

Overlord Volume 5 Prologue

Translator: Sene9ty

Editors/Proofreaders: JcqC, Ferro, TaintedDream, Namorax, Skythewood

Month 9, Day 1, 14:15

He raised his face and saw the darkened clouds covering the sky bleed out a fog of rain. Seeing the world of gray spread out before his eyes, Warrior Captain Gazef Stronoff clicked his tongue.

If only he had left a bit earlier, perhaps he could have avoided this rain.

Although he scanned the skies for a clearing, the thick clouds completely enveloped Re-Estize, the Kingdom's capital and showed no signs of abating even if he were to wait.

Having abandoned the notion of waiting it out inside the palace, he donned the hood attached to his coat and stepped out into the downpour.

He passed through the palace gate's guards with only a flash of his face and headed towards the center of the capital.

Normally, the place would be overflowing with life, but the usual bustle of activity was nowhere to be found. Instead, it was replaced by the scant number of people moving about, careful not to slip on the wet surface.

Seeing his empty surroundings, he could guess how long this rain had been falling.

Can't be helped then. Leaving a bit sooner wouldn't have made a difference.

With his coat steadily growing heavy from the water, he brushed past the other pedestrians in mutual silence. Although his jacket was able to serve as a raincoat, the wet sensation of it clinging to his back made it uncomfortable. Gazef quickened his stride and headed for home.

As his house grew closer, the fact that he would soon be liberated from his drenched coat brought a sigh of relief to Gazef's lips. Suddenly, his senses were drawn to the side. His vision shadowed by a thin veil, a narrow road veering off to his right. There, seemingly uncaring of his soaked body, was a ragged man plopped down on the side of the road.

Appearing to have roughly dyed his hair, patches of his natural hair color could be seen all over his head. His hair was drenched and clung to his forehead, dripping droplets of water from his locks. His face was slightly bent downwards and hidden from view.

The reason Gazef stopped his eyes on the man was not because he thought it odd for someone to be outside without a proper coat in this rain. Rather, he felt that something else was out of place. His eyes darted especially to the man's right hand.

Like a child grasping onto the hand of his mother, the man held a weapon that did not match with his ragged appearance. It was a very rare weapon called a 'katana', crafted in a city located within a desert in the far off south.

He's holding a katana... A thief...? No. This feeling I'm getting from him is different. Am I feeling glad to see him?

Gazef felt that something was off, like a coat with mismatched buttons.

With his feet planted, Gazef stared earnestly at the man's profile. At that moment, his memory resurfaced like a surging wave.

"Is that you... Unglaus?"

As soon as the words left his mouth, his mind was filled with doubt.

The man he faced in the finals of the palace tournament, Brain Unglaus.

Even now, the appearance of the man with whom he fought a close match was engraved in Gazef's mind. Quite possibly the strongest opponent he has faced since first picking up the sword and living his life as a warrior— and even if it was one sided, it was the face of a man he considered to be his rival.

That's right. The man's gaunt profile matched almost exactly with the face from his memories.

However— that was impossible.

Without a doubt, their faces were very similar. Even if the passage of time changed his appearance, traces of his past self were still apparent. But the man from Gazef's memories did not have such a pitiful countenance. He was a man who was filled to the brim with confidence in his sword and a fighting spirit that burned violently like fire. He did not have the look of a wet dog like this man before him.

With the sound of splashing water, Gazef walked towards him.

As if responding to the sound, the man slowly looked up.

Gazef felt his breath fall short. Looking at him from the front, he was now certain. This man was Brain Unglaus, the genius of the sword.

However, the light from the past was gone. The Brain that was in front of him was a defeated man with his will completely broken.

Brain staggered to his feet. This dull, languid movement was not that of a warrior. It was difficult to even call it the movement of an old soldier. With eyes downcast, the man turned around without a word, trudging away.

As his back grew smaller in the rain, Gazef was struck by an ominous foreboding that if they parted here, he would never see him again. He closed the distance that grew between them while shouting.

"Unglaus! Brain Unglaus!"

If the man denied it, he would decide that the two simply looked similar and admonish himself. However, a tiny voice flowed into Gazef's ears.

"...Stronoff."

It was a lifeless voice, one that could not possibly have belonged to the Brain of his memories whom he crossed swords with.

"What, what happened?"

Dumbfounded, he asked.

Just what exactly was happening?

Of course, anyone could have their life ruined and fall on hard times. Gazef had seen countless examples of such people. A man who always chose the easy way out could lose everything from just one failure.

But was he such a man? The sword genius, Brain Unglaus; it was completely unthinkable. Perhaps this was simply born from his own sentiment of not wishing to see the strongest opponent of his past reduced to such a disgrace.

The two men met eyes.

How can he make such a face...?

With gaunt cheeks, he had dark bags under his eyes. His eyes were deathly pale and devoid of all energy. The man was like a corpse.

No, even a corpse would be better than this... Unglaus is dead on his feet...

“...Stronoff. I’m broken.”

“What?”

From his words, the first thing Gazef looked to was the katana that Brain held in his hand. But he soon realized that wasn’t it. What was broken wasn’t the katana, but—

“Hey, are we strong?”

He couldn’t say yes.

The incident in Carne village flashed across Gazef’s mind. The mysterious magic caster, Ainz Ooal Gown; had he not come to his aid, both him and his soldiers would have perished. Even

with the title of the strongest in the kingdom, that was all he amounted to. He could never call himself strong with his head held high.

To his silence, Brain continued to speak.

“Weak. We’re weak. After all, we’re only human. We humans are inferior.”

Humans are indeed weak.

Compared to something like the strongest race, dragons, the difference was clear. Humans do not have hard scales, razor-sharp claws, wings that soared through the skies, Breath that obliterated everything; these were everything that humans did not possess.

That was why warriors held Dragon Slayers in high esteem. With their trained skills, weapons, and allies, there was glory in overcoming great odds and bringing down such a race. It was a merit allowed only to the warriors who could be described as ‘exceptional.’

Then could Brain have fought a ‘Dragon’ and lost?

He stretched out his hand to a place that was beyond his reach and failed; lost his balance and plummeted back to the earth.

“...What are you saying. Any warrior would understand that humans are weak.”

That’s right. He couldn’t understand. Anyone would know that a world for the strong existed.

Even if he was called the strongest by the surrounding countries, Gazef held doubts about whether that was really true.

For instance, there was a high possibility that the empire could be hiding a warrior who was stronger than Gazef. Not only that, the physical strength of demi-humans like Ogres and Giants far exceeded that of his own. If demi-humans ever gained even the roughest semblance of technique, Gazef would not be able to defeat them.

That world might be invisible to him, but Gazef was still fully aware of its existence. A fact that could even be considered common sense to any warrior, did Brain truly not know?

“There is a world where only the strong exist. Are we not training so we can win against such foes?”

With hope that one day, they will reach them.

But Brain emphatically shook his head, causing his drenched hair to fling droplets of water to his surroundings.

“No! That’s not the level that I’m talking about!”

A shout like coughing up blood.

The man before him overlapped with his image from Gazef’s memories. Despite his energy seeming to be directed in the complete opposite direction when compared to back then, it was the same spirit as when they crossed swords.

“Stronoff! We can never reach the world of the truly powerful, no matter how hard we try. As long as we’re born human, this is the truth. In the end, we’re just children holding sticks. We’re playing with swords now, but we are still mere children pretending to be swordsmen.”

A calm expression that lost all traces of emotion stared at Gazef.

“...Listen, Stronoff. You should be confident in your sword too, right? But... that’s garbage. All you’re doing is deluding yourself if you think that you’ve been protecting these people with that useless thing in your hand.”

“...Was the peak you saw really that high?”

“I saw it and realized; a height that humans can never reach. Actually—”

Brain let out a self-mocking laughter.

“What I saw was just a glimpse. I was too weak to see the actual pinnacle, you see. It was like child’s play, hilarious.”

“Then if you were to train so you could see that world...”

Brain’s face twisted in anger.

“You don’t know anything! You can’t ever reach that monster’s level, not with a human body. Even if you were to swing the sword without end, it’s obvious that it still wouldn’t do any good! ...Useless. Just what was I aiming for all this time?”

Gazef could say nothing.

He had seen a person whose heart was this wounded. A person whose heart was shattered from seeing his comrades die in front of him.

There was no way to save such a person. He cannot be saved by others. Without the will to stand with their own strength, any attempts to help him would only be futile.

“...Unglaus.”

“...Stronoff. Strength achieved from the sword really is garbage. It’s useless in front of true power.”

As expected, those words showed no signs of his past splendor.

“...I’m glad to have met you in the end.”

As Brain turned his back and walked away, Gazef stared at him with pained eyes.

The pitiful figure of his once greatest rival with his heart in tatters. Gazef could no longer find the energy to speak to him. However, he did not miss the short phrase that he heard as they parted.

“Now... I can die.”

“Stop! Wait, Brain Unglaus!”

He shouted feverishly to Brain’s back.

He ran up to him and grabbed his shoulder, turning him around.

His staggering appearance no longer had the light from the past. However, despite the fact that Gazef pulled him with all of his strength, Brain’s posture did not falter nor collapse. It was proof that he possessed both a well-trained lower body and an outstanding sense of balance.

Gazef felt a small relief. In the end, his skill had not rusted.

It still wasn’t too late. He couldn’t leave him to his death.

“...What are you doing.”

“Come with me to my home.”

“Forget it. Don’t try to stop me. I want to die... I’m done with being scared. I don’t want to be constantly looking over my shoulder, frightened by shadows. I don’t want to face reality anymore. And to think I used to be content with this trash in my hand.”

Hearing Brain’s pleading voice, Gazef felt his irritation swell up inside him.

“Shut up and follow me.”

And with that, Gazef began to walk while holding onto Brain’s arm. Seeing how Brain followed with faltering steps, without putting up resistance, Gazef felt a sense of displeasure that he couldn’t describe with words.

“After you change your clothes and eat something, immediately get some rest.”

Month 8, Day 26, 13:45

The Kingdom of Re-Estize and its capital, Re-Estize.

A country with a total population of 9 million, ‘old’ would be the best way to describe its capital. A place of history, the unchanging daily life, a dirty city that hides under the guise of antiquity, a static city— the place held various such meanings.

It was something that could be easily understood with a simple stroll through town.

Aside from the few actual houses on either side, the apparent harshness of the surroundings meant that freshness or splendor was sorely lacking. However, how this was interpreted was different depending on the individual. Indeed, there may be those who see it as the tranquil atmosphere of a land rich with history. Others could see it as a dull city, endless in its stagnation.

It looked as if the capital would continue to exist as is, even if there was nothing that was immune to change.

The capital had many roads that were left unpaved. Because of this, in the event that such places became wet from the rain, they would turn into mires that raised doubts over whether one was truly inside a city. This did not mean that the Kingdom was poor. You could not compare them with places like the Theocracy or Empire.

With the roads being narrow, people did not walk in the middle of the path — in the way of the carriages — instead, they squeezed through the sides in a disorderly manner. The Kingdom’s citizens were already used to such congestion and walked like they were trying to slip through the cracks, skillfully avoiding others heading in the opposite direction.

Despite this, the path Sebas was taking was different from the norm in that it was wide and paved with the seldom seen stone blocks.

The reason was obvious with a glance of the surroundings. As the central road of the capital, the houses that were lined up side-by-side were large and magnificent, radiating a feeling of wealth.

As Sebas walked briskly with a dignified air, followed by the eyes of various middle-aged women and young ladies charmed by his elegance. Though there was the occasional woman who would brazenly send him a sultry gaze to his face, Sebas paid them no mind. With an upright back and steady eyes directed straight ahead, his feet did not falter for even a moment.

The feet that seemed to show no signs of stopping until it reached its destination suddenly halted and focused its attention on the carriage that was approaching from the side. It then turned ninety degrees and crossed the road.

At the place he was heading to was an old woman. She was sitting next to a bulky carrying frame while massaging her ankles.

“Is there a problem?”

Surprised at having been suddenly approached by a stranger, the old woman raised her face, revealing a pair of wary eyes. But that suspicion immediately weakened upon seeing Sebas’ appearance and elegant attire.

“You seem to be having trouble. Is there any way I can be of assistance?”

“N-no sir. Not at all.”

“Please do not let it bother you. Extending a hand to those in need is a matter of course.”

Sebas showed a bright smile, causing the old woman to blush. The handsome smile from the gentleman overflowing with charisma shattered her last vestige of defense.

Having finished peddling from her street stall, the old woman was returning home when she sprained her ankle and had found herself in a difficult situation.

Even though the area around the road generally maintained a decent public order, it didn’t mean that the people who traversed here were all law-abiding citizens. It was still possible to run into bad luck by asking the wrong type of people for help and end up losing both the money and goods. Knowing that such incidents were reality, the old woman could not blindly ask for help and was at a loss.

Then it was simple.

“I will accompany you. May I ask you to guide me?”

“Good sir, will that really be alright?!”

“Of course. It is customary to help those in need.”

Sebas turned his back to the old woman who was thanking him repeatedly.

“Then, please get on.”

“T-that’s...”

The old woman’s embarrassed voice.

“I’ll end up dirtying your clothes!”

However—

Sebas showed a kind smile.

Just how was having one’s clothes dirtied significant? Something like that did not even merit a cause for concern when helping others.

He was suddenly reminded of his comrades in the Great Tomb of Nazarick. Their strange expressions; scowling faces that showed clear contempt. And at the head would be Demiurge. But no matter what he may say, Sebas firmly believed that this was right.

Helping others was the right thing to do.

Having convinced the old woman through her repeated refusal, he carried her on his back and lifted the luggage with one hand.

The sight of him lifting such a heavy object without even a falter drew a sigh of awe from not only the old woman, but from those around them.

With her as his guide, Sebas began to walk.