

He comes running at huge strides as you'd expect from a giant. The mana emitted from his body causes the water in the river below to be blown away. He definitely has a terrifying force.

The witch spear, which is about to appear from his shoulder, shakes in concert. The red meatball representing that Adom-something duke remains floating in the air. Does that guy count as an outer combat force now?

Schmihazar's speed has gone up by a level compared to earlier. Is it the effect of the fire wand?

The tentacles grown out of Iglued have penetrated Schmihazar's thighs and are glowing as they're linked to the spear. It looks like they are raising his physical abilities.

Schmihazar thrusts Iglued at me as if to match the timing with me covering my whole body with Magic Combat Style at full throttle. As Iglued approaches, I activate <Blood Acceleration> once again, cladding my body in blood from my feet up to the back. At the same time I perform the footwork of the Wind Spear Style's 『Single Fold Stick』.

While twisting my waist and right arm, I transfer my Lucival strength into Baldok, unleashing a forceful <Thrust> against Schmihazar's Iglued. Iglued's blade and Baldok's red spear collide, both screeching and releasing respectively red and green flashes of light. A mana ripple, err, shock wave travels through space. With the point where the two spears hit each other as origin, the river also turns into a raging stream.

My forebangs are swaying as well.

"Gununu, equal, huh——" Schmihazar comments with his lips trembling after being likewise struck by the shock wave.

Certainly, on a first glance, we're equal. But, this is only the beginning, Schmihazar.

While rotating the right hand with Baldok, I draw it close to me. This allows me to hook onto Iglued's spearhead with Baldok's red ax blade, causing Schmihazar's posture, alongside his left arm Iglued, to pitch diagonally forward. This is the same situation as a while ago.

It's the spear technique I learned through the mock battle against the Divine Spear King ranker Riko. But, probably because he's already seen it once, Schmihazar deals with it, relying on spear techniques and his boosted physical abilities.

"——Hah!" Schmihazar yells with a voice full of spirit.

He forces the spear blade sideways, out of my lock, and then swings it back towards my head, aiming to cut it apart from the cheek.

I can see the approaching green spearhead through the ax blade. I avoid it at hair's breadth, and then focus on Baldok which I'm holding beneath my neck with both hands. I draw my left hand close to me, and push up the metallic handle of Baldok with my right hand as if to punch. This causes the butt end of Baldok to head for Schmihazar's abdomen while drawing a blue arc from below.

The Magic Dragon Gem hit Schmihazar's abdomen as a counter. I immediately hear a dull thud

from that direction, accompanied by cracking sounds. His new armor, a combination red and green, quickly cracks, and the gem sinks into his belly. The armor caves in deeply, and violet flesh splatters off the spot of impact. It seems to have applied some pressure on his entrails.

"——Guoooh."

Schmihazar pitches forward and falls down, face first. I suppose because he's a giant, his body isn't overly nimble. This time it's different from the previous attack with Murasame. I also felt a proper feedback through Baldok.

I'll wrap this up in one breath——

I summon Ganghis into my left hand while pulling back Baldok. While twisting my left hand, and pouring mana into Ganghis, I unleash <Darkness Drill>. Ganghis lunges forward as if to replace Baldok at the front.

The flat spearhead of Ganghis with its two crescent-moon blades, clad in darkness, heads for the top of Schmihazar's head as he groans in pain. Schmihazar stands still, but just when I believe that Ganghis would penetrate his head, Schmihazar's left hand Iglued responds.

The chilly afterglow of Iglued's glowing Demonic Eye remains in my visual field. A flock of several, hand-like tentacles branches out of its handle, and entwines Ganghis alongside the darkness coiling around it.

The vibrating spearhead of Ganghis continues towards Schmihazar's head while severing the tentacles entangling it as if felling trees in a forest, but the number of tentacles is abnormally high. Eventually, Ganghis' spearhead is stopped midway.

Well, I've expected as much. I instantly focus on the tassel of Divine Spear Ganghis.

"Guaaaaah."

"Gyaaa——"

The bluish-white hair strands instantly turn into blades, and transform into a balloonfish. Schmihazar's whole body as well as Iglued's are completely pierced by the needles. They look as if sewed into the sky. Schmihazar has stopped moving alongside Iglued.

Nice, it's a great chance——

I thrust out Baldok at Schmihazar's neck after having pulled it back in no time earlier, activating <Darkness Drill>.

Suddenly, Iglued explodes.

Huh? It's not an explosion. Iglued has willingly scattered its own small shrubs and branches as if splitting apart. Iglued also separates from Schmihazar.

"——Iglued! Well doneee—— Guoooh!" Schmihazar shouts.

The thick trunks, which are repeatedly separated from Iglued, extend towards Baldok's red spear, entangling it. They are moving like snakes as they coil themselves around the spearhead. The red spear, clad in a dark mist, got completely covered.

The spiraling red spear consecutively runs against branches. As the trunks of the small trees appear to have a darkness attribute, they absorb the momentum of <Darkness Drill>. The trunks grow out, catch fire as soon as they get in contact with the spear, and vanish. This process keeps repeating itself. Just like that the red spear gets entangled in a net of countless trees, and has its force chipped away in the same way as Ganghis.

Within milliseconds, the rotation of <Darkness Drill> comes to a halt, before the spear stops entirely. The trees of Iglued seemed as though they were only escaping the blue hair blades of Ganghis, but instead it looks like they were used to capture Baldok.

For caution's sake I erase Baldok while pulling my right hand back, and immediately following, Schmihazar, now without a left arm, shouts "I offer myself——"

A huge amount of blood gushes out of the opening at his left shoulder. The witch spear is about to appear from there.

Schmihazar's body shrinks down, being sucked into the dark red, long shaft of the witch spear together with his violet blood while spiraling.

The small, one-eyed meatball screams from afar. But, rather than the demon...Schmihazar's former left arm that has detached alongside the spear is much more of a problem.

Due to Baldok disappearing, the original Iglued moves in a way showing that she lost her target. Next Iglued transforms into the shape of a honeycomb while dividing many times over like a kaleidoscope. This also allows it to perfectly escape the hold of Ganghis' blue hair blades.

The thing now looks like a honeycomb with the countless combs filled by artistic mirrors and the Demonic Eye in its middle. It continues to expand while playing a lute music piece. As it keeps creating something akin to glue, it continues encroaching the space around it.

Is this an illusion? No, it's a type of <Dusk of Origin>.

A liquid similar to a greenish, translucent solution is being ejected from the Demonic Eye.

I make Ganghis disappear from my left hand, and summon Baldok back into my right hand in exchange. While at it, I also try to set up a defense formation with <Chain>, but an inarticulate voice reverberates, saying, "——A sacrifice is a sacrifice."

"Fufu, I wonder whether I should let you experience the same pain——"

My visual field becomes pitch black. At the same time, pain assails my head and right arm. Magic Observation doesn't work either.

"——Guoo..."

Next I hear metallic sounds from the chest area of my Evil Dragon King armor, and the shoulder dragon. It looks like they're under fire. But, from under my feet I can properly sense how I'm walking across water.

While focusing on that water, I hurriedly fire ice pebbles from my shoulder dragon as I brandish Baldok. As soon as I shoot <Chain>, I try to step away, but——

"It's useless. But, what's that armor you're wearing, sacrifice? Even though I tried to shred it apart and devour it like back then, I couldn't cut through it."

The voice of Iglued, which sounds terribly sad as it's accompanied by a flute song, reaches my ears, feeling as if it's going to encroach my brain.

At that moment, a nostalgic voice, the voice of my Master, overwrites Iglued's voice which appears to affect my mind.

『Good, that's the way. Try to keep going. Feel the distance, and obtain the deepest secrets of the rotational evasion』

『——Yes!』

My eyes are filled with the gruesome training I did at the Goldiba village. I remember the many, many times I had to deal with spiked logs. Sounds, pace, how to place the axis of the rotation on my soles, the distance to the approaching spikes, and the sensation of the black spear's range in my right hand.

While recalling the time when I finally reached the point where I could evade the spiked logs...I close my eyes, calm my mind, and perform a half-turn on my toes.

"Eh? You evaded by using the water?"

Next I do a half-turn in the opposite direction.

"You evaded again? Can you see me?" Iglued further cries out, "Unbelievable! The water is being absorbed into your feet!? A cane as form?"

But, in the next instant,

※You have met the conditions for a skill derivation of the Extra Skill <Demonic Cerebral Spine Revolution> ※

※Piiing※ <Dark Water Moon of Nothingness> ※Acquired permanent skill ※

※<Super Demonic Brain Nimble Sensation> and <Dark Water Moon of Nothingness> have combined ※

※Piiing※ <Super Brain - Hazy Moon Reflection on Water> ※Acquired permanent skill ※

I receive such a chain of messages, informing me about the acquisition and fusion of skills. And then, my foresight and Iglued's image became one.

At once, I perform the new Hazy Moon Reflection on Water and succeed for the first time in unconsciously following up with an attack of my own after evading Iglued's illusionary attack. My eyes were tightly shut, but I could clearly tell that the tip of Baldok's red spear...had pierced something.

"Ouuucchhh——it hurts! Cold and hot. My core...has been exposed..."

At that moment, vague images that seemed to be Iglued's memory...

『Elias, your precious heart...』

『It's okay as it is, Iglued...』

With a sad song of flute and singing playing in the background...I hear such voices that seem to be echoes of the past.

※Piing※ <Water Cover> ※Acquired skill ※

My sight returns to normal alongside the acquisition of a new skill. I've been saved by Master Achilles' voice.

Thank you very much, Master——

I extend a greeting to my Master by overlapping my fists so that Baldok lays sideways. As I recall Master's face...I notice how steam rises from Baldok's red spear. For an instant I saw something similar to a water membrane protecting the red spear. Must be the last traces of <Water Cover>.

The billowing steam projects Iglued's expression. It's one full of sadness and sorrow, but it's still the head of a beautiful woman. Is that her true face?

The beautiful Iglued is crying. A teardrop falls into the river. But, as soon as a gust of the evening wind crosses past, the steam disperses like fine dust. However, her tears, which have fallen into the river, cause ripples on the water surface, making a faint sound as they spread.

Thereupon, as if connected to the sound...the dust that used to be Iglued converges in one spot right above the river. I don't know whether it's the power of the wind, sound, or her final moment, but...a pretty, light green boulder floats up in front of the cluster of gathered dust.

No, is that the seed of a plant? I don't know whether it's a seed or a stone, but the round object tries to get away as it sways. Trees are depicted in the designs on its surface, and it also has a small lute mark.

...How beautiful. It resembles the tree that existed inside Iglued's Demonic Eye. Is that round object actually Iglued's main body?

I feel some heartbreak from her final moments...

At that point, I focus on <Tail of the Crushing Evil Spirit Tree>. In an instant I send glowing trees with the size of an arm towards the round object. At the same time I imagine a cage off the cuff.

The trees encase the surface of the object. In no time the trees complete something like a wood cage, locking up Iglued within.

I don't know whether this is going to save her. If it's a seed, I could put it into the Wave Gourd, maybe? Or like Catiza...but, that's all I can think of.

While pondering about that, I send the cage in the direction where Higlia and the others had escaped to before.

"Aahhhh! Iglued was done in! Even though she absorbed a part of me!" The small, round meatball laments.

It's coming closer to me while flying. I don't have a clue whether it's a man or a woman, but the small wings on its back look cute as they flap about. Let's grab this one with the trees as well.

"——What the hell are theeese! Let go! I'm Demonic Duke A..."

Since he's so noisy, I plug up his small mouth with a tree. Then I have the slightly bigger cage of the Demonic Duke-kun line up next to the cage with Iglued, and have both of them head to the other side of the river.

At that point, as I'm wondering what's happened to Schmihazar, it looks like his upper body has been sucked into the witch spear he had summoned from his own shoulder. Only his legs with their conspicuous hooves remain. The wand clad in fire has vanished as well.

A corpse with just its feet thrust out from a pond reminds me of a certain, famous thriller...

The witch spear seems to have finally appeared as well. The spear combines scarlet and ivory black colors. Moreover, the grip of the handle is rather odd. A fine material like particles or sand, clad in mana, floats around the grip. It kinda looks like the ring of Saturn. The grip's part is translucent with a tinge of red...

Can you actually hold that thing? I have my doubts whether you could call it a spear.

But, after all is said and done, I'd say it's a spear from the handle upwards. The handle itself is big with motifs similar to the Burning Knights' heads. The portrait of a woman is depicted in the middle, surrounded by those skeletal heads. The brain slightly peeks out of the woman's skull. A magic symbol is visible on her forehead.

A woman's naked body...is something that would delight me usually. But, the skin at her torso has been turned inside out with magic crests having been engraved onto that inner skin layer.

This is a huge turn-off. Truly a witch spear...a cursed spear.

Then again the blade of the witch spear is slender and refined, focusing on the curve lines as if trying to depict a woman's form. A dark red stake blade is affixed to the end of the staff continuing from the handle and apparently combining bones and metal. Blood drips from the tip that reproduces a touranba [efn_note]This is a special tempering pattern created by the swordsmith Tsuda Echizen Nokami Sukehiro from Osaka in the early years of the Edo period. You can find a

picture of the pattern here: https://www.hyogo-c.ed.jp/~rekihaku-bo/historystation/rekihaku-meet/seminar/bugu-kacchuu/obj/img/tk/tk_intro3_img5.jpg (it's the first from the left)[/efn_note] .

The part with the skeleton heads was the one that absorbed Schmihazhar. Countless bone hands have taken hold of Schmihazhar as if to lure him into the abyss.

As I'm watching, the magic source response of my partner — I guess she's been able to come back at last.

In the next instant, crimson flames similar to a madder-red sun wrap up Schmihazhar's legs.

"Nyagoa!"

"Rollo!"

These flames belong to Rollo's directional attack. A hot wind blows against my face.

I can't see Schmihazhar or the witch spear because of the flames, but I can sense their magic sources through Grasping Perception. Through my magic source perception I can also observe how Rollo's flames contract, turning into a sphere. The flame sphere caves with dull impact sounds, and then loudly flies off upwards just like fireworks. The sphere heads into the sky right above us as if to create a new sun.

The witch spear, which is in the middle of absorbing the rest of Schmihazhar, deploys a gray membrane while hovering in midair. It looks like the spear has repelled the flames by deploying a magic defense field.

In the next moment our surroundings are as brightly illuminated by the flame ball as if a flare had been shot into the sky. Seemingly surprised by that sudden light, the fish in the river leap up.

"Nn——" Rollo reacts to the fish.

Her forepaws are twitching. But, she seems to be more curious about her own flames moving through the sky. While widely opening her mouth and thus exposing her glistening fangs, Rollodeen meows towards the sky as if saying, 『It got flicked away~』.

However, her eyes then turn back to the fish as her interest is apparently drawn towards them again. As she does, I can see that Rollodeen's paws are dirty with soil. Moreover, the fur above her head is stirring restlessly? Is she carrying something?

"Rollo, what's the thing on your head?"

"Nn, nyao~"