

Overlord Volume 4 Chapter 2  
Chapter 2 - Gathering, Lizard man



OVERLORD [4] The lizard man Heroes

2章 集う、蜥蜴人

Part 1

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It had already been a half day journey riding on Rororo through the wetlands. The sun was already high in the sky, yet Zaryusu had not encountered any enemies he was concerned about, and arrived safely at his destination.

In the wetlands, there were several residences with houses constructed in the same fashion as those of the Green Claw tribe, surrounded by sharpened spikes facing outwards on all sides. Although there were wide gaps between the spikes, it was sufficiently effective in obstructing large creatures such as Rororo from invading. Although number of houses was less than that of the Green Claw tribe, individually, each one was larger.

Therefore it was not clear which side had a larger population.

Every residence had a flag attached to it billowing in the wind. The flags all bore the Red Eye lizardman mark.

Correct, this was Zaryusu's first intended destination—the settlement of the Red Eye tribe.

After surveying his surroundings, Zaryusu sighed in relief.

This was because, fortunately for Zaryusu, their place of habitat was in the same patch of wetlands, consistent with previously obtained knowledge. He originally reckoned that they could have moved away as a result of the last war, in which case he would have to begin searching for their tribe.

Zaryusu looked back in the direction which he came from, and although he couldn't clearly see it, just narrowly outside of his line of sight was his own village. Right now, his village should be vigorously making various preparations. Although he left with anxiety, he could be fairly certain that the village would be safe from attack for the moment.

The fact that Zaryusu was able to arrive here safely was proof.

He was unable to determine whether this was a flaw in the Great One's plan, or whether his own actions were also within its calculations, but in any case the opponent did not currently intend to go back on its word, and did not attempt to intervene in the battle preparations.

Of course, even if the so called Great One moved his hand to interfere, Zaryusu could only act to implement his beliefs.

Zaryusu leaped down from Rororo and stretched his body. Although riding Rororo over long distances made his muscles stiff, stretching his back made the fatigue seem rather pleasant.

Following this, Zaryusu instructed Rororo to remain at this position to wait for him, then took out some dried fish from his backpack for Rororo, to serve as its breakfast and lunch.

Honestly, he wanted it to forage its own meal from around here, but refrained from giving the order due to the possibility of disturbing the Red Eye tribe's hunting grounds.

After petting each of Rororo's heads several times, Zaryusu set off by himself and proceeded forwards.

If he brought Rororo with him, the other side could feel apprehensive of the hydra and be unwilling to come out. Zaryusu was here to form an alliance, and did not wish to appear high-handed.

He advanced whilst making splashing water noises.

At the corner of his vision, Zaryusu could see several Red Eye tribe warriors walking in a single file around the inner edge of the spike perimeter. Their equipment was exactly the same as those of the Green Claw tribe, not wearing armour and holding wooden spears made from sharpened bone attached to the tip of a wooden staff. There were also people holding ropes used for rock slings, but since these were not loaded with rocks, it should indicate that they had no intention of immediately attacking.

Zaryusu tried as much as possible to avoid stimulating the other side, so he slowly drew closer until both sides arrived before the main entrance. He directed his gaze to the watchful lizardmen and raised his voice.

"I am Zaryusu Shasha of the Green Claw tribe. There is a matter I wish to discuss with your tribe chief!"

After a while, a venerated lizardman holding a walking cane appeared, with five burly lizardmen following behind him. The old lizardman's entire body from top to bottom had markings painted on with white body paint.

*Is this the Elder Druid?*

Zaryusu maintained his authoritative posture.

This person before him was an equal in terms of position, therefore he could not put on an appearance of weakness. Even as the elder druid observed the mark on his chest, Zaryusu did not falter.

"Zaryusu Shasha, of the Green Claw tribe. I have come with a matter to discuss."

"...Although I cannot say that you are welcomed, the leader of our tribe is willing to meet you. Please come with me."

This strange rhetoric confused Zaryusu.

What made him perplexed was why the other individual was not called tribe chief, and also why they did not require him to display an item to prove his identity. However saying anything at that moment could upset the other party, and that would spell trouble. Although he felt that something was off, Zaryusu silently followed behind the line of lizardmen.



He was brought to a beautiful small hut.

It was even larger than Zaryusu's older brother's. The walls were dyed with a rare pattern, proving that the owner of the house was of nobility.

What concerned him was that it had no windows, only a gap for ventilation. Lizardmen could see objects clearly in the dark, but this did not mean that they enjoyed darkness.

Then why would anyone want to live inside such a dark hut?

Zaryusu had many doubts but couldn't turn to anyone for answers.

Looking behind him, the druid and warriors who led the way earlier were all gone.

When those who led the way had told him that they were leaving, he felt that they were being too careless. He almost let his doubt slip.

But when Zaryusu heard that this was the wish of the leader, of the tribe acting chief, His opinion of the person waiting inside the hut rose.

Although he had promised his brother that he would return safely, Zaryusu was already prepared for the possibility that he would be unable to fulfill that promise. As such, surrounding him with armed guards to pressure him would prove ineffective. In fact, it would only make him feel disappointed by the fact that this was all they could muster.

However, if the other party already knew his thoughts and still displayed generosity...

*Possibly a skilled negotiator, a troublesome opponent...*

Ignoring the peeping eyes from the distance, Zaryusu went straight to the door and announced in a loud voice:

"I am Zaryusu Shasha of the Green Claw tribe, and I have come here to meet with the leader of the tribe."

A small voice from within responded in kind, the voice of a female. It granted him permission to enter.

Zaryusu opened the door without hesitation.

The interior was as dark as he had imagined.

Because of the difference in brightness, even if he had night vision capabilities, Zaryusu could not help but to blink a few times.

The air inside smelled something akin to medicine, mixed with the scent of herbs that stabbed the nose. Zaryusu visualised an elderly female lizardman, but this was negated by reality.

“Welcome.”

A voice spoke out from within the darkness. He had mistaken the voice from behind the door as elderly. But hearing it close up, it contained a youthful energy .

Finally accustomed to the change in light, a lizardman appeared in front of his eyes.

White.

This was Zaryusu’s first impression.

Snow white scales, a spotless purity. Round, bright red eyes like rubies, and slim limbs that did not belong to a male, but to a female.

Her entire body was covered in red and black patterns, meaning that she was an adult, able to use a variety of magic and was... unmarried.

Zaryusu had once been stabbed by a spear in the past.

In that moment, Zaryusu felt his body burn fiercely as if it had been pierced by a hot iron stake and likewise his heart also accompanied this by beating rapidly, both combining to produce a feeling of pain shooting across his entire body.

There was no pain, but then...

Zaryusu was lost for words as he stood motionless.

Having interpreted his silence in her own way, she merely gave a self-deprecating smile.

"It seems that I am a strange sight even for the wielder of one of the four treasures, Frost Pain."

Albinos in nature were exceedingly rare, partially because they were too conspicuous. It made it difficult for them to survive.

The somewhat civilized lizardmen had a similar tendency Weak to sunlight, bad eyesight, they have not reached a level of civilization where such feeble individuals could survive. Therefore it was extremely rare to come across an albino adult. There were even cases where they were killed at birth.

It should already be considered fortunate if albinos were seen as detestable existences by ordinary lizardmen. There were even some who saw them as a kind of monster, that was why she had a self-mocking attitude.

However Zaryusu was not like that.

"...What is it?"

The female lizardman inside asked a surprised question towards the motionless Zaryusu standing at the door. Without reacting to the question, Zaryusu let out a tremolo cry.

Hearing this sound, the female lizardman widened her eyes and opened her mouth, in surprise, confusion and in embarrassment.

That sound was none other than a courtship cry.

Zaryusu came back to his senses and realised what he had done. Just like how a human's ears would turn red, he flicked his tail repeatedly in agitation.

"Ah, no, wrong, wait not wrong, not that, this isn't what I..."

Zaryusu's frantic movements caused the female lizardman to calm down, and she smiled, making Zaryusu puzzled.

"Please calm down. It's troubling if you move so violently."

"Ah! Sorry."

Zaryusu hung his head, made an apology and then entered the room. At the same time the female lizardman's tail drooped as if she had finally relaxed. However the very tip of her tail was still fluttering, indicating that she was not entirely calm.

"Please come over."

"...My sincere gratitude."

Entering into the home, Zaryusu saw that the area where she was indicating had a cushion woven from an unknown plant. He sat on it, and she sat opposite to him.

“This is the first time we have met, I'm a traveler of the Green Claw Tribe, Zaryusu Shasha.”

“Thank you for your courtesy. I am the acting chief of the Red Eye Tribe, Crusch Lulu.”

After the introductions were over, the two observed each other as if to guess each other's intentions.

The hut was temporarily submerged in silence, but this could not be allowed to continue. Zaryusu was a guest, therefore it should be the host Crusch who should say the first word.

“First, mister messenger, I believe there is no need for us to be so formal. I would like for us to speak freely, so please make yourself comfortable.”

Accepting the proposal to speak without reserve, Zaryusu nodded.

“I am truly grateful for that, since I am not accustomed to speaking with a serious and formal tone.”

“Then do you mind sharing the reason for your visit?”

Although she asked, Crusch already had a rough idea.

The mysterious undead which appeared at the centre of the village. Magic that controls the weather, 4<sup>th</sup> tier magic 「Control Cloud」. And now the male lizardman from a different tribe, one who could even be called a hero.

From here, there could only be one expected answer. As Crusch pondered on how to deal with Zaryusu's reply— she felt all of her expectations shatter.

“...Please marry me.”

.....

.....?

.....?!

“...Ha?!”

For an instant, Crusch doubted her ears.

“Actually, this was not my original purpose for coming here. I fully know that this should wait until after my objective is completed. But I can't lie to my heart. You may laugh at this foolish male.”

“A...a...ah... ha.”

These were words which she had never heard since the moment of her birth, and ought to have no relevance to her. Her thoughts were torn to shreds in a turbulent storm, scattering all over the place and as such she couldn't organize them.

Towards such a flustered Crusch, Zaryusu revealed a forced smile and continued to speak:

"I apologize, I don't know what to say, we are currently facing a contingency. Your response can wait until this is over."

"Uh, ha...haha."

Finally able to piece together her psyche and successfully resume her thoughts, Crusch regained her composure. However upon immediately recalling Zaryusu's words from a moment ago, her thoughts once again slipped into disarray.

Crusch tried to secretly take a peek at the male's face in front of her which had an extremely calm expression.

*Saying something like that to me, but he's still so calm... Perhaps he frequently proposes to other people?! Or perhaps he is already accustomed to this having been proposed so often? ...Although he certainly is rather dashing... Ah, what am I thinking! This is part of his plan, it must be, intending to control me, making a proposal to me and proclaiming love. P-p-proposing to someone like me...*

She, who had never had the experience of being treated as a female, was unable to keep her cool and failed to notice that the tip of Zaryusu's tail was also slightly trembling. The man in front of her was also using strength of will to control his emotions from displaying themselves.

That was why a period of silence resulted. Both individuals required some silent time to allow the exuberance to settle.

Barely ten minutes later, it seemed possible to finally return to the original topic at hand.

Crusch intended to ask Zaryusu again for the reason for his visit, but remembered the words from earlier.

...Just how do you bring that up!

With a slap, Crusch's tail hit the floorboards. The male in front of her flinched, almost as if he was the one who was struck.

This action was too impolite, and Crusch panicked inside.

Even if he was only a traveler, the other person was also a tribe representative... and furthermore not just any ordinary lizardman, but the hero who wielded Frost Pain. Impoliteness towards such a person could surely not be forgiven.

*But this is your fault! What's more, say something!*

Zaryusu was in fact reflecting in embarrassment on his rash action, and had chosen to remain silent. However Crusch, who was preoccupied with her emotions as if she was putting a lid over an active volcano, did not notice this at all.

The silence continued, but since this was not a solution to the current situation, Crusch who had realised this decided that it was best to change the topic.

“Since you are not fearful of my body, perhaps it is not surprising that you are a hero?”

Towards Crusch's barbed words, Zaryusu wore a look of confusion that showed he was clueless as to what she was saying.

Crusch also wondered just what exactly she was thinking.

“Not afraid of my albino body, I mean.”

“...It's like the white snow that covers the top of the mountain range.”

“...Eh?”

“...A beautiful colour.”

Of course, she had never heard this line once in her life.

*W-What is this male saying!*

The internal pressure building up within Crusch reached a point at which it could no longer be contained, and the lid holding it in was blown off with this single phrase. Whilst Crusch was lost in the chaos of her own thoughts, Zaryusu smoothly reached out and stroked her scales. Their bright colour was of a polished beauty... and on those slightly cool scales his hands moved downwards like water in a flowing river.

*Hiss!* It was a short warning noise, but something else was mixed within her breath as well.

It gave both the chance to regain some of their lost composure.

The two realized what was just done to her and what he just did subconsciously. Their entire bodies trembled. Why did I do that? Why did I let him? Doubt became anxiety, and anxiety led to confusion.

As a result, two tails slammed the floor, violently enough to shake the hut.

Then both of them looked at each other, and confirmed the status of the other's tail. As if time had stopped, both tails stopped moving.

“.....”

“.....”

The atmosphere was heavy, or perhaps better described as nervousness. Silence fell upon the two individuals, followed by the two secretly stealing glances at each other. Finally managing to get her thoughts in order, Crusch asked him with an icy gaze, determined to detect any lies in his words.

“...Why did you... all of a sudden?”

Although Crush had trouble expressing her thoughts in words, Zaryusu appeared to have understood as he replied honestly and without hesitation.

“It was love at first sight. Besides, death may result from the war this time, and I do not wish to leave any regrets behind.”

This simple honesty, his words that hid none of his emotions made Crusch momentarily lost for words. However, there was a part that she just could not relate to.

“...Even the wielder of that famous Frost Pain is prepared to die in battle?”

“Correct. The opponent is an incomprehensible enemy, one which cannot be taken lightly... Have you seen the monster that acted as the messenger? The one which came to our settlement had this appearance...”

Crusch accepted the illustration which Zaryusu passed over, and nodded after giving it a cursory glance.

“Yes. It was the exact same monster.”

“Do you know what kind of monster that was?”

“No. Including me, no one in the tribe had any idea.”

“Is that so... actually I have come across that kind of monster once before...” Zaryusu spoke up to this point and paused to observe Crusch's response as he continued “...and I fled.”

“—Eh?”

“It was impossible to defeat. No, to put it nicely, it was a fifty-fifty chance of dying.”

Crusch then understood that the monster was such a terrifying undead, and heaved a sigh of relief that her decision to stop the warriors back then was the right decision.

“It can emit a scream that causes mental confusion. Not only that, it has an ethereal body therefore it is almost entirely immune towards attacks with weapons which are not magically enchanted. Using numbers will not work.”

“Amongst the magic which our druids use, there is a kind of magic which can temporarily imbue magic on swords...”

“...Is it able to defend against mental attacks?”

“It is able to strengthen the resistance, but protecting everyone’s mental state would be too much and our strength would be insufficient.”

“So it’s like that... are all the druids able to use that magic?”

“If it is strengthening resistance, almost all of the druids are capable of it. But I’m the only one in this tribe who can shield the mind from confusion.”

Crusch noticed that Zaryusu’s breathing had shifted ever so slightly. It seemed that he had already noticed that Crusch’s position was not merely an empty title.

Correct. The lizardman Crusch Lulu was an extremely skilled forest druid. Maybe even above some of the other elder druids amongst the lizardmen.

“...Which number was the Red Eye tribe in order of the tribes that were attacked?”

“The opponent said we are the fourth.”

“I see... then, what are your plans?”

Time passed by.

Crusch was contemplating whether revealing the plans would be beneficial. The Green Claw tribe would certainly choose to go to war, and Zaryusu’s objective in coming here should be to form an alliance, requesting to head to battle together. With that in mind, what should be done for the best interests of the Red Eye tribe?

Red Eye tribe originally did not intend to form an alliance. Their opinion was to choose to seek refuge. Going to war against people able to use 4<sup>th</sup> tier magic was an incredibly foolish idea. Moreover, knowing that the undead which were sent out by the opponent possessed such terrifying abilities made it more obvious that there could not be any other verdict.

However, was honestly revealing such thoughts really for the best?

Towards Crusch who was trapped in her own thoughts, Zaryusu narrowed his eyes, and opened his mouth to speak:

“Let me tell you what I truly think.”

Having no idea what Zaryusu was about to say, Crusch looked at him with unblinking eyes.

“What I am worried about is what happens after seeking refuge.”

To Crusch who was unable to understand the meaning of this sentence, Zaryusu calmly continued.

“Do you think that after moving away from a familiar environment which you are used to living in, you will be able to maintain the same lifestyle as the one right now?”

“Impossible... no, it would be rather difficult.”

If they were to leave here and establish a new place of habitat, they would have to fight with their lives on the line — they would have to win the fight for survival. The reality was that lizardmen were actually not the only occupants of this lake, and they had obtained this piece of wetlands after many tiresome years of warring. For this kind of species, it was not possible to easily set up a new habitat in unfamiliar environments.

“There’s also more than enough chance that there wouldn’t be enough food.”

“Probably so.”

Crusch, who was unable to understand what this male lizardman standing in front of her was getting towards, replied with a sharp suspicious voice.

“Then, if the nearby five tribes seek refuge at the same time, what do you think will happen?”

“That...!”

Crusch fell silent, because she already figured out the true meaning behind Zaryusu’s words.

Although the size of the lake was quite vast, when a tribe would choose a certain area to serve as a place of refuge, that area should also be the place that other tribes would want to obtain. Therefore, just moving to a new place could trigger another fight for survival, nearby would also have opponents who would fight for fish as the main source of food supply. Like this, what kind of situation would play out? Finally there would be no guarantee that the most feared result would arise, that being a war just like the one in the past.

“Don’t tell me... the reason you want to fight even though we might not win...”

“...That’s right. With the other tribes combined, I’m considering how many less mouths we can feed.”

“For something like that!”

That was why he wanted to form an army. So even if they lose the battle, there would be less lizardmen to feed.

In a war for survival, it would be extreme but understandable to think that everyone aside from the battle-able warriors, hunters, and druids were expendable. No, in the long-term it may be better if the rest simply died.

Less mouths to feed means less food required to survive. In that case, even coexistence may be possible.

Crusch frantically tried to think of reasons to reject his idea.

“You don’t even know how dangerous the new location will be, yet you want to start from the beginning with reduced numbers?”

“Then I’ll ask you this. Let’s say we easily win the battle for survival, what then? If our fish dwindle, will the five tribes fight one another next?”

“We may be able to catch more fish!”

“And if we can’t?”

She could not answer in the face of Zaryusu’s chilling barrage of questions.

Zaryusu acts with what is the closest to a worst case scenario in mind. Crusch thinks with wishful thinking as her foundation. If a bad situation arises, her choices will lead to disaster, while Zaryusu’s will not.

And even if they were to be defeated and the number of adult lizardmen decrease, they will have died a glorious death in battle.

“...If you refuse, we will have to attack the Red Eyes first.”

The dark tone of his voice caused Crusch to flinch.

It was a declaration that they will not allow only the Red Eyes to flee to a new land with their members intact.

That was the correct, reasonable judgement.

If a tribe with reduced numbers fled to a refuge where the Red Eyes, with their full strength undiminished, had settled, the only thing that awaited them there would be doom. Considering the danger, the only measure would be a preemptive attack. It was an obvious choice for one responsible for an entire tribe. If she herself had been in that position, she would also have made the same decision.

“Even if we lose the war, I believe that allying with us will lower the chance of there being bloodshed between our tribes in the new habitat.”

Crusch, unable to understand what he meant, showed an honest, confused expression on her face. Zaryusu explained himself so that his real intentions would become clear.

“It will plant a sense of camaraderie. Rather than as different tribes, we will be able to recognize one another as allies who fought together.”

That’s right.

Crusch chewed Zaryusu’s words in her mouth.

He was claiming the possibility that tribes that spilled blood together will not be so quick to war against each other if food becomes scarce. But her own ideas and experience caused her to doubt. With her face slightly lowered, as soon as she was about to fall into deep thought, Zaryusu posed a question.

“By the way, how did the Red Eyes overcome that period?”

It felt like being stabbed by a needle. Before she herself realized it, Crusch jumped up. Seeing his face straight on, she could see the surprise on Zaryusu’s face, the one who had asked the question.

*Ah, he asked because he really didn’t know.*

Although she had known him only for a short time, Crusch had grasped the basics of his personality, of the male named Zaryusu. She intuitively realized that it was not a question to threaten them.

Crusch narrowed her eyes and stared at Zaryusu. Her gaze was so sharp that it seemed like it would pierce a hole through him. Unable to understand the reason for her glare, she saw how it made him feel helpless. But even so, Crusch could not control herself.

“—Is there a reason that I need to tell you?”

She spat out her words, tone brimming with loathing. The change in Crusch made him doubt whether he was talking to the same person.

But Zaryusu could not back down. It might contain the answer that will let everyone survive.

“I would like to hear it. Was it a druid power? Or was there another method? Therein could be our salvation...”

Zaryusu stopped there and closed his mouth.

If it really did hold the answer, there was no way that Crusch would look as pained as she did now.

As if she read his mind, Crusch snorted like she was ridiculing everything, including herself.

“You’re right. That is no salvation.”

After a pause, she wore an exhausted smile and continued.

“What we did was a war of fratricide— we ate our dead.”

Zaryusu was unable to open his mouth from the shock that overcame him. Killing the weak—reducing the mouths to feed was not taboo. But eating your own was a foul act and a taboo amongst taboos.

*Why is she telling me this willingly? This is something that should be taken to the grave. Why did she reveal it to an outsider, an envoy? Does she intend to not let me leave alive? No, this isn’t that sort of atmosphere.*

Crusch herself could not understand why she told him.

She knew well how much scorn this would invite from the other tribes. So why—

Her mouth moved smoothly, as if it was not her own.

“That day, when a different tribe started the war, our tribe also had serious food shortages and were in a dangerous situation. But the reason our tribe did not participate in the war was because we were composed of many druids and few warriors. Our druids were able to create food through magic.”

Crusch’s mouth did not show any signs of stopping, as if it was being controlled by a different consciousness.

“But the food our druids made just weren’t enough, not if you were to compare it with the size of the tribe as a whole. The only choice left to us was to walk the path of gradual destruction. Then one day, our tribe chief brought back food. Bright red meat.”

*—Maybe I wanted him to listen... to my sin.*

Crusch grinded her teeth together. The male in front of her listened quietly. Even if he was disgusted, he hid it and listened.

For that, Crusch was grateful.

“Everyone vaguely knew what kind of meat that was. For the moment, we made strict laws and anyone who broke them were banished. The only time the tribe chief would bring back meat was after someone had been banished. Even so, we all closed our eyes and ate in order to survive. But something like that could never last very long. The grievances that piled up suddenly all exploded one day and took the form of a revolt.”

With her eyes closed, she remembered their chief.

“We ate... we knew and still ate. That makes us accomplices and yet... looking back on it now, it’s laughable.”

Crusch finished a silent prayer and stared straight at Zaryusu’s face. She looked into his quiet eyes and saw that they harbored no disgust. She felt surprised from the joy that sprouted from somewhere in her heart.

Why did she feel happy?

Crusch too, vaguely knew the answer to that question.

“... Look at me. Once in a while, someone like me is born in the Red Eye tribe. Since ancient times, they will display a power. In my case, it was the power of a druid. This leads to us having authority that almost rivals that of the tribe chief... And I was the center of the rebellion that split the tribe in half. We won because we had the greater numbers.”

“And in the end, the food was divided up evenly amongst those who were left?”

“Yes... as a result our tribe managed to survive. During the rebellion— that time, the tribe chief never surrendered. He died with countless injuries. And when he received the final blow, he smiled at me.”

As if she was coughing up blood, Crusch continued to speak.

It was the pus that slowly coalesced in her heart, ever since she killed the tribe chief.

The pus that she could never reveal to the members of the tribe who trusted her and fought against their chief, Crusch was just barely able to confess it to the one named Zaryusu. That was why her words did not stop, like water emptying out at the bottom.

“They were not the eyes of someone staring at their killer. No hatred, jealousy, hostility, curses, none of it. It was such a beautiful smile! The chief always faced reality directly and acted. And we... we acted on our ideals and hostility. Maybe the one who was in the right was the tribe chief! That’s what I always think about! Because the chief died— the one who was regarded as the root

of all evil, our tribe was able to unite as one once more. And what's even worse, since our numbers were smaller, we even got the gift of no more food problems!"

This was her limit.

As the tribe acting chief, as the one who shouldered the sin, desperately enduring it all, the force of her collapse was as great as her struggle. The overflowing muddy stream swallowed everything. The thoughts that had been torn to shreds, it was difficult to change them with words alone.

With a faint noise, although her tears did not fall, mentally, she was crying.

It was a small body.

It was agreed that in nature, weakness was a sin. Of course, children were to be protected, but regardless, both male and female lizardmen emphasize strength as a virtue. On that point, the female in front of him could only be seen as an object of ridicule. One who gathers a tribe, how could she show such weakness in front of a stranger, one from a different tribe nonetheless?

However, what Zaryusu felt in his heart was a completely different emotion.

It could have been because she was a beautiful female. But as much as he thought so, he believed that the one before him was a warrior. Wounded, groaning, in torment, but still she tries to walk forward. His thought was that a warrior of such caliber only briefly showed a moment of weakness.

One who tries to stand and walk forward, that person was not weak.  
Zaryusu approached her and hugged Crusch around her shoulders.

"—We are neither omniscient nor omnipotent. We can only choose our course in the moment. I may have acted similarly had I been in the same position. But I don't wish to console you. Just where would one find an answer that is wholly correct this world. We merely walk forward, the soles of our feet bearing countless wounds from our regrets and suffering. You as well, your only option is to move forward. This is what I believe."

As their body temperatures transferred to one another, though slight, they could feel the beating of their heart through their bodies. They were caught in the illusion of the two beating hearts matching their rhythm and slowly becoming one.

It was a mysterious sensation.

Zaryusu felt a warmth that he had never before experienced since the day he was born. It wasn't because he was hugging a lizardman.

*Is it because I'm holding this female, Crusch Lulu?*

After a while, Crusch separated herself from Zaryusu's body.

The heat leaving him was regrettable, but he could not mention it out of embarrassment.

“I’ve shown you something shameful... do you scorn me?”

“Just which part of it was shameful? And do you see me as the type of foolish male to scorn someone getting up and walking forward through the pain and suffering? You are beautiful.”

“—— ! —— ! ! ”

A white tail repeatedly slammed against the floor.

“What should I do.”

Without even being able to ask the muttering Crusch what she meant, Zaryusu asked a different question.

“Anyway, does the Red Eye tribe cultivate fish?”

“Cultivate?”

“Right, it’s raising the fish that will become food.”

“We do not. Fish are nature’s blessing, after all.

The cultivation that Zaryusu was talking of was a technique that was not known to any of the lizardmen tribes. The idea that they could raise their prey with their own hands was an idea that fundamentally different from their way of thinking.

“That seems to be the druid way of thinking. Would you not care to compromise? Raise the fish with the sole purpose of eating them. The druids of my own tribe agreed.”

Crusch nodded her head.

“Then I will teach you how to cultivate fish. The important part is what you feed them. You can give them the fruits created from the druids’ magic. That’ll greatly enhance their growth.”

“Is it really okay for you to share that?”

“Of course. There’s no use keeping it hidden. It’s more important that many tribes survive using this method.

Crusch deeply bowed her head and raised her tail high.

“Thank you.”

“Your gratitude... there is no need. In return, I wish to ask you again.”

The gratitude disappeared from Crusch’s face. Seeing her behaviour, Zaryusu calmed his heart.

The question that absolutely could not be avoided. Both Zaryusu and Crusch inhaled at the same time.

And he asks.

“What will be the Red Eye tribe’s course of action regarding the upcoming war?”

“...From the consensus of yesterday’s meeting, we will be fleeing.”

“Then I will ask Crusch Lulu, the tribe acting chief. And today, is the decision unchanged?”

Crusch did not answer.

Her answer here will determine the fate of the Red Eye tribe. It was obvious that she would hesitate.

However, there was nothing for Zaryusu to do here. All he could do was smile awkwardly.

“... It’s your decision. The reason that the previous tribe chief smiled at you was probably because he was leaving the future of the tribe in your hands. Then now is the time for you carry out your mission. I have said everything there is to say. All that is left is for you to choose.”

Crusch’s eyes darted searchingly around the interior of the hut. She was neither looking for an escape, nor seeking help. But simply to draw out the correct answer from within herself.

Whatever she decides, Zaryusu would accept it.

“I will ask as the tribe acting chief. How many refugees are you planning to evacuate?”

“For each tribe’s refugees I’m considering ten warriors, twenty hunters, three druids, seventy males, a hundred females, and a few children.”

“...And the rest?”

“—Depending on the situation, they will die.”

Crusch wordlessly stared up into space, then suddenly muttered.

“—I see.”

“Then tell me your decision, Red Eye tribe’s acting chief, Crusch Lulu.”

Crusch devised countless ideas.

Of course, killing Zaryusu was also one of the possible choices. She personally did not wish to kill him. But acting chief Crusch was different. What if the whole tribe fled after killing him?

She discarded that idea. It's future was too dangerous. Also, there was no guarantee that he really did come alone.

Then what about promising him before fleeing.

This could also become a problem. If things went wrong, it would set off a war between them and the Red Eye tribe. They would become a target of population depletion. The other side's true intentions would be to reduce the population, it would not matter who the target was.

In the end, he figured that should the answer be no to forming an alliance, Zaryusu would probably return to his village and lead an army here to exterminate the Red Eye tribe.

However, not knowing if Zaryusu had realised, there was one loophole. In the end, the food problem wouldn't be resolved.

Crusch suddenly smiled. From the very start there was no way out. From the moment Zaryusu suggested to her to form an alliance; From the start when the Green Claw tribe's phase of action began—

There was only one path of survival for the Red Eye tribe, that was to form an alliance with the others and participate together in the war. Likewise, Zaryusu should have understood this reasoning.

Even so, he had to wait for Crusch to personally respond. He probably wanted to discern whether Crusch who was in command of the tribe's lizardmen, had the qualifications to become an alliance partner.

All that was left was whether she wanted to voice out her decision.

Except, after declaring that decision, there would definitely be many individuals who would lose their lives. However—

“Let me first make one thing clear. We are not going to war for the sake of sacrificing lives, but to obtain victory. I have perhaps said many things which have made you feel unsettled. However, we want to be the ones with the standing and laughing victoriously. Please do not be mistaken on this point.”

Crusch nodded to express her understanding.

This male lizardman really was kind. With such thoughts, Crusch voiced out her own decision.

“... We, the Red Eye tribe shall cooperate with you, because I do not wish to see tribe chief's smile become meaningless, and also because it will grant Red Eye tribesmen a chance at survival.”

Crusch lowered her head in a deep bow; her tail was straight and elevated.

“—I am extremely grateful.”

Zaryusu nodded slightly. That elevated tail expressed a complex thoughts, more intensely than his words.



Early morning.

Zaryusu stood in front of Rororo, looking towards the main entrance of the Red Eye tribe.

He could not resist opening his mouth wide and yawning. Last night he was a guest spectator at a Red Eye conference until late at night, therefore he was currently a little fatigued. However there was not much time left, and it was necessary to visit another tribe within today.

Zaryusu desperately fought against his drowsiness, but momentarily subsided to it and gave another yawn, but the one this time was even larger than the previous one.

Although sitting on Rororo was not comfortable enough for sleeping, he felt like he was able to do so.

After taking a glimpse of the yellow sun which had just risen, Zaryusu turned his gaze back at the main entrance, and then felt some confusion. This was because a curious object had just run out of the main gate.

It was a bundle of grass.

There were weeds grown on top of a clothing which was sewn together from many long strips of cloth and threads clothes. If one were to lay on the wetlands and observe it from a distance, it would look like a bundle of weeds.

*Ah, I believe I have seen a similar monster somewhere before—*

Zaryusu was just recalling a sight he had seen during his travels as a traveler when Rororo behind him let out a warning low growl.

Of course Zaryusu understood who that bundle of grass actually was, and it was impossible to be incorrect because her white tail was slightly visible.

As he was staring blankly at that excitedly swaying tail whilst at the same time reassuring Rororo, that bundle of weeds had already arrived beside Zaryusu.

“— Good morning.”

“Un, good morning... looks like you unified the entire tribe without a hitch.”

He turned his gaze towards the Red Eye tribe's residence. Since early in the morning, the gathering area had already been palpitating with murderous intent. Many lizardmen were frantically running around. Crusch also stood on one side facing the same direction and replied:

“Yes, no problems have arisen. Today we should be able to arrive at Razor Tail tribe settlement, and those who wish to flee have also already packed up.”

The druids inside the village used magic to pass on a situation update. Razor Tail tribe was told that they would be the first tribe to be exterminated. The first tribe which would be wiped out was not the Dragon Tusk tribe, therefore this was more advantageous in terms of timing.

“Then Crusch, why would you want to come to our side?”

“The answer is very simple, Zaryusu, but before I give my reply, first tell me one thing. What are your plans?”

After yesterday's meeting which took place from evening to early morning, the two individuals felt no reservation even when calling out each other's names. The reason was because they had become familiar enough that even their manner of speaking to each other had changed.

“Coming up next, I plan to visit another tribe... the Dragon Tusk tribe.”

“They are the tribe where strength means everything right? I heard that their fighting force was the strongest out of all the tribes.”

“Erm, you are right. Seeing as the other side is a tribe of which we have never exchanged with before, we have to prepare ourselves mentally.”

All information on the other side was cast with a veil of mystery. Therefore just heading towards the other side's base was an extremely perilous matter. Furthermore, they had absorbed the survivors of the two exterminated tribes of the past war. This fact merely elevated the upcoming danger.

To the defeated from the two tribes, Zaryusu, who played an active role in the previous war was an absolutely hated enemy, detested to their very bones.

Even so, they were the most needed helping hand out of all the tribes for this war.

“If that is so... then, it is still better for me to go with you.”

“— What?”

“Is it so strange?”

The weed pile made a small movement, and let out a faint whispering noise. Because he could not see her face, he could not know what her intent was.

“I don’t mean to say that it is strange... but it would be very dangerous.”

“Is there still a place that is safe now?”

Zaryusu stayed silent. He was calmly thinking, bringing Crusch with him would be beneficial in many ways. However as a male lizardman, he still had reservations against bringing a female lizardman, whom he had feelings for, to a knowingly dangerous place.

“—I really am not calm enough.”

Although Crusch was hidden inside the grass, and her expression could not be seen, she almost seemed to smile slightly.

“... Then, let me ask you another question. What is with your appearance?”

“Does it not look nice?”

The question of whether it looked nice or not was a strange one. However, wouldn’t it be better to give a little compliment? Zaryusu did not know how to respond, and after a moment of deep thought, sized up the other’s unseen expression and replied:

“...I should say that it looks good... right?”

“How can that be possible.”

Crusch steadfastly rejected this. Zaryusu felt his strength drain from him, that couldn’t be helped.

“It is solely because I am weak against sunlight, therefore when I head outside, I almost always dress like this.”

“So that’s why...”

“Ah, you haven’t given me your answer. Will you let me travel with you?”

Any further discussion on this would probably not sway her mind. From the point of view of forming an alliance, bringing her along should be advantageous for obtaining this objective. She also thought along the same lines, which is why she probably made this suggestion. With that being said, there was no reason to refuse her company.

“...I understand, then please lend me a helping hand, Crusch.”

Crusch was delighted from the bottom of her heart as she replied:

“— Understood, Zaryusu. Leave it to me.”

“Are you already prepared for departure?”

“Of course. My backpack is already filled with all the various necessary items.”

After hearing this, Zaryusu subtly assessed her back region and discovered that there was a slight lump on the surface of the grass. A fresh grass smell wafted from that area, as well as some concentrated fragrance. Since she was a forest druid, therefore there should be some herbal related skills, that was why the contents inside should be filled with related goods.

“Zaryusu, you look very tired.”

“Ah, yes, I am a bit. The past two days have been hectic, I’m lacking sleep.”

At this moment, a white scaled hand stretched outwards from underneath the weed costume.

“For you. This is a strength replenishing fruit. You eat it along with the skin.”

There was a purple fruit on the outstretched hand. Hesitantly, Zaryusu placed it in his mouth and gave it a bite.

His mouth was immediately filled with a sudden sharp and bitter taste, getting rid of a bit of tiredness. Certainly for raising alertness, this effect was barely passable, but after continuously chewing it multiple times, suddenly a gush of taste exploded from the top of his tongue. Not only that, but even the breath he spat out had the same taste.

“Muu, what is with this cooling sensation that even permeates the nasal cavity?”

Zaryusu subconsciously shouted out his brother’s catch phrase. Seeing his reaction, Crusch could not resist chuckling.

“Do you feel that your drowsiness is slowly disappearing? The reality is that it has not actually vanished, please do not get overly familiar with this sensation. It is still better that you find time to rest.”

Zaryusu felt that his mind was clear and refreshed because of his inhaled and exhaled breaths, and because his entire body was filled with a cooled sensation. Feeling satisfied, Zaryusu nodded and replied:

“Then let us find some time and have a quick nap on Rororo.”

Having said this, Zaryusu immediately climbed on top of Rororo’s back, followed by Crusch likewise climbing upwards. The unfamiliar feeling of having a weed pile laying against its body made Rororo unhappily glare at Zaryusu, but eventually thought of a method to reassure it.

“Then let’s be on our way. Because the ride will be bumpy, hold onto me.”

“Got it.”

Crusch hugged Zaryusu’s waist— the prickly feeling of the weeds gave Zaryusu a bit of an itch.

“.....”

The difference in the actual feeling and what he had imagined it to be like, made the corners of Zaryusu’s lips curl.

“—What’s wrong?”

“No, nothing. Rororo, let’s depart.”

What was it that made her so jubilant? Crusch’s extremely merry laughter came from behind him, making Zaryusu irresistibly reveal a wide smile on top of Rororo’s back.

**Part 2**



The newly dominated Tove forest was full of silence, every living being was afraid of the king's gaze and held their breath.

But, only this place was different.

The sounds of trees being cut down and voices spread throughout the surroundings.

The golems here would make one think of heavy construction machinery— Heavy Iron Machine, were transporting wooden logs to a construction area of a huge building. This building still had a long way to go before completion, the foundation was huge, and a small part was completed.

Working within this area were a group of golems and undead.

Out of the undead working here, most of them were Elder Liches, who wore conspicuous red robes.

Upon each one's shoulders were demons about thirty centimeters in length, sporting long bat wings and red copper-colored skin— demons known as imps. The imps lifted their venomous tails up high in order to prevent them from dripping poison and hinder the Elder Liches.

One particularly hardworking Elder Lich opened up the plans in his hands, and gave orders to the working golems.

Looking at the golems who stopped and obeyed his command, he compared the construction site and the plans in his hands. After a little consideration, he spoke to the imp sitting on his shoulder.

After listening, the imp expressed his understanding, flapped his wings and flew up into the sky.

With flying that could not be considered elegant, the imp surveyed the area with his eyes opened wide. Not long after, the imp found his target and quickly flew downwards.

That person was the Great Tomb of Nazarick's Sixth Floor Guardian, Aura Bella Fiore, and also one of the new kings of this forest.

The Dark Elf girl used a rolled up paper as a megaphone, allowing her voice to travel far. The imp flew down and stood in salute in front of her, Aura then inquired in a familiar tone.

“Good~ now which group are you coming from?”

“Aura-sama, it would be Group U, number 3.”

“U Group, good good, understood. Now what else is the problem?”

The ones working here were divided into groups named with letters, from A to U, each group was sent to a different area to do a different job. From Aura's memory, she remembers that Group U's job was the construction of the storage warehouse, whose construction progress was also the second fastest.

TL Note: A to U means the Japanese Language Hiragana system, which is A, E, I, O, U. Not English!

“There are problems with the width of the logs used for construction, are we able to request for a little more ti—”

At this moment, the imp's voice suddenly stopped, this was because a sound came out from a piece of iron hanging around Aura's wrist.

“Its break time~”

Hearing a bubbly female voice, the color of Aura’s face suddenly changed, her ears dropped down, and changed into an embarrassed expression.

“Yes, understood, Simmering Teapot-sama!”

Aura energetically replied to the voice from her wrist.

“So, because it is already time to eat, the work for this morning will end for now.”

Out of all the monsters working in the area, almost all of them didn't need to eat. On that issue, Aura herself was also wearing the Ring of Sustenance, and needed neither food nor sleep. But since her own master worried about the wellbeing of everyone and always said “Always have a good rest”, she followed his instruction happily.

“Although it would be rude to you, but it is time for rest, so please come back in an hour.”

“Understood, then this subordinate will take his leave.”

The imp quickly left and flew into the air, leaving only the sound of his flapping wings.

Looking at the imp going towards where the construction of the warehouse was happening, Aura shook her shoulders, then looked at the strap on her wrist.

This time she showed an expression filled with happiness.

This was a reward given to her by her master because of all her hard work. Of course, towards their main task as a Floor Guardian, working hard at their job was a given, and did not warrant a reward. In fact, it should be obvious to give all that she has for the master.

However, she could not just reject the wristwatch given to her by her master.

“Hohoho, I really want to hear more of Simmering Teapot-sama’s voice.”

Aura warmly touched the strap on her wrist. Her current actions could be comparatively warmer than when she was touching her own pets.

All the voices that came from this instrument were from the one who created Aura.

Even though the voices were only used to tell the time, this still served to satisfy Aura greatly.

When she heard that her younger brother had received the Ring of Ainz Ooal Gown, she felt a little envious, but honestly speaking, right now she felt that the object she obtained was so much better.

“Hohohohohohohoho.”

Aura’s ears drooped, and she looked shyly at the strap. She looked at the light shining brightly onto the strap, and satisfyingly nodded her head.

“Why did Ainz-sama set some times when it cannot be used?”

Ainz-sama ordered that the times 7:21 and 19:19 can not be set as alarm time.

“Eh... why don’t we just ask him? Ah, this is bad!”

Aura looked at the numbers on the strap, and quickly ran off.

In front of where she was going was a maid.

One of the 41 maids within the Great Tomb of Nazarick, a homunculus whose outer appearance was that of a beautiful lady, but she was an exception.

Her head was that of a dog, with a vertical line running down the center of her face like a scar with signs of stitching. It felt as though her face that had split into two halves were being sewn back together.

Her name is Pestunia S Wanko.

She is the Great Tomb of Nazarick’s Head Maid, and also a High Priest.

“As per Aura-sama’s wishes, I have brought a hamburger, as well as two pickles, french fries with skin on, the drink would be cola... Woof.”

After a long pause, she let out a “woof” sound, making Aura think that she may have just forgotten to add it at the end. But Aura did not say anything special about this, because there was something else that had her attention. It was the smell which would make one’s stomach growl. Although the Ring of Sustenance made it so that one did not have to consume food, it did not mean she could not eat. Also eating should be a fortunate thing, especially if it was food that was so delicious.

“Speaking of the overall effect of eating this...”

“Ah, no need, no need, I am not eating this for the sake of a beneficial effect.”

“Understood.”

Aura walked towards the side of Pestunia, where a meal cart was emitting a fragrant smell.

“Time to eat, time to eat.”

Pestunia, upon hearing Aura's self-composed meal song, took off the silver lid off the plate on the meal cart.

“Aah~”

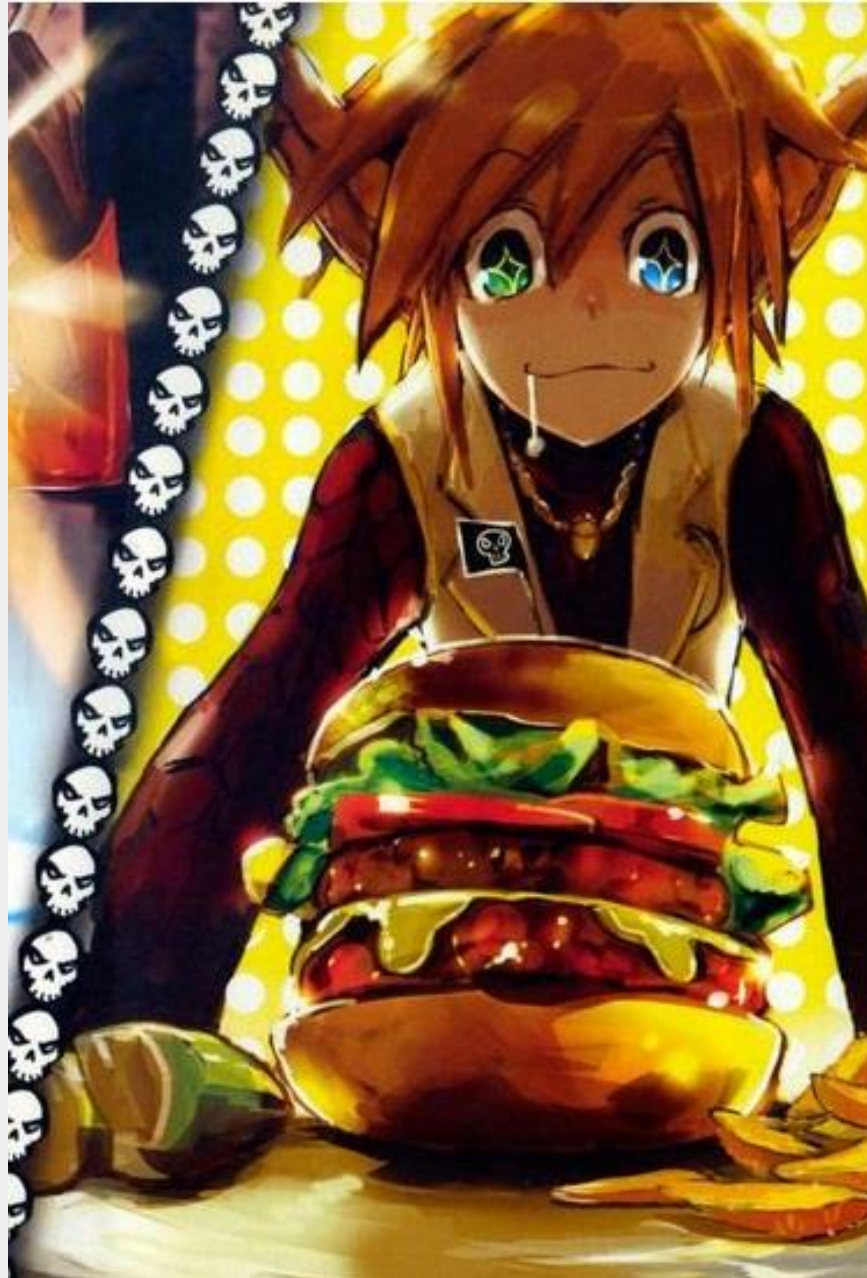
Aura could not help but stare intently at the food revealed before her, at the same time spoke the words that immediately came to her mind.

“Although A7 beef is also good, but I much prefer a mixture of beef and pork. If only I could use that combination to create a 3 layered meat pie.”

“Then, this servant will convey your suggestion to the chef.”

“Ah sorry to trouble you!”

Aura then took the plate and happily walked away.



### Part 3

Zaryusu observed the Dragon Tusk Tribe's settlement before him. At the same time, a bundle of vegetation appeared from beside him. Needless to say, that bundle of vegetation was actually Crusch. She reached out her hand out to part the grass, revealing what Zaryusu thought was a beautiful face.

“Do you really wish to directly charge inside? Are you trying to clash with them head-to-head?”

“Wrong, it is the opposite. The Dragon Tusk Tribe values strength heavily. If we were to casually part from Rororo and enter the place, we could quite possibly come across people picking a fight before we even meet with the tribe chief, and that would be troublesome. Proceeding forward whilst riding Rororo would deter that kind of situation from arising.”

After riding Rororo forward for a distance, various warriors throughout the village must have seen them. Each one was holding weapon, and watching Zaryusu’s group with unwavering gazes.

Sensing hostile intent, Rororo let out a low growl. Zaryusu listened to Rororo’s warning and indicated for it to continue proceeding forward.

Continuing forward would eventually ignite into battle. Yet they kept proceeding forward until they had reached a threshold, a brink where anything could happen at any moment; before Zaryusu finally let Rororo stop and jumped down. Crusch also followed suit and was down in a moment.

Several warriors’ sharp gazes were directed towards the two individuals. Those gazes carried such intensity that they were no longer simply hostile but outright murderous.

Crusch was slightly intimidated by their gazes which caused her to halt her steps. Although she was an incredibly skilled individual amongst druids, she lacked experience of being in the frontlines.

Conversely, Zaryusu took one more step forward. Using half his body to shield Crusch, he shouted out loudly:

“— I am the representative of the Green Claw Tribe, Zaryusu Shasha, and my visit here is to discuss matters with the tribe chief!”

His powerful bellowing voice seemed almost as if it would disperse the murderous intent around them. The Dragon Tusk Tribe warriors were all startled and seemed almost as if they were intimidated.

Following this, Crusch also spoke up, announcing herself:

“I am the Red Eye Tribe's acting chief, Crusch Lulu, and likewise I have come to visit the tribe chief.”

Although her voice was not loud, it carried the pride and self-awareness of a tribe leader. The young skinny female lizardman from earlier was gone with the encouragement of the male’s self-confident voice.

“Once again, we are here to see the tribe chief! Where is he!”

At this moment, the atmosphere around them was rippling. It was just like the mood of the scene had suddenly turned into actual attacking force directed at the two of them.

Each of Rororo's four heads did a somersault. Opening its jaws, it let out a threatening roar in all four directions as it shook its heads and glared angrily. As the gigantic hydra's sharp growl emanated, fear seemed to permeate the surroundings as the atmosphere tensed up.

"... There was no need to protect me from something so trivial."

"I did not intend to protect you, because you came of your own volition. However, I am the one who allowed their entire tribe to perish, therefore it ought to have been only myself to shoulder their hostile gazes."

Warriors started to gather at the interior of the tribe settlement. All of them were muscular and burly lizardmen with light scars on their scales, suggesting that they were veterans of countless of battles. However Zaryusu perceived that the tribe chief was not amongst them.

Each of the lizardmen were merely warriors. None of them carried authority like his older brother did, nor had a strange appearance with the confident atmosphere of being tribe chief like Crusch.

During this period when only Rororo was emitting an intimidated sound, each individual lizardman maintained a high level of alertness. At this moment—

"Haah!"

Crusch exhaled a breath of air, letting out a weak sound. However, Zaryusu, who predicted that there would eventually be one lizardman making an entrance, remained unmoved. This was because even before the opponent had shown himself, he could feel that there was an enormously powerful being slowly getting closer.

But he still could not help staring dumbfounded at the lizardman who appeared in front of him.

To simply put it, that lizardman's appearance was simply bizarre.

The opponent was an enormous individual with a body build exceeding two hundred and thirty centimeters in height. This feature alone would be insufficient to justify calling it bizarre, therefore there were other reasons for describing the appearance as such.

Firstly, his right shoulder had a weird outer appearance being relatively thicker than the other, just like how fiddler crabs have a unilaterally giant claw on only one side. No, his left shoulder was not thin at all, with a thickness about the same as Zaryusu's own shoulder. It was simply his right shoulder which was abnormally thick, and this was not because of illness or congenital malformation, but was actual muscle.

His left arm's ring finger and pinky were completely gone.

His mouth was parted far backwards, perhaps as a result of a cut injury, and his tail was squashed quite flat, not like a lizardman's but rather more like a crocodile's.

However, even when compared to these, the most striking feature was— the insignia seared on his chest. Although it was different image to the one on Zaryusu's chest, the meaning was the same, proving that this lizardman was also a 'traveller'.

That lizardman with the strange appearance sized up Zaryusu, and let out a terrible laughter as his teeth clashed together, sounding like collision between dead wood.

"Welcome, wielder of Frost Pain."

His deep voice was extremely fitting for his appearance, except it had the effect of making even plain talk sound threatening.

"This is the first time we have met. I am the representative of the Green Claw tribe, Zaryu—"

The lizardman waved his hand indicating that introductions were not necessary.

"Just the name will do."

"... I am Zaryusu Shasha, and this is Crusch Lulu."

"That person cannot be... a plant monster? However, since you already bring a hydra here, bringing along a monster to be its food shouldn't be too much of a surprise."

"... That is not the case."

Towards Crusch who was about to shed her weed costume, the strange looking lizardman once again waved his hand to indicate that it was not necessary.

"Don't treat my joke for real, how troublesome."

"— !"

Feeling uninterested, the strange looking lizardman gave a brief glance at the bundle of weed which was Crusch before once again turning his gaze towards Zaryusu.

"Then, why have you come?"

"Before that, would you please give us your name?"

"Ah. I am the tribe chief of the Dragon Tusk Tribe, Zenberu Gugu. Feel free to call me Zenberu."

Zenberu revealed his teeth as he smiled. Although it was within expectations, the fact that a traveller was also the tribe chief still came across as startling news.

But then on the contrary, this was also the most acceptable answer. It was impossible that such a powerful male lizardman was merely a traveller. In truth, at the moment he had appeared, the surrounding hostile intent had immediately dispersed like smoke. This male lizardman possessed such large authority as well as having extraordinary combat prowess and cohesiveness.

“You may also call me simply as Zaryusu. Then, Zenberu, please let us know if there has been any unnatural monster which has visited your village recently.”

“Un, that Supreme One person.”

“Since the opponent has been here, the matter to discuss becomes much simpler—”

Zenberu raised his hand, interrupting Zaryusu’s speech.

“I can roughly guess what you plan to say. However, we only believe in strength. Unsheathe your sword.”

The burly lizardman standing before Zaryusu — the Dragon Tusk tribe chief, Zenberu Gugu — smiled revealing a mouth full of teeth.

“What!”

Only Crusch exclaimed. Zaryusu and the surrounding warriors all showed expressions of agreement.

“... This method is simple, Dragon Tusk Tribe Chief. It keeps the judgment brief, and wastes no time at all.”

“You truly are an outstanding emissary. No, since you are the master of Frost Pain, that should be a given, right?”



Selecting the strongest as the tribe chief— for lizardmen this was a natural and ordinary matter.

However, for a problem where the subsistence of the tribe was at stake, was such a simple method of determining an answer appropriate? Shouldn’t this be a matter to be discussed and evaluated by everybody, taking detailed analyses from different approaches before arriving at a conclusion?

Crush thought as such, then realised how coming up with this idea was incredulous.

In reality, all of the surrounding observing warriors, regardless if they were male or female, all agreed with the tribe chief’s judgment. If it were before, she herself would also feel that this decision was one of the options.

*Then why does the current me feel doubt about this?*

Where did this doubt originate?

Did she think this way because she had suffered the magic attack of some stranger? Impossible. When it came to magic, she was confident that she would not lose to anyone.

Crusch turned to look at the two individuals.

Zaryusu and Zenberu.

The two of them standing together looked like a child versus an adult.

Of course, body physique did not determine everything, and as a magic caster she understood this point fully. However after seeing the difference in body build which was like that of heaven and earth, she could not help internally screaming out at herself that she did not wish for it to be like this.

*Do not wish? I hope that they do not— no, do I not wish for them to battle?*

Crusch wanted to comprehend why such a miraculous feeling would swell up inside of her. Why did she not wish for this to happen? Why did she not wish for them to fight each other?

There was only one answer which was obvious.

Crusch let out a slight smile. It was both a wry smile and also a self-mocking smile.

*You can only honestly admit it now, Crusch. You don't want Zaryusu to fight because you fear that he will be injured... fear that he may possibly die.*

Simply put, that was the matter.

In this kind of battle, only rarely would it end with the death of one party. However the meaning of 'rare' meant that there was still a possibility of it happening. If the fight escalated to one which involved a loss of reasoning, a life could be easily taken away. Born as a female lizardman, she did not wish that her partner would lose his life because of his participation in this battle.

This also meant to say that in fact, subconsciously, Crusch had long already accepted Zaryusu's pledge of love.

*It is because no male in the past had treated me like he did... that was why I would so simply... if it's like this, does it mean that I am easily swooned? Eh, in the very least I feel... a bit happy and also a bit saddened... ah, really, enough!*

Honestly accepting her feelings, Crusch walked to the side of Zaryusu who was preparing for battle, and gently tapped his shoulder.

“Are you missing anything in your preparations?”

“Nothing. There are no problems at all.”

Once again Crusch tapped his shoulder.

His powerfully built shoulders.

From a young age, she had walked the path of a druid, and had come into physical contact with male lizardmen’s bodies during prayers, anointment of medicine, and when casting magic. However it seemed like this time spent touching Zaryusu’s body was even longer than those previous times aggregated.

*So this is Zaryusu’s body... ah.*

When facing battle, hot blood flowing through the body inflated the powerful muscles allowing others to sense his masculinity.

“... What is it?”

Since Crusch had still had not let go, Zaryusu momentarily felt that this was strange.

“—Eh? Ah, that... this is a druid’s blessing.”

“This... will your ancestral spirits still assist me even though I am of a different tribe than Crusch?”

“My tribe’s ancestors are not so narrow-minded. Good luck.”

Crusch withdrew her hands from Zaryusu’s shoulders, and prayed in her heart for her ancestors’ forgiveness. This was because she had lied in order to wish for the man of her heart’s victory.

At the same time, Zenberu was undergoing similar preparations. In his right wrist he held an enormous spear— a metal spear with a length close to three meters, one which ordinary lizardmen would need both arms in order to use.

Then he casually gave it a wave.

The lateral sweeping motion generated a gust of powerful wind, such that Crusch, who was a distance away from that sweeping motion, also felt it.

“Will victo... no, is everything alright?”

“About this... I will adapt to the situation as necessary.”

Crusch originally intended to ask whether it was possible for him to win, but she did not speak out. Zaryusu knew he was facing a battle where defeat was not an option.

Then this male lizardman could not possibly lose. They had only familiarised over their half-day journey, and had only met since one day ago, but if anything Crusch understood one thing well.

This male Lizardman was worthy of being fancied by her.

“Then, are your preparations complete? Bearer of Frost Pain... ah, Zaryusu.”

“They are complete, and we can start anytime.”

Zaryusu coolly turned to have his back facing Crusch, and walked into the perimeter of the fight zone.

Crusch exhaled one breath. The reason was that she could not resist gazing at his back figure.

Crusch’s hand was in contact for a very long time — actually it was not that long — and the warmth left on his shoulder was already slowly disappearing.

The upcoming battle would be simple, similar to the one used for determining tribe chief. Because it was a one versus one fight, therefore the involvement of third parties by adding magic enhancement was a violation of the rules.

When the warmth was still on his shoulders, Zaryusu’s mind was sent into disarray. Whilst Crusch’s hands had not left his shoulders, he almost thought that she had cast some defensive magic on him, but as her tribe's acting chief surely she would not be oblivious to this rule.

Then, even when the other side had clearly not used enchantment magic, why did he currently feel so fired up inside?

Was it because he himself was a male, and wanted to put on a good performance in front of a female? Older brother once said that he was too dense... but this phrase seemed to be untrue now.

Zaryusu entered into the circle made up of lizardmen and swiftly unsheathed Frost Pain. The sword responded to Zaryusu’s command and gave off frosty white mist.

The surrounding lizardmen burst into clamour.

They knew the previous wielders of Frost Pain, and were also survivors of the Sharp Edge Tribe, therefore would have personally recognised the prowess of Frost Pain.

Seeing the ability which only the true owner of Frost Pain could bring out, Zenberu’s hideous facial expression turned into one of delight, revealing his teeth as he growled deeply, just like a wild beast would.

Towards the lizardman in front of him blatantly giving off an eagerness to fight, Zaryusu only coldly threw out a sentence:

“I wouldn’t want you to suffer serious injuries.”

This provocative speech heightened the surrounding lizardmen's antipathy to the maximum, however the subsequent water splash and sound of collision with the water surface brought about by extraordinary momentum silenced the surrounding.

That was the result of Zenberu stabbing the wetlands with his halberd.

“Oh... then let me taste defeat with satisfaction! Hear me well! If I were to die in this battle, he will be your tribe chief! There will be no objections to this!”

The surrounding warriors should have disagreed, but nobody voiced out an objection. In truth, if Zaryusu really did kill Zenberu, everybody would give their obedience even if they had to bite their lips to do so.

“Very well, bring your resolve to kill me to the fight. I should be your toughest opponent to date.”

“Indeed... understood. Then, if I were to die by your hands—”

Zaryusu’s gaze slightly shifted backwards towards Crusch.

“Of course, I will let your woman return home safely.”

“... Not ‘mine’ just yet.”

“Ho, looks like you really do wish to chase that weed monster. Is that female lizardman that good?”

“Extremely so.”

Zaryusu ignored the female Lizardman squatting with her hands covering her face.

“That I really wish to see for myself. If I win, just before I let her go, why don’t I cut her open first.”

Up until then, Zaryusu had a warrior’s willingness to fight. Now another motivation to fight had surfaced.

“... It seems like I now have a reason for me to absolutely not lose. I will not let a fellow like you see Crusch’s face.

“You really do like her to the point that no medicine can save you.”

“Yes, that is how much I like her.”

There were several female lizardmen who spoke some words to the kneeling Crusch, and she immediately gave a denying response by shaking her head to signal them that they should just ignore those two for now.

“Ha!”

Zenberu delightedly laughed out loud.

“Then defeat me! If you were to pass away, it would all amount to nothing!”

“That was my intention all along.”

Zaryusu and Zenberu’s exchange of words concluded at this point and they looked at each other.

“— I’m about to make my move.”

“— Bring it.”

Both lizardmen exchanged brief words, but neither made any movement.

Just as the surrounding observing lizardmen were starting to get restless, Zaryusu began to slowly draw closer. They were in the wetlands filled with water, yet no splashes could be heard.

Zenberu remained still as he waited.

Moments later, the moment when Zaryusu closed in— Something flashed with a loud bang before the eyes of Zaryusu as he leapt to the side. That was the sound made by Zenberu’s halberd.

There was no technique involved; it was just a simple swing.

But that was why it was so shocking.

Zenberu took a stance with his halberd as he prepared to attack Zaryusu again. With just his right hand, Zenberu was able to wield that giant halberd. After each tornado like swinging action, he was able to immediately resume his original stance.

Zaryusu was puzzled.

Therefore, in order to confirm the intention of these actions, he once again jumped into the enemy’s attack range— and was again greeted with another identical fierce horizontal swing. Zaryusu blocked with Frost Pain and a great impact landed on the hand he was holding Frost Pain with, and his body was knocked back.

To send a grown lizardman flying with one arm, his arm power was indeed extraordinary.

— Blood boiled with excitement.

When the warriors saw their Chief display unrivalled arm power, they roared loudly.

Zaryusu swayed his tail to regain his balance as he retreated.

He shook his numb hand as he squinted.

*What... is this all about?*

Zaryusu focused on the giant body right before his eyes.

*What is this? He is... too weak.*

Zenberu was quick as lighting, and would send Zaryusu flying if he blocked with his sword. But that was all, there was nothing scary about that.

Zenberu's movements were akin to a kid playing with a stick: there was no technique to speak of, just powerful swings with brute force. But was that really all? With that giant arm of his, Zenberu should be able to wield it more skillfully than this.

*Is he holding back to lure me off guard?*

Zaryusu felt that wasn't it.

Well being wary of this unknown strange feeling, he rethought his strategy. Zenberu who had yet to take a step asked with a smile:

“Well? You are not going to use Frost Pain's ability?”

That sneer was probably a taunt and Zaryusu didn't react to it.

“I was defeated by the wielder of Frost Pain in the past.”

Zaryusu remembered, he knew who Zenberu was referring too. That person was the chief of 'Razor Edge', the one who was killed by Zaryusu.

Zaryusu eased his focus on Zenberu slightly and observed the surrounding.

Among the hostility he felt around him, the ones with the strongest killing intent should be the survivors from 'Razor Edge'.

“The two fingers on my hand are like this because of that fight.”

Zenberu showed his left hand which was missing two fingers to Zaryusu.

“If you use the power that guy unleashed to defeat me, you might be able to win.”

“Is that so?”

Zaryusu answered calmly.

Indeed, that ability was strong.

And because that ability could only be used thrice a day, he had a great chance of winning if he were to utilize that ability. Zaryusu only defeated the previous owner of Frost Pain because the ability had been used up. If he had used that ability, Zaryusu probably would have died.

But it was impossible for someone who knew the ability of Frost Pain to taunt him into using it.

Zaryusu tightened his guard.

*I don't understand... Anyway, things will never end if we drag on like this, I should attack.*

Zaryusu made up his mind and dashed in with twice the speed.

Zenberu swung his halberd at Zaryusu with amazing speed.

Zaryusu didn't dodge and blocked it with Frost Pain. Everyone who saw this thought Zaryusu would be sent flying back.

Sword and halberd clashed— and the attack was parried easily.

There was no need to use abilities. Zenberu was merely wielding the halberd like a kid, and it could be parried no matter how hard he swung it.

Zenberu opened his eyes with shock— no, it was admiration.

At the same time, Zaryusu charged towards Zenberu— giving him no time to withdraw the halberd to defend. Even if he had that kind of muscle, it would take time to pull the deflected halberd back. That was enough time for Zaryusu to close in.

The next instant, Frost Pain slashed towards Zenberu's body—

— Blood splashed out.

A loud cheer erupted and a soft cry could be heard.

The one who was bleeding and retreating wasn't Zenberu. It was Zaryusu who was bleeding from the two cuts on his face.

Contrary to his tactic so far, Zenberu took large strides towards Zaryusu to attack with his weapon, not letting him get away.

That weapon was— claws.

Frost Pain and the claws clashed with a crisp metallic ring. After that, the sound of the halberd falling into the water could be heard.

“Wargghhh—!”

Zenberu breathed out deeply, and attacked consecutively with his large arm as he stepped forward.

Unlike the childish halberd play earlier, Zenberu's attack with claws was on the level of a master. Zaryusu finally understood after the most important information was leaked out.

Zenberu was not a warrior, but a monk who uses his own body as a weapon by utilizing a special energy called Qi.

Zaryusu blocked the chop with Frost Pain.

The claws of lizardmen were harder than humans, but not so tough that they could emit such metallic noise. That's right, this was the result of hardening the body parts— such as claws and fangs. An ability known as 'Natural Steel Weapon', an ability of monks.

It was said that a punch of a monk who had reached the highest level could destroy the hardest material adamantium. But judging from the feel of the exchanges, Zenberu wasn't at that level yet, he was at most at the level of steel. Even so, he was on par with one of the four treasures of the lizardmen, Frost Pain, and that was not to be trifled with.

The two of them exchanged blows.

Zenberu attacked with his claws while Zaryusu slashed with Frost Pain. They evaded each others attack and lept back, pulling away from each other.

“— Hahah, you are still alive!”

Zenberu licked the blood and meat on his fingers.

Zaryusu used his long tongue to lick the red liquid on his face.

Zaryusu felt lucky, for having avoided the claw to his eyes. He was hurt, but it was just a nick, he could still fight on. He was thankful to the ancestor's protection and—

*Maybe I dodged that because of Crusch's ancestors.*

Zaryusu was grateful while Zenberu complained unhappily.

"Speaking of which, you seem to be holding back by refusing to use that ability."

Zenberu clenched both fists and repeatedly beat his chest.

"My apologies, but I have no intention to use that move."

"Eh? Then don't complain after your defeat that you did not use your full strength."

"After exchanging blows with me, you still think I am the kind of person who would say such a thing?"

"... No, I don't think so. Sorry, I have said too much. However — if you do not plan not use that move, then it's my turn now!"

With the sound of piercing wind, Zenberu launched a kick towards Zaryusu with his leg that was as thick as a tree trunk.

The movement was made without a shred of hesitation.

As Zaryusu was avoiding that leg thrust, he swung Frost Pain to slice Zenberu. However a metallic sound rang out and the sword was deflected.

Zaryusu widened his eyes in exclamation.

If one were to use a blade to block an attack by flesh, the attacking party would be the one to be injured, this much was common sense. However, utilising monk's Qi energy overturned this logic.

This was the effect of 'Steel Skin'. At the moment that an attack came into contact with the user's skin, this special ability would use Qi to envelop the body, turning skin into the toughness of steel. This ability was the same as 'Natural Steel Weapon', where similarly the amount of training that was put into refining the technique meant that a greater toughness could be achieved.

The opponent's skin had deflected a magic sword. This meant that the opponent had already refined the monk ability to great heights. However Zaryusu remained confident that victory was within his grasp.

It wasn't that the difference in both parties' battle technique was astronomical, but rather that Zenberu's circumstances were inherently relatively unfavourable.

Allowing one to be overwhelmed by continuous attacks.

Kicks, tail sweeps, punches, chops, attacks of all sorts.

Zenberu relied on his body's ability with each strike, which was not only fast but also heavy. Facing such an enemy, even Zaryusu had to drop his offence to maintain his defence.

Continuous attacks were followed by even more continuous attacks.

If he were to forgo defending against the enemy's crushing attacks, Zaryusu would no doubt be defeated. The surrounding lizardmen believed that the tribe chief who was launching continuous attacks without stopping had victory in his grasp and were shouting out encouragements.

Zenberu's claws occasionally grazed Zaryusu, easily breaking apart the hard scales protecting the body, causing fresh blood to flow. His injuries were not light at all.

Zaryusu's body was full of these wounds. His life was like a candle in the wind, and it would not be surprising for him to surrender at any moment. The evidence was all over the lizardmen's faces as they revealed joyful smiles in delight for their victorious tribe chief.

However, Zenberu did not share their sentiment.

Every time a continuous strike was blocked, Zenberu felt that victory was slipping further and further away, which distressed him immensely.

The blade of Frost Pain harboured cold frost which stacked frost injuries for every cut it inflicted on enemies. In addition, it had an effect where any enemy coming into contact with the weapon would suffer some frost injuries. In other words, merely by exchanging contact between the blade and flesh, Zenberu was slowly being eroded by the frost.

With both hands frozen and both legs numb, his movements became more and more slower.

*What a shame... because the previous fight was such a quick defeat... I didn't even know that it originally had such an ability! It seems like it doesn't just have that one ability! No wonder it is one of the four treasures!*

It was precisely because Zaryusu knew that the item had such an effect that he chose to stick to defence — Rather, that was why he would choose this method as it was able to guarantee causing harm to the opponent. It was because of this that he did not evade Zenberu's attacks but took them head on.

This choice was the most cautious and also an elaborate path to victory.

It was flawless. For the current Zenberu, it was the greatest enemy.

Towards Zaryusu who leaped over, Zenberu released a powerful punch. If this move were to be blocked, Zenberu's chances of winning would plummet.

Zenberu felt like he was picking a solo fight against an impregnable fortress.

*Ah, ah, what a shame, can I not defeat him... However, I have waited for this moment for a very long time!*

He recalled the memory of going by himself to pick a fight with that male lizardman. Since then, he had become much stronger, and had gone through never-ending back-breaking training in order to obtain victory. When he heard the news that the person who had defeated him had been killed, he had felt immensurate regret, and yet he had not stopped his training.

All in preparation for this day to come.

As tribe chief, he had been unable to set everything aside to go pick a challenge, therefore when he heard that the wielder of Frost Pain had arrived in the village, he was hard-pressed to contain his joy.

He could not allow this fight, which he had been waiting for all this time, to end so easily.

Zenberu punched and kicked, yet his sense of touch was gradually diminishing, and his Qi too was increasingly ineffective in reaching his hands and feet. Even so, he still attacked relentlessly.

*So strong, even stronger than the fellow from that time!*

Seeing as he himself had trained unceasingly, this male lizardman in front of him must have also undergone continuous training unabatingly up until this point.

Since the start, both lizardmen had not drawn any closer during the fight, and of course he could also find an excuse by saying that he had lost to the ability of Frost Pain, but he did not wish to use such cowardly words.

*Incredible! No wonder he is the master of Frost Pain! The strongest male lizardman amongst all lizardmen!*

On the outside, Zenberu did not stop his continuous attacks, yet inside he was calmly complimenting Zaryusu who was using Frost Pain to block his moves.

Injuries, blood flow, and more injuries.

Crusch, who was unwaveringly staring at this ferocious match, had already foresaw the outcome through her outstanding druid abilities.

*Truly incredible insight... that he had already figured out the fight roughly just after it started.*

She took in a large surprise at Zaryusu's excellent capability as a warrior.

The surrounding ceaselessly emanated with sounds of encouragement.

Those cheering were directing their ardor towards the relentless attacker, at Zenberu who appeared to be completely prevailing against his opponent. The surrounding lizardmen seemed oblivious to the fact that Zenberu's limbs were already slowing down in movement.

Zaryusu was strong. Crusch was confident in this conclusion.

Almost all of the lizardmen relied on strong and robust bodies, using brute strength to fight, but Zaryusu... no, even Zenberu as well... relied on technique to fight, and Frost Pain was merely a supporting asset.

As such, about this current situation... the gap between the two individuals and Frost Pain were largely related, but Crusch understood clearly that Frost Pain was not the sole factor in bringing about this outcome.

Hypothetically, if one were to give Frost Pain to an ordinary person to use, would that person be able to deal with Zenberu like this?

The answer was probably not. Zenberu was not such an easy opponent.

The weapon was indeed powerful, but Zaryusu who was able to beautifully utilise the the weapon's ability was likewise a first class warrior.

But even more commendable than that was his sharp and insightful mind.

Zaryusu had been able to evade the opponent's strike when he had dropped the halberd, because he was ever cautious and constantly observing the situation. He first observed the opponent for his trump card, and realised that the halberd was merely a bluff.

Having faced the tough decision of being branded a traveller, yet having the resolve to shoulder the consequences, just what else and how much knowledge had he brought back during his travels apart from rearing fish and these battle tactics?

Without being aware of it, Crusch had already become firm in the belief that Zaryusu had victory in his grasp. Right now, her heart was beating rapidly not out of worry for him but for another reason as she gazed silently at that male lizardman's face.

"He really is an outstanding male lizardman."

The exciting battle mulled away everyone's time easily, but for the two who were fighting, it felt like a very long time. They were out of breath and the physical and mental exhaustion was much greater than the time that was spent.

Zaryusu who retained his will to fight despite bleeding all over had commendable courage. He received high praise from the lizardmen watching for keeping up with their chieftain far longer than anyone else could manage.

Suddenly, Zenberu who seemed to be inches away from victory dropped his battle stance.

The surrounding lizardmen waited with bated breath for Zenberu to announce his victory when he shouted.

But the content was the opposite of what they expected.

“It is my loss!”

Their chief should have been moments away from victory.

So why did the chief declare his loss? Only Crusch knew that this would happen. She ran briskly into the center of the circle formation.

“Are you alright?”

Zaryusu breath out deeply when he heard that question. He lowered the sword in his hand and answered exhaustedly:

“No mortal wounds... It won’t affect any future battles.”

“... Good, I will heal you with spells.”

Crusch made a rustling sound with her grass attire and revealed her face.

Zaryusu felt a soothing warmth over his wounds, different from the searing pain he suffered earlier. Zaryusu immersed himself in the sensation of energy flowing into his body and turned his head to face the giant lizardman who fought a deadly duel with him.

Zenberu was surrounded by his tribesmen as he explained what exactly happened and what Zaryusu’s tactic was.

“That should do.”

After casting her spell twice, Crusch announced the treatment to be complete. Zaryusu looked down at his own body.

There was still dried blood on his skin, but the wounds had healed completely. Zaryusu could still feel tightness when he flexed his wounds, but it doesn’t seem like those will rip open.

“— Thank you.”

“You are welcome.”

Crusch smiled brilliantly, she looked beautiful showing her pearl white teeth.

“— How pretty.”

“Ah...!”

Her tail hit the water surface hard.

The two of them fell silent.

Crusch was silent because she was baffled by how casually this male lizardman said these words. For Crusch who was not used to compliments, it was not good for her heart to hear Zaryusu say them too often.

On the other hand, Zaryusu didn't understand why Crusch didn't respond. Could he had made some mistake— such a feeling of unease flashed across his mind. Actually, he had always felt his life would have nothing to do with female lizardman, so he didn't knew what kind of reaction to make. Unexpectedly, Zaryusu was also at a loss.

As the two were troubled and wondering what to do, a voice saved them.

“Hey hey hey, you are too enviable you bastard.”

The two of them looked towards the one speaking— Zenberu.

Zenberu was dumbfounded momentarily when the two of them reacted the same way.

“Eh~ white one, can you heal me?”

Zenberu was unmoved even after seeing Crusch's albino face. When Crusch recalled her impression after seeing Zenberu's appearance for the first time, she understood Zenberu's lack of reaction.

“Alright... But would it be a problem not to let your tribal druid to heal you?”

“Yeah, it doesn't matter. Don't talk so much, I'm hurting right now, even my bones are freezing, can you hurry up?”

“You are the one who want me to do this, remember to explain to your druids.”

“Yes, I am the one forcing you, so please.”

Crusch sighed and started her treatment.

Zaryusu felt the number of hostile gazes had fallen, and looks with good will had started popping up.

“Okay, I’m done.”

Crusch casted more healing spells on Zenberu compared to Zaryusu. This meant that his wounds were deep, although it didn’t show.

“Oh, your skill is better than the druids from my tribe.”

“Thank you, but I seldom do this for other tribes... No, thank you for your compliment.”

“Well, our injuries are mended, let’s go into the main topic for today okay? It is a bit too rush for you?”

“Oh! Let’s hear what you want to say— Although I wanted to tell you that...” Zenberu paused when he reached this point, and then said with a smile: “But let’s have a drink first!”

Zaryusu and Crusch— the both of them looked puzzled, as if they didn’t understand what Zenberu was saying.

“Troublesome formal matters have to be discussed in a banquet, you understand?”

Letting the other party know your strength will give you the advantage in negotiations. Zaryusu understood that he had to risk his life for this as this was how lizardmen did things. But he couldn’t understand the behavior of throwing a banquet since ‘Green Claw’ didn’t had such a custom.

It seemed depraved to party right after a deadly battle.

“I don’t get it...”

A sense of resignation washed over Zaryusu, making him show his surprise honestly as he answered softly. But waves of regret appeared in his heart immediately, for he had shown such a childlike reaction to a tribal chief that had yet to ally with him. Zaryusu could also feel Crusch looking at him with a weird gaze.

For Zaryusu who had no experience with love, it was impossible for him to sense that Crusch was looking at him because the one she likes had displayed a new side. It was a look of curiosity adoring something cute.

“No, what I meant is that drinking too much will dull the mind and that will be troubling for me.”

Zaryusu changed his words in a panic, but Zenberu didn’t seem to mind and replied:

“Hey hey hey, you are a traveler, right? If you want to learn knowledge around here, that would be the Dwarves right?”

“No, I didn’t learn from the dwarves, but from men living in the forest.”

“Is that so? Then remember this, friends who drink together will become buddies, that is the teaching of the dwarves. There might not be much time left, but we should start our talks soon. Am I right, Zaryusu Shasa?”

“I see... I get it now, Zenberu Gugu.”

“Awesome! Everyone, we are having a banquet! Bring that here! Begin the preparations!”



A fire pit almost two meters wide was set up on the ground, the flames almost searing the sky. Its red glow fended the darkness of the night away.

Near the fire pit was a giant pot more than a meter high and about 80 cm in diameter, the scent of alcohol lingered in the air.

Dozens of lizardmen took turns to scoop the liquid from within. But the wine from the winepot seemed to be bottomless.

Like Zaryusu’s Frost Pain, this was one of the four treasures, ‘Giant Pot of Wine’.

The taste of the never ending wine was bland and would make anyone who appreciates alcohol frown. But for the lizardmen, this was delicious wine.

That’s why they kept coming back for more.

A short distance away from the wine pot was a very quiet place. As for why, it was because of the drunk lizardmen lying motionless here.

The lizardmen who had blacked out from the alcohol were all dumped here.

Crusch who had removed her grass attire treaded the ground carefully — although she stepped on the tail of a lizardmen unintentionally — as she moved forth. Her steps were steady and did not don’t seemed to be drunk, but she didn’t seemed to be completely fine either.

Her tail seemed to be moving independently, thrashing about lively. It curled at times, straightened the next. Erect this moment, and drooped later, excited like a child.

In fact, Crusch felt as if a refreshing wind was blowing across her heart. Part of the reason was the alcohol, but the feeling of liberation also aided this.

This was the first time she showed her albino body to a large group of people. It surprised some of the people, but since their chief also looked like a mutant, she mixed in with the others in no time.

Crusch carried the food with both hands and walked with brisk steps.

She came to the place where Zaryusu and Zenberu were sitting cross legged and drinking with each other.

The two of them used something like a coconut as a cup. Inside were transparent fluid, but the whiff of alcohol was strong.

Raw fish was placed right before them to complement the wine. Zenberu greeted Crusch who walked over with a smile.

“Ah, plant monster.”

“... Can't you change the way you address me?”

She already took that attire off, but this male lizardman insisted on calling her that. He was probably planning to tease her like that forever. Crusch who realized this fact decided to stop her futile resistance.

“Have you finished your discussion?”

Zaryusu and Zenberu glanced at each other and nodded.

“For the most part.”

They wanted to talk man to man, so they asked Crusch to give them some time alone. They already made it so clear, so she had no choice but to leave and collect the food, despite wanting to take part in their dialogue. If they wanted to discuss the upcoming battle, she would be involved too.

She wanted to know the essence of things while avoiding the awkward details—

“This is a talk between men.”

But Zenberu shut out the topic coldly with this phrase. Crusch showed her displeasure on her face honestly, and had no other option but to change the topic.

“So what are your plans? Form an alliance and fight together?”

“Huh? Oh, of course we will fight. Even if both of you had not come, we would still fight.”

The sound of wooden planks rubbing against each other came from Zenberu's mouth.

“You are really a battle maniac.”

“Don’t praise me like that, I will get embarrassed.”

Zenberu ignored the stunned Crusch and requested something from her.

“Oh right, plant monster, can you help me convince him? No matter how I beg him, Zaryusu still wouldn’t become our tribe chief.”

Zaryusu also showed a resigned and fatigued expression. Crusch could tell from that tired look that when Crusch wasn’t around, this question had been repeated countless times.

“It is impossible for him to take this job. He is from a different tribe and is a—” Crusch wanted to say traveler, but she remembered that Zenberu was a traveler too, so she changed the topic: “Why did you become a traveler?”

“Huh? Oh, losing to the owner of Frost Pain was a huge blow to me, so it was only natural for me to want to leave and visit different places and become stronger right? So I became a traveler.”

Zaryusu who was beside him drooped his shoulders tiredly. Crusch remembered Zaryusu talking about his travels too.

When Zaryusu became a traveler, he was motivated by his determination, resolve and sense of duty to his tribe. Zenberu who was a traveler must have had similar thoughts... But that wasn’t apparent from the way he was behaving.

Crusch placed her hand gently on Zaryusu’s shoulder to console him, conveying to him the message that he is he, you are you.

To the bystander, Crusch’s action must have seemed like that of a lover. When she became aware of that, Crusch’s tail started to panic. Zaryusu’s tail was also thrashing intensely.

The two of them looked at each other’s eyes and smiled shyly.

Zenberu pretended to not see all that and continued saying happily:

“I thought that there must be powerful guys in that mountain since it is so big, learned a lot from the dwarf I met in my travels and got that war scythe. I didn’t want it at first, but since he said that was a memento of our meeting, I had no choice but to accept it.”

“... So that happened, that’s great.”

Crusch answered coldly.

“Yeah, thanks.”

— Sarcasm didn't work.

With the nice atmosphere ruined, Crusch picked up a cup and drank it all. She felt her throat heating up, a warmth spreading from the wine in her stomach to her entire body. Zaryusu did the same.

At this moment, the sound of a soft query came. The feeling was totally different than before, making it hard to discern who was asking immediately.

“So, do you think we can win?”

Zaryusu answered softly.

“... I don't know.”

“Yeah, I guessed as much, there are no guarantees in war. If someone assured victory without knowing the strength of the adversaries, I want to beat him up and ask him not to bullshit.”

Crusch didn't say anything more to Zenberu who was laughing softly.

“But... our enemy is careless, this might affect our chance of winning.”

Crusch explained to the baffled Zenberu in Zaryusu's stead.

“Do you remember what that monster said?”

“Sorry, I was napping then.”

“... Someone must have heard it right?”

“Hmmp, I forgot because it is a hassle. Anyway, the important is they attack us, we hit them back, right?”

This guy is hopeless— Crusch gave up explaining with such a face while Zaryusu explained with a wry smile.

“... They said, ‘Resist stubbornly, mortals’.”

A dangerous expression appeared on Zenberu's face, his features scowled into a sneer.

“How maddening, looking down on us from the very beginning.”

Zenberu roared angrily.

It hinted strongly of wrath and displeasure.

“That’s right, they are looking down on us. To be that confident... means they have the forces to overwhelm us easily... But we will crush the arrogance of our foes. We will unite the five tribes and show them the largest force we could assemble. We will strike them down head on, and tell them we are not defenceless weaklings.”

“Hmmp, not bad, that’s a simple way of putting it. I like that.”

As the two male lizardmen was discussing passionately on how to fight, Crusch poured cold water onto their plans.

“It won’t do us any good to wound their pride too much. We just need to show them our worth, correct? If they knew we are of use, they might refrain from wiping us out.”

“Hey hey, you want us to bow our heads to those annoying people?”

“Zaryusu... I understand the danger in evacuating, but I think keeping our lives is more important than losing our freedom.”

Crusch said her piece softly.

The other two didn’t rebuke her thoughts or mock her about this.

No one wants to be dominated, but being enslaved has more future than losing their lives. If they have a future, there will be endless possibilities.

For example, if they taught the fish farming technique to everyone, they might be able to abandon their current homes and run away.

If one was to give up on this possibility and order everyone to die, he has no right to be a leader.

“Listen to this.”

After hearing what Zaryusu said softly, the three of them perk up their ears and listened to the laughter from the banquet being carried here by the wind.

“We might not be able to have fun like this after being dominated.”

“Maybe we could, right?”

“Really? I don’t think so. I don’t think an existence that is amused by our death would be so charitable. If they had any mercy at all, they wouldn’t attempt to wipe us out with such a playful attitude.”

Crusch nodded in agreement.

Even so—

“What I want to say is... please don't die.”

“— I won't, not before I hear your answer to that question.”

“— !”

Crusch and Zaryusu gazed into each other eyes under the cool night sky.

And made an oath.

— Completely ignoring the disgruntled Zenberu.