

In Another World With My Smartphone

Patora Fuyuhara
illustration • Eiji Usatsuka

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INTERLUDE: THE BRUNHILD GUARDIANS

THIS COUNTRY WAS MADE FROM THE GROUND-UP BY MY MASTER... IT'S NO EXAGGERATION TO SAY THAT I, STANDING AT HIS SIDE, AM ONE OF THE GUARDIAN BEASTS OF BRUNHILD ITSELF. IT IS OUR DUTY TO KEEP PEACE IN THIS NATION.





**HAVE
SOME
FUN IN
THE
SUN!**

**WHY NOT
TAKE A LITTLE
BREAK FROM
YOUR TROUBLES?**



"Hey, idiot. Let go of my friend's hand."

"I am the Crown Prince of the Panaches Kingdom! Robert Tell Panaches! But please, we are friends now, so just call me Robert!"

Character Profiles



Elze Silhoueska

One of Touya's fiancées. The elder of the twin sisters saved by Touya some time ago. A ferocious melee fighter, she makes use of gauntlets in combat. Her personality is fairly to-the-point and blunt. She can make use of Null fortification magic, specifically the spell **[Boost]**. She loves spicy foods.



Yumina Urnea Belfast

One of Touya's fiancées. Princess of the Belfast Kingdom. She was twelve years old in her initial appearance, and her eyes are heterochromatic. The right is blue, while the left is green. She has mystic eyes that can discern the true character of an individual. She has three magical aptitudes: Earth, Wind, and Darkness. She's also extremely proficient with a bow and arrow. She fell in love with Touya at first sight.



Mochizuki Touya

A highschooler who was accidentally murdered by God. He's a no-hassle kind of guy who likes to go with the flow. He's not very good at reading the atmosphere, and typically makes rash decisions that bite him in the ass. His mana pool is limitless, he can flawlessly make use of every magical element, and he can cast any Null spell that he wants. He's currently the Grand Duke of Brunhild.



Sushie Urnea Ortlinde

One of Touya's fiancées. She was ten years old in her initial appearance. Her nickname is Sue. The niece of Belfast's king, and Yumina's cousin. Touya saved her from being attacked on the road. She has an innocently adventurous spirit.



Lucia Leah Regulus

One of Touya's fiancées. The Third Princess of the Regulus Empire, she's Yumina's age. She fell in love with Touya when he saved her during a coup. She likes to fight with twin blades, and she's on good terms with Yumina.



Kokonoe Yae

One of Touya's fiancées. A samurai girl from the far eastern land of Eashen, a country much like Japan. She tends to repeat herself and speak formally, she does. Yae is quite a glutton, eating more than most normal people would dare touch. She's a hard worker, but can sometimes slack off. Her family runs a dojo back in Eashen, and they take great pride in their craft. It's not obvious at first, but her boobs are pretty big.



Linze Silhoueska

One of Touya's fiancées. The younger of the twin sisters saved by Touya some time ago. She wields magic, specifically from the schools of Light, Water, and Fire. She finds talking to people difficult due to her own shy nature, but she is known to be surprisingly bold at times. Rumors say she might be the kind of girl who enjoys male on male romance... She loves sweet foods.



Paula

A stuffed toy bear animated by years upon years of the **[Program]** spell. She's the result of two-hundred years of programmed commands, making her seem like a fully aware living being. Paula... Paula's the worst!



Sakura

A mysterious girl Touya rescued in Eashen. She had lost her memories, but has now finally gotten them back. Her true identity is Farnese Forneus, daughter of the Xenoahs Overlord. Currently living a peaceful life in Brunhild, and she has joined the ranks of Touya's fiancées.



Leen

One of Touya's fiancées. Former Clan Matriarch of the Fairies, she now serves as Brunhild's Court Magician. She claims to be six-hundred-and-twelve years old, but looks tremendously young. She can wield every magical element except Darkness, meaning her magical proficiency is that of a genius. Leen is a bit of a light-hearted bully.



Hildegard Minas Lestia

One of Touya's fiancées. First Princess of the Knight Kingdom Lestia. Her swordplay talents earned her a reputation as a 'Knight Princess'. Touya saved her life when she was attacked by a group of Phrase, and she's loved him ever since. She's a good friend of Yae, and she stammers a bit when flustered.

“Lestia has suffered at the hands of the Phrase as well... I suppose my feelings are mixed on this subject.”

I could understand why she felt that way. We were effectively attempting to become friends, or at least become neutral, with a party that had been desperately trying to kill us. The fact that our heads understood the benefits, while our hearts felt uneasy, was a very human problem to have.

“What are you still doing here anyway, Hilde?”

“Ah... I-I was just reading a book that Linze had given me, that’s all...”

“...A book from Linze?”

I remembered the incident yesterday involving the nefarious author princess, and suspiciously turned my eyes toward the book Hilde had set down on the table. I recognized the title of the book as a popular romantic story from Roadmare. I sighed a bit of relief, content in the knowledge she wasn’t reading anything... freaky.

“Is it good?”

“I’m finding it rather unique, as I’m not used to stories like it. Most of the novels I’ve read in the past are tales of adventure and heroism.”

Hilde seemed a little embarrassed as she spoke. It was understandable, given that she’d been raised in a knightly family, but I still questioned her father’s parenting skills...

“It’s a little embarrassing, but I always enjoyed the characters in those stories.”

“You mean the damsels in distress?”

“No, the knights that saved them.”

“Ah, I see.” Yep, the knight king’s child-rearing skills were very questionable.

“But I definitely understood how those damsels must have felt when they were saved... The first time we met, you appeared as if from nowhere to rescue me, Touya. As you slashed the Phrase to pieces, I had my eyes fixed on you...”

Oh right, totally forgot I first met her during that Phrase attack.

“After that, I started gathering as much information about you as I could... Even my brother found my actions queer. Your killing of the Black Dragon... Your quelling of the coup... Each tale of your dashing exploits made my heart grow fonder. It wasn’t long before I hoped we’d meet again.”

Man... That’s so embarrassing to hear... I guess Hilde being this direct is also because she’s so knightly... Her brother’s kinda like that too.

I decided to brush off my embarrassment by spouting a cheesy line.

“But you know... if the Phrase had never appeared in this world, we might have never met. That’s one thing we have to thank them for, eh?”

“I-I suppose so... Though it may be a little selfish...” Hilde said as she chuckled softly.

“But that’s why when I read romantic books like this, I can connect with the way the protagonist feels... Things like her loneliness when separated from the man she loves, or the frustration she feels when she can’t voice her emotions properly... or the happiness she feels when her dashing hero does something for her. That’s how I came to enjoy these works of romantic fiction.”

That made sense to me. It was a little embarrassing to hear her say those things about me, but I understood her perspective.

I wanted to do something to make her happy, so I opened my mouth.

“So... would you like to maybe go watch a romantic movie with me?”

“Oh! A motion picture?! It has been a while since I’ve seen one. I’d love to!”

Hilde clasped her hands together in joy. I watched movies with the girls now and then, but sometimes it was difficult because I had to explain concepts and technologies that were unique to Earth... It ended up eating a lot of time up. Due to that, we typically watched fantasy flicks, basic comedy movies, or simple action movies. Watching a romantic movie would definitely be a first.

I opened up the movie app I’d downloaded to my smartphone. God Almighty had given me a ton of virtual currency so I could download basically whatever I wanted without feeling guilty for pirating them... I also made sure to avoid certain adult films. *Hmm... Which would be good...*

I settled on a movie about an Englishman who owned a bookstore and ended up falling in love with a Hollywood actress. I'd seen a little bit of it on TV some years ago, but remembered it looked interesting enough.

We walked into the living room and I closed the curtains, then we snuggled up on the couch and settled in.

I pressed play, and the movie began. It was the Japanese-dubbed edition of the movie, but for some reason, the people of this world were capable of understanding it. Still, I was instantly able to speak the language of this world when I came here too, so I decided not to think about it and just assumed God Almighty did it.

As I thought about silly things, I could see Hilde getting engrossed in the movie. I decided to join her.

I got flustered and embarrassed during the more... intimate scenes of the movie, but Hilde seemed to really enjoy it. That made my heart warm. I was a lucky man.

Interlude II: I'm Happy Just To Dance With You

"My, my, my! What is this?! Could it really be?! This is incredible!"

"Is it really that impressive?" I had no frame of reference to go on, so I wasn't quite sure why Zanac was so impressed by the item I'd presented to him.

"Magnificent! This material is produced by moon silkworms, and they've been extinct for hundreds of years! This cloth is simply exquisite! Exquisite I say! This kind of material is sought after by royalty, you know! At the very least nobility! Where did you find this?"

"Uhh... A chest in the dungeon."

"Oho! Perhaps the chest you found it in was enchanted with preservation magic... It's in perfect condition, ooh! This is truly wonderful!"

Zanac seemed absolutely smitten with what I'd brought him.

I told him I'd discovered it in the dungeon, but that was a lie. It was actually something I'd found while messing around in Babylon's storehouse. The piece of fabric was from the Partheno civilization, back during Doctor Babylon's time. Even back then it was considered a valuable thing.

All of Babylon's treasures were ultimately mine to do with what I wished. They were originally the Doctor's, but she handwaved it all and said she didn't really care. Apparently she was fine living out her life as a gynoid and didn't really need extravagance.

Since I was free to do whatever I wanted with whatever I found, I decided to bring this material to Zanac and have him check it out.

"So, do you want me to do something with this material?"

"Yeah. I didn't bring it here just to brag about it. I've got a party to attend up in the Kingdom of Palerius, anyway. So I figured I'd bring it to you to see if we could get outfits out of it."

"Palerius? Oh, that island to the north?"

It seemed like the word had already spread to most of the world's merchants, I wasn't too surprised. The discovery of a new nation was huge news, especially from a business perspective.

"Yeah, me and the girls were invited there for a party."

I turned and looked deeper into the store. I'd brought my fiancées to Fashion King Zanac, and all of them were eagerly browsing the costumes.

"I see... Then you want me to use this fabric to tailor dresses for the young ladies?"

"That's right. Can you?"

Zanac grinned broadly at my words. He moved closer to me. A little too close for comfort...

"Ohoho! Of course, I'd be honored to work with a fabric like this. I swear on my honor as Fashion King Zanac, I'll have my people feverishly create the best things they can!"

I was glad. If he'd appraised the fabric as cheap or mediocre, it wouldn't have made good dresses for everyone, so I was glad to hear that not only was it good, but that he was willing to fill such a big custom order.

I didn't want us to be seen out in public dressed in anything that looked cheap, our outfits needed to be appropriate for royalty. Nothing would be worse than us being sighted at the party in something tacky, and then a rise in rumors of Brunhild not being financially well-off or something...

To be honest, I had a fair bit of money in my coffers anyway, so getting luxurious dresses made wasn't a big deal.

"Touya, is everything alright?"

"Ah, yeah. All is well. Seems like we'll get something nice."

I turned around at the sound of Yumina's voice, and I saw the other girls behind her.

"I'll take your measurements now, please follow me."

A female store attendant gestured toward the girls and took them to a fitting

room. That reminded me, the girls had all been eating very little... I wondered if they were worried about their weight. I hoped they wouldn't deprive themselves of food all the way until the party started.

I decided to look up some lower calorie recipes and give them to Crea, since unhealthy eating habits could end up catastrophic.

"Oh, right... Here... It's the designs that each of the girls picked out for their dresses... Is this fine?"

I took out nine different sheets of paper and spread them out across a nearby table. Zanac picked them up and carefully looked over each.

"Hmhm... I've never seen designs this pretty before... They're truly lovely... Your eye for design is certainly versatile, Grand Duke."

"Ahaha..."

I couldn't tell him the truth, that the designs were just taken based on image search references I'd looked up online. They weren't actually my designs.

I swallowed my guilt and continued talking with Zanac about the dresses.



There were four major cities on Palerius island, one in each cardinal direction. In the days of Alerius Palerius, his four disciples reigned over a respective city each. The temple with the dimensional door was in the center of the island and had a path that forked off to each of the four cities. Now each of the cities was inhabited by the descendants of the people who were brought to the island's relative safety.

Since the island was safer now, more buildings were being constructed around the central temple. The ultimate goal was to turn it into a bustling capital city, with the temple serving as the new Kingdom's palace.

Since the capital didn't technically exist yet, the party was being held in Meridius, the southern capital.

Heads of state from around the world, along with their families, had been invited to celebrate there. Naturally, I was invited as well. Besides, I was the only one who could bring everyone to the island.

Each country had one or two mages that specialized in teleportation or transportation magic, but I was the only one who could precisely leap across nations and move people to exact locations from my memories.

The party was to formally coronate Mentor Central as the Queen of Palerius.

Palerius island didn't exactly have an aristocracy, but there were favored bloodlines. The descendants of the city founders would be designated as four lords under the new Queen. It was kind of similar to Eashen's structure.

Due to the fact that Palerius didn't really have anything much akin to nobility, the party wasn't that fancy either. It didn't feel gaudy or oppressive.

Personally, I liked that, it felt a little more casual in the same way that Brunhild did. Plus, I didn't want to participate in any dancing, so that was a relief too. There wasn't much in the way of music, either. There was a band playing, so some music rang through the halls as the festivities went on.

Hmm... A band... I don't think Brunhild needs one. As far as music goes, Sousuke is more than enough.

That did remind me, though. A few members of our knight order were interested in instruments, but they weren't exactly unified or anything. I decided it might be a good idea to get them some proper training, then they could end up being Brunhild's official band... Or maybe even an orchestra if there were enough.

"Grand Duke, thank you so much for all you've done."

Queen Palerius approached me and flashed an earnest smile. Djent, leader of the southern city, was behind her.

He stood stoic as ever, but I could see the traces of a grin on his face. It was good to see the people of Palerius looking happier than ever.

"No need to thank me. Rather, thank you for founding this nation properly. I wish you well, honestly. From one leader of a fledgling country to another."

I grasped Queen Palerius' outstretched hand. It was true we were both fledgling nations, but Palerius island had a history spanning five thousand years.

Queen Palerius smiled and went off to speak with the other royals.

The tables were lined with various meals. I'd never seen any of them before, but their taste matched how great they looked. I used my hands to rip off a portion of some meat and bone. It was delicious... Whatever it was, it reminded me of spare ribs.

I chowed down and noticed Sue walking toward a crowd. I followed her stride and found her settling near my other fiancées. They were surrounded by curious women. Apparently they'd all noticed the quality of the dresses they were wearing.

The royal and noble girls immediately started fawning over my fiancées and complimenting them on their looks. The compliments only increased once Yumina casually mentioned that the dresses were made of moon silkworm thread, and also dropped the fact that the material couldn't be obtained anymore.

While that was a true statement, there was actually a truckload of the stuff in Babylon's Storehouse. What they were doing might've amounted to gossip, but this kind of shallow interaction had its uses. It was important for the noble and royal ladies of each nation to talk, get along, and exchange information.

Either way, I had to abide by social norms. There was no way I was going to approach the girls while they were all in the middle of their chatter.

I shifted my gaze and found that Sue, Sakura, and Yae were side-eyeing me as I ate the ribs. It seemed like they wanted some, but it wouldn't be proper or ladylike to eat finger food in a dress that nice.

"Mmh... I'm tired..." Yumina eventually walked her way over toward me, free from the clutches of the other women.

I glanced to my left and found Sue sneaking some snacks into her mouth while nobody else was looking.

"Touya, you should help us out more... I don't wanna talk to stuffy ladies all night!"

"C'mon now... What do you expect me to do?" I definitely didn't have the courage to approach that crowd. Making a single wrong turn meant risking the ire of noblewomen on an international level, and I wasn't interested in that.

Leen walked over, her face just as tired as Yumina's.

“Darling... We might want to change our cover story about where this fabric came from... As it stands, the ladies might have their husbands send knight squadrons into our dungeons.”

“Ah... That's not good.”

Even if they scoured the whole place, they wouldn't find any of the stuff. Maybe it'd be a good idea to slowly introduce the fabric into market circulation instead.

“It's been a while since I've attended a party... But it is rather pleasant.”

“I understand that you must be accustomed to this, Hilde-dono... But I am of common birth and do not find it comfortable, I do not.”

Yae grumbled quietly next to Hilde, as her feet fidgeted around. Apparently she didn't like wearing heels. I quietly cast **[Cure Heal]** on her and the others to offer their feet some relief.

“Thank you, Touya-dono...”

“Yeah, don't overdo it. We can get you a change of shoes if it's too much.”

“Not at all. If this is what it takes, then this is what it takes, it is.”

Yae put on a brave face, but I didn't want her being uncomfortable. I stood back a bit and looked around the room. I didn't really feel like talking to anyone I could see.

For noble families, parties like this were a good place to mingle and try to see about forming marriage-based alliances with other important families. I had no interest in getting swept up in that kind of conversation.

In my case, I didn't have any wives, just an overabundance of fiancées. I definitely didn't need any more.

I really hope nobody tries to marry their daughters off to me. I decided to sit down and stop people-watching.

Hmm? Why's Queen Palerius rushing over here?

“Grand Duke, do you have a moment?”

“...Sure, what’s wrong?”

“...Ah... It pains me to say it, but there are some people in this nation who opposed us opening up to the outside world. Some of them are causing trouble right now.”

“What kind of trouble? An attack?”

It was one thing to peacefully protest for personal reasons, but kicking up a fuss was another matter entirely.

Then again, this party had various important families from around the world in attendance. It was a prime opportunity to damage international relations. I wasn’t surprised they’d try to attack at an event like this.

“It’s worse than we feared, actually... They’re attempting to call Behemoths to Meridius.” Djent spoke up, walking up to me from behind Queen Palerius.

Calling Behemoths here? Is that possible?

“They’re using beastwood, I’d wager. It’s a special kind of wood that releases a monster-attracting scent when it’s burned. Something like that, right?”

“You’re right, but it isn’t beastwood. There’s a special dried plant in this country called mystic herb. When burned, it has properties much like beastwood. It calls to creatures in the wild and makes them lose what little reason they have.”

Queen Palerius promptly answered Leen’s inquiry. That definitely didn’t sound good.

“We used to use it as a hunting tool. When attacked by Behemoths outside the barrier, we’d burn it and leave it in a different location as a distraction.”

“And now they’re using them to attract Behemoths to the city. Meridius has a barrier around it, so nobody will be harmed... But the incident is sure to scare the royals and nobles we have as guests here. I’m certain public opinion of Palerius will decline if such an incident is allowed to happen...”

That was definitely true, and there wasn’t much worse than a bad international image. To have such a terrible event happen during the coronation ceremony? It’d be unthinkably embarrassing.

We'd hunted down most of the Behemoths on Palerius island some time ago, but obviously, we hadn't killed all of them. There were still mana wellsprings here and there on the island, which meant new Behemoths would surface from time to time.

Even though the main barrier separating the island from the rest of the world was gone, the magical barriers protecting the temple and the four major cities were still in place. That meant they'd be safe so long as the Behemoths didn't attack en masse.

"Search. Locate all Behemoths in the area."

"...Searching. Search complete. Displaying."

A map of the area surrounding Meridius was projected into the air. It was still far away, but there was a single red dot moving toward us. It was probably being drawn here by a group of hunters on the move. I wondered what to do. Kicking up a fuss would definitely kill the party's vibe, so I decided it'd be better to handle it without letting the attendees find out.

"In that case, should we use Brunnhilde? It has stealth armor, so it should be able to fire a shot off completely unnoticed."

Yumina suddenly appeared by my side with a suggestion. That seemed fair. We could mute the sound of the gunshot with **[Silence]**, too.

I spoke to the queen about it and negotiated for the Behemoth's corpse as compensation. It'd be good to make back the money I'd spent getting those dresses tailored.

"Alright, we'll head off. Yumina and I'll go with Djent and some of the knights, since we need to figure out who's actually drawing the Behemoth in."

"Alright, then. Sounds good."

"As for the rest of you girls, please stay right here. We don't know their plan, so their friends might end up trying to disrupt the party directly. You gotta be here to take care of things if worse comes to worst."

"Leave it to us, Touya-dono."

Yae nodded firmly. They could easily draw their weapons from the **[Storage]**

in their rings if need be, so I was sure they'd be able to handle themselves.

Yumina and I headed off out of the city with Djent and about a dozen knights.

“Brunnhilde!”

Once we made it out of the city, Yumina held up her left hand and called her Frame Gear through her engagement ring. It appeared in a flash, wielding its sniper rifle.

“Ooh!”

The knights were impressed as Yumina hopped into the cockpit and triggered the stealth functions of the machine.

Brunnhilde dissolved into the evening environment itself.

“**[Long Sense].**”

I projected my senses about a kilometer away from us, but the Behemoth wasn't in sight. I decided it must've been a little further, and pushed my sense of sight onward a bit. Eventually, I found it.

“Yumina. It's about five kilometers this way.”

“Got it. It's in my sights.” I saw an animal-drawn carriage with smoke rising from it, and a monster trailing behind. The Behemoth resembled a large and scruffy black goat.

“It's a Dark Goat.”

It was a creature with large, twisted horns. It wasn't an especially powerful monster, but any means, but that didn't mean it could be underestimated.

A Behemoth was a Behemoth in the end, it was still capable of catastrophic damage. Plus, this thing was over twenty meters tall. Our only saving grace was that it wasn't as agile as it could've been due to its sheer weight. If it was slightly more athletic, it would easily catch up to the cart leading it. It seemed like the people riding it were aware of that as well. They looked terrified.

I looked a little closer and noticed bits of animal guts under the Dark Goat's hooves. It was crushing other animals in its path. It seemed like the mystic herb was drawing other animals toward it as well, and the poor little things were

dying immediately.

“I’m glad it’s not a shelled monster like an Armored Turtle. Alright, I can’t let it get any closer to the city or people will notice. I’m gonna take the shot.”

“[Silence]!”

All noise in the surrounding area vanished in an instant. I saw a puff of smoke and a flash of light from Yumina’s rifle, and then the Dark Goat toppled to the ground. *One shot, one kill. Great work.*

“...! ...! ...!”

“...! ...!” The knights were all cheering and jumping for joy, but they were completely inaudible due to the effects of my spell. I quickly canceled it.

I saw through my projected senses that the men in the carriage were surprised by the sudden downpour of giant goat blood.

“I’m gonna open a portal, so you guys can grab the morons.”

“We’re in your debt again.”

I figured it’d be better to have the guys captured here and now rather than let their nonsense carry on any further. I opened up a **[Gate]**, allowing the Palerius knights to charge in and surround the carriage. I passed through the portal after them and used Water magic to wash away the burning leaves.

“[Waterfall].”

“Bweh?!”

“Urgh!” The water came crashing down on the men’s heads. The smoke from the burning herbs vanished, and the men were washed out of their carriage as well.

“Apprehend them!”

On Djent’s command, the knights moved in. There wasn’t much in the way of resistance, and before long all the men were caught.

“Is that it, then?”

“For now.”

Yumina came through the portal behind me and tilted her head to the side. The situation wasn't over for the most part. They still needed to find out who was behind this stupid plan to begin with. But that was a problem for Palerius, not me.

I looked at the Dark Goat's corpse. It had been shot cleanly through the forehead. I was amazed by Yumina's precision, even at that distance... I didn't want the Dark Goat stinking the place up or rotting, or getting eaten, so I shoved the carcass into **[Storage]**.

We took the captive men back to Meridius. After parting ways with Djent, Yumina and I returned to the party.

"Welcome back."

"Everything fine now?" Linze and Elze noticed our return and called out to us. Queen Palerius also cast us a curious glance. I shot the queen a thumbs-up and a grin, letting her know everything had gone smoothly.

"Thank you so much... We must repay you for this..."

"Nah, it's fine. I got the Behemoth's body. That's all I need."

I hadn't really even done anything this time. It was all Yumina.

"Any problems here?"

"None to report. The teriyaki chicken was great..."

That's not really what I meant, Sakura... But I guess I'm glad you like the food.

"...Wait a second... Why does it look like there's a dance starting?"

Half of the dining space had been cleared away, and there were men and women dancing in pairs. The band was playing a gentle waltz, causing the partners to sway and dance in tandem.

Wait a second... On the piano, is that... Sousuke? When did you get here?!

"Ghh... Why is there a dance?!"

"There wasn't one planned, but it seemed some thought the party was lacking without a dance. Thus, it happened..."

"And then Sousuke appeared out of nowhere and started playing music?"

Lu nodded. This felt unnecessarily convenient.

He was currently playing Flower Waltz from The Nutcracker. I stared at the band, wondering how they knew to play something like this. Leen, apparently reading my mind, spoke up.

“Those aren’t Palerius natives, darling. They’re from Brunhild. It’s the group that was interested in taking up instruments. Sousuke has been working with them for a while.”

“...Huh.”

There were a lot of instruments lying around the knight barracks. I’d heard that some knights had taken an interest, but I didn’t realize Sousuke had already taken them under his wing. He must’ve pulled them over here using his teleportation magic.

“Ohh... Father and Mother...”

“Hm?” I followed Yumina’s gaze and saw the king of Belfast slowly dancing with his wife. Their movements were deliberate and mesmerizing. *Wow... Although, I guess that kind of thing’s standard with royals. They look great... I have a lot to learn.*

“...I refuse to lose.”

“What?”

Yumina grabbed me by the hand and began walking us toward the dance floor. *Whoa, easy there!*

“Hold on, Yumina! I can’t dance...”

Since I became a royal, I’d understood that attending social functions was necessary. That’s why I’d taken a few dance lessons. But unfortunately, it became clear I had no talent for it.

I knew some basic moves, but I was a little clumsy. Frankly, I just found the whole thing difficult.

“You can do the basics, right? Don’t worry. I’ll guide you, and it’ll just be for one song.”

“A-And then one with me, after!”

“Then I will dance with you after Lu!”

“You crafty little... I’ll dance after Hilde, then!”

Yumina’s words caused quite the stir with my other fiancées. Lu, Hilde, and Sue immediately spoke their desires.

“I would be better off just watching, I would.”

“Uhhm... I’ll pass.”

“Me too...”

“I’m not much of a dancer.”

“I prefer singing to dancing...”

Yae, Elze, Linze, Leen, and Sakura all declined the opportunity to dance with me.

It seemed like they were split into two camps. Those that wanted to dance, and those that did not want to. But I suspected that the girls who declined simply couldn’t dance all that well. But that wasn’t my place to judge. I definitely wasn’t any good at dancing. Ultimately, my protests proved fruitless, and Yumina dragged me off.

Uhh, let’s see here... Elbows straight... Shoulders lowered... Spine upright... Oh, hold on... Gotta put my hand on her shoulders, no wait... Her waist?

“Touya.”

Yumina smiled at me as I frantically wracked my brain.

“It’s okay. Just calm down and follow my lead.”

“O-Okay.”

I took a deep breath and squeezed Yumina’s hand. Then, I moved to the slow beat of the music, and we began to dance just like the other couples.

“Hmm... This song...”

“Something wrong?”

“...No, it’s okay.”

As we danced, I narrowed my eyes toward Sousuke. I wondered if he’d chosen this song on purpose. It was *Je te veux*, by Erik Satie. It was originally composed for a French actress, and the title translated to “I want you.”

The lyrics that were created for the piece were layered with thick, almost erotic intent.

“...Hmm...” I wondered why Sousuke had chosen this song, but I couldn’t dwell on it. I needed to focus.

Yumina slowed our dance and flashed me a gentle smile.

“It’s okay just to take it easy, you know. You don’t have to be so tense. Let’s enjoy our dance, and take it as slow as we need. There’d be no point wasting a good opportunity like this.”

...She’s having fun... Even though I’m not great at this, she seems to be happy... I looked around, and all the couples around us were dancing happily as well. It was nice.

“...You knew I was tense, huh? Was I holding you too tight? I’m supposed to be a royal, so I guess I was nervous about giving off a good impression. But you’re right. I shouldn’t worry about that, I should just be myself.”

Yumina always had a knack for pointing out things I hadn’t noticed. She also had a knack for giving me personal courage.

My legs began to move in a proper rhythm as the song went on, and an earnest smile crept across my face as I gave into the music with Yumina.

The dance was starting to feel really pleasant. I was happy just to dance with her.



Eventually, the song came to an end, and we stopped our dance as well.

“That was fun!”

“It really was. You’re amazing, Yumina.” Yumina smiled once more, and I ran a hand through her hair. Lu suddenly approached from behind us.

“Yumina, it’s my turn now. Shall we, Touya?”

Oh, right. I have three more dances to go... Well, no point worrying about it. I’m gonna have fun.

Yumina waved us off on to the dance floor and joined the other girls.

Sousuke started up another song. This time it was The Skater’s Waltz by Waldteufel.

I took Lu’s hand into mine and began an elegant synchronized motion with her.

I guess dancing isn’t so bad, huh? I smiled softly as I continued to dance the night away.

Chapter III: A Happy Twist Of Fate

“Oh, it connected! Amazing! There’s barely any lag at all!”

“Naturally, it was all thanks to my hard work of course. Linking up the Dimensional Disruptor proved more tricky than I’d initially expected, but it seems to be working well.”

I could hear Doc Babylon’s voice through my smartphone’s speaker. Even through a voice-only call, she was exuding raw, smug energy.

I was standing on one of the peaks of Drakliff Island in the Reverse World, while she was working in Babylon in the regular world. We’d successfully achieved cross-world instant communication, which was a pretty impressive feat in its own right. I could understand why she’d be smug, even if I couldn’t see her making the expression I imagined.

This technological leap meant we could now act quickly if the mutants appeared in the Reverse World.

Part of me wished that the Reverse World had an adventurer’s guild, though... It’d make things a lot easier. What I needed was an organization that specialized in collecting and distributing information... I wondered if maybe there was some kind of ninja clan hanging around, like Tsubaki’s people back in Brunhild.

Est from the Red Cats would probably know something like that, since they were an underground organization.

I was planning on giving mass-produced smartphones to her and Nia, so I’d ask them when we crossed paths.

“I’ll be off for a while, then.”

“Best of luck.”

“Ping.”

“Pong.”

“Pang.”

Shirogane bowed, causing the three maid Golems behind him to bow as well. The three of them were definitely growing more human-like in their motions. I was pretty impressed by their learning capabilities.

Now, Nia and the others...

I pulled up my smartphone and looked them up. *Hm? They aren't at the abandoned fortress, and they're not at the underground hideout either... Did they get a new base?*

The place was a little north of the abandoned fortress we'd encountered last time, within the Kingdom of Strain.

I used **[Gate]** to move to the old fort's courtyard. I could've used **[Teleport]** but I didn't exactly want to chance a repeat of the incident I went through with Nia last time... I didn't think it was likely to happen again, but I just didn't want to tempt fate.

I walked through the portal and out the other side.

“Wuh?!”

A young man, perhaps a bit older than me, jumped up in shock and drew his weapon. The red bandana on his head told me that he was a member of the Red Cats.

“Wh-Wh-What are you doing here?! Who are you?!”

He didn't seem to have any idea who I was, and he looked scared out of his wits.

“I'm Mochizuki Touya. I'm just stopping by here on my way to see Nia. I don't mean any harm.”

“Y-You know the boss?”

“Yeah, I guess. Is Est around, maybe? What about Euni or Euri?” The bandana-clad man immediately turned around and ran into a building, then came out with a ponytail-wearing girl. It was Euni.

“Yo, long time no—”

“Touya! You came just at the right time! We need your help!” Euni suddenly cut off my greeting and began pleading instead. I wondered what had happened.

“Boss and Est are in the middle of a fight! You gotta help them!”

“Wait, what?!” *They’re in a fight? Did the kingdom’s knights attack them or something?*

“They’re to the north, in Ripto village! Those golden devil things appeared! There’s a ton of them! Boss is fighting there, alongside the prince of Panaches... Even though they have two crowns, there are way too many monsters for them to handle!”

What?! The mutants? And a lot of them? Shit, this ain’t good... I took out my smartphone and projected a map of the area, centering it on Ripto village. Then I ran a search for the mutated Phrase.

Thud, thud, thud. Pinpoints landed all over the map. There were roughly a hundred of them. Frankly, I was relieved, I was expecting thousands of them... But that didn’t exactly mean I could relax either.

“Two crowns should be enough to handle that many, right?” I remembered reading in the newspaper that the prince of Panaches had taken out a group of mutants with his crown, so I wasn’t worried about it all that much.

“Boss and the prince have crowns that aren’t really great against groups of enemies! Plus, if she’s fighting to protect the people, she won’t be able to go all-out with Rouge either!”

I remembered Rouge’s power. It was the red crown that served Nia. It had monstrously destructive capabilities and could control flames. It asked for its master to shed their blood in payment.

That definitely wasn’t a power made for fighting multiple enemies. Plus, the more enemies, the more blood she’d have to spill. In the worst case scenario, the blood loss could even kill her.

Nia couldn’t fight at full power because she’d put her own life at risk, and she couldn’t go too powerful or she’d put all the people at risk. It was a truly terrible dilemma.

“Alright. I’ll head over.”

“Thanks so much!”

A single use of **[Teleport]** would easily cover that kind of distance. I quickly nodded to Euni before warping off to the battlefield.

I landed at a good vantage point, a hill overlooking the town. The sight I gazed upon was one of black smoke and ruined buildings. I saw a group of a hundred mutants laying waste to the town. Most of them were Lesser Constructs, but there were a few Intermediate ones dotted around too.

Using a Frame Gear for head-on combat would be ill-advised, since it’d only cause more damage. That was why I went with something else.

“Reginleif!” I invoked **[Storage]** and summoned my Frame Gear.

I jumped right into the cockpit and set my smartphone down on the main console. I then made Reginleif fly into the sky and activated the Fragarach systems.

The plated wings on Reginleif’s back detached and began orbiting the Frame Gear.

“Mode Change: Dagger!”

“Fragarachs shifting to Dagger Mode.”

Each of the board-shaped Fragarachs split into four smaller segments. In the blink of an eye, twelve orbital devices became forty-eight blades.

“**Gladius!**”

The swords glimmered on my command. All forty-eight daggers started dancing through the air, piercing through the mutated Phrase below.

I didn’t know exactly where their cores were, so I just had the projectiles pierce them in multiple points at once. I also made sure not to cause any damage.

It only took a short amount of time for all the Lesser Constructs to crumble under my assault. There were only Intermediate Constructs left.

Suddenly, one of the remaining mutants, one shaped like a monstrous

centipede, shot a particle beam cannon blast in my direction.

I tried to maneuver Reginleif to dodge it, but something suddenly jumped up in front of me. It was a small, blue humanoid Golem.

It looks similar to Nia's Rouge... Is this the blue crown, then? Not that I really needed saving... But still. The thought counts.

It held its arm up against the incoming beam of light and bent the light back. The blast was deflected into the sky at an angle. *Huh. What was that?*

It was kind of similar to my **[Reflection]** spell... At least it looked that way at a glance. I wondered if that was what the Golem's skill was. *Guess it... Saved me? I guess.*

I willed several of the crystal daggers to pierce the centipede mutant, and after a few slices, its body began to melt into gross goop. *Three left.*

"Mode Change: Blade."

The daggers began forming into several longswords until there were twelve of them in total. I launched four of the blades against each of the remaining mutants.

A sound of screeching metal rang out into the air as the mutants were run through and disposed of in no time at all. Black smoke began to rise from their bodies, and they melted into goo.

That was that.

I used my camera to survey the town, and found it was mostly in ruins. Unfortunate, but there was nothing I could have done.

I quickly spotted Nia and Est. They seemed fine, as did Rouge and Akagane.

I set down Reginleif in front of them, then hopped out of the cockpit.

"Touya?! That was you?!"

"Sure was. I went to the fortress to find you, and Euni told me to assist. Glad to see you guys aren't any worse for wear."

"What... Forget about that a sec... Where'd that massive Golem come from?!"

“It isn’t a Golem. It’s a Frame Gear, and... Uh, forget it. I’ll explain later.”

I needed to sort out the roaring fires around the town before carrying on the conversation.

“Man, what a pain... **Descend, O Water. Blessing of the Heavens: [Heavenly Rain]!**”

Raindrops kept falling on my head, and then they kept falling everywhere else as the clouds spread out from above me. I quickly moved under a nearby building, and the light drizzle turned into a heavy downpour. After a short amount of time, the clouds vanished, and the sky looked as though there’d never been any there to begin with.

“That should take care of the fires.”

“Amazing... You really can do anything, can’t you?”

“You’re like the sorcerers of legend...”

Est and Nia looked up at the sky in bewilderment.

[Heavenly Rain] was an ancient spell that allowed you to determine radius and amount of rainfall based on your own magic power. According to Leen, most people would only be capable of casting it over an area the size of a small dining room.

That meant the spell would be useless to most people, but it wasn’t to me. Either way, it probably became a lost art because of its lack of functionality, it was just pointless as a spell.

If you needed a bit of water, then casting **[Water Ball]** would be more than enough. But I definitely found it handy for emergencies, and also crop watering.

“Wait, forget the magic. Tell me about that Golem!”

“It’s not a Golem...”

Nia started yelling, and Est simply looked on at Reginleif with curious eyes. Rouge and Akagane also seemed inquisitive.

I wondered how to best explain the situation to them. I didn’t exactly want to lie to them, but it’d probably take a while to explain. We needed to go back to

the fortress if they wanted the full story.

“Truly magnificent!” A loud voice suddenly called out from behind us. I turned around and the sight I saw was enough to turn my expression into a deep, troubled frown.

The man in front of me was the absolute visual embodiment of the word “prince.” He had short golden hair in a bob cut, with a little crown sitting atop his head. He wore a small, blue cape on his back. His legs were adorned with white tights, and he had puffy striped pumpkin pants.

If he was a cute little boy then the look would be novel, and adorable... But he wasn't. He was clearly around my age... so it looked weird, and forced. I didn't know what to make of him at all. He looked just like he'd leaped out of a storybook.

He was likely the prince from Panaches. The small blue Golem that used the reflection-based technique was standing next to him.

“Truly, truly, truly magnificent! Such strength, such poise! My body quivers in anticipation!”

The pompous, exaggerated prince began lavishing praise upon Reginleif. He was certainly... hyperactive.

“...Who is this?”

“That's the prince of Panaches. Robert Tell Panaches. He's also the contractor of the blue crown, Distortion Blau.”

“He's a dumbass prince. Nothing more.”

Nia grumbled quietly, following up Est's more formal answer. I could sort of understand what she meant. He didn't exactly look normal.

“You there! Are you perhaps this beautiful Golem's master?”

“Not exactly? I mean, it is mine...”

The prince took his gaze away from Reginleif and began quickly stepping in my direction. He grinned broadly and moved using his whole body as if he was trying to dramatically assert dominance. He reminded me of an overenthusiastic actor.

“I see! Most curious! Then you have my thanks, my most astute and honest thanks! I’ve no idea what might have happened if you hadn’t arrived! Could I please hear your name, my friend?!”

“U-Uhh... It’s M-Mochizuki Touya...”

“Mochizuki Touya, you say?! Has a nice ring to it! I am the crown prince of the Panaches Kingdom! Robert Tell Panaches! But please, we are friends now, so just call me Robert! Ever since I was a child I have had very few friends, you see! I’d appreciate it if you completely ignored my magnificent, royal, gilded blood! Please ignore the silver spoon in my mouth! It isn’t important! My brilliant lineage is simply unimportant!”

Robert took both of his hands and tightly grasped one of my own, shaking it like an excited child. His eyes practically had stars in them... I was a little annoyed.

He didn’t seem like a bad guy. He was just too... eager? He was way too fired up about everything, so I wasn’t too surprised to hear he didn’t have many friends. I definitely couldn’t understand his weird fashion sense, either.

“Hey, idiot. Let go of my friend’s hand.”

“Why, he’s my friend too! Is there a problem?”

“Yeah there’s a problem, it’s you! I don’t wanna know anything about you!”

“Now now, Nia Belmont! Don’t limit your friendships! I’d like it if we could get along better, too!”

“Don’t be gross, asshole! I don’t wanna hear it, dumbass prince!”

“Goodness me... The red crown’s master is certainly a shy one, isn’t she?”

Nia glared at him like he was a piece of crap she’d just stepped in, and he was innocently smiling back at her. I had no idea what was going on here at all. I left their argument... If you could even call it that, and talked to Est.

“He’s certainly a character, huh?”

“That’s one way to put it. Regardless, he’ll shut down soon.”

“Shut down?”

As if to answer my question, Robert suddenly stopped speaking. His eyes immediately closed, and he faceplanted into the ground as if he'd just had his batteries removed.

Wh-What the hell?! Did Nia get a surprise hit in while I wasn't looking? I got closer to check what was going on, and... I heard him snoring. The mad lad had straight-up fallen asleep.

“That’s the price the blue crown claims. The blue crown controls spatial distortion. Much like how Nia must offer up her blood, the contractor of Blau needs to offer up his own consciousness. He’s forced to sleep.”

Spatial distortion? Guess that explains how it bent away the beam. Still, that’s quite the compensation... Sleeping doesn’t actually seem all that bad, though.

“The blue crown can bend space and teleport much like you can. I’m not sure if I’m convinced of its uses, though... The contractor always falls unconscious within an hour of activating Blau’s power.”

“How long is he gonna be asleep for?”

“Depends on how many times he used the powers. If I had to make an estimate, he’ll probably be out for two days this time around.”

Two whole days? That definitely sucks. I’m not even sure if it’s worth the trade-off... Hell, if he falls asleep in the middle of a fight he could die. I wonder if he’ll fall into an eternal slumber if he uses it too much... Guess that’d make him more of a Sleeping Handsome rather than a Sleeping Beauty.

Wait, what do we even do with him? As I pondered to myself, the small Golem by his side picked him up and hoisted him over his shoulder. Seemed like it would carry the prince home.

“Prince!”

“Master Robert!”

Two knightly-looking people came running toward us from the town. One was a man, and one was a woman. According to Nia, they were his escorts and were never seen away from him.

It made sense that he’d have people with him, since he fell asleep at random

based on his power usage.

The blue crown, Distortion Blau, turned away from us and began walking toward them with the prince in tow.

“Hmm... So that’s red, purple, and now blue... Are there no ordinary crown contractors, I wonder...”

“Did you say something?”

“No, nothing at all.” I was lucky Nia hadn’t heard my muttering. She probably wouldn’t have liked me musing about her being abnormal. I needed to take care of what I said out in the open, lest I invite danger.

Nia and Est were technically bandits, so they couldn’t hang around for too long. I called Reginleif back into **[Storage]**, and then fired up a **[Gate]** to bring us back to the abandoned ruin.



“To be honest, I have trouble believing this... But believing it would answer a lot of questions.”

“Huh... I thought you were strange to begin with, Touya... But this whole tale makes you even stranger.”

“Gimme a break.”

I was in the fortress hideout with the Red Cat leaders. Currently, we were seated in a tent within the main courtyard.

I told them the whole story. About how I was from another world, about how I was royalty, and about how the mutated Phrase had appeared in the other world as well. I told them about my intentions to take care of the threat.

All four of them were here. Nia, Est, Euni, and Euri. They all had equally confused expressions as they sat around the table.

“So... Those metal devils... Or rather, these mutants... They’re going to keep on appearing?”

“I’m afraid so, yes. In my world, we have a league of nations that keeps the whole world in the loop, but there aren’t any similar countermeasures here.

That's kind of what I'm hoping to fix... We were lucky there weren't a lot of them. But if a large group appeared, they could take out a whole nation."

"Th-This wasn't a large group? How many is, then?"

"They could appear in the tens of thousands. In the end, no country will be able to stand up to them all... Not even the ones in my world could do it alone, which is why we're working together."

When faced with an extra-terrestrial threat, the entire world really has no choice but to start working together as one. Otherwise, there wouldn't be a world left to rule over.

I didn't think getting nations in the Reverse World to co-operate would be much of a cakewalk, either. There was that whole Primula issue earlier, too.

"Wh... Hold on a second here... Tens of thousands? There's no way we could face off against them!"

"Nia, Est... You remember that Frame Gear thing I showed you earlier? They were originally designed to combat the Phrase, the species that these mutants derived from. We have hundreds of them standing at the ready."

"Hundreds of that thing...?!"

That wasn't strictly true. It wasn't like I had hundreds of Reginleifs in reserve. I couldn't show them the other models, since I didn't have any on standby in **[Storage]**.

"So, what's your next step?"

"I want to gain an audience with any person or organization that can help me gather information on this side. I already have ties in Primula and Triharan, but that's not nearly enough to cover the whole world."

"Would other countries even believe you? Even if they hear you out, they'll probably just laugh when you say you're from another world..."

Euri was right. Primula believing me was due to extremely specific circumstances. But even if they didn't believe me at first, they'd have to eventually. When the mutants attack their towns and slaughter their people, they'd have no choice but to believe.

I didn't want it to come to that, though... I wanted to co-operate with nations before they were brought to the brink of collapse.

"Hmm... Well, I do know of an information brokerage..."

Oho, great. I knew I could count on Est... Wonder who the broker is.

"Alright? What place? Do I know it?"

"It's Papillon."

"Wait... Papillon? Don't they run the black market?"

That was the place I'd gotten the three Etoiles. If I recalled correctly, the criminal organization that managed the black market was known as Papillon. Nia had said it was a vile organization that did anything in the pursuit of cash.

"Papillon is actually in the middle of an inner conflict right now. After the attack by the purple crown, they sent out several assassins and failed multiple attempts on the contractor's life. In retaliation, the purple crown and its master killed all the leaders of the organization."

Fanatic Viola, I think it was called... And its master was that psycho chick, Luna.

Wherever they went, carnage followed. I had no interest in seeing them again.

"Papillon split into two groups as a result. There's a group that operates above ground, and one that operates underground."

Est explained that the above-ground group managed inns and brothels as its main source of income while offering shady spy services like information gathering and rumor manipulation under the table.

The underground group, on the other hand, was dealing with more dangerous jobs like assassination, thievery, arson, and trafficking. The black market fell under their jurisdiction.

The leader in charge of the above-ground branch and the leader in charge of the underground branch had been openly arguing ever since the overall bosses were killed. Tensions were apparently reaching a fever pitch.

“The previous leader had no heirs, so the successor is expected to be one of the two sub-leaders... Right now they’re engaged in a bitter feud about who should take over.”

“Huh, I see. So I should go after the above-ground leader.”

“Right. They’re masters of information gathering. Papillon’s inns are spread out all over the world, and they have a presence in every major city.”

That sounded good to me. A network that wide would probably rival the adventurer’s guild.

“...Wait, Est. The leader of Papillon’s above-ground department...”

“Indeed... She’s Silhouette Lily... Also known as Kageyuri.”

“N-No way! We can’t send Touya into her clutches! The poor guy’ll be sucked dry!”

Nia began flailing her arms as her cheeks turned red. I wondered what she was getting worried about. It was just a lady, right?

“Is she scary, or something?”

“...Yes. Kageyuri is primarily in charge of Papillon’s brothels, and she’s a notorious woman... She’s rumored to be undefeated in terms of seduction, causing man after man to fall... I’ve met her once before, and she’s truly what I’d define as a man-eater...”

Hmm... A brothel master? Well, it can’t be that bad. It’s a little ominous, but it should be fine.

“Kageyuri isn’t exactly adept in terms of fighting power compared to the underground boss, but she makes up for that in sheer number of subordinates. If you can get her on your side, she’ll be invaluable.”

“So, how do I meet her?”

“We’ll use our connections to find out where Kageyuri is right now. After that... Well, you can just go and meet her, I suppose.”

Is it that simple? Something feels weird here. I don’t exactly want to get into trouble...

Little did I know that trouble was quickly becoming a lifestyle for me.



I found myself to the north of the Kingdom of Strain, in the commerce-based city of Cantere.

I headed straight for the red-light district and found myself at the highest-rated brothel in town. It was a gaudy-looking place called the Moon Parlor. It was lit up like a grand pavilion. There were bits of neon decor here and there, too, glowing in all kinds of different colors. I hadn't exactly come here as a customer, but there was still a nervous lump in my throat.

"...I bet this place ain't cheap..."

I wondered how much it'd even be for a night. Maybe a platinum coin? It's not like I couldn't afford it... But I wasn't here as a customer... I definitely wasn't here as a customer. There were some stairs leading up to the main entrance, with two burly guys in suits standing at the bottom. I was seriously intimidated just being near them.

Still, nothing would come of anything if I just stood still, so I moved onward. I didn't want to loiter around, that'd just look shady.

I braced myself for the glare of the bouncers and started ascending the stairs. I opened the door and found myself in a long hallway lined with stained glass windows. At the end of the hallway was a man at a desk. He wore all black and had a bit of a slimy smile.

"Welcome to the Moon Parlor, friend. Is this your first time?"

The man had a short beard and looked to be around thirty. His smile seemed painfully sweet. No matter how you looked at it, his smile was a businessman's. I was bad at dealing with guys like him.

"I'm a first-timer, but I'm not here for pleasure. I'm here to see Silhouette Lily."

"...If you're not seeking pleasure, friend... Then leave. Before you find pain."

The smile was wiped clean from his face, and he stabbed me with a sudden threat. Judging from his response, I was in the right place.

“She’s here, right? I just want to talk to her. I won’t be long.”

“Hey, knuckleheads! Get this putz outta here!”

The two bouncers from the door came down the hall toward me. One of them stretched out a beefy arm and attempted to grab me. I responded by touching his hand and invoking **[Paralyze]** instead.

“Gwuh?!” He fell to the ground, and I quickly cast the same spell on the other guard. They were kind of just doing their jobs, but I didn’t want them in my way.

“Bastard! Are you one of Zabbit’s cronies?!”

The bearded businessman unsheathed a concealed dagger and swung it toward me. I had no idea who the hell Zabbit was supposed to be. It was possible he was the guy in charge of Papillon’s underground branch, though.

“Never should’ve come here!”

“**[Slip].**”

“Gaaah!”

The man suddenly stumbled over the ground itself and did a beautiful backward somersault. His dagger slipped from his hands and embedded itself in a part of the wall. That thing was sharp! I guess even being part of surface-level operations didn’t make him any less of a crook.

“I don’t know any Zabbit. I just want to meet with Silhouette. Let her know I need to see her.”

“Urgh...”

The man glared daggers at me from the floor. He wasn’t interested in cooperating, but I didn’t exactly want to tear the place up.

Suddenly, a woman’s voice called out from above us both.

“My, my... I’d appreciate it if you didn’t raise more of a fuss.”

“M-Ma’am?!”

There was a woman standing at the top of the curved staircase on one side of the hall, she slowly made her way down. She had long hair and hazel eyes, and seemed to be around twenty years old. Her body was... Curvy in all the right

places, and pretty well-proportioned. The white cheongsam she wore hugged her figure, and the white lily-shaped hairpin she wore helped tie the whole look together. But the look itself wouldn't have been possible without the natural beauty she radiated.

This must've been Silhouette Lily, the Kageyuri.

She was definitely as gorgeous as the rumors said, but she was the kind of beautiful that would make me hesitate. For some reason, I felt like I needed to have my guard up around her.

"So you're Silhouette Lily?"

"That is the case, yes. I don't know who you are, sugar. It's awfully rude to visit a working girl without a prior reservation. I'm rather busy."

"I'm sorry for that, but I'd been informed that trying to arrange a meeting in advance probably wouldn't have gotten me one anyway."

"And who told you that?"

"Est, of the Red Cats."

My response caused her to raise a brow, and her expression softened slightly. Silhouette Lily then smiled and continued down the stairs.

Ohh... Her legs are totally bare... And her thighs are kinda peeking outta the dress... Ghh... I'm weak against women like this...

"Seems you aren't one of Zabbit's tools, then. What do you want with me, boy?"

She came down the stairs fully and walked over to me with a crooked grin spreading across her cheeks. But I wasn't paying attention to the gorgeous woman in front of me. I'd sensed something else. I whipped out my smartphone to confirm my suspicions, and my intuition was right.

"...Before that, can I ask something? There are around fifty people surrounding the building right now. Did you schedule a group meeting, or are they uninvited too?"

"Huh?" Silhouette blinked in confusion. At that moment, the stained glass windows lining the hallway shattered, and a few men jumped into the building.

At least I thought they were men. They were just humanoid. Thin Golems with clothing wrapped around them.

They had ruler-length blades jutting from their wrist mounts. The Golems completely disregarded me and the desk clerk and attempted to slash at Silhouette.

“Boss!”

The prone guardsmen cried out, unable to do anything. Their voices alerted me in time to channel my magic.

“**[Shield].**”

I raised my hand and thrust it in Silhouette’s direction, casting an invisible barrier between her and her attackers.

“What is this...?” Silhouette stood there in confusion as the Golems were deflected. They continued to smack against the barrier with their weapons, but it was pointless.

“**Confine, o Ice! Everlasting Confinement: [Eternal Coffin]!**”

After my chant finished, ice began to sprout up beneath the three Golems, and in seconds they were trapped inside rectangular pillars. It was an ancient spell I’d recently looked up in the library, they wouldn’t be able to escape.

Silhouette looked around in confusion before moving toward me from behind the pillars.

“...Did you just do that?”

“Should I not have?”

“No, I just... You saved my life... That was extremely dangerous... And those Golems... Oh... Wait, did you say we were surrounded?”

“We are, yeah. Want me to take care of them? I’ll do it if you listen to what I have to say afterward.”

“...Very well. If you can really handle them all, then that’s the least I could do.”

Ha! Gotcha! That’s a verbal contract! Alright, time to take out the trash.



“Alright, I guess that’s that.” I stood outside the Moon Parlor’s entrance, surrounded by collapsed black-clad men. They were all on the ground, of course... And their Gollems were sealed in frozen pillars.

I just want to be clear here, none of the men were dead. I didn’t even scrap their Gollems.

A bunch of thuggish-looking men came out of the Moon Parlor and dragged the unconscious men away. Part of me hoped they were going to hand the guys in to the authorities, but I also knew that was a naive expectation.

These guys were definitely not random, innocent citizens. Hell, their outfits basically reminded me of some kind of criminal secret service getup. Not to mention they all exuded a threatening aura. That kind of made them second-rate, in my opinion, but it wasn’t like they were trying to be subtle so it didn’t make much of a difference.

They were probably going to torture the unconscious attackers and find out who sent them. I had a feeling they already knew who the mastermind was, but it never hurt to break a few fingers to be sure.

“...You really managed it. Tell me, are you one of the Red Cats?”

“I’m not, no. But I am a friend of theirs.”

Silhouette’s voice reflected the fact that that she was still in shock from what she’d just witnessed.

“...Hmm. If he’s really attacking me so brazenly, it seems the time for peaceful negotiations is over.”

“Who, Zabbit?”

“Yes. Zabbit Grandt... He handles the underground affairs of Papillon.”

That was about what I had expected. He probably considered Silhouette to be a pain and wanted to kill her... Although, given how weak these guys were it was probably meant to be more of a message to her.

She’s really beautiful, after all... If the guy was really that scummy, he’d probably think of it a waste to have her die.

“He’s been harassing us more recently and has even done horrible things to the girls that work for me. Many of the girls have been emotionally wounded by his vile commands, as well... That man is a pig, and he’s been unspeakably cruel... I love the women that work for me, so I’d rather have them shake their hips in pleasure than shake their whole bodies in fear.”

If that was true, then it was pretty despicable. I didn’t like the idea of such a brute trying to take out Silhouette.

Still, the situation was getting pretty dangerous... Now that this intimidation attempt had failed, he could actually end up trying to kill her.

“Now, as I promised... I’ll talk to you. Please, come this way.”

Silhouette led me back into the Moon Parlor. Once I made it inside, I saw a large crowd of people gathered in the foyer.

“Wh-What?!”

I froze up on the spot when I saw them. They all stared at me. There were a few guys standing around, but most of the people were girls... And all of those girls were in varying states of undress.

Some were wearing skimpy dresses, allowing me to see their underwear... Some of them weren’t even wearing bras. *Holy crap were... Were they with... clients? D-Doing it...? Doing... that?! Augh! W-Wait, some of them aren’t wearing clothing at all!*

“Woow! You’re, like, so strooong...”

“Thanks for saving us. Oh gosh!”

“Mmh... How about I give you a little present as thanks? Wanna spend the night between my legs, sugar?”

“Hey, don’t just offer him that! You should let him slip into something comfortable first. Like me.”

“O-Oh! N-No, ladies, please! I-I have some... I have some stuff to attend to, please!”

The girls started grabbing at me, pulling me back in no matter how many times I tried to escape their clutches.

Oh no... What's that nice smell? Hh... What's that soft feeling against my back?! What the hell? Did someone just kiss me on the cheek?! Wait, why is my arm wet? HELP!



“That’s enough, girls. Back to your bedrooms, I have business with the boy.”

Silhouette clapped her hands together and the girls begrudgingly returned to their rooms. Some of them were grumbling and muttering things like “No fair, the boss gets to hog him...” Some of the guys went into the rooms with them, too. Presumably, they were customers.

I’m glad it’s over.

“Are you alright, hm? Seems you were a little... Overstimulated. Are you perhaps unfamiliar with the touch of a woman?”

“...N-No comment.”

I sheepishly looked away from Silhouette, who was giggling up a storm. ...*That really caught me off-guard. It was a bit too much for me to handle.*

The air was a little awkward for a while after that, but we finally made it to the top floor of the brothel. We passed through a pair of heavy doors and came out into a fancy-looking room. From all the luxurious furnishings, I could’ve easily confused it for a royal bedroom. Not even the rooms back in Brunhild castle were this nice.

I sat down on the couch and looked around the room. When I looked up I noticed there was a skylight installed, giving me a full view of the full moon.

There was a little black cat curled up on a pillow next to me. I assumed it was probably Silhouette’s cat.

“Would you like a drink? A real drink, I mean... Or are you the kind who prefers fruit juice?”

“I’ll take the juice, please.”

Silhouette shrugged and brought a couple of drinks to the small table in front of the couch. She then sat on a chair opposite me. Her drink fizzed and bubbled quietly, it resembled champagne.

“So, what exactly do you want of me? I haven’t even heard your name yet, you know.”

“Oh... Sorry about that. I’m Mochizuki Touya. Right now... I guess I’m a visitor

to this area.”

“A visitor? Very well. I’ll hear you out.”

With her permission, I laid out the general outline of what I wanted, and why. I told her about the golden monsters that would randomly appear around the world, and the fact that I could detect their emergence. Then, I told her I wanted her organization’s help in installing these detectors and information-gathering.

“Golden monsters, eh? We’ve definitely heard eyewitness reports of these things all over the place. I tend to hear things before anyone else does... A country lost an entire village to them, you know. Another country lost an entire squad of battle-equipped Golems to them as well. I do find it hard to believe that they’re invaders from another world, though.”

“You’re certainly well-informed...”

“Of course I am. I’m the head of all Papillon’s espionage, after all. It’s my job. I hear everything in this world, before anyone else. From major incidents in governments and politics to minor rumblings in thuggish crime families.”

I was impressed, but not terribly surprised. It would make sense that most towns in most countries would have brothels or inns, and some of those would probably be operated by Papillon to some degree.

If members of Papillon joined the staff there, or if they were the managers of the facilities, then gathering local information would be incredibly easy. That information would then be passed on to Silhouette. It was doubtful that every town in the world fell under Papillon’s shadow, but it was highly likely that the majority of them were at least slightly tainted.

“And what would I gain for helping you, exactly?”

“...I mean, you’d get advance warning on when the mutants, er... the golden monsters, would arrive. It’d let you evacuate faster.”

“That doesn’t sound especially enticing... And it’s not like they’ll emerge near my towns every time, right?”

She wasn’t exactly wrong. From a partnership perspective, it was obviously

more for my benefit than hers.

But when the mutants began attacking more, she'd surely see the benefits... Not that I wanted it to drag out that long. It'd be too late if she only realized at the end.

I wondered what she'd stand to gain, or even what she'd want. She probably had something in mind already, given the sly grin on her face.

I sighed quietly as I realized what she was waiting for me to offer.

"...Fine. I'll handle the Zabbit guy. Is that enough?"

"Hehe... I like smart little boys... Things run much smoother when you know what a woman wants."

Her sly grin warped into a full-on smile as she crossed her legs. I quickly moved my gaze upward, as her cheongsam dress almost offered a glimpse into the void.

"Hmm... Now you have me curious. Could you have been involved in the incident between Primula and Triharan the other day?"

Heh, she even knows about that? Then again, there were a lot of eyewitnesses so I guess it's not that shocking...

I didn't have anything to hide, so I told her about how I supported the Primulan government, abducted the heir, and captured the head of the senate. I also told her I planned on cooperating with both countries going forward.

"So you can use teleportation magic? That's quite amazing... Could you perhaps grab Zabbit and bring him before me?"

"...I mean, yeah. I probably could. But what would you do? Kill him and become Papillon's sole leader?"

If Silhouette wanted to handle responsibilities like assassination and more morally messed up stuff, then I needed to reconsider whether I wanted to work with her or not.

Papillon wasn't exactly like the Red Cats, they weren't doing things in the name of chivalry or justice. I wasn't asking them to go completely straight and clean up their acts, but I couldn't overlook the really criminal stuff.

Silhouette must have noticed the shift in my expression. She leaned back and gave a dismissive wave of her hand.

“Me? Papillon’s leader? No thanks. In truth, I’d like to sever ties with that branch entirely. If they hadn’t started hassling us, I’d have left them alone and continued with my work... But Zabbit is a man of great greed and ambition, and he won’t be satisfied unless he has his fingers in my pies too.”

“So you just want to handle inn management and brothel-running?”

“Not at all. In this world, money is power. And information is an incredible currency. I plan on continuing our intelligence operations, but not for overtly malicious purposes. If I used the information for extortion, it’d probably be against corrupt nobles or crooked merchants.”

That made sense. She wasn’t exactly shedding all criminal activity, but I could tolerate what she was describing to me. It was basically the same as what Nia and the Red Cats were doing anyway.

“For the time being, then... would it be enough to disable the underground portion of Papillon?”

“Mm... I suppose? What are your ideas, Mr. Mage?”

“Well, I could take the easy method and place a curse on them.”

“...That got dark all of a sudden. What do you mean by a curse?”

Silhouette raised a brow. I could understand her suspicion, but a curse was the easiest thing for it. I could simply curse him in a way that prevented him from taking action against us.

Then again, that wouldn’t exactly work, since I didn’t know all the members of the group.

“Do you know where the Zabbit guy is?”

“You won’t have to go far. He’s in this very city. He lives in the tallest tower in the northern sector.”

Silhouette stood up and pulled back a curtain. I looked out the window and saw a massive tower that shone out into the night.

I'd noticed it on my entry to the city. I'd actually thought it was a clock tower, but my guess had been wrong.

It reminded me of the Ryounkaku. It was a twelve-story building that had been around in Asakusa from 1890 to 1923. I'd read about it in my history books during school. The tower I'd seen in the books wasn't quite so needlessly gaudy-looking, however.

I couldn't believe the creep was this close to us.

"Pretty flashy and self-indulgent for a criminal's home, isn't it?"

"As far as most people are concerned, he's just a merchant. Publicly, I'm just a brothel owner as well. We need cover identities, in the end. The citizens aren't aware of the true extent of our activities. Not even the merchants he does business with are aware he's a devil in disguise."

This guy was sounding slimier by the minute. Like a villain that only cared about himself. He was a far cry from the nobility of the Red Cats.

"Some of the girls who work at my brothel were homeless before I found them. I've heard stories from them that he has a bad reputation as an abuser of homeless people... It's like a game for him, teasing the lives of others..."

Silhouette's face turned sullen, but the tension was broken by a knock on the door. A maid appeared and apologized for the intrusion, before speaking with Silhouette. She quickly left after a brief exchange.

"What's up?"

"We have a confession from our attackers. They came here on Zabbit's orders, with the intention to threaten me. They were also told to kidnap me if the chance presented itself."

Well, that's that then. Guess I don't have to hold back against the guy.

"Can you tell me some of Zabbit's personal features? Physical features would be good."

"Hm? Well, uhm... he has wiry hair and a mustache. Oh, and he wears gold-trimmed glasses. He's over thirty, and definitely looks middle-aged... He has a golden walking stick, too! And his eyes are super leery, like he's undressing you

with them!”

I felt like the last point was probably something exclusive to his interactions with Silhouette, but it was enough information to go off on.

I projected a map into the air and ran a search for Zabbit. I received exactly one hit based on the criteria, and it was a person in the highest room of the building.

Silhouette seemed surprised by my map, but I couldn't be bothered to explain. *Hmm... The distance is about that far, and the angle is... Hmm...*

“Alright, be back soon.”

“Hm?”

Without stopping to explain, I used **[Teleport]** to warp straight from Silhouette's room to Zabbit. My vision warped and I found myself facing an older-looking man with wiry hair. He was just about to tuck into a thick steak.

“Wh-Huh-How?!”

His mustache was wide and wiry, kind of like catfish whiskers, he was wearing a gaudy-looking changshan and had unnecessarily golden glasses. There was no doubt about it, he had to be Zabbit.

I immediately judged him to be the guy I was looking for, so I wordlessly walked over and grabbed him by the neck, then used **[Teleport]** to bring us back to Silhouette's room.

“Guh!”

“Eek!” Zabbit groaned as I threw him to the floor, and Silhouette shrieked at our sudden appearance.

There we go, abduction accomplished. Barely took me any time at all.

...Maybe I'm getting a bit too used to this, though... This is the second time in this world that I've basically kidnapped someone... I'm a good guy, I swear!

“Wh-Who are you?! Where am I?! Don't you know who I am?!”

Zabbit scowled and yelled as he pointed the fork he'd been holding at me. It still had a chunk of meat on the end of it. After a short amount of time, he

noticed Silhouette, and his eyes narrowed. He turned his hate-filled voice toward her.

“I see... So this was your doing? You stupid bitch. Had you shut up and obeyed me, I’d have let you keep your job... But you really have a deathwish, don’t you?”

“I’ve said it once, and I’ll say it again. I’m not going to work for you. Please refrain from bothering me and my workers again. This is your final warning.”

“Pfft. There can only be one leader of Papillon, harlot. If you won’t obey, then you’ll simply die. Hey, you!”

I blinked in confusion and cautiously pointed toward myself. *What, me?*

“Eliminate this slut. I’ll give you all the gold and whores you can dream of. I’ll even let you be one of my trusted aides. And if you work hard, you might even rise in the ranks of Papillon and—”

“You really are a moron.”

“Gwaugh!” I pulled out Brunhild and fired a paralyzing bullet into his gut. He keeled over and faceplanted into the floor.

“D-Did you kill him?”

“Nope, just paralyzed him. He’s basically unharmed, and he’s completely conscious. He just won’t be able to move for a while.”

I used my foot to roll Zabbit over on to his back. His eyes were glancing around in fury. He was conscious, so he’d be able to see, hear, and feel everything going on. I crouched down at him and glared at him, speaking to him as coldly as I possibly could.

“Hey, scumbag. I’m about to place a curse on you. So long as you behave, like a good boy, you have nothing to worry about. The conditions are simple. Don’t do anything against Silhouette and her people, ever again. Don’t get involved with her affairs, either. Not only you, but your subordinates too. If even one of your cronies does something, the curse will trigger. Your entire body will slowly, permanently, be paralyzed... Eventually, the paralysis will creep into your rotten heart, and make sure it never beats again. Got it?”

The fear in Zabbit's eyes was starkly visible. He had evidently gotten the message.

“So long as you abide by the rules, the curse won't trigger. Just go about life honestly and properly, okay? If any of your subordinates harass Silhouette or her people, even of their own volition... Even if you didn't ask, the curse will start spreading across your body. Better keep your men in check, creep.”

The conditions seemed pretty fair to me. It was all simple enough. I didn't think it was an especially harsh curse, given the man's crimes. Hell, he could easily reduce the chances of the curse triggering just by relocating his base of operations to another city.

“Brand, o Dark. Sinful Brand: [Guilty Curse]!”

The curse was applied, and a small insignia appeared on Zabbit's forehead. It was the mark of his curse.

I used **[Recovery]** on him to relieve his paralysis. The moment I undid it, he hopped up in a seething rage.

“Y-You wretch, what did you do to me?!”

“Uh, I just told you, dude. I cursed you. Are you sure you wanna hang around here? I'm pretty sure you're violating the curse conditions just being on her turf.”

“A curse?! Bullshit! Nonsense, that's... Wh— My... My fingers... Why can't I feel my fingers?!”

Zabbit clutched his right hand as his face paled. The curse activated once. If he didn't hurry and leave, it'd keep going. Frankly, I was fine with having him suffer a bit of it, due to the things he'd done to Silhouette's people so far. Plus, actually feeling the effects would make it more real to him.

I opened up a **[Gate]** to the room where he'd been enjoying his steak and kicked him back through it. It wouldn't be as fun if he just died there and then.

With that, my mission was accomplished.

There was no way he could mess with Silhouette now, not unless he wanted to die. He also had to make sure his cronies didn't try to start anything either.

Plus, he couldn't exactly explain what had happened, either. If his people knew about the curse, then there could be some who'd bother Silhouette just to keep triggering the curse. He'd only be able to tell people he truly trusted, but I doubted he actually had people like that.

"Well, that's the end of that chapter. He shouldn't cause you guys any more trouble, I think. If he wants to maintain his hold over Papillon's underground stuff, then he'll have to do his best to ignore you and leave you alone."

Silhouette stood and stared blankly at me for a while. When she finally finished processing what had happened, she gave me a timid nod.

"...That is quite the curse. So then, we're freed from the shackles of Papillon... With a curse like that they'll actively be avoiding us. This is incredible... It was a problem that had been on my mind for so long, and you took care of it so easily."

Silhouette seemed utterly amazed. I didn't know what to say, so I just shrugged a bit.

"I've held up my half. You gonna work with me now?"

"Definitely. Just let me know what I have to do."

Awesome. Now I have the support of a massive information network in the Reverse World. Now all I have to do is gain access to an army that can physically fight the mutants.

There's no Babylon in this world, either... It's really just trouble after trouble for me...

"B-By the way... Do you have any plans this evening? Would you perhaps like to play a little downstairs? I'll let you have the entire facility for the night, if you like..."

"Hm? Play?"

I didn't really understand what she was getting at, but then I saw the coy smile on her face and the gears started to turn in my head. She was propositioning me.

"If you want, I'll let you use me, too..."

Silhouette leaned forward in a way that revealed her cleavage. *Whoa, nope! Abort mission! This is too much!*

“N-No. No! Oh goodness, look at the time. It’s quite late, huh? Let’s go over the details of our business partnership later on, then! See you!”

“What a shame...”

I used my divinity to escape her seductive gaze, then warped straight back to Brunhild.

I was definitely bad with girls like her... The sexy older types... I felt like she’d chew me up and spit me out.

Not that I disliked them... I just needed to be clear about that. I didn’t exactly have an issue with people like her... They were just scary.

...Geez, what a day...



Several days had passed since I cursed Zabbit on behalf of Silhouette.

Without so much as a word, the man and everyone related to him suddenly vanished from the city.

It was understandable why, since he wanted to minimize any chances of encountering her or her people.

His gaudy tower had its lights switched off due to the sudden disappearance of its owner.

I had a feeling it wouldn’t take long for it to regain its luster, though. There were many merchants in this city, and surely one would want to live somewhere so unnecessarily luxurious.

Silhouette had no plans to take up residence there, at any rate. Her group also formally broke off from Papillon and rechristened their organization. They were now the Black Cats.

The name was similar to the Red Cats, and I think that was an intentional decision on their part. On the other hand, it could’ve just been named for the little cat in Silhouette’s room. I didn’t know for sure. It also seemed like they

were now self-proclaimed rivals to the Red Cats, since they operated similarly.

I was in the middle of passing various items to Silhouette.

“So this is the device that can detect those golden monsters...?”

“Yeah. They can report how far the emergence point is from the devices, and in what direction. They can also predict when they’ll emerge, so you can arrange evacuations. I’d like you to give one to each of the inns and brothels under your control, and get in contact with me whenever you get a reading.”

Silhouette nodded along as I explained how the devices worked. She raised her brow in curiosity as I passed her a mass-produced smartphone. It only had my number on it.

I planned on giving phones to Nia and Est, but I didn’t want Silhouette and Nia getting into phone contact with each other. Apparently, Nia had something against the brothel owner.

Est might’ve been able to make use of contact with Silhouette, but frankly, I didn’t want to chance it. Both Est and Silhouette were cunning, so putting them together in private communication felt dangerous.

“Very well, then. I’ll abide by our arrangement. I certainly can’t renege now you’ve given me this. It seems like you weren’t lying about how much of a worldwide threat they are, too... I’ll be sure to contact you if we detect any emergency events, so don’t worry about that. Now... Could I perhaps ask that the young women beside you calm down a little bit? They are aware that there’s nothing going on between us, right?”

Silhouette grinned and jabbed a teasing comment in the direction of Yumina and Lu. The two of them were clinging tightly to either side of me.

“I-I know you aren’t a bad person, but you’re a threat to us. Please understand.”

“I-Indeed. Touya is ours, and we don’t exactly like the idea of him being led astray by you or your people... A-A-And don’t you think you’re showing a little too much skin?!”

“You’re certainly well-loved, Touya... I’m jealous.”

“Ahaha...” I could do nothing but laugh awkwardly. I was trapped between a rock and a hard place.



After I'd returned from the Reverse World, something bad happened. Apparently there was a lipstick kiss-mark left on my cheek, and the smell of perfume was also noticeable. The girls, understandably, lectured me on why I shouldn't be visiting brothels.

I was able to defuse the misunderstanding pretty quickly, but they still decided that I had to have people accompany me whenever I visited Silhouette and her establishment.

They really had no confidence in me. It was true that this place kind of riled me up, though... They probably noticed the place got me a little excited. But I couldn't help that. In case they hadn't noticed, I was a guy.

"Well, I can understand being upset about your guy hanging around my establishment... Still, it seems like you guys are all virgins, huh? So... Some of our girls and customers get off on being watched... Would you like to have a little look at them in action? It might prepare you better."

"Wh-What?! H-Have a look?!"

"A-Action?! What kind of action?!"

The two of them began shaking their heads rapidly. Their faces were completely red, and it looked like steam was about to shoot out of their ears.

Silhouette grinned broadly at the sight... She was clearly having fun at their expense.

Geez, the two of them are really sheltered... so it's not like they're good with adult situations. Hell, it's not like this world has a porn industry like my old world or anything... Wait...! I nervously stared at Silhouette, then glanced at the smartphone in her hand. Regret began to seep through me at the core.

...Th-The camera function on that thing... can record videos... And I know from my old world that sex sells... Don't tell me I accidentally started an adult video industry here... N-Not that I've seen any adult movies or anything! I'm underage. That would be immoral.

I turned my attention back to the two girls, I didn't want them passing out due to the blood rushing to their heads or anything.

“Fufu... Their innocence is really delicious.”

“C’mon now, quit teasing them... They’re innocent girls. They can’t handle it.”

“Oh, and you’re saying I’m not?”

“Are you saying you are?”

“Not in the least.”

We chatted a little further but eventually, we left the Moon Parlor behind us. The girls remained embarrassed the entire time we were there. After that, we headed off to the Red Cats, since there were a few things I needed to sort with them.

“Oh? Someone like you has a fiancée, Touya? Hell, you have two of them? Nice work, man! You must be a real ladykiller.”

Nia latched on to that little detail just like I’d expected. Her eyes were practically glittering as she probed my fiancées for information like a gossiping old lady... She was certainly irritating.

What’d she mean by “someone like you,” anyway?! She didn’t have to be so damn rude.

“Actually there are nine of us. We’ll all be marrying Touya at some point in the future.”

“N-Nine?! Th... That’s way too many! What are you, royalty?! Wait... Yeah, you are royalty! Is that kind of thing normal in the other world?! What gives?!”

Yumina’s reply seemed to shock Nia, who responded by folding her arms and firing out rapid commentary.

...Nope, it’s definitely a lot there, too. The king of Egret has like, seven, and that’s considered a lot. Though I did hear that the piggy guy from Sandora had over twenty before he died.

“Putting that aside... These smartphones of yours... Is it really alright for us to have them? We appreciate it, but they seem to be quite sophisticated...”

“Yeah, I want you to have it. You’ll need it in case of an emergency. It has functions installed into it like a notepad, a map, and even a calculator.”

Est was skimming the user manual when she apprehensively asked us if it was really okay, but I said it was fine. Behind her, Euni and Euri were playfully taking selfies together with their own phones.

We'd swung by the Red Cat fortress hideout to give the four of them mass-production models. That was the primary purpose of the visit, but I also wanted to ask about something else.

"...I know it's kinda rude to ask for something in return, but I might need your help."

"Hmm? If it's something we can actually do, we'll do it for you!"

Nia was the leader so I felt like I was going over her head by asking Est about it, but... Est was basically the leader anyway.

I left the tent and took out several large oval-shaped capsules from **[Storage]**. They were each about the size of a mini-van.

"What are these?"

"They're called Frame Units. Yumina, Lu, could you demonstrate?"

"Yes, of course."

"Leave it to us!"

The two of them hopped up and, as if very used to it already, opened up the Frame Unit hatches and got inside. After a few moments, a low rumble came from the powered-up devices, and a large screen was projected into the air in front of them. It seemed like they'd chosen the Great Plain level.

On the holographic display, we watched a Shining Count and a Knight Baron materialize out of nothing and land on the field. Yumina was in the Shining Count, while Lu had taken the Knight Baron. Unlike the Frame Units in the castle, these ones didn't have the relevant data pertaining to their Valkyrie Gears.

"Ohh! Those must be like that giant Golem!"

"This is... The thing from the other day?"

"Wh-Wh-Wh-What are those things?! How are we seeing them?! Where are

they?!”

“Wow...”

All four of the girls showed varying degrees of interest. There were also some generic Red Cat soldiers staring at the screen with their mouths hanging open.

“These are Frame Units. They’re virtual reality training devices, designed to give you piloting experience for the Frame Gears.”

The battle on the screen had already begun. The white knight piloted by Yumina brought its sword against Lu’s black knight, but a shield swiftly blocked the hit. Lu then used the momentum to thrust forward with her halberd, but Yumina deftly ducked away from the hit.

“I’ll be letting you guys borrow these, so please have everyone in the fortress train using these... Just treat it as a leisure activity.”

“...You intend to prepare us for battle using the real things, don’t you?”

“I hope it doesn’t have to come to that, but... Yes. It’ll probably have to happen in the future. I think preparing you to wield something that can protect your world is a good thing, in the end.”

Est stared at the ongoing battle for a while in silence, and then she nodded.

“We’ll take them and treat them as a leisure item, then. If we can learn how to pilot these Frame Gears of yours, we might not need you to swoop in and save us like last time.”

I passed a manual to Est. It was less of a manual for Frame Units specifically, and more for Frame Gears in general.

The battle on the screen ended with Lu’s victory. She was definitely better than Yumina when it came to close-range fighting situations. That being said, the fight was a close one. I wondered if Yumina’s future sight had improved, given that she’d managed to hold her own so well...

It had been a while since she mentioned her power to view the future. When she last talked about it, it wasn’t exactly very useful, but if it continued to develop then it’d be a valuable asset.

I wondered if the other girls were also experiencing personal changes as their

own individual potentials began to blossom, too...

The Frame Unit hatches opened up, and the girls clambered out.

“Alright, me next!”

“Ah, Nia... There might not be much point to you practicing with that thing, so there’s no need to overdo it.”

I stopped Nia as she charged toward the Frame Unit. She turned around and glared at me like I’d just slapped her in the face.

“Are you mocking me?! I wanna learn right away!”

“No, that’s not what I meant. Elluka has been working with one of my researchers to develop a Frame Gear based on Gollem technology. From what I understand, only legacy Gollems are gonna be capable of operating them, so we’ll probably want you to train using the new system we’re developing instead of this one. That’s why there’s no real point to you practicing with the Frame Unit, is all.”

I looked toward the small red Gollem next to Nia. I was hoping that we’d be able to make something that could fully bring out the potential of a crown model like Rouge.

“Well, okay... But there’s no problem with me practicing in this until then, right?”

“I mean, I guess not. Go ahead and play.”

“See?! It’s fine! Hey, Lu! Show me how this works!”

Nia grabbed Lu by the sleeve and dragged her toward one of the pods.

“...She seems quite the lively person.”

“...That’s just a polite way of calling her an idiot. Even Est agrees with me on that.”

Yumina was clearly trying to keep her regal poise about her. I just shrugged and sighed.

Euri and Euni went into two of the other pods as well. They seemed just as excited as Nia to give it a try. Lu hopped into the third, and Nia into the last one.

Then they began their first lesson.

The four girls appeared on the screen. They began basic motions like jumping, crouching, and moving in different directions. They looked a little unsteady, but I was sure they'd pick it up. It was basically the same for our knight order.

Now all I needed to do was pass on Smartphones to the leaders of Primula and Triharan. I figured I'd bring Mentor Central... Or rather, Queen Palerius, to visit Primula as well.

It was a pretty wild story to think about. Both descendants of the same man, both became royalty in two different worlds...

If you put it in perspective, this was basically a family reunion five thousand years in the making. That was kind of a big deal... Though to be honest they probably wouldn't have much in common besides ancestry.

Actually, that reminded me, Elluka said something about a stone tablet that had been passed down the Primula royal family. It was possible I'd be able to decipher it, so I wanted to take a look.

I quietly pondered to myself as I watched the virtual Frame Gears training together on the display.



“Good day. I am the queen of Palerius Island, Central Palerius, descendant of Alerius Palerius.”

“It's a pleasure to meet you. Welcome to Primula, Lady Central. I am the king of Primula, Ludios Primula Palerius, descendant of Lerios Palerius.” The two Palerius descendants shook each other's hands firmly.

Lerios Palerius was Alerius Palerius' son, so they were basically descended from the same family.

After five thousand years, two branches of the same family had finally been reunited.

Queen Central wasn't alone. She'd brought a few escort knights and Millie West, the representative of Palerius Island's western city.

Millie asked us if she should come, and I was a little apprehensive about it...

But I could understand her concerns about their island's queen heading to some unknown world alone.

I'd cast my translation magic on everyone so communication was completely fine.

The girls who had been chosen to, er... monitor my activities this time, were Yae and Hilde, so I had a sword-wielding duo preventing me from getting into hot water.

"You have my thanks, Sir Touya... For allowing a reunion that transcends space and time."

"Don't sweat it, honestly. It's only fair that you get briefed on your family history. The people of Palerius Island already knew about this world, after all."

I waved dismissively toward the King of Primula. It was probably about time for me to tell the other world leaders about the Reverse World... It was no longer just my issue alone.

"These documents were left behind by Alerius. We have various copies, so you may keep these."

"Fascinating, thank you... These are theories relating to Space-time magic? This is certainly going to be worth a read..."

Space-time magic was, in short, a separate form of magic from the six major schools, and Null. It seemed to be a form of magic that lent itself well to magical devices, meaning even those without any elemental affinities could make good use of it. The interdimensional gate on Palerius Island could be considered a culmination of that kind of research.

This world had items that employed that form of magic in a way that replicated the effects of my **[Storage]** spell.

They took the form of those storage cards, like the one Mr. Sancho had. Apparently, that tool became commonplace in the world due to the work of Lerios Palerius, who passed down his Space-time knowledge to future generations.

It seemed Primula was a pretty focused nation compared to others when it

came to the pursuit of magical research. Its breakthroughs were still nothing compared to the level of the world I'd come from, though.

I passed them a copy of the magical book I'd given to Nia, as well. Hopefully, they'd be able to do some good with it.

"Now then... Lady Central, Sir Touya... There's something I'd like you to take a look at."

The king of Primula glanced to the left. A butler responded to the gesture by bringing over a wooden box and setting it on the table in front of us.

The box was rectangular, roughly A4 in terms of size, similar in size to a medium-sized notebook. The king opened it up, revealing a padded interior with a black stone tablet resting upon it.

"What is this?"

"This has been passed down to us since ancient times. It is the legacy of Lerios Palerius."

It was rectangular, much like the box it was kept in. The surface had been polished to the point where it was incredibly shiny, and as I leaned over it I could see the reflection of my face staring back. There were no distinguishing features on it at all, it was just a plain black tablet.

"Is... It a mirror, perhaps?"

Hilde tilted her head as she pondered. It could certainly be used as a mirror, but I doubted that was the primary intended function.

The king of Primula chuckled softly before handing off the tablet to Central.

"Would you mind channeling some of your magic through this?"

"My magic? Hm... Ah!" When Central poured a little magic into it, the tablet began lighting up with red-colored, glowing shapes. They kind of resembled cuneiform writing, a wedge-shaped symbol-based written language invented by the Sumerians.

After a while, the symbols vanished before appearing once more. The new ones looked similar, but they were a little different in places. Then, they vanished again before being replaced by another set. It seemed like the tablets

were scrolling through multiple pages of text in an unknown language.

I wondered if this was similar to the messaging book that the adventurer's guild used to communicate between branches.

"Each generation, the new king receives this tablet from his predecessor. The language written here was only understood by Leros, so we have no idea what to make of it. Some speculate that it was the alphabet of the world Leros came from to begin with."

That was interesting. Plus, it explained why he was so eager to show us. But it was definitely my first time seeing this language... so it wasn't the kind regularly used in the world I knew.

"Sir Touya... Have you perhaps seen these letters before?"

"Can't say I have... This isn't any of the ancient languages I've come across so far..."

Guess it's a language they used five thousand years ago... Sucks, but I got no choice but to ask Doc Babylon about it... Or maybe I should ask Fam. It's been a while since I went to the library... It's kind of annoying dealing with that shut-in, though.

Just as I was about to tell them I'd return home for a bit, Central opened her mouth.

"Actually... this is a language passed down on Palerius Island. It was originally used by an unnamed tribe, and Alerius Palerius used the language in some of his inscriptions."

"R-Really?! Th-Then you can read this, Lady Central?"

"I can. Not just me, either. All four of the descendants that govern the major cities on Palerius Island should be able to read it. Millie? Can you make this out?"

Central passed the tablet to Millie, who was seated beside her.

"...Yes, it's plain as day. There are some parts where the structure is a little awkward, but I can generally grasp the full meaning. Given that I'm the most educated about this language as far as our island goes... I should be able to

produce a passable translation.”

Lerios, the first king of Primula, was Alerius’ son. It made sense that he’d write using the same languages as his father. But given that it seemed to have been written in something obscure, it must have been something the guy thought was worth encrypting.

“Hm... Is this a historical record? No... From the layout, it’s more like a diary... Hm? This part here... Crystalline beasts... Oh! Is this referring to the Phrase?”

“The Phrase?! Is there something about them written there?”

“Yes, it seems so... There’s some more difficult stuff here I can’t fully make out, but... Give me a little time and I’ll have something.”

After Millie spoke, the king of Primula called over his butler, who brought a few bundles of paper to the table.

“These are copies of the text from the tablet. Please use them as you see fit.”

“Thank you. That helps. Could I have something to write with?”

Millie scanned her eyes over the pages, occasionally narrowing her eyes and writing down a rough translation of what she was reading.

Central read the entries on the stone tablet at the same time, her expression flittering between confusion and shock now and then. The rest of us could do nothing but wait around.

Damn it. If I knew the name of the language, I’d just be able to read it myself...

After a while, Millie put down the paper and passed them over to the king of Primula.

The king began passing me the papers that he’d finished reading, allowing me to take a look at what we were dealing with.

It was like a mixture between a diary and a historical record, meaning that the tablet was probably like a personal memorandum book that belonged to Lerios.

I began reading the papers that chronicled the strange adventures of Lerios Palerius.

Today's Date: 19th of Skywater, 2015

■ The eastern capital is gone. Crystals consumed it. They're making tracks for the grand capital now. Father, rest his soul, will see his wishes granted by my elder brother. My brother has departed for the island, along with the other disciples and their families. Once we trigger the barrier on the island, the crystals won't be able to get us. But on the other hand... We won't be able to see the outside world ever again. Though such fears seem futile now, I doubt there'll even be a world to go out to once all this is over. This is our only method of survival, so we must grasp it with both hands. But even if it is what will save us, I can't help but feel guilty.

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Today's Date: 21st of Skywater, 2015

■ I'm supposed to be heading off to the island soon, toward the gate our father dedicated his life to building. But I can't. This country needs me. Much like my father before me, I have found a purpose. I need to trust this person, and the two they've brought with them. They're come from another world, after all. With their help, we may yet set things right. We might even be able to drive these crystals from our world... I must be honest, our chances are slim... But I'm willing to bet it all on this last chance. I will believe in this mysterious stranger, and the white and black he holds dominion over.

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Partheno's Date: 3rd of Soilguide, 2015

■ There has been a complication... The white and black's power has run completely wild due to their master falling to despair. As a result, the vast majority of the crystals were purged from my world. But the reckless and distorted nature of their might affected all in the area without discrimination. I

have crossed into another world entirely. My entire family is back there, and I cannot reach them. I see the irony in that avoiding the destination set out for me by my father, I have ended up achieving the very thing he sought to reach. I wonder if I'll be trapped here forever...

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Partheno's Date: 5th of Soilguide, 2015

■ I have no hope here. The magic of this world is far less developed than that of my home's. I'm all alone here, and I have little in the way of communication. I find it hard enough to survive here, so what hope have I of reaching my home again? My thoughts constantly drift back to those I've left behind. Brother... All of you on that island... Were you caught in their rampage? Are you safe?

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Partheno's Date: 17th of Shineloop, 2015

■ I've been welcomed into a tribe of people. They're called the Primula. By sheer coincidence, the young girl I saved happened to be the daughter of the tribe's chieftain. It seems my suspicions were right, and magic isn't well-developed in this world at all. My abilities may pale compared to my father, but I can still use it well enough to amaze and stupefy the tribesmen. It's somewhat amusing to me, though, given that I find their usage of these mechanical dolls just as strange and incredible. Regardless, these people are kindhearted, friendly, and clearly appreciative of my deeds. I've decided to stay with them for a while longer. I'm grateful for the company.

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Partheno's Date: 6th of Dusknight, 2019

■ The war between the Primula and the Zalza is over. The Primula have won. That means that Primula controls most of the territory in the area. It has been some time since my last entry, but in that time much has happened. I took the daughter of the chieftain as my bride and ascended to the position of leader myself. I have been uniting the tribes through negotiation or force, and we are now the Kingdom of Primula. I have not fully lost hope. My brother and the other islanders will surely find a way to this world soon enough, which is why I must secure this territory in order to keep them safe when they arrive. I'm hoping to meet with them soon, so that we might finally reunite. I hold that hope in my heart as I continue my work here.

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Partheno's Date: 17th of Flamewing, 2051

■ It is my fondest hope that... Someday... Be it in the lifetime of my children, or their children, or their children's children... That those who found themselves on the island will pass through my father's Gate and make their way here, to their true home. When that time comes, I hope the people of Primula will greet them with warm drinks, open arms, and boundless love. Please. Treat them kindly. This world would be sadder if it experienced any more of the loneliness I had to endure.

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I put down the papers and let out a deep breath. If this was true, it meant Leros came to the Reverse World after the accident that removed the invading Phrase army.

His brother and the others closed themselves away on Palerius Island, never realizing that Leros had gone and done something that saved them all... And

that was where they stayed for five thousand years, fending off Behemoths all on their own.

The Palerius lineage has suffered a lot...

I'd assumed Lerios had passed through to the Reverse World before his dad died, but it seemed like I was wrong.

Still, there was a more pressing matter I wanted to address. I turned to the king of Primula.

"The white and black mentioned in the text here..."

"Mm... They're likely Gollems. The black is surely the black crown, Chronos Noir. The white is likely the white crown, as well."

Knew it. Old man Palerius probably got info on building his gate after meeting the two Gollems and whoever their master was. Then I guess he passed away without being able to complete the whole thing. His eldest son then found the island, while his second son got blasted into the Reverse World...

"Touya-dono... This diary is strange, it is... If we go by it, then the white and black should be somewhere in our world, they should."

"Yeah, I guess... But I think I heard the black crown and its master exist in this world nowadays..."

Euri had mentioned something like that, if I remembered correctly. She'd said something about the black crown's master being a rival of sorts to Nia.

But in that case, how did the black crown make its way back to this world after the disaster? I wondered if it had been accidentally blown back here like Lerios, or if maybe that was just its power to begin with.

But that made me wonder what was up with the white crown. If it had something to do with the world's boundary being repaired, then I wanted to know about it.

Either way, I clearly had to meet up with this black crown.

"Do you know where the black crown is?"

"I'm afraid not. The black crown and its master came through here a few days

ago, but they left after I mentioned a few things about Elluka.”

“Hm? Why would the black crown’s master be asking after Elluka?”

“Hm? You didn’t hear from her? The black crown’s master is Elluka’s younger sister.”

Wait, what?! I didn’t know that at all... Why wasn’t I informed?!

“I did mention a few things related to you as well...”

Before the king of Primula could carry on talking, my smartphone started ringing. I apologized for cutting him off, then picked up the phone. It was an incoming call from Shirogane, on Drakliff island.

“Sup. Something wrong, Shirogane?”

“I’m terribly sorry to call you while you’re in the middle of things, but there’s a spot of trouble over here...”

“What is it?”

“Well... There’s an intruder on the island, and they’re causing quite a stir. It seems to be a girl, and she’s demanding you show yourself. It’s a young-looking girl and a Gollem, yelling accusatory remarks. She claims you kidnapped her sister... I’m afraid the way things are going, your holiday home could very well be a target soon.”

Huh? Kidnapper? Me? I mean sure, I’ve done a little kidnapping here and there... but that doesn’t make me an actual kidnapper!

I wondered if this sudden intruder was the younger sister of Elluka. If she was, this was a serious speak of the devil moment. I certainly hadn’t expected to be hunted down. I asked Shirogane to tell the rampaging girl to calm down and wait for me, then hung up the phone.

Guess I’ve got no choice but to drag Elluka with me. Seems like whoever the girl is, she’s pissed. But still, don’t call me a kidnapper! Elluka’s the one who asked to come with me!

Geez... Red, blue, purple... Seems like no matter which crown contractor I find, there’s always something wrong with them. Wonder if this girl’ll be any better... But there’s only one way to find out.



There were several unconscious Dragons laying around Drakliff island's beachfront. None of them were dead, but their injuries looked grievous.

There was a barrier on the island that prevented non-Dragon intruders from entering. It was at its edge on the beach that I found the young girl, who stood atop a fallen Dragon with her arms crossed.

She wore a white blouse with a thick black ribbon at the neck, along with a black skirt and tights combo from the waist down. Standing by her was a small, knightly-looking Golem. It was jet black and had a long scarf. A little bit behind the two stood a maid with short, violet hair. She had a regretful expression on her face, but I was wondering why there was even a maid here to begin with.

The girl herself was really small... She was younger than Sue, hell she looked younger than Renne. I estimated she was around six or seven years old. Despite her looks, I sensed a strange kind of smug aura emanating from her as she glanced around.

I was using **[Long Sense]** to view her from the safety of my mountain villa, so there was no way she could've seen me.

"That's your sister?"

Elluka wordlessly responded to my query by nodding her head rapidly. I projected the image of her into the air, and just looking at the girl prompted Elluka to sweat profusely. I wondered if she was afraid for some reason.

"Alright, let's go talk to her. If you can just explain the situation, then we—"

"No way!"

She outright refused. She immediately began clinging on to the nearest object, as if preparing to hang on for dear life.

"She'll get angry! You won't like her when she's angry!"

"What are you, a little kid? Come on..."

I stared blankly at Elluka, who had planted her feet firmly against the ground and kept on shaking her head. I wondered if she was really the elder sibling in this situation. Yae, Hilde, and I were at a complete loss. What were we

supposed to do? Elluka was older than us, but she was acting like a little kid.

I glanced at Fenrir, her wolf Golem companion, and quietly implored him for help.

“Mph... My master is rather bad at dealing with her sister. Given that she left this world and took off without even informing the girl, she’ll surely be quite angry... I’m not entirely sure if I can do anything here.”

“She didn’t contact her, she didn’t? Is there a reason she did not, is there? Surely she could have sent a letter, she could.”

“If I’d sent a letter, she’d have been able to trace where it came from! And if she traced it, she’d come capture me!”

...What are you, a runaway? Why are you that scared of making your little sister mad? If you’d just communicated properly before coming to Babylon, we wouldn’t have this issue!

“My master likes to charge into action without considering the implications. She’ll often forget her circumstances and charge into new opportunities whenever she can. It is a poor habit on her part.”

I could certainly see that. She came to another world without any hesitation on her part... So I could probably understand why her sister would be frustrated.

Regardless, sitting around wasn’t going to solve anything.

“Alright, let’s go.”

“Nooo!”

Hilde grabbed Elluka by the legs, but she held on for dear life and absolutely refused to budge.

She was like a little kid throwing a tantrum, and it was starting to piss me off.

“Perhaps, Touya... You could speak to my master’s sister first? If you explain the circumstances, she may calm down... Potentially...”

“Ugh...”

I wasn’t really good with kids that thought they were tough. That one time

the king of Palouf's fiancée picked a fight with me, I ended up making her cry.

Hell, she was even younger than the girl I fought... I had my doubts she'd even understand my explanation. I shrugged, then asked Yae and Hilde to watch over Elluka while I reluctantly walked down to the beach.

The little girl stood atop the unconscious earth dragon, glaring in my general direction.

The two of us stared each other down, the barrier the only thing between us. Due to the fact that she was standing someplace elevated, I had to look up to meet her gaze.

"Are you the Mochizuki Touya that the king of Primula told me about?"

The girl looked down on me condescendingly, the effect amplified by the fact that she had the high ground. *D-Damn... She sounds a lot sterner and more confident than I expected.*

Given that she's strong enough to make it out here, too... This might not go so well.

"That's right. You're Elluka's sister, right? What's your name?"

"Norn. Is something funny? What's with your face?"

"Ah, no... Sorry. I just know someone else with that name."

I smirked for a half-second in surprise. She had the same name as one of our higher-ups in the knight order back in Brunhild, Norn. It wasn't a super rare name, apparently. They definitely had different personalities, though.

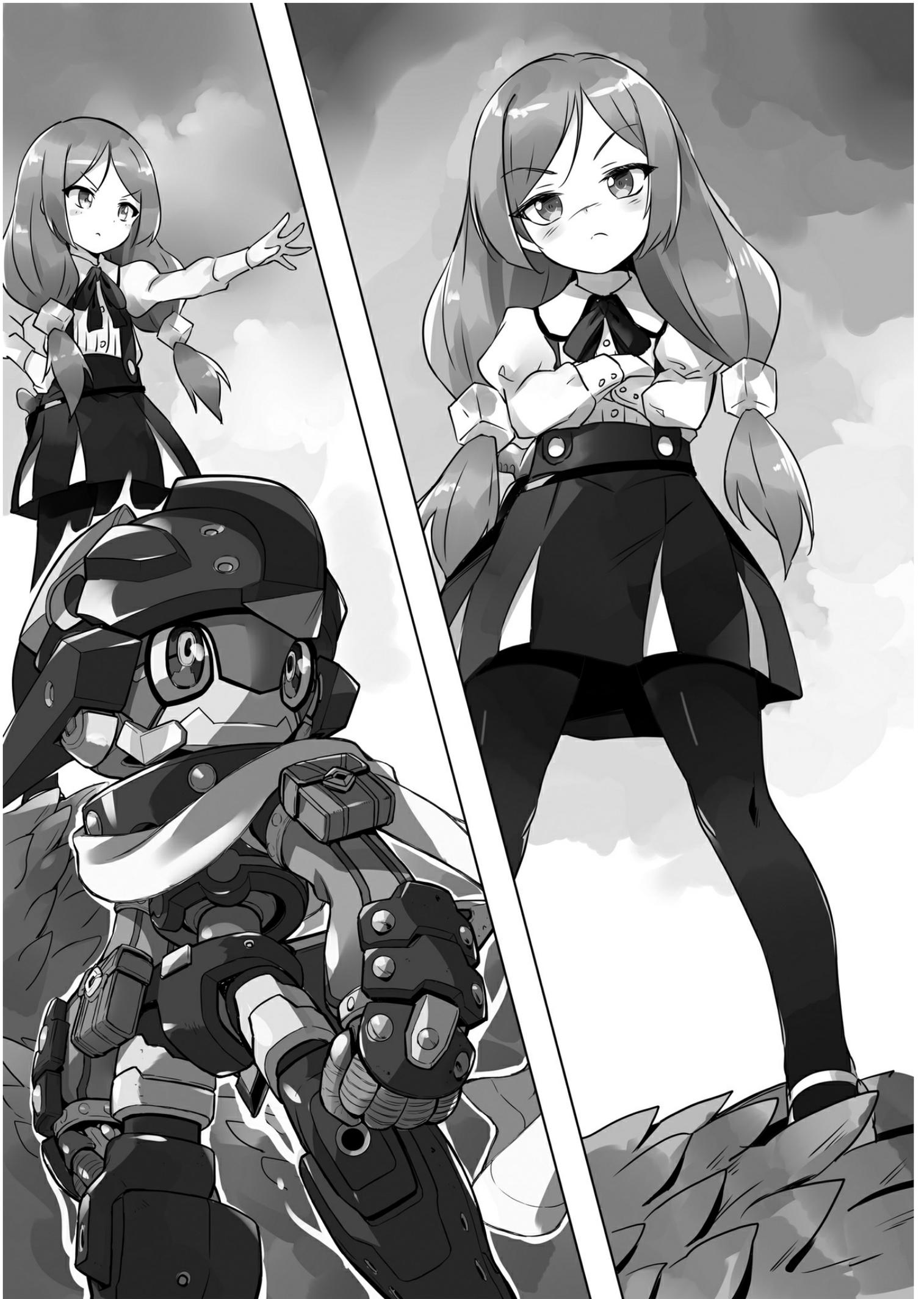
"So? Where's my sis?"

"Cowering up there, for now. She doesn't wanna come down."

"...I'd have let you off with a light beating if you played along, but you're going to hold her hostage?"

"Huh?"

"Noir!"



The black Golem charged toward the barrier and smashed its fist into it.

Obviously it wasn't strong enough to break through, and its tiny fist was held back by the invisible wall.

...You're really gonna attack like that? Talk about hot-blooded.

"Hey, listen to me. I didn't kidnap your older sister, okay? She tagged along with—"

"Noir! Summon Weapon No. 10: **[Newton]**!"

"Affirmative."

Before I could even finish my sentence, the black crown materialized a massive hammer out of nowhere. It was ridiculously oversized! The Golem itself wasn't even one meter tall, but the hammer was easily the size of a minivan. I had no idea what to say.

A shattering sound rang out as it brought the massive thing down, and the barrier protecting the area crumbled. Clearly that hammer of his was no ordinary weapon.

"Noir! Summon Weapon No. 9: **[Schrodinger]**!"

"Acknowledged."

Norn called out, and the black crown responded. The enormous hammer vanished into particles of light, replaced by two magical-looking guns.

A bolt of lightning shot from each of the guns. It didn't look strong enough to be fatal, but I wasn't going to sit around and take it either.

"[Absorb]."

I used my magic to drain the incoming blast. Several shots followed, but all of them met the same fate.

I needed to take out the Golem, but I didn't want to break it. I decided on the next best thing.

"[Prison]."

The crown pulled out the hammer again at the last second, but I'd mixed

some of my own divinity into this particular spell. It wasn't going to break.

The black crown was now encased in a partially see-through cube, about one meter in diameter. With the Golem immobilized, I leaped toward the girl atop the unconscious Dragon.

“Milady!”

The maid, who had been standing off to the side, suddenly pulled out a thin blade from nowhere and came charging at me. *Yikes, can't be doing that...*

“**[Paralyze].**”

I moved to the side and grabbed her by the wrist, then cast my spell. But... For some reason, the maid wasn't affected at all.

“Wh—?!” I dodged her follow-up attack and regained my composure. She seemed physically strong, but untrained in swordplay, which meant her strikes were too telegraphed.

My spell didn't work? Does she have a talisman or something? I didn't expect the people in this world to have stuff like that...

“Sorry, but... **[Gravity].**”

“Eek!” I placed my hand on the maid's shoulder and she came crashing down to the ground.

“Guh!”

Norn suddenly pulled out a magical gun from under her coat. She pointed it down at me.

“**[Slip]!**”

“Gaaah! My spellcaster!” Norn slipped and fell down from the Earth Dragon, dropping her weapon in the process. I quickly sealed her up in a **[Prison]**, much like her Golem. With that, it was checkmate.

“Gwuh! Open this right now, you bastard! Kidnapper! Coward! What school of magic do you draw from, huh?! Perversion?!”

“...There's nothing perverted about me. What are you talking about?”

I suddenly frowned as I looked at the girl, who was now frantically pounding

her fists against the walls of her confines.

Hm... Does she think I kidnapped Elluka for her body or something? Urgh... That's pretty messed up.

I sighed quietly and shook my head. There had been a fundamental misunderstanding that I had to clear up.



“...So yeah, now you know the story. Elluka asked to come to my world. Pretty firmly, might I add. Do you get it now?”

“...I understand, yes. There's a lot of it that seems odd to me, but I have a good grasp on the situation... It seems my sis has caused you a bit of a headache.”

My shoulders sagged in relief. I was glad that someone as young as her even understood what I was talking about, but given that her sister was some kind of unparalleled genius, it stood to reason that this girl would be following suit.

“...So, would you mind letting me out of here?”

“Oh, my bad.”

I released the **[Prison]** around Norn, ending her grumbling.

I also dispelled the cage around Noir and dispelled the effects of **[Gravity]** that I'd cast on the maid.

The maid dusted herself off and bowed her head.

“Well then, nice to meet you. Name's Norn Patolakshe. This is my Gollem, Noir. My maid here is named Elfrau... What's with the funny expression?”

“Oh, sorry... It's just, there's a country in my world called Elfrau...”

“Oh. And you said I had the name of someone you knew, too? That's kind of annoying.”

Yes. It definitely was.

“My name is Elfrau. If that's too confusing, you may refer to me as Frau.”

Elfrau said something that reminded me of my maid, Cesca. Surely El

would've been a more logical nickname? Kind of like how Fran would've been a better nickname for Francesca than Cesca... Perhaps there was some unwritten rule I was unaware of.

"So, my dumb sis is up there?" Norn pointed up the trail toward my villa.

Dumb sis, huh...? I guess even being a world-renowned genius doesn't matter when family's concerned.

"Fenrir's with her, too. Elluka ended up panicking because she thought you'd be mad at her."

"Obviously I'm mad at her! Not only did she go to another world without telling anyone, she spent two whole years wandering around! She's been walking all over the world, causing trouble... And who do you think has to mop up her messes?! Me! I've been suspected of crimes thanks to her! I got involved in shady stuff with casino owners because of her! All sorts of dumb stuff! I have more than a few words for her!"

It seemed like Norn had quite a few bones to pick with her elder sister. I decided the wisest thing to do was let them both hash it out.

"...Man, you sure have it tough. Elluka sure is a bad sister, having a little girl like you take care of her problems."

"Ack, don't say that...!"

"Ill-advised language detected."

The maid, Frau, and the black crown, Noir, both attempted to warn me in their own ways.

Hm? I turned and wondered what they were talking about, which distracted me from Norn's quick-draw on her gun. She brandished the spellcaster with a menacing fire in her eyes. Then, she dashed forward and, at point-blank range, blasted a metallic pellet right into my groin.

"Hngh! Ghhh!"

I couldn't even speak. All the wind was knocked out of my lungs and I fell to my knees. Then, I curled into the fetal position, cradling my precious crown jewels beneath my palm.

Hngh... I-It hurts...! I-It hurts... Ghhh... Ghaaaugh! Why?! What I felt was the pinnacle of male body pain. Sweat caked my face, my back, my arms, and my legs. The sensitivity made it hard to move, so all I could do was writhe atop the sand.

There wasn't anything I could do but ride through the agony.

"Don't you dare call me a little girl! I'm fifteen!"

Fh... Fifteen? Th-That's the same age as Linze and Elze, isn't it? Nngh... I-It's still hard to breathe... Oh... I can see... I can see a white light... Is it my time already?

The surprise attack was driving me wild with anguish. She couldn't possibly have understood what I was experiencing.

"A-Are you okay?"

"N-Not... really... But... let me lay here... fhh... for a while..."

Frau rushed over, but I just shook my head. There was nothing anyone could do for me. I just had to wait...

Something similar happened to me once in the past... It was the work of the storehouse's Terminal Gynoid... That clumsy idiot, Parshe... I didn't expect to receive this kind of critical damage again. I was careless...

"Suggestion: Apologize for rash action."

"Guh... No way, Noir! He was rude to me first!"

The Golem turned toward its master and shook its head. If she was six, maybe this would be forgivable, but there was no way I'd forgive a teenager for this... Hell, I wasn't so sure I would've actually forgiven a six-year-old.

Seemed like she had a complex regarding her physical appearance. Which seemed fair, given that she looked to be around six or seven years old. She definitely wasn't part of a race with a long lifespan like Leen, either... so I wondered what was up with her.

I quietly cursed her name as the dull pain continued coursing through my gonads. It was at that moment I made a silent vow to enchant my pants with **[Shield]** as soon as I possibly could.



Chronos Noir.

That was the name of the black crown. Its abilities were space-time manipulation.

It was capable of pulling things from alternate realities and different worlds for about a minute.

Those abilities weren't limited to physical objects, either. It could pull forth alternative concepts such as weight, resistance, strength, or even alternate versions of itself. It can use these to amplify its own powers. But such power obviously comes with a price, as with all the other Gollems. The black crown could only use the full extent of its abilities during the night, and whenever it did, its master's physical age was reversed in proportion to the strength of the ability.

In terms of time magic, it could peek a few seconds into the future, enhance its own speed, and even slow down enemies. However, it wasn't capable of stopping or rewinding time... Not yet, at least.

"So what you're saying is..." Doctor Babylon took a few steps to her right, then pointed to where she'd just been standing.

"Let's call where I'm standing right now Point A. Let's call where I'm pointing, where I was a few seconds ago, Point B."

"Okay."

"And a couple seconds before that, I was standing over here. Let's call that Point C. A few seconds before that, I was standing right there. Let's call that Point D. So now, each second has left an imprint in time, and I exist in those particular positions for the seconds I spent in them. To be blunt, the black crown doesn't pull things from different worlds so much as different times. It could realistically pull the me from Point B, the me from Point C, and the me from Point D out into this moment in time, allowing me to interact with them from Point A. It would be temporary, but four of me would exist in this world at the same time." *Four copies of the doc? No thanks.*

But, hm... I kinda get it, but... If the me from a couple seconds ago was pulled

out of time, wouldn't that erase the timeline that brought me here in the first place?

“Time flows in a singular pattern, but infinite possibilities still branch from the forward march. Here I am right now, standing. But in five seconds, I could be to the left, or right, or forward, or backward. If I move forward right now, and the black crown called upon the hypothetical me that moved backward, the flow of time that led to me being here wouldn't be disrupted at all.”

So it's basically like a parallel world kind of deal? I guess you see that stuff in fiction all the time. I know time paradoxes get used as cheap plot points, too. For example, the Grandfather Paradox, the one that posits a scenario where you go back in time and kill your grandpa before you or your parents were born. What would happen then? From what I understand, the death of the grandfather would prevent your own birth, but that also means you could never have traveled back to kill him in the first place... That's the paradox, basically.

But there's also the idea that killing the grandfather would create an off-shoot reality that preserves the universe by preventing the paradox. It would create two worlds running in parallel. One in which the grandfather survived, and went on to have the family that produced the grandchild... and one in which the grandfather was killed, and thus the grandchild was never born...

In short, it was a “what-if” sort of world, with infinite possibilities. It seemed like Noir's ability reached into hypothetical potentials, and manifested them as realities without compromising the past. And that was pretty incredible. If I had faced Noir at night, it might've been really dangerous... But given the toll the contractor had to pay, it might not have been so simple.

“So it's not exactly pulling things from other worlds, then.”

“Not quite, no. More like pulling things from the same world, in a different hypothetical timeline. In the many worlds under the survey of that god you mentioned, I'm sure one or two are nearly identical, aside from a few little differences. You can consider alternate timelines to be kind of like that. Identical to this world, but tweaked due to different actions.”

Made sense to me. The idea would be that there was a single world, and a single flow of time, so Noir wasn't pulling things from other places, just other

potentials.

“Wonder if that’s the power that pushed the Phrase back five thousand years ago...”

“I wonder, too... I don’t think the ability alone could push back so many hundreds of thousands of Phrase from the world, though. Elluka hasn’t done much in the way of uncovering information on that, and it seems like Noir has undergone multiple memory wipes since then... There’s nothing we can do for now. Not to mention the fact that messing around with its abilities is dangerous, given the price its contractor has to pay.”

The cost of mastering a crown was a heavy burden. The fact that its true abilities could only be used at night was probably a blessing in disguise.

Apparently the weapons it brought out against me during the battle were just supplementary gear and abilities installed on to it by Elluka and had nothing to do with its actual innate power.

In Noir’s case, when it used its temporal abilities, Norn’s age would regress. She was fifteen, but looked around seven or six due to repeated use of these powers.

At first glance, it might seem incredible since it can basically guarantee immortality, but using it one too many times could have you regress to a fetal state, which would basically be the same as death. And the fact that she looked so young meant that Noir had consumed at least eight or nine years.

It was a little bit of a scary power... But if used sparingly, the time could be gained back just by waiting and growing. Norn would grow to be physically fifteen again if she waited those eight or nine years she’d lost. Though mentally, she’d be in her twenties at that point.

Apparently commenting on her height or looks was ill-advised, and it was simply within her instincts to attack anyone that pointed it out. Or that was what Noir told me, at least. I remembered a movie I saw once that had a protagonist who got reflexively upset when he was called a chicken. That movie involved a time machine too, actually... A bit of an amusing similarity... But nothing more than a coincidence, in the end.

Elluka got chewed out by her angry sister, but I could glean little snippets of legitimate concern and worry for Elluka's wellbeing in the girl's harsh words. Seemed like she was hiding her real feelings behind a harsh façade... Maybe.

"So, what is the little lady Norn doing right now?"

"She's going to stay in this world for now, since Elluka doesn't plan on leaving Babylon any time soon. I asked her if she wanted to stay in the castle, but she said no and booked out a stay in the Silver Moon instead."

"Hmph... Well, it's helpful to have a crown on hand. Hopefully it'll help us out... Now, on to more pressing matters." Doctor Babylon picked up a bundle of paper, set it down on top of her desk, and flipped through it. It was a full copy of the translated journal left behind by Lerios Palerius.

"We're assuming the white crown is still in this world, right...? Have you tried using your magic to locate it?"

"I have, yeah. But there were no hits. I've seen the red, blue, black, and purple crowns at this point, and they all looked visually similar. Given their distinct similarities, I don't think the white crown would look much different." If my magic couldn't locate it despite all that, it either meant that the white crown's appearance had changed, or it was hidden behind a magical barrier.

It was possible that the master of the black and white crowns from five thousand years ago ended up sealing the white one somewhere for safety.

"Actually, something concerns me regarding the master mentioned in the diary. The compensation for Noir's abilities is regression of age, right? And it was used to wipe out the Phrase some five thousand years ago. I'm fairly sure that the cost for such a feat would be massive... Even if their master was extremely old, it wouldn't surprise me to find that using the ability turned him into a zygote and killed him immediately."

"So you're saying he must've died when he used Noir?"

"Not... exactly? There's a possibility of him belonging to a non-human race with a longer lifespan, after all... We can't draw any conclusions, but I did think of another possibility. I was wondering if the white crown's contractual price could be the opposite of the black crown's."

The opposite? If the black crown's price is age regression, then... age progression?

“My current hypothesis is that the white crown's price is physical aging. By using the white and black crowns in tandem, it's possible that their master could use their abilities with no cost whatsoever... That's just a theory, though.”

Opposite prices, huh? Growing old, and growing young... A plus and a minus... Or rather, a minus and a minus that form a plus in this case, I think.

Well, that was all hypothetical. There was no point in thinking about how it worked without solid proof.

“Well, let's put that aside for now... How's the Golem research coming?”

“Quite well, actually. Would you like to see a sample unit?” Doctor Babylon produced a strange sphere with robotic limbs and a head sprouting from it. It was a miniature model of what we were hoping to produce in the end.

Design-wise, it was pretty different from a Frame Gear and felt a little more coarse. It wasn't colored either, but that was probably just because it was a test model. There were various areas with clear parts incorporated into the design. On the real thing, they'd be made of Phrasium.

“The Golem's core is encased inside, then submerged in a gel that can transmit magic much more efficiently. After that, it amplifies the power output. Putting the details aside, the end product would be something just as strong as a Frame Gear, with the capabilities of boosting Golem skills.”

“Interesting...”

“We need to be careful when experimenting with the Crowns, though. We don't want to accidentally amplify the cost of their abilities.”

That was definitely true. Depending on the Golem, that could cause disastrous effects. Especially for Nia's Rouge or Norn's Noir.

“Could normal Golems be powered up, too?”

“Yep. We can use the sphere core as a base, then swap out parts to change the model. If we used Fenrir as a base, for example... it'd become animalistic, like this.”

As she spoke, Doctor Babylon popped off the limbs and head from the humanoid model and fitted new parts into the empty slots.

Before long, the once-humanoid robot was quadrupedal and vaguely resembled a wolf. It seemed like the customization of these new machines was much higher than that of the Frame Gear.

We'd be able to customize them to accommodate any kind of Golem... But stuff like Mr. Sancho's crab bus would probably be out of the question.

This would definitely give us the edge in the battle against the mutants. Even non-crown Golems would be able to hold their own against them if powered up in this way.

The Reverse World's boundary line was in way better condition than the tattered one in this world, so it was doubtful any seriously scary enemies would show up there... But it was still way better to be safe than sorry.

"So, how close are we to completing these?"

"Around sixty percent, I'd wager. We still need to make tweaks to the crown functionality, though. That'll take a while."

Hmm... I don't exactly want to force them to rush, but we need to keep up with our enemies. Guess the best I can do right now is wish them luck.

I left the research laboratory and headed for the rampart. I wanted to speak with the group over there.

"Yo, Touya. Been a little bit."

"We should eat katsudon for dinner tonight..."

"Lady Melle, we had that two days ago... My personal vote goes to ramen."

"Fish. We should have sashimi. With heaping bowls of rice..."

I sighed quietly as I looked at the four of them. They'd certainly made themselves at home... I didn't know whether to laugh or cry at how easily they'd gotten accustomed to living here.

"So, have you guys come to a conclusion?" I turned toward Ende and asked him the question, while glancing at the Phrase. The Sovereign Phrase, Melle,

was chomping on some cookies. Ney and Lycee were sitting opposite her, eating apple pie.

“Mm, not exactly. We’re still undecided as to what tonight’s dinner will be...”

“Not that, moron.”

Ende just shrugged in an over-exaggerated motion. I was a little bit irritated that their only worries seemed to be what they’d be eating for dinner.

“I don’t care, so long as I remain with Endymion.”

“I wish for Lady Melle to return to Phrasia. That is the consensus of my followers, as well.”

“...I can’t. I’m no longer your leader...”

Seemed like they were still at an impasse. They’d made no progress at all. Had they just sat around eating snacks? I was pretty irritated. Apparently the three Dominant Constructs, who were unfamiliar with food, found the experience quite novel. As a result, they were eating three square meals a day, and several snacks.

They didn’t take energy from calories like ordinary people, so it was entirely a pleasurable experience for them. It was just irritating because they asked for so much food every day. At first, they were eating even more than Yae. Every day. Each. We were going through roughly ten cow’s worth of steak every twenty-four hours. It wasn’t sustainable.

After a while, they stopped eating so much, but the three of them were still eating enough for ten.

As far as I was concerned, these guys were freeloaders. They were eating free meals on my dime, and I wanted to kick them out... But it would’ve been bad if the wicked god got ahold of them, so I had no real choice.

I could have chosen not to feed them, but that would’ve been cruel.

“Much happening out there, Touya?”

“Not really, no. More mutant attacks in the Reverse World, though.”

I shrugged and sat on the couch opposite Ende. The whole situation with the

mutants felt like a termite infestation. You might not see any clear signs of an issue, but one day the whole house could just come crashing down.

“Have all the Phrase been absorbed by the mutants now, Ende?”

“The ones that Ney and the others brought are, yeah. I’d say there are around hundreds of thousands of them now... Consumed ones, I mean.”

That’s... a hell of a lot. I also remember hearing that Lesser Constructs could replicate themselves under the right conditions. Hopefully the mutants don’t have a stronger version of that ability.

That meant I’d be getting no more Phrasium to use, though. I had a ton of it, but I needed to start being more conservative with it if the supply was finite.

Either way, it seemed like these guys were used to their lives in confinement. The Phrase had long lifespans, so they were probably used to being bored.

From what I’d heard, Melle had actually been borrowing books from Fam and reading them, though. Much like Elluka and Doctor Babylon, Melle could be considered a genius from her world. She had outstanding talent. She was the one who created the method that allowed the Phrase to cross between worlds in the first place. Looking at her hungrily chowing down snacks, I wouldn’t be able to tell that at a glance. Seemed like there was really a fine line between genius and idiocy.

“Say, Touya... Can’t you let me out a bit?”

“Moron, didn’t I tell you? If Melle or the others leave this protective **[Prison]**, the mutants will be able to locate them. Are you trying to bring chaos to Brunhild?”

“No, of course not. I get the risk. I’m asking if you can let me out, not them.”

Hm... I guess Ende isn’t likely to abandon Melle or anything. I can easily change the settings to allow him to freely pass through... But what does he want to do, exactly?

“I want to train... I guess. I have a little bit of pride in me as a man, Touya. If those twins come back at me, I want to be strong enough to defeat them.”

He was referring to the mutated duo that defeated him last time... It was

irritating that we had Dominant Constructs on Yula's side.

Hmm... His eyes seem pretty honest. Guess he's upset he lost.

I didn't really care if he wanted to go out and get stronger. It'd only be a benefit to us.

"That's the spirit, my boy!"

"Wh-What?!" Ende and I called out in confusion at the sudden, booming voice. A man appeared next to us in less than the blink of an eye. He looked to be around thirty. He had short hair and wore a white, sleeveless training costume that showed off his defined muscles. He had sharp, eagle-like eyes and thick bushy eyebrows. A bandana was wrapped around his head. There was no other way to describe him than... martial artist. He almost looked like a character from a fighting arcade game.

Given that he'd been able to breach this area meant he was no ordinary person.

"Wh-What... I-It's you?!"

"You know this guy, Ende?"

"Y-Yes, I do! Wh-When I got the divine blades, h-he appeared and beat the snot out of me!"

"Nice to see you again, my boy!"

The martial artist laughed out loud. His booming voice was almost overbearing.

Wait... The one who beat up Ende...?!

"Are you... the god of combat?"

"That I am, son! I've descended to this world in a human body! Why? I'm glad you asked! It's to make my boy Ende's dreams come true!"

Seven gods? This is all getting a bit much. We're at maximum god capacity already, thanks! What is this, some kind of lucky sevens deal? I don't want it!

"I'm here now, my boy! Leave it all to me! I'll etch the very meaning of battle into your body!"

Ende just stared blankly and pointed at himself in confusion, as if to ask whether the guy was actually talking to him or not.

God Almighty did mention something about him wanting to take on a new disciple... He'd probably been watching and waiting for a good moment to interject.

I felt bad for Ende, but it wasn't any of my business. The god of combat could do whatever he wanted with the guy. Ende wanted to get stronger, so it was perfect. He was going to be the disciple of this god, and that meant neither of them would bother me.

...It was a necessary sacrifice.



“It’s me, ya boy Mochizuki Takeru! I’m Touya’s uncle, so let’s get along, sports!”

The god of combat... Or rather, uncle Takeru, laughed boisterously as he greeted the others. They just stared at him in stunned silence. To be honest, he could’ve easily passed as my elder brother, but Karen and Moroha refused. They said they’d rather die or go home than have a brother as irritating as he was. And so, he became my uncle. In short, he was taking on the role of the god of agriculture’s younger brother.

“...He’s your uncle, Touya? So that means he’s... one of those, right?” Elze quietly whispered to me.

“Oh... Yeah... He is... He’s the god of combat. He covers fighting, basically... Unarmed combat, martial arts... That kinda thing.”

I saw the sparkles in Elze’s eyes and realized I should not have said any of that, but it was too late. It was far too late. Elze immediately charged up to uncle Takeru and greeted him.

“Oho... Those are some well-used gauntlets. You’re a battler like me, ain’tcha?”

“That’s right. I’m Elze, one of Touya’s fiancées. Can you teach me some new moves?”

“Fwahahahaaa! Amazing! Well, that makes you my niece! I’ll be training my disciple right after this, so you can sit in on our lesson!”

“Thank you!”

Augh... I guess I should’ve considered this. Yae and Hilde learned a lot from Moroha, but Elze fights in a totally different way, so it’s not like she learned all that much... It’s only obvious that a martial artist god would appeal to her from a training perspective. Well, Ende... good for you. You got yourself a sparring buddy.

“Feel free to train with him, just don’t overdo it.”

“I won’t. Thanks!”

Elze grinned as she bunched her hands into fists. She’d be fine, I was sure. Due to the fact that she was being influenced by my divinity like the others, I couldn’t imagine her getting hurt or anything.

“Alright, you two! First up is a special skill! It’s a special uppercut imbued with the power of a dragon! Who’s ready to sit under a waterfall?!”

“I am, I am!”

“U-Uh... I am, I guess...” Ende stared on, looking positively horrified. I wondered if he’d be alright, since he certainly didn’t look it.



Uncle Takeru put his hands on their shoulders, and they vanished into thin air. He'd probably warped them to some far-off waterfall. Even in a human body, he wasn't restrained by laws of logic.

"...Goodness me, Your Highness. I thought I'd gotten used to the sight, but your family is truly... Special." Prime Minister Kousaka stood there, shaking his head, obviously still reeling from the battle between Takeru and Moroha that he'd witnessed earlier.

Honestly, that duel was hard to describe. They clashed against each other like primal elemental forces. I was fairly sure that only I and the other gods could even catch their movements. They were going beyond the speed of sound. The match ended after Karina stepped in and notified the combatants that if they continued to fight they risked destroying the entire training field.

I couldn't understand how he deflected Moroha's sword attacks with just the cloth bindings on his hands... Sure they were dulled training swords, but... man, gods were scary.

"I wonder if she'll be okay..." Linze muttered quietly out of concern for her elder sister. Karen patted her on the shoulder with a smile.

"It'll be fine, you know? That guy might be a musclehead, but he knows about all the right care and consideration in training, you know? Elze will be fine."

"He's actually pretty sweet on chicks. On the flip-side... he's extra tough on dudes. If anything, I'm worried about the boy." Moroha butted in and finished Karen's explanation. The information she'd provided was a little unsettling, though.

...G-Good luck, Ende... Please come back breathing.



"I never expected you to come down to the mortal world... But I guess it's not the first time you've shown up, huh?" Mochizuki Karina, god of the hunt, sat in a bar with a rugged-looking man, casually chattering to him.

"I mean, I'm just here to get the stolen weapon back! I guess I'd be lying if I said I wasn't a little interested in the new guy, though..."

The god of combat, or rather... Mochizuki Takeru, grinned a bit as he swilled the mug of ale in his hand.

“Mmh... This stuff’s great! It’s been a long time since I’ve tried mortal booze, but I must say I like it far more than sacred wine!”

“Nyahaha! That’s the spirit, Takeru! I like it a bunch, too! Hic! Sacred wine’s good and all for offering, but thish kinda drink just can’t be beat! There’s more appeal in variety, and the mortal realm sure ash hell has a ton of that, hic!”

The girl muttering to the older-looking man was none other than Mochizuki Suika, the perpetually drunk god of alcohol. She was laying on the ground next to Karina and Takeru.

The melodic sound of strings came from nearby, as Mochizuki Sousuke played the lute. Karina often came to see him play, as he was her brother in this world. He would frequently play music in the tavern at night, and many people came just to hear his tunes.

As the music continued to play in the background, a man appeared with a large tray in his hands. The tray had come from the tavern’s kitchen and had an array of fresh dishes on it.

“Alright, s’done. Got a buncha heapins’ve cully rice, complete with my veggies! Oh, hey, uh... Takeru? Might be a little spicy fer your blood, but it should be good, aye?”

“Mm. Looks good to me.”

The god of agriculture, Mochizuki Kousuke, placed a bowl of veggie cully and rice down in front of Takeru.

Takeru took his spoon and then brought a scoop of the meal to his mouth. His eyes shot open in shock.

“Amazing! Holy crap! This is delicious... Man, it’s so spicy! But it’s delicious! This force, such power! Hot diggity damn that is good stuff!”

“Heh... Glad you like it.” Kousuke smiled softly as Takeru continued to wolf down the meal. The god of combat couldn’t afford to lose in a fight, even if that fight was against spice. He continued shoveling the food into his mouth as his

eyes watered.

Before long, his plate had been completely cleaned. He chugged down a fresh mug of ale and let out a thoroughly satisfied sigh.

“Whew! Food and booze, what more could a man ask for! Thanks, mortal realm!”

“Oh! You all got started without me, you know? You should’ve waited a little longer, you know?!”

“Ohh, looks good. Where’s my share?”

The last two members of the Brunhild pantheon walked into the bar. One was the cheery god of love, Mochizuki Karen. Following in her wake was Mochizuki Moroha, the god of swords.

There were seven of them in total. Seven gods, manifested in human form, eating and making merry.

“Let’s celebrate our union, then! Hic! Cheers!” Suika yelled out, prompting the others to clash their mugs together. Kousuke consulted the waitresses for additional snacks and drinks, while Moroha turned to Takeru.

“So... how are those two disciples of yours?”

“Mm... They’re pretty good! Ende has a lot of intuition going for him, while Elze has that kind of tenacity I can’t hate! Both of them taught me their own ways, and immediately took to the lessons I started imparting on them! I’m really looking forward to working with them... But aren’t we supposed to be supporting the newbie god? What’s up with that?”

“Ehh... I think by doing what we’re doing, we’re helping enough. Personally, I train Yae, Hilde, and the knight order. They end up adding to Touya’s power, so it’s good enough for me.”

“Mm... Guess that’s fine, then! God Almighty told me to help out as best I can, so I’ll keep on training those two!” Takeru said, grinning as he refilled his tankard once more.

“Just be careful. We’re primarily here to support Touya, so we can’t half-ass things all the time.”

“There’s no problem, you know?! Me and you, Moroha, we’re supporting him as his elder sisters, you know?!” Karen’s optimism overtook Moroha’s realism. For the most part, Karen was the vocal representative of the other gods, anyway. She often presided over his personal relationships and helped facilitate communication between people in Brunhild. In her own way, she was ensuring that things went smoothly for Touya as well.

“Plus, a lot of you guys just do as you please! Like you, Suika! All you do is drink, you know?!”

“H-Hey! It’s, hic, my job to be the cute little sister, right? Hic! I can drink all the time because I’m a mascot! I, hic, do emotionally supportive schtuff!”

“...Didn’t you vomit down the back of Touya’s neck? What’s emotionally supportive about that?”

“Ghh... How’d you find out about thaaat?” Suika grumbled to herself, poured some Eashenese sake, and drank some more. Her face was red, but booze wasn’t the only reason.

Even though she was the god of alcohol, she didn’t have the chance to drink all that often. She was making the most of her chance to drink freely. During that particular incident, she’d had more booze than she was comfortable with, and couldn’t hold back the sudden rush of puke. Given that she was the god of alcohol, it was a matter of personal shame that she couldn’t hold her liquor.

Kousuke suddenly spoke up, breaking the awkward air.

“Now, now... We’re all on standby, ain’t we? We just got a lotta free time right now, so it ain’t a big deal. No shame in relaxing now and then, right?”

As if responding to Kousuke’s comment, Sousuke began playing a more gentle, relaxing tune. It was a famous song that had been covered by various artists and helped set the mood for the situation at large.

Ultimately, it was up to Touya to actually face down the wicked god. The gods themselves were only here to support him. Even if they were taking human form, it would be no good if they defeated the wicked god on Touya’s behalf. Otherwise, he’d learn nothing. It’d be like a parent stepping in on a child’s feud, and beating up the bully themselves.

“If Touya loses to the wicked god, this world’ll get nixed by the god of destruction, right? I’d prefer it if we could avoid that outcome.”

“That’s why we’re helping him by training the people who matter to him. Plus, I wouldn’t underestimate him, in all honesty... He’s favored by God Almighty, too... I don’t think he’ll go down so easy...” Moroha seemed to have confidence in her surrogate brother.

“Mm... Gotta be careful not to let confidence turn into arrogance, though. I’m pretty impressed by his capabilities, though. I think the lad has some fine combat stuff going on.”

The god of combat nodded as he munched down on some red meat. From his perspective, Touya was pretty lucky to have the support he’d been given. The people he’d encountered in his journey so far were a blessing for the boy, and he was probably aware of it.

“Touya’s made a lot of enemies, but he’s made some excellent friends, you know? He’s even got the support of some excellent girls... I know that one, in particular, takes all his trouble in stride, you know?”

“Yumina? Yeah, she’s a good one. Helps that she can read people’s intentions, too... She’s one of the greatest companions he could’ve met.”

Moroha and Karen started talking amongst each other. There were people who had malicious intentions, who wanted to use Touya’s status for their own social gain. But Yumina’s mystic eye put a stop to them before they even got close.

Thanks to that, it was easy to tell that Touya was surrounded by good people. But it was still possible for people to change... In the meantime, though, Yumina put concerns of mistrust to rest.

The other eight fiancées were also capable in their own ways and could do things Touya wouldn’t possibly be able to achieve on his own. He was lucky to have them.

“So we don’t really have to help too much, do we? Seems he has the support of some great humans as it is.”

“Nope. A world of humans is best left to humans, in the end. We can jus’ keep

on bein' subtle with helpin' the lad..." Kousuke quickly followed up on Karina's postulation.

"Well then, let's just celebrate for now! Touya's gonna be fine, so let's take it easy and help him when he needs us!"

"Cheers to that!" The seven gods wished good fortune to the budding newbie they'd been called to help. The divine in mortal flesh, invigorated by their good evening together, pledged to support him in any way they could.

Interlude III: Right by Your Side

“Haaah!” Moroha jumped to the side and just barely avoided Jutaro’s wooden sword. It was a subtle motion, and she managed it at the last second, but the sidestep she made was pretty impressive.

Jutaro was undeterred, however, and came at her again with a blow from below. But even that was easily avoided.

She could read all of his movements. I wasn’t too surprised. She hadn’t triggered her Apotheosis, but her abilities were still far beyond human.

“Gh!”

Jutaro thrust his weapon toward Moroha’s throat, but she shifted to the side again. He found himself only striking thin air.

“Don’t neglect your legs.”

“Uwah?!”

A thud rang out as Moroha swept Jutaro’s legs. He was knocked off-balance, and quickly tried to readjust his posture. Moroha made her move once he was distracted by his own motions.

It happened in a flash. With speed invisible to the naked eye, Moroha brought her sword crashing into Jutaro’s stomach. He was blasted backward and collapsed. His wooden sword whooshed out of his hand.

“Was that... two strikes...? Or three...?”

“Mmm... I could barely see it, I could not.”

Hilde and Yae murmured to each other. It seemed like they were unable to comprehend the vast number of attacks that had just unfolded.

“Guhhh...!”

Jutaro stood himself up and charged toward Moroha once more, his posture looking different from before. *Wait... I’ve seen Yae do that before.*

“Kokonoe Secret Style: Flying Swallow Rend!”

The tip of his blade danced as he jumped forward, aiming a graceful strike at Moroha’s shoulder.

“You’re still too slow.”

Moroha simply shook her head and sidestepped the attack. She then used Jutaro’s own momentum against him, slamming her sword into the side of his neck.

“Hngh!” Jutaro fell to his knees in front of her, his wooden blade on the ground beside him.

...How scary. If that was a real fight, he’d have been decapitated.

“You’ve still got much to learn.”

“Jutaro-sama!”

As Moroha let her weapon rest, someone cried out and ran toward the defeated man. It was Ayane, the Kokonoe family servant. She’d come along for a visit with Jutaro.

Jutaro was completely beaten. He didn’t even have the strength to raise his head, but the shame-filled glance he aimed at Ayane before passing out stood out as strange to me.

“Geez... Didn’t you go a little hard on him?”

“He’s fine. I’m hardly gonna beat him within an inch of his life. He’ll open his eyes in no time.”

Moroha shrugged in response to my words. Beating a man unconscious still seemed pretty bad in my eyes, though.

I walked over and cast **[Cure Heal]** on Jutaro, along with **[Refresh]** for good measure.

“Dang it... Kohaku? Take Jutaro to the medical center.”

“As you wish.”

Kohaku transformed into her beast form, and I lifted the still-unconscious Jutaro on to her back. Ayane anxiously followed them both.

Moroha casually spoke to me as she watched them leave.

“He’s getting better, you know? He might even catch up to me one of these days. I can feel a pretty burning desire from him. It’s a strong will to get stronger. But he’s also kinda desperate...”

“He is impatient, he is... Mmm... I wonder if he is troubled, I do...” Yae mumbled and folded her arms. She was worried about her brother. Yae cared a lot for her family, so I wasn’t surprised.

Yae’s brother, Jutaro, was visiting us for the day. He had won the fighting tournament we’d put on a while ago. But then in the exhibition match afterward, he lost to Moroha.

Today, he’d come in an attempt to regain some of that lost honor. But he’d been defeated yet again. That was plain as day. The gulf between them was way too vast. Moroha was the god of swords, so it was kind of hard to even come close to her on her own turf. Though, to be honest, I think Jutaro was more interested in learning from her than just winning.

Still, I couldn’t help but feel bad. Ayane had come from Eashen with him, and she watched him get beat down pretty roughly... I could see the panic on her face, so I felt a little bad about letting Moroha go so far.

“I have never seen brother lose so badly, I have not. There are only a few people in Oedo stronger than my brother, there are.”

Heh... Well, I guess Jutaro is pretty tough by mortal standards. It’s not really fair to judge him against a literal god. Especially not one that can be such a no-good bully...

“Were you thinking something rude just now?”

“No! Not at all.”

Moroha was sharp as ever.

“...I will go and see how my brother is doing, I will.”

“Oh, I’ll come as well.”

I felt like even if he had something seriously wrong with him, Flora would be able to deal with it. I headed from the training grounds with Yae and walked

through the castle until we reached the medical center. Jutaro was on a bed in the corner of the chalk-white room, breathing slowly.

Flora was there, dressed in her usual nurse getup, and Ayane was sitting uneasily by his bedside. Kohaku was also there, in her tiny form. She was curled up on the bed next to him.

“Ahh, Master. He is fine, you see. He has just fainted, you see?”

“I see. That’s good to know.”

...Guess Moroha was right, then. Probably shouldn’t have doubted her.

“I am sorry that this has happened...”

“What do you mean? My brother has no restraint in matters like this, he does not. It was his own decision.”

Ayane bowed her head to Yae and apologized, but Yae simply shook her head. She was probably upset about inconveniencing everyone. But in the end, Yae’s family was my family, and I wouldn’t consider something like this a bother.

“My brother has been acting strangely today, he has... Has something happened, has it?”

Ayane reacted with silence, only stopping to glance nervously in Jutaro’s direction. It seemed like something had happened, but I certainly had no idea what. We left Jutaro behind and walked out to the courtyard garden outside the castle.

This area was considered Cesca’s domain, and she treated it with as much care as she did Babylon’s garden. It wasn’t exactly as teeming with life, but it was a comfortable and relaxing place to hang out. It honestly irritated me that such a stupid, perverted maid had such hydroponic talent. She’d even been personally praised for her horticulture by Uncle Kousuke. Given that he was the god of agriculture, that wasn’t a casual compliment. Then again, she’d probably been specifically engineered to tend to plants.

Yae and I sat with Ayane in the courtyard and asked her what was going on with Jutaro.

“Recently, Jutaro-sama has been lost in thought almost every day... When I

ask about it, he simply tells me everything is fine... I wonder if he has some kind of deep trouble that he cannot talk to me about..."

"My brother seems that troubled, he does? Hmm... Perhaps he is frustrated after hitting a roadblock in his pursuit of sword mastery..." Yae folded her arms together and tilted her head. If it was a problem with his swordplay, then obviously he wouldn't want to bother Ayane with it. But still, I wondered just what his issue was...

If he was troubled by his swordplay reaching its peak, then I hoped that his loss against Moroha wouldn't deepen that unease. I didn't exactly want him to lose faith in himself.

"U-Uhm, Your Highness? G-Grand Duke? I-It may be terribly impolite of me to ask, but could you ask Jutaro-sama about his troubles?! As I understand it, men have an easier time talking to men..."

"Me? I mean... I guess if it's just listening to him... I dunno if he'll want to talk, though."

To be honest, if he had issues with swordplay, I was hardly suited to giving him advice. I didn't exactly have much in the way of swordplay.

But... if he was going to be my brother-in-law... I figured it'd be good to hear him out if he had a problem.

I left the two of them behind in the courtyard and headed back to the doctor's office.

When I got back, the guy was awake in his bed. Flora was holding a smartphone over him, taking a few candid shots of his forehead. Or at least, that's what it looked like she was doing.

Flora's mass-produced smartphone had the added ability to look through things, much like an x-ray scan. It was a function granted by enchanting the device with my **[Long Sense]** spell and had great medical applications.

"There's no problem with him, you see. He's the picture of health!"

"I'm in your debt..."

He bowed to Flora and smiled, but his expression immediately shifted to a

pensive one.

I asked Flora to step aside for a bit and took a seat next to his bed. He looked a little discouraged, but that didn't seem to be the problem most prominently on his mind.

"Jutaro... I know you're not feeling well, but is there anything on your mind?" I decided to just ask him directly. For a while, he made a face like he didn't know what to say, but eventually, he just turned and started muttering.

"Uhm... Well... Ahh... C-Can I tell you a story about a friend?!"

"...Sure."

A story about a friend? I don't buy that for a second. Man... I asked you straight, and you're gonna beat around the bush?

"This friend of mine... is in love with a woman, you see... But the woman will soon have a formal marriage interview, and be married off elsewhere... S-So, you see..."

"Huh?!"

"Wh-What is it?"

"...Nothing. Please continue."

A formal marriage interview?! For real?! Wait... if the guy in this story is actually Jutaro, then... is the girl Ayane? Is that why you looked at her like that earlier... Wait, is Ayane getting married off?!

"The person this woman is set to marry is the successor of one of the richest clothing traders in Oedo. The family is quite enthusiastic to take her in and would like her to be married by the end of this year... And I, er... Ahem, my friend... is understandably upset, but he feels it is not his place to step in."

"W-W-Wait a second! How can he just give up like that?"

"It is a matter of social standing... The man who will marry her is the head of a household, and a rich merchant. My friend, however... is a lowly soldier. Even if he was in good standing with Iyehsu-sama, he is not of noble blood. It is clear as day that the woman would be happier if she married into the wealthy family."

Hmm... I guess I can understand the concerns here... It's true that the Kokonoe family is highly praised and respected in Oedo, and they even work directly with Ieyasu himself... but the family honor lies with Jutarō's father, not Jutarō.

Not to mention the fact that the position wasn't exactly fixed, even if they worked for Ieyasu, there was no guarantee his successor would keep them on. Jutarō could wait until his father passed, but there was no guarantee he'd come to head the family and the family would have the same level of importance by the time that came about. It wasn't like he could just change the house he served, either.

Well, technically he could. Jutarō won the Brunhild contest, and many mighty contenders from Eashen were in attendance. If he introduced himself to anyone that saw him, they'd probably consider taking him on... But that probably wasn't a real option either.

"So, for the happiness of the woman... he believes he should stay away from the situation. At least, that's what my friend says."

Yeah, I get it... You're thinking about her happiness because you don't want to ruin things for her. It was the same for me. When I decided to marry Yae and the others, I wanted to be sure that I could provide for them, and actually make them happy...

Suddenly, out of nowhere...

Shit!

"Love! Solutions! Decisions! Justice! Let's connect the red string of fate, you know?! Have no fear, Mochizuki Karen is heere!"

"Wh... Where did you come from?!"

"Ghh..."

Karen appeared, striking a ridiculously flashy pose. She was also winking. I hated it. She must've teleported in from somewhere else. I was a fool to think even the smallest whiff of a love story would go by unnoticed in her territory. I wondered just how many Brunhild locals had been subjected to her meddling.

"Where did you come from?"

“That’s a stupid question, you know? Wherever there are love troubles, there is Mochizuki Karen, you know?!”

Jutaro stared at Karen in a mixture of blank confusion and disbelief.

“U-Uhm...”

“You don’t need to say a thing, you know? Leave it all to me! Touya and Yae have been helped big-time by my incredible advice! It’s proven! Tried and tested!”

Hm...? Seems like that got his attention. She’s not exactly lying... She has been helpful here and there when it comes to my love life.

“...Well, if he must.”

“Hey, Touya! Don’t act like I’m forcing him into anything, you know?! Hmmp!” Karen grumbled loudly. Since she was the god of love, I always figured she’d be a little more professional... But she always came across like some kind of tacky gossip. I wasn’t entirely convinced she’d be able to help in this situation.

There had been cases where love didn’t bloom even after people consulted with her, after all. But Karen always said that failed romances were never failures, and you just need to learn from them to make the next love even stronger. Frankly, I didn’t see the point in resisting her any longer. She had her eyes set on the prize, so we just had to go along with it.

I didn’t exactly feel great about it, but consulting the god of love was worth a shot at least.

“So... what should we do here?”

“Love is a battle, you know?! First thing’s first, know thy enemy! Then, plan your attack!”

She’d caught me off-guard there. That was surprisingly decent advice. It was definitely true that you couldn’t do much without knowing anything about the other side. A little bit of early investigation would serve us well.

“So, Jutaro... what kind of person is the clothing merchant guy?”

“Oh... Well... I have not much interest in clothes, so I am unsure.”

Hm... Even if Ayane and that guy get married, I wouldn't want her to be with a person who was unpleasant or cruel.

I decided that we needed to figure out what kind of guy this merchant was.

Alright... For the sake of Jutaro, Ayane, and love! Let's get snooping!



“So? Did you find anything out?”

“Yes, we did.” Three girls were kneeling before me and Yae. They were my special ninjas, serving directly under Tsubaki. Sarutobi Homura, Kirigakure Shizuku, and Fuma Nagi.

It had been a few days since I'd given them their mission. I asked them to look into the young heir of the clothing merchant family. I wanted to know about his personality, his reputation, rumors about him, and who he was friends with.

Basically, I'd sent them to do some basic information gathering.

“To start with, his name is Surugaya Ichinose. He's twenty-six years old, and is the successor to the Surugaya Outlet.”

Shizuku began speaking first. *Twenty-six, huh? Jutaro is twenty-two, if I remember right... And Ayane is twenty. That's a little bit of an age gap, but it's not all that bad. Single men around that age are pretty common in Eashen, I think. Women usually get married before or around Ayane's age, though.*

“From what I uncovered in town, there are no bad rumors about him at all. Apparently he is the studious type and has a hard-working demeanor. He even avoids indulging in things like drinking and gambling.”

“And his appearance?”

“One moment.”

My smartphone suddenly vibrated, and Yae took out hers as well. We'd both received a message. The sender was Shizuku, and a picture was attached.

“Hm... He looks very polite, he does... A gentle, easygoing face, he has...”

Yae was right. The image showed a calm-looking young man. He had a soft, smiling face and wore a casual, well-made uniform. So this was Jutaro's rival...

“But even if he looks nice, maybe there’s something darker under the surface... Did you find anything like that?”

“Nooope... He’s a good guy through-and-throuuugh... He was pleasant even when he discovered Homuraa...”

“Wh— You idiot! They do not need to know about that!”

...He did what, now?

“I... I was in disguise and watching him from the top of a tree... But my eyelids were drooping, and... I regret to say that I fell asleep...”

“You fell from the top of the tree right next to him, Homuraa...”

“...Oh geez.”

What kind of ninja falls asleep on top of their target?

“Please forgive me...”

“Even though she was tootally suspicious, the guy just asked if she was okay and checked her for injurieees. He has to be a good persoon.”

Apparently Homura responded to his queries with a moment of concussed confusion. She just saluted at him and vanished into thin air, then he went about his day.

Ugh... This is irritating. Why is he nice? Aren’t the villains supposed to be irredeemable and gross? If he was an abuser or some kind of corrupt merchant, that’d be one thing, but...

“Oh, there was one thing that came up, though.”

“Mm?” Shizuku noticed Yae and I grumbling and quickly gave us a final piece of information.

“Apparently he is searching for a cloth made from Fire-Rat pelt. According to our intel, the person he’s been betrothed to desperately wants one.”

“A Fire-Rat?”

“It is a monster, natively known as the Fire-Rat in Eashen. Most adventurers know them as Burning Rats. They are typically found in the volcanic regions of Eashen... You can also find them in the desert regions of what was once

Sandora.”

Oh... Those things? Now I remember. It's a large rat with a flaming tail, and it employs the flames in combat. It was around the size of a large dog, if I recalled correctly.

Well... I only recalled seeing it in the guild's bestiary. I had never seen it in person.

But why would Ayane want that...?

“The pelt of a Burning Rat is pure white and completely resistant to fire. You can clean it perfectly by immersing it in flames. It's a really valuable material and isn't often found on the market. Burning Rats are difficult to hunt due to their dwindling population and relative strength.”

Plain white fur...? Does she want to incorporate it into a wedding dress, or something?

“So he wants to present it to her to get the marriage rolling?”

“Yes. He is sparing no expense in the matter, and is looking for any possible lead on the pelt.”

“Hmm... But if he gets it, then the wedding will be brought forward, it will... Why would Ayane want that, why would she?” Yae folded her arms together and sighed. I was equally confused.

Ayane was the daughter of a landowner who moved to Oedo in order to study under Yae's family... If she married, then she'd have to leave everyone she knew behind. Why would she be eager to get the marriage underway?

Fire-Rat cloth... Hm... Cloth... Fire-Rat... Why does that sound so familiar to me?

“Oh!”

Of course! I pulled out my smartphone to look it up, and the first page told me everything I needed to know.

The robe of the Fire-Rat was an integral part of the story of Princess Kaguya, from the Tale of the Bamboo Cutter! In the story, Princess Kaguya was approached by five princes who wished to marry her. She said she'd marry

them if they fulfilled her impossible tasks, involving finding treasures that couldn't be found.

The robe of the Fire-Rat was one of those impossible treasures. Perhaps asking for a Fire-Rat cloth was Ayane's indirect way of refusing the proposal.

"Yae... Do you know the story of Princess Kaguya?"

"Kaguya? I do not... Which country has a princess named Kaguya, Touya-dono?"

"Oh. What about you guys?"

I turned to the three ninjas, and they shook their heads. I was a little surprised, but reasonably I had no reason to be. It was a story from Earth, in the end. I needed to remember that I was only speaking and understanding the people around me thanks to the influence of God Almighty. It was entirely possible that me hearing such linguistic similarities was entirely coincidence based on my subjective understanding. Translation was a difficult art, after all.

But even so... it was possible that Ayane was rejecting the proposal with an impossible demand, just like Princess Kaguya did.

And in that case... Jutaro still had a chance!



"Let's get a Fire-Rat cloth."

"I don't really know where to find that..."

Jutaro was training at Oedo castle when I swung by to see him with Yae. He was studious as ever...

"It's one of the demands made by the young woman, the one your friend was pining after."

"Huh?! Ayan— Ahem... Th-The young woman, you say?"

"That's right. The girl you...r friend is in love with. I think she's issued such a difficult challenge as an excuse to refuse his proposal. She probably can't outright say no due to social obligations, but if she makes such an unreasonable demand with a straight face, then it would be a plausible way to reject him."

“An excuse to refuse him...?”

I saw a small sliver of happiness appear on Jutaro’s face, but we had no time to slack off. We had to actually put the work in.

“So why don’t we get the Fire-Rat cloth first? Beat the guy to the punch. If we did that, then the talks would be stretched out much longer and she might not even marry the other guy. Plus, your friend could give it to her and use it as a chance to profess his feelings.”

“Oh, but... isn’t it something that’s incredibly hard to find?”

“Brother... Touya-dono is capable of teleportation and searching magic, he is. We already know where to find one, we do. The rest is up to you, it is.”

Yae spoke to her apprehensive brother in a firm tone. She stared him straight in the eyes, the determined flames dancing along her expression. He finally relented beneath her gaze.

“Very well, then. Let us go.”

Alright, about time! Yae and I looked at each other with a grin.

“Oh... W-Well, I’ll do it for the sake of my friend! Yes, my dear friend! I’ll help him out, this time! Aha...”

...Both Yae and my own expressions soured a little, and we let out a pair of sighs... Still, we shook our heads and carried onward, regardless.

“Alright! Let’s get a Fire-Rat cloth for the sake of Jutaro and Ayane. Then, Jutaro can finally tell her how he feels!”

“Yeah! Wait... What?!”

“Heh, too late. You already agreed.”

“...You are a terrible liar, you are... Please learn to weave stories better.”

Yae simply shrugged her shoulders in resignation. Frankly, I felt the exact same way. The two of them were so stupidly honest by nature that you could tell they were related.

“N-No! Of course not! I am in no position to tell Ayane who to marry!”

“...C’mon, cut the nonsense already. Like Yae said, you’re no good at lying.

We're either doing this, or we're not. Personally, I think if you give up here, you'll only come to regret it later."

Jutaro went quiet for a while, but eventually, he spoke up with nervous conviction.

"...I will do it, then. I do not wish for any regrets."

He turned to us with serious eyes. I was just glad he finally admitted he was talking about himself.

"Touya-dono, open us a **[Gate]**. We will head toward this Burning Rat, we will."

"No problem." I cast my spell, and a portal of light opened up. We passed through the other side into a rocky, burning environment. We were in a mountainous area connected to the Rabbi Desert, known as the Tecracala Gorge.

The ground itself was a reddish-brown in this place, kind of like the Grand Canyon back on Earth. I could only really see dust and rocks, with the odd plant here or there. I looked around more closely and saw something white. It was an animal skeleton. I wondered if it was a skeleton that belonged to a Burning Rat... Whatever it was, it was rare. That meant it was mine for the taking.

"Now I just gotta look up the precise locations..." I searched for Burning Rats with my smartphone. I decided to add in a few parameters to the search. I wanted the largest possible one.

"Got it. It's not too far, so let's walk over."

Yae and Jutaro were fairly hardened fighters, so they'd be fine in a place like this. We began walking toward the place that was outlined on the map. We clambered over rocks and continued over the rough terrain. I thought just because the target was close in terms of distance, it'd be easy... but I was wrong.

I suggested using **[Fly]**, but Yae immediately vetoed that suggestion. What a pain...

"It's supposed to be around here..."

“I do not see it, I do not...”

I looked around the place, but couldn't see much. There were massive boulders around the place, so it was hard to see.

“Hm?”

“What's up?”

Jutaro suddenly crouched down and brought his hand to the sword hilt. We followed suit.

“...The air is warmer around there. Is the Burning Rat around, perhaps?”

Jutaro pointed toward one of the massive boulders. He said it was warmer... But frankly, the whole place was warm to me. I checked the map, and it actually did correlate with Jutaro's instincts.

The Burning Rat's tail was always aflame, so it would make sense for the air to be hotter where it is. That seemed pretty obvious in retrospect. Just as I thought that to myself, something leaped out in front of us.

From the shadow of a massive boulder came an equally massive white rodent. It was a Burning Rat, that much was for sure, but the size was not at all what I expected. The guild's bestiary had me assuming it'd be around the size of a dog. However, this Burning Rat was clearly the size of a large elephant. Clearly someone was measuring wrong when he recorded information about the species!

“Kyikyikyaaaaah!” The Burning Rat's entire body suddenly shuddered and lit up with flames. It had immediately designated us as hostile.

The Burning Rat shook its body, sending several flaming projectiles into the air.

“Look out!”

Yae and Jutaro spread out on my command. The projectiles landed exactly where we were, exploding on contact with the ground.

“Touya-dono! Is this the Burning Rat, is it?!”

“The size is off, but yeah, I think so! This one might be a Behemoth, I dunno!”

If this thing was left alive a few more years, it'd probably end up being terrifyingly huge. We'd end up needing a Frame Gear to take care of it.

To be honest, this thing was so large that the young merchant probably couldn't have used his vast fortune to take care of it. In that regard, we were pretty lucky.

"Alright, guess I'll use my Water magic to subdue it, and then..."

"Excuse me, Grand Duke... Could you leave it to me?"

"Huh?"

I shrugged, then watched as Jutaro charged toward the Burning Rat. This monster was definitely at least on the level of a silver adventurer. It wouldn't be an easy victory...

I was about to warn him, but I found Yae tugging on my sleeve. *...Alright, I get it. It's something he wants to do for Ayane. I'll let him tough it out alone.*

"Alright, fine! Go fight it alone! But if you get in serious trouble, I'm stepping in!"

"Very well! Thank you! I feel as though if I can take down this creature, I may be able to pass the barrier that I have reached in my training!"

Jutaro earnestly pointed his blade at the Burning Rat. To be honest, I still felt uneasy about his chances. Jutaro, like most people in Eashen, had no magical aptitude at all. All he had to defend himself was his swordplay.

In other words, he had no magical means to supplement his physical skills. He had nothing but his own finesse to face off against the huge Burning Rat. Just watching the scene unfold had me a little nervous.

I thought of at least supporting him with magic, but Yae stopped me.

"...The opponent may be a monster, it may... But my brother considers this a true duel, he does. That is why you cannot use any of your magic to help him, you cannot. This must be a fair fight."

I understood what she was saying. My magic would tip the scales way too much. But still, if it looked like he was about to die, I'd definitely intervene. I wasn't going to entertain any samurai honor nonsense at that point.

“Kyikyaaaah!”

“Hmph!” Jutaro just barely avoided the monster and its burning claws. He swerved his body to the right and retaliated by slashing its right foreleg.

“Kyh?!”

It was a shallow wound. That certainly could’ve gone better. But he couldn’t get too close, since the flames billowing from its body were too intense.

Eashenese samurai used their swords to make clean, precise cuts. He was at a disadvantage against such a large monster, especially one with active area denial. Even if he managed to get a good slash in on the rat, it wasn’t likely he’d do enough to critically wound it. He also risked dulling the blade if it happened too many times.

Jutaro understood that, surely.

The fight raged on between the two of them, with Jutaro taking a defensive position. The Burning Rat spewed forth more fireballs from its fur, making Jutaro stumble here and there.

“Kyiiiiiaaah!”

“Ngh?!”

The beast suddenly opened its mouth, stood on its hind legs, and let loose a billowing torrent of fire. *It can breathe fire like a Dragon?!*

Jutaro responded to the attack by leaping to the left and hiding behind a boulder. He was definitely getting worn out. It was hot enough just passively, and the added heat from the monster was clearly doing little for his fatigue. If he got tired, then his speed and strength would fall as well. He needed to pull out.

“Yae.”

“Not yet, Touya-dono. My brother has not given up, he has not. I look forward to seeing how this goes, I do. He is reaching for his victory...”

Yae was staring at the fight, clearly transfixed. She believed in him. She believed that her brother could win, no matter what.

...And so did I. Even if I was worried, I wanted to share in Yae's conviction. Jutaro could win this. He had to do it for Ayane.

"Kiyaaaaah!"

The Burning Rat prepared another breath attack. Jutaro, seeing an opportunity, charged out at full pelt. I had no idea what the madman was doing. He dashed across the ground faster than the flames could move and kicked off a nearby rock. The motion spring boarded him into the air.

"Kokonoe Secret Style: Hornet Jabber!" Jutaro yelled out, and he dug his blade into the monster's throat. He kept the sword running until he'd gutted the Burning Rat from neck to belly.

Were you aiming there this whole time?!

"Kyiiiih!"

The Burning Rat squealed as blood pooled from its mouth. It fell over, dead. Then, its flames slowly began to fade out, until there weren't any left on its body at all. All that remained was an oversized rodent.

He'd won.

"Ngh... Hhh... Gh..." Jutaro fell to his knees, breathing heavily. He looked positively exhausted.

"Brother!"

"...Do not worry. I am okay. I have done as I intended..."

Jutaro smiled at his sister, but he certainly didn't look alright. I wondered if he just wanted to look cool in front of Yae.

I quickly cast **[Refresh]** and **[Mega Heal]** on the poor guy. His injuries were healed, and he caught his breath again. I tossed the Burning Rat carcass into **[Storage]**. The people at the guild would be able to skin it and take it apart much better than I could.

Once we had the material, we'd be able to sell the rest of it. Though, I heard that Burning Rat meat wasn't all that tasty, so it probably wouldn't fetch a high market price. That was a shame, but it was just one of those things.

“Now, all you have to do is tell Ayane your feelings.”

“Ahaha... Somehow, that feels more formidable a task than slaying this rat...”

Jutaro’s face went red, and I didn’t think it was just from the heat. I could certainly understand his feelings in that regard... Confessing was scary.

But either way, there was no escaping it. Not if you wanted the person you love right by your side, anyway.



“One Fire-Rat cloth, as ordered.”

“Ohh! This is splendid, it is!”

A few days later, we were at Fashion King Zanac’s Brunhild branch, picking up the finished product we’d commissioned. Zanac had worked wonders with the material, creating a beautiful white cloth. It looked pristine.

The Fire-Rat cloth could be cleansed of dirt in flame due to the fact that it had incredible resistance and insulation against fire. In terms of adventuring equipment, it was top-notch. The processing made it shrink a bit, but that wasn’t an issue given how big the creature was.

After Zanac handed it over, I felt the softness in my hands... It was hard not to want to run my hands all over it. *Ohh... This is nice... This is really nice...*

I resisted the sudden, strong urge to rub it up against my face. I didn’t want to smother myself in Ayane’s gift, after all.

“Are you fine with me keeping the rest of it?”

“Sure. That should cover the costs of making it.”

“Thank you so much! Accessories we make with its pelt should sell well...”

Even if there was only a small portion of the pelt left, that was relative. The monster itself was massive, so I was sure that Zanac would be able to create earmuffs or cloth pouches from the rest. He’d definitely make a lot of cash from that.

It was pretty costly to process the Burning Rat’s pelt because it was a material that could only be suitably handled by the best of the best. I said I’d pay for it,

but Jutaro refused. And that was when Zanak came in with a compromise. He said he'd process and stitch it all together for us, in exchange for the rest of the pelt. Thank goodness for his shrewd business sense...

"Brother, you must take this to Ayane, you must. There is no time to waste, there is not!"

"R-Right!"

Jutaro took the Fire-Rat cloth, which had been neatly placed into a paper bag, thanked Zanak, and ran out of the store. I opened up a **[Gate]** to the Kokonoe Dojo back in Oedo, and we stepped through.

Yae walked to her house and went to find Ayane. There were only a few students in the dojo, but Yae and Jutaro's mother, Nanae, was back at the house. Confessing while she was there would be awkward, which was why we wanted to call Ayane out.

Jutaro started fidgeting and breathing heavily.

"Guuuh..."

"Just relax, man. Talk to her like you usually would."

"Wh-What?! How can I act casually at a time like this?! T-Tell me, Grand Duke! How do you do it? H-How did you handle Yae?"

Huh? Me and Yae? Well, uh...

"...There was a duel involved."

"That does not help at all!"

Yeah... My case was definitely an outlier. I think in Jutaro's case, he's just gotta tell her straight.

Yae suddenly came charging back toward the dojo alone, prompting the already panicky Jutaro to get even more concerned.

"Th-This is bad, it is! Ayane was called to the storefront of the man she is to be betrothed to, she was! She is headed there now, she is!"

"Wh—?!"

The moment he heard that, Jutaro went charging out the door. He was fast!

We followed after him, running through the streets at full pelt, turning corner after corner. After what felt like five minutes of full running, we came out in the middle of a bustling city street.

Jutaro continued running down the street until he saw the person he was looking for.

“Ayane!”

“Hm...? Oh... Jutaro-sama? And... Yae-sama? A-And the grand duke?! Wh-What is going on?” Ayane just stared at us in confusion, clutching a bag in her hands.

Jutaro had charged all this way to see her so he was completely out of breath, and people in the surrounding area were looking at us suspiciously. Having him confess like this was just unfair.

“Sorry, I’m gonna move us someplace better.”

“Huh?”

I opened up a **[Gate]** beneath us, moving only us four to another place. It was a quiet, forested area outside Oedo. It was the place I’d first landed in when I came to Eashen.

We stepped out into a forest with a large camphor tree, under which there was a torii arch with a hokora shrine, protected by two lion-dog statues.

“E-Eh? H-Huh? This is... the town’s shrine grove?”

“A-Ayane! There’s something I want to tell you!”

“Y-Yes?!”

Jutaro’s sudden proclamation startled all of us, but it also made Ayane drop the bag she was holding. And that bag spilled open, revealing a soft-looking, white material...

“Oh no! It got dirty! Oh wait, that is fine...”

“A-Ayane... Wh-What is that...?”

“Oh, this? It is the cloth of a Fire-Rat... They say you can clean anything made of Fire-Rat fur if you throw it into a fire... A-Are you okay?”

Jutaro's face was as pale as the cloth. *Oof. Sorry, man...*

"Ayane. Did you receive that as a gift from the man who wishes to marry into your family, did you?"

"Huh? Yae-dono? How did you know that? Y-Yes, you are correct. Though, I honestly did not expect him to find it... I was quite surprised."

Ayane laughed softly, which made Jutaro's expression shift to one of misery. *Were we too late...? Why's she looking so happy, anyway? If it's a reluctant marriage, then shouldn't she be looking a little more disappointed? Although... I guess we never bothered looking into Ayane's feelings, did we?*

"My sister will be delighted when she sees it. I must get this to her right away."

"...What now?"

HOLD UP. Get this to who? Your sister? Why would you need to... Don't tell me...

"Uhm... Ayane? By any chance, is your sister marrying some good-looking guy who's the successor to a clothing merchant household?"

"Yes, she is! Did you hear about it?"

"Whaaaaaat?!"

Ayane's eyes widened as the three of us yelled out in exasperation. *What the hell?! That's not the story I was told at all! Jutaro, you idiot!*

"Jutaro! What's the big deal here?!"

"Oh, I... I heard about it from my colleagues in the bar!" *It was just hearsay?! You dumbass! They clearly got Ayane confused with her sister! Are you kidding me right now?!*

"So this was all a big misunderstanding, it was... This feels like a bad joke, it does."

I exhaled and pinched the bridge of my nose. So did Yae. I could understand her feelings. Even though we'd struggled so much, we didn't even need to. *What was that one Aesop's fable about great efforts yielding little? The*

mountain had labored and brought forth a mouse? Yeah, that's definitely appropriate for this situation! Except the mouse was a goddamn rat, and it was mountain-sized!

"Um... Is everything okay?" Ayane looked over at us with concern on her face. Things were definitely not okay.

I just shook my head. However, Jutaro stepped forward and approached Ayane once more.

"Ayane, please look here." Jutaro reached into his paper bag and pulled out the Fire-Rat cloth. It was obvious that it was bigger and far higher in quality than the one Ayane had.

"H-Huh? Jutaro-dono?"

"...I got this for you. For the same reason the young merchant got one for your sister..."

"What...?" Ayane gazed from the cloth to Jutaro with a stunned look on her face.

"That... Well, if it's okay with you... I'd like you to stay... Stay by my side, always."

"Jutaro-sama... I, well..."

"I-I want you to be my wife, Ayane. It may not be as lavish as the life of a merchant's wife, but it would be one filled with love."

He reached out and grabbed her hands, locking their fingers in an embrace beneath the soft cloth.

A gentle breeze blew through the forest. It felt as though time itself had stopped.

Yae and I held our breath as we watched Ayane and Jutaro stare into each other's eyes.

...How much time has passed, exactly? Couple seconds, maybe? Three? Four? Feels longer.



Ayane's hands crept forward until they took the cloth from Jutaro. Then, she held it against her chest and spoke her answer.

"Yes... If you would accept someone like me... I want to be by your side...!"
Ayane looked up at him with teary eyes.

"Ayane!"

The moment he heard her words, he reached out and embraced her tightly. How very bold of him.

"Jutaro-sama!"

Ayane hugged him tightly back, wiping her tears against his chest. The couple smiled and sniffled as they did nothing but hold each other for a while.

Heh... They're trapped in their own little world. However, there was a sudden interruption.

"Hmph! I am your sister, I am... Do you not feel a little embarrassed to be flaunting your affections so brazenly in front of me, do you not?"

"Ah, no... Yae, I just..."

"Y-Yae-sama?! I... I did not mean to put on a public display!"

The two of them were completely red in the face, and they backed off from each other a little.

C'mon, now. It was your brother's confession. It's not that big of a deal. What's with that reaction?

I shrugged and hoped that the couple would find further happiness.

"Congratulations are in order, they are. Ayane... Or should that be elder sister now, should it?"

"Fufu... Do not be hasty, though... We have not yet received the blessing of Jubei-sama or Nanae-sama."

Ayane smiled and wiped the happy tears from her eyes. I hadn't thought about that. Her being the daughter-in-law of Jubei would also make her my sister-in-law.

“Oh, you’re right! I need to tell father and mother! Touya-dono, could you make us a **[Gate]** now?”

“Sure thing.”

I grinned slightly and warped us off to the Kokonoe household.



The house was in an uproar due to the sudden news. When Jutaro told his parents about his engagement, Nanae responded by throwing her arms around Ayane and welcoming her to the family. Jubei, on the other hand, just told his son off for taking so long in getting around to confessing.

He might’ve been yelling, but anyone could see in his eyes that he was happy and proud. I was glad it went over well.

After that, Jubei called in his students from the dojo and started a round of drinking. Apparently some of the students had crushes on Ayane as well, but they’d been beaten to the punch by Jutaro in the end. Regardless, everyone started drinking sake and having a good time.

I participated in the feast by bringing some food and drinks from **[Storage]**, but I neglected to drink any alcohol.

“Yeah, I’ll be back later. Yep. Thanks, everyone.” Since I was having dinner in Eashen, I made sure to call Lu and tell her not to worry about cooking for me and Yae.

I’d stepped out into the garden of the Kokonoe household, which was separate enough from the dojo that the loud partying sounds were distant. I looked up at the full moon and enjoyed the breeze.

“Here you are, you are.”

“Oh, Yae. You aren’t with Jutaro?”

Yae walked out from the nearby corridor and came out to stand by me.

“He is still back at the dojo, he is. He is very happy right now. He laughed so much he nearly fell over.”

Frankly, I couldn’t blame him for letting loose. Jutaro was normally such a

serious guy, and he definitely wasn't a moron. He was just happy that things were going his way.

Apparently their marriage had been set for one or two years from now. They were waiting for my marriage to Yae, so my status as grand duke of Brunhild would have greater bearing on Jutaro's social position. He'd be brother-in-law to a world leader, after all.

They didn't seem to mind at all. Their feelings were in the right place, so they were as good as any husband and wife already.

"Ayane was clinging to the arm of my brother all night, she was. It is already as if they are married, it is."

"They're a good couple. I'm happy for them."

"...If I must be honest, I am happy. However, I also feel a little bit lonely about it, I do. My brother will be building a new family with Ayane, he will. There is no room for me in that family, there is not. I know it is stupid... but part of me feels as if I have lost my brother, it does."

Yae let out a little laugh. She clearly loved her brother very deeply. I didn't have any brothers, but I could still see where she was coming from.

I moved closer to Yae and took her hand in mine.

"Even if your brother gets married, there'll always be room for you. Family isn't broken so easily, Yae. Even if his position changes slightly, he will always be your brother."

"...You are right, you are... My brother can have his family, but I am his family as well, I am. My brother will always be my brother, and I will always be his sister, I will. Thank you, Touya-dono."

Yae smiled beneath the pale moonlight. She looked beautiful. We stared at each other for a few magical moments and brought our faces closer together...

"Ooh! Grand Duke! I was looking for you!"

The two of us were startled by the sudden voice and jumped away from one another. It was Jutaro. He came running down the hallway toward the two of us.

Wow. His body is totally bruised... That's... Yikes.

Yae, who was completely red in the face, turned to her brother with a pout.

“B-B-Brother! You must learn to read the atmosphere, you must!”

The accused party turned toward her and frowned.

“I do not know what you mean... Ahaha... Reading the atmosphere? Is that not more of a feminine concern? That sounds like something Ayane would say. Usually, you only care about the blade.”

“I-It is none of your business, it is not! What about you, hm?! You are so dull-headed that I wonder if Ayane even knows about your feelings, I wonder!”

“Huh?! What do you mean by that?!”

I looked at the bickering siblings and smiled.

Even though they were squabbling, I could feel the love they shared. After all, they got along closely enough to squabble like this.

I closed my eyes and heaved a satisfied sigh. I was blessed to have such wonderful people in my family.

Afterword

Hello again, I hope you've all enjoyed this volume of In Another World With My Smartphone.

It's sort of like a collection of shorter stories about forging bonds with new people. Touya's had his horizons broadened, literally, so he now has more opportunities to interact with even more people. And, of course, the opportunity for danger has increased as well.

Norn, the master of the black crown, made her debut in this volume. But of course, she has the same name as Norn from Brunhild's knight order.

To be honest, I originally chose Norn for the black crown contractor... but then I ended up using it prematurely.

In the webnovel version, the Norn from Brunhild was renamed Norue, but I just decided to keep her name the same for the light novel release.

I considered changing the crown contractor's name to something else during the publication, but I just couldn't bring myself to do it. In the end, that's her name. I don't want to take that from her. And that's also why the maid is still called Elfrau.

I had a feeling I would regret changing names on a dime.

Some of the heroines have similar names, too... Like Sue and Lu. I wonder why I did that... Then again, they're just nicknames. Sue is actually Sushie, and Lu is actually Lucia. I guess my shorthand names aren't very imaginative... Oh well, it's not really a big deal.

This volume was hard, since a lot of the writing was original content. You got three whole interludes that didn't exist in the web novel. There was a lot of different schedules involved, and so on... Not to mention the fact that in Japan, the next volume comes with a Drama CD. It was my first time writing a script, so that was exciting. It was honestly a little hard to write something that was entirely dialogue...

Thankfully, we got the same voice actors they used in the anime, too. I wasn't able to attend the recording myself, but I heard it was a lot of fun.

I did receive a phone call from the guy organizing the recording on the day it happened... But I was sleeping like a log. Whoops! Why was my smartphone on silent? I don't remember setting it to that!

Since the Drama CD could only involve characters from the anime, Sakura, Lu, and Hilde weren't allowed.

...But if we get a second season, I'd like to write one for them. I think a Drama CD about a hero and all nine heroines could be a lot of fun.

Anyway, the Drama CD comes with the Japanese special edition of volume 16. I hope people enjoy it. The special edition even has a special cover illustration by Eiji Usatsuka. I love it.

Anyway, time to give my regularly scheduled thanks.

Thanks as ever, Eiji Usatsuka, for your amazing illustrations. I'm looking forward to seeing the special edition cover in stores, and the regular cover as well!

Thanks again to Tomofumi Ogasawara for the mecha designs. You've designed multiple crown Gollems at this point, and they're just so charming. Thanks again for working so hard.

As always, K, and the other members of Hobby Japan's editorial staff... Thank you so much!

And, of course, thanks to everyone who has continued to read my work so far, including those who are following the webnovel version.

Patora Fuyuhara

Bonus Short Story

The Crown-wielder Turned Adventurer

“I’d like to register as an adventurer.”

“Hm?”

Misha, the catwoman receptionist of Brunhild’s adventurer’s guild, found her ears twitching towards the sudden voice from in front of the counter. Funnily enough, however... she couldn’t see anyone. At least not until she peered down, and noticed a small girl standing there.

“I’d like to register as an adventurer!”

“Huh?”

The voice belonged to what seemed to be a five or six-year-old girl. She was standing next to a small knightly-looking creature that stood about the same height as her. It was a girl and a Golem. The girl was named Norn, and her Golem was the Crown, Chronos Noir.

“Uhm... H-How old are you?”

Strictly speaking, the guild had no formal restriction on the age you had to be to apply to join. Hypothetically even a baby could sign up if they paid the fee. But as a general unspoken rule, most receptionists barred entry for anyone who looked under twelve. Misha herself clearly saw this child as entering potential danger, and was trying to ward her off.

“I’ll have you know I’m fifteen years old.”

“...Are you?”

The girl folded her arms and began to grumble. Misha wasn’t quite convinced by her words. Meanwhile, a bearded patron of the guild stumbled over with a grin on his face.

“Gahaha! Why don’t you go home to mommy and help with her chores?”

Leave adventuring to people who can handle it, kiddo.”

In a flash, the little service bell atop the counter was swiped by the girl and launched into the man’s face. He didn’t take that especially well.

“Y-You little... What the hell was that?!”

“I could ask the same of you, asshole!”

“Shut it! Don’t go takin’ us adventurers lightly!”

“Gah...”

A couple angry-looking guys stumbled up from their chairs. They seemed to be companions of the man who’d been struck in the face. Among adventurers, there were those eager to prove themselves, and some of them would even go so far as to challenge children.

“You little shit! Get outta here!”

One of the men violently lumbered over to Norn, intent on grabbing her.

“Ghh... Noir, suppress these morons!”

“...Affirmative.”

The Black Golem let out an electronic-sounding sigh as Norn drew a magic gun from her waist. This weapon, known as a spellcaster, could launch bolts of lightning at enemies with the pull of a trigger. That’s exactly what she did to the man chasing her. He fell to the ground, lightly toasted. Noir then ran towards the remaining ruffians and punched each of them in the belly, knocking them to the ground easily.

“Wh-What the heck...? You’re a crazy powerful kid...”

Misha looked on in confusion. The men that had just been so easily dispatched by this child were all blue-ranked adventurers: they were pretty experienced.

“Hm... You flatter me.”

Norn grinned, holstering her spellcaster before patting her hands together.

“My, my... What’s this?” A voice rang out.

“G-Guildmaster?”

Much to Misha’s surprise, Guildmaster Relisha had appeared in the room. The gorgeous elf was clearly curious about the little girl and her companion, given the way her eyes scanned the duo.

“Are you the boss here?” barked the small girl.

“That I am. What do you want?”

“I came to register as an adventurer. Can you help? I know the Grand Duke personally.”

Norn’s words caused Relisha to grin and raise an eyebrow. She turned to the receptionist.

“Misha, get her registered, would you?”

“E-Eh?! I-Is that okay to do...?”

“You saw how she and her little friend pushed around some blue-ranks, right? This is fine.”

Relisha grinned again, and Norn returned the expression with a fearless glare.

“Glad you’re reasonable. Now, what’s the best kind of job to get a lot of money, fast?”

“If it’s money you want, then you should delve into the dungeon islands we’ve set up. We’ll buy anything you find in there at a reasonable price.”

“Alright, then. After I finish registering, point me in the right direction.”

“N-No problem! Uhm... Here! Fill in this, and... This...”

Misha started showing Norn the forms to fill out, but there was a problem. Norn was from another world, and didn’t speak the common language of the world she was in. In the end, Misha had to fill it all out for her.

From the next day onwards, an absurd amount of raw materials started being brought into the adventurer’s guild on a daily basis.

Bonus Column

Merry Christmas & A Happy New Year

Merry Christmas!! Probably? It might well be Christmas when you're reading this, but I can't be sure. At the very least, in Japan, by the time this volume releases things should be kicking into the festive mood. Right now, at the time of writing, there isn't any snow or anything, though. Frankly I prefer the cold to the heat... So I'm waiting quite eagerly for Christmas.

Hm... Christmas, though... I used to work in a bakery, just as a part-timer. We always got busy around the holiday season. I obviously wasn't the one doing any of the baking, but it was still tough for me too! Christmas turned that little bakery into a warzone... Do you know how many pots I had to scrub? Over, and over again?

I also worked wholesale once, and toy sales just skyrocketed around Christmas, even as soon as November. We sent out crate after crate to stores all over the place, but the orders just kept coming in... Another fierce battle, I'll have you know.

I always worked part-time jobs around the holidays, and my actual Christmases always ended up being a bit understated and lonely... I'm a stay-at-home kinda guy. Sendai has this yearly event called the Pageant of Starlight. On December 12th, they light up the whole city in beautiful sparkling lights. I've never actually been to the switch-on event... I always just sit at home watching it on TV, remarking about how pretty it is. Unfortunately, much like the Tanabata Festival, I'm too much of a shut-in to go out to events like that...

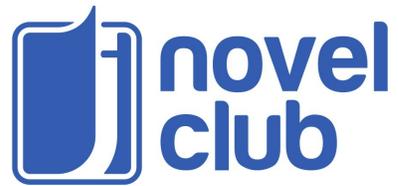
Time goes by fast, though... There's only about a week between the end of Christmas, and the beginning of New Years. At the beginning of this year I had my fortune read, and the reading said I'd have great luck. Looking back on everything that happened, I'd say that was pretty accurate. Well... There was that time I got hospitalized, which wasn't so good... There was also this other incident where I came down with a serious sickness and my friend had to take me to the emergency clinic. Turns out I had the influenza virus, which I was not vaccinated against. Oops.

I'm not exactly a superstitious man, I don't put a lot of stock into having my

fortune read, but I do see patterns sometimes... I suppose that's how they're made, though. Either way, I do enjoy it... I remember on that day I also bought a keychain at the shrine, and told myself that I'd start collecting keychains... But it didn't take me long to give up,ahaha...

That first shrine visit of the year was still fun, though. I'd like to go again next year. I'd offer up a prayer to God, but maybe he'll just reprimand me for not sticking to my resolutions.

Regardless, if it's the season where you are... Merry Christmas & A Happy New Year! Let's keep on enjoying In Another World With My Smartphone far into the future!



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In Another World With My Smartphone: Volume 15

by Patora Fuyuhara

Translated by Andrew Hodgson Edited by DxS

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Ebook edition 1.0: June 2019