

Yusura Kankitsu

Illustrator
Ruria Miyuki

vol. 2

Reincarnated Mage with Inferior Eyes

Breezing through the Future as an Oppressed Ex-Hero



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Reincarnated Mage with Inferior Eyes: Breezing through the Future as an Oppressed Ex-Hero Volume 2 [Complete]

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Prologue

Setting Out

It was now a day prior to the commencement ceremony for Arthlia Academy of Magecraft, and I was currently sitting in a chair, staring at the scenery outside through a window.

“Master Abel, have you gotten your things together?” a voice suddenly called out from behind me.

The name of the slim, silver-haired beauty with a knockout body who had spoken to me was Lilith. Two hundred years ago, I’d saved her, despite the fact that she was the daughter of the Demon King. And now, due to various circumstances, I was living with her.

“Yeah, I’m good. Everything’s packed.”

We were currently preparing for our move to Arthlia Academy, since students had to live in the dorms. Anyway, it would’ve been difficult to make a daily commute all the way from this remote area to the royal capital, Midgard, where the academy was located.

“Having second thoughts?”

In lieu of a response, I continued silently staring out the second-floor window. *Nothing has changed since I first woke up in this age*, I thought, as I stared at the familiar scenery. The mountain ridgelines and the trees in the forest looked exactly the same. It was an incredibly plain area with nothing noteworthy about it, but after living here for over two years, I’d developed an attachment to it.

“You can always return during summer vacation,” Lilith said with a gentle smile.

I locked the window and shut the curtains without saying a word. All that was left was to lock the door.

“Hey, Master!”

The door flew open with a bang, and in came a boy who was a little shorter than me, with dirty-blond hair. It was Ted. I'd taught him various things over the past few years, but it seemed that he'd yet to learn how to open a door quietly.

"Let's get going! We're gonna miss the carriage!"

He's as noisy as always. He began impatiently hopping around like a rabbit.

"Wait—what's with all the bags?" I asked, pointing at the four paper bags he was carrying in both of his hands. They almost looked like balloons with how puffed up they were. *What does he have in there?*

He let out a smug laugh. "I'm glad you asked!"

Ted put the bags on the floor and began rummaging through one of them before pulling something out. "This here is a famous specialty snack, native to the Rhangbalt territory! It's a snowball bun!"

I had no response. *If it's so famous, why haven't I heard about it in the two-plus years I've been living here?* It couldn't have been all that "famous" of a specialty item. It felt almost like fake advertising.

"Are you...planning on selling them at the academy or something?" I asked, confused.

"No, of course not! I'm gonna give these to all the friends I make!"

"That's a lot of snowballs. Are you going to be able to hand them all out?" Lilith asked.

"No worries, Ms. Lilith! After all, I'm planning on making a hundred friends!" Ted grinned innocently.

A hundred friends? Can't say I have any interest in that. All I want to do is stay in the background and not stand out at all. It would be "mission accomplished" if I could just graduate without incident.

"Let's get going, Master!"

"Master Abel, I'll carry your luggage."

I stood up and walked with them to the carriage. After we boarded, the horse neighed before promptly departing. Soon, the house I'd lived in these past

years became nothing but a speck in the distance as we departed the Rhangbalt territory. Looking out the window of the carriage, I could see that the snow that’d piled up had begun to melt, making space for new life to grow across the land.

Chapter 1

A New Life

By the time I finished reading one of the books I'd brought, the wind entering our carriage had begun to smell different. *Hm. Looks like you can both smell* and *see when you're getting close to Midgard.* I looked out the window as the carriage continued through the well-organized city.

It wasn't long until the castle-like Academy came into view. The silver dragon gates opened, allowing our carriage inside. This was my second time at the academy, the first time being when I'd come here for the entrance exam. Our carriage continued forward until it reached the back of the castle.

"We've arrived. That building over there is the student dormitory," Lilith said once she'd alighted from the carriage, pointing towards a long, stone building.

There were five buildings total, all made of red brick, and each was vastly larger in both size and land area than noble mansions.

"It's huge."

"Indeed. It was made for the use of all students. It seems that a portion of the rooms are also used as research facilities. There are stores inside as well."

I posited that the reason that the dorms were split into five buildings was to separate the students by year. From what I'd heard, the academy was a five-year program.

"Master Abel, I have some matters to attend to, so this is where I'll leave you for now. I *am* technically a new instructor, so there are greetings to be exchanged and class plans to submit."

"Oh, okay. Got it."

"I will see you later."

I exhaled after Lilith had disappeared into the distance, and shifted my gaze to the guy who was still fast asleep in the carriage. He was such a noisy sleeper

that I'd used magecraft to erase the noise of his snores.

As soon as I removed the magecraft, however, a sound like an animal roaring grated on my ears. *Good grief.*

"Fireball," I said, creating a ball of flame approximately the size of my fist in midair.

I'd been sure to decrease the strength of the magecraft to avoid causing any burns. This was as much kindness as I could muster. I then dropped it on his face to wake him up.

"Aaaaagh! Hot!"

"We're here, Ted."

"H-Huh?! I-I could've sworn there was something on my face..." Ted looked completely dumbfounded as to what was going on.

To be fair, this style of waking someone up had been fairly commonplace back in my day. It seemed like this method was not nearly as well known anymore, though.

"It was just a dream, okay? Come on, let's get going."

"O-Oh. Phew. Just a dream? It must've been an awful one."

Ted hurriedly grabbed his things and followed me out of the carriage. We passed through the entrance to the dorms, which had fairies depicted on it. As soon as we did, I felt a strange mana response. It might've been the fault of a device set up to prevent intruders. *Hm. It doesn't seem like it causes any direct harm.*

As we walked inside, we saw a reception desk where a woman wearing a tight, white coat was seated.

"New students? A minute, if you would?" *Oh, I remember her.* She'd been the mage who'd cast the defensive magecraft on the applicants during the final exam. "My name is Fedia. I'm responsible for the first-years."

Hm. I'd known she was a decently powerful mage, but I hadn't known that she was so disciplined. Her well-trained body hadn't been achieved overnight. It'd most likely been the product of years of daily training. Though that wasn't

the main reason for it, I felt like I should respect her.

“First, allow me to give you two your school uniforms.”



Fedia handed each of us a clear bag which had our respective uniforms in them.

“You’re free to wear any clothes you like while you’re in the dorms, but as soon as you step even one foot outside, you *must* be wearing your school uniform.”

Fedia continued to explain the intricate, rigid rules of the academy to us, but none of them caught my interest. What *did* was the uniform itself.

“This uniform’s enchanted, isn’t it?”

“That’s exactly correct. I’m surprised you could tell. It has an enchantment for Magecraft Resistance and Stain Resistance.”

Long story short, Enchantments were a type of magecraft that focused on improving the properties of materials. Where Ashen Eyes excelled at fortification and transformation of organic matter, those with Obsidian Eyes excelled at the same thing, just with inorganic matter—these two types of eyes were essentially counterparts.

“Pardon my asking, but who did these Enchantments?”

“If I remember correctly, the academy outsourced it to their designated manufacturer. Do you take issue with our school’s uniform?”

“No, nothing like that...” *But actually, yes, I have a problem or two with it.*

I decided not to voice my complaints because if the uniforms had been handled outside of the school, there was nothing she could’ve done about it. Even though the fabric used was first-class, the Enchantment work was third-rate at best.

It seemed that deterioration of the level of magecraft over the past two hundred years had affected Imbuement Magecraft as well. *What a waste of good fabric. I guess I’ll fix up the Enchantments later.*

“Your rooms are on the second floor. After you get your room key from the front desk, you may spend your time however you wish until tomorrow’s commencement ceremony. My personal recommendation for how you spend that time is making use of the training facilities in the basement.”

Oh, I see. The reason Fedia's body was as well trained as any first-rate mage was because she essentially worked out as a hobby. This was similar to back in my day. Since Ashen-Eyed individuals were always using magecraft on their bodies, more often than not, they'd get very into working out.

"Phew, she seems like a strict teacher. She's pretty, but I bet she's not the type popular with guys," Ted whispered, glancing at Fedia's back as she walked away.

Piece of advice, Ted. When you talk behind someone's back, don't do it so literally. At least wait until they've left. I was almost certain that I noticed her stop in her tracks for a split second. It seemed that Ted's comment wasn't too off the mark if that was her reaction.

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My room, 238, was a corner room on the second floor. I had my own little placard with my room number on it hanging from the door.

"Wow! I think your room's bigger than mine!"

"Hm? Is it?"

"Yeah! I bet it's because you have a corner room. It's definitely a reward for how well you did on the exam! They're totally giving you special treatment!"

He seemed really excited for me, but I couldn't shake the feeling that I'd downgraded from my room at home that I'd gotten so used to. Then again, there was no point complaining about something that'd been given to me. I'd just have to make do with what I had and go from there.

"Hey, Master. Whatcha doing?"

"Uh, isn't it obvious? Enchantments."

I pulled my uniform out of the clear bag it'd come in and began concentrating mana into my fingertips so I could confirm the texture of the material.

"Uh... What's an Enchantment?"

"How did you pass the written exam without knowing what Enchantments are?"

I think this is *the first time I've used Obsidian Eye magecraft in front of him. Maybe I can't give him too much crap*. But on a different note, he really needed to start looking at magecraft outside of his specialty.

"Just checking, but you know the specialties of each of the eyes, right?"

"Of course! Crimson Eyes are fire, Azure Eyes are water, Verdant Eyes are wind, Ashen Eyes are support, and Obsidian Eyes are...creation?"

"*Production*, not 'creation.' They mostly improve the effects of instruments, or imbue garments with magecraft. Out of all the magecraft they have an affinity for, Enchantments are the most practical."

"Oh, really?!"

The technique of enchanting materials was known as Imbuement Magecraft. All that Obsidian-Eyed mages didn't possess in terms of combat ability, they made up for with their excellent Imbuement Magecraft. Back in my day, they'd been in high demand and indispensable as back-line members of parties.

"Enchantments allow you to fortify or alter the properties of materials. For example, you can enchant a sword to be sharper, or you can enchant a shield to be more durable—stuff like that."

It went without saying that, as an Amber-Eyed individual, I was proficient with Imbuement Magecraft as well. The list of people who'd requested me to do enchantments for them had been so long that some had had no choice but to make reservations fifty years in advance. I guess that didn't matter so much now that I'd reincarnated two hundred years into the future, though. *I kinda feel bad for the people I stood up.*

"Stopped listening?" I asked.

"Huh?! N-No! I'm listening! I just don't understand!"

I guess this is a little too difficult of a topic for him. The best way for him to learn something was probably to experience it firsthand.

"Ted, how about I redo the enchantment on your uniform too?"

"Huh?! You mean it?!"

"Yeah. Just for today."

Of course, I wasn't so kind as to redo an enchantment solely out of the goodness of my heart. One of the disadvantages of enchantments was that the length of time it took to remove them was directly correlated with their quality. The better the enchantment was, the longer it took.

There's a saying about Imbuement Magecraft: "Multiply by three." Basically, it was three times more difficult and took three times as long to remove enchantments than to cast them in the first place. *So, sorry, Ted, but I'm going to use yours as a practice run before I do mine.*

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Phew. Looks like I was worried for nothing. It'd only taken me thirty minutes to redo the enchantments on his uniform. Maybe it'd gone so quickly because the fabric was already of good quality.

"Done. Try it on, Ted."

The uniform had been woven using gryphon wings, which were famous for their resistance against offensive magecraft. Back in my day, only a portion of nobles had their hands on gryphon wings, making mass production impossible. Imagine my surprise when I found out that due to modern techniques, clothes that used them could be made for cheap.

"Whoa! It's... I don't know how to explain it, but it's real good! I feel so light!"

Great. Glad you enjoy it so much. It went without saying that I'd dropped the level of the enchantments to match what was expected at this school. Going any further would only have served to garner attention, and not the good kind.

"Well, I'm gonna wear this and begin diplomatic snowball relations!"

"Sorry, what?"

"Feast your eyes!" Ted brought out the Rhangbalt region's "famous" delicacy, the snowball bun. "I'm gonna hand these out to our dormmates. It'll help me with my plan to make a hundred friends, for sure!"

In the next moment, Ted burst out of my room and ran off. *Good grief. There really is no pause button for him, is there?* His plan to make a hundred friends sounded crazy at first, but honestly, for better or worse, I had a feeling that Ted

could still pull it off. Or at least that's what I thought—back when I was still unaware of the prevailing mindset at this school.

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After he left, I redid the enchantments on my uniform. Afterwards, I could finally let out a sigh of relief. Perhaps it was because I hadn't used Imbuement Magecraft in a while, but I felt extremely fatigued. Though it wasn't too flashy, it took a lot more concentration than standard magecraft.

Time to sleep. Not like I have anything better to do until the commencement ceremony, anyway. Since my room faced the south, it was well lit by the sun, making it perfectly cozy for a good nap. Just as I took a pillow out of the closet, I heard yelling.

"Screw you! How much more do you wanna humiliate us before you're satisfied?!"

Hm? That's coming from the hallway. Who's the rude bastard getting in the way of my sleep? I considered ignoring them and sleeping, but the guy yelling foul language showed no signs of stopping anytime soon. I poked my head out of my room to see what was going on, and saw a familiar face in the hall.

"H-Humiliate you? I-I'm just tryin' to be friends! That's mean..."

Huh? Ted? What're you doing? He was obviously in distress as he held the bags containing the snowball buns. I wasn't exactly sure what was going on, but there was one thing I was sure of. His "diplomatic snowball relations" had failed.

"Huh?! Wake up and smell the coffee, you country bumpkin!"

"Who'd wanna be 'friends' with a gutter rat like you?!"

Four boys our age were yelling at him.

"You stupid Poison Perch! How dare you wear the same uniform as us!"

Hm? What'd they call him? I think I've read about it in a book... If I remembered correctly, a Poison Perch was an invasive species of freshwater fish whose population had increased exponentially, mainly in the inner-city rivers.

They'd originally been imported for consumption, but some ignorant people had apparently released a few into the ecosystem. Their huge appetites and amazing reproductive abilities were now causing problems. Aquatic bugs, small fish, shells, seaweed, eggs of other species, small fry—they ate *anything*. Of course, as a result, the ecosystem of this country's rivers was suffering greatly. It'd even come up as a societal issue.

"H-How about you just try a bite? It's the pride of my hometow—"

"Shut up! It reeks of Poison Perch!" one of the boys yelled, swatting Ted's hand away, which caused him to lose his balance. Ted dropped the bags he was holding and fell flat on his butt.

"We're not in the business of eating trash! Get it outta here!"

I couldn't help but be stunned by what happened next. The boy kicked the bags, sending them flying. The buns scattered out of them and rolled across the hallway. *Good grief. That's harsh.* Were they never taught by their parents to not waste food?

"No!!! M-My snowballs!" Ted gripped his head as he watched the snowballs roll away.

Judging by his panic, he must've been very shaken by how the gifts he'd painstakingly prepared had all gone to waste. *I should intervene.* But just as I thought about going out to help him, someone beat me to the punch.

"Well, if you insist, I guess I'll take one."

Standing in the direction of the scattered snowballs was a familiar girl with crimson hair. I knew her name. It was Eliza. Ever since the entrance exam, it seemed like I kept running into her. She was now wearing the school uniform, and was really pulling off the pleated skirt.

She picked up one of the snowballs and took a small bite. "Mm... Not bad. I'd give it a seven out of ten. It's not inedible, but I kinda wish it had more of a special flavor to it if you're gonna tout it as a regional specialty."

Hm. Doesn't seem like she's changed one bit since I last saw her. There may have been nothing wrong with her at first glance, but as soon as she opened her mouth, it became apparent that she had no filter whatsoever.

“Ew!!! This girl ate something off the floor!”

“You gotta be kiddin’ me! Where’s your dignity?! Ugh, this is why I hate Poison Perches!”

The boys began fussing over Eliza’s unexpected actions, but honestly, who were the ones who were really lacking dignity in this situation? More than likely, Eliza eating one of the fallen snowballs was her way of cheering Ted up. *I guess I have no choice.* I *really* didn’t want to get involved with anything troublesome, but leaving this situation as it was would only lead to bigger headaches down the road. I was worried about what Ted would do, but I was even more worried about what someone with a short temper like Eliza would do.

“Hey, you two. How about we leave it at that?”

“Huh?! Who the hell are you?!”

The boys all turned their attention to me as soon as I stepped forward to mediate the situation. In the next moment, they saw my eyes and burst out laughing.

“H-Hey, look! Look at his eyes!”

“Ha ha ha! For real?! There’s a guy among the transfer students who can’t use magecraft?!”

Ah. I think Lilith warned me about this before. There were two types of students at this academy—the first were students who had come up through the affiliated junior school without needing to test in, called “continuing” students, and those from outside who entered after applying and passing the exam, known as the “transfer” students. *Now I get it. They’re calling all transfer students “Poison Perches” as an insult.*

“Hey, you! Why so quiet? Say somethin’, you worthless Inferior Eyes!”

“Don’t you bad-mouth Master!!!”

Whoa. Calm down, Ted. I’d stepped out to help take this situation down a notch, not exacerbate it. But it was too late. Ted had used his small body to headbutt one of the boys with all the force he could muster.

“Agh!”

Now he’s done it. There’s no going back. Ted might’ve been lacking in the magecraft department, but he made up for it with a decent level of physical strength. His headbutt had knocked the poor boy out.

“Dammit. Get ’em!”

Ted had lit the fuse, starting a fight. The remaining boys clenched their fists and charged at Ted. But then, something surprising happened.

The remaining three boys cried out as the enchantment on Ted’s uniform activated and flung them back.

“H-He’s bad news!”

“What the hell is going on?!”

Why are you scared of him*? It’s the enchantment doing the work.* Having taken damage, they scrambled to get away from us. I was somewhat surprised, though, that the students at this academy were so weak that they’d be so easily repelled by a basic enchantment.

To reiterate, the enchantment on Ted’s uniform was by no means anything special. I’d only imbued it with an extremely simple “physical repellant,” but I guess against these students, who were already incredibly weak, it was rather effective.

“D-Dammit! We’ll be back, and you’ll be sorry!”

What a cliché. They’d taken damage without even understanding what had hit them, and promptly decided to retreat. Still, I couldn’t get over how weak these students were. How could they lose to a simple enchantment? What was even happening? *They’re so...well, pathetic, I’m starting to get scared.*

“M-Master! I didn’t do anything, but they were blown away! How amazing am I?! I never thought I’d awaken to such power!”

That’s because you didn’t. You’re weak too.

“Hey! Acorn-head! What’s with your uniform?!”

It seemed that Eliza was the only one who’d realized that an enchantment

had been at work. *But also... "Acorn-head"? Is that her nickname for Ted?* Sure, the slightly round shape of his body kind of resembled an acorn, but that wasn't much nicer than "Poison Perch."

"Huh?! Is something wrong with my uniform?!"

"I don't believe it... I've never seen such delicate enchantment work before."

"Is it really that amazing?" Ted asked.

"It goes beyond 'amazing'! The number of enchantments it's imbued with isn't normal! Who did you contract to do this for you?!"

She's really proving herself to be a descendant of Maria, the Fire Hero. Apparently, Eliza was well acquainted with the imbuement magecraft of Obsidian Eyes. *Hm, but what to do?* If she found out that I was the one who'd done it, I could only see this situation getting more annoying. *I guess I don't have a choice.* I didn't want to stand out too much after just starting school, so it was best to play things as close to the chest as possible.

I stared right at Ted and gave him a look that said to keep quiet about me doing the enchantment work. Ted nodded, seemingly understanding.

"Isn't that obvious? Master did it! Wouldn't you know it? He's an expert with Imbuement Magecraft too—"

"We're leaving, you imbecile."

"Agh—"

Ugh. Why did I ever think Ted would be able to read the room? But I was also partially at fault. I'd lowered the level of the enchantment to match what I thought would be normal, but ultimately, it'd drawn attention to us. What I considered "normal" was abnormal for the people of this time. I wanted to smack my head against a wall. If my goal was to spend the remainder of my days here in peace, I needed to make sure that I didn't do anything that was too incredible.

"Abel... Who *are* you?"

I wasn't sure, but I thought I heard Eliza say that as we walked away.

Chapter 2

Emerson's Reputation

With the events of last night behind us, it was finally time for the commencement ceremony. We left the student dorms and quickly made our way to the great hall.

"Phew. It looks like we managed to avoid being late, but we're the last ones here."

Ted groaned. "I-I'm so sorry! I'm the type of person who sleeps horribly if I use a different pillow than the one I'm used to."

"I never expected you to be so sensitive about that kind of thing."

Oh yeah—sometimes it's so easy to forget that he actually is *a noble.* But at any rate, we'd arrived on time, so all's well that ends well. I looked at the wooden door, which was a deep brown. With its ornate carvings, it resembled a work of art—a testament to the academy's image as one of the country's top schools. The price of attendance also reflected its prestige since, regardless of the quality of its students, one needed to pay quite the hefty sum to attend.

"What's wrong, Master?"

Hm. After completing my analysis, I noticed that the door had some kind of magecraft composition embedded in it. *I see. So this is how they welcome students.* But with how it was set up, I'd draw a lot of attention to myself if I touched the door now. On the other hand, if I let Ted do the honors, I'd lose the opportunity to fully view the magecraft's mechanism. That'd be a waste.

"Ted, I'll open the door for you, so go in ahead of me."

"Huh? Why?"

"Well, I think you'll find out as soon as the doors open."

More or less forcing Ted to agree, I had him walk in front of me as I opened the door. Suddenly, there was the sound of gears turning. *Hm. I have no clue*

who thought this up, but I like their style. As soon as the doors opened, sculptures that were positioned across the hallway began moving. It was like watching a waltz of fairies.

"What *is* this?!"

"Don't worry about it. It's just simple Imbuement Magecraft."

This particular magecraft wasn't anything new—it enabled the mechanism to react to the level of mana possessed by the person who'd activated it. As we entered, all the students inside turned towards us and began to whisper. But who could blame them?

Flowers bloomed, guiding us along the path ahead, and apparently, whoever had set all this up had decided to include musical accompaniment. Our very own pleasant marching tune played throughout the rather spacious great hall. From what I gathered, the purpose of all this was to celebrate strong mages who were just starting out at the academy.

"That blond kid is insane! He activated every last one of the sculptures from the 'Doors of Serenade'!"

"He even made the Knight's March play! He's a once-in-a-decade talent!"

Oh, so that's what they're called? Both the teachers and the continuing students who'd come up through the escalator system looked at Ted while fussing amongst themselves. Meanwhile, Ted—the target of their praise and confusion—looked completely confused himself by the spectacle surrounding him. *Well, it's probably kinder to keep him in the dark at this point.*

"Ho ho ho. This is the first time in twenty years that these halls have heard the Knight's March." Everyone went silent as an old man with an unusual laugh and a long white beard stood at the podium. "Allow me to introduce myself. For those who don't know me, I'm the headmaster, Mikhael. Let me first congratulate all the new students who were accepted into this academy."

At this pronouncement, the teachers began clapping. *Wow—now that I'm looking, there are a lot of students here... Maybe around two hundred per class year.* There must've been a little under a thousand people gathered here, all of them affiliated with the academy.

“Master, did you know that the headmaster is a descendant of Roy, the Hero of Wind, who defeated the demon king?!” Ted excitedly whispered into my ear.

“Hm? Really?”

It’d been a while since I’d heard anyone mention Roy. In the past he’d been like a little brother to me, as well as one of the people I’d teamed up with to defeat the demon king two hundred years ago.

“Where’d you hear that from?” I asked.

“Huh? It’s in the academy brochure.”

“Oh, really? I had no clue. Didn’t see the point in reading it.”

“W-Wow, Master. That’s just like you.”

After that, the headmaster, Mikhael, began telling the new students about something really uninteresting—how the herbs for magecraft this year were in good supply. As a result, the divination that could only occur at the beginning of spring was on track. Most likely, even he was aware that most students weren’t really listening to him. In a sense, his little digression was almost refreshing.

“Ahem. Let’s leave the prattling from this old man for another time. Lilith, please step forward.”

The light illuminating the podium made her silklike silver hair sparkle. The thin nape of her neck was as beautiful as porcelain, and was complemented by her slender arms and legs. Her beautifully symmetrical face was second only to the shape of her knockout body beneath her clothes.

The male students all let out sounds of awe. Lilith smiled at me as our eyes met. *Good grief. She’s bad at not mixing business with pleasure.*

“Hey, did you see? She smiled at me!”

“Are you stupid?! She was obviously looking at *me*!”



Now she'd riled up all the male students with her actions. On a separate note, though, I'd felt as if I was being watched for the majority of the day. At first, I'd thought maybe it'd been because I'd walked in with Ted after the whole door thing, but the gaze I felt on me right now was different. It didn't feel like it was coming from a human or animal. *Maybe a Regalia?* It certainly did feel as if I was being observed by some unknown technology. I couldn't sense any immediate threat from it, but it seemed that I'd have to investigate it in the near future.

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Afterwards, we were given an explanation about which areas were restricted and what sorts of activities were forbidden. With that, the ceremony ended and the students boisterously left the great hall. I, however, didn't immediately get up to leave. Part of it was because I didn't want to be stuck in the crowd, but also, I simply wanted to observe my surroundings.

First, I looked at the fairy sculptures that'd been placed alongside the path. *Hm. Their eyes do give me the sense that I'm being watched.* Of course, I could've destroyed one of them and taken a look inside, but I knew it'd be best to avoid attracting any attention, especially on the day of our commencement ceremony.

And so I left, walking through the hallway with the moving floor, then climbed the spiral staircase until I arrived at a classroom in the middle of the castle—the one for Class 1-A.

"Hey, did you hear about last night?"

"Yeah—about Marth, right? I heard he took a headbutt from one of the transfer students and spent the entire commencement ceremony in the infirmary."

As soon as we entered the classroom, all chatter stopped and almost all eyes fell on me. I wasn't particularly bothered by this, and simply moved to an empty desk in the back. *Doesn't look like seats have been assigned yet.*

"Wow... Really seems like we're the odd ones out here," said Ted.

"You think so? This doesn't feel like anything new to me."

But maybe it is for Ted. He'd been born with eyes that didn't automatically make him the subject of persecution by others. He wasn't used to being the focus of everyone's ire. This was something I'd learn later, but apparently, eighty percent of the students here came up through the escalator system—a prep school for the academy. Their parents were upper-class nobles who were very passionate about education and had deep pockets. Because of their upbringing, a lot of the students here had warped views and saw themselves as the chosen few, leading them to look down on those who'd gotten in through normal means—in other words, by passing the entrance exam.

After waiting for a little while, the door next to the blackboard opened, and in came a tall, thin, young man. *Hm? Is he one of the mages in this age who's actually exceptional?* At the very least, he seemed like the most competent mage I'd met so far.

"No way! Our teacher's gonna be *the* Professor Emerson?!"

"I can't believe my eyes! Isn't he a top candidate for Chronos's top brass?!"

The students began buzzing as soon as they lay eyes on him.

"Oh my god! Emerson?! Is it really him?!"

In terms of being surprised, Ted was in the same boat.

"Is he famous?" I asked.

"Of course! He's the top mage of this generation! He's also rumored to be the strongest mage of this age!"

The strongest? Hm. Really? That was certainly possible, given the level of mages in this day and age, but how strong could he really be? Back in my day, mages of his level were honestly a dime a dozen.

"I heard he's the one who wrote the questions for the entrance exam's 'Magecraft Engineering' section. That's why it was impossible!"

"Oh, I see."

There'd been three sections in our written test: General Culture, Magecraft Syntax, and Magecraft Engineering. The last section had been, for some reason, much more difficult compared to the others. I was pretty sure that no other

student except for me had been able to solve the question about Depornix's Final Theorem.

"Well, hello, class. I will be the teacher in charge of this class, 1-A. The name's Emerson. I look forward to getting to know all of you," he said in an almost bored voice, standing at the podium.

I see. He barely makes the cut for looking like an adult. He had some serious bedhead, and hadn't even bothered to tuck his shirt in all the way. Excellent mage though he may have been, I was noticing a lot of critical flaws. Ultimately, I decided to hold off on making my final evaluation of him for other, unrelated reasons.

"Um, could I ask a question?" a girl timidly asked.

"Sure. What is it?"

"Professor, I'd heard that you're so busy with your research that you rarely ever teach classes. Why the sudden change?"

Wait, what? He's a teacher, but he's barely taught any classes here? That was something unheard of back in my time, but maybe it was more common in modern day.

"Well, truth be told, I don't really have any interest in anything but myself. I only became a teacher for the state funds I can receive for my research. I never had any aspirations to teach or anything."

"Th-Then why are you teaching us now?" the girl persisted.

"Well, if I had to say... I guess it's because I want to confirm something. Anyway, looks like we're out of time, so I'll end homeroom here for today," Emerson said, before exiting the room.

Hm. It seems that I'll have to be wary of this Emerson fellow, or whatever his name is. He might've thought he was being discreet, but it was obvious that he was trying to observe me. If I had to guess, the gaze I'd felt on me during the commencement ceremony also had been his doing.

Chapter 3

Undesirable Encounters

At any rate, my school life began, and though I was initially confused by this unfamiliar lifestyle, it didn't take me long after getting the hang of things to construct a schedule.

I had classes in the morning and afternoon. After classes let out, I holed up in the library. Then, when night came along, I'd go back to the dorm, take a shower, and read some more in my room. Sometimes, I'd find time to secretly confer with Lilith. Overall, I'd say that I was making the best of my time, but I guess there was one problem...

"In essence, in order to express the numerical analysis's fluctuation equation of the magecraft composition, you must derive it by calculating the composition equation, the reaction equation, and the magecraft extrinsic-affinity coefficient, which will bring you to..."

The problem was that this professor spoke in a soporific, flat tone. He had a bulbous nose, and droned on without paying any attention to his students. Even worse, he would erase the blackboard as soon as he finished with an equation and immediately begin writing new ones. Everyone was so desperately focused on keeping up that they didn't even have the luxury of engaging in any personal conversations.

Good grief. Are modern instructors really this *bad at teaching?* Most likely, his strategy for teaching was to speak extremely fast, nonstop, and weed out the students who couldn't keep up. But also, it went without saying that the content of the lesson was not very difficult for me.

No matter how many big words he used, what he was teaching could've been compressed into mere dozens of steps by using simplified versions of equations that already existed. I sighed, knowing that I'd have to sit through these kinds of classes for another five years. I couldn't help but feel melancholic.

"Wow... The classes here are so hard. This school's really living up to its

reputation...” Ted said.

To me, though, these classes were nothing more than a waste of time. Recently, I’d been so bored in classes that I’d begun conducting my own magecraft research during class. The great part about research was that it could be done anywhere, so long as you have a paper and pen.

“How about we have Mr. Abel come up and show us how this problem is solved?” the professor suddenly called out.

Well, then. Classes have never been like this. Most likely he’d called on me because it looked like I hadn’t been paying attention. *Trying to make an example of me? How stupid.* All this served to do was reinforce just how low-level of an instructor he was.

“Is this good enough?” I asked, easily solving the problem.

“U-Ugh. Y-Yes. Sit down,” the bulbous-nose teacher said, grinding his teeth in anger.

Good grief. You might think you raised the difficulty, but you may as well have asked me to steal candy from a baby. That probably would’ve been harder than this question. After returning to my seat, I got back to my research.

“Hey—is Abel, like, actually a diamond in the rough?”

“Yeah, I was thrown off by his eye color at first, but he’s actually kinda cool and handsome.”

Hm? I feel like I’m getting some weird looks. Give me a break. I’m just reaching the good part of my research.

“Tch. Disgusting. Not only is he a transfer student, but he’s an Inferior Eyes—learn your place.”

“Agreed. He thinks he’s all that just because he’s a little book smart.”

What is going on? After I’d solved that problem, some of the continuing students shot me looks of loathing.

◇

Arthlia Academy had a total of five libraries of varying sizes. Among them, the

great library had a freakish amount of books. Since Arthlia was a top and storied academy, the great library was used even by researchers unaffiliated with the academy. Thanks to that, there was a considerable amount of foot traffic. Not too surprisingly, there weren't any people who talked in the library. Instead, the sound of people walking around and pages turning was itself incredibly annoying.

So instead of reading there, I borrowed books from the great library, then went to a smaller library on the west side of the campus after school. It was a building with three floors that was shaped similar to a chess piece. It was an incredibly quiet library, and only had one librarian looking over the entire facility.

I opened one of the books, spread out some paper, and took out a pen. This was mainly where I did my magecraft research. Coming here and working was part of my daily routine. Of course, I didn't have to be here—I could've done it in my room. The only thing was that I liked the view of the outside from here around this time of day.

I also loved the faint smell of books that this library had. It really calmed me down. I might've been up-front with my dislike of being a student when I first started here, but as long as I could continue coming to a place like this, I got the feeling I could bear it.

Suddenly, the door to the entrance opened. My eyes naturally moved in its direction, and there, I saw a familiar girl.

"What a coincidence. You study here too, Abel?"

Maybe it was because of the setting sun, but her face seemed slightly flushed. *But hm, is this a coincidence?* I'd thought that I was the only one who willingly came here. However, I supposed that if she said it was a coincidence, it must have been.

"What a surprise. I didn't take you for the kind of person who studies in libraries," I said.

"Abel, you wound me. Is that how little you think of me?" Eliza asked, sitting in front of me and opening her textbook. "Aren't you gonna do today's assignment?"

“Oh, I do homework in my room.”

The homework assigned was so easy that I generally finished them all in the ten or so minutes before bed. After a little bit, I noticed that Eliza’s hands had stopped moving. I glanced over and saw that she was stuck on a problem regarding application. *Oh, that’s a trick question.*

“There are two equations involved for that one.”

“Huh? Really?”

“Yeah. Try separating out the front and back equations.”

“Like...this?”

“Exactly. After that, you remove the common denominators and calculate them later.”

“Oh! So that’s how you do it!”

It seemed that Eliza had figured out the trick, because she began breezing through the rest of the problems. *I see. Her ability to learn and apply concepts is a hundred times better than Ted’s. If Ted was this smart, I’d be happier to teach him.*

◇

By the time the sun set, a few hours had passed. I’d spent the time helping Eliza study, but now the library was closing.

“Thanks for...y’know, helping me study. The way you teach is incredibly easy to understand,” Eliza said, as she gathered her books.

Really? You’re exaggerating. She didn’t have to thank me for helping her with homework at that level. I didn’t feel like I’d done anything deserving of thanks.

“So...do you always hole up in the library to study?” Eliza asked as we descended the spiral staircase to get outside.

“Yeah, why? Is that weird?”

“No, it’s not weird, but you’re in a city now. Don’t you want to explore it?”

“Well, I guess I haven’t really been out yet. I haven’t really had a need to, since everything I need can be bought at the school store.”

“But there are things you can only experience outside of the school—like tasty food, fruit with strange flavors—oh, and most importantly, the best-tasting snacks ever!”

“So just food, huh?”

“W-Well, of course there are a lot of places besides those that serve food! Oh! Like secondhand bookstores! You might be able to buy uncommon books for cheap.”

Hm, secondhand bookstores? I have *wanted to check out modern bookstores.* The books in the school libraries were much more recent and were nowhere close to the quality of the books I’d read back in my day.

“Hey, how about we go out on the weekend? I wanna thank you for helping me study.”

“Sure, I don’t mind.”

“Okay, great! I know the royal capital like the back of my hand—I know where all the tastiest shops are!” Eliza began excitedly listing off her favorite places to eat in the capital. The expression she had on her face was livelier than any I’d seen her wear before.

I see. I think I’m starting to get why her body is more developed than most girls her age. At least half of her head is filled with nothing but thoughts of food.

◇

As soon as the two of us exited the library, we were met with very clear hostility. *Hmph. I’ve really been having a lot of undesirable encounters.* Had these guys really been waiting for me this entire time out here in the cold? *Aw, how cute.*

One of them wolf whistled. “Must suck to be popular, Abel!” I soon recognized him as one of the continuing students who’d been involved in that scuffle with Ted yesterday.

“Need something?” I asked.

“You piss us off! Why are you acting so high and mighty when you’re just a lowly transfer student?!”

“Why’s an Inferior Eyes like you even at our school? You must’ve done something shady to get in!”

Good grief. Everyone who was at the entrance exam should’ve known that I got in through my own strength alone. Rumors should’ve spread. But maybe these students are the type that needs to see something to believe it. A very small part of me sympathized with them, but mostly, I found everything about them incredibly annoying.

“Spit out what you want already. Unlike you all, I actually have things to do.”

“Urgh! Yeah, you *really* piss me off.”

“We’re gonna give you another test to see if you really deserve to be here!”

Then, they pulled out and readied their tacky Regalia. *Well then. What to do? It’d be easy to beat them down, but I’d like to choose an option where I don’t cause more waves than necessary.*

I used Body Fortification on my legs and then zoomed past them, seizing an opening I spotted. Once I was behind them, I plucked the Regalias out of their hands.

“You *really* want to take me on with these crudely made toys?”

“Wha—”

A closer examination of the Regalias showed me just how poorly constructed they were. Most had offensive magecraft installed, but various portions of them were locked, preventing the user from appending the composition whatsoever.

Where was the fun in using something that clearly abandoned the idea of allowing the user to get creative and modify its design? It may have made sense to others, but not to me.

“M-My Regalia!”

“Wh-When did he—”

Why so surprised? We were about to do battle, and yet you decided to look at each other, trying to figure out who would go first, which left me an opening to go on the offensive. At this point, they all frantically distanced themselves from me.

“Hey, did you know that your Regalia’s in bad shape?” I called out to one of the guys. “You should probably take it in for maintenance.”

“H-How do you know that?!”

“I have eyes. Due to the degradation of its materials, cracks have formed in the magecraft composition. If you wanna be a mage, you gotta take good care of the tools of your craft.”

I threw it back to him. *Honestly, though, in my opinion, if you learn to fight while relying on Regalias, there’s little chance that you’ll become a strong mage.*

“Let’s go, Eliza.”

“Huh? O-Oh. Yeah.”

With them dumbstruck over having their weapons stolen, it was time for us to leave. I ushered Eliza away by the shoulder, quickly putting distance between us and them.

“Dammit! That bastard... Acting like he’s all that!”

“Get ready for tomorrow! Mark my words: we’re gonna humiliate you!”

What’s happening tomorrow? Is there some kind of special event? I wondered as I walked Eliza to the dorms.

Chapter 4

Physical Education

And so the next day came.

“Yeah!!! Finally—phys ed! It really gets my blood pumping!” Ted yelled in an annoyingly hyper voice.

Hm. Looks like this is our once-a-week physical education class. Ted had donned his gym uniform faster than anyone. After changing, we went to the inner courtyard, where the training field was. It seemed like the girls had yet to arrive. *I guess they need more time to get ready.* After a brief delay, the girls joined us.

At almost the same exact time, a voice boomed from a short distance away. “Good! Looks like you’re all here!” A slightly tanned man wearing a navy blue tracksuit appeared. “I’m the phys ed teacher, Kantre.”

I see. He really has the aura of a phys ed teacher. As much as I knew it wasn’t good to judge a book by its cover, it was kind of disappointing that he was portly despite being someone who was supposed to educate us on fitness.

“What happened to that girl you were hitting on at the bar, Kanty?”

“Shaddup! I told you not to ever bring that up again!”

“How about I introduce you to a woman with big knockers—just your type!”

“Shaddup! I’m not so down on my luck that I’d let one of my students set me up with a woman!”

The students laughed. If I had to guess, the continuing students that’d come up through the prep school knew this guy pretty well. They had their own inside jokes, so we transfer students felt completely excluded. They even kept up their small talk for a while.

“Ew. Not a fan,” Eliza muttered as she sat, hugging her knees.

Ted vigorously nodded in agreement. *Hm. I already sense that there’s*

favoritism in other classes towards the continuing students, but this goes a step beyond that. As the new kids on the block, we felt as if we were being isolated.

"All right. We'll be playing Hunt today." The continuing students all screamed in excitement at his announcement. "All of you who came up through the prep school know what this is, right? Hunt is a competitive sport amongst magecraft schools—it's one of the three school tournaments! Make sure you get these rules down pat!" He brought over a basket of gloves that'd been left at the edge of the courtyard.

"These glove-type Regalias are used for Hunt. Teams take turns being on defense and on offense."

"Oh, Kanty, we know the rules already!"

"Ha ha ha! You guys don't get it. This is a class, and classes are for everyone—including people who don't know anything and can't do anything!"

The continuing students laughed again at Kantre's phrasing. *Hm. He makes it sound like the transfer students are failures—inferior students.* I'd already become used to this kind of scorn, but I wasn't sure if the others would take it in as much stride.

As expected, Eliza, who had difficulty hiding her emotions, was practically fuming. "He's dead... The world'll be better off if he's dead," Eliza growled, looking like she was about to go for a punch.

Meanwhile, Ted frantically tried to hold her back. *Good grief. This is going to be a* long *phys ed class.*

◇

The activity that had been suddenly sprung on us was a sport called Hunt. Two teams took turns every five minutes switching between "attacking" and "defending." The team on offense were called "Shooters" and the team on defense were called "Rabbits."

It was apparently a sport inspired by the timeless noble tradition of hunting. The objective of the Shooters was to eliminate the Rabbits with magic bullets. The objective of the Rabbits was to avoid said bullets. Whichever side knocked down more members during their turn as Shooters won. It was a pretty simple

game.

“I’ve brought Shot Gloves for everyone to use today, but well, you know the drill. If you brought your own, you can use them if you want.”

Hm. So Shooters have to use those glove-type Regalias? From what I could tell, there were three types of magic bullets they were capable of shooting. One was a spear type that specialized in speed. The other was a sphere type that was more balanced in terms of its strengths and weaknesses. The last one was a disk type, which allowed the user to easily adjust its trajectory. None of them would inflict wounds—instead, they were designed to create shock waves upon collision.

“Oh, I get it. This game’s pretty much like dodgeball,” Ted mumbled from his seat on the ground next to me.

How unusually perceptive of him. Dodgeball hadn’t existed two hundred years ago—it had a relatively short history. I’d never played, but I had a rough grasp of how it worked from what I’d read about it.

“Okay, I’m gonna split all of you up into teams. There are thirty of you, so we’ll have two teams of eight and two teams of seven. Listen for your name. First, Team A,” Kantre said, beginning to read off names.

As soon as he finished calling out the names of Team B, I felt like something was off. After he read out the names for Team C, everyone but Ted noticed what was wrong.

“And the last seven of you are in Team D.”

“Yeah! I’m on the same team as Master!”

Good grief. You’re so easygoing. A heavy atmosphere descended upon the remainder of us who’d realized what the problem was.

“Um, might I ask about how you decided the groups, Professor?” a shy, black-haired girl nervously asked.

“Something wrong? Isn’t it better for you to work with people you know?”

I see. Now the things those kids said last night are starting to make sense. No wonder they were so excited about today. Was this the event in which they

planned to embarrass me? *Interesting.* So those hadn't been empty words. They'd actually had a plan for today's class. And if they knew what was happening in advance, it must've meant that the teacher was in cahoots with the continuing students.

"I'm sure you all know this already, but you're not allowed to use any magecraft to interfere with your opponents, nor are you allowed to alter the magecraft in the gloves. Of course, you're allowed to use body fortification magecraft to defend yourself, though. It's up to you kids, not me, to make sure that you don't get hurt, okay?" Kantre looked at us as he said this.

Huh. It's almost as if he's trying to say that it's no concern of his if we get hurt.

"All right then, Teams A and B are in the backcourt. C and D are in the front court. Sound off when you're ready to start," Kantre said, clapping his hands.

The students stood up, chatting with each other as they made their way to their respective courts.

"Heh heh. Let's have a good match, Inferior Eyes. We're gonna get you back for yesterday," one of the kids from yesterday said as he passed me.

I heaved a sigh. I was almost impressed by how blatantly biased the teams were. Team C was filled with continuing students who were filled with animosity towards the transfer students. *Good grief. What do they have planned?* And so, the battle between the team of continuing students and the team of transfer students began.

◇

Now that I was with my team, I began evaluating them. There was me, Ted, Eliza, that black-haired girl who'd spoken up to the teacher about the strangeness of the groupings, and then a few others whom I wasn't very familiar with.

I see. There are thirty students in Class A, and a mere seven of them are transfer students. No wonder the continuing students act like they own the place.

"Wh-What should we do? I've never been good at sports..."

“Me too. I’m quick-witted, but not quick-footed.”

Good grief. We haven’t even started and they’re already whining. It’s true that having a sharp mind is important for mages, but everything starts with having a strong physical foundation.

“Are we going to be okay? I...I don’t want to hold any of you back. We could also get hurt...”

“It’s all gonna be okay! *I’ll* be backing you up!” Eliza said, puffing out her large chest.

Mm-hmm. She and Ted are the only ones who’ll actually be of any help. I honestly can’t believe that this is happening. I’m actually *counting Ted as a potentially reliable ally. Never in two hundred years would I have ever predicted this.*

“B-But... Eliza, the continuing students... They don’t think well of us,” the black-haired girl said, glancing at our opponents on the opposite side of the court. The same kids who’d tried messing with me yesterday were currently smirking at us.

“Yeah, no worries there. It might’ve changed over time, but Hunt is still a sport based in tradition. There’s no way that even *they’d* stoop so low as to toss tradition to the wayside to cheat. Let’s beat ’em to a pulp, fair and square, and make them rue the day they stood against us!” Eliza said, trying to pump up the black-haired girl.

Hm. You might think that way, Eliza, but do you really think they’ll abide by tradition? Given what happened yesterday, I think they might pull out all the stops to get back at us. I was sure that they’d try something during the match.

“Anyway, if we’re doing this, let’s do our best! Let’s go!” Eliza said, bravely taking command.

After that, we did a coin toss, which ended with us starting as the Rabbits. The seven of us entered the square court, twenty meters long on each side.

There were three shooters across from us. They grinned and raised their gloves. *Hm. I’m worried about how my teammates will fare.* In most sports, the better your team did as a whole, the more likely you were to win. In this case,

no matter how hard I worked, we'd only score one point if all the other Rabbits were taken out. I needed to stay alert.

◇

The whistle blew, signaling the start of the match.

"Okay, let's take 'em out one by one!" one of the Shooters said, pouring mana into his glove and firing a magic bullet.

It was a spear type, specializing in speed. *I see. It's fast, but not anything to write home about.* The seven of us easily dodged it. To make things fair, in this game, there were only three Shooters versus seven Rabbits. In terms of pure numbers, the Rabbits had an advantage. Plus, Rabbits could move freely around the court, so it was easy to dodge any magic bullets that entered our field of vision.

"They're attacking from behind!" Ted yelled.

However, the point of this sport was firing bullets that your opponents couldn't notice in time. With the way they were spread out in three different directions, it was almost impossible to notice all of their attacks. The most crucial part of this game seemed to be whether or not you could dodge bullets that came at you from your blind spots.

"Whoa!" Moving lightly, Ted dodged a bullet from behind.

Those are his primal instincts at play. He's reacting to the vibrations in the air from the bullet being fired. However, while Ted was capable of this, our teammates weren't.

"Agh!"

See? What'd I say? One of our teammates was hit in their blind spot. As the bullet came into contact with him, there was a loud sound like something bursting. Unable to withstand the shock waves, he crashed to the ground, flat on his butt.

I see. The bullets have no elemental affinity and barely pack a punch, meaning that there's no chance of them being lethal whatsoever. But magecraft is magecraft. If you didn't activate your body fortification at the right time, it'd

hurt a lot. *Oh, this time, they're being stupidly straightforward and attacking from the front... Hm? Wait. There's something different about this magic bullet.*

"H-Huh?"

"Wh-What?!"

Two more of our teammates were hit and knocked down. *Good grief. I didn't expect that the magecraft composition of these non-elemental magic bullets would be modified to include homing in on targets. Didn't the rules say we aren't allowed to alter the composition? They're obviously cheating.*

"Hey! You cheated!"

Looks like I'm not the only one who noticed. Eliza had picked up on it too. It'd have been one thing if the trajectory of the disk-type magic bullet had changed—it was designed to do that. But it was clearly unnatural for the spear-type one to have changed directions. More than likely, they'd prepared gloves with altered magecraft compositions.

"Whoa there. That's a serious accusation."

"Do you have any evidence, bubble butt?"

"B-B-B-Bubble butt?!"

"Calm down, Eliza."

Good grief. What a troublesome princess. Throwing off your enemies by insulting them was so incredibly basic. I pulled Eliza back by the collar like a cat.

"Huh? Wha—"

A magic bullet whizzed right by Eliza's face. "They fired that from the side. Keep your attention on all of them."

"Th-Thanks...Abel," Eliza said, her face slightly flushed.

Hm. So she is *capable of being polite.* She'd have been perfect if she was like this on a regular basis. Those good looks were wasted on her.

◇

After that, we regained our composure and continued to dodge their attacks. *It's kinda boring that, as Rabbits, all we can do is dodge, though.* It would've

been a little more fun if we could've repelled the bullets with magecraft, at least.

"Eliza, there's a magic bullet coming from behind you!"

"Thanks, Yukari!"

I was a little surprised that the shy, black-haired girl had gotten into the spirit of battle. She was right that she wasn't very athletic, but she was more perceptive than Eliza and Ted. She was also calm. If she fixed her passive personality, I could see her becoming a promising mage in the future.

"Tch. The Rabbits are dodging better than I thought."

"Fine. We'll start hunting the one we *can* hit."

Right after they said this, I sensed an obvious change in their auras.

"Huh?!"

Oh, I see what their plan is now. They're going to focus their resources on the black-haired girl, Yukari, since it's easier to hit her than it is me, Eliza, or Ted, with our higher physical abilities.

"Eek!" Unable to withstand the barrage of magic bullets, Yukari fell to the ground.

"Outta the way, slowpoke!"

Even I hadn't expected them to do this. The opponents continued to shoot Yukari even after she'd fallen to the ground.

"Hey! What are you doing?!"

"Hm? Isn't it obvious? We're exterminating a Poison Perch from our school."

Despite how she curled up into a ball, they continued to relentlessly release bullet after bullet at her.

"Jerks! She's been knocked down already!"

"Hmph. There's no rule saying we can't keep attacking a Rabbit that's been knocked down."

"S-Still! There are boundaries that—" Eliza screamed, but her argument was

interrupted by a guy on the other team, who took the opportunity to shoot her, knocking her down.

I sighed. *You're too naive, Eliza. Getting emotional during battle is a bad habit of yours.* But also, I didn't understand what they could possibly hope to gain as Shooters from continuously shooting players who'd already been knocked down. Maybe it was to create more situations where they shook our composure, like what had just happened with Eliza.

"Wait! Objection! That shouldn't count! Ahh!!!"

I sighed again. *Stupid does as stupid sees.* Ted had fallen for the same trick, becoming magic bullet fodder. I couldn't rely on my allies at all.

"Ha ha! Some 'genius three' you all turned out to be. In the end, you're nothing but stupid outsiders!"

"How about you all just quietly go out the storm drains like the invasive sewer rats you are?"

It hadn't even been two minutes since the match started, and yet I was the only one left standing. Now, they were all smirking, their gazes focused on me. *Good grief. I really don't want to draw any attention to myself. I want to live a peaceful school life.* I didn't care about winning. I would've been okay losing, though that might've only served to encourage future poor treatment of us by the continuing students. *I guess I don't have a choice.*

I don't need any kind of special magecraft to dodge their attacks. For now, I suppose I'll prioritize getting revenge for Eliza and Ted.

"Eat this and die!"

"Ha ha! Looks like you're out of breath!"

Nope. Haven't even broken a sweat. If anything, it's you three who are starting to look worn out. It may have seemed like it would be difficult to dodge attacks coming from three different directions, but for two reasons, it actually wasn't.

First, their attacks were simple—completely one-note, as you'd expect of simpletons like them. If they used their heads and tried to cut off my escape

routes, then it might've presented slightly more of a challenge, but they showed no signs of doing that.

The second reason had to do with the court. Rabbits could move around freely within a twenty-meter square. This was more than enough. Given that they had to shoot at me from outside the court, I probably could have dodged their attacks with my eyes closed. *Hm. Now that I think about it, I've been holed up in the library a good deal. I don't think I've gotten any exercise recently. Huh. Phys ed might be a great opportunity for me to get some exercise in.*

"Whoa! That was close! I guess even Master struggles against three people..."

"No. You're wrong, Acorn," Eliza said, realizing something. "Abel hasn't moved a single step."

Heh. Of course she's the one to notice that. It would've been child's play to dodge them using everything that I had on hand, so I'd decided to artificially increase the difficulty by restricting my own movements.

"Crap! We're not gonna finish him off like this!"

"Fine! We'll have to use the formation attack!"

Hm? A what attack? An explanation would be nice. As I thought that, a large number of magic bullets were released around me. *Hm. It seems that they added Scatter to their magecraft composition. What blatant rule-breaking.* Did none of them listen to the explanation earlier? Altering the magecraft composition wasn't allowed.

"How's that?! No way you're dodging this!"

A barrage of magic bullets closed in on me all at once. *I see. It's true that it's hard to find an opening to dodge all of these.* But really, what that meant was that it'd be hard for me to dodge them without using inhuman movements, consequently putting even more of a spotlight on myself than I wanted. Which left me with but one choice. *Remember—you guys are the ones who broke the rules first.*

"Analysis complete. Negation Magecraft."

I analyzed all their magecraft, and instantly negated all of it. This was only

possible when there was a big gap between you and your opponent, so of course, there wasn't a problem using it on these weaklings.

There was a sound like glass breaking, and all the magic bullets shattered. *I wonder...does using Negation Magecraft count as breaking the rules?* Kantre had explained that using magecraft to directly interfere with your opponent wasn't allowed, but he hadn't said anything about interfering with their magecraft. It felt like a gray area.



“Wha— What just happened?!”

“N-No way! Did our Regalias malfunction?!”

A buzzer rang out, signaling the end of the match. The timing was perfect, and made me feel that using Negation Magecraft to endure their attack had been the correct decision. Now, any bystander would’ve just come to the conclusion that there’d been a magecraft overflow, due to their use of appended magecraft compositions they weren’t accustomed to.

“Yeah!!! I knew you could do it, Master! You’re the best in the world!”

“Amazing, Abel! You withstood them all on your own!” Yukari chimed in.

They were acting like we’d already won. It was great that my team was happy, but we couldn’t let our guards down yet. I’d been the only one to survive, which meant that unless we eliminated their entire team on our turn as the Shooters, we’d lose the game. *Now then. What to do?*

◇

After that, there was a five-minute break which we used to switch sides. Usually, teams would use this time to decide which three individuals would be representing them as the Shooters, but we already knew who we would be sending. To begin with, our options were limited in terms of those who would be able to effectively perform as Shooters.

"Yeah! We're gonna make up for our mistakes!"

Eliza giggled. "Now that I can use offensive magic, they'd better say their prayers!"

As lamentable as it was that *these* guys were our best options, our team had decided on Ted, Eliza, and myself. It was regrettable, but unavoidable. While I couldn't really rely on these two, they were at the very least incredibly motivated compared to the others on our team.

"You got this!" Yukari called out.

Oh, right. I almost forgot about this timid, black-haired girl who'd surprisingly gotten fired up in our Rabbit phase. During our team meeting, I'd proposed that we use her instead of the dimwitted Ted, but she'd shot that idea down. *Well, I guess her timid nature wouldn't be a good fit for being on the offensive.*

"Let's get the win, Master!"

"We're gonna show them what happens when we get serious! Get pumped, guys!"

Their heavy breathing made it incredibly easy to tell how excited the two of them were. *Good grief. As much as I would've liked to teach the other side a lesson, I'm not sure how interested I am in continuously making myself stand out.* Ideally, Ted and Eliza would take them all out. If they could pull that off, it would certainly simplify things.

"Pfft! Did you hear that? They're talking about 'getting pumped'!"

"Get with the times! Nobody talks like that anymore."

The court was now occupied by the seven continuing students of the other team, who were now the Rabbits. Their contemptuous stares showed no signs of lessening, but behind that, I sensed confidence. *Hm. They must have*

something up their sleeves if they're acting like this.

Then, the whistle blew, and the next round began.

"Yeah!" one cried, taking the lead. "Let's crush these sewer rats! Phalanx Formation!"

"Roger!" the other six yelled back.

In the next moment, the seven of them gathered in the middle of the court, forming a circle with their backs to each other. *I see. I think I get the gist of their strategy.*

"That just makes you a bigger target! Take this!"

"Like moths to a flame!" Eliza giggled.

Ted fired off a bullet, and then after a short delay, Eliza fired a shot from the other side. They were most likely trying to create confusion for the other team by firing from two separate locations. I exhaled in disappointment. *I can't believe you fell for their trap.*

"Spear-type at ten o'clock!"

"Disk-type at five o'clock!"

Hm. Just as I thought. The reason they'd gathered in one central location was so they could easily share information and eliminate any blind spots.

"I can't hit 'em!" Ted exclaimed.

"Ugh. *We* should be the ones overwhelming them with our magecraft!"

Hm... Looks like we've already hit a snag. The difference between their teamwork and ours was like night and day. They'd probably been building a rapport with each other since they were in the prep school. If they'd only used this formation on the spur of the moment, I would've been able to easily locate weaknesses, but I couldn't.

"Ha ha! These Poison Perches can't even pull off a coordinated pincer attack!"

"They don't know the first thing about formations!"

Hm. Leaving these two to their own devices is just a waste of time. I only wanted to use this as a last resort, but I guess they're forcing my hand.

“Hey, Ted. Lend me your ear.”

“Huh? You got somethin’, Master?!”

I whispered my plan to Ted. Having a strategy meeting in the middle of the match was a severe waste of time, but if we could pull this off, it’d more than make up for it.

“Hey, what are you two up to?!”

Fine. I can see you’re getting exhausted, Eliza. I’ll wrap this up fast.

At my signal, Ted raised his right hand to the sky and began chanting some random words. “Holy lance descended from the heavens! Darkness blacker than twilight! Gather at my palm and release my power from these wretched chains!”

Hold up. What is with the excessive preamble? I decided not to say this out loud and instead focused on quickly composing the magecraft, matching his timing. I produced a normal lance-type magecraft with no elemental affinity. But I tinkered with it such that the same base magecraft composition would be duplicated over and over again, creating so many bullets that it would be impossible for them to avoid. Technically it would’ve been much easier to append a Scatter command into the composition like they had, but that would’ve been against the rules.

“Plummeting Tempest!” Ted swung his arm down, and at that exact moment, I channeled mana into the magecraft composition.

Getting the timing right was crucial. I was trying to make Ted the star here, so it’d all be for nothing if they realized it was me behind the curtain. Making it look as though other people were casting my magecraft was an old trick that I was proficient with even two hundred years ago.

“Wh-What is that?!” one of our opponents said, noticing the magecraft spears above them.

But it was too late. There was a whistling as the spears fell on them like rain. It went without saying that each individual bullet was just your run-of-the-mill non-elemental magecraft, but you know what they say—when it rains, it pours. Even if one of them wasn’t enough to really hurt, a thousand of them would

create more than enough force to cause some pain.

“Agh!!!”

“Argh!!!”

“Grah!!!”

The rain of spears mercilessly crashed down onto them, and the barrage continued even after they were knocked down, inflicting an amount of damage that was admittedly slightly overkill.

Hm... I might *have gone a little overboard. But, in their words, “there’s no rule saying we can’t keep attacking a Rabbit that’s been knocked down*.” It wasn’t as if I’d used an elemental attack that’d inflict any real damage on them. They’d just be in pain for a bit.

“Gah— Please, make it stop,” the leader of their team pleaded pitifully.

He sounded like he was begging for his life. *Well, this is gonna be a source of trauma for them for a while.* I exhaled. Maybe it was because this was the first time in a while that I’d used so much focus, but my body felt heavy.

The world was big, but not big enough for there to be another mage like me, capable of duplicating magecraft that many times in such a short time frame. After the rain of bullets stopped, the training field fell silent. Everyone who’d been focused on our match was stunned, not grasping what had happened.

“Rrgh... Group D are the winners!” After a long pause, our phys ed teacher, who’d been serving as the referee, bitterly declared us the winners.

And then we were met with explosive applause.

“Holy crap! Who *is* that blond kid?!”

“There might be a dodging *and* attacking prodigy amongst this year’s transfer students!”

Well, that’s just how it goes. Thanks to making Ted take all the glory, I was able to successfully pass relatively unnoticed.

◇

At the same time, elsewhere, Emerson was in his personal underground

laboratory. The maverick mage and young prodigy was using his self-made terminal to watch footage on its crystal screen.

“Intriguing... It seems that you’ve increased your inventory,” said the old man who was visiting Emerson.

He was the headmaster of the academy, Mikhael. Emerson’s laboratory was strongly secured by a barrier of his own design which prevented people without permission from entering.

“Welcome, Headmaster. Please have a seat,” Emerson said, gesturing to a space. “I’m sorry it’s so cluttered in here.”

“Don’t be. I don’t mind one bit.”

However, Emerson wasn’t trying to be humble—he simply wasn’t the type of person who cleaned up after himself. It was to the point that his belongings littered the floor, leaving little to no clear space for one to even walk upon.

“Oh? Professor Emerson, it seems as if you are looping the same clip. Are you investigating something?”

Emerson had been watching a video of the phys ed class where Abel had used offensive magecraft. By using a Regalia he’d developed himself, he’d been able to perfectly record a video of the Hunt.

“Look. Right here,” he said, pointing to the crystal monitor, which was as thin as glass.

On the screen was a blond-haired boy, chanting with hand raised high. Then, in the next moment, non-elemental arrows with a large amount of mana poured into them manifested. Emerson began replaying that scene on repeat.

“Did you see it?” Emerson asked.

“Hrm— D-Did he...”

After a few loops, Mikhael finally noticed what was strange about the scene. The magecraft that had decided the match hadn’t been released by the blond boy. The flow of magic had been so quick that it was hard to spot, but it was instead Abel who’d crafted the attack from a short distance away.

“Such wonderful Masking Magecraft! Anyone but myself would’ve been

completely fooled," Emerson said, staring sharply at the screen from behind his glasses.

However, the Masking Magecraft wasn't the only surprise. Using non-elemental magecraft was difficult, and controlling it without a Regalia was considered near impossible. At the very least, Emerson had never met anyone who could do it so easily.

"Hrm. Professor Emerson, what... No, *who* is Abel?"

"No clue. There's nothing I can conclusively say at this point, but please rest assured, I'll uncover his true identity!"

The headmaster had asked him to investigate Abel. As the headmaster himself was a descendant of the Wind Hero, Roy, he was suspicious that Abel may have been the very same Amber-Eyed Mage that was mentioned in letters left to him and Roy's other descendants.

"What about this footage?"

"It comes from a reconnaissance drone that I developed. It allows me to learn more about Abel in real time."

There was a feed of Abel reading a book in the library.

"Impressive. This is truly very amazing technology. I'm sure we are within arm's reach of discovering who Abel really is."

"Well... I'm not so sure about that."

At that very moment, Abel slowly got up from his seat and opened the library window. Unexpectedly, Abel looked right at the drone, which was approximately a hundred meters away. Then in the next moment, there was an explosion. Abel had shot down the scouting device with his magecraft. The monitor went dark and all that was left was the sound of static.

"This is the third time that's happened," Emerson said, not sounding too surprised. "I had a feeling this still wouldn't be good enough. Maybe next, I'll try a hundred and fifty meters away. I'll have to upgrade it."

Emerson's eyes sparkled with excitement like a young boy's. It was hard to believe that this was the same man who always seemed so lethargic.

Hm... I may need to revise my appraisal of Abel, Mikhael thought.

Just who *was* Abel, to have captivated the genius known in modern times as the young lion? The mysteries surrounding Abel only seemed to deepen.

◇

Allow me to recount the events that followed that phys ed class. My life became extremely peaceful. At the very least, the continuing students stopped trying to mess with us.

“Master, it’s almost lunchtime.”

“Hm? Oh, so it is.”

“Wanna eat in the cafeteria? They’re serving a special, limited-time meal!”

Hm. I’ll admit I’m slightly intrigued. Ted had a palate that was somewhat on the refined side, most likely due to his upbringing in a noble house. So if Ted was excited about the meal, then there was a decent chance that it would actually be good.

“Hey, look over there.”

As Ted and I made our way to the cafeteria, we were met with curious looks from the students around us. This was just how things had been recently. Ever since that phys ed class, Eliza, Ted, and I were getting weird looks from a lot of the continuing students.

“Look! It’s one of the recently famous G three members—the demon king, Ted!”

“*That’s* him? The one who beat the continuing students to a pulp during their Hunt match, right?”

Good grief. Even I could never have predicted that there’d come a day when Ted of all people was called the demon king. If Ted *had* been the demon king, I could take him out in under two seconds.

“Nice to meet you! I’m Ted! We’re in the same class, right?” Ted called out to one of the continuing students, noticing his gaze.

“U-Uh, yes,” the student replied, a little shaken.

“How’d you like a snowball as a sign of our friendship? It’s my hometown’s specialty!” Ted said, pulling out a snowball from the pocket of his uniform.

You’re really still carrying those around? Even with all the prejudice the continuing students have shown, you still haven’t given up on your plan to make a hundred friends?

“Eek! Thank you! I wanna try it so bad!”

“Please don’t hurt us!”



After accepting the snowballs from Ted, the students scattered like spiderlings. I'd only find out later that, among the continuing students, there was a rumor that you'd be met with gruesome retribution if you dared refuse the snowball offered by the Demon King Ted. Apparently, the snowballs had become a symbol of fear among the continuing students.

"Sheesh. It's so weird how they've been acting all nervous around us recently."

"About that, Ted, I might be able to fill you in a bit..."

"But y'know, thinkin' back to when they refused my snowballs, it just shows how much closer we've gotten. It's an improvement!"

I fell silent. *Hm. He's seeing this in a positive light, so maybe it'd be uncouth of me to tell him what's really going on.* At any rate, with this, the long-lasting issues of the continuing students towards the transfer students had been solved.

Chapter 5

Fedia's Worries

Fedia was lauded by others and herself as a highly respected and beautiful instructor at Arthlia Academy of Magecraft. Students respected her as someone who had explanations that were easy to understand. Her abilities were also highly valued by the academy, which made her a chief instructor at the young age of twenty-seven. Not only did she have laudable morals, she was also gifted with both intelligence and beauty.

This woman, who possessed traits that were the envy of all, had recently begun worrying about something. After her commute from an apartment she was renting in the western district of the royal capital, she was now walking through a hall, towards the staff room entrance.

Finding the person she wanted to talk to, she quickly approached her. "Lilith. A moment?" Even without seeing her face, it was easy to identify Lilith by her voluptuous body, which she was proud of. As of this spring, she'd begun working at Arthlia as an instructor. Her work background was a mystery, and so was her education. Aside from the fact that she'd been eagerly hired through a recommendation from the superintendent, she was shrouded in mystery.

"About the documents I asked you for..."

"Oh, I submitted them this morning."

"Thanks. You're always such a big help."

At first, many were opposed to her hiring because they thought she'd gotten the position through nepotism. Now, though, everyone recognized her talents and acknowledged her abilities. Of course, Fedia was one of those people. Fedia felt that Lilith was perfect—perhaps almost too much so, to the point that it was suspicious.

"Morning, Lilith." As Lilith and Fedia entered the staff room, the first person to greet her was Kantre.

“Good morning, Professor Kantre.”

“Man, you’re as stunning as always. You free tonight? I know a good place in the central district with great beer!”

“I apologize, but I’ll have to decline your offer,” Lilith replied, before shuffling off to her seat as if running away from him.

This wasn’t a new sight. Kantre had a history of hitting on any woman who caught his fancy—and now, he’d restricted his focus to Lilith and Lilith alone.

“Gah ha ha! Man, that Lilith. I got turned down again.”

No matter how perfect a being Lilith was, if this kept up, she would eventually be worn down by Kantre’s daily sexual harassment. With that in mind, Fedia took it upon herself as the more senior instructor to ensure that Lilith wouldn’t have to endure it anymore.

“Professor Kantre, could I ask that you stop persistently asking her out?”

“Oh? How rare. You’ve never started a conversation with me before.” Despite the warning, Kantre didn’t seem to care whatsoever. Instead, he began looking Fedia’s body up and down. “Don’t tell me you’re jealous?”

For a moment, Fedia fell silent with confusion. “Huh? You’re not making sense.”

“What a shame. You’ve got a rockin’ bod, but you’re just not quite my type. If only you were three or so years younger...”

Fedia was dumbfounded by his unprompted statements, which left her no room to respond. Though it was true that, in this country, a single woman at the age of twenty-seven was considered “old” and “past her prime,” it was also true that these days people were marrying later and later. That being said, a lot of women still got married in their teens and had children in their early twenties. The majority of Fedia’s friends from her days as a student had already gotten married and started their own families. She felt completely left in the dust.

“Don’t worry. It’s not a race. I’m sure you’ll meet a wonderful person too one day!” Kantre said, with a pitying look.

Though Fedia’d intended to help out the new instructor, Lilith, it now felt like

she needed some help of her own.

Wh-What a day... This may be the first time I've endured such humiliation. Fedia walked away in a daze.

◇

As soon as classes let out, Fedia made a beeline for the gym underneath the academy to work off all the stress she'd built up over the course of the day. It was common for Ashen-Eyed mages like her to be obsessed with workouts.

Damn it. Damn that pudgy man! How dare he look down on me! Fedia internally cursed at Kantre while continuously lifting a barbell with forty-kilogram weights on either end. Contrary to what one might have thought, she was by no means someone who didn't catch the eyes of the opposite sex. In fact, she'd had admirers since her student days. However, perhaps due to her strict personality and her rigidness about rules, none of her relations ever turned romantic. This continued until she had reached her current age—an age where she was considered "past her prime."

Who the hell cares about meeting a "wonderful person"?! Mind your own goddamn business! Fedia was currently twenty-seven years old and had no delusions about the reality of her situation. She was very aware that there would not be a day when a prince on a white horse appeared and swept her off her feet.

Urgh! I'm gonna give my body a thorough workout today! She liked muscles—they couldn't betray her. After accepting the hard truth of reality, she'd thrown herself into working out.

Hm? I know this sound. As she was in the midst of partially giving into despair while raising the barbell, she heard the sound of shoes tapping against the ground as someone ran. *Is that...?* She looked over and saw Abel using the treadmill.

Him again? I feel like I've seen him every day. I'm impressed. Students these days rarely trained their stamina, perhaps because they didn't like exercise, but Abel was obviously an exception. She found him curious. The treadmill he was using was the machine that put the most strain on the body. It was rare to see someone use it without showing their exertion on their face.

His form is beautiful. He might be slender, but he's perfectly toned. Fedia got the impression that he had most likely trained himself daily before starting at the academy. The beautiful outline of Abel's body stirred something in the muscle-crazed Fedia.

No. No, no. It's unbecoming of me to be stricken by that! No matter how adultlike Abel seemed, he was more than a decade younger than Fedia. It was not right for an instructor to view a student as anything other than a student. But as she had that thought, tragedy struck. She lost focus, and the dumbbell slipped out of her sweaty palms and began falling towards her.

"Gah—!"

She'd been careless. The barbell she trained with every day weighed a total of approximately a hundred kilograms. Even with body fortification magecraft active, that weight would've been enough to cause some damage.

"Are you okay, Professor?"

"Hm?!"

In the next moment, Fedia couldn't believe the sight that greeted her eyes. Abel had easily caught the barbell and lifted it away from her without even breaking a sweat. Her eyes widened in shock. It would've taken two grown men to lift the barbell, but he'd done it by himself. *How?! Are his muscles secretly incredibly trained?* Fedia was at a loss.

"U-Uh... Th-Th-Th..." As much as she wanted to say "thank you," looking at Abel made her extremely nervous, and she found that she was unable to force out the words.

"You seem kinda off today, Professor. You don't seem as focused as you usually are."

Fedia fell silent, her face turning crimson at Abel's comment. "Y-You were watching me?"



“I was. It’s usually just you and me in here around this time, after all.”

This was where Fedia realized that she’d been laboring under a misunderstanding. To her, Abel had seemed like someone who didn’t care about anyone else, and didn’t even bother looking at them. But that wasn’t the truth. He’d been watching her carefully, to the point that he’d jumped in to help her when seeing that danger was about to befall her.

“Uh... W-Well... Th-Thank you...”

Finally, Fedia was able to squeeze these words out. But for some reason, she began to feel as if the age at which she would get married was being pushed even further down the road.

Chapter 6

Sightseeing in the Royal Capital

Today was the first real break I'd had since starting at the academy. Though there had been many a weekend until now, I'd been so busy trying to stabilize my life here that I hadn't had any time to take a breather. As much as I'd have liked to use this rare freedom to hole up in my room and read, I'd unfortunately already made plans.

"Hey, how about we go out on the weekend? I wanna thank you for helping me study," Eliza had said to me in the library that night.

As promised, I'd have her show me around the royal capital. She'd made it abundantly clear how knowledgeable she was about the best food options, but there'd also been talks of visiting secondhand bookstores. Either way, going to the heart of the city and experiencing the culture of the modern world for myself would do me good.

However, there was but one problem. According to academy rules, students needed to submit an excursion request form if they wanted to leave the school grounds. The academy apparently didn't usually reject these requests, but I heard that it got a little dicey if you happened to submit a form on the day that a certain annoying professor was on duty. *I hope I luck out.*

"Master Abel, is something the matter?"

It looked like my prayers had been answered. A familiar face called out to me as I walked up to the gate.

"Lilith... What are you up to?"

She was sitting in a chair by the gate with a book, looking like she had nothing but time on her hands.

"Oh, I've been posted here to ensure students only exit the premises with the proper permission."

"I see. Got it."

This works in my favor. If that one professor with a bad attitude had been on duty, there'd have been a nonzero possibility that I'd be prevented from going out. And Kantre, especially, would have had a high possibility of refusing to give me his permission. I'd been prepared for the worst possible situation, but now I didn't have to be, since Lilith would be adjudicating.

"Could you approve this for me?"

"You're going to the city? That's...unusual."

"Yeah, I have some business there."

I must be seeing things. I could've sworn she looked a little upset when she took the form from me.

"By the way... Your classmate Eliza came by a little earlier and submitted a request as well."

Hm? What's going on? There's something off about her today. Specifically, I think this might be the first time I've heard her talk about any other student besides me. Hm, this is kinda amusing. Let's poke the bear a little.

"Oh, really? What a coincidence."

"Will you be spending your time with this Eliza girl?"

"Hm. Couldn't say."

"Master Abel, could I...have you come over here for a moment?"

Lilith's next actions took me by complete surprise. She suddenly pulled me into the shadow of the trees by the school gate.

"Hey, what are you—"

"Master Abel... Pardon me."

Just as I was about to ask her for an explanation, she covered my lips with hers. A slightly sweet aroma filled my mouth.

"Haa... Mnff... Master Abel..."

Hm. Do the words "public decency" not exist in this woman's vocabulary? I was sure I'd firmly warned her not to pull these kinds of antics at school. Our relationship was top secret and not to be revealed to anyone under any

circumstances. I, of course, had no intention of ever telling anyone about us myself. It went without saying that this was because we were now student and teacher. If others knew about our true relationship, things would get really annoying.

"Oh, look. Isn't that Professor Lilith?"

"It is! I wonder what she's up to."

I couldn't help but sigh. *Look. We're already in a bad situation.* Though we were hidden in the shadows of the trees, it wasn't like we were invisible. I heard the footsteps of the curious female students closing in on us. Lilith, on the other hand, noticed that they were approaching a little later than I would've liked, and frantically removed her lips from mine.

"Abel, how many times must I explain that excursion requests must be submitted in advance? To be honest, I've always had the impression that you lack an awareness of what it means to be a student at an academy as prestigious and storied as Arthlia Academy. In the first place..."

Good grief. I have to hand it to her. It's impressive that she can come up with a speech like this at the drop of a hat. But also, I think you're *the one without an awareness of what it means to be a professor at this academy, given that you're laying hands on one of your students.*

"Oh, she's lecturing a student?"

"What did *you* think she was doing? Well... Honestly, I guess I was kinda hoping for the same kinda thing you were thinking of."

After that, the girls left, believing that I was just getting a stern talking-to.

"What's the big idea?" I exhaled.

Even *I'd* freaked out a little. We were lucky because we detected them quickly enough, but if we'd even been a second or two late, it would've been a disaster.

"My deepest apologies. I suddenly desired physical intimacy with you, Master Abel."

Don't say that with a straight face. I couldn't help but wonder why she'd kissed me, though. Well, I guess even with my lack of romantic experience, I

wasn't so dense as to not know the answer. Obviously, she'd gotten jealous after learning that I was spending the day with Eliza.

"Just so you are aware, I'm not by any means jealous," she said, out of the blue.

It was as if she'd read my mind. "Hm? Jealous?"

"Yes. I'm not jealous."

"Well, this is rare. I've never seen you so flustered."

"A-At any rate, your excursion request is approved, so please be careful during your time off campus," Lilith said, before turning on her heel and rushing off as if she was running away from me.

Hm. I might have discovered an unexpected weakness of hers. She usually looked calm and composed, but it was apparently extremely embarrassing for her if she was perceived as being jealous, enough to make her act strangely. *I wonder why.* All the same, I couldn't help but think that it was slightly cute.

◇

After receiving permission to go to the city, I slowly walked along the riverbank. *Hm. Looks like I still have some time until we're supposed to meet up.* I decided to take in the sights while walking towards the central district of the royal capital.

The western district was home not only to our academy, but also various research facilities and other academies. Thanks to that, I caught sight of a mix of students wearing the familiar Arthlia academy uniform, as well as others wearing uniforms I'd never seen before. I glanced at them as I continued towards the central district.

At the end of the stone-paved path that was as blue as if it'd been imbued with lazulite was the clock tower where we said we'd meet up. *Hm... I guess I got here a little early. Looks like there's still time before eleven o'clock.* But then again, it seemed as if the person I was supposed to be meeting up with had already arrived.

"Sorry. Wait long?" I asked, pushing through the crowd to get to her.

Though she was wearing the usual school uniform, the backdrop of the clock tower gave her a different aura than usual. It was almost frustrating how picturesque she looked despite hardly trying at all.

“No. I just got here, but...”

“Yeah?”

“I’m a little surprised,” she said. “I never thought I’d hear you apologize.”

I exhaled. *No filter as usual. Just what does she think of me?*

“Okay, let’s go,” she went on. “I’ll be your guide for the day.”

Uh-huh. My “guide”? I felt a little pathetic having to rely on this little girl to get around, but what else was I to do? I wanted to get to the central district as quickly as possible and learn more about how modern culture had shaped up. I still wasn’t sure what had possessed her to invite me out, but I intended to use her kindness to my advantage.

“For starters... Oh, I know! Since we’re already here, how about we check out this clock tower? There’s an observation deck inside!”

“Sure. That works for me.”

Apparently it was called the “Ruwen Commemorative Clock Tower.” However, it wasn’t obvious who or what exactly it had been built to commemorate. At the very least, “Ruwen” wasn’t a name I’d seen or heard about two hundred years ago.

“Hey, Abel, did you know that on clear days like this one, you can see all of the royal capital from the clock tower?”

Eliza explained this to me with childlike excitement as we climbed the narrow stairs of the tower. As we did, I noticed a slightly interesting-looking device. *Neat. That* does *look like fun.* I began inspecting the insides of the large clock. I felt captivated by the springs of varying sizes and the continuously moving anchors. The large contraption was so well put together that I felt I could’ve stared at its mysterious majesty for hours on end.

“Look! We can see all the way to the ocean from here today!” Eliza said from a little ways ahead, as she looked out a small window.

Hm. Looks like we're blessed by the advent of spring weather. It was easy to see the bright twinkle of the ocean from here. *Hm? What's that floating on top of it? A...boat? No...*

"What's that?" I asked.

"Huh? You mean the steamboat? Don't you know what they are?"

"Oh—the boats that use magic stones as their fuel to move across the ocean, right?"

Said boat blew out a plume of smoke so thick that it could've been mistaken for a cloud. The fact that we could see the boat so clearly from here meant it must've been decently large.

I decided to ask Eliza about some other of the big and small things I'd noticed. Thankfully, despite having some superfluous words in her explanations, she answered each of my inquiries. *Hm. I'll admit it—having Eliza here is actually somewhat helpful.* Most of my knowledge came from what I'd gleaned from all the books I'd read, but it was completely different actually seeing things in person. I got the feeling that today would encompass all kinds of different experiences.

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There was no denying it. There were a lot of things that surprised me as Eliza and I walked through the royal capital. Though I'd thought that I at least had a basic grasp on modern culture from my studies, in reality, that wasn't remotely the case. As we made our way through the streets, I saw many a thing that I had no clue about—and the biggest example of that was the shop we were currently standing in front of.

"What's this?" I curiously asked Eliza, who was next to me.

It was a mysterious store emitting a lot of loud clicking and clacking noises. The customer base seemed incredibly varied—old and young, female and male, and even students gathered inside.

"Mm... I'm not sure how to explain it. It's apparently known by the locals as a 'game center.'"

“Game center? What do people do here?”

“People with time on their hands come here to kill time and waste money.”

I still don’t get what this mysterious store is. Her explanation actually kinda makes me more curious. Sure, the level of mages had fallen drastically, but society had definitely made strides in terms of developing entertainment. Most likely, after all the years of peace, the general mindset had shifted from an interest in fighting to an interest in recreation.

“Since we’re here, should we check it out?” I asked.

“Yeah, sure. Truth be told, I haven’t really been here before.”

We passed through the automatic doors and were met with a very unique atmosphere. In this space isolated from the outside world, they had card games and even chess, a tabletop game that I was aware of. But also, there was something in the back that held the attention of the most customers by far.

It was a strange-looking tool that continuously made loud clicking noises. I’d read about this before in a book. More than likely, it was a slot machine. This is how it worked: The player would first purchase tokens, which they could insert into the slot machines, thus placing a bet. The slots would then spin and had a possibility of stopping on a certain pattern which would result in a payout that would increase the number of tokens you had, which could then be exchanged for real currency.

Personally, I didn’t really get the appeal, but it seemed that customers were hooked on the potential of hitting it big. As a result, they poured a lot of tokens into it.

Suddenly, a decorative skeleton began clattering as it spoke. “Hey kids, come back when you’re older if you wanna play the slot machines. Swing by the all-ages area for games you can play!”

Thanks, you nosy skeleton. I glanced towards the slot machines. The customers playing seemed almost possessed. What were they so obsessed with? Though I was interested, maybe it was best not to try to understand what was going through their minds.

“How do I put this...? Whatever world they’re in is...really something.”

“Yeah,” I agreed. “It’s like a completely different culture.”

We moved towards the all-ages area as instructed by the skeleton, passing through a set of regular doors to get there. This place had a completely different atmosphere. As opposed to the tension of the previous area, it felt very relaxed and was filled with bright lights.

“Oh, hey! There’s something that looks fun over there!” Eliza said, pointing to a strange contraption—a clear, square box.

At the top, there was a part that looked like a dragon’s arm. *Hm. I think I’ve read about this before too. If I remember right, it’s called a “crane game.”*

“Whoa! Look! They have Minimum Monsters! I love this series!”

Inside the machines were deformed plushies of monsters. *Huh? I think I might recognize this one.*

“What exactly is a Minimum Monster?”

Looking like she’d been waiting for me to ask, Eliza immediately began explaining. “They’re a series of legendary magic beasts that used to exist, turned into mascot characters. There are over two hundred types! They’re really popular with the younger crowd in the city.”

“Uh-huh... I see.” This explained why they seemed so familiar. The different kinds of plushies inside were all monsters I’d fought in the past. “The one I like the most is this one—Jamis. No contest. Sure, it might not have the kind of appearance that’ll make girls squeal about how cute it is, but I bet it’d be a strong opponent in a fight.”

I see. That’s a really fitting opinion for someone like Eliza, who’s only interested in strong opponents.

“You’re right. The real version is really strong.”

It had the head of a lion, but a body of a snake, and had come about due to mutations caused by rampaging magical elements that had burst from the ground. Its full length was about five meters, which was on the larger side for magic beasts. One of the most annoying things about it was that its breath had special properties—this breath could petrify organic matter, which meant that

regular adventurers with swords had difficulty dealing with it. Usually, the party of heroes I was with were dispatched to take them out. *Sheesh, thinking back, those monsters were such a pain.* By the time we arrived, they'd usually already have petrified multiple villages.

"Their stone breath is a pain to deal with, but using wind magecraft gave us an avenue to ultimately take them out. But then after that, I had to develop anti-petrification magecraft to help the villagers. Man, I remember struggling with that."

Eliza's eyes met mine. *Hm. I can't believe I slipped up like that.* I'd grown excited talking about a strong enemy that I'd fought in the past. It was a bad habit of mine. In general, humans have a tendency to be more loose-lipped when talking about something they enjoy, and back then, one of the things I'd enjoyed the most was fighting.

Suddenly, Eliza giggled. "I never took you as one to make these kinds of jokes. Color me surprised."

"Yeah... A joke..." My little anecdote had been based on my own real experiences, but for now, I was more than happy to let her think it'd all been a joke.

Eliza gazed at the Jamis plush behind the glass and sighed. "Do you think I'm weird? There are a lot of cuter monsters in there that I should want instead."

Hm. I never imagined Eliza to be the type to say things appropriate for a girl her age. Just like her peers, she was probably worried about straying from what was considered normal.

"I don't think you're particularly weird or anything. After all, the most important thing isn't what's on the outside, but the essence that's on the inside."

"Right. That's true," Eliza, seemingly pleased with what I'd said, furiously nodded in agreement.

Honestly, a Jamis isn't cute in the slightest, but the plush's design—a deformed version of its real self—is much easier to love.

Eliza sighed. "I don't know why, but the twisty lines of its body really tug at

my heartstrings.”

She continued to lean over shamelessly, sticking her butt out so she could stare at the Jamis plush. *Good grief. You should really have more awareness of how you’re presenting yourself to the people around you.* There were quite a few guys who’d begun staring at Eliza’s defenseless figure.

“You want it?”

“Huh?” Eliza, perhaps not expecting me to make a guess that was right on the money, was clearly surprised.

Fine. I’ll grab it real quick and then we can get away from here. I pulled out my leather wallet from my uniform’s pocket.

“I-I do want it, but...it’s impossible! That small arm isn’t enough to grab that big plush!”

Eliza had a point, but also, I’d noticed that this machine with the Minimum Monsters in them must’ve been popular, because there were traces of people playing a countless number of times. There were some plushes in the middle that’d been knocked over, but it seemed none of them had been won. Following a hunch, I used Inspect to study the construction and mechanisms of the machine.

I knew it. It’s constructed so that you can’t win. The strength of the arm was set to the lowest value, meaning it didn’t matter how much money you put in—it wasn’t grabbing anything. They’d also purposely made it difficult to control the arm. *I’m almost surprised by how openly fraudulent this is. But I’m relieved. Now I can do what I want without any guilt.*

“Didn’t you know? Being a mage is all about making the impossible possible.”

It’s not, however, about stealing plushies. I inserted the designated amount of tokens into the machine, then used magecraft to fortify the arm’s grip. Then, all I had to do was operate the arm and move it close to the Jamis.

The arm easily seized the prize, picked it up, and dropped it into the prize chute, whereupon it rolled out of the machine. Just like that, I’d obtained a plushie, letting the curtain fall on my very anticlimactic rematch with the Jamis that’d been over two hundred years in the making.

“Here. This is the one you wanted, right?”

“Huh?” she said, dumbfounded as she accepted it from me. She looked as if she wanted to ask a question. But eventually, she hid her mouth with the plushie and began to speak slowly.

“I...I guess I’ll take it. I’ll treasure it.”



After obtaining the stuffed animal, we left the game center. *Hm, Eliza hasn't looked at me even once after that. I wonder why I'm getting a weird distant feeling from her.*

Chapter 7

Eating Crepes

After leaving the game center, Eliza avoided looking at me for a little while. The only thing that got her acting like her usual self again was when we entered a certain restaurant. The food that was brought to us was all extremely unfamiliar to me. Amongst these was an item that was apparently called a "crepe"—lightly baked flour with fruits, cream, and other sweets crammed inside.

"Mm!!! It's so good! The crepes from Hakurendo really are out of this world!" Eliza was grinning from ear to ear, her cheeks puffing out as she ate her crepe, which was filled with strawberries and cream.

How much can this girl eat? Before coming here, we'd stopped by a few food stalls as well. It was starting to become clear to me why she was so well developed for her age.

Eliza and I ate our crepes while sitting on the sparsely populated terrace outside of the store. I'd ordered a bitter chocolate and almond crepe, and from what I could tell, I'd made the right choice. It had just the right amount of sweetness, making it easy to eat.

"Hey, can I have a bite?"

I sighed. It seemed that the tradition of being enticed by the food that someone else had ordered hadn't changed in the last two hundred years.

"Sure. Here." I stuck out my crepe to Eliza.

She took a huge bite of it. "Mm! This is really good too! Want a bite of mine?"

"Yeah. Thanks."

I chewed off a bit of her whipped cream crepe as she held it out to me. *Hm. This is pretty sweet, but that's not coming from the sugar. No—this was made taking into account the natural sweetness of milk.* I wasn't a huge fan of sweets, but I was getting the feeling that I could eat all of the crepes on their menu

without issue.

“Whaddya think? Good?”

“Yeah. It’s delicious.”

Eliza giggled. “I know, right? This place is my number one recommendation!” She proudly puffed out her chest. The way she boasted, it was as though she’d made the crepes herself.

“I gotta say, I’m surprised. I thought you’d care more.”

“Hm? About what?”

“Well, I’m not really familiar with this way of thinking, but I read in a book that apparently, placing your mouth on the same location that someone else’s mouth just was constitutes something called an ‘indirect kiss.’”

Eliza’s face suddenly turned red. *Hm? Don’t tell me that you were so entranced by the food that you didn’t even realize. You really are a gluttonous monster. I know you’re a big eater, but this is beyond even my expectations.*

“Sorry, I said something uncouth...”

“I-I-It’s whatever! I-Indirect k-kisses are totally normal! There’s absolutely nothing to be bothered by, not in the least!”

“Oh? Okay, that’s good.”

It was plain as day how flustered she was, but if she was going to deny it, then I wasn’t about to press any further.



Between Lilith's actions and now Eliza's, I was reminded that I really had no clue how the female heart worked.

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After finishing my crepe, I enjoyed a cup of herbal tea. *Hm. I gotta say, this place isn't all that bad. No wonder Eliza recommended it.* I was impressed not just by the high-quality ingredients they used, but also the aesthetics and overall atmosphere. Very chic. But the thing I enjoyed the most was the outdoor terrace where you could get a good view of the city.

"The atmosphere around this street's kinda different from other places in the city."

"Oh, you can tell? Yeah, this street is special, even here in the capital."

Special, huh? Yeah, it definitely feels that way. The large polished stones that they used for the road, the unevenness of the stone walls, the windows with lattices and old-fashioned lanterns that evenly lined the street—it was a view unique to this area. There was only one word that came to mind seeing this.

"It feels pretty retro," she said.

"It's nostalgic," I said, at the same time.

"Huh?" she replied.

"Hm?" I replied, at the same time.

Ah. What's nostalgic to me is retro to people in the modern world. Eliza looked at me, an obvious look of suspicion on her face.

"Abel, if you don't mind me asking... Who exactly are you?"

I wasn't sure if this was coming from her too soon or too late, but either way, the dreaded question had finally been asked. I wasn't sure how best to answer. The only person who knew that I'd reincarnated myself from two hundred years in the past was Lilith. Of course, I didn't *have* to keep it a secret, but I didn't want it to spread too much either, or the risk of me being dragged into annoying situations would grow. Given that I wanted to live a peaceful life, especially while I was a student, such a development would be completely contrary to that goal.

Good grief. Really? Right now? Before I continued with the conversation, there was something I needed to take care of.

“Eliza, would you mind moving a little to the side?”

“Sure. L-Like this?”

“Yeah. Perfect.”

After quickly ascertaining the coordinates of my target, I constructed my magecraft. *Let’s see... The target is about two hundred meters away? At this distance, using a basic magecraft like Fireball and then appending Projectile Acceleration should be sufficient. I don’t even need to confirm the hit—there’s zero chance that I’ll miss.*

“Huh?”

“Sorry, there was a bug.”

Good grief. I’m getting tired of all these people trying to sniff around me. To a certain extent, I turned a blind eye to it when we were in school, but I drew the line at them trying to observe me on my day off. It was about time that I came up with a counterstrategy. Whoever was persistently trying to surveil me was starting to get on my last nerve.

“Abel, did you actually just use your full strength right now?”

Hm? Full strength? Maybe. I might have put a little more power into that magecraft than I had when Eliza and I had sparred. But the Regalia I’d shot down could move pretty quickly. If I’d pulled any punches, it might have dodged. But also, I felt a little insulted. *You really think* that *is what my magecraft’s like at full strength?*

“Ridiculous. You think anyone would get serious just to get rid of a bug?”

“Th-That’s true... Ah!”

Suddenly, the teacup she was holding slid out of her hand. The dishes that they used here were obviously not something you could buy at a store. They had a unique feel to them that really conveyed the owner’s personality.

Good grief. It’ll be a whole lot of bother if we get into trouble because of this. I quickly extended my hand and caught the teacup right before it hit the ground.

“Got it. Hold it more carefully next time, okay?”

“Th-Thanks...”

Now then. What were we talking about again? I took another sip of my herbal tea and tried to return to the original topic. “Sorry, we got off track.”

“No, it’s okay.”

“Hm?”

“You can just forget it. I’d appreciate it if you did.”

I sighed. Her heart’s so mercurial. But it was certainly more convenient for me this way. I didn’t really have any intention of telling the truth right now, nor did I want to make up some difficult lie about where I came from.

So, just like that, our day of touring the royal capital ended without incident. With our sightseeing goals accomplished, we left the central district together.

Chapter 8

Abel versus Chronos

As Eliza and I walked back to the dorms, I once again noticed the unsettling gaze of someone observing me. *Hm... This isn't the usual Regalia. It's obviously a person. Are they finally getting off their asses and coming at me? Well, this is convenient. At last, I can be free of this long, pointless game of cat and mouse.*

"Sorry, Eliza, but could you go ahead without me?"

"Huh? Why?"

"Sorry, I forgot something I needed to do in the city."

Whoever was watching me, it didn't seem like they had any interest in Eliza. Knowing that, it seemed better to send her away than to get her mixed up in whatever trouble was about to happen.

"Okay. I'll see you tomorrow then, Abel."

"Yeah. Get home safe."

Though she seemed a little disappointed, she turned on her heel and continued walking towards the school by herself.

"Okay. We're alone. Show yourselves."

As it turned out, two people had been observing me. They didn't seem like excellent wizards or anything, but considering the state of the modern mage, they probably were "capable" by modern standards. At the very least, they might've been some of the better mages I'd seen in this world so far.

"So, you realized what we were after and let the girl escape? I like boys who are quick on the uptake."

The first person was a woman who was about 170 centimeters tall, with Ashen Eyes. *Interesting.* She'd appeared from the surrounding environment as if she'd been camouflaged. She must've used Ashen-Eyed magecraft to alter the appearance of her body to match her surroundings. My guess was that her

being in such a skimpy outfit was her way of raising the potency of the magecraft, even if the effect was small. Changing the color of her clothes was delving into Obsidian Eye territory, however, which she wouldn't have been as proficient at despite the fact that it was conceptually similar to changing the color of her skin. When using magecraft outside of one's specialty, there were bound to be some rough edges.

"Ha! I must be gettin' old! Can't believe a brat managed to sense us!"

The second person, a man seemingly in his midthirties, had his legs wrapped around a branch and was hanging from it upside down. He had Verdant Eyes, which meant he was a mage who specialized in wind magecraft. His attire greatly resembled traditional shinobi garb, which was particular to an eastern island.

Verdant-Eyed mages specialized in fortifying their speed through the use of wind-element magecraft. Judging by how he'd tailed me using traditional methods, I surmised there was a high chance that his fighting style was orthodox.

"No wonder this brat's caught the interest of *that* guy. I'm very interested in his talent."

"Gimme a break! The kid's gotta be a monster if he figured out we were followin' him."

I understood something from their conversation. It hadn't been their idea to follow me, but rather, they'd done it at the behest of someone else. I already had a faint idea of who'd requested them to follow me. *Maybe I should start by checking with them.*

"Who hired you? What's your objective?"

The middle-aged man smirked. "Sorry, kid, but we're pros. We won't give up the person who hired us, even under threat of death."

"Is that right?" *Well, that works for me. It'd be boring if they blurted out the name that easily.*

"Anyway, kid—sorry, but we're gonna kill ya," the man said.

“I can’t believe a cute kid like this is our target... It *really* gets me going.”

The two assassins took out their respective Regalias and assumed fighting stances. *Hm. I truly feel bad for them. It’s really unfortunate for them that they’ll be the first ones I fight with my full strength, as a way to dispel this built-up frustration. You two are the first good-quality toys I’ve had in two hundred years. Sorry, but I don’t get the feeling that I’m going to be able to hold back at all.*

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No human in this world would pick a fight with an insect. Just as how no one tries to converse with monkeys or stars, this man didn’t try to discuss magecraft with anyone else, because there was nobody who could understand him.

Emerson was a prodigy who stood at the top of the world of modern mages, with an unparalleled knowledge of magecraft. And his propensity for it showed from a young age. Before he even began attending school, he’d taken apart the Regalias he received from his parents and created new ones. Then, as soon as he started at school, he’d developed Regalias which were more convenient than before and could produce even more powerful magecrafts. All his inventions were revolutionary.

“Being a prodigy must be really nice...”

“Sorry, I don’t really understand what you’re talking about.”

“Hey, don’t you think he’s gotten kinda full of himself recently?”

“Tch. I bet he looks down on us for not being prodigies like him.”

But being an overwhelming genius sometimes results in proportionately overwhelming feelings of isolation. When Emerson entered a magecraft academy, he tried his hardest to get people to understand him, but eventually, he came to a realization. Why should *he* have to lower his level to match others, who were inferior to him?

It was frustrating and irritating. Most people have had the experience of a metaphorical wall separating them from others, but a genius like Emerson experienced this in the extreme. Before he knew it, he had lost all motivation.

Diamonds could only sparkle when polished, but that required coming into another diamond or something even harder. No matter how elite of a mage one was, if they never met another mage who had a similar level of skill, they'd begin to feel as if they'd hit a roadblock. Ultimately, Emerson had grown tired of the world. Or at least, that *was* true—until one day, his world changed...at the hands of a young man named Abel. Since then, Emerson had found enjoyment in observing him and trying to measure his strength. But today would probably be the end of his long period of observation.

Hm. The battle should be over by now. Emerson thought. No matter how strong Abel was, he couldn't have been a match for the assassins. They were combat professionals that Emerson had hired—Bardo of the Wind, and Myussen of Bewitchment.

The two of them were colleagues of Emerson in the Chronos Magecraft Association—a gathering of mages who were all considered the crème de la crème. Though Emerson rarely ever recognized the talents of others, he valued the combat strength of those two very highly.

Now then. I can't wait to see how this'll turn out. He'd asked them to use Regalias he'd developed so that he could have a recording of the battle. How far could Abel get against two of the strongest mages in the world? Emerson had no doubt that he'd uncover the identity of Abel this time. With that in mind, he excitedly returned to his laboratory.

"Sorry to barge in like this."

"Wha—" Emerson exclaimed.

In front of him was Abel, who was leisurely enjoying a cup of coffee in Emerson's laboratory.

"How did you get in here? I have two or three barriers set up around this room..."

"Oh—*that's* what those were? Sorry, I thought that was just some flimsy wall work. I had no clue that was your idea of a barrier."

Emerson was at a loss for words. He had Obsidian Eyes and thus excelled at fortifying objects. Of course, that meant he excelled at the creation of barriers

that would deceive the eyes of others and keep them out. Even in the Chronos Magecraft Association, there weren't many who could break through his barriers.

But even in the face of this shocking situation, Emerson remained calm. He knew that the most important thing was to stay calm, and not to let one's opponent dictate the pace.

"Shucks. Looks like I really can't win against you, Abel. So, what can I do for you?"

"I'll cut to the chase. Stop observing me," Abel said, in a soft but very commanding voice.

"Ha ha ha. I have no clue what you're talking about."

"It's no use playing dumb. Your comrades sold you out. The Regalias flying around observing me recently are your doing too, right?"

Suddenly, a strong wave of fear washed over Emerson. It was already unbelievable to him that the two he'd hired had lost in a fight, but it was even more unbelievable that Abel had made them talk. He couldn't help but wonder if Abel had used some form of Mind Control magecraft. Otherwise, there was no way that two professionals like them would ever give up the name of the one who'd hired them.

"What if...I refuse?"

"I'll kill you right where you stand."

Emerson felt as if his blood had begun to flow backwards. A chill ran across his body and his muscles tensed up. He could tell Abel was fully intent on killing him. And as soon as he came to this realization, Emerson couldn't stop his hands from trembling.

"Okay... You win. I accept all your terms," Emerson said, managing to squeeze these words out of his mouth despite the abnormal amount of killing intent he was being exposed to.

"Good."

Still, Emerson couldn't understand why someone as talented as Abel had

decided to subject himself to being a student, surrounded by incredibly inferior peers. “Could I ask you something? What is your goal? Why did you come to our academy?”

“All I want to do is live a peaceful school life,” said Abel. “That’s it.”

“Ha ha ha. Are you crazy?”

Emerson’s eyes trembled underneath his glasses. He didn’t think for even an instant that any good would come from someone as talented as himself, or even more talented than himself, being buried in anonymity as a mere student.

“Abel, you could do *anything* with your abilities. You could even change the world to your liking, should the mood strike you!”

Emerson’s words partially reflected his own true desires. He wanted to push the incompetent fossils of the world to one side, while making everything revolve around himself. But unfortunately for Emerson, he lacked that strength. No matter how talented he was, he was but one person. He’d believed that the time when one person could change the entire world had passed...until now.

“A revolution, huh? Yeah, not interested,” Abel said, before leaving Emerson’s laboratory.

So Emerson was left standing, dumbfounded by the incredible killing intent he’d felt from Abel. Even for someone who was part of the Chronos Mage Association—a collection of the most talented mages in the world—he’d never met an individual like Abel, who was a prodigy at so many different things. But the aura that Abel gave off separated him from all the other prodigies that Emerson had met. Everything about him had been so intense that it made them feel like relics of the past.

“Ha ha ha... There’s no chance that those two weaklings were even close to being a match for him...”

Emerson’s hands were still trembling. He’d never felt this way before. He pulled up his clothes to see that his body was drenched in sweat.

“Abel... You truly are amazing.”

For some strange reason, he felt refreshed. Knowing that no matter how far

he stretched his hand out, he'd never even come close to touching the wall between the two of them, made his heart race. Emerson, now filled with a brand new sense of fulfillment, couldn't stop his lips from curling into a smile.

"Heh heh heh. Abel, mark my words. I *will* surpass you," Emerson said before a mirror, an unsettling smile creeping across his face.



Chapter 9

Eliza’s First Love

At the same time, elsewhere, Eliza returned to her room and took a shower.

“Today was fun... I can’t remember the last time I enjoyed myself like that.”

After getting out of the shower, she dried herself off with her fluffy, marshmallow-like towel. She put on her favorite pink underwear with a cat pattern on it, then used a Regalia called a blow-dryer. As warm air blew out of it, Eliza sat down in front of her dresser and began drying her long hair.



Though Eliza's hair was close to being straight, it was a little curly. If she didn't take proper care of it, it'd go all over the place, resulting in an undesirable, slovenly appearance.

"Abel... He was so cool today..."

In the back of Eliza's mind, an image flitted across her mind of the Amber-Eyed boy named Abel whom she'd recently found herself inexplicably drawn to. After finishing with her hair, she lay down on her bed, still just in her underwear.

"Ugh... I'm so stupid. How could I *not* ask him the most important question I had?"

However, she already knew why. She was frightened that the relationship between her and Abel might change if she got closer to the truth about him. Ever since the entrance exam, Eliza had been extremely curious about Abel's background and the events which had led him to become such a powerful mage.

"I wonder what he's doing right now..."

She pulled the Jamis plush towards her from its place next to her pillow and hugged it to her chest, before raising it above her, as one might a kitten. Abel seemed like he could do anything, whether it was academics, sports, or even the crane game. Their classmates might not have realized this yet, but Eliza had a hunch about him and where his true strength came from.

During the Hunt, an accident had occurred where the barrage of magic bullets fired by the continuing students had simply disappeared. That'd been written off as a Regalia malfunction, but Eliza had a different opinion. She believed the miracle witnessed then was the doing of Abel's magecraft.

What is it? What is this feeling? She tried to fight it back, but couldn't. She found herself desperately wanting to see Abel. This desire gripped her chest so tightly it hurt. From a young age, Eliza had been raised in a strict environment where she barely had any opportunities to interact with boys. What she was feeling right now was completely uncharted territory for her.

"Oh, I know... I haven't thanked him yet for the plushie!"

After agonizing over what to do, Eliza had come up with an excuse to visit him at this time of night. However, there was a problem with her plan. According to the academy's rules, students weren't allowed to visit the rooms of members of the opposite sex.

"Hm? Wait..." Struck with a sudden flash of inspiration, Eliza pulled her student handbook out of her bag.

Her eyes widened as she reread the rules. *I knew it. There are exceptions to the rule, such as in cases of extreme emergencies.*

"It's okay... Not thanking him is an extreme emergency to me."

After having interpreted the rules to suit her purposes, Eliza put on her uniform and quickly made her way towards Abel's room.

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At Arthlia Academy of Magecraft's first-year dorm, the boys were on the first and second floors while the girls were on the third and fourth floors. The problem for Eliza right now was that there was always a teacher on watch in the night duty room, which was in front of the stairs between the second and third floor. Every day, when night came, there'd be someone on duty in that room. In other words, when it was lights out, she'd be unable to traverse between the second and third floor without being caught.

"I guess I don't have a choice. Nothing ventured, nothing gained."

She was guaranteed to be caught by a professor if she went down the stairs, which meant that there was but one option left to her—she had to enter the second floor through a window, then go to Abel's room. Eliza prepared herself, opened her window, and jumped to a nearby, tall tree. She never thought that a day would come when she'd be climbing trees while wearing a skirt.

"If anyone was right underneath me, they'd have full view of my panties..." Eliza muttered, calmly analyzing the situation as she made her way down to the second-floor windows. After confirming that there was nobody around in the second-floor hallway, she seized her chance and quickly infiltrated the building before immediately heading towards Abel's room, 238.

"Uh... I'm pretty sure it's around here..."

Eliza's heart was pounding out of her chest. If anyone were to see her here, strange rumors would surely have begun to spread.

"Oh, I think this is it!"

She went to knock, but then noticed that the door was very slightly ajar. She peeked inside, knowing that she ought not to. It was nothing more than a whim, but the sight that awaited her on the other side was incredibly shocking.

"Master Abel... How was your outing today?"

"Mm... I think it was an effective use of my time."

Eliza recognized the woman he was talking to—she'd heard boys talking about her all the time in class. Her name was Lilith. Her slender arms and legs, her porcelain skin, her silver hair which glistened like pure white snow—every last part of her was beautiful. She was *so gorgeous that even Eliza couldn't help blushing a little.

By this point, there most likely wasn't anyone who didn't know Lilith's name. She'd stolen the hearts of many male students since she'd started at the academy.

"By the way, would it be acceptable if I slept here tonight?" Lilith asked.

"Don't be stupid. I told you to avoid attracting any attention, especially in the dorms, right?"

"I see. In that case, may I at least..."

What happened next dumbfounded Eliza. Lilith took Abel's hands, then pressed her lips on top of his.

"H-Huh?!?!?!"

Despite how cool her demeanor usually was, it was like she became a different person entirely while kissing Abel. She looked extremely passionate.

"Wha— Wha-Wha-Wha-Wha..." Eliza was so shocked that she couldn't pick her jaw off the floor. She fell to the ground, her eyes spinning. The shock had made her soul leave her body.

Bonus Story

The Strongest Mage Goes to Karaoke

My name is Abel, and I'm a mage who reincarnated two hundred years in the future. In my day, those with Amber Eyes like me were heavily discriminated against. One day, I decided that I'd had enough of that, and developed reincarnation magic to send me to my ideal world in the future. In that regard, I succeeded, and found myself waking up to a peaceful world. Even now, I was enjoying just another normal day of peace and quiet in Arthlia, one of the many magecraft academies of this country.

However, on this particular day, someone called out to me right as I had one foot out the door after classes had ended.

"Um, Abel. Do you have a second?" a girl with fiery red eyes and crimson hair asked.

Her name was Eliza. She was a descendant of Maria, the Hero of Fire, one of the much-revered heroes of old. For some reason, I seemed to run into her everywhere I went ever since we'd taken the entrance exam.

"Need something?"

"W-Well, I don't exactly need something, but... I got these from a friend and was wondering if you might be interested..." Eliza pulled out a folder that was perfectly folded twice into the shape of a square.

Karaoke Plaza: Siren
Grand Opening Coupon: Students get 50% off

There were perforations at the bottom of the flyer. *You probably tear those off to use as coupons*, I thought.

Hm. Why did they choose the name Siren, though? That's definitely not a name I ever wanted to hear again. Sirens were magic beasts with the upper

body of a human woman, but the lower body of a fish. They used their songs to charm humans, luring men to them and then draining their life force for sustenance.

From what I could remember, they were probably the most annoying magic beast to take out. They had a similar level of intelligence to humans, so they were smart enough to never pop up when a mage more powerful than them came around. As a result, it took forever to locate and destroy them.

During the time that it took for us to find them, they'd sapped off an entire male workforce, leaving many fishing villages without working hands. The experience had left a bitter taste in my mouth and was certainly not something I'd wanted to be reminded of.

"Do you...know what karaoke is, Abel?"

"Yeah. I read about it in a book once. I at least know *of* it."

Having that much knowledge, I understood that it was a relatively newer cultural phenomenon that'd come into being about ten or so years ago. At these establishments, patrons could sing their favorite popular songs to their hearts' content against a backing track of the instrumental version.

Most likely, the store had chosen the name "Siren" because of how the beasts were synonymous with songs. That being said, I still couldn't exactly agree with their choice to associate themselves with one of the worst magic beasts out there, who were responsible for a great number of victims.

"Oh, good," Eliza said. "Well, the coupon seems to only be valid until this weekend. It'd be a waste to not use it, and...I'd be pretty happy if you came with me," she said, fidgeting while crossing her fingers.

Well then, what should I do? Personally, I was somewhat interested. After all, it was a chance to experience a type of culture that hadn't existed back in my day. However, there was one problem.

"I don't really know any songs."

Apparently, in modern times, there were various singers who put out their own songs, but I unfortunately had no clue about any kind of popular music. More than likely, I was not the kind of customer that karaoke was geared for. If

someone like me joined a group at karaoke, it'd only serve to kill the mood and bring down the tension.

"That's not a problem! You just have to enjoy the atmosphere!"

What a pushy girl. She'd invited me with such vigor, though, that I felt it was necessary to take her up on her offer and participate in the modern-day entertainment known as karaoke.

◇

There was a small shopping district not too far from Arthlia that students like to stop by. The western district of the royal capital played home to a lot of different academies and research facilities, so it was filled with establishments geared towards students.

The karaoke place we were going to, Karaoke Plaza: Siren, was one such establishment that aimed to attract students, and was located right on one of the main roads, which was bustling with students. However, there was one thing...or rather, person...whose presence confused me.

"Man, I'm so excited for karaoke, Master!"

"What's he doing here?" I asked Eliza.

"Th-That's what *I* want to know!"

When I arrived at the meeting place, I saw the familiar face of a boy with dirty-blond hair. It was Ted, a guy who'd stuck to me like glue ever since we were kids.

"Heh heh. I'm always by Master's side. I'm his pupil, after all! Everywhere he goes, I go too!" Ted stated, a proud look on his face.

Good grief. What am I going to do with him? This wasn't exactly the first time that Ted had followed me around. As much as I wanted to be mad at him, I decided to let it slide. Not that this had anything to do with my decision, but this kind of activity was most likely more enjoyable with larger groups of people.

"Um, I'm really sorry. Ted asked me where we were going, and it just slipped out," Yukari, a girl with black hair, said politely, clearing up the situation.

Oh, I see. So that's what happened. Yukari had been on our team during the Hunt. It might have just been my imagination, but I had a feeling that ever since then, I'd been seeing her around more frequently.

"Well, whatever. We're all here now, so let's get going."

At her behest, the four of us walked inside the establishment. It might have had to do with the fact that it'd just opened recently, but it really had a neat and tidy, refreshing atmosphere. Eliza and Yukari proceeded to the front desk and began using terms such as "student discount," "free time," and "drink bar," making me wonder if they'd been to a karaoke place before. Either way, thanks to their adroit usage of these unfamiliar terms, we were able to swiftly register.

"We got the room key. We're on the third floor," Yukari said, walking towards us.

I see. It's necessary for us to move to a different location to do karaoke. We walked down the hall, passing by countless private rooms which were reminiscent of small apartments, until we finally reached our room.

"Whoa! So *this* is what a karaoke room looks like?! I'm so impressed!" Ted jumped onto the couch inside the room, his excitement already dialed up to the max.

Hm. It certainly does look like a room designed for singing. They even made the door fairly thick. With the way it'd been constructed, there was no need to worry about sound leaking out. Patrons could fully focus on singing to their heart's content.

"Hm? This Regalia..." As I surveyed the room, a certain object caught my eye.

The Regalia in question had a very familiar magecraft composition in it. *Wow, this is a throwback.* It was the exact same composition I'd come up with two hundred years ago—Voice Recollection.

"Something wrong, Abel?"

"Nope. I was just reminiscing a little."

I'd created this magecraft as a way of secretly recording the conversations of enemies in their hideouts during infiltration. For someone like me, who never

really had any money, it was imperative that I developed magecraft of my own. Looking back on it, though, I may have been a fool for doing that.

The various magecraft I'd developed were used in wars, and resulted in a great number of people being adversely affected. But knowing that the magecraft compositions I'd birthed were now being used for purposes completely unrelated to war made me feel relieved—like a weight had been lifted off my chest.

"So, who's going first?" Yukari asked.

"Oh, me! I wanna go first!" Ted said, excitedly raising his hand. *Can you lower your voice a little?*

After learning from Yukari how to input songs, he took the microphone and stood at the front of the room. At Ted's song request, the device that had the Voice Recollection magecraft in it began to play a song. It was the kind of modern song that one might hear all around town.

Hm. Where did he learn this song? Though he looked like he was having fun, Ted's rhythm was all over the place. He might not have had any technical skill, but he was at least singing his heart out.

"Here you go. You're next, Abel," Yukari said, passing me a thick catalog.

From what I understood, this catalog held all the songs available to be requested. All you needed to do was find the number which corresponded to your desired song and enter it.

"You can just skip me. I'm not gonna sing."

"You're not?"

"Yeah, sorry, but I don't really know any modern-day songs. I'm just here to listen today."

While Yukari and I were having this conversation, Ted's song ended.

"Acorn-head... You suck at singing," Eliza said.

"All good! What matters is having fun!"

"That's true, but..."

Eliza held the microphone as the next song began to play. She'd chosen an upbeat love song. As expected, she had a very powerful voice. Her singing was a little rough around the edges, but it put her personality on full display.

After Eliza finished, it was Yukari's turn. I had to say, I was surprised. She had by far the most beautiful voice out of the three of them. She'd chosen a ballad, and she was never offbeat or off tempo. If she just sang a little louder, she'd have been golden.

Overall, everyone showed off their individuality with their song choices.

"You should sing something, Master!"

"Yeah! Join us, Abel!"

My theory was that karaoke really amped people up as they did it. Ted and Eliza seemed incredibly hyper after all the singing that they'd done.

"I told you this earlier, but I don't really know any songs."

"But you know at least one or two, right?" Eliza quipped.

She was right. I did know exactly one song. When I was still living in the Rhangbalt region, there was a song that frequently played at a restaurant Lilith and I would go to.

"Fine. But I'm not exaggerating when I say that this is literally the only song I know."

I flipped through the catalog on the table to look for it. *Hm... I'm pretty sure this is the one.* I turned the dial and entered the corresponding numbers. Then, after a brief pause, a familiar melody began to play. It was a gentle but plucky song, like a waltz. The original singer was a woman, so there were some parts that were too high for a male voice to sing in the original key. *Oh well. This is all for fun anyway. No need to worry.*

As soon as I began singing, the three of them looked down, seemingly sobering up from their previously overexcited states. *Uh... What's going on? That's not a great reaction. Did I do something extremely wrong with regard to proper karaoke etiquette?* I wouldn't have been surprised if I had. After all, this was the first time in my life I'd experienced karaoke culture. It wouldn't have

been a shock if I'd made a misstep.

"M-Master, what *is* this song? What is it?!" Ted suddenly jumped out of his seat, tears streaming down his face for some reason.

Can you explain what you *mean first?* The other two seemed to be in the same boat. They hadn't reacted as intensely as Ted, but both Eliza and Yukari's eyes looked moist.

"I'm surprised. I didn't know you were so good at singing, Abel."

"I don't know why, but after hearing you sing, the tears won't stop," Eliza said.

Thinking back to two hundred years ago, there was something I remember a troubadour who was traveling with us had once said. According to them, one's singing voice carried mysterious properties that reflected one's life experiences. What was happening here was most likely an example of that. My voice conveyed all the various hardships I'd endured throughout my life, and that'd shaken the hearts of the people gathered here.

"Abel, sing this song! I think it'll fit your voice perfectly!"

"No, Master! Sing this song instead! *This* will fit your voice best!"

Ted and Eliza began fighting with each other over what they wanted me to sing next. I exhaled. *How many times do I have to repeat myself? I literally only know one song.*

◇

The lights on the street came on as the sun began to set. I had to admit, today had been pretty fun. The three people in front of me were walking with a spring in their step.

"Today was so much fun! Let's come again—the four of us!"

"Yeah! Next time..." Ted coughed. "...let's have Master..." Ted coughed again. "...learn more songs." He had completely wrecked his throat from singing too hard.

"Yeah. I definitely wanna hear his beautiful voice again," Eliza said, turning around to look at me.

Our eyes met. *Good grief.* I primarily enjoyed spending time alone. The most efficient use of my time was being by myself, expanding my knowledge either through reading or magecraft research. But as Yukari had said, spending time with friends felt strangely...good.

“Yeah. I think doing this again might not be that bad of an idea,” I agreed.

Modern humans might have been weaker in regards to magecraft, but that didn’t make them inferior beings altogether. As I looked at my school friends on our way back to the dorms, a certain thought crossed my mind. *These kinds of breathers from my studies might be an inefficient use of time, but...they might be okay every now and then.*

Bonus Story 2: Lilith and the Rainy Sky

A girl was crying, curled up into a ball. The man with whom she'd been walking seemed at a loss for what to do. *Why does she cry?* he wondered. No matter how much he thought about it, he couldn't come up with an answer.

"I'm scared of the rain," the girl said, through trembling lips.

Finally, the man understood. This girl had just lost her father the other day...or rather, he'd been murdered. It'd been a day just like this, with heavy rain, that her father, the demon king, had been felled. And now, this man was currently bringing the demon king's daughter to a place far from civilization, where nobody would recognize her.

There were many who'd wanted her head, simply because she was the daughter of the tyrannical demon king. Yet, this man was opposed to that idea. He'd convinced his party members to stay their blades, and was able to save her life. As a result, the girl had very slightly opened her heart to him. However, as small as that opening was, it was enough for her to feel comfortable crying in front of him—because she felt she could rely on him. The man thought for a while, and then whispered in the girl's ear.

"If you're scared of the rain, then..."

The words that followed were almost like magic to her.



◇

It was a bright, sunny weekend.

“Master! Hey, Master! Let’s go to the festival!”

The one who’d so rudely and suddenly barged into my room was a kid with dirty-blond hair who revered me as his master for magecraft. His name was Ted, and he’d been following me around ever since we were young. He was essentially a childhood friend.

On this beautiful day off, I wanted nothing more than to hole up in my dorm room and read all the books I’d bought, but something Ted had said caught my attention.

“What festival?”

“The Celestial Sword Festival! It’s a proud tradition that goes back two hundred years!”

I couldn’t help but smile wryly at his words. “Is it really that old of a festival?” I asked, very doubtful.

After all, there wasn’t any such festival back then, at least, from what I remembered. One might have wondered how I could be so sure. Well—I just so happened to be a mage who’d reincarnated from two hundred years in the past.

I and the party I’d been in had defeated the demon king. Then, due to various reasons, I was kicked out, at which point I decided to reincarnate myself into the future. That was why I was confident I knew about what had gone on two hundred years ago better than anyone. Despite that, Ted exhaled through his nose confidently.

“Yep! It’s a *really* traditional festival! It’s a day that celebrates the heroes’ party for taking down the demon king!”

Oh, I see. If that was what the holiday celebrated, it made sense why I didn’t know about it. After all, I’d used my reincarnation magic not even a year after we’d defeated the demon king. If the festival had come about a few years or so after I’d executed the reincarnation process, then there wouldn’t have been any

way for me to learn about it. In that case, it'd make sense for people to claim it was a two-hundred-year-old tradition.

"That's why everyone has today off too! It's a super holiday!"

Oh. So it was on this day two hundred years ago—well, two hundred and a few years ago—speaking strictly from my perspective, it was about two years or so... Either way, this was the day we defeated the demon king.

From what I gathered, this festival seemed like a yearly event. This was yet another good chance to learn more about this world. I could find out what festivals were like in modern times.

"Okay, lead the way."

Ted looked thoroughly pleased as he began walking in front of me. He explained the various stalls and traditional dances, all at once. I didn't listen too carefully to what he was saying, though, and mostly tuned him out. But on our way to the festival, I saw a familiar face standing in our path. She was a beautiful teacher at Arthlia, one with long, silver hair.

"Master Abel, are you heading out?"

"Yeah. Gonna check out the festival."

Her name was Lilith. Long story, but she was someone I knew from two hundred years ago. Being a demon, she aged differently than humans. As a result, she didn't look too different from a human woman in her twenties. Apparently, she felt indebted to me for saving her life back then, and had been doing everything she could to ensure I could have a peaceful life in the modern world.

"Oh, Ms. Lilith! You're not off today?"

"No. Though today is a holiday, we cannot afford for everyone to take a break all at the same time. Here. Be sure to submit your excursion forms, okay?" she said with a wry smile.

"That's a shame... I wish you could've come with us."

"Yes, it is a shame, but you two should enjoy yourselves."

"You got it!"

Ted filled out the excursion form extremely quickly, but sloppily, and handed it back to Lilith before heading out of the school gates ahead of me. *Good grief. He's as quick as usual to move from one thing on to the next.*

"Um, Master Abel?"

"Yeah?"

"Never mind. Please enjoy yourself at the festival," she said with a bright smile.

"Yeah, I will."

Though I didn't really have a reason to, I found myself turning to look back at her after walking a bit past the gates. All that I saw was the usual Lilith, waving back at me with her gentle smile as she noticed me looking back at her.

◇

Fried soba noodles, candied apples, cotton candy, sausages, meat skewers—Ted went from stall to stall eating all these things as we walked through the festival. *I'm reminded heavily of a certain red-haired girl.*

I ate with him at first, but partway through, I could feel myself getting full, and knew that my stomach was not going to be receptive to any further food. *I'm surprised he can eat this much.* In his case, it didn't seem like his stature was proportionate to how much he consumed. It was a shame how all food did for him was increase his horizontal growth, and not his vertical growth.

Suddenly, I felt drops of rain falling. *A drizzle?* It didn't seem to interrupt the festivities or the festival goers at all, but I could tell that the later it got in the day, the heavier the rain would become.

"Ted, it's only a matter of time before it starts pouring. We should leave sooner than later."

"But, Master! There's grilled chicken on a stick over there! I heard it's jumbo-sized! I *have* to eat that before we leave!"

"Fine. That's it, though, okay? I'll wait for you here, so go and buy it."

"Got it! I'll get you one too."

“No thanks.”

Despite that, Ted ran off, reassuring me that I didn’t have to hold back and that he’d get me one anyway. *Good grief. He’s so hyper because of the festival.*

No sooner than I’d had that thought, I heard a clang out of nowhere. The sound of blades clashing against one another rang out, and a stage a short distance away grew raucous. *Are they screaming? No—this is cheering.*

Though they weren’t exactly close, I could tell that they were putting on a play. There were four heroes equipped with silver armor, swinging their swords in the midst of an intense battle with a colossal enemy with its wings spread. It was the legend of how the four heroes had defeated the demon king—or at least, what had been passed down as history.

In reality, I’d fought in that party as their fifth member, but history had elected to forget that detail. Maybe that was putting it nicely, though. After we’d defeated the demon king, I’d been scrubbed from the record. That was just how much discrimination Amber-Eyed individuals like myself faced.

Lilith may have been the daughter of the demon king, but I’d fought against the decision to kill her. I argued that she was only a child. Ultimately, I’d been able to think of a way to prevent her murder—I took her to a place far away, where people would never really see her.

“It was raining like this back then too...wasn’t it?”

The memories that I’d forgotten now flashed clearly through the back of my mind. I remembered how she’d been scared of the rain back then.

Then, the play ended, and applause began to ring out. The demon king had been defeated and peace had been brought back to the world. Suddenly, an image of Lilith’s expression as Ted and I had headed out to the festival popped up in my head.

Though this was a fun, celebratory festival for humans, I couldn’t help but wonder what it felt like from Lilith’s perspective. Before I knew it, the rain had begun to pound down harder than I’d expected. Changing my plans, I headed right back to the academy.

◇

Arthlia Academy was spread out over a large area of land. There was the main building near the entrance where the students took their classes, which resembled a castle and towered over the nearby buildings. However, in the same area, there was a string of buildings of various sizes, called the annex, that only teachers had access to.

Phew. Looks like I made it in time. It seemed that I'd arrived just as Lilith had finished the paperwork she'd been working on. *I knew it.* She hadn't brought an umbrella because of how sunny it'd been earlier. She was standing at the entrance of the annex, taking shelter from the rain and waiting for it to die down.

"Master Abel?" Lilith asked, slightly surprised to see me. "You're back from the festival already?"

"I couldn't really focus on it, unfortunately. Something was bugging me, so I decided to come back early."

I handed her the umbrella that I'd prepared ahead of time.

"Did you come all the way back here just to give this to me?"

"Yeah. I had a feeling you might've been crying again."

Two hundred years ago, right after defeating the demon king, we'd seen his daughter. She'd been hiding in the rubble with the rain pouring down on her. I remembered how my comrades had immediately suggested that we kill her. But I'd defended her, and convinced them to spare her.

After that, I took her to a faraway land, one where she'd never be found by those who wanted to harm her. The entire journey didn't even take a month, but during our travels, there was one time when there'd been a huge downpour. When that had happened, Lilith had broken out into tears, her whole body trembling. It'd been raining on the day that her father had been killed too. That was why, whenever she saw rain, it evoked in her a lot of painful memories.

"Pardon my rudeness, but I'm *not* a child anymore, Master Abel. Rain doesn't..." Though she looked as calm as she usually did, I could tell that her eyes were hiding a slight tinge of discomposure. I wasn't going to pretend like I

hadn’t seen it, no matter how slight it was.

Then, she giggled. “I suppose you really do see through everything. I lied. I am a little frightened. I can still remember the events of that day as if it was yesterday.”

Who could blame her? Memories were a fickle thing—you couldn’t forget the things you wanted most to forget, no matter how hard you tried. Her home had been invaded by humans, and in a single night, she’d lost everything. There was nothing that could erase that trauma from her mind.

“If you’re scared of the rain, then...I’ll make it disappear.”

Thinking back, we’d had a similar conversation on that day too. Clouds were nothing but floating masses, composed of droplets of water. Their distance from the ground might have given the impression that they were out of reach, but magecraft made it entirely possible to interact with them.

“Gungnir.” I pointed my hand at the sky and fired magecraft out of it.

A lance of flame flew into the sky, drawing a trail of light that resembled a dragon, and pierced the thick clouds. Then, there was a flash and a boom, and then the heavy clouds dispersed as a strong wind blew them apart. From the hole that was made, a flood of warm, golden light from the setting sun poured down. *Oh, right. I guess it’s about that time of day.* The twilight of the night sky radiated an aura of mystery that felt as if it warded off others.

“What’s the matter? Let’s go.”

Lilith’s eyes widened as she gazed at the light, just as she’d done on that day.

“Yes, Master Abel.”

The two of us walked side by side, under the same sky as on that day. Her smile was indistinguishable from the one she’d worn two hundred years ago.

Afterword

Hello, it's Yusura Kankitsu. Thanks to all your support, I have completed Volume 2. This time around, the theme was focusing on the school life of a reincarnated mage. When writing this kind of story, most authors try envisioning their ideal school life, but even so, I had a lot of difficulty writing this.

Oh, by the way—you might have noticed that there were some establishments that are relatively modern compared to what you see in the rest of the story, such as karaoke and a game center. So I'd like to take this opportunity to address the question that I'm sure is on your mind—what time period does this story take place in?

The cultural basis for this story is similar to the latter half of the 1900s, based on our world. I love stories that mix cultures, like the Taisho Roman genre, so it's quite possible I might have taken some inspiration from those kinds of stories.

Most modern light novels like to use settings that are closely based on medieval Europe, but I wanted to write one that contained elements of both past and modern cultures.

Now, time for some promotion!

The manga version of Reincarnated Mage has begun! So far it's been picked up as a series on Nico Nico Douga's *DASH X Comics on Wednesday*. The author overseeing the storyboarding of the manga version is the same person in charge of *Saikyo no Shuzoku ga Ningendatta ken*, Nekohako Yotaro.

In charge of art, we have the amazing Hiro Touge, who's drawn such popular series as Maoyu and *Bodacious Space Pirates: Abyss of Hyperspace*! To be honest, I haven't seen the finished version of the manga yet, so I'm extremely excited to see how it all turns out!

Anyway, I hope to meet you all again in the next volume!

- Yusura Kankitsu