

But leaving that aside, I cannot afford to let Quiche fight that monster. Focusing on my shoulder dragon, I changed Hal'Konk from its tank top version into its Evil Dragon King armor.

I pass Quiche while dashing through the sky, closing in on the semi-transparent orc.

『——Helme, lend me your strength』

『Yes, "just as usual."』

I don't give any particular response to Helme's telepathic comment, but I'm sure a smile is blooming on my face right now. While strongly thinking of a certain image, I activate <Spirit Ball Conception>.

The glittering liquefied Helme slides out of my left eye with a wet sound. The fluid, which is hard to describe as liquid or sap, spreads out from my left eye, dyeing a part of my left shoulder turquoise blue as a new defense layer.

※Piing※ <Elixir Law - Catfish Conception> acquired

Oh, I got a skill when I created a strong mental image. The left field of vision for <Elixir Law - Catfish Conception> that's based on <Spirit Ball Conception> is as mysterious as ever.

If you look at it from the side, it might seem as though a huge, planet-like catfish is floating above me on the left. Maybe it even looks like a Spirit Beast.

Immediately following, the orc reacts to me approaching it from the sky, and roars loudly, "Don't get any clooooooser! Nuguuoooh!", with its muzzle cracking open to the sides.

It then throws an orc corpse my way.

Whoa, how amazing! There's still quite a bit of distance left between us.

I quickly rotate my body vertically, swinging Baldok by drawing my right hand back. The orc body, which closes in on me trying to completely fill my visual field, is bisected by the red ax blade. I continue rotating forward while getting basked in blood.

Just like that, I land on the ground, firmly planting my feet down. The corpse had been awfully heavy. It might have been a special <Throw> technique that transforms corpses into meatballs.

It was spot on to not allow Quiche to fight this thing.

Right when that thought crosses my mind, the orc's attack is incoming after it's closed the distance between us. The attack consists of semi-transparent tentacles which have extended from the orc's crooked fist.

We're still separated from each other quite a bit, but...that guy got a considerably high reaction speed. And the approaching tentacles are abnormally fast, too.

Before deploying my <Chain>, I manipulate <Elixir Law - Catfish Conception> that covers the area from my left eye to my left shoulder, making a warped, catfish-shaped defense layer expand in front of me.

As soon as the tentacles get in contact with the <Variation of Ball Conception>, they get instantly absorbed in <Elixir Law - Catfish Conception> as if disappearing.

"What are youuuuuu!?! A trooolll vanguaaaaard?" The orc screams loudly.

"Do I look like a troll to you?" I ask through <Elixir Law - Catfish Conception> as it blocks the orc's ranged attack while drawing closer to it.

"...Humph! So you're a collaborator of the Tree Apparition King who's slipped in among the humans?"

"Who the hell is that? I know the Death Butterfly people though." I answer while getting even closer.

"Whaaaaat, stay awaaaay! A person from the underground world, eh!? Nuuuuaaaaa——"

The number of tentacles shooting out of the orc's fist increases. However, small, Helme-like hands extend from the catfish shape, grabbing the tentacles instead and pulling them into the turquoise blue interior of the catfish. The tentacles closing in on me vanish in an instant. It seems like the tentacles just have a semi-transparent color, but otherwise don't differ from flesh or material-based tentacles.

"You ate them!?"

"Smart boy——"

I kick off the ground, and shoot <Chain> ahead from my left factor mark. As the chain's tip stabs into the ground, I reel it in like an anchor, forcing my body to move. Using that movement force, I keep shortening the distance to the surprised orc.

The orc swiftly brandishes its extended left arm downwards while making its body's interior gleam. It tries to squash me from above, but I quickly erase <Chain> and dodge to the left.

An intense noise as it happens when the ground caves in reverberates across the vicinity. At the same time rock fragments hit my neck and face, causing a certain amount of pain.

——However, I ignore that pain.

After the evasive movements, I kick off the ground once more, shifting towards counter-attacking from a right angle. I spread out water from life magic while simultaneously manipulating <Spirit Ball Conception> through <Elixir Law - Catfish Conception>.

Then I crouch down while creating multiple water layers beneath my feet. Yep, it's the technique of spear user Soleck. With my body half-risen, I unleash a low thrust, invoking <Fang Stab> as I stab

out Baldok with my right hand.

The spiraling red spear drills through the orc's leg.

"Nuguuoooh——"

Once the orc releases its mana with its upper body trembling, its body splits apart. The suddenly appeared smaller, semi-transparent orc versions are slender in contrast to their main body. Each of them holds a silver magic sword.

The situation has abruptly developed into a 3 vs. 1, but I cope with it calmly.

——Blood Mana <Blood Path - Open Third Gate>.

I activate my blood acceleration. Making Baldok disappear, I summon Ganghis into my left hand. Tilting Ganghis diagonally below, I parry the low stab aimed at me by the orc on my left. Next I switch to a two-handed hold, and lift Ganghis above my head, blocking an upper slash coming from my right.

Then I move Ganghis vertically, parrying a mid-tier slash targeting my side, and at the same time I stoop down to dodge a sweeping slash by the main body.

At that point, I ward off another approaching sweep by tilting Ganghis' blade diagonally once more. Making Ganghis rotate as if drawing an arc, I rotate myself as well. The blood and water sticking to my feet is being scattered around me, representing my movements.

Ganghis' circular movements belongs to the Wind Spear Style's 『Branch Twine』. I wield Ganghis to draw a circle in the air dragging the silver sword I've turned aside along. It's a counterattack by entangling the sword with my spear, but the enemy is strong and fast.

Two orcs have synchronized their movements, both stepping in towards me with their swords at the ready and simultaneously swinging their swords.

I put priority on defending myself. I move Ganghis, which I've been rotating up until then, vertically, allowing me to receive the synchronized sweeps of both orcs with the middle part of Ganghis.

Sublime, fickle sparks scatter as Ganghis clashes with the two silver blades. Moreover, a shrill metallic screech hits my ear drums.

——Don't think I'll just keep defending, okay?

I step forwards as if sidling up while intentionally smiling. At the same moment, I stab Ganghis into the ground. While focusing on the hand holding the spear, I deliver a front kick, driving Arzen's Boot into the chest of the orc on my right, sending it flying.

At that instant, the main body's sword lunges at me. It's a thrusting technique that's attempting to pierce through my chest. It has apparently judged that I'd be defenseless when my kick comes to an end.

While evading the incoming sword point by shifting my body sideways, I wind up the sword approaching from my left with the <Spirit Ball Conception> I've deployed at my feet, causing the left orc clone to become defenseless instead.

I make use of Ganghis as it's vertically stabbed into the ground, and twist my waist as if performing a pole dance on Ganghis, dispatching a right turn kick. The kick, with mana charged into Arzen's Boots, impacts on the orc's head.

A dull gong and sprays of blood scatter into the surroundings, but without paying any attention to that, I use the momentum of my kick. While registering how the orc clone with the pulverized head vanishes, I rotate my body.

Suddenly, the main body extends its arm, aiming the point of its sword at my foot. Is it trying to crush the foot that produces all my swift rotational movements?

——I use the approaching silver sword against the orc. Measuring the timing by watching the sword point, I jump as if making my body float a bit, and adjust my balance by pouring mana into my left foot.

Just like that, I trample down on the sword's middle part with the image of crushing the orc to death with the sole of Arzen's Boot. I place my body weight on the sword, pushing down the sword even further with the intent to completely bury it in the ground.

In the next instant, I summon Baldok into my right hand, and whirl around while pinning down the main body's sword with the sole of my left foot.

Yep, it's a shift from a spear stance to a spear stabbing technique.

At the same time I erase Ganghis, and resummon it into my left hand again, before thrusting out Baldok in my right hand.

I activate <Water Drill> on the spiraling red spear. The spear covered by water looks unusual. Given that it's being clad with water while that very water keeps evaporating, the attack looks like a steam stab. Even as I consider that the spear and skill might not be very compatible with each other, the red spear's <Water Drill> penetrates the main body's abdomen.

I feel feedback, but it's kinda shallow?

"Gununununu——"

The main body falls prostrate, groaning while holding onto Baldok.

At that moment, the clone orc I've blown away with my front kick aims its sword at my torso, but it's too slow. While letting go of Baldok, I dodge the sword thrust with <Hazy Moon Reflection on Water>. Continuing from there, I direct one hand towards the ground with a cartwheel motion while my body stands sideways. Thrusting that hand into the ground like a water surface, I lower my waist while closing the distance.

Even as I'm showing my back to my opponent, I drive an upper vertical kick into the clone's bosom. A dull thud reaches my ears from its abdomen accompanied by a solid feedback from my foot.

Having suffered a counter, the clone is hurled high into the air. With its body folded, the orc's body is slowly disappearing, but I won't let it get off so easily. I unleash <Dark Water Moon Pierce> at the clone's belly.

It's a nimble spear technique that continues to alter my posture from propping my body up with a hand to drawing a half moon in the air alongside Ganghis. I thrust myself towards the orc's belly as if having become one with Ganghis' spearhead which seems to pierce the heavens.

"Gyaa——"

The scream by the clone orc concludes with it ending up on Ganghis. In that instant, foggy blood is released from the clone orc's muzzle, and it disappears.

"Hiii."

This scream comes from the main body that's still alive. The main body orc has maintained its semi-transparency even after getting hit by Baldok's red spear and ax blade at the abdomen. Quite the tough guy.

I try to pull Baldok out of the orc's abdomen, but it doesn't allow me to do so.

"Don't touch it with your dirty hand——" I shoot ice pebbles at it from Hal'Konk's shoulder dragon.

Next I fire <Chain> from point-blank. The chain's spearhead penetrates the main body's body. The ice pebbles stab the area around the orc's eyes.

"Guuuaaa."

Moreover, I shoot a series of 《Ice Bullets》, controlling them so that they don't damage Baldok. The orc's flesh is scattered as it's showered by a spray of machine gun bullets, continuously becoming smaller while unable to even scream.

I erase <Chain> as it meaninglessly cancels my spells. In the middle of that, the orc's body changes its color, becoming dark. Without caring about that, I advance with my Blood Acceleration while absorbing the scattering mana, flesh, and blood with <Spirit Ball Conception>.

Grabbing Baldok with my right hand, I pull it out of the now small lump of meat that used to be an orc. As soon as I extract the spear, the hole in the orc's abdomen becomes visible. Blood quickly surges out of that hole.

At that moment, Baldok's red spear and ax blade glow. Baldok releases threads similar to the witch spear's filaments, and sucks up the orc's blood.

A huge heart with a magic square talisman stuck to it is visible through the hole that has become spot-clean after the blood was absorbed. Its heart is located in its abdomen?

Also, Baldok seems to be slowly changing.

At that instant, the heart squirms. For the time being, I erase Baldok.

"Is it possibly stuffed with several magic hearts? Oh well, not like I care——" I rotate sideways while muttering this indifferently.

If Mysty was here, she might have stopped me, telling me that she wants to research it, but I've no reason to stop.

Yep, of course I'm holding Ganghis in my left hand.

——I activate <Darkness Drill - Evil Destruction Spear>.

It doesn't suit Ganghis to be clad in darkness. Still, its spearhead buries itself entirely in the hole that had been opened up by Baldok.

Accordingly, the huge darkness lance, Destruction Spear Gladopalus, penetrates through the orc while swallowing its body. In an instant, the orc's right body half turns into small pieces, and vanishes.

I cancel my blood mana while also erasing Ganghis. I don't look at the main body dispersing like wind. Rather, I turn in the direction of the women's voices that seem to be quarreling behind me. I won't go as far as calling it a fight, but Quiche and Kisara are exchanging complaints.

Aren't there any other orc soldiers around?

Asking myself, I warily scan the vicinity with Grasping Perception and Magic Observation while approaching the two. But it looks like there are no other enemies around.

"Ah, Shuuya..."

The moment Quiche notices me approaching, she lets go of her beloved longsword. Dropping her shield next as well, she covers her trembling lips with both hands. Green jade earrings adorn her earlobes. Were those Emerald Meditation Gems?

In addition, her white, porcelain-like skin, and a bird on her right chest armor that's bulging out as characteristic for female breastplates. Just as before, small, crane-like emblems are drawn on it.

I don't know about her butt since I can't see it, but it should be alright. I'm sure it's still properly split in two.

"——Shuuya-sama." Kisara props herself up with one knee on the ground.

I nod at her, and then look at Quiche, "I'm back, Quiche——"

While focusing on smiling, I lift my hand to exchange a high-five with her, but Quiche leaps into my chest instead.

"...I saved the children. It appears Azola's amulet did its job."

"I see, I'm glad to hear that. But, I knew that you saved them from you being here."

"Haha, you've got a point there."

"And just like you said that you'd devote all your power into it, you kept your promise. Shuuya, you're a true hero..." Having been hugging me, Quiche pulls away her face a bit, and praises me while staring at me.

Tears are spilling out of her eyes. The tall Quiche...her dear, slender shoulders...

She isn't carrying a knapsack anymore, but memories of us lying atop each other like lovers cross my mind. And a slightly sweaty scent wafts over from her.

I can tell that this fragrant, nice scent doesn't only belong to battle, but also to an elf even without relying on <Inhalation of Odor Technique>.

"Quiche."

"Shuuya..."

Just like that, I steal Quiche small lips.