

Chapter 2: The lady molester from another dimension

The light was already fading.

Thanks to Thoearle's recognition jamming apparatus, we made it back home from the scene of the fight unquestioned. The problem was afterward.

"Once we're inside... ssh. Mom's home."

I'd come home through the cafe without any hesitation normally, but today that's not a good idea. We went around to the back, and I turned the key in the lock with unnecessary care.

"Thanks for having me ove~... ooguuh."

Thoearle, acting all of a sudden like a grade school boy coming over to play at her friend's house, took a punch in the solar plexus from Aika. She seems fluent in Japanese, but I guess a word like "ssh" isn't part of her vocabulary.

"Oh, Sou-chan~?"

Mom's voice came from the kitchen.

There shouldn't be anything suspicious about coming in the back door, but the guilt over bringing along an unknown girl made me tense up.

"Uh, yeah, I'm home!!"

"I'm here, it's me, Aika! Thanks for having me over!"

Aika helped me out by deliberately giving her name. Maybe thanks to that, my mom called back in her usual tone of voice, oka~y! Aika exchanged glances with me and went into the kitchen.

I went up the stairs to my room, taking care to keep my mom from noticing Thoearle.

As soon as we walked through the door she started to say "nervous nervous, nervous nervous," which bothered me, but before long Aika came up with black tea and the three of us took chairs and sat around my table.

Sure enough, Thoearle was looking restlessly around my room.

"...You're pretty lively considering I pounded you into the dirt earlier, aren't you."

“Haha, ridiculous. A woman who is bothered by a little thing like that would hardly be suitable. After this I expect Souji-sama to pound something even more amazing int--”

She started to say something, but trailed off in the middle of her sentence, maybe because Aika had moved into another knifehand strike pose. I looked down once more at the bracelet on my right hand and then at the girl sitting opposite me.

“You can explain this, right. The power you gave me, and the identity of those deviants.”

“...I, I am sorry. This is the first time I have ever been in a boy’s room... ehehe.”

“Wait. The first thing you’re going to explain to me is why I turn into a girl!!”

“What should I do... My heart’s beating fast, he’s going to hear it...”

“You know, I don’t think you’re talking to each other at all?”

Aika put in an amazed comeback. The gears of conversation weren’t turning an inch. And I think I was hearing things that shouldn’t have been said out loud in the first place.

“...U~m.”

Thoearle turned to look carefully at Aika next to her, and made a quiet noise.

“Aika-san. You are tired, are you not. Please go back to your house and rest.”

She had a smile like an angel but a closing time, get lost aura was floating around her.

“Nope. I would like to hear it too.”

Aika answered flatly, a vein standing out on her forehead.

...What is this atmosphere. I don’t know why, but I’m suddenly feeling a chill.

“Aika, I will send you a letter after we are done, so please go home and take a nice rest tonight. Incidentally, it seems that in this country they have the phrase ‘read the atmosphere, stupid.’ I was quite interested to learn that.”

“Shut up and start talking!!”

“Eaaaaaaaah, that’s a contradictiooon”

Aika had grabbed her collar and was shaking it with her neck snapping back and forth like a baby whose muscles weren't developed yet. It looked like a dangerous situation. I hastily jumped in to stop them.

"Calm down, Aika. I'm sure this is just Thoearle's way of showing her consideration."

"Ha ha... Souji-sama, you understand me perfectly, do you not? I'm no match for you..."

Even though we were in my room, Thoearle's hair sparkled and fluttered in an unseen wind.

It's like a widescreen event CG, it looks like it's shining like the climactic scene of a game. What kind of game is this.

"Hey, Souji, is there a nice weapon in your room? Like a hammer or axe, something like that."

"No, of course there isn't, and you're a girl, so you should choose a weapon that doesn't depend so much on your muscles!!"

A giant weapon that relies on arm strength to promise a fatal wound. That's not a nice weapon, those would put her on ice.

Thoearle cleared her throat and, "I apologize. I think I have gotten ahead of myself."

She didn't reply to Aika's suspicious "where?" but continued.

"Allow me to explain, from beginning to end. First, the Tailgear."

"Right, that's the first thing. Why I become a girl."

Thoearle took a scrap of paper out of her pocket and unfolded it into a huge liquid crystal terminal. The creases had vanished. I'm getting excited at all these little bits of overtechnology.

In the middle of the screen was a complete chart of the Tailgear. The rest of the space was filled with descriptions and lines drawn to each piece of the armor.

Overview of the parts of the Tailgear

Manufacturer: Thoearle (B90 W57 H86 Equipment user has the right to confirm with the naked eye and/or body)

【TAILGEAR】 An anti-Elementarian strength-amplification weapon created by user Elementara resonance with a twintail element as the core. Not limited to ground combat, it can operate equally well in deep sea or the vacuum of space. A mere 0.01 seconds pass between the beginning of the transformation and the completion of the weapon, and even during that time enemy attacks are held at bay by an unfolding shield, the Photon Cocoon.

【PHOTON CIRCLE】 A piece that covers the neck. Deploys Imagine Chaff, the recognition jamming force. It also strengthens vision and hearing to the degree that the equipment user can see and even hear events taking place 20 kilometers away.

【FORCE RIVON】 A hair ornament-model device. Creates a weapon in response to the rising Elementara of the equipment user.

【PHOTON VEIL】 An extremely flexible metal which covers the whole body, it is the raw material of the Tailgear. It can boast hardness over 80 times that of diamond but is as light on the body and easy to move in as a set of clothes. The Photon Veil disassembles and absorbs the user's clothing, so transformation and cancellation occur smoothly.

【SPIRITICA FINGER】 A piece that covers the hand from the wrist to the fingertips. It strengthens the force of the equipment user's grip several hundred times, and the punching power becomes over 100 tons.

【SPIRITICA LEG】 A piece from the lower leg down to the ankle. It strengthens the equipment user's walking power several hundred times, and the kicking power over 150 tons.

【TAILBRACE】 After the transformation, it regulates the Tailgear's power output. Also, it is connected to the base's main computer and transmits the operating condition with a negligible time lag of 0.001 seconds.

【ELEMENTARATION】 **Elementara Orb Conversion Device** connected to the left armpiece. Special equipment that draws out the power of an Elementara Orb. The power of the Orb is reified, and charges every part of the Tailgear.

【EXCELLION BOOST】 Opening from the hip, an amplifier apparatus that focuses and releases Elementara. Supplies power to movement and incarnated weapons. When all energy is released, it protects against counter-currents so that the equipment user will not be wounded by backlash from the power they have raised to its limit.

【EXCELLION SHORTS】

【PHOTON ABSORBER】 A defensive membrane of spiritual energy that surrounds the Tailgear. It can take a force corresponding to a 90-ton physical impact and

distribute and mitigate it before it reaches the Tailgear. Also, when fighting in space, it plays the role of a radiation shield.

“That was loooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooong!!”

Thoearle had finished her excited explanation and was bowled over by an iron punch from an equally excited Aika.

“Every little bit of it is so stupid, but... here! A one-hundred-ton punch would blow over a building!”

“Uuuh... For those numbers I was trying to give it a chuu-ni feeling, so I just wrote whatever I thought looked good... You can do it if you try to, though, I think.”

Thoearle got up, rubbing her cheek. She’s reckless and tough, this girl.

She already has the technology of instantaneous teleportation, so even if the suit did have a destructive force of 100 tons or so, it wouldn’t really be surprising...

“What’s this Force Rivon supposed to be? It’s just a ribbon piece, why is there a V in there, it pisses me off!!”

“What do you mean? Boys of a certain age love the letter V! It makes their fighting spirit roar! I guess after all this is an area that a psychotic¹ girl who doesn’t know anything about boys wouldn’t be able to understand, isn’t it!”

“I... W, wh, wh, hey, so are you saying you have so much experience with guys!?”

“That’s very rude. I am not necessarily a virgin, do not put me together with a bitch like you.”

Aika heaved Thoearle up onto her back and delivered a blow to her spine, with an amazing technique that even I hadn’t seen before.

For the time being let’s say this is just a very radical version of girls’ talk.

I’m surprised myself at how serene I am. It could be this wild dance of special moves designed to destroy the human body, radical in another sense... well, in the original sense.

That aside, Thoearle was right. I’m not sure how to put it, but... there are a lot of things here that appeal to a man’s imagination. When I look at it my mouth opens a little.

¹2channel slang (メンヘラ = someone with mental health problems). I can’t think of a way to tell you this subtly, but apparently Thoearle’s world was so much like ours that it also had a 2channel with the same slang.

“But, when I look at it again it’s awesome.”

With everything amplified several hundred times or several thousand times it wouldn’t be impossible to break through the atmosphere sometime when you were running.

“Thoearle, the Excellion Shorts part is blank, but they have some kind of function, right? This... here, right on the swimsuit... part...”

“Er, to put it simply, when the fight goes on for a long time and you want to go to the bathroom, this can break it down to the molecular level and scatter it into the atmosphere for you, but... it seemed like it would spoil the chuu-ni a little, so I wasn’t sure if I should mention it.”

I didn’t hear it - the true function of this piece of cloth with the glittering title of Excellion.

I will also leave this space blank in my heart hereafter.

“Ah... wait, wait! So you explained the layout of the Tailgear, but what about my body! Explain the part about becoming a girl first!!”

“What, you want me to teach you about a girl’s body? Hoho, that’s right, I resigned myself to this. When I agreed to come home with a man who worked himself up in a fight, I knew in my heart that this would probably”

“Tell us already, I’m not going to hold back for much longer!!”

“My elbow can bend farther nooooow!!”

Wrestling fairly well with her words too, Aika was ruthlessly trying to break... no, she was crushing the girl’s slender arm.

...So up until now you’ve been holding back?

Looking at this brutal joint technique I don’t think Aika needed a weapon.

“You become a little girl when you put on the Tailgear because ---- that’s what I like! Is there something wrong with that!?”

“You’re suddenly serious!?”

Thoearle rose bravely to her full height as if she weren’t afraid of anyone.

Of course, I was also lost for words.

“Also, if you look like a little girl, it invites carelessness from the enemy, and you draw their attention. It is the best style to use against those guys.”

“We have little white lies in our part of the world too, Thoearle.”

But you know, if she'd choked down the first thing she said and just used the second explanation, I would have been able to barely accept it. For some reason her personal tastes were seriously interfering with what she wanted to say and exposing her.

“I understand. I can't agree with this, but there is a good reason, so I guess I can't help it.”

“Of course, right? Little girls are so cute, right!!”

No, not just interfering, I'm almost certain taste was her main reason, but... I'm scared to ask.

“Now. I want to ask about that monster too, but first, Thoearle, could you tell me about yourself?”

“Yes, I've been waiting for you!! Please take a good look in all the corners!!”

She was about to strip her white coat off with a splendid gesture and probably a little jacket play when Aika's body blow landed.

“Tempura donnnn”

With a mysterious moan, Thoearle collapsed on the floor. These guys are already perfectly in sync...?

“I... I am not a human of this world.... I came here from another world.”

That makes sense. I thought that we couldn't communicate, our gears weren't meeting up, but she wasn't just a foreigner, she was from another world.

The cultural wall between worlds is incredibly thick, huh.

“Please do not misunderstand me, though. I said another world, but to be exact it is like a parallel dimension. It is not so different from here. The name of the country is different, but in this world, I would be Japanese.”

““Really!?””

A rare harmony with Aika. Now I can't imagine what she means by “not so different.”

“So first let’s talk about what that monster wanted... the mental energy called Elemera.”

I’ve broken the explanation Thoearle gave down into my own words.

Not planets, not universes, but an uncountable number of “worlds” lie parallel to each other. Although no one can see it, they are as close together as if they were on either side of a door. As if they were the points on a backgammon board.

Originally these worlds didn’t have the slightest idea that there were others, just like we don’t. A human race that had only barely managed to make it to the moon could not possibly travel between dimensions.

But apparently there exists an extremely rare world which has reached scientific heights that are literally in another dimension. Elemera, the energy of the heart, was born on that world.

The energy requirements of the technology they were developing became a problem, and they eventually arrived at a way to divert the power of the human heart. That became like their electricity, their fossil fuel, their mineral wealth, and more than any of them.

They made the vague and doubtful thing called the ‘heart’ solid and concrete, and it gave birth to infinite possibility.

The core of the Tailgear, the target of those monsters, element energy - Elemera. It mediates every thought and desire a person has, and exists without limit.

Not just a person’s taste, but their profession, the features of their body, their field of expertise... a person doesn’t necessarily just have one element, and some have many.

“The enemy today was shouting, ‘find the twintails,’ or, ‘catch little girls with dolls,’ were they not? That is what they meant by it.”

I remembered the monsters’ mad little party vividly.

“That is what is called a twintail element. The fact that they have twintails. And their love of them and attachment to them. Those ingredients condense into mental energy. Elemera is the support everyone has in their heart, the source of their vitality. If it is lost... for example, if a person lost their twintail element, that person would never in their life be able to wear twintails again!”

“In their whole life!?”

“Yes. Even if they tried to tie them, they would not be able to. The blank left by a lost element will rule the body for eternity.”

A chill ran up my spine.

So if I had screwed up back there, those girls wouldn't have been able to wear twintails again in their life, even if they had wanted to.

“S, something that crazy is possible...” Aika was touching her own hair protectively.

“Can you get that much power just because someone likes twintails!?”

“The force of the mind is vast, stronger than any fuel or chemical energy. Even when you are exercising, there is a remarkable difference in effectiveness depending on whether you are bored or you concentrate, right? That is also your mental energy turning into driving force.”

“That's true. ‘The greatest way to train is to polish your mind’... grandpa said that to me a lot too.”

“Yeah.”

I know that in the fight today I was also remembering her grandfather's words. I'm worried that his leading successor pays absolutely no attention to his wisdom, though.

“Aika, do you by any chance have an interest in martial arts?”

“Yeah, my grandpa ran a martial arts school.”

“That makes sense... I may need to start carrying a gun to protect myself, I suppose.”

“Go ahead. In that case I can kill you without hesitation.”

“.....”

Thoearle froze at the straight-faced reply. I've been spending my days with a girl who says, “At last I can get serious,” when someone pulls a gun on her. My eyes are getting red.

“Tha - that aside. Unaided, a person's ability to concentrate is more or less their limit, no matter how much practice or training they have... but this energy, Elemara, goes beyond that. The conversion is much more efficient when you materialize it and do not just burn it internally, and you obtain a source of refined energy far beyond existing methods of generating power. That is what makes it possible for the Tailgear to be the strongest weapon.”

Thoearle dropped her gaze to my right arm.

"I believe you recovered a stone after the battle."

I remembered the stone that I had picked up without thinking. A light green stone with a mysterious glow. Maybe because I had it in mind, the stone popped out of the bracelet and rolled into the palm of my hand.

Although it was clearly not organic, I felt a quickening in it as though alive.

"That is a crystallized element, called an Elemera Orb."

"Elemera Orb, huh?... But why something like twintails? I understand the part about a strong mental power, but, you know, in that case... it should be love for your family, or friendship. Aren't there lots of things like that?"

"You could say that those have a splendid strength, but look at it more carefully. The love for family that Intelligent beings possess is to some extent an instinct. Those are the bedrock of the mind, not the motivation for life but life itself. And in your life, what do you throw yourself into, what do you long for? What are you charmed by, what do you charm others with? That is where you will find the spiritual power of the individual, will you not?"

"Throwing your life into twintails..."

Aika gave me an amazed, sidelong glance.

"What, something bad about that!? Actually it was really powerful, wasn't it!!"

"Yes. The twintail element has the highest order of power even among the Elemera. And that is also what allowed me to make use of its power to create a battle suit. The name 'Tailgear' does not only come from the 'tail' in 'twintail,' but from the 'tale' of fantasy!"

"...Are you serious, twintails are the strongest...!?"

"There is no reason why a strong element must have an impressive title. Elements which make you go 'huh?' and tilt your head for a second are often more powerful, enough to shock you."

My life is not some kind of mistake.

This might be an exaggeration, but I think maybe my whole life has led to this day.

"The Tailgear is a weapon built to have a twintail element at its core. Therefore, its use is of course limited to those with a strong twintail element. A boy who has never himself worn

twintails would ordinarily not be expected to have that much power. But in this world, the possessor of the strongest twintail element is... Souji-sama, it is you----

“So I was the chosen one!!”

“Yes, you are the chosen one! ...Um~ by the way, the explanation has gotten a little boring, so would you mind switching off the lights?”

Thoearle ran her fingers along the floor as if she were playing scales on a piano and lifted her hand to touch my thigh. Aika threw a very bulky monthly shonen magazine that had been lying on the floor of my room and intercepted it.

“Ooow!”

Those thousand-odd pages weren’t just for show. Thoearle puffed on her finger.

“You said those monsters were looking for Elemiera. Did they come from another world too?”

“Yes. Those guys are --”



A monster that looked like a bug brought its fist down bang! on the table.

“You say Lizad Guildy was defeated!? By a human!!”

“Nonsense, how is that possible!!”

“Mere negligence cannot explain that! What is this!!”

A grand hall, all dull grey. Creatures of richly individual shape were gathered at a round table like executives holding a meeting in a conference room. This was the secret base of the Ultima Guil.

Neither air nor sea nor the solid earth knowing, a crystal of science and the occult. A base and a mother ship. And also the colony where the monsters lived.

It wasn’t hidden somewhere. It wasn’t even visible to the human eye. A temple... or a better word would be a sanctuary. Now, of course, it was anchored in Souji’s world.

As the commanding officer of the raid squadron, Lizad Guildy had departed in high spirits. But he hadn’t been out for a day before he was defeated together with several dozen of the Ultiroids. The report sent a huge shock through his fellows.

“Hmmm, what is this! Our preliminary investigations of this world showed the level of civilization was low and the element level higher than anything we’ve seen before, an ideal environment! That was what we decided, wasn’t it!!”

Angry roars rose from all corners of the room, their calm lost.

The Elemerians.

The brilliant flourishing of Elemera had been cut short in one stroke by an unknown form of life. They were outside of the evolutionary chain of all other living things, crystals of mental energy with an ego and a body. As it were, the life of Elemera itself. So they had been given that name.

Humans are organic matter, and so we take in other plants and animals to survive. With bodies of mental energy, Elemerians have to live by -- of course, absorbing that same mental energy.

Like blood donation, it had become an iron rule that Elemera must never be extracted in a quantity large enough to hurt someone. But the Elemerians sucked it all out in an instant. They built up advanced knowledge unnoticed and finally learned how to form a conspiracy, and they gathered together into a grand organization and pulled the fangs out of humanity.

That organization was the Ultima Guil, the evil army that had already crossed through many worlds and was now in the world where Souji lived.

“Si-ilence!!”

A monster in the shape of a dragon broke through the mayhem with a roar. The hall suddenly went quiet as if it had been hit by cold water.

“Commander! Dra - Drag Guildy!”

Their commander gave off a fierce fighting aura even seated in his chair. His status was clearly well above that of the other figures in the hall.

“We who trained Lizad Guildy know well his strength. What this tells us is that there is a hidden soldier with enough power to defeat him.”

“A soldier...”

"Watch. It died in an instant, but one of our Ultiroids broadcast this recorded image to us."

On a large monitor at the front of the room, a picture of the transformed Souji appeared.

Oooohh..., a simultaneous cry of wonder.

"Lizad Guildy was defeated by her... hmmm, if it was those twintails then I can understand it."

"What beauty... what love... this must be the Guardian of this world!"

"One cannot call this anything other than a coincidence, the work of the gods. All we knew about the level of civilization in advance was the surface layer, so even if there are one or two warriors that transcend this world's logic and limits, it is not so mysterious. We have faced warriors who oppose us many times before, have we not."

"...But up until now the strong enemies we have been fighting have all fallen into our ...
aoooooh, what is this!?"

The muscular soldiers stood up out of their chairs with a tremendous noise. Broken into six parts, the monitor was showing the young warrior from all directions. A moment when her twintails were in lively motion had been captured, just like a blog review of a figurine.

Oh my.

Hmm.

Oh, this is.

They were supposed to be mourning Lizad Guildy but had become judges in a twintails show.

"More than anything, this young child... I sense in her fate both dread and destiny. These are not just twintails, this is not just a young girl. I feel a profound mystery here, don't you?"

Drag Guildy folded his arms and curled his upper lip back. His eyes were missing nothing as he watched the screen, with a gleam of wit in them that didn't match his bold and grim appearance.

"Well, what shall it be? Will we tuck our tail between our legs and leave for another world?"

With a faint smile, he cast his eyes over the company. The answer was obvious, and so the only response was a fearless grin from them all.

"What are you saying, sir? With twintails like that before us, to run to some trash world?"

“Heh... It looks like I’ve found the place I’m going to die.”

“Then nothing has changed. We will take those twintails and the Elemera of this world together!!”

Eaaaaaaaaaahh...!!

Each and every one of them was a soldier so gallant and resolute that it was almost stifling.

“This is a happy accident, isn’t it? An formidable enemy comes out of nowhere and blocks our path - when that happens, a military man’s blood starts roaring even harder!”

Drag Gildy let out a ringing laugh with a look rising on his face that mixed joy and madness.

This is the Ultima Guil.

Callous monsters who cross between dimensions and have made humanity their enemy ---- we have the general idea of them for now.



“Your world was destroyed, Thoearle!?”

I was amazed at what she casually said after she was done talking about the monsters.

“All of the people of my world had their Elemera stolen away by the Ultima Guil. Looking at the world from far away, you might not notice a single difference... but it was a lonely world of people who were somehow inanimate, with no ambition. There can be no invasion so quiet and cruel.”

In other words, what they destroyed was the heart of the world -- what they conquered was people’s spirit, or more like...

“In our world, the technology of Elemera had not yet been established, so they were an evil beyond human knowledge. There was no way to fight them. On top of that, you remember, you two thought at first that the girls were not hurt. It is hard to understand the real depth of an injury to Elemera. We dragged our feet when we should have opposed them with all our strength.”

“...Thoearle...”

Aika who had been optimistic back then hung her head in agreement.

A world where no one can meddle with the things they love, the things they pour their heart into. When I imagine it, I shiver.

“Definitely. They wouldn’t launch a serious global-scale counteroffensive against a monster that said stupid stuff like that, either, right.”

“Because I saw injury early, I conducted research on their technology before they started to seriously gather Elemers. Thanks to that, not all of my Elemers were stolen from me, but...”

You didn’t have enough to protect the world?

“Thoearle, you’re a researcher? To analyse a technology your world didn’t yet have, that’s amazing. You must be ridiculously smart. And you look like you’re about as old as we are.”

“My age is a secret!”

Thoearle put a finger to her lip and winked. Maybe sick of her girlish attitude, Aika bent her eyebrows up in a 八 shape like a punk in a leather jacket.

“If once stolen, the absorbed Elemers will never return. So it is a revenge that will bear no fruit, but... I would like to use my power to stop them from invading, at least.”

“All right! It’s a huge blessing for us that our interests coincide, but I’ll do it, to strike at the enemies of your world, and to keep our own world safe. Thank you for letting me use this power.”

“Yes! Please use it any way you want! This body!!”

Aika lashed out like a whip to grab Thoearle, who had a triumphant smile on her face as if she didn’t feel like it was enough to just let me use the Tailgear, and floored her with a back suplex.

I can see their underpants perfectly from where I’m sitting but, why is it, why is it that even when they do this I’m not feeling anything erotic about these two.

“Come to think of it, Thoearle, isn’t there anyone else who can use the Tailgear?”

“I cannot mass-produce them, but there is one other one, just one. And I have found someone who is qualified to use it already.”

“Really!? In that case, we...”

“But... it is not a person with a just spirit like you, Souji-sama. I don't know if person is even the right word for them. An inhuman barbarian, heartless, a wild beast stained through to their soul with violence. If I gave such a mighty power to that demon, even supposing they could use it, I think they might become a greater threat to Earth than the Ultima Guil are.”

Thoearle poured out her heart with a bitter expression.

“Is that so? There are villains like that among people who like twintails, that's kind of sad...”

“Hmm. Even though they have Elemera, they're a demon with no heart. That's odd.”

“Yes. I could not have believed it myself until I saw it with my own eyes. Actually, I still can't believe it.”

In any case, we can't expect reinforcements. It looks like I have to fight by myself for now or it'll be hopeless.

“Naturally, I want to stop Souji from fighting in a war, but if he's the only one that can fight, I guess there's nothing I can do... But your safety is your first priority, all right?”

“Yeah, I know!”

“You don't know! Listen, if you're the greatest thing to them, you're going to become their number one target! What if you lose, what do you think they're going to do to you!?”

“Aika, you're so gloomy... Elemerians do not have any particular interest in the human bo... lime juice!!”

Another back suplex. Before long the floor's going to wear out.

“Your face is bright red, is it not! You are imagining something like tentacles!!”

“Sh, shut up shut up!! If they like that kind of thing, or if they have an element like that...”

Aika, waving her hands like an angry kid, abruptly stopped with a serious look.

“...Hey. You said that all the world's Elemera was stolen, right? Then how did the Tailgear...”

“Oh my, it's already this late!”

Thoearle looked somewhat unnaturally at the clock hanging on the wall behind her and clapped her hands. Aika had started to say something, but was interrupted by her badly delivered line and made another 八\ with her eyebrows.

“I think that it would be a good idea to go home and rest before long, Aika. Are you not tired?”

“No, I’m just fine. Why are you trying to get me to go home by myself?”

“I thought you might be tired...”

Endless.

Thoearle felt around in the pockets of her white coat, and stood up suddenly with a smirk.

“Souji-sama, I am going to go make some more tea.”

“No, I can’t let you do that, you’re a guest - hey.”

I tried to get up but she stopped me, put the cups on the tray, and left the room hastily.

“...Hey, wait a second, Thoearle! My mom’s in the kitche...!!”

“I have made some more.”

“So fast!?”

I was about to hurry out of the room and follow her, but the door opened again after only seconds. Did she use the teleportation pen again? For some reason she had just one cup and was holding it carefully.

There was steam rising from it, certainly, but... did she really make more.

No, it’s not steam, there are bubbles rising from the unnaturally boiling water, or a piece of wrapping paper had fallen out of the pocket she was using, or it looked like she had just finished emptying the contents, or is that what’s going on or isn’t it, which one is it, it’s this mood where a chill is running up my spine again.

“Well, please go ahead, Aika.”

“Uh, okay...?”

You’ve been shouting all this time, your throat is probably dry.

Aika accepted it obediently and was about to raise the cup to her lips...

“...”

Her hand trembled and she stopped short as if she had felt the presence of a ghost. I couldn't help but be drawn to the source of the gaze either. When I looked tactfully out of the corner of my eye at Thoearle, she was staring at Aika with her eyes wide open like an owl.

“Now, drink,” her look said.

“...Thoearle, try a little bit of this.”

Aika handed back the cup.

“No, I have already had enough.”

“Just a sip is fine, though.”

“No, no.”

“Please, drink.”

“Absolutely not.”

“...You put something in this, didn't you, you fucker!!”

Aika brandished the cup and threw the tea in Thoearle's face.

“Nyuonmuuuu!!”

“Aaah ---- what are you doing, Aika!! That's terrible!!”

When I see the way Thoearle is holding her mouth firmly closed, I feel absolutely sure she did put a sleeping pill or something in there. Why is she trying this hard to get Aika to go away!?

“Sou-ji, you can't put any confidence in this woman! She absolutely has some kind of plot!!”

Uh, you know, I'm not going to believe everything Thoearle says all of a sudden either, but usually, I get interrupted by screaming when I try to think carefully about it. What am I supposed to do!

“Calling it a plot is too harsh, I think.”

“So - Souji... Why are you putting this much trust in her! Is it because she has breasts!?”

Aika demanded an answer with tears in her eyes. Was she worrying about it that much? Maybe it would have been better to hold back the joke about her chest in that fight...

I pulled a hand towel out of the storage under my bed.

“Use this towel, Thoearle. I’m going to bring some ice from downstairs.”

“That is all right, it was not really that hot.”

“It looked pretty hot!?”

I started to wipe Thoearle’s face carefully with the towel.

“...M~m... m~ fu...”

She’s bringing her face unnaturally close to me. Watching us, Aika started to groan quietly, and her body was shaking. Feelings of guilt were naturally welling up within her, I guess?

“I don’t think you’ll have a burn... Aika, even if she came from another world, she’s just a normal human being. If you do the kind of tsukkomi you usually do on me, she’ll get hurt.”

I should have said that back when we met. How many punches has she taken already?

“Oh, that’s right.”

Thoearle, lying back in my arms as I was wiping her face, smiled as if she had realized something and suddenly began to wriggle again.

“It is hot... it is hot inside my clothes too. Please wipe me there...”

She took off her white coat. The plump breasts under her thin untrustworthy underwear shook as if they were about to burst.

“Eeeh...!? No, that is, uh, definitely... I’ll ask Aika.”

“If Aika did it, she might pour more boiling water in, I am worried.”

“I’m not gonna!!”

“That is a lie! You were trying to see if you could twist off my breasts earlier!!”

“They stayed on in the end, so it’s fine, isn’t it?”

I think I can turn a blind eye to this conversation. I feel unspeakable fear responding in me, a long way beyond any of the scenes of destruction that I saw today.

“Let me have that!!”

As I broke out in a cold sweat, Aika took the chance and grabbed the towel from me.

“Nuryaaa!!”

Aika threw all her strength into scrubbing Thoearle’s chest with the towel to the point that it was more like rubdown therapy.

“The heat of friction is cutting down my breaaaaasts!!”

“You should get cut down to the bone, people like you!!”

It’s a little late to be saying this, but that first impression of Thoearle has certainly been smashed to atoms.

“Let, let’s talk about exactly how to operate the Tailgear later... I will leave the details for tomorrow or afterward, so let us stop here, all right...”

Thoearle made this suggestion while rubbing her chest. (By the way, without learning anything she said “Souji-sama, please rub my chest” and took an open-palm blow from Aika on her chin.)

“Yeah, okay.”

To be honest, there are still many things I haven’t heard enough about, but I decided to agree with Thoearle since Aika has been in a really bad mood this whole time. I’ve asked the main things, and this should be enough for today. And I think this conversation is going to cut down Thoearle’s life if it goes on too long.

“Um... sorry. Throwing the tea on you. I went too far with that.”

Aika seemed to be unwilling, but she apologized.

“It is all right, after all, I am stronger than a normal human. Incidentally, I think the other things that have happened to me that threatened my life may also have gone a bit too far.”

“Sorry, all right!!”

Stronger. I hadn't expected to hear that word, and a single doubt rose into my mind at it. What was it that gave Thoearle that strength? She said that her goal was revenge, but I can't feel even a hint of tragedy in her.

No, it wasn't the kind of "invasion" that left everything a scorched earth, but even when she was talking about her old world, even when she was explaining her enemy the Elemerians, there didn't seem to be even a bit of anger or sadness or resentment in her.

If that's because she was putting a happy face on it, I think she really is strong.

"Umm~."

"Whoa!"

Thoearle rubbed her hands together in front of my [?] thighs, and gave me a look pregnant with meaning that was mixed with long, feverish breaths.

"So, then, Souji-sama. I also want to be able to back you up in a fight, so, from now on, I would like us to do everything together as much as possible. For efficiency's sake, even eating and sleeping... um, the essential one of those is sleeping..."

She closed her mouth there. A look sharp like a bed of nails was fired from behind me.

"Eating and sleeping... wait, you mean here?"

"Yes, so would you allow me to borrow a room? As long as I can sleep it will be enough."

"Huh!?"

"If you are going to say 'we don't have any rooms to lend to someone like you,' then even a toilet will be fine, so... Hhh, haah..."

That would be even more inconvenient. But Thoearle is breathing louder for some reason.

"No, there's not really anyone here but me and my mom, and we have extra rooms, so it's fine, but... can't you stay at Aika's house? You're both girls, and there's something better about that."

Aika's parents are overseas for a job right now, so she's living together with her older sister. As long as her sister is okay with it, I think that would be better, but...

"It is better with a boy and a girl... er, what I mean is, there are a number of considerations."

“Even Aika doesn’t normally throw tea on people. Do you?”

“Of course I don’t! How savage do you think I am!!”

She wants to say I’m being ridiculous, but looking back at the amount of violence in not even an entire afternoon, she doesn’t make so unpersuasive an objection.

“But I am going to support you, Souji-sama, so it is more efficient if you let me live here. The assassins of the Ultima Guil are going to be coming again and again after this, you know!”

“U~mm, but...”

I can’t give an instant answer to this. First of all, how should I explain this to mom?

“My mom is really like a kid in some ways. So, you know, if this incident leaks out, I’m worried she’ll stick her nose in.”

She lives her life jumping into the next exciting thing - for example, her half-hearted management of the cafe. If I let her know that I’m going to take care of a girl, she won’t worry about it or scold me, she is the master of taking nothing seriously. I’m scared to talk to her about this. I can see too clearly what would happen.

“Another urgent matter is the establishment of a base.”

“A base--”

Aika was taken aback at the jump in vocabulary. Come to think of it, there was something about that in the chart for the Tailgear.

“Due to the tremendous scale of the enemy, the system that supports Souji-sama must be flawless. Mission support, monitoring of the combat, maintenance of all kinds... it will also act as a research laboratory, so the base has to have a suitable size.”

“I see.” I agreed with her. The value of support had been more than proven in the first battle today.

“And so, I would like you to allow me to dig a space underneath your house. The ground under this house is also more suitable.”

“Space under my house!? I’m not sure it will be okay if there’s an earthquake or something.”

“...Wait, the ground? But I live right next door...”

Aika's also extremely worried. We're such close neighbours that we're practically connected, after all.

"Please do not worry. I will finish it tonight."

Thoearle said something so ridiculous that people throughout the world working in the construction industry are going to do an old-fashioned spit take and blow out their tea.

"That makes it even harder to feel safe. What's that lightning-speed work! Our houses aren't just all going to sink into the ground, right?"

Thoearle shook her head gently and smiled sweetly.

"Aika, if you were living by yourself, I would not be unwilling even to demolish you and your house together with explosives, but I cannot cause trouble for your family."

"Why don't you get buried, hey, why don't you get buried!"

Aika is shoving Thoearle's head into the floor with an angry look on her face, on the verge of caving in the floorboards. She's so beautiful that you feel ashamed just to look at her, but it looks like Aika's gotten totally used to that. She doesn't hold back when she scolds her.

"Thoearle. I'll persuade my mom one way or another, so... could you help me think of a good reason why we're going to live together? I absolutely don't want anything about the Tailgear and the stuff about the Ultima Guil to come out."

"Leave that to me. I can think of a million lies like that. I am Seek Time=Zero Thoearle."

She hit her chest proudly with a thump. Another sketchy name in the ruby².

"Don't act proud! And don't shake your breasts!!"

Aika shot an "I still haven't wiped it enough?" glare at that chest as if it were a hereditary foe.

"How about this? I am your classmate, studying abroad from a foreign country."

"I see, a homestay line or something?"

"No, I was lost in an unfamiliar city, and you tricked and kidnapped me and locked me up. See, I'm desperately trying to run away, so it makes perfect sense for me to dig a hole!"

² The other sketchy ruby titles I can think of are 'Imagine Chaff' for the recognition jamming system and 'Tailgear' itself, which is in ruby when it shows up for the first time - the main text is 空想装置 Daydream/Fantasy Armor.

“Does that make sense!!”

Thoearle took a punch to the liver.

“...I'll persuade her on my own, okay?”

“Yeah. That's a better idea. Go do it before she gets back up.”

I'm sorry. I can't watch this.

She's the most beautiful girl I've ever seen in my life, and she's rolling on the floor in agony in a way I've never seen outside of a fighting manga. This spectacle could easily overturn my whole view of life if I look directly at it.

I went out into the hallway and breathed a big sigh of resignation.

This is the first time I've ever told my mom a lie this huge. It's a kind of tension I've never tasted before.

The homestay line is the safest one, I think.

I'm not sure how well I'll be able to explain afterward, but I am not good at lying. Ad-libbing doesn't work either, as I've had rubbed in my face twice today.

“I'll hide the parts I need to, and I'll explain the truth as much as I can afterward. That's all I can do...”

My mom was leaning on the with her arms folded when I came down the stairs.

“---- I hope you didn't mind me listening in!”

“You shouldn't listen---!!”

“Oh my.”

I pulled my mom into the living room.

“Do you not care about your own son's privacy?!!”

“You brought a girl other than Aika-chan along with you, so I was sure there would be interesting developments!!”

I rubbed my forehead and groaned. The whole thing was already revealed back when we walked in. I shouldn't have worried about eyewitnesses at the scene, I should have been on maximum alert after I came home.

"...How much did you hear?! What did you hear?!!"

"I heard a girl screaming over and over. Muhuhu, things were pretty rough."

Ah, she heard almost the whole thing. That's already almost the whole thing. By the way, all the violence without exception was the young girl from next door.

"You said you were the ones who settled the incident that was on the news?"

"Why do you believe that!? Don't you even have a little doubt!?"

We believe it because we saw it with our own eyes and then fought in it, but somehow she believes the whole thing just from eavesdropping on us.

My mother looked up at the ceiling and took a deep breath.

"So at last, this day has come..."

I stepped back in shock at the serious expression on my mother's face.

This calmness, the speed of adaptation... there was only one conclusion I could come to.

"...It can't be, mom, you've already known for a long time...!? I was going to be chosen as the wearer of the Tailgear...!!"

"Umm, I don't know anything about it."

Complete denial with the same serious face.

"Why were you acting like you knew!? Or actually, you didn't hear anything we talked about!!"

"Monsters called Elemerians in the Ultima Guil attacked this world to obtain Elemera, the mental energy of humans, and you fight them using a suit called the Tailgear, Sou-chan?"

"Or you understand all of it, or which one!?"

That's impressive understanding considering she was eavesdropping.

"...This was my dream, you know."

My mother raised her face to heaven with lips tinged with drool and an expression of ecstasy on her face.

“You know, your mother grew up with an aggravated case of chuunibyou. I passed my days dreaming of becoming a heroine who protected the world, and it finally didn’t come true and I became a mother of one. But, listen, I passed that dream down through the umbilical cord, and entrusted it to you.”

“What are you doing to your kid before he’s even born!!”

With a little effort this could probably have become a moving, unforgettable conversation between parent and child, but my mom was talking about the errors of her youth.

“And your late father, he was also ----- a terminal chuunibyou patient.”

“Is that something you pause before saying? ...Dad had a bad case of chuunibyou too.....”

My eyes feel itchy, and not because I’m about to cry.

“We fell in love in an instant, and threw our chuuni back and forth at each other to our hearts’ content, wishing together. Dad also wanted very, very much to be a hero. He’d make stories where he became a hero in great detail, and he let me hear about them! At the end, he’d even tell me how he felt when he powered up and things like that.”

“Stop-- I think I’m about to run into the front hall and smash his portrait!!”

I pressed my hands against my skull as if under assault by ultrasonic waves. Just listening to these memories feels like it’s blocking the blood vessels in my brain.

“But the situation your mother hoped for the most was to get close to a young man from an enemy organization and fall in love with each other. On the other hand, your father also dreamt of exactly the opposite situation, so we fought with each other on countless occasions! To be honest, several times we decided to break up because of that.”

English is not my strong point at all, but right now I think I could fluently say “OH MY GOD!”

Someone who tries to put on a bracelet that transforms you into a young girl when they ask to share a table seems normal.

My parents, on countless occasions, fought and broke up for reasons as irrational as any in the world - it’s too heavy for the heart of a boy in adolescence. It’s very difficult to take.

“In the winter of our third year, you know. Your heartbroken mother said, “Let’s try a setting where a boy and girl who are always at each others’ throats are drawn to each other,” as a concession, but your father insisted that it had to be forbidden love with the female commander of the enemy forces (wearing body armor like a swimsuit) and refused to compromise. Even our relationship can only go so far... that’s about the time I started to resign myself to that. ...Sou-chan. I realized that you were in my belly around...”

Ectoplasm is coming out of my mouth. I can’t push it back in, my hands have no strength.

Dating each other with messed up fantasies, and then a shotgun marriage. This kind of parents. What do I do, what am I supposed to do with these frustrated feelings.

Something even heavier than the peace of the planet Earth is settling onto my shoulders.

“After that we got along with each other so well that it seemed unbelievable... heh heh, we often said that our child was the tie between us.”

That might have been true in my mother’s relationship, but when I hear that right now I feel pain like a spike being driven through my head!

“There’s one more important thing I have to say. This is a good time, I think.”

“Huh?”

“You know, Souji... you’re the oldest child, so did you ever wonder why your name has the character ‘two’ in it?”

A deep sadness dwelled in my mother’s eyes.

Certainly I’ve wondered, but in the end I never asked about it.

Why is she talking about that now?

“...Ah... Did I have some older brother or sister that you expected to come before me!?”

Mom shook her head.

“It came from the shared feelings of your father and I. ‘Aah, the real grade two of middle school was the most fun time,’ we said. It was the nostalgia we felt for those happy days gone by that made us put the letter ‘two’ in your name!...”

“Couldn’t you have taken that secret to the grave!? I’m going to be a delinquent! If they had to hear interesting secrets of their birth one after another like this, any normal adolescent human would be a delinquent already the next day!”

“I wanted to make it something more impressive, really. Like Meteo³ or Ultimate⁴. But this was another compromise between the two of us - we finally chose a character that we both liked.”

“Sorry, Souji is good.”

I finally sunk to my knees. I nearly wore the name of a self-conscious enemy organization...

Hey, is it possible that my, the part of me that people think is a bit of a pain, really is a hereditary thing passed down through the umbilical cord?

The sound of a floorboard creaking made me hold my breath.

“Um~, is it all right?”

“Wai... Thoearle, you can’t come yet!”

Thoearle was peeking into the living room, half hiding behind the door. She is already very lively even though she took a straight punch to the liver some minutes ago.

“Hehe, you let me listen in on your conversation, Thoearle-chan!”

“Actually, I have also been taking the opportunity to listen in.”

I’m out of reactions.

That funny story about my birth, on a level that could win a prize if you submitted it to a variety program - I guess she heard that too. I could die of agony from the memory.

“Honored mother... I have already spoken about this with Souji-sama, but I would like to live here, if you would be so kind.”

“Sure, I’ve got no reason to say no!”

“Also, I would like to build a research laboratory underground if possible, and use it as a starting point for backup.”

³ 命天男 -> fate heaven man. Mei-ten-o and heavy-handed abbreviation makes it me-te-o.

⁴ 有帝滅人 -> they who destroy a monarch. Aru-tei-metsu-to -> あるていめつと -> Ultimate.

“Get it done right away. A hundred kilometers deep if you like. I always wanted a secret base. Let me see it once in a while, okay?”

“Of course.”

“Heeeeeeyy--!?”

The conversation is advancing bewilderingly fast. She’s even been allowed to break the limits on excavation depth in the private property regulations, it’s nuts.

“Also, honored mother, could I manage to have you say ‘Oh, that’s a problem, we don’t have any spare futons. That’s right, you can just sleep together in Souji’s bed!’?”

“...Thoearle-chan, that’s good. You are really good! For someone like you to come to us from an alternate universe makes me really happy! Please think of this place as your own home! ...But, oh, that’s a problem, we don’t have any spare futons. That’s right, you can just sleep together in Souji’s bed!”

The hell are you playing it back perfectly like a voice recorder! That’s a woman who devoted her whole youth to chuunibyou for you. Apparently mom can also use Seek Time=Zero.

I’m being washed in some kind of aura coming off the two of them, mom and Thoearle, and it looks to me like they’re being pulled together by something like magnetic force. ...Sympathy?

Thoearle must also have a severe case of chuunibyou, I guess. And she puts Vs into words too.

This is scary, now what am I going to do, I’m asking you a favor, so, just once, let me cry without worrying about what other people might think.

“And so I don’t have any problem with Thoearle staying at our house. Think of this as your own home, including Sou-chan’s room, and use it without reservation.”

“Thank you very much, Mother (in law). I will mainly think of Souji-sama’s room as my house.”

What’s this? They’re making fun of me, I’m pretty sure that’s what’s going on.

If I make comebacks one by one it’ll be me who loses.

I bowed my head. I had reached partial enlightenment.

“...Hehe, instead, would you mind making Sou-chan into a proper man sometime?”

“Oh, no, Mother (in law), please don’t be so reserved. Why do you not say ‘tonight?’”

“Thoearle-chan...!!”

“Mother (in law)...!!”

The two hugged each other for dear life.

Aika came down the stairs at a run, raising dust. “Wai... Aunt Miharu, come over here, please!”

“My my, mother is very popular.”

“And also, you, don’t add “in law” in your mind when you say “mother!””

“How did you know!?”

Aika went right past Thoearle without even remembering to punch her. ...Maybe I should cry now while I can... silently, with tears streaming down my face.



Aika took Souji’s mom •Miharu into a neighbouring room and closed the door. She really didn’t want to be heard, opening the door a crack to check Souji and then shutting it again right away.

“Aunt Miharu! Think about this carefully! If you make him live together with a woman like that, Souji’s virtue will be in danger!”

“I couldn’t ask for more, could I? Suddenly a beautiful girl comes to live with the hero, and things turn in an erotic direction. It’s just like that day, that hour, the dream I painted in my mind back then! Even if she pushes Souji down, it won’t bother me at all.”

“And you still call yourself his mother!!”

It looks like she also painted a detailed love comedy in her youth of chuuni fantasy, but... I wonder why a woman had a dream with a development like that?

“But, it’s normal for a parent to want her son to find a girlfriend?”

Miharu gave her a probing look.

“.....That..... that might be true, but.....”

A bashful Aika poking her fingers together.

“Or else, you, Aika-chan...?”

Aika hastily waved her hand. “It’s not like I... I’m just worried about Souji as his childhood friend...”

“Ye~s, if that girl hadn’t appeared, I wanted to look at you a little more carefully.”

“Wh, what are you saying?”

“Thoearle-chan has a good look in her eyes. They’re the eyes of a woman who wants to eat a virgin, an aroused woman with no principles!”

“Even as a joke, is that something you say about your guest!?”

That made even Aika feel pity; she tried to defend her.

“A guest... no! Thoearle-chan is already a fine member of our family.”

The door opened with a soft sound. Thoearle came in, her eyes wet with tears.

“Mother (in law)...”

She gripped both of Miharuru’s hands tightly, and something passed between their eyes.

“Huh? Why is there an emotional atmosphere!?”

“I am sorry, mother, but I am not a woman without principles. I have one principle: Souji-sama.”

“You should deny the rest of it too!!”

“That is right. It’s romance for a woman to lose all her principles when it comes to a single man!”

Has a day come when in just a few minutes the air is filled with such unromantic words? Why has a girl her age gotten to the point where her eyes brim with happy tears when mom calls her a virgin eater? Just like Souji, Aika seems to have been assaulted by a violent headache.

Although she was holding her forehead with her head lowered, Aika’s lips were pressed hard together. Miharuru still thinks she’s just worried about Souji, and no, she still didn’t trust her.

(The way she’s acting, some of it is joking, but...)

Thoearle was holding hands with Miharuru and turning around in circles as Aika stared with distrustful eyes.

(There are a lot of crucial things she's holding out of focus. Like in a world where Elemira had been hunted to exhaustion, how did she get the twintail element for the core of the Tailgear?)

The Tailgear, armor that lets you fight without covering your face. Aika felt that its manufacturer had hidden her own face behind a heavy mask.

(I know there's something important she's hiding...)



Aika had stressed it to the point of stubbornness as she was about to head home.

"Souji, from today on, sleep with your door locked."

"Why?"

"Who cares! If you don't, I'll weld it shut from outside!!"

That's ridiculous, it's a wooden door, I was thinking, but I understood it as Aika's way of saying that I should be more careful about crime prevention. Without objecting any further, I nodded obediently, and I went obediently to bed that night. But.

Mohyan.

Memepoppo, puryon.

Kyopo-. Kyopo-.

Ryromuminminminmohe-.

"....."

I can't sleep.

I hardly feel awake, but my eyes have opened on their own.

It's fine, leave it to me, Thoearle had said.

I'm not worried about something like digging a hole in the basement of the house. Even taking present-day Japan as an example, construction techniques have reached the point where they look like magic to an ordinary person, as you can see from the subways stretching through the earth under Tokyo like the mesh of a net.

Thoearle has come from a world where scientific techniques are far more advanced, so even though she's doing rush construction, I don't think there's much reason to worry about a cave-in. I understand that, and I'm lying in bed like this, but...

No matter how I put them into text, it seems like you'll doubt my sense of sound - what in the world are these weird construction noises?

"Ah! ...Dangerous, dangerous, I was almost about to break through to the planetary core..."

I shouldn't be able to hear her distant voice, but it was as clear as if it were directly assaulting my brain.

Let's sleep.

I have to sleep.

I have to leave these odd sounds and words on the other side of a dream.

Before much time had passed, suddenly the sounds stopped. She said she'd get it done in one night so I thought she'd have to work hard tonight, but it looks like she's finished. Or the planetary core - no, let's not think about it.

My exposure to the vortex of weird sound made even the ticking of the second hand of the wall clock sounded louder than usual when it stopped.

"Whew..."

I should be terribly tired, but for some reason I'm wide awake and can't sleep. I raised my upper body out of bed and opened the curtains of the window.

The sky was full of stars.

As I watched them rising into the night sky I had a poetic thought, out of character.

That girl is just like a fragment that has fallen from one of those stars.

Zip.

A human face with bloodshot eyes fell into sight, facing the other way up. Its wide eyes met mine straight on as it passed the window.

“Gwaa-----!!”

“Aahwaa-----!!”

I fell off the bed in surprise but the girl on the other side of the window didn't have it that easy.

“Hawawa, Souji-sama...”

“What are you doing, Thoearle!!”

Getting back on my bed, I hurried to pull up Thoearle, who got her hand on the windowframe in the nick of time. Well, first, my nomination of “fragment of a star” will probably lose the election without much debate.

...She had been doing some Sunday carpentry on the planetary engineering level, but despite that she had a nice smell. Something like peaches.

“I, I am inexcusably sorry, it looks as though I fell asleep while I was working and... while I was half asleep I walked up to the roof at some point, and the instant I realized where I was, my foot carelessly slipped and I fell.”

Seek Time=Zero. Certainly the thinking time is extremely close to zero, but isn't the fact that the vital content of the lie is so sketchy a fatal flaw?

“Er... If that's really true, there is room for careful thought about our mutual position.”

“No, no, no, you can use any position you want and I will be fine! Strength, direction, time doesn't matter, whatever, however, wherever you come from, by all means!!”

I feel like a misunderstanding has crept in somewhere, but if she tells me I can take whatever position I want, I want her to let me put a little distance between us, so that's how we'll do it.

“Hey, Sou-ji, what are you doing! There was a huge noise, but.....!!”

The sound of a window being shoved open.

Wearing light blue pajamas, Aika bent forward out of her window, her face changing color.

The house next door... my room and Aika's are right across, and the gap between them is so small that you can straddle the windows and move between them, but on this night that convenience had backfired.

"...Ah?"

Thoearle was sitting on the bed just the way I had pulled her up. We were facing each other.

"What are you doing in theeere!!"

With a violent four-footed leap, Aika entered my room with a dynamic ☆ apology for butting in and with the same force sent Thoearle flying.

"Eh..... me... why me, in a love comedy it is the guy who gets punch... higaah!!"

Under Aika's rush Thoearle floated into the air hit by hit.

Together with the dull sounds of impact.

The brilliant kicks and punches continued without a break.

And on top of that, the illusion of faint blue afterimages on the arc of motion.

This is the first time I've seen humanity do that outside of a fighting game.

"What are these about, these breasts! They piss me off! They piss me off!!"

"Do not worry. I myself used to be very small once. But I reached an ordinary size after two or three years. By the way, if you do not stop sooner or later I will di..."

"What do you mean average!? There's nothing average about them -mune!!"

Ah, in a pathetic, moving way, she's turned her overflowing anger into a verbal tic.

"Even if I am from another world, human gh..."

They're so close to me, but they're far away.

"...Heeey."

Even calling to them didn't stop them, so I gave up on all of it and pulled the futon over my head.



Yougetsu Academy suspended its first hour of classes, and the whole school was gathered in the gymnasium. Of course, it was about the incident yesterday.

A solemn atmosphere ruled by silence.

The fact that I couldn't see any odd students out who were yawning and wishing for the assembly to end soon seemed odd in itself.

Only one thing broke the quiet: the steps of the student council president, Shindou Erina, walking up to the podium.

Standing at it, she swept her gaze across the room to cover every student. Just like peasants waiting for a verdict from the South Magistrate of Edo⁵, they kept silent, waiting for her to speak.

Maybe reflecting on their failure yesterday, several of her maids stood like special police in the shadows behind her. They weren't worrying about the look of it any more.

"Everyone. As you are aware, the town faced a heretofore unprecedented danger yesterday, when it was assaulted by a group of mysterious monsters."

Certainly, it's beyond unprecedented. The monsters with their clear intention to collect twintails are in some sense even more of a shock than an invasion from outer space.

"In fact, I happened to be at the site, and was one of the targets."

"Wh...!!"

"What's that!"

The students suddenly started to murmur. They were trying to keep quiet for the sake of the president, but even so, when their anger rose up and overflowed, they couldn't hold it back.

Her twintails were swaying with the motions of her body and hands, so I felt the tension rise too.

"Unforgivable!!"

"Even if it kills me, I'm going to try and beat them!"

⁵ The text says Tōyama Kagemoto, a well-known historical figure who served as the South Magistrate at one point among other things: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T%C5%8Dyama_Kagemoto. My translation is a lie for the sake of flavor. If you know the "stolen smell" case, that was a different South Magistrate, Ōoka Tadasuke.

“Hey, quick, someone strap dynamite to my body! Shut up, do it right now!”

Male and female students were shouting without a pause, as angry as if it had happened to them personally, or rather angrier. The flame of anger ran through the students’ bodies like a fuse, trying to turn the children of two thousand parents into insurgents.

If getting carried away like this is your school spirit, then just laugh and accept something small like my slip of the tongue yesterday!

“Your righteous anger makes me very happy. It is a wonderful thing for your hearts to ache for a stranger. And on top of that, for someone like me who is so inexperienced as a leader.”

She was short, so she was using a riser to reply. And yet still she was standing on tiptoes. I thought of a young girl stretching out as far as possible to write her answer on the blackboard.

That courage was another source of intoxication for her very well-trained dogs... rather, students.

“However, their aim was not me alone. Even in this room, there are several people who were targeted, I believe? And if we look outside of school there are even more girls who almost fell into the evil hands of the invaders.”

Another burst of murmuring, but this time she intercepted it with a sharp “But!”

“As you can see, I stand here unharmed. There is still very little information on television, but I believe many of you have learned about it from the net or other places. At that place there appeared like the wind... a gallant fighter for justice, who was kind enough to save us!”

Her voice became a little sweeter in the middle. She sounded just like a princess, her heart burning for the one she loved.

.....A fighter for justice?

I felt an uncomfortable suspicion, and cold sweat ran down my spine.

“----That girl, that day, she stole my heart!!”

A loud and enthusiastic cheer rose up in response.

‘I’ve been waiting for those words, President!!’

"I'm so glad... Although I've been saying 'a tiny girl with so much pride, so sexy,' honestly I feel hesitant. But if that's what the president says, I don't feel sad at all any more!!"

"This is bad... I do feel sad, but it still turns me on!!"

"For the tiny president, a tiny ally of justice... is this providence? I feel like I understand something about the world!"

It was a cauldron of excitement. I was reminded of the scene you often see at the end of an action movie, when they find out that the operation was successful and a whole room of FBI agents wave their hands in the air and cheer.

One after another they say things that make me worry about the future of Japan, or the world.

Eh? Could it be that I got the president to fall in love with me?

But the one she likes is me as TailRed... as a little girl... eh?

"Students, behold!"

When the president raised her right hand, without a moment's delay one of the maids set up a projector screen. A large image of a girl appeared on it.

""Ooooo---hh!!""

"Aaah!!"

The exact opposite of the cheers around me. Sure enough, what they had put up on the screen was me after transformation. It's a perfect angle. Pictures like this have already leaked out here and there on the net, it seems like.

"Eee..."

It's frustrating, but... those are spectacular twintails...!! I can't keep myself from looking!!

Lined up with the president, it's a splendid view that is already rocking my heart.

It's like being under the gaze of the two temple guardians⁶. A fierce power created by the harmony of two bodies in one. It's probably because of the resonance with the two beautiful tails of hair that are the foundation of the twintail.

⁶ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nio>

“The Shindou family has decided to do everything in its power to support her! I ask everyone here, somehow, together with us, to aid the savior of the new era!”

The cheering became even louder.

A passionate gaze at the president, and TailRed’s twintails.

Everyone is looking at... my twintails-----

“Huh!?”

I felt my heart beating strangely fast in my chest for a reason it would not be a good idea to think about, and made a fist with my right hand and punched myself in the cheek.

The Shindou family had decided to support me, including even the president’s mother, the director of Yougetsu Academy. Lots of the students adore the president, so they should agree almost without exception.

The whole school is behind me -- but as someone who’s burdened with the job of turning into a little girl this isn’t something like high school baseball, where I can be openly proud of the fact that every student is cheering me on.

Even though school has just started, I can’t remember anything that’s happening in class.

I’m overhearing bits of gossip from all over, and probably all of it is about me, TailRed.

My stomach hurt, and time passed.



At lunch, Aika came over to my seat carrying a bundle with a bento box in it.

“Hey, Souji, listen, after school...”

“Ah, sorry. I’m going home as soon as school ends, I promised to listen to the explanation of the Tailgear. And I need to let her show me the base, too.”

I answered her quietly to keep from being heard.

“The rest from yesterday?”

“I’m just going to hear how to use it, so you don’t have to come today.”

“...Just you and her?”

“There’s no one else, is there?”

It’s possible Mom will insist on joining in from the start this time.

“---M, me too!!”

Aika banged the table with the water bottle she was holding.

“I want... to hear it too, so let me come.”

“...Okay.”

With that much force in her voice, that was all I could say.

It was the first day of normal class. It was too early for people to be having lunch with new friends they had made, so almost everyone in both the bento faction and the cafeteria faction was eating with the people they knew from middle school.

Aika has quite a few friends from back in middle school, but I don’t even have one. I appreciate the fact that she’s coming to see me at lunch like this.

Yeah, that’s right.

We’re always together like this. If Aika wants to, I’ll let her hang out with me to the end.

“Ohh~, I haven’t seen this picture before!!”

When I looked over at the happy group of guys that were gathered by the window, their eyes were are rooted to a tablet that one of them was holding.

“I’ve decided! From now on, I am TailRed-tan’s oniichan!!”

The lethal noise pierced my eardrum.

“Pffff~~~~”

Without thinking I spit out the Fruits au Lait I was drinking.

“Wait a minute, Souji, don’t get it on my face! Ugh, it’s sticky...”

“So, sorry... I couldn’t help it...”

It did bother me that the girls nearby were grinning for some reason as they listened to us, but the guys were a bigger problem. You could easily see even from here a bright red young girl... TailRed was on the screen, and on top of that, it looked like it was switching in a slideshow.

“It’s all over the net now, isn’t it...!!”

I took my head in my hands.

“When we go home today, why don’t I get my hands on Thoearle and make her delete all the files that have gotten out? With her scientific ability, she should be able to do it.”

“Listen, think of something that doesn’t involve violence once in a while!”

As we whispered to each other, the guys were heating up even more.

“Really cute! Really cute! Really cute!”

I shuddered with chills. Ah, I was happy with the sight of all those people cheering for me, but when you look at them one by one this is what it feels like. It was the right decision not to give in to that strange feeling earlier.

“I was more into large breasts, but, you know... I’ve woken up.”

Woken up to what?

“Uhehe, she’s cute carrying that sword... I want her to cut me too.”

I will hit you as many thousand times with the flame blade as you want.

“Ah, man, I can’t take it anymore!!”

The owner of the tablet, no longer able to bear it, pursed his lips and leaned close to the screen.

“Aaaaaaah!!”

I suddenly grabbed Aika’s water bottle, and, although I didn’t even remember my classmate’s name, I took aim at his head and threw it. It hit barely in time, three centimeters before the kiss.

“Aaow! ...What the hell, Mitsuka!!”

“You should be ashamed of yourself, with such a little girl!!”

“Ah, if it’s shame, I’ve already accepted it! And here I stand!!”

What kind of state of mind have you reached at this young age!

I tore at my scalp.

And yet this guy properly remembers what my name is! Ngh...

“...Hm-hu~m. Come to think of it, you like twintails so much that on the first day, you wanted to make a Twintail Club! You just want to keep TailRed-tan yourself!”

“Nooooooooooo!!”

I wanted to recover from my mistake on the first day and somehow live a quiet student life, but somehow, now that I’m in the high school section, everyone seems to be sucked into the flow far more easily than I expected.

“I’m tired...”

The peace and quiet after school came with a pile of worries. My exhaustion was reaching its peak around the time I left, together with Aika as I had promised.

People in higher grades were crowded together on the walkway from the entrance to the school gate, enthusiastically welcoming the new students. But, whether the dark clouds gathering on my back were so thick that they could be seen or not, no one tried to talk to me.

I had a sudden thought as I was walking.

“You know, I wrote something like Twintail Club and left it undecided... what club should I join?”

“You’re not going to be fighting every day. When it comes to things like club life, just choose what you want like normal.”

Now that you say it, maybe you’re right.

“But I need to be prepared. Even today we don’t know if they’re going to show up again!”

“No way. After yesterday...”

I turned the corner with a bitter smile, and

<<To all humans who live on this Earth! We are the chosen soldiers of God from another dimension, Ultima Guil!>>

“ .. ”

“ .. ”

We dropped our bags at the same time.

An enormous screen was floating in the sky.

<<Ladies and gentlemen, we do not intend to harm you! All we want is the light within your hearts! Resistance is useless! And if you don't resist, we guarantee your lives!>>

A monster that looked like a dragon sat in a show-off throne. With his legs crossed, he was making a speech.

Well, anyway it's a sight that would piss you off.

<<But it seems there are those of you who would bear arms against us. Resistance is useless! If, despite that, you dare do so, we will take up any challenge you give! Attack as you like!>>

“Is this being broadcast to the world!?”

The sound could be heard even from the houses in the residential area, on top of the razor-thin computer window that was floating in the sky.

With an unlikely thought I turned on my cellphone's 1seg. Sure enough the same image was being shown whichever channel I switched to.

What is this, are they coming in on the whole broadcast spectrum!? So extreme...

“Those guys, are they really going to invade the whole Earth?!!”

A relaxed speech that said, resist as much as you want to.

If they have really foreseen all the military and scientific power humanity possesses when they say that, then what kind of power does their organization boast?

Thoearle had said that they had overthrown many “worlds.” The meaning of her words became even deeper, and it made my legs sink under me.

Their invasion isn’t destructive.

A quiet conquest that steals the light from hearts, and the brilliance of life.

Yesterday’s fight was only really a skirmish. From now on, an overwhelming invasion would start, and the opponent would be the whole world.

Once that happens I’m not sure what just one person can do.

<<Hahaha, I am Tuttle Guildy! As our leader Drag Guildy says, resistance is useless! I will be taking the light of the stars that shine in youth’s glittering sky... the Element of Bloomers!>>

The dragon had been replaced by a turtle-like monster, who was leaning back proudly.

But an Ultiroid approached apologetically from behind him and whispered into his ear.

<<...What!!? You say they hardly exist in this world any more! You have been fools, humans, you have been digging your own graves!!>>

The monster screamed, and humanity was speechless.

I can understand a hairstyle, but even your feelings about a half-extinct type of clothing can give you tremendous power? There are profound depths in this that I don’t want to know about. Seriously, what in the world is Elemera.

Once, once is enough, I want to take a look at the faces of the people who loved bloomers enough to give birth to a thing like that.

<<Souji-sama, did you see that just now!?!>>

Shortly thereafter a message came in from Thoearle. The high school the next town over - apparently still in bloomers - was being raided. Let’s do it, then.

There are probably people who love bloomers so much that they can’t get enough, the way I am for twintails, aren’t there? Even if they have already started to go extinct on their own, I can’t let them be stolen by the invaders.

“...Ta, tail on.”

The activation words... the ones we'd decided on yesterday in a break in the conversation. I was still embarrassed about them, but...

Let's go.

To crush this terribly small-scale "world invasion."



"Welcome home~, Souji-samaan~"

When I opened the door of my room, my optic nerve was hit with enough peach-colored light to give me vertigo. Thoearle had remodeled my bed to give it a canopy, and she greeted me wearing a negligee and wriggling a little.

"Hey, pervert."

"...Uh, what, Aika!? Why are you here? Souji-sama said he would be alone! This is not what he promised!!"

"What kind of eternal promise do you think he maaaaade!!"

With a kick, Aika broke a support of the canopy and flattened Thoearle under it.

Getting remodeled, getting broken... my bed's tragedies continue.

"...Uu, it's awful! It is too much! And you didn't come home quickly when the fight was over, so I've been lying like this for over an hour!"

"What's too much is your breasts!!"

Aika promised to listen to the explanation. If you were waiting, then you should have been waiting for both of us honestly at the cafe.

But I'm exhausted from the fight. I don't have the energy to think of comebacks or worry about the two of you. The turtle monster who kept saying "bloomers" was killed instantly, but I was surrounded by the students at the school where the fight happened and it was a lot of trouble to escape. That's most of the fatigue.

"I give up, I had people take so many pictures of me with their phones and things..."

"That the day would come when someone in a man's body [? 男の身で・・・] would be scared of the words 'secret photographs on the net'..."

“U, uu... Thoearle, is there anything I can do at this point? Their declaration of war went out across all of Japan!”

I poured out my anxieties to Thoearle, who had crawled out from under the canopy.

It's terrifying not to feel any interest when a girl this beautiful is wearing a thin negligee.

“It was broadcast to almost the whole world at the same time, apparently. Every country is in a downroar⁷ at this point.”

“...Well, certainly I don't know if it would cause an 'up'roar, but...”

“Weren't they speaking Japanese, though?”

“It was merely converted into Japanese when we heard it. They are creatures of mental force, and the language they speak does not travel through the ears, it comes directly into the head.”

I turned on the TV in my room. Just as she said, all over the world various speculations were in the air. It wasn't a high alert situation yet, but it seemed like the events that had happened in Japan had been accepted in every country, and countermeasures were being put together.

NASA was bearing the brunt of it, so it looked like they had mistaken them for aliens.

“Ah, it's getting to be a serious thing...”

I sank to the floor and buried my head in the bed.

“There is no need to worry. They only caused so much damage yesterday because we were not adequately prepared. From now on, if they appear, we can detect them right away.”

I remembered what I saw yesterday. As if she had noticed that anxiety, Thoearle continued in an even more cheerful voice.

“Basically, defeat them right away when they appear. If we take that stance and are thorough, it will not be such a problem. If we hold damage to the minimum possible level, public interest should fade and there should not be an uproar.”

“But with a loud proclamation of war like that, even the police and the army are going to come in, aren't they?”

⁷ I can't translate this pun nicely. 小騒ぎ -> downroar 『大』騒ぎ -> “up”roar (is this what's going on?)

“As I said yesterday... even if the army does appear, they cannot get through to the Elemerians. They are materializations of spirit. You have to have the Tailgear, which can convert that same mental energy into power.”

“...Can I do this... an enemy who is attacking the whole world.”

I had a painful feeling that I'd gotten myself into this without much thought. My feelings of wanting to protect haven't changed, but can I really keep fighting when it's just me on my own?

All it would take is for several of them to appear at different places and I'd be out. And that's something that they could put into practice at any time.

“That is what the secret underground base is for. Why not go and see it after this! We can already use the teleportation equipment, so now it will only take a second even to get to the other side of the earth!”

That overtechnology too. If we weren't in this situation I think my eyes would be glittering with happiness, though. Maybe because Thoearle was worried about my sinking feelings --

“[Zaisho-tto](#)⁸”

With a shout of encouragement as terrifying as any, she came to straddle my legs facing me.

“Tho, Thoearle!?”

“Please pick yourself up, Souji-sama, in various ways.”

With her hands behind her back and a suspicious smile, she touched my thighs. To keep me in suspense, her fingers crept upward --

“What are you doing!!”

“Cedar woodware!!”

Aika's fist hit her and blew her away, making a strange noise. She stuck into the wall head-first.

“...Ph... hahah”

Watching their argument, I couldn't help but laugh.

⁸ Twoearle is replacing the “Yo” in “Yoisho” (a slang word to encourage someone that became popular in the Showa era) with “Za” so it becomes the name of a sexual position.

It's no use if all I do is worry. I have to trust Thoearle, and trust my Elemera. I'll just fight as long as I can. This fight of mine is just beginning, after all, so --

“So, Souji... sama... that's an ending flag ...”

I thought I heard the brave words of a girl trying to hold back an ending herself.

[uploaded to Bakatsuki]