would withdraw so readily. Was all of this truly just a game for them? I suppose them trying to measure my true power by pretending to play around because they sensed my mana also plays into this.

Either way, they seem not interested in making a true enemy out of me. If they had injured Rollo or Higlia...I think I'd have started to fight just like Hoffman, without a care that they might just play around.

Now then, I'm curious what's going to happen to Hoffmann, but for now I'll prioritize the children.

"Rollo, Higlia, we're going."

"Nya~"

"Okay!"

We energetically run into the cave. It's dark inside. The walls are moist, and the air is mixed with the stench of mold and blood. The size of the dome, including the walls, has at least a diameter of several dozen meters, I think.

The side walls continue to have conspicuous traces of having dented in, overlapping into multiple alcoves and niches. Since I can measure the width of the cave by eye, I guess you can call it narrow.

As we head deeper inside...the cracks on the rock surface grow in number. I suppose this is a result of rain having permeated the rock over many, many years. There are also some spots where huge amounts of water leak out.

Also, it looks like lighting magic tools have been originally installed on the walls. Someone has moved broken magic tools and fragments clad in bright light to the sides.

We carefully advance through the cave while stepping across those fragments. The tip of <Blood Chain Search> points deeper into the cave while following the trail of Arry's blood. Rollodeen properly follows Higlia and me even though she plays ice hockey by kicking the scattered rocks around.

Higlia walks while amassing mana in her legs to capitalize on her power as an ancient wolfwoman. She completely stayed out of the battle against the butterfly woman, but she might be considerably strong when it comes to close combat. I can tell that the physical abilities are quite high.

At that moment, I hear from ahead in the cave, "Kill them!" "Don't screw around! As if Sword King Moga and Twilight Nemus would get done in by the likes of small fry vampires!" "Ne~~~~mus!"

A talking voice blended with many screams, and a deep rumbling.

Small rocks break off the fissures in the rock, and drop down from the side walls. It doesn't look like this cave is close to collapsing, but it must have been an attack with amazing firepower. Even so, I feel like I've heard those voices before.

No way, you're kidding, right?

"...It seems they're fighting inside the cave as well."

"Sure looks like it——"

Higlia speaks up to me while extending silver claws from her index and middle fingers on both hands. It appears she's capable of combat at any moment.

Rollodeen, who was at my feet, bumps her head against the silver fur at Higlia's leg. Does she like her fur over me? Well okay, I don't have any fur growing on my legs...

It breaks my heart a bit...well, it'd be a lie to say I don't care.

Even while feeling shocked, I nod at Higlia and run through the cave's corridor leading towards the source of the noise. My blood chain points in the same direction as well.

Just as expected, a battle is taking place down the corridor. The rock surface is punctured with holes.

"Moga! Stroooong!"

"Nemus stroooong, muscleman~~~"

Eh? The voices of children?

Once I arrive at the scene, I spot that dearly-missed, unbalanced duo fighting vampires while protecting many people with the children in their midst.

"——Oooh, ain't that you guys, Moga, Nemus!?"

This place is spacious enough. I brandish Baldok, swinging it from the side. While bisecting the torso of a vampire, I greet those two. While at it, I'll also confirm the state of the children.

"Arry and Taack, right?"

"Huh? Our names."

"Yep, I'm Arry."

I can also see the nostalgic "rabbit tail" dangling at Arry's waist. That's...

Well done, Quiche. Your judgment proved to be correct.

The rabbit tail, which Azorla owned, seems to properly exhibit its effect. ...Right away, I feel like

seeing an illusion of the Ignite Fang of Polar Bear Pau and the laughing Azorla behind the children as if protecting them. I'm unconsciously moved to tears....as I look at those smiling faces.

Azorla...have you watched over them?

However, this place is a battlefield. Sadness and happiness have to wait for later.

I focus on <Blood Path - Open Second Gate> and invoke <Blood Chains Banquet>. The blood chains swarm towards the vampires that are still alive.

It'd have also been fine to go with <Chain Spear of the Ray System>, but I'll obliterate them with a world of blood.