Yusura Kankitsu
Illustrator
Ruria Miyuki



vol.3

Reincarnated with Inferior Mage Eyes

Breezing through the Future as an Oppressed Ex-Hero

Yusura Kankitsu
Illustrator
Ruria Miyuki



vol.3

Reincarnated Mage with Inferior Eyes

Breezing through the Future as an Oppressed Ex-Hero

Reincarnated Mage with Inferior Eyes: Breezing through the Future as an Oppressed Ex-Hero Volume 3 [Complete]

1. Part 1
2. Part 2
3. Part 3
4. Part 4
5. Part 5
6. Part 6

Yusura Kankitsu
Illustrator
Ruria Miyuki



vol.3

Reincarnated Mage with Inferior Eyes

Breezing through the Future as an Oppressed Ex-Hero

Prologue: An Incident in the Training Room

My name is Abel, and I'm a mage who reincarnated two hundred years into 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 in a peaceful world.

In a turn of events, I then enrolled in the country's distinguished Arthlia Academy of Magecraft, where I was currently enjoying yet another humdrum day as a student.

"Uh... How long has that first-year been running?"

"I think he's been at it for the past hour or so. Unbelievable..."

At the moment, I was in the middle of my daily stamina training. It seemed that, more often than not, modern mages let this sort of training fall by the wayside. Despite everyone having the day off, as it was the weekend, the gym was just as empty as usual.

I sighed. What an absolute waste. I couldn't help but feel that the students here weren't using all the academy's facilities as much as they should've been. There were *ten* treadmills in this gym, and I had yet to see more than three being used at the same time.

But—thanks to that, I suppose—I could devote even more time to my training, so it wasn't entirely a bad thing.

"Master!!! Finally! There you are!" a familiar voice rang out.

It was Ted, easily recognizable by his dirty-blond hair and toned body. For the record, I had never actually taken him on as my apprentice. However, due to a certain sequence of events, he'd begun calling me "Master" after I saved his life when we were little. Since then, he essentially followed me everywhere I went.

"Whoa, I never knew about this place! Is *this* where you are whenever I can't find you?"

Ugh. This is the worst. Of all people, it just had to have been Ted that discovered this place. To me, this place had become an excellent spot in the academy to take it easy. But now that Ted had discovered it, it might have become necessary for me to change my perception of this place as a relaxing hideaway.

"Beats me. Anyway, did you need something?" I asked.

"Oh, right! I've been wanting to ask you about this for a while, but do you already know what research society you're gonna enter?"

"No, not really. Why...?"

I'd heard about this before he'd brought it up. At Arthlia Academy, in addition to the usual classes, there were also research societies that operated after school and in which students could independently participate.

That being said, the name "research society" made them sound much more professional than they actually were. That is, they weren't any more advanced than the students that ran them. More than half of these societies were just for fun. However, there were a few that were actually distinguished and received awards from the government.

"I'm thinking about headin' to the research society fair—would you like to come too?" Ted asked.

"Sorry, but you might wanna ask someone else. I'm not really interested in that kind of stuff."

After everything I'd experienced two hundred years ago, I was resolute that magecraft was something that was more efficiently researched by oneself, and not in a group. I absolutely did not believe that researching magecraft with others at this point would be fruitful.

"Aw, don't be like that. When are you gonna get another chance like this? You never know—there might be something there that catches your eye!"

As Ted showed no signs of giving up, I decided to rethink my decision. *Well... I suppose one could say it isn't wise to simply unilaterally write off the research societies as a way for students to fool around.* I couldn't believe how narrow-minded I'd been. After all, it's difficult to have an informed opinion without first

seeing how things are for yourself.

“Okay, lead the way,” I said, accepting his invitation.

“You got it!”

It went without saying that, at this moment in time, I still had no intention of joining any of the student-led research societies. That being said, however, at the very least, taking a look at what they had to offer would surely help to broaden my horizons.

After I lightly dried myself off with a towel while Ted urged me to hurry up, we left the training room.

Chapter 1: Recruitment Fair

The place Ted dragged me to was called the central plaza. It probably had the most foot traffic out of anywhere in Arthlia.

“Whoa! Look at all the people!”

I couldn’t blame him for the surprise, because, at this very minute, there were more people than we’d ever seen before at the school crowding this area. *Hm. It’s almost like a festival.* The place was filled with a lively energy, and that was most likely due to the young students yelling their hearts out to advertise their various research societies.

“Hey, wanna join the Dragon Knight Research Society?!”

“Hey, froshie! You should join our Hunt Research Society! Let’s shed some sweat together!”

I see. There are even more varieties of research societies than I’d imagined. Surveying the area told me something—there were two types of societies in this plaza. There were those focused on magecraft, such as the Fire Magecraft Research Society and the Healing Magecraft Research Society. Then there were sports-oriented research societies, such as the Dragon Knight Research Society and the Hunt Research Society.

However, this plaza was so jam-packed with research societies that there wasn’t enough time to check out every single one of them. I weaved through the crowd and decided to look for any research societies that didn’t have too many people around them.

“Oh, hey, you! Got a sec?” After I had walked a little, someone who looked like an upperclassman called out to us.

“Whoa! What’s with that outfit? Are you an armored ghost?!” Ted exclaimed excitedly.

“Ha ha ha. This is the protective gear we use during matches. Sorry if I scared ya.”

An armored ghost? I see. That's certainly a perfectly fitting expression. This person was covered from head to foot in white armor. The way the shoulder and knee areas puffed out slightly made me think that there were most likely protective pads inside them. Whatever sport this armor was used for must've been very intense. Honestly, the protective gear was so over the top, I wasn't even sure that what it was used for could be considered a mere sport.

"The name's Segahl. Do you have any interest in Army Foot? Someone as exceptional as you would become a starter in no time!" he said, firmly gripping Ted by the shoulders.

"What's Army Foot?" Ted asked.

"To put it simply, it's primarily a physical ball sport where participants wear this magic armor and engage in hand-to-hand combat. It's called the fastest ground martial art because of how rough the matches can get sometimes."

Hm. I think I get the gist of it now. Most likely, this sport was a variation of a sport that was popular in my time—football.

"Huh... Well, I *do* like movin' my body around, so it sounds pretty interesting, but...could my master join as well?"

"Huh? By 'master,' do you mean the Amber-Eyed guy next to you?"

"Yep! If *I'm* good enough to start in matches, Master's gonna become the team's indomitable ace immediately for sure!"

"Uh... Hm... I don't know..." Segahl awkwardly averted his eyes.

I didn't blame him for his reaction. To the people of this age, Amber-Eyed mages were nothing but symbols of failure who couldn't use magecraft properly. When Segahl had called out to us, he'd only had eyes for Ted. He hadn't even given me a second of consideration.

"Hey! What's goin' on here?"

"Oh! Captain! W-Well..."

A large, well-built guy had appeared. Compared to Segahl, he was wearing much sturdier, high-end armor.

"I found a promising first-year, but he said that he'd only join if that guy can

join too.” The now-timid Segahl whispered this explanation into his captain’s ear.

“Ha ha ha! Well, obviously, that’s not gonna fly. The day an Inferior Eyes joins our research society is the day that our reputation is in the toilet!”

I could only sigh at how frank he was being. On the other hand, this development was, in a way, very convenient for me. If they didn’t have any need for me in the first place, then that gave me a reason to leave.

“Let’s go, Ted.”

“Huh? Are you sure, Master?!”

“Yeah. I’m not interested in their little ball games, anyway.”

“Hold up, brat.” Just as I was trying to swiftly walk away, the captain growled after me in a low voice. “What’d you just say?”

“That I’m not interested in your little ball games,” I said, repeating my words.

Hearing what I’d said again, the captain grew enraged. “You know... I *hate* being discriminated against!!!”

Uh...hello? Talk about a double standard. This guy really gets angry at others discriminating against him*, but is perfectly fine when he does it to others?*

Enraged, the captain kicked off against the ground and began charging towards me.

“Still gonna call this a ‘little ball game’ after you eat my tackle?!”

I see. He wasn’t just acting tough—his stance showed that he had the skills to back up his words. He was most likely coming at me with the kind of tackle that was used in the sport. But still, no matter how much experience he had under his belt, to me, his speed was essentially no different from a baby crawling. As he charged at me, I swept his legs out from under him lightly and made him lose his balance.

“Wh-Whoa!!!” As he fell over, he fumbled the ball, and it flew high into the air. “Rrgh! I’m not done yet!!!” he roared. Getting back to his feet, he once again charged at me.

Good grief. I really *don't want to make a scene in a place filled with so many people, but...I don't have a choice.* I decided to be as discreet as possible so as to resolve this situation peacefully, without standing out.

"Here's your ball back, sir."

I caught the ball as it fell from the sky, then activated the very basic Object Fortification that was the specialty of Obsidian-Eyed mages. Now that the ball was fortified, if I threw it with all my strength, I was pretty certain I'd be able to kill someone with ease. However, that wasn't my aim here, so I tossed the ball as lightly as I could at his face instead.

"Bwaah!!!" He took the ball to the face and then flew backwards, curled up like a shrimp.

I sighed. Sure, I'd fortified the ball, but the fact that he couldn't even catch that weak toss showed how lacking his training had been.

"Whoa! Who *is* that first-year?!"

"He took out *the* demon captain of the Army Foot Research Society in one hit!"



Good grief. I'd done this to *not* attract attention, but it seemed that I'd only succeeded in accomplishing the complete opposite. Internally, I resolved to

come up with more prudent methods of solving problems in the future. Either way, with that annoying upperclassman out of the way, I decided to get back on track and look around at the other research societies.

◇

After that, I stopped by various booths and looked to see if there were any that would be a good fit for me. Ultimately, though, as obvious as this should've been from the start, there weren't any that really jumped out at me and made me want to learn more about them.

At first, I'd been interested in the sports societies which focused on stamina training. Unfortunately, the more I heard their explanations, the more dissatisfied I felt about how much time their activities required.

It would've been fine if they only required some time after school, but they also required participation on weekends as well, which was too involved for my tastes. Thus, I determined that there was no need for me to join any of the sports research societies. If I wanted to train my body, I'd need only to set aside time for going to the training room.

That being said, I was even less interested in the magecraft-focused research societies. All of them seemed very...basic. I knew it was too much to ask for there to be a research society at the level of a mage who'd reincarnated from two hundred years in the past, but even so, I would've appreciated at least seeing the potential for improvement.

"Okay, Ted! Join the Army Foot Research Society and let's sweat!"

"Are you crazy?! Ted's gonna join our Hunt Research Society!"

"Agh! Master! Save me!"

Oh, right. I forgot. Ted had been walking around with me when he'd suddenly been kidnapped by a few muscular upperclassmen. I hadn't seen him in a bit. He was probably the exact kind of person they were looking for, since his body was toned.

In all honesty, they weren't barking up the wrong tree. Putting his talent for magecraft aside and speaking purely in terms of physical prowess, I considered Ted to be at a respectable level. If he did decide to participate in any of the

sports research societies, he would surely excel at them.

◇

At any rate, there was one thing that I found extremely interesting about this event—the upperclassmen seemed to have absolutely no qualms about inviting transfer students like us to join their societies. Could this have been a sign that the farther you progressed in the grades, the weaker the systemic disdain towards transfer students became? Though there'd been some booths with signs saying "no transfer students," they'd definitely been in the minority.

"Let's rid this world of war!"

"Enter the Magecraft Extermination Research Society and let's bring peace to the world!"

Uh... What's that? After walking around a little bit more, I came across a booth that was completely different in nature from the others. The group operating it seemed a little shady. The placard read "The Magecraft Extermination Research Society," and there was a group of guys behind it who appeared to have taken over their own little corner of the central plaza.

Hm. I can't say I understand what you guys are feeling, whatsoever. Couldn't they have just *not* come to an academy dedicated to the study of magecraft? Where had they gotten the bright idea to begin campaigning for the "extermination of magecraft" here, of all places?

"Now is the time for the light of glory to shine on the Magecraft Extermination Research Society! The time for revolution is nigh!"

For some reason, I thought I heard a familiar voice. I squinted and tried looking for its source. Not long after, I was met by an even more startling sight.

"Huh...?" I couldn't help but voice my surprise.

I was right to think that I knew that voice. I couldn't believe my eyes—it was Barth, the older of the two rich spoiled brats. Though I'd heard that Ted and I had enrolled into the same school as him, never in my wildest dreams had I expected our reunion to be under these circumstances. He'd grown much more gaunt since the last time I'd seen him.

However, despite how unhealthily thin he appeared, his eyes were still sharp as ever, and in them I could still sense a faint aura of malice. It was hard to put into words how eerie his body had become. He almost reminded me of a starving lizard.

Suddenly, as I was observing this shady group, I heard a voice from behind me. “Hey, could you possibly be the person who was with Ted?”

Hm. If I remember right, this is the guy who tried to recruit Ted into his sports research society. I think his name’s Segahl.

“I wanna apologize for the behavior of our captain. I’m really sorry.”

“Don’t be. I’m not bothered by it. I’m used to being on the receiving end of discrimination because of these eyes.”

It felt like I was beating a dead horse with this explanation, but two hundred years ago, my Amber Eyes were the target of persecution. In modern times, these eyes were now instead the target of mockery, but this was nothing compared to the unreasonable treatment I was subject to in the past.

“If it’s okay, I’d like to give you this sports drink as an apology. We give these out at our research society,” Segahl said, pulling a bottle out of his bag. The liquid inside was almost as clear as water—I’d never seen a drink like it before.

“Thanks. I appreciate your consideration.”

I see. In contrast to his prideful captain, this Segahl fellow was much more well versed in proper decorum.

“Um, so, I’ve been wondering, but who are those people over there in the weird getups?”

“Oh... The AMO guys. They’ve been expanding recently, and it seems they’ve gone and set up a base of operations in the academy too. They’re seriously a troublesome bunch.”

“AMO?”

“It’s short for Anti-Magecraft Organization. They’re the most prominent large-scale organization of individuals against magecraft in the country. On the surface, they talk all about how they’re ‘anti-war’ and ‘pacifists,’ but everything

they do is extreme. They've become a big societal problem in recent years."

Hm. I had no clue. This entire time, there'd been an organization like that throwing its weight around. Because of how remote the Rhangbalt region was, I hadn't been in an environment where I could receive up-to-date world news.

"By the way, Abel, have you already decided on a research society?"

"No. Honestly, I'm not even close. At the very least, I've narrowed my search to just magecraft-oriented ones, but there's nothing that's really caught my interest yet."

Segahl, perhaps catching the meaning behind my words, smiled wryly. "I'm not surprised. Someone as skilled as you will no doubt have difficulty finding something at your level. Honestly, I'm not sure if our academy has any research societies that'll..." He trailed off, and there was a sparkle in his eye, as if he'd thought of something brilliant. "Wait... No, there might be just one. Come with me. You might see somethin' fun."

I see. It looks like Segahl has somewhere in mind. Typically, I was at best indifferent to information like this regarding the academy, but at times like these, I was very grateful to have someone in the know. With that in mind, I decided to take a peek at the research society that Segahl wished to recommend to me.

Chapter 2: The Olden Magecraft Research Society

We proceeded to a corner of the central plaza, towards the booth that Segahl had recommended.

“Take a look at that girl over there.”

In the direction he’d indicated sat a girl reading a book at a desk, in the shade of a parasol. *Hm. Now that I’m getting a good look, there’s something strange about this picture.* It was as if everyone passing by was intentionally avoiding her. None of them even tried to look at her. Despite how crowded the plaza was, it was as if her booth had been made just to ward off other people.

“Weird, isn’t it? Everyone’s scared of her—the Ice Queen.”

“‘Ice Queen’?”

“Yeah. All the continuing students know that name. Despite having an overwhelming amount of skill, she—Noel—has never tried to befriend anyone. Nobody’s ever seen her laugh either, which is why everyone calls her the Ice Queen. I get the feeling that you two might get along.”

I see. So that’s what’s going on. From what I could tell, her skill was most certainly much better than other mages of this age. If my evaluation was right, then she was maybe at about the same level as Eliza, or a little stronger. And if she was, then I wouldn’t have been surprised if she felt bored out of her mind at the academy.

“Well, anyway, I’ll leave you to it. I hope everything goes well with her!”

With Segahl leaving me, I decided to approach the so-called Ice Queen. *I see.* As I moved closer and got a better look at her, I realized that she was a top-tier beauty. She had Azure Eyes, meaning that she was a water magecraft user. I got the feeling that her nickname was also partly because of the color of her eyes.

When I walked up to the booth, she didn’t have the slightest reaction. She remained deeply immersed in her book. It was as if her body was present, but

her mind was somewhere completely different.

The table she was reading at had a placard with “The Olden Magecraft Research Society” scrawled on it. *Hm. A research society dedicated to old magecraft?* In contrast to the other research societies that were passionately advertising themselves, it was as if she had absolutely no motivation to recruit new members.

“Hey.” Since she hadn’t responded to my presence yet, I decided to call out to her.

“What?” Noel replied, poking her face out from behind her book.

“I’m interested in your research society. Got any information for me?”

At first, I considered being a little more polite, but the more I looked at her, the more I realized that she was a first-year, just like me. This was apparent from the color of her uniform, which was the same as mine. As such, there wasn’t any need for me to go out of my way to be polite with someone the same age as myself.



“Hm? Solve this first, then,” Noel said, handing me a small box with a complicated pattern on it.

A maze circuit? How nostalgic. A maze circuit was an item used to gauge one's skill at deciphering complicated magecraft compositions. Put simply, it was a type of disentanglement puzzle—one that used magecraft.

In order to solve it, one first had to understand the magecraft composition. Then, by pouring mana into the correct circuit, one could open the box. *Hm, let's see...* This didn't seem to be commercially made. If I had to guess, this was something that she'd created herself.

"Done," I said, handing her the solved puzzle shortly afterwards.

She stared at me in disbelief. "Was it...broken?"

"Of course not. I solved it."

Though my response was firm, Noel still looked at me with doubt. "Impossible. It should've taken you at least an hour."

I sighed. *Good grief. You really think this basic of a problem would take me an hour?* Still, though, I had to hand it to her. It was a well-made puzzle, for a student. At the very least, I was fairly sure that Ted couldn't have solved it, even if he spent his entire life working on it.

"Either way, a promise is a promise."

"Fine. I'll take you to our research society's room," Noel said, grabbing the parasol that was propped up against the table.

Hm. If she's using a parasol on a cloudy day like this, she must really not get along with sunlight.

"Follow me."

"Okay."

As I'd successfully cleared Noel's test, she agreed to take me to the Olden Magecraft Research Society's room.

I was taken to a place where the light of the sun didn't seem to reach. Despite being in the middle of the day, it was dark as night. We'd arrived in a place I'd never been before—the academy underground.

There was something that'd been bothering me, though. There were certain signs, seemingly placed at set intervals, that read "No Student Entry Without Permission." *They must be pretty serious about that.* I wasn't really sure of the intention behind all the signage, but at the very least, I got the feeling that this wasn't the kind of place we should've been in without asking.

"Hey, is this *really* the right way?" I asked. However, I received no verbal response in return.

Instead, I think I saw her nod slightly. Then—

"We're here," Noel said, suddenly stopping in the middle of the hallway.

Hm. Here's another really old mechanism. There seemed to be a hidden door ahead.

"Wait there."

Having said this, Noel brought out a sparkling stone from her uniform's pocket. Upon closer examination of the stone, I realized that it'd been modified. It must've been some kind of key, because as I watched, Noel extended her slender hand towards the stone statue next to her and stuck the stone into it.

In the next moment, there was the sound of something unlocking behind the wall. Many similar mechanisms had existed back in my day, as well. This stone was called a "Key Stone." It was a handy item typically carried by some nobles or influential merchants.

"This is my research room."

On the other side of the hidden door lay a collection of books that easily numbered in the thousands. The room itself seemed far too large to be a research room meant for students, but it was also a little lacking for a library. That was the sense I got from the room.

"Where are the other members?"

"There aren't any. So far, I'm the only one in this research society."

I see. If the maze circuit she'd had me solve earlier was her idea of an entrance exam, then it made sense that there weren't any other members. I'd been able to solve it easily because of who I was, but it probably wasn't possible for modern students, given how lacking they were in magecraft. The room was fairly cramped, but it was very well organized. I had to admit, it was a pretty endearing space.

"Oh? Is this..."

A particular book on a shelf caught my interest, and I nonchalantly reached out to it. *Well, this is an old one.* Looking at the publication date, it was about fifty or so years old. *Could all of these be...* After perusing the shelf for a bit, I confirmed my guess. All of the books here were fifty or more years old, and I'd never seen them in the city's bookstores.

"The oldest book here seems to be a hundred years old... Are there any that are older than that?"

I was wondering if there were any books from back in my day. I kinda had high hopes, but they were utterly dashed by Noel's response.

"No. The majority of the books older than that were burned and destroyed in the Great Disaster."

Noel proceeded to explain just what that event was. Her story began over two hundred years ago. The Hero of Wind, Roy, led The Great Four, and brought peace to the world by defeating the Demon King of Twilight who'd ruled the world. *Well, I'm definitely familiar with the story up to this point, at least.*

Apparently, things got messy less than a year after that. Problems arose regarding how to divvy up the territory that the demon king had ruled, and a war began among humans. This war lasted a hundred years, and resulted in many casualties. *How foolish.* Apparently, the number of casualties which resulted from this war over the former territory of the Demon King of Twilight was larger than the number of people who'd died under his tyrannic rule.

The long war had worn down the minds and bodies of the people. The doctrine of anti-magecraft—precursor to the formation of the modern organization known as AMO—was born during this period. They detested magecraft, resorting to force to rid the world of it. Specifically, they burned

tomes in an active effort to degrade the practice of magecraft.

“Hm, that’s weird. If this Great Disaster is as big a historical event as it sounds, why is it never talked about?”

“It’s simple. Many in power subscribe to the anti-magecraft doctrine. Thus, it’s taboo to talk about the book burning.”

I fell silent. Thanks to her explanation, I finally had the last piece of the puzzle to answer the question I’d had all these years about the decline of mages. Though I’d initially postulated that it’d been due to Regalias, I now knew that they were only one of multiple contributing factors.

This went without saying, but it was imperative to leave exceptional tomes behind for future generations in order to further the development of magecraft. However, since these people had burned those tomes with ill intent, it only made sense that modern magecraft had declined to this extent.

“Modern magecraft is a shadow of what it used to be. Thus, this research society aims to learn the superior magecraft of old.”

I applauded her initiative. The majority of humans alive right now didn’t even have an inkling as to how far magecraft had declined. By coming to that realization on her own, she’d really proved herself to be an exceptional mage.

“You’re...not going to laugh?”

“What’s there to laugh at?”

“Well... Everyone says that modern magecraft is more convenient with Regalias.”

I see. Most likely, she’d been treated as an outcast by other mages, and had become ashamed for focusing on studying olden magecraft. There was no doubt that Regalias were convenient. Compared to olden magecraft, modern magecraft may have been weaker, but it had its own advantages. The fact that Regalias allowed anyone to use the same magecraft, to the same effect, regardless of their individual abilities, was useful in its own right.

“I’m not gonna laugh at you. After all, I’m not in the business of belittling someone’s hard effort.”

“You’re a strange one. Could I ask for your name?”

“It’s Abel.”

“This is a key to this room. If it’s all right with you, I’d like you to come by tomorrow as well,” Noel said, pulling out the stone that she’d used to enter this room earlier.

Hm. Though I hadn’t really had any intention of joining a research society, with how things had played out, I found it hard not to accept this troublesome request of hers. I couldn’t find it in myself to say no. After all, there were countless rare books that I’d never find in the city’s bookstores in this room. I wasn’t sure if I’d come all the time, but at the very least, I’d definitely come again when I felt like it.

◇◇◇

Elsewhere, shortly before Abel and Ted went to the recruitment fair, a girl with crimson hair, Eliza, was waiting at a certain café located in the western district of the royal capital, which was a typical student hangout area. The café was in one of the backstreets. After having gotten her coffee, Eliza was now waiting for her friend.

This was Eliza’s favorite café. It was run by a woman who’d worked as a court chef in the royal capital, who had decided to open her own shop after retiring. Even putting it nicely, it didn’t get much traffic. That being said, it was a place with high-quality sweets at an affordable price, and was thus well known among a portion of female students.

“Sorry for the wait, Eli!” A girl by the name of Yukari appeared in front of Eliza, holding a tray filled with an assortment of colorful sweets. Like Eliza, she was a transfer student, which had most likely helped to strengthen the connection they had. Ever since their phys ed class the other day, when they’d been on the same team for Hunt, Yukari had completely opened her heart to Eliza.

“Hm? Eli, you didn’t get any sweets?”

As soon as she’d arrived, it was clear to Yukari that something was wrong. As far as Yukari knew, Eliza’s stomach was a bottomless pit. This was especially

true when it came to sweets—she ate so many of them that it was a cause of mild concern for Yukari.

But at this moment, Eliza seemed like a different person. Her tray was essentially empty save for one cup of coffee, which didn't even have any sugar in it. Nor was there a trace of Eliza's usual appetite.

"Hey, Yukari... I wanted to ask for your advice on something."

"Oh? What is it?"

It was unusual for someone as bright and confident as Eliza to be acting like this. Her serious tone made Yukari brace herself unconsciously for what Eliza was about to say.

"I...saw..."

"Uh...?"

"I saw Abel...kissing someone."

Eliza then proceeded to explain what she'd seen the other day. It'd all started a few days ago—Eliza had gone sightseeing around the royal capital with Abel and succeeded in having her first date. It was like a dream come true.

However, her happiness was not to last. Due to certain circumstances, she'd found herself in front of Abel's room that same night. It was there that she witnessed Abel locking lips with a woman—and not just any woman. She'd immediately recognized that it was Lilith, one of the academy's professors. Though she'd only just begun teaching at Arthlia, her unreal beauty had made her famous almost immediately.

"I see... I didn't know about that."

Now the reason for the diminishing of Eliza's monstrous appetite was obvious. Yukari, for her part, was vaguely aware that Eliza was interested in Abel romantically.

"Yukari... Do you think that Abel and Professor Lilith are...dating?" As Eliza asked this question, a deep sadness appeared in her eyes.

Yukari didn't want to see her precious friend's face fraught with worry any longer. With that in mind, she quickly told Eliza some gossip that she'd heard.

“It’s okay! You don’t have to worry about that at all, Eli! The two of them are siblings by blood!”

“They...are?”

Eliza was so confused that her brain couldn’t really process what she’d just been told. This shocking reveal only left her with more questions.

“Oh, I guess you really didn’t know! It’s a pretty big topic of discussion among the first-years. After all, the two of them stand out in a lot of ways.”

“But...isn’t it kinda weird that they met up in his room at night to k-k-kiss, despite being blood-related siblings?”

As a primary witness to the events that’d unfolded, Eliza couldn’t readily accept that explanation. The kiss that those two had shared that night did not look like any kind of kiss that family members would share. She got the feeling that the kiss was much more intense than that.

“Well... I think every family has their own traditions, and it might be normal in some families to kiss each other.”

However, Yukari was operating under a misunderstanding. The “kiss” that she was envisioning was an innocent peck on the cheek, at most. However, that was not the case at all. Never in Yukari’s wildest dreams would blood-related siblings have entered the kind of relationship that you got between a man and a woman. That idea had not crossed her mind even once.

She’s right. Kissing is normal for family members! Eliza thought.

However, Eliza was, of course, not aware of the misunderstanding under which Yukari was operating. Regardless, now knowing that Abel and Lilith were siblings, Eliza fully returned to her usual energetic self.

“Heh heh heh. I feel hungry again, with that load off my shoulders.”

“Would you like some of my cake? I thought you’d be eating a lot, so I got extra just for you!”

“Really?! Thanks!”

Eliza’s eyes began sparkling as she realized that she could eat the cake that she loved so much.

“Let’s eat to our hearts’ content today, Eli! What cakes do you recommend here?”

“Hm... That’s a tough one. In my opinion, you definitely can’t go wrong with the strawberry cake, but the most popular is apparently the chocolate cake. According to the owner, this month—”

Eliza began talking about her cake recommendations with an uncharacteristically serious expression. Ultimately, by the time she’d finished eating the cakes she loved so much, she was back to her usual cheerful self.

You got this, Eli! Yukari thought.

Ideally, she wanted to witness the moment that Eliza’s crush bore fruit. This was the incident that made Yukari determined to support Eliza’s crush from the shadows.

◇

At the same time that Eliza was enjoying cake at her favorite café, Ted, who’d escaped from the relentless recruitment efforts of the upperclassmen, was returning to the dorm, looking extremely fatigued and holding a large number of recruitment flyers.

“Phew... I didn’t think I’d ever get free.”

Ted’s school bag was stuffed full of recruitment flyers that the upperclassmen had more or less forced him to take. Since he was very well built compared to the other first-years, he’d been dragged around by the sports-oriented research societies.

“Hey, long time no see, Ted.”

Suddenly, Ted heard a voice call out to him. The sound of the voice was not only nostalgic—it was familiar to him as well.

“B-Barth?!”

His older brother had suddenly appeared behind the dorm. This was the first time Ted had seen him in a while. In that time, it seemed that Barth’s face had become terribly gaunt. He looked unhealthy.



“Why are you here?! I thought you were taking a break from school to focus on your health!”

Ted had tried to visit him a number of times, but Barth had stopped coming to the academy due to medical reasons, before becoming entirely unreachable. He also hadn't made any effort to contact Ted himself.

"Never mind that," Barth said. "Have you already chosen a research society to join?"

"N-No. Not yet. Why?"

"Heh heh heh... Good. In that case, how'd you like to join us in the Magecraft Extermination Research Society?"

"Huh? What's that?"

Barth raised his voice. "Excellent question! We of the Magecraft Extermination Research Society are a super legal organization that protects the peace of the world. We exterminate the evil magecraft that's run rampant in our lands, so as to restore order to this world!"

An unfamiliar fear gripped Ted at these words. It was true that even from a young age, Barth had been impressionable and high-strung. But it was still hard for Ted to believe that this was the same brother he'd always known, that he used to live with. The change in him was so drastic that it was almost as if he'd been possessed by something.

"H-Hey, bro. Sorry, but I'm learning magecraft from Master as his disciple. I don't think I can join you..."

"'Master'... Oh, right. That commoner named Abel, huh?" Ted nodded, and Barth bit his lip.

This had been a habit of his since he was a child. Whenever he ran up against something that wasn't going his way, he'd bite his lip. But Ted had never seen him bite his lip so hard that he drew blood.

"You're a disgrace! Is that Inferior Eyes *that* important to you?!" Barth howled, violently thrusting Ted away from him.

"Gah!"

Ted, losing his balance, fell on his butt, and the contents of his bag scattered everywhere.

“Think about this long and hard—who are you going to listen to? Your own flesh and blood? Or a stupid commoner with Inferior Eyes?”

Ted was in shock. He couldn’t even begin to understand what’d happened to make his straitlaced brother change this much. The image of his brother’s extremely altered appearance hung heavy in Ted’s mind.

Chapter 3: Akashic Record

Now that classes had let out for the day, it was time to decide what to do. I'd sorta said I'd go to Noel's research society after school today, but to be honest, having to meet up with someone was rather troublesome. That being said, I was interested in the books hidden away in that room.

I gathered my textbooks and swiftly made my way to the exit.

"Abel. Do you have a second?" Just as I entered the hallway, someone called out to me.

"Need something?"

I turned and saw someone I knew very well indeed. Someone with crimson hair, whom I hadn't been able to shake ever since the entrance exam.

"I-I don't *need* something, but...did you already decide what research society you're joining?" she asked, fidgeting while intertwining her fingers.

Hm. As usual, she asks the most random questions. I had no idea what she could gain from learning that information.

"No, I haven't really picked one yet."

To be more precise, though I checked out the Olden Magecraft Research Society yesterday, I didn't join it.



Most likely, the right answer here was to say that I hadn’t decided yet.

“O-Oh, great! There’s a research society that I’m planning on checking out

tomorrow after school. Would...you like to join me?” Eliza said, handing me a pamphlet.

Dragon Riders Research Society — Freedom

New members welcome!

Let’s all have fun riding dragons through the sky after school! First-timers are totally welcome! We’re holding daily tours during the recruitment period. Come ask our members if you wanna learn more!

It was a very colorful pamphlet—each letter was a different color. *Hm. Dragons, huh? It’s been a while since I rode one.* It might not be too bad to play around with dragons, as a change of pace. Plus, Eliza had gone out of her way to invite me.

“Sure. Sounds good to me.”

“R-Really?! I-It’s a promise, okay? Okay?!” Eliza said, before running off.

Good grief. She’s as busy as ever. For some reason, though, she seemed even stranger than usual. The sun’s rays made her cheeks look red, and her heartbeat was so loud that I’d been able to hear it even from where I was standing. *Are you that excited about riding dragons?*

There probably wasn’t too much point reading into this. From what I knew, Eliza was the type of girl whose mood changed as frequently as cats loll around on the ground. Most likely, there was no particular reason behind her actions.

◇

Having finished making plans with Eliza, I made my way to Noel in the basement of the academy. I opened the emergency door and passed by the sign forbidding admission by normal students. Finally, I arrived at the familiar underground hallway.

Hm. Now that I think about it, there’s a lot of mystery around this Noel girl. Judging by the color of her uniform, I at least knew she was the same age as us, but I’d never seen her in a classroom ever.

The same could’ve been said about this underground hallway. Regular

students weren't allowed in, so what purpose was there in having a facility for students here?

While I was thinking that, something strange happened. Apparently, there was someone already present. And judging from their presence, I knew exactly who it was. But why was *he* here? It was probably better to keep my guard up. After all, I didn't know what his motivations were. I moved to stand behind him, making sure to conceal my presence.

"What are you doing here?" I asked Emerson, just as he'd opened the secret door to the hidden library and was about to head inside.

"Aha ha. I never expected to meet you here... What a surprise." The man scratched his messy bed hair while giving me a wry smile.

Emerson was not a person I could let my guard down around. After all, there'd been a time when he'd been observing me and trying to sniff around through the use of Regalias he'd developed. It was hard to imagine that he would extend this dangerous behavior to Noel as well, but if I saw him doing anything strange, it might become necessary for me to come up with countermeasures.

"You don't have to worry about anything, Abel. I'm the adviser for the Olden Magecraft Research Society."

Judging by his words, he'd apparently seen through what I was thinking. *Well, color me surprised.* I'd heard that this research society had a professor as its adviser, but I hadn't expected it to be *this* guy.

"Though I'm the adviser, all I really do is come in every now and then to check on her. What are *you* doing here?"

"I just have something of a standing promise with the girl inside."

"I see... Noel's taken a liking to you, then. Now that I'm here, I might as well tell you a bit about her."

After that, Emerson began talking about Noel. Apparently, she'd been admitted by recommendation of the headmaster. She was a special student who, despite being a first-year, was exempt from attending classes. She seemed to be the only one who had this special perk.

Noel's skills already surpassed the majority of the professors at the academy. Due to this, it was impossible for them to devise any curriculum suitable for her. Consequently, the school had made an exception and allowed her to use the secret library that was filled with rare books for her own self-study.

"Her overwhelming genius at times distances her from others. My guess is that she wants a friend who's at a similar level to her."

I see. Emerson's got a point. Now it made sense why she'd made a maze circuit and used it to judge the strength of others.

"Heh heh. Of course, I know that your strength is on a much higher level. But how about it? If I use my authority, I could also have you exempt from class—"

"Not necessary. All I want to do is live a normal, peaceful life here at the academy."

With that, I shot down his proposal and headed inside, to where Noel was waiting. While the prospect of not having to attend classes was attractive, I couldn't trust Emerson. Also, I got the feeling that being in his debt would result in an unnecessary amount of trouble.

"Oh... You don't know, do you? Simply becoming involved with her in any capacity means that you'll never achieve the peaceful life that you desire."

As I walked into the room, Emerson left me with these cryptic words.

◇

"Oh, Abel. I've been waiting forever."

As soon as I entered the room, Noel happily ran up to me. *Good grief. The way she's acting almost reminds me of a puppy.* Unbeknownst to me, she seemed to have become extremely attached to me.

"Yeah, I said I would. So, what do you need from me?"

"I have something I want to show you... I brought it from home," Noel said, bringing out a book from a box.

Oh? Looking closer, this book has a very strange shape. There are traces of it being burned all around the cover. It was not particularly well preserved. There was mana enveloping the book like chains—probably to prevent anyone from

easily opening it.

“What is this book?”

“The Akashic Record...or at least, that’s what my family calls it.”

I’d heard the name of this book before. It was famous enough that it was being talked about even after I’d been reincarnated two hundred years into the future. After all, over a hundred years ago, there’d been countless wars waged among humanity due to the Akashic Record.

Apparently, the magecraft in it would give you enough power to make even the world yours. It had definitely earned its reputation as an evil book of calamity.

“Why do you have that?”

“Well... You said that you were looking for books from two hundred years ago.”

I sighed. *Yeah, but I wasn’t asking for* these *kinds of books. Still, I’m surprised.* How had her family come into possession of something so valuable? I was very curious as to what circumstances had led them to have sole possession over it. Were they some kind of high nobles, or maybe part of the royal family? At any rate, her family most likely set her apart from the other students.

“Was this...a bother to you?” There was concern reflected in her blue eyes.

It went without saying that I was not the least bit bothered by her actions. If anything, it was the opposite. I loved all sorts of books. Even back before I reincarnated, most of the money I earned was put towards feeding my reading addiction. Thus, I was incredibly curious about the contents of a cursed tome like this, which supposedly had enough power hidden in it to distort reality itself.

“Could I take a look?”

“Yeah... But just you. I’ll let you, and only you, take a look at my treasure,” Noel said, removing the chains and opening the pages of the book.

Whoa. These are some pretty intricately written magecraft equations. It was burnt all over, so I couldn’t completely decipher its contents, but I got the

feeling that the level of what it contained was high. Even back in my day, I was about the only person I knew who could write such complicated magecraft equations.

Hm? Uh... Wait. This writing looks familiar. I sighed, not believing the situation. Never in my wildest dreams could I have guessed that the author of this Akashic Record was none other than yours truly. When I flipped to the last page, I spotted a nostalgic name written there.

To my dear comrade in arms, Daytona.

“By any chance, was this book passed down to you by an ancestor?”

“Yeah. I took it from my family’s storehouse. From what I understand, my ancestor received this two hundred years ago from an amazing mage that they respected.”

“Oh, I see. So that’s why...”

Seeing something so nostalgic made me revisit old memories...

◇

This was a story that happened over two hundred years ago, after we of the hero party had taken down the disastrous demon known as the Demon King of Twilight, who’d brought about the age of darkness.

Afterwards, each of us split up to go around the land and fight the scattered demonic forces. Day after day, we continued to fight.

“Hey, there you are, Abel.”

A blue-haired woman by the name of Daytona was waiting for me at the inn I was visiting. The hero of water, Daytona, was a mage who used to be a merchant—an unusual backstory in our party. With her magecraft, she could freeze the air and even the movements of objects. She was as proficient as I was, if not more so, at least within the realm of Azure Eyes magecraft.

“You bring what I asked you for?”

“Yeah... I guess.”

After taking down the demon king, I'd promised to gift Daytona a book. Personally, I had some hesitation about giving others books, but she'd saved me once on our journeys, so it made it hard for me to really turn her down.

"Kinda late now, but can I ask why you even want this?"

I'd been working on reincarnation magecraft since I was around ten or so years old. The book contained records of my research process as well as magecraft that I'd created. The only snag was that the majority of its contents was magecraft for those with Obsidian Eyes or Ashen Eyes. Naturally, I couldn't think of many uses for a water-elemental mage like her. I wasn't sure what she could really gain from having it.

"Abel, I have no doubt that your name will go down in history as the greatest mage of all time. That's why I want to take this opportunity to have a personal belonging of this amazing mage as a keepsake," she declared, giving me an enthusiastic wink.

I couldn't stop myself from sighing. *She's really gonna say something so disingenuous at a moment like* this*?* I'd known her long enough, however, to know that she wasn't such a sentimental person.

"What's the real reason?"

"Heh heh heh. Money, of course! A tome written by you is definitely gonna be worth a crazy amount of money!"

Can't say I'm surprised. It's completely on brand for you, as a miser. Regardless of her motivations, I wasn't one to renege on my promises. Anyway, I'd written the book as nothing more than a way to pass the time, and I hadn't thought of it as necessary to myself for quite a while now. Since I was never going to reread it, I didn't really have a problem with giving it to her.

"Oh, I know! This is a *great* opportunity—could I get your signature too?! I think that'll really bring up the price!"

"Seriously, what am I to do with you...?"

It was then that I'd decided to play a tiny prank on Daytona. Though I had no need for it anymore myself, it did annoy me somewhat that the book was going to change hands via financial transaction.

So that was why, instead of writing my name on the final page, I wrote, “To my dear comrade in arms, Daytona.” Even I had to admit that it was a very tiny prank indeed, but at the very least, it’d make it a little bit more difficult to give the book to someone else.

I was surprised. I'd never expected Daytona to have tried so hard to preserve the book I'd given her. Or maybe I was looking at things the wrong way. Ever since that day, the book had been passed from person to person, becoming the trigger for conflict between humans. That must've been why it'd become known as the Akashic Record—a tome of taboo.

Despite how she acted, Daytona was a person with a strong sense of personal responsibility. She must've worked extremely hard to recover the Akashic Record, which had become the catalyst of conflict.

"Is something wrong, Abel?"

How had I not seen it sooner? Now that I thought about it, Noel was the spitting image of Daytona when she'd been young. There was no doubt about it. Taking into consideration all we'd spoken about, it was more than likely that Noel was a descendant of Daytona, the Hero of Water.

"No, nothing. I was just thinking about the past a little."

I exhaled. *Now that I'm rereading this, its contents are pretty poor.* Compared to what I was currently capable of, the things written in the book seemed like absolute failures.

"Abel... Can you read this book?!" Noel asked, her eyes sparkling.

I sighed. Of course I could read it—I was the one who'd written it.

Then again, Noel's surprise was understandable. The magecraft language used within its pages wasn't used in modern magecraft—it was a relic of the distant past.

Back in my day, it was normal for tomes to use extremely formal, ancient language. However, that ancient language was never as optimized as modern mage language, so it remained esoteric and incredibly difficult to decipher.

"Yeah. For example, there's some stuff about Revival Magecraft written on this page."

"Revival Magecraft?!"

"Put simply, this book discusses the interconnectedness of the human body and soul. Take a look at this page..."

I began giving her a simple explanation of the contents. No mere student could comprehend what this book contained, but for Noel, who was a descendant of Daytona, The Hero of Water, it seemed that the tome's contents might at least catch her attention.

"Amazing! Could... Could you please tell me more about this book, Abel?!"

Judging by her reaction, I felt it was safe to say my guess had been right on the money. Noel was already very curious about olden magecraft. As I continued to decode the book for her, she grew more and more excited. I could almost see her wagging her tail like an excited puppy.

"Abel, what about this sentence?"

"Sorry, but could we save this for another time? It's getting kinda late."

Due to the lack of windows in the room, it was easy to lose track of time, but if my guess was right, there wouldn't be enough time to get back to the dorm before curfew if we didn't start getting ready to leave soon.

Apparently, breaking the curfew set by the academy would result in some kind of fearsome punishment. I wasn't sure about the details, but I didn't really want to attract any negative attention either, so I'd concluded that I should abide by the dorm curfew as much as possible.

"Okay... That's fine."

As I began to get ready to leave, I could tell that Noel was obviously in low spirits.

"No need to be so down. I'll tell you more about how to read the book another time."

"Really?"

"Yeah. But, understand that it's not at the top of my priority list. I'll only do it when I have a spare minute after reading, got it?"

"That makes me so happy... It's a promise..." She smiled brightly, and no trace of her earlier sadness remained.

Good grief. I've made some troublesome promises in my life, and this is definitely one of them. However, I wasn't in the business of doing charity work

—this was my way of paying her back for allowing me to use this room free of charge. Separately, I was also thinking of another way to repay her. These were the circumstances that led me to begin teaching Noel old magecraft language.



Chapter 4: Riding Dragons

The next day, I woke up early, left the dorm, and spotted a familiar face waiting for me in front of the school building.

“G-Good morning, Abel.”

“Morning.”

Hm? Did she wake up extra early just to get here to greet me? As usual, I had no idea what was going through Eliza’s head.

“Um, do you remember the promise we made yesterday?”

“Yeah—we’re gonna ride dragons, right?”

“Yeah. I’ve been so excited about it since yesterday. It’s...been my dream to ride one, ever since I was little.”

I see. That’s really on-brand for someone like you, who admires strength. Throughout time, dragons, being symbols of power, have been well-liked by humans. Thus it seemed pretty much inevitable for her to have come to adore dragons.

“Well, I’ll see you after school, then! I’ll submit your excursion form too!”

“Got it.”

Eliza and I entered the classroom, then went our separate ways. As I walked to my seat, I felt the gazes of the guys in the room focus on me for some weird reason.

“Hey, did you see that?”

“Who does he think he is? That stupid Inferior Eyes thinks he can cozy up to girls.”

I sighed. *I’ve been thinking about this for a while, but I always seem to attract a lot of attention when I’m with Eliza. What a pain, but it’s understandable, I guess.*

Eliza’s looks were a clear cut above those of the rest of the girls her age.

Seeing her acting friendly with an Amber-Eyed individual like myself must not have sat right with these adolescent boys.

“Dammit! I... I wanna touch Eliza’s huge rack too!”

“Shut up! You’re being so loud! I totally get your pain, though!”

The crude desires of some of the boys in the class had come spilling out of their mouths. *Good grief. There’s a limit to how crass you can be, guys.*

However, this made it clear to me that although Eliza had been a little bit of an outcast when she’d started at Arthlia for being a transfer student and prideful too, day by day, she’d grown more popular with the guys. There may have been more guys than I thought aiming to win Eliza’s heart.

◇

After the usual boring classes ended for the day, I left the academy with Eliza as planned and headed to the dragon stable in the Western district.

“Woo-hoo! Hey, everyone! Thanks for comin’ today!”

“Yay!” three other members cheered in unison.

Uh... Are these the members of the Dragon Riders Research Society? There were about fifteen, very energetic upperclassmen waiting for us outside the dragon stable. Their appearances gave a very frivolous impression.

In fact, from the way they were dressed to the extremely fragrant cologne they had on, it was hard to believe that they were going to be riding dragons. Two hundred years ago, taking care of dragons took more work than one could possibly have imagined. After all, dragons ate frequently and moved around a lot. Also, being highly intelligent, if you dropped your guard for a moment, they’d try to fly the coop. How could guys who didn’t look like they’d worked hard at anything in their life be able to handle such beasts?

“Sorry... I didn’t know that the research society was like this.”

Hm. It seems I’m not the only one slightly put off by their appearance. Eliza also looked as though the vibes of the people here weren’t like what she’d expected.

“Um, could I...ask a question?”

“Hm? Sure. Ask away, cutie.”

“What’s the difference between this research society and the Dragon Knight Research Society next door?” asked a girl, who was probably also here to tour the research society.

The upperclassman she’d directed this query to replied in a loud voice. “Great question! Simply put, we operate on different philosophies. Unlike them, we’re all about having a good time! So we don’t sweat the formalities or any of that kind of stuff! We want to enjoy ourselves freely, whether that’s while riding dragons or while doing other activities.”

I see. It makes sense now why the atmosphere here is so lax. Still, though, I was surprised. Back in my day, dragons were irreplaceable to humans as a resource. Never had we ever considered using dragons for our own personal amusement. Then again, this just went to show how affluent the present world was. *Let’s look at this in a positive light.*

“Okay, everyone! Pair up with the upperclassman closest to you and let’s get to the dragon riding!”

At these instructions from the representative of the research society, the students began moving around. *Hm? What’s going on now?* It wasn’t until people had begun to pair off that I realized that everyone who’d come to tour this research society was a girl—except for me. On the other hand, all the upperclassmen were guys.

“I’m starting to get a headache...” I sighed.

*So ultimately, the objective of this research society visit is...well...*that. I couldn’t help but sigh at such a sad turn of events. Even if two hundred years had passed since my time, it was depressing to see them reduced to mere tools used for flirting.

“Hey, Eli, I’m so glad you came!” The guy with blond hair, who’d been acting as the representative, approached us.

Hm. Up close, the stench of cologne is even stronger. I could also tell that he probably didn’t do much in terms of physical training. He was definitely on the slender side, but looking even closer, I could tell that there was useless flab on

him. At his waist hung a pistol-shaped Regalia. It looked like an expensive one too, but other than that, there was nothing particularly noteworthy about him. He was the spitting image of a modern mage.

“Thank you for the invite. I also brought a friend,” Eliza said, flashing me a glance.

Noticing me, the upperclassman’s brow furrowed.

“I know it’s sudden, but would you wanna ride with me? I have a really great dragon prepared just for you, Eli.”

“Wait. I came with someone today, so could he ride with us too?”

“I’m sorry, but that won’t be possible. My dragon can only seat two people. It’s unfortunate, but he’ll have to ride separately.”

“But...”

Well, I can’t say I’m surprised. The real purpose of this open house is to flirt with the first-years. I’m nothing but an obstacle and a nuisance to the members of this research society.

“Eliza, you don’t have to worry about me,” I said. “You should just enjoy yourself.”

It’s kinda sketchy whether there’s even a dragon for me to ride, though. On the way here, I’d learned a few things from my conversation with Eliza. This would be her first time riding a dragon, and she’d been extremely excited about it. In that case, it was only proper for me to give her a little push so that she could fully enjoy the experience.

“Hmph... Fine.”

Uh... Huh? Why is she acting like that? All I’d done was be as considerate of her situation as I could. But now she seemed to be in a terrible mood.

“Don’t worry, Eli. I’ll make sure he gets a dragon to ride.”

I sighed. *I* really *don’t know what’s going through this girl’s mind.* After that, Eliza, without looking me in the eye, quickly disappeared into the dragon stable.

◇

Phew... It's been a while since I've smelled this. As soon as I entered the dragon stable, I was hit by the very potent and unique smell of dragons. The most obvious difference between dragons and other animals was the incredible amount of energy that they consumed. After all, they had huge bodies.

Speaking in terms of pure size, other large-bodied creatures existed, but none boasted both such a large size *and* the ability of flight. As a result, a fully mature dragon ate over three hundred kilograms of food in a day. Of course, that meant that the amount of excrement they produced was proportionally inhuman. The dragonkeepers, who took care of the dragons, were pretty much bogged down all day cleaning up after them.

"Take a look. This is my beloved dragon, Saint Glory!" the representative of the research society said, introducing Eliza to a scaly green dragon.

"Wow! I don't think I've ever seen a dragon this big!"

Eliza was right to be so excited. It certainly wasn't a bad dragon whatsoever. Back in my day, the only ones who would've been able to boast ownership of such a big dragon were a handful of big-time nobles, or people with royal blood.

In all likelihood, the methods for raising dragons had been thoroughly researched, and the processes had been streamlined to be more efficient. At first, I'd thought that dragons might've gotten weaker with the decline of magecraft, but it seemed that concern was completely unfounded.

"And for you... Uh..." He trailed off then, seemingly not able to remember my name.

"Abel."

"Right. For you, Abel, we have a dragon in the back. Feel free to do your own thing."

Good grief. His treatment of me is very crude compared to how he's treating Eliza. But also, I much preferred a more hands-off treatment anyway, so this might've all worked out in my favor. I decided to take him up on his offer and do as I wanted.

"All righty, Eli, let's go outside and enjoy a nice ride in the sky."

“Okay...” Eliza seemed a little down, but went with the representative and left the dragon stable. *Hm. It looks like I’m the only one left.* I didn’t have a choice. It would make me a little late, but I needed to find the dragon set aside for me, then follow Eliza and the others.

I went to the back of the stable as instructed, but just as I went to open the door there, someone called out to me.

“Hey, you! What are you doing?!”

“Uh, sorry... Who are you?” I asked.

“Name’s Pepe. I’m one of the people who help take care of the dragons here.”

I see. This Pepe guy seems to be the same age as me, but he’s gone down the path of making dragonkeeping his career. I wasn’t sure if he didn’t shower frequently enough or simply lacked sleep, but his hair was incredibly oily and there were heavy bags under his eyes. The dirt underneath his nails was, most likely, dragon excrement.

He was the poster child for being unhygienic, but I still had a much better impression of him than the strangely tidy members of the research society. Back in my day, people who took extremely good care of dragons naturally ended up scuffed and dirty.

“More importantly, are you tryin’ to go back there?!”

“Yeah. Why?”

“I wouldn’t if I were you. You’re better off staying away from Leonhart—he’s the dragon in there.”

“Why’s that?”

“I think it might be easier to show you than to explain.”

He opened the door to the back and beckoned me to follow. *I see. Again, it’s* very *obvious that dragons are kept here.* Inside, I saw a dragon sleeping. Surprisingly, it was even bigger than Saint Glory, the dragon that had amazed Eliza. It also seemed fairly old.

“This is a magnificent dragon,” I remarked. “A dragon like this would normally

be in the possession of the royal family, wouldn't it?"

"Ha ha... Leo isn't anything that amazing."

Pepe began loudly explaining to me how violent the dragon in front of us was. Leo was apparently over a hundred years old and was the oldest of any of the dragons kept here. He used to be a famous racing dragon, but after retiring and being taken in by this dragon stable, his entire personality had changed.

He wouldn't listen to any humans at all and would go on rampages. Too many students had tried to tame him but gotten injured instead. Though his strength had decreased with age, since he'd hurt so many people, he had a reputation around here as the absolute worst and most problematic dragon.

"I don't understand why you'd continue to keep such a violent dragon."

There wasn't a creature in this world as costly to keep as a dragon. Back in my day, if a dragon stopped being useful, they were immediately chopped up and sold on the market.

"Well... It seems that Leo is highly revered by the younger dragons. Even if he's not too useful, we can't just get rid of him. Dragons are much more delicate creatures than people think."

I see. Having heard all of this, I guessed that Leo was actually keeping his strength hidden. Dragons were extremely prideful, and would never show respect to other dragons that they thought were weaker than themselves. In short, this old dragon had by no means grown weaker. He simply didn't like being used by humans, and had thus decided to hide his strength.

"Hey. You awake?" I asked, touching the dragon.

As I did this, Leo opened his eye, which was itself about the size of a human head. I could tell by the way he looked at me that he didn't really respect me. *I see.* This old dragon was a staunch hater of humans.

Yet I couldn't blame him if he was always having to deal with the upperclassmen I'd met today. However, the way he'd reacted to me was within my expectations. After all, this wasn't too different from how it had been two hundred years ago. Powerful dragons often had a habit of being very strict about who they chose to allow to ride them.

“Obey me,” I said, spending just a tiny bit of mana to flick Leonhart in the head.

The next moment, he roared, completely blowing away any trace of the sleepiness he’d shown before. *Hm. This is a little unexpected. He has even more power than I thought.* The fighting spirit he exuded was as strong as that of any other extraordinary dragon I’d ever met.

“Whoa! I’ve never seen Leo this fired up!”

The one who seemed the most surprised by Leonhart’s sudden change in behavior was the dragonkeeper, Pepe.

“Hey... Just who are you? You made Leo obey you in an instant. You’re no ordinary guy!”

“No, I’m nobody special. Just your average student.”

“Come on, now, don’t mess with me. I know I might not look the part, but I’m really confident about my eye for both humans and dragons, if nothing else.”

Good grief. Say what you want, but...at least right now, I really am *just a student.* The person who’d lived two hundred years ago, and had made a name for himself as part of the hero party, was dead.

“Well, anyway,” I said, “I’m gonna borrow Leo for a bit. I’ll be sure to bring him back before dark.”

“H-Hey, wait!”

Ignoring Pepe, I rode Leo out of the enclosure, then out of the stable. *Hm. Looks like the others have flown pretty far ahead. But honestly, if this dragon flies at his true speed, I’ll catch up in no time.*

◇◇◇

At the same time, in the mountain range about ten kilometers away from the royal capital, the members of the Dragon Riders Research Society were flying through the sky, each at their own pace, far ahead of Abel.

Wow! The city looks so small. Though Eliza had been feeling down not too long ago, she’d recovered while riding on a dragon—the very thing she’d been yearning to do for so long.

If only Abel was the person riding in front of me, this would be perfect... She sighed.

It was unfortunate, but unavoidable. The dragon that Eliza was on was large compared to the others, but it still wasn't big enough to comfortably seat three people.

"Eli, what's the matter? Something on your mind?"

"Huh? Oh...yes."

"Let's take a break on the plateau over there," said Brian, the representative of the research society, before landing the dragon on a nearby tall, lone cliff.

This is amazing. You can go so far riding a dragon...

This special situation was only possible because of the opportunity she'd been given today. If she reached out just a little, she'd be able to touch the clouds. Eliza's excitement was as high as it could go as she stood in this extraordinary, picturesque spot.

"Eating scones up here while taking in the scenery is the best. Would you like to join me?"

"C-Can I?!"

"Of course! Just wait a bit. I'll pour us some tea too."

If Eliza had been in her normal state of mind, she would've been a little warier about being alone with a guy she was meeting for the first time. However, her excitement from having finally gotten to ride a dragon had lowered her defenses, and so she didn't notice the trap that the guy had set.

Huh? I... I feel so sleepy, all of a sudden.

After she'd been eating the scones for a while, Eliza could tell that something strange was going on. Her vision started to blur, and her body grew heavy. She began to lose control of her movements, even dropping the scone she'd been so happily enjoying.

"Heh heh. Sheesh, you're a tough one, Eli. It took a lot longer than I'd expected for the drug to kick in."

Gone was Brian's previous kind and gentle aura. In his place stood an entirely different person.

"What? Drug...?"

"Aha ha ha! If you're gonna blame anything, blame that sexy body of yours! It's not right for a first-year like you to have such a huge rack! You can't blame me for wanting to rape you!"

Finally sensing danger, Eliza grunted, immediately launching an attack. She knew that, in all likelihood, she only had one chance. Everything rode on this attack. She'd undergone strict training from a young age, unusual for a modern mage, and as a result, she was able to use magecraft without needing a Regalia.

"Fireball!"

"Aha ha ha! What a pathetic attack!" With his bare hands, Brian deflected her attack, extinguishing it.

This threw Eliza into deeper despair. *H-How is that possible?! I know I cast my magecraft perfectly!*

Though she'd lost her best chance, she knew that she couldn't let herself falter. She fired off a second fireball, then a third.

"Wh-Why can't I...?"

But the result was, once again, unexpected. Each fireball she aimed at him misfired, fizzling into the air before even getting close to him.

"Heh heh. Sorry, but this is just how it is. As you can see, that defective Regalia-less magecraft is weak."

Eliza gritted her teeth. The fear swelling up inside of her had made her unable to properly construct her magecraft. Olden Magecraft was produced by the user, and relied heavily on that user's mental fortitude. Though Olden Magecraft was more versatile than Regalias, the reason Regalias had become so mainstream in modern times was because of their reliability. No matter the situation, they always worked just the same.

"Heh heh. What a naughty girl you are, defying an upperclassman..."

Eliza began to tremble, her voice becoming shaky. Fear washed over her as

Brian touched her hair. It was nearly impossible for her to construct magecraft in this state. She felt the pain of her own weakness at this moment. She didn't have enough mental fortitude to be able to reliably use Olden Magecraft.

"Save me... Abel..."

In the face of this despair, all she could squeeze out was the name of the boy she was interested in. She remembered that Abel should've gotten a dragon himself. Perhaps he was flying on a dragon himself, not too far away from them.

However, her one last ray of hope was shattered into pieces by Brian.

"Abel? Heh heh. What? That Inferior Eyes brat?" Brian began snickering uncontrollably. "Oh, you don't know, do you? The dragon that I let Abel borrow is the perfect dragon for an Inferior Eyes like him—it's our absolute *worst* dragon! Despite the fact that it can't even move around well, its pride is sky-high. Nobody's seen that dragon fly."

"Th-That can't..."

"Heh heh... Ha ha ha! That Inferior Eyes probably got the shit kicked out of him and is biting the dust right about now!"

Suddenly, Eliza felt tears well up in her eyes. Even if she tried to resist, the paralyzing effects of the drug were taking over. Brian slowly mounted Eliza's body and brought himself closer to her.

"Don't worry. If you're a good girl, I won't do anything bad to you," he said, licking his lips.

Right as he went to take her clothes off, however, he was interrupted.

"Sorry, just passing through."

Suddenly, a familiar voice could be heard saying these words as a massive dragon crossed over them.

"Bwaah!" Brian yelped as he was sent flying—the massive dragon had kicked him in the face. He rolled across the ground pathetically.

Due to this sudden turn of events, Eliza couldn't even blink. She was dumbfounded. After all, the one who'd just appeared was a person who shouldn't even have been able to get here. It was Abel, the person she adored.



Good grief. I already had a bad feeling about things after they pushed the so-called problematic dragon on me, a person who'd just come to check out their club, but...I have to admit, I never expected to encounter a scene like this while stopping by this plateau on the back of the old dragon, Leonhart.

"Y-Yew! Inferior Eyes?!"

The blond upperclassman who'd been kicked in the face glared at me, blood spewing out of his nose.

"Y-Yer dead! I'm gonna kill yew!"

Of course, one wouldn't normally have walked away from being kicked in the face by a dragon with such light injuries. Right before he'd been hit, I'd cast defensive magecraft, saving his life. So, if anything, I wasn't sure why he felt I deserved his ire. He should've been thanking me.

"Are you okay, Eliza?"

"I-I'm so happy... You really came, Abel."

I jumped off of Leonhart and ran to Eliza's side. *Hm. It seems she's paralyzed and can't stand on her own. From the looks of things, she's been drugged.* This was something that I could more or less remedy with magecraft...but before that, I had to resolve a certain problem first.

"Hey, sir. Coming up to the mountains for this kind of roughhousing isn't exactly commendable behavior."

I honestly never expected to come across an attempted rape in this era of peace. *I see. No matter how much time passes, evil never disappears from the hearts of men.* There wasn't a soul in sight, so if I hadn't arrived in a hurry, something that couldn't be undone would've happened.

"Shut up! Shut your damn mouth! You're just a failure who can't even use magecraft properly! You don't get to tell me what I can and can't do!"

In a state of rage, he got to his feet. He unholstered his pistol-type Regalia from his waist. I sighed. *How long has it been since I heard that clichéd line?* Back in my day, Amber-Eyed individuals were seen as the strongest, but also the most evil, individuals. After all, we shared an eye color with ninety percent of

demons. But times had changed, and now those with Amber Eyes were viewed differently. We were no longer feared, but instead seen as failures who couldn't use magecraft.

"You can die where you stand! Wind Bullet!" he screamed, voice filled with rage as he activated his magecraft.

Hm. It looks like he's trying to blow me off the edge. Maybe it was because the Regalia he was using was of high quality, but alterations had been appended to the magecraft composition in it to give it power that was way above that of a student. That being said, he wasn't exactly an opponent I felt it was necessary to use magecraft against.

Magecraft fired by Regalias were textbook predictable, which made them the easiest thing in the world to dodge. As soon as he'd fired it off, I weaved past the magecraft, twisted my lower body, and kicked the Regalia out of his hands.

"Wh-What the—" he yelled, in a voice that sounded so exaggerated I could've sworn he was reading off a script.

The shared weakness of modern-day mages was that, once they'd lost their Regalias, they were powerless. But it seemed that my opponent's real aim had been different. *Good grief. Really? Despite being one of the weakest mages I've ever seen, you're* still *trying to win with your little schemes?*

"Ha ha, you fell for it, you stupid Inferior Eyes!"

"Abel, watch out!" Eliza screamed, trying to warn me. I may have been in a child's body, but his attack had been so clearly telegraphed. I hadn't become so weak that I'd failed to notice what was happening.

"Send him flying, Saint Glory!"

I turned around to the roar of his dragon. The creature was flying full speed towards me, its belly just barely grazing the ground.

Hm. So his attack was just a way to buy time for his dragon to get into position. Well then, what should I do? It would've been child's play to kill the dragon charging at me, but honestly, that seemed a little too cruel. It was just following its master's orders. It was still a young dragon—none of this was its fault. After brief consideration, I decided on the course of action that would

result in the least amount of damage to the dragon.

Body Fortification Magecraft: Strengthen Finger. I focused the mana in my body into the tip of my index finger and intercepted the dragon at my max speed.

There was a clunk as my index finger came into contact with the dragon's face, and then it was over.

"Phew. Dragons sure are strong," I remarked.

I could play this game of comparing our strengths with this dragon because of who I was, but if any run-of-the-mill mage had been in my place, they'd have been shredded to bits like nothing more than paper.

"Wh-What are you doing, Saint Glory?! This isn't playtime!"

I felt bad for the dragon as it roared. *Sorry, but you're not beating me in a contest of strength.* Even though it was putting its full strength into pushing back, I hadn't even moved one step from where I'd been standing.

"Heel," I ordered, turning my intent to kill upon it.

Sensing that I was serious, the young dragon froze up, going still. *Good. Now I don't have to hurt it more than is necessary.* Dragons were creatures that were very sensitive to relative differences in strength—much more so than humans. Now that I'd clearly shown it how much stronger I was, it would no longer try to recklessly challenge me.

"Take *that guy* and go. I'll spare your life if you do."

At my order, the young dragon whimpered. It turned on its heel and went to its master.

"Hey! What are you doing, Saint Glory?! Your enemy's over there!"

The dragon screeched, gripping its master's body tightly in its front legs before flying away into the sky.

"Whoa! Aghhhh!!!"

Hm. That's a pretty thrilling way to take flight. This is a rare opportunity for him. I really hope he gets to leisurely enjoy his voyage through the skies.

◇

Later, after I'd rescued Eliza from that tough spot, we enjoyed a nice stroll through the air. Slowly, we flew through the crimson-stained sky. The scenery was honestly not too bad.

I made sure to check and see if any of the other girls had ended up in similar danger, but my findings were surprising. Every last one of the other female students were cozying up to their affluent, noble upperclassmen guides. They were essentially using the skies as a date spot. If anything, Eliza and I were seen as nuisances for ruining the mood. Fortunately, it didn't seem that any of the other upperclassmen had tried to drug the girls they were with, unlike that one guy we'd just dealt with. The air around the couples was completely congenial and pastoral.

"Whoa, this is amazing! Leo, right? He's so much faster than the other dragon," Eliza said excitedly from behind me.

Though a lot had happened, I was glad that Eliza was able to enjoy herself. She'd been looking forward to riding a dragon more than anyone else. It would've left a bad taste in my mouth if she'd gone home with nothing but negative memories.

"Hey...Abel?" Eliza suddenly whispered into my ear, sounding a little dejected. "Wouldn't it be nice if time would just stop right now?"

I sighed. *What is this girl saying? Look, even* I *don't know the magecraft to stop time. But at the very least, I know that, in theory, it's possible. Maybe in ten...no, five years, I'll complete a practical Time Stasis Magecraft.*

"You were really cool today..."

I felt her arms tighten around me, bringing her body closer. *Good grief. You really like to say things that guys'll easily misinterpret. It's because you show these moments of defenselessness that you get caught up in trouble like today. Yeah... I've felt this way for a while, but she really can't be left to her own devices. With that in mind, maybe I should keep an eye on her and protect her so that she's not exploited by people with bad intentions.*



“Hey, Eliza, there’s a research society I’d like to introduce to you.”

So that was why I decided to let her know about the Olden Magecraft

Research Society that I'd come across.

◇◇◇

At the same time, in a corner of the crowded central plaza at Arthlia Academy of Magecraft, there was an individual screaming his lungs out.

"We of the Magecraft Extermination Research Society are on the precipice of being engulfed by the great light! Join us! Lead this world to revolution and carve out a new one!"

A certain boy in a black robe was yelling these words in front of the first-years. His name was Barth Rhangbalt. He was a member of the Magecraft Extermination Research Society, which was a sub-entity of AMO. He'd been working hard at recruiting since early in the morning.

"What *was* that?"

"No clue. It's probably related to AMO, though. I hate how I'm seeing more of them recently."

These were the sorts of things the first-years murmured to each other as they passed by.

Urgh... thought Barth. *This is bad. At this rate, I won't be able to show my face to* "him."

Barth was participating in this recruitment event, but had yet to produce any results to speak of. He was beginning to panic. Though the Anti-Magecraft movement was picking up steam in the rest of the country, it was still a minority within the walls of a magecraft school like this.

Most students passing by shot Barth a look of pity, and didn't even try to interact with him. Just as he was about to return to his research society's room with head in his hands, he heard a voice call out to him from behind.

"Hey, Barth. How're things going?"

All the color from Barth's face drained as soon as he saw who'd called out to him. "M-Master Navir. What are you doing here?"

Navir was a branch director of AMO, which was the largest Anti-Magecraft organization in the world. Normally, anyone not related to the academy wasn't

allowed on its grounds. To that end, the academy had security features to detect intruders, but for someone like Navir, who was among one of the most proficient combat experts in AMO, penetrating the academy's security measures was child's play. Navir was known for being able to use magecraft to slip through all sorts of security systems. His name was synonymous with sudden appearances.

"Don't worry about it. More importantly, do you remember the promise you made?"

Barth fell silent, casting his gaze to the ground. As a member of the Magecraft Extermination Research Society, a part of the AMO organization, Barth had received a very strict quota to meet for recruitment. However, it had been much more difficult than he'd expected—he hadn't even fulfilled half of the quota.

"My deepest apologies, Master Navir! I'm still not even— Agh!!!"

Barth couldn't breathe. His neck was being crushed. He couldn't even force out another word. Before he knew it, his body was strung up, as though by invisible strings.

"It's such a shame, Barth. I had high hopes for you."

"Gah! P-Please forgive me, Master Navir!" Barth pleaded for his life through tears.

After having entered the school, Barth had experienced the discrimination that transfer students received at the hands of the continuing students. Someone prideful like Barth was a prime target for bullying. But amidst all of that, Barth had finally found a place where he felt he belonged. To him, Navir's existence was second to none.

"Heh heh. Okay, how about I give you one last chance?" Navir said, perhaps sensing how Barth felt. He released Barth from his invisible strings and whispered in Barth's ear, a wide smile on his face, "I'm going to give you a very special job, Barth."

Suddenly, Barth felt something weird at his feet. There was a rustling, and then in the next moment, countless black creatures were crawling over his

shoes. They were spiders, maybe not even ten centimeters in size. They continuously multiplied by the second, and soon enough, they covered Barth's entire body.

"M-Master Navir, what is this?!"

"Fear not. It only hurts in the beginning. I'm sure you'll feel relief momentarily."

Suddenly, pain ran through Barth's body. Each of the countless spiders that'd crawled up his body injected their venom into him. There were so many, he couldn't even see out of his own eyes. The world was as black as if he'd been blinded.

"A-Aghhh!!!"

Even if he wanted to beg someone to save him, there was nobody he could reach out to. All that was left was his screams, filling the air.

Chapter 5: A Showdown Between Brothers

With classes over for the day, I lead Eliza to the academy underground passageway as promised.

“Weird. I never knew that the academy had a place like this in it,” Eliza remarked, as the two of us walked through the dim hallway.

Oh. I think it’s around here. I pulled out the Key Stone that I’d received from Noel and stood in front of the statue.

“Uh, Abel, what are you doing?”

“It’ll be faster to show you than explain.”

As soon as I’d placed the stone in the statue’s face, there was a click, indicating that the lock behind the wall had come undone. Then, the door opened.

“Huh? Is it past here?”

“Yeah. This is the Olden Magecraft Research Society that I was telling you about yesterday.”

Eliza fell silent, doubt filling her face. *I understand how you feel. Even for me, this research society is still veiled in mystery.* The first time I saw this room, I was full of unease. It was unavoidable.

“Abel! Yay, you finally came...”

Good grief. It seems that the owner of the room is as full of energy as usual. As soon as Noel noticed me, she jogged up. But the moment her eyes met with Eliza’s, both girls let out sounds of disgust and their mouths hung open in displeasure.

Hm? What’s going on here? “Are you two already acquainted?”

“Well... Our parents are old friends...”

“We had no say in our continued acquaintance.”

Oh, I see. Both of their ancestors were part of the Hero Party. One was the

Hero of Fire and the other the Hero of Water. Still, though, what a coincidence. Who would've thought that two descendants of my comrades would've been attending the same academy at the same time?

"Why are you here, Eliza?"

"Why are *you* here? Why do you know Abel?!"

I sighed. *This might be developing into a troublesome situation.* I decided to summarize the situation for the two of them.

◇

Thinking about it again, this was quite the strange situation. Never in my wildest dreams would I ever have thought that, two hundred years later, I'd be sitting at the same table as the descendants of the party that I'd been a part of.

The four other heroes I'd traveled with had been the Hero of Wind, Roy; the Hero of Fire, Maria; the Hero of Water, Daytona; and the Hero of Ash, Cain. I only found out about this later, but though we'd worked together as five to take down the Demon King, history had removed me from the picture entirely, remembering them only as The Great Four.

"I think I get what's going on now. Eliza is looking for a research society, and you want me to let her join mine?"

"Yeah, pretty much. Is that okay?"

"Mm. You can do what you want. I'll just follow your lead."

Good grief. We'd only just met, but Noel had really warmed up to me. I wasn't sure when this had happened, but apparently, I'd gained her trust.

"But I have a condition."

"Okay. What is it?"

"I want you to look at *me*, not Eliza, the most," Noel said, gripping my hand.

Good grief. I know how badly you want me to teach you magecraft, but that doesn't mean you need to be this clingy. I can't really condone a girl your age, who's not even married yet, getting all touchy-feely with a guy.

"H-Hey! Why are you holding his hand like you're close to him or

something?!”

“Quiet down, Eliza. This is just how things are between me and Abel. This amount of physical intimacy is normal for us.”

Then, as if to taunt Eliza, Noel brought her arm to her body and hugged it, raising the amount of physical contact between us. That being said, I could understand why Noel was acting so desperate. I’d been teaching her Olden Magecraft language recently. Most likely, she was worried that I wouldn’t have as much time to teach her. She learned at an impressive rate, and could now even decode about a fifth of the Akashic Record. At this rate, I could see her understanding the basic outline for Revival Magecraft in no time.

Eliza groaned. “I-I can do that too!”

In the next moment, something unexpected happened. As if to compete with Noel, Eliza had now gone and pressed her body against my arm. *Good grief. I commend both of you for being so hungry to learn about magecraft, but you’re both clinging to me too much.* The two of them were exceptional beauties, despite their young age. It was fortunate for them that I was the target of their affections, since I could stay cool in this situation. But I couldn’t commend them for acting this vulnerable in front of a guy that they weren’t even romantically interested in.

All of a sudden, I sensed something was off. I immediately broke away from them and used Ice Magecraft to throw a knife of ice at the wall. The knife struck a large spider, over ten centimeters in size, killing it. It began leaking purple bodily fluids from the fatal wound I’d inflicted.

The two of them, reacting slower than I had, ran up to the spider I’d killed.

“Huh?”

“A large...spider?”

“I don’t think it’s a species endemic to this area. Maybe someone was keeping it and it got loose?”

Their opinions of what’d happened were very optimistic. My opinion, however, was very different. There was no mistaking it—this spider was the familiar of a demon. High-ranking demons would bestow their blood to

creatures and turn them into servants, making those creatures do their bidding.

But this was most curious. *Why* had they done this? What was a demon's familiar running around like this? I couldn't shake the bad feeling I had about what was yet to come.

◇◇◇

At the same time, elsewhere, Ted was tiredly walking back from yet another consecutive day of trialing at a research society.

"Sheesh... That was rough."

Ted had been invited by various upperclassmen to their respective sports research societies, and had joined many of them on a trial basis. He had a hard time saying no to people who asked him for favors. As a result, his schedule had become more and more hectic with each passing day. Though he was confident about his stamina, he was getting worn out.

All I wanna do is crash into bed... But I have to take a shower first... he thought. But just as he rounded the corner, chills ran down his spine. He'd never felt anything like this before.

It wasn't the same kind of sensation he got from someone extremely strong, like Abel, nor was it like the magic beast that he'd encountered once as a child. The feeling elicited in him was one of unease, and the physical disgust that came from an ominous mana presence. Ted turned around, preparing to fight.

"Wh-Who's there?!" he yelled, facing the ominous presence.

Standing there before him was a sight so shocking that Ted almost doubted his eyes.

"Hey, Ted."

"B-Barth?!"

The guy in front of Ted was, undeniably, his older brother. Setting aside the fact that he had become much more gaunt and unhealthy-looking than the last time Ted had seen him, he also looked more inhuman.

"Wh-What do you want? Even if you're the one asking, I'm not gonna join the Magecraft Extermination Research Society!"

“Heh heh... Aha ha ha ha ha ha! Ha ha ha ha ha!!!” At Ted’s words, Barth suddenly burst into a fit of laughter.

Ted began to wonder what had happened to Barth in these past few days. These sudden changes evoked an immeasurable amount of anxiety in Ted.

“I couldn’t care less about that now! Hey, Ted, can you tell me where the hidden library is?”

“The...what?”

“It’s useless to play dumb, Ted. I’ve heard all about how your little friend, that vexing Inferior Eyes, has been making trips to the secret library!”

“I-I really don’t know anything about that!”

The secret library in the academy’s underground served as the Olden Magecraft Research Society’s activity room—but it was also a top secret room, the existence of which only the society’s members and a portion of professors were privy to.

“Barth, you really look sick. I think we should go to a hospital...”

“Silence!!! Don’t you *dare* pity meee!!!”

Barth’s green eyes became bloodshot as he bellowed in a voice so loud it nearly cracked. And then, something strange began to happen. Barth’s body suddenly began to emit cracking sounds, and it started to change. It turned a blackish red, as if he had been doused in blood. Multiple arms sprouted from his back, such that he now had eight limbs. His appearance resembled a spider’s.

“Wh-Wh-Wha—”

“Heh heh heh. Ted, I’ll give you a little treat and show you how I’ve been reborn!”

Even if Ted wanted to run away, the fear had struck too deep—he couldn’t move a muscle. A feeling of utter despair washed over him as he saw the unrecognizable form his older brother now inhabited.

Chapter 6: Abel Versus the Anti-Magecraft Organization

The next day, I was once again sitting through the usual boring morning classes.

“Essentially, appending a magecraft equation means taking the existing magecraft foundation and then replacing parts of it with new equations. By doing so, you can expand its utility. As a result...”

The professor with a bulbous nose, who was in his late thirties, stood at the podium as he continued giving his lecture. I couldn’t help but sigh. His classes were extremely boring. I’d had this thought before, but he seemed to think that speaking so fast that students couldn’t keep up with him was the same thing as having a class that was actually difficult.

As usual, students were furiously trying to take notes, their pens moving in desperation to keep up with him. All of this just reeked of inefficiency. The purpose of classes wasn’t note-taking; it was to understand the problems presented to you and how to solve them.

Though the class itself was the same as usual, there was one thing that caught my attention. *Hm. Now that I think about it, I haven’t seen Ted this morning. It’s not like him to be late.* At first, I’d thought maybe he was feeling under the weather, but something wasn’t right about that.

From what I could remember, Ted had never caught a cold once over the past two years. His resilience was one of his few redeeming qualities, so it was odd for him to be absent from class out of the blue like this. *I guess I have no choice. I’m not too enthusiastic about it, but I suppose I’ll go to his room and check on him.*

“Pardon. Could I ask something?”

“What is it, Mr. Abel? Do you plan to interfere with my class again?”

I sighed. *What a weird accusation to level at me.* It seemed that this professor

held some kind of grudge against me. Sometimes, he'd just suddenly throw questions at me that were supposed to be difficult for modern students. All I ever did was solve them, nothing else. But that only seemed to make his grudge against me worse.

"I don't feel too well. May I be excused?"

The professor with the bulbous nose snorted, as if to say I'd fallen into his trap. "Mr. Abel, I'm sorry, but I don't give you permission to leave my class. If you don't feel well, you'll at least need to present me with a physician's note."

I sighed. *It's rare to find such a haughty teacher in these times. What do you stand to gain by enforcing such a pointless rule?*

"Please sit down. Now, setting aside that rude interruption, let us resume."

You leave me no choice. I didn't want to have to resort to rougher methods, but I can't exactly be picky right now. If he wasn't going to let me leave, then I'd have to make *him* leave. Looking at the professor, I directed as much killing intent as I could in his direction.

"Gah!"

Phew. Looks like it worked. Having sensed my killing intent, the professor cowered on the ground, unable to move.

"Wh-What's going on?!"

He looked utterly confused as to what was happening. Both animals and humans had a habit of freezing up when gripped by fear—after all, holding still raised their chances of survival if they ran into a predator. I'd taken advantage of this to make him want to leave the classroom.

"Are you okay, Professor? You don't look too good," I said, reining in my killing intent, and playing dumb.

Though it'd only been for a moment, he'd been bathed in my intense malice. This should have made it hard for him to continue teaching, at least for a while.

"Urgh... I can't stop shaking. My head's killing me. I feel absolutely horrible..."

Using the podium to support himself, he finally got back on his feet. He may have looked like he was in bad shape, but in reality, there was nothing wrong

with him. After all, I hadn't attacked him or anything. I'd just given him a taste of my killing intent. He'd be right as rain after lying down and having a little rest.

"My dear students, I don't feel too well, so class is canceled for today. Self-study! Study by yourselves!"

Hmph. Good grief. What a self-centered professor. Though he wouldn't permit a student to leave, he seemed to have no problem canceling an entire class for his own sake. Either way, this left me able to leave without anyone stopping me. I waited for a bit, and finally left when I judged that the timing was right.

"Is Abel okay?"

"Hm, I wonder. Maybe I should go after him and nurse him back to health."

As I left the class, I heard a few girls' voices. *Good grief.* By using a slightly forceful method, I'd unintentionally garnered some attention. *Ted, you owe me big time.*

◇

After leaving the classroom, I headed straight to the second floor of the first-year dorms. Recently, Ted had been dragged all over the place by our upperclassmen to try out their research societies. It was possible that fatigue had caught up to him, and he'd passed out cold in his bed.

"Ted, I'm comin' in."

I knocked, but there was no response. To be honest, I could already tell that he wasn't inside without even looking. *Hm? What's going on?* His school bag had just been left lying by the door to his room. The uniform that I'd enchanted was still hanging inside too.

Hm. This isn't good. From the look of things, Ted hadn't returned since last night. Had something happened to him while he was checking out the research societies? It was entirely possible. Ever since he was a kid, his needlessly large amount of energy had constantly gotten him into trouble.

I don't have a choice. I wasn't too proficient with Mana Search, but I decided to use it to try and locate Ted. By spreading a thin layer of my mana out around my body, I created a sort of membrane of mana. Then I slowly expanded it,

using it to detect the life signatures of whatever it came in contact with.

These were the basics of Mana Search. However, there were many downsides to this technique. Once the search field had been activated, it could no longer be retracted. Because of that, the larger the search area, the greater the strain on the body. If I'd been in my adult body, I could've extended the radius to ten kilometers, but with my young body, the most I could manage was a fifth of that.

"Found you..."

After searching around the academy for a bit, I detected a mana signature that seemed like Ted's. From what I could tell, he'd been stranded in a tree. For some reason or another, he didn't seem to be able to move, and was thus stuck there. I sighed. *Always a handful.* After having successfully located Ted's whereabouts, I decided to go and check on him.

◇

Hm? What am I seeing right now? When I arrived at the spot where I'd sensed Ted, I was greeted by a completely unexpected sight.

"Mmmf! Mmmfff!!!"

Was that spider silk wrapped around Ted's body? He looked like a bagworm moth, with the way his entire body had been wrapped up. He was flailing around and swinging while trying to scream. *I guess I don't have a choice.* No matter what the story behind this was, I needed to cut Ted loose first.

"Wind Edge."

I used magecraft to generate weak blades of wind to cut him down. *Hm. I'm surprised. This silk is definitely not natural.*



The threads had been greatly reinforced by mana. A run-of-the-mill mage wouldn’t have been able to even scratch it. But of course, for me, it wasn’t a

problem at all. I appended my magecraft to make it sharper and cut the threads, which were almost as hard as steel.

Ted fell onto his butt and looked up at me with relief. “M-Master! Thank you!”

“Ted, what happened here?”

There was no way that a normal student could’ve made this spider silk. Even back in my time, only high-level magic beasts or high-level demons could have pulled that off.

“Oh, right! We have a problem! Barth! He’s...”

“He’s what?”

I had a bad feeling. Last time I’d seen Barth, he was deep into the Anti-Magecraft ideology. He’d essentially become a different person entirely. If Barth was involved, then I got the feeling that this would become unnecessarily annoying.

But nothing could’ve prepared me for what Ted said next.

“H-He’s been possessed by a monster!”

Hm? Have you gone crazy, Ted? Being possessed by monsters was something that I hadn’t heard of, even back in my day. That being said, however, Ted wasn’t the type to spew baseless lies. I knew that better than anyone. So, I asked him to fill me in more about what was going on.

◇◇◇

At the same time, elsewhere—in the hidden library located beneath Arthlia Academy—Noel, who’d received special permission to use said library, was enjoying her favorite pastime. As usual, she was reading.

“I wonder if Abel will come today too.”

The boy she’d met at the recruitment fair, Abel, had been in the back of her mind ever since they’d met. Her overwhelming amount of talent distanced her from people sometimes. Ever since she was a child, she hadn’t been able to make friends. But Abel was different.

Abel was the only one who treated her like a normal girl, rather than as a descendant of one of the four heroes. Before she knew it, she found herself thinking about Abel in her every waking moment.

Suddenly, the door began to creak open.

“Abel!” Anticipation filled her chest, but that was soon replaced by confusion, as an unexpected sight greeted her.

“So... you’re the famous Ice Queen, huh?”

The one who’d appeared in the entrance of the secret library was a blond boy she’d never met. As far as Noel was aware, the only ones who could enter this place were a handful of professors, herself, and Abel. She couldn’t make sense of how *this* person had gotten in.

“Wh-Who are you?”

“That doesn’t matter! I’m gonna inspect this room!” The boy confidently strutted into the library and walked to the back of it. “Heh ha! It’s just as Master Navir said! This place is filled with dangerous texts!” He began indiscriminately throwing the books onto the ground.

“You...! What are you—”

“Silence, traitor! The books here are all tools of war! I must destroy them for the sake of world peace!” The boy drew his rapier from its sheath at his waist, and screamed at Noel. “Wind Edge!”

His actions threw Noel into deep despair—he’d used his wind magecraft to slice the books on the ground to shreds.

“Wha—”

She couldn’t just sit idly by while her beloved books were destroyed. Deciding to act, she immediately constructed magecraft in retaliation.

“Ice Storm!”

The spell she’d used would flash freeze objects in an area. It was one of the hardest Ice Magecraft spells to construct. The fact that she could cast a high-level magecraft like this without using a Regalia was what truly earned her the moniker of Ice Queen.

“Where did he—” Though she’d cast her spell in a way that she was sure he wouldn’t be able to dodge, unexpectedly, her magecraft had missed. “What...?”

This was the reason she’d missed: Barth had shot spider’s silk out of his body, just in time to pull himself towards the ceiling and stick to it. Seeing the sudden change in Barth’s appearance struck fear into Noel’s heart.

There was a rustling noise. Barth had discarded his human form, transforming partially into a monster. He used his eight limbs to scuttle across the ceiling.

“Ice Needles!”

“Ha ha! Way too slow!”

With another blast of spider’s silk, he swung away from the place where her spell would’ve hit. Missing its target, her attack lodged itself into the ceiling instead.

“Where’re you aiming, slowpoke?!”

“Oh no!”

By the time she turned around, it was too late. Barth’s venomous fangs were right around Noel’s neck, about to sink into it. In the next moment, however, there was a clinking sound. Suddenly, Barth’s body was pierced by countless bullets of ice.

“Gahhhh!!!” Barth began rolling around the floor in agony.

“Phew. Looks like I just barely made it in time.”

In the face of such an unexpected situation, Noel had forgotten to blink. She was utterly dumbfounded. After all, standing there was the very person she looked up to and had been waiting for—Abel.

◇

Good grief. This was yet another extremely troublesome situation. After Ted explained what’d happened, I got a very bad feeling about things, so I ran to the secret library. And what I discovered when I arrived was exactly what I’d expected.

After having seen the demon’s familiar yesterday, I’d had a feeling things

might turn out this way. From what I could tell, among those who adopted the ideology of the Anti-Magecraft Organization, there was one who labeled old books as dangerous and went around destroying them.

What if Barth had been ordered by that certain someone to destroy the books in the secret library? If that was the case, then the current situation made sense.

“Heh ha ha! Oh, I’ve been waiting to see you again, Abel!”

I sighed. One thing I still couldn’t understand, though, was Barth’s rather off-putting appearance. It seemed that someone had shared demon blood with him, and made him their familiar. He was now essentially a half-demon.

As far as I knew, there was no pattern of normal humans becoming half-demons on their own. But what if, hypothetically, as humans had become weaker over the past two hundred years, demons had been growing stronger? I was starting to get the feeling that things were getting very troublesome indeed.

“Barth. You’re looking much unhealthier than the last time I saw you.”

“Silence! Shut up! Shut uppp!”

He shot out more webbing and began flying all across the room. I sighed. If I were being honest, I wanted nothing more than to use Crimson Eye magecraft and burn his webs, but that wouldn’t have been a good idea in this place. Even if it wasn’t likely to happen, I didn’t want to risk burning any of the books. With that in mind, my only option was probably Azure Eye magecraft.

“Whaddya think of my speed?! An Inferior Eyes like you can’t track me, can you?!”

Hm. He is decently fast. It made sense why Noel had had so much trouble with him. I got the feeling that facing him in his current state would’ve been difficult for most modern mages.

“It’s your fault... If you weren’t around, I could’ve been happy!” he screamed, as he wrapped around behind me.

Good grief. That’s a strange accusation to lob at me. While I will admit that

your life went in a different, unexpected direction after you met me, I'm not responsible for that. That's all on you*.* His personality, which prevented him from reflecting on the past, had made his life fall apart and led him down this path.

"Heh ha ha! Your head is mine!"

Hmph. You really think that the speed you're going at is fast enough to beat me? Know your place. Body Fortification: Strengthen legs.

As soon as I fortified my body with magecraft, I went behind Barth, who'd thought he'd successfully gotten behind me.

"Wha— Where'd you go?!"

Sorry, Barth. Looks like you're *the one who can't track my movements.*

"Ice Needles."

Now that Barth was exposed, I shot him with the Azure Eyes magecraft I'd composed. By the time he panicked and turned around, it was already too late. His body was pinned to the wall by my attack. He couldn't move even a little.

"Dammit!!! You defective, Inferior Eyes braaat!!!"

Barth tried to use his strength to escape, but no matter how he struggled, he couldn't break free from my ice. This was only natural. The composition of the magecraft I'd used differed from normal Ice Magecraft—I'd also used Obsidian Eyes to fortify the ice. Things would've been different if he'd been a high-level demon who specialized in combat, but what I'd done was more than enough to restrain a half-demon like Barth.

"Now then, Barth. Any last words?" I asked, creating a sword of ice as I walked towards him.

I had no choice. Though I wasn't eager, this was the only way I could think of to stop him, now that he'd become a demon's familiar. I had to kill him. I used Obsidian Eye magecraft to increase the sharpness of the blade. In this way, I could make it quick and painless.

"Stop!"

Just as I went to bring the sword down on him, someone stopped me from

behind.

“Let go, Noel.”

“No... I don’t want you to become a murderer...”

I sighed. I would never have believed that the day would come where someone would be concerned about me becoming a murderer. It went without saying that I’d already killed a countless number of humans two hundred years ago. The dirty work had always been left to me. By taking the jobs that nobody else wanted to do, I was able to carve out a place for myself.

“Barth, I’m going to take your soul.”

“G-Gaaaah! Abel! You bastard!!!”

Hm. His tenacity is impressive. I could tell that the ice that I’d been sure he couldn’t break free of had begun to crack ever so slightly. *Come on, Barth... If you’d just channeled this energy into something a little bit more productive, you could’ve led a much more fruitful life.* Unfortunately for him, though, I couldn’t spend any more time on him.

In a moment, I pierced his heart with my blade of ice. Flecks of warm blood stained the clear blade, dyeing it red.

“Gaaaaahhh!!!” He let out a chilling scream.

Like most demons, Barth’s heart was his weakness. After all, part of the heart’s job was pumping mana around the body. Since there were some demons who could survive even if you destroyed their head, I made sure to always go for the heart, since I’d yet to meet a demon who could survive having it pierced.

“Abel...”

Was Noel in shock from witnessing my killing someone? She fell to the ground, and tears began pouring out of her eyes.



“Noel, there’s no need to make that face.”

Good grief. I hadn’t wanted to show her this specific magecraft no matter

what, but... The concept of Revival Magecraft was real, and exactly as it had been described in the Akashic Record that'd been written two hundred years ago. When humans died, their souls would begin to leave their bodies. During this process, if there was a healthy body nearby that could support life, it was possible to revive the person who'd perished.

"Heal."

First, I used Ashen Eyed magecraft to heal Barth's body. Restoring organs was one of the most difficult magecrafts within the Ashen Eyed arsenal, but on this occasion, it wasn't. The ice blade that I'd created had been extremely sharp so that the wound it left would be clean. Thanks to that, it didn't even take ten seconds to heal him.

"Abel... What are you...?"

From Noel's perspective, she probably found what I was doing very strange. No matter how talented a mage was, they couldn't bring someone back from the dead. Or at least...that'd been the case until I'd developed this magecraft.

"Raise Dead."

As soon as I cast the magecraft, Barth's body began giving off a bright light. *Phew. Looks like it's working.* Usually, familiars of demons would stay loyal to their masters until their dying breath. That was why I'd had to separate his soul from his body in order to return him to being a normal human.

"I don't believe it... His heart is beating..."

Having noticed the effects of the Revival Magecraft I'd used, Noel wore an expression of surprise. *Hm. Well, it's good that this situation was resolved without anyone getting hurt.* Barth was, of course, unconscious, but he'd wake up sooner or later. And with this, the sudden attack of demons on Arthlia Academy of Magecraft had been thwarted, and peace was set to return to the campus.

Chapter 7: The Truth Behind the Events

There's a phrase from back in my day: "To know the path the snake takes, one must ask a snake." It roughly translates to "takes one to know one."

On a related note, I wasn't sure whether this was the silver lining of everything that had unfolded, but there was one person close to me who might be able to help me shed light on what'd happened. With that in mind, I decided to go visit my demon acquaintance to get her thoughts.

"I see. I have an overall understanding of the situation," said Lilith, a slender beauty with unique, silver hair.

Lilith was the daughter of the demon king. Two hundred years ago, I'd saved her. Now, through various circumstances, we'd been reacquainted with one another.

"My guess would be that this is the work of Navir of the Moonlight," Lilith said, adjusting her legs, which were wrapped in argyle-patterned tights.



Hm. Apparently, the world of demons is much smaller than I'd expected.

Though I'd been pretty general with the information I'd given her, she'd been

able to come up with a specific name. I was in awe of her intelligence network.

“So what’s a demon doing involving themselves with AMO, or whatever it’s called?”

“It’s simple. The anti-magecraft movement is incredibly beneficial to some demons.” Lilith then proceeded to explain the circumstances of modern demons.

Apparently, after the Demon King of Twilight had been defeated, the demons had fractured, splitting into two groups. One was the moderates, which aimed to coexist with humans. Lilith belonged to this group. The other was the reformists, who hid from humans while plotting their resurgence in order to rule over the human world.

“I’ve heard rumblings of Navir being involved in the anti-magecraft group since about twenty-five years ago. He was the most devoted follower of my father, the Demon King of Twilight. He must be plotting to gather allies with the same ambitions as him and overthrow the current world order.”

It made sense why Navir and the other reformists found the minority movement of anti-magecraft so beneficial to them. After all, if that ideology spread across the world, humans would be weakened significantly, at which point it would be child’s play for the demons to swoop in and overthrow them.

“Master Abel, just in case, I should tell you that...”

“No need. I know. The demons that mean us harm are just a minority. They won’t lead me to harbor any hate towards demons this time around.”

Although, even two hundred years ago, demons had by no means been monolithic when it came to their alignments. This probably was especially true in present times, because of the diversification of various values.

“I’m very glad to hear you say that. By the way, about the boy...”

“Oh. Barth?”

“Yes. How should we deal with him? He’s already gotten involved with a demon... I’m not sure if we can leave him be,” Lilith’s demeanor changed. Her words had become cold.

Most likely, Lilith was trying to say that, since Barth had tried to do me harm, he was too dangerous to be left alone. Thus, she must have felt that the best plan was to, let's say, *deal* with him, and make sure his existence never came to light.

"It'll be fine. As payment for saving his life, I'm having him be a guinea pig for a new magecraft I'm developing."

After the battle had ended, I'd cast Memory Alteration on him. The downside to this magecraft was that at this stage of its development, it was impossible to precisely control it. I had no clue when he'd started getting involved with demons, but for the time being, I'd completely erased the past ten days from his memories. At the very least, that seemed like it would prevent him from trying to attack me for the time being.

"As long as Barth is alive, I'm sure that demons will try to get in contact with him. He's still useful to us, so don't do anything unnecessary, Lilith."

Lilith paused before speaking again. "You really aren't very honest, are you, Master Abel?"

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Nothing. I like that side of you, so I've fallen even harder for you!"

Good grief. I still have no clue what goes on in her head. Things were getting troublesome, though. Most likely, the one who'd been manipulating Barth from the shadows—Navir—was no pushover. If demons caught wind of the fact that the very mage that had defeated the Demon King of Twilight had reincarnated into the modern day, it'd become near impossible to accomplish my goal of living a peaceful life.

The anti-magecraft bunch were honestly not worth my time, but that calculation was different if they were trying to interfere with me. If they continued to try and attack me, I'd have to deal with them appropriately.

◇

The next day, after school, I went to the secret library to participate in the Olden Magecraft Research Society. However, Noel seemed different from usual. She didn't run up to me like a little puppy the moment I entered the room.

Today, she was simply reading a book at the table in silence.

Hm. Judging from her reaction, she's not so entranced with her reading that she hasn't noticed me. If anything, it seemed like she was just pretending to read while waiting for a chance to ask me something.

"Abel?" she asked, as I was pondering these things. She seemed as if she'd been waiting a long time for the right moment to ask her question.

"Need something?"

"Mm. I have something I want to ask you."

Noel pulled something out of her bag. It was the Akashic Record. *Hm. So she really did catch on.* It wasn't too surprising that she'd noticed something was strange. I'd used Revival Magecraft, despite parts of the book being so burnt that they were illegible. Of course it would have seemed strange that I'd managed to so perfectly replicate the magecraft in the book.

"The magecraft you used yesterday...it's written on this page."

Hm. Let's see. What is the best way to respond in this situation? The only person in this world who knows that I'm a mage reincarnated from two hundred years ago is Lilith. Technically speaking, it wasn't something that I absolutely *had* to keep under wraps. However, if this information spread and made Navir set his sights on me, then that would change things. I didn't want to invite any kinds of developments that would interfere with my goal of living a peaceful life at the academy.

"If I said I wrote that book, would you believe me?"

"Huh?"

Hm. Of course there's no way that she'll believe me if I tell her the truth. I'd tried saying that to her as a little test, and she'd simply looked at me in confusion, unsure of how to react.

"That was a joke. Don't worry too much about what happened yesterday. It was all nothing more than a coincidence."

Yeah—putting the burden of my secret onto a mere student would be too heavy a weight for them to carry. I think I'm going to keep the fact that I'm a

mage from two hundred years ago a secret for a little longer.

Chapter ?: A Certain Mage's Reminiscence

"Get out, you monster!"

Like a stray cat, I was thrown from the house, landing in a thin layer of snow. The dirt beneath the snow covered me.

"Mom, why are you—"

"Don't you *dare* call me that! You're no child of mine! You're my dead sister's son!"

Her words echoed within me endlessly. Being only five years old, I couldn't comprehend what she was saying. All I could do was lie there on the ground, staring at the woman I'd loved as my mother.

"Why are you looking at me with those rebellious eyes?! You have something you want to say?!" she screeched as she threw something at me.

It was a flower vase. I needed to avoid it, or I'd be hurt, but I didn't. Instead, I manipulated the space in front of me, freezing the vase in midair. As soon as I tried to open my mouth, the woman began screeching again.

"You wretched monster! You don't even use incantations or mediums to cast magecraft—you're just like a demon!"

Her opinion was a foolish one, although not unexpected for a country bumpkin like her. In fact, any living creature could use their own body as a medium to produce magecraft, so long as they had enough mana.

However, this was a settlement of humans, and a small one at that. Barely any news from the outside world reached this place—they were essentially closed off from the world. I understood now that whenever these villagers saw someone who possessed powers that were clearly different from themselves, they would perceive these individuals as fully different beings altogether.

"De...mon." My voice quivered as I tried to say the word in its entirety.

"That's right! Go to the territory of the demons, or wherever! Never, *ever* come back here!" she roared, before slamming the door shut.

I heard the sound of the door locking, and then quiet settled over me, just like the falling snow. I slowly stood up, but, having no clue where to go, I simply tottered aimlessly down the dark road. And day and night, I continued walking through the frigid cold.

I stole food, and was almost killed for it. I slept in ditches. Once, I'd heard that cats and dogs hide when they're about to die—maybe that's what I was doing. I'd grown so thin that I'd literally become skin and bones. Eventually, I found myself running down a brick alley in an unfamiliar town. I came to a stop, leaning against the wall to stare up at the sky and the unending snowfall. Then, I closed my eyes.

"Kid, *this* is where you're gonna die?" a husky voice called out to me.

I opened my heavy eyelids, and saw a grizzled man standing there. He chuckled lightly as he looked down at me.

I tried to squeeze out a word—any word, but couldn't. My throat was too parched. I could only taste dried blood. Even so, the man smiled and reached his hand out to me.

"Got a name, kid?"

I was beginning to think him cruel, for asking questions despite the fact that he could tell I could barely speak. Trembling, I reached out and took his hand.

"A...Abel."

As I was on the verge of fainting, he looked at me and gripped my hand. "Abel, huh? Listen up. From now on, you're my son."

That was the moment that light filled my world, which had once been closed off.

◇

Two years had passed since that day, but I could still remember all of it vividly. As I lay there on the precipice of death, I'd been taken in by a guy who'd just coincidentally been passing by. His name was Garius, and he was a man of around forty years who ran an orphanage on the outskirts of the royal capital. And thanks to what happened that day, I ended up living there.

“I should’ve known you’d be here, Abel...”

Garius was not only my savior, but also my magecraft instructor and father. I’d heard rumors that he used to be a big-shot mage in the royal capital. He was very knowledgeable about Amber-Eyed individuals, and because I had nowhere else to go, he’d taken me in and taught me all sorts of things.

“Talking to others kinda brings me down, so I’d rather be here, reading by myself. It’s much more enjoyable.”

There was a small space behind the stairs that I liked. It was one of the few places where I could really relax. Reading the books that he lent me in this space was one of my secret pleasures.

“Sheesh... Who might you take after, I wonder? If this is what you’re like as a child, I’m worried about your future.”

My future? You don’t have to lie. There was no way he wasn’t aware of how the war with the demons had intensified. The hatred towards those with Amber Eyes, like myself, grew stronger with each passing day. Even in this orphanage, I was relatively alone. I didn’t really have anyone that I could call a friend.

“I heard that you tried to threaten the other kids with your magecraft, Abel.”

“No, they started—”

“It’s impressive how well you deal with how you’re treated as someone with Amber Eyes...but I can’t really say I approve of how you handle it sometimes,” he said, ruffling my hair.

Those with Amber Eyes were viewed as symbols of fear and targets of persecution. Though there were people who only felt afraid of us, there were also people who turned the anger that they should have directed at demons on those with Amber Eyes instead.

The kids who’d gotten into a fight with me were just like those people. Their parents had been killed by demons, so they hated those with Amber Eyes indiscriminately.

“Listen, Abel. You have an amazing talent for magecraft. But you shouldn’t ever use it for yourself. Only use it for the sake of others.”

“Others...?”

“Right. If you do, nobody will be scared of you anymore. You can hold your head high and live your life proudly.”

I fell silent. I knew that these were just platitudes, but his words differed from what other adults said. He was so just and idealistic to the point of being naive, and treated everyone with warmth.

“Okay, then. Let’s start today’s class, shall we? We’ll pick up from where we left off yesterday—reviewing the basics of Imbuement Magecraft.”

That was why, as we sat before the fireplace, I listened so intently to his lecture.

◇

I met *her* at the age of eight. I’d become very used to my life at the orphanage, and had become able to use magecraft at a high level. Usually, it’d take around ten years of training for people with Amber Eyes to master magecraft, but it seemed that it really depended on the person. At the very least, I was different. Perhaps partially due to the fact that I’d been blessed with a great learning environment, it hadn’t even taken me three years to be able to use all the different types of magecraft.

“Give it back! Come on!”

“Shaddup! You’re a guy—why’re you playin’ with a doll?!”

“We’ll hold it for ya! If you want it back, come and take it!”

Curious about the loud voices, I looked into the room. *Hm. A shy-looking boy seems to be surrounded by a group of guys.* This wasn’t exactly a rare sight. No matter how old they were, there would be strife amongst humans.

According to Garius, when humans live together in a closed environment, a caste system will inevitably form, leading to fights. That being said, I refused to get involved, so this had nothing to do with me. With that in mind, I turned on my heel and began to leave.

“Hey! You should all be ashamed!” a girl barked.

Her hair was crimson like fire, and she sounded very strong-willed. She

seemed to be around two years younger than me. *Who is she? I haven't seen her around here before.* The way things worked around here was that kids "graduated" once they were taken in by foster parents. Thanks to that, there were different faces passing through all the time.

For the record, it went without saying that nobody wanted a wretched, Amber-Eyed boy like myself. Before I realized it, I'd become the kid who'd been at the orphanage the longest.

"Ganging up on someone weak is a disgrace for guys!"

"Yeah? And who are *you*?"

"I'm Maria! I'm the proud daughter of a knight, with justice in my heart!" she said, pulling out what looked like a toy sword.

Hm. If she was a little more reserved, she'd be a beauty, but that all goes to waste when she opens her mouth. She's definitely the self-centered type...and I mean that to the extreme.

"Hey, newbie. How about we teach you how things work around here?"

"Huh?"

In the next moment, one of the guys landed a sharp kick to Maria's abdomen. I couldn't help but sigh. Watching events progress in this fashion was never fun. Some might've just written this off as nothing more than a squabble between kids, but in my opinion, it should've been taken more seriously. It was precisely because they were children that they could be excessively cruel and violent.

"How do you like *that*?! Hey, where'd all that gusto go?!"

"Guh!" Maria's face twisted in agony as she took kick after kick.

"Listen up—whoever's strongest is king around these parts! Oh, I know. Hey, newbie, you're gonna be my new doll from now on!" said the guy who was most likely the leader, pulling Maria by the hair.

Before I knew it, the other guys had surrounded her, cutting off any chance of escape. Given that the orphanage was a place filled with hotblooded kids who had lost their parents, it seemed it would be impossible for her to live here peacefully after this.

But of course, whatever they wanted to do had nothing to do with me. I knew that the right choice was to ignore what was going on. But suddenly, Garius's words popped into my head. *Using my strength for others...was it?*

I guess I don't have a choice. I didn't care *that* much about what happened to this girl, but it would've left a bad taste in my mouth if I just stepped away and left her for dead. Anyway, this was a good chance to test out how effective the magecraft I'd learned was against humans.

"Wind Bullet."

I compressed air into bullets and shot them through the gap in the door. As the bullets' trajectories were so straightforward, the risk that the kids would be able to tell where they'd come from was high, so I made sure to control each bullet to alter its flight path.

"Gyah!"

"Oof!"

"Wah!"

My bullets knocked each of them flat on their butts. Then, the room went dark, as if it'd been doused in ink.

"Wh-What's going on?! Why's it dark?!"

Of course, this wasn't an accident. It was all part of the plan. I'd made one of the bullets I'd fired extinguish the fire, but at a delay. I wasn't going to let this opening I'd made go to waste.

"Demon. There's a demon here," I yelled from outside the room, trying to frighten them.

I know you're your own worst critic, but I definitely could've said those words a little less monotonously. Still, though, that seemed to do the trick.

"No!!!"

"Mommy!"

Good grief. Despite harboring so much hate towards demons, and even acting on it whenever they saw me, when a situation where they might actually face a

demon presents itself, they turn tail and start quivering in their boots. Pathetic. Of course, if someone had only cast Flashlight, they could've immediately seen through my lie.

But, due to the perceived emergency of the situation, they were all panicked and couldn't properly compose their magecraft. As a result, they scattered, fleeing the room like spiderlings. When I used magecraft to light the room once more, Maria approached me.

"Who...are you?"

Hm. Compared to those other guys, she seems to actually have some courage. Usually, seeing someone with Amber Eyes would frighten people, but not her. She looked straight into my eyes without even flinching.

"If you wanna live a long life, you should learn from this and never do anything so dangerous again." I purposely neglected to answer her question. If she became involved with me, that'd only spell further disaster for her. "Heal."

After treating her wounds, I quickly turned on my heel and left the room. This was how I, by sheer chance, met Maria, the Hero of Fire, and one of the Distinguished Four whose name was passed down through history.

◇

Well, six months had passed since I'd saved the girl with crimson hair, Maria, on a whim. Contrary to my prediction, life at the orphanage had continued to be peaceful since then.

"I got you now, Abel!"

Sensing someone coming from behind, I instantly fortified the newspaper I was holding and blocked the blow.

"Aw, what? *How*?! You shouldn't be able to block my sword with paper!" Maria was in utter shock that I'd blocked her all-out attack with a piece of the newspaper I'd been holding.

If you're wondering why Maria was trying to launch surprise attacks on me, it's because I'd said that if she could even land one blow on me, I'd take her on as my student, and she'd taken me in complete seriousness.

Of course, that hadn't been my first choice. I'd refused her initially, but then she wouldn't stop pestering me. She was so persistent about it that I had no choice but to make that verbal promise.

"You rigged this paper somehow, didn't you?! Let me see!" Maria took the newspaper and inspected it suspiciously. "Hm... It doesn't look like there's anything unusual about it..."

Though Maria showed glimpses of having an above-average talent for magecraft, she seemed completely inexperienced with Obsidian Eye Magecraft. I could almost see a huge question mark appear over her head as she examined the newspaper. She couldn't tell at all that I'd used Imbuement Magecraft.

"Hey, Abel, did you see this article?" she asked, her gaze suddenly coming to a stop partway down the page.

As a child who'd been raised in a knight's household, she was one of the few children here who could read.

"You're talking about the human transmutation magecraft incidents, right? I hear another person was abducted yesterday."

Human transmutation was in vogue right now, and that trend had recently reached its peak. Various mages had begun researching how to produce a human soul. The cause of this craze was the ongoing war with the demons, as the human forces were beginning to dwindle.

In order to compensate for the lack of manpower, the government had announced that they'd give an extremely hefty reward to whoever could create a practical Human Transmutation Magecraft. Thus, of course, research into the subject had gained traction.

"You should be careful when you go out. It's been dangerous recently."

There were many mages who thought of humans as a crucial ingredient in the development of magecraft. Of all humans, though, children were prized most highly, as their souls were the purest, despite their bodies being weaker. Accordingly, children went for very high prices.

"I don't need to worry about the outside world! After all, I'm gonna be here with you forever, Abel!" she said, flashing me a smile without a care in the

world.



Good grief. This girl is so carefree. But the time that we ultimately spent together was a lot shorter than she'd thought. After all, unlike me, she was

blessed not only in talent but also with looks. It was only a matter of time before she was adopted.

◇

In the distance, if I listened closely, I could hear the critters of the evening chirping softly.

“Hey, Abel, why do you reject her?”

On a certain night, Garius asked me this baffling question as I helped with his research. I saw him as my magecraft instructor, but it’d been a long time since he’d been in a position to teach me anything. As time passed, I’d accumulated knowledge and techniques by myself, and had even become good enough to help him with his research.

“By ‘her,’ do you mean Maria?”

“Yeah. It’s rare for you to get involved with other kids, so I’ve been observing you two with great interest.”

I see. I was thinking it’s strange that someone as excellent as Maria hasn’t been adopted yet, but now I can guess why that might be the case.

“I think...it’s because I’m scared. If I open my heart, I have a feeling that I’ll be betrayed.”

Suddenly, images flashed through my head of the woman I used to call my mother.

Get out, you monster! she’d said.

It was possible that Maria wasn’t scared of me yet because she was still young and innocent. But as she grew older, it was likely her values would change, and she could become a completely different person. That’s why I’d naturally put a wall between myself and her...and between myself and other people as well.

“Heh heh. That right? I’m kinda relieved to know that you have the same kinda worries as most people.” He laughed, ruffling my hair. “Don’t worry. You’re my son. As long as you’re here, I’ll make sure you never feel uncomfortable.”

I always liked seeing the deep wrinkles that’d form when he laughed. His

hands were the same ones that I'd known all this time—they were warmer than anybody's. I began to get the feeling that everything would work out. I hoped that the days would continue to pass forever, just like this.

But, one day, the peaceful life that I thought I had would crumble to dust.

◇

On a day when it was storming so hard that it threatened to tear the very roof off, there was a pounding at the door. I was in the library reading when I heard this furious knocking.

"Abel!" A girl burst into the room, completely drenched, and leapt into my arms.

Uh...hello? Could you not do that when you're soaking wet? I quickly moved the hand holding the book behind my back to protect it, and hugged her reluctantly with the other.

"What should I do...? I'm graduating tomorrow," Maria said, her face wet both from her tears and the rain.

I see. Sure, I'd known this day was coming, but it had arrived sooner than I'd expected. I may have sounded like a broken record, but this orphanage was a temporary housing facility for children who'd lost their relatives. A child like Maria, who had so many attractive traits, was never going to be stuck here forever.

"It'll be fine. This was bound to happen the minute you stepped foot in here."

"I don't want to... I don't want to leave..."

Good grief. The way she was holding on to me suggested that she wasn't going to budge until she was satisfied with my response. *I don't have a choice. I need to cheer her up.* Later, I'd think back to this moment, and how the whim I'd acted on here might have changed the future drastically.

"Take this as a parting gift."

I brought out a scrap of paper from a notepad that I'd pulled from a drawer. However, this was no ordinary scrap of paper—I'd done something special to it.

"Huh? Is this...?" Surprise filled her face as she accepted it from me.

For a while now, I'd had nothing but time on my hands. One of the things I'd studied was something called "origami." I'd gotten pretty good at it, to the point where I considered myself an expert.

"It's like a good luck charm that'll protect you. Let it remind you of me, and take good care of it."

At the very least, she seemed rather pleased by my words. After that, she made me promise over and over again that we'd reunite someday before finally leaving the room.

I glanced out the window, and saw the thin trees shaking in the strong wind. *Doesn't look like the weather will get better anytime soon.*

◇

Now then... It was the middle of the night, and everyone was asleep. Fallen branches, knocked from the trees from the incessant rain, stood like bridges over water as it pooled on the ground. A feeble mana signal guided my steps. It was unfortunate that the storm showed no signs of clearing up, but there was something I absolutely needed to confirm. No... Somewhere deep in my heart, I'd known the truth all along. However, I'd unconsciously sealed it away, suppressing it.

When I arrived at my destination, I came to a stop, feeling something very out of place beneath my feet. I walked over the muddy ground, and found an iron plate jutting out of the ground. I pulled it up. Beneath it were stairs that led downwards, deep into the ground. I steeled myself and took step after step into the darkness, until...

"Abel... What brings you here?"

It seemed that by the time I'd taken a single step into this place, he'd already sensed me. There was Garius, looking down at me with a weirdly satisfied smile across his face.

"I put a tracking magecraft on the origami I gave Maria yesterday. But I knew for a while that there was a place like this around here."

All around Garius were various empty humans who'd had their souls ripped out of them. *Good grief. I know all of these kids... They're the ones who*

supposedly “graduated.”

“Why are you doing this?” I asked.

There was no mistaking it. He was researching human transmutation magecraft in this underground facility. Though there were reports of this kind of work having become more common, there was nothing out there on this scale. This was unprecedented.

“Sacrifice is necessary for the advancement of magecraft. I’m sure you, of all people, understand what I mean... Don’t you, Abel?”

There was a certain excerpt about Garius I’d read in secret. It said that he was a remarkable mage. His talent had been recognized at a young age, and he’d been appointed as a researcher at the royal capital. During his tenure, he left behind many an accomplishment.

However, as a commoner who’d assumed a post of power, he earned the ire of others. The researchers of this country were rotten—they stole his achievements and dragged his name through the mud, eventually driving him out into this remote area.

“You’re right. After all, I’ve been watching you closer than anyone,” I replied.

To Garius, completion of the Human Transmutation Magecraft was not only a way for him to achieve his life’s goal, but also an opportunity to get back at the colleagues who’d been responsible for his fall from grace. Most likely, it was for that reason he’d set his eyes on me. He probably saw himself in me, a boy with Amber Eyes, who’d been persecuted by the world.

“Heh heh heh... You really are my son, Abel. I think it’s time I give you your final task,” he said, before tossing me a sword.

It looked very well kept, but reeked of blood. Most likely, he’d used this very blade to end the lives of many.

“I’ll leave the finishing touches to you,” he said cryptically, before opening the lid covering a nearby tub.

Crammed inside was Maria.

“Mm! Mmmmf!”

She seemed to be conscious, but was fully bound and unable to move. She was gripping the origami that I'd given her, and it was clear she was desperately trying to fight the emotions welling up inside her.

"Okay..."

At this point, I wasn't scared of killing someone. I'd tried to draw a line between myself and others so that, when the time came, I'd have the resolve to complete the act.

My eyes met with Maria's. As I pointed the blade at her, fear and despair filled her eyes. But then...

"What is the meaning of this, Abel?" said Garius. His tone was gentle, but the look on his face was stern.

Strands of his hair fluttered to the ground, having been severed from his head when I'd suddenly slashed at him.

"I've changed my mind," I said. "Let's fight."

Good grief. I can't believe I chose the more difficult option. It wasn't that I hesitated to kill Maria, but...I couldn't allow myself to kill someone that I'd once saved. It felt like that would have been going against my personal creed, whatever that may have been.

"Heh heh heh... You crazy? You think *you* can beat *me*?"

I could tell from his expression that he was serious. After Amber Eyes, Ashen Eyes were known as the next strongest. Those with Amber Eyes could fight on both the front and back lines, due to their ability to fortify their bodies and also to regenerate. Because of that, they were extremely versatile.

"Ice Needles! Spread Rain!"

Garius struck first. As expected, he didn't use any Crimson Eye magecraft. He didn't want to damage this underground facility, which held all the results of his research. It was only logical—producing flames of any kind here would have been extremely risky.

I was in the same boat. If I used fire in this closed space, all the oxygen would quickly be depleted. It would've been one thing if it was just me, but Maria was

here too, and she was just a child. Depriving us of oxygen would leave us in dire straits.

Not long after, the room was filled with high-pitched clanging and the crackling of ice as it shattered. I dodged some of the ice needles, and would sometimes be able to deflect them as I searched for an opportunity to fight back.

“Too slow!”

His attack was just a distraction. He’d used Body Fortification Magecraft to instantly wrap around behind me, sending me flying with a kick.

“I see. In that moment, you adjusted your stance to absorb the shock and soften the blow, huh?” said Garius. “What a shame. Another ten years of training under me, and you’d be the strongest mage that ever lived.”

I couldn’t deny his words. In general, those with Amber Eyes grew at a slower rate than others. Furthermore, my body was still immature. His stamina eclipsed mine. No matter how I looked at it, I was at a disadvantage.

“Come on! Is that it? Done already?!”

What followed was simply a one-sided beatdown. Using his Ashen Eyes to their full potential, he fortified his body, hitting me over and over again even though I was already covered in wounds.

However, not too long after that, something most strange happened. Having been the target of his violence and ire, my body, which had become almost unrecognizable, now dissipated into thin air like smoke.

“What the...” The shock returned him to his senses.

“Did you have a nice dream?”

The ability to interfere with someone’s mind and force them to see a dream—Trance Magecraft—had been developed by none other than Garius himself. However, the base of the composition he’d developed was riddled with superfluous additions, and as a result could not be used under real battle conditions.

Fortunately, I’d been blessed not only with the perfect environment in which

to learn magecraft, but also the time to do so. After poring over an essay I'd found in my room, I'd been able to improve his magecraft.

"Th-That's not possible! That magecraft is supposed to be incomplete!" Suddenly, all the composure had leaked out of his expression. "Did you... Did you hide your true strength from me? Was it all to prepare for this day...?"

He was half right, but the other half of what he was saying was pure speculation. After all, even I had never dreamed the day when I'd have to fight Garius would come. No—it was for another foolish reason that I'd hidden my strength.

"You...*monster*," he said, his expression filled with contempt and fear.

Oh, right. I remember this look.

Get out, you monster! In his face, I saw the face of the woman I used to call "mother." I'd never wanted him to look at me that way, so I'd hidden my true power until now.

"This is farewell... Garius."

Taking down an opponent who'd lost their composure was extremely simple. I dodged his attacks with ease and pierced him with the sword I held. His blood splashed on my face. It was warm. And now, as he leaned into me, his strength fading, I got the sense that he'd grown much thinner than he was when I'd first met him.

◇

I'll explain what happened after that. After I took down Garius, I leaked all of his evil deeds to the world. The juicy story of a formerly famous and great mage doing all kinds of heinous acts spread like wildfire.

I heard that, after our fight, when Garius regained consciousness, he used magecraft to kill himself. He probably saw it as a good time to call it quits. That was the path he'd chosen, and I had nothing more to say on the matter.

I knew that the things he'd done couldn't be forgiven, but even so, I felt grateful to him. This was only natural. If he hadn't taken me in, I probably would've died a dog's death that day, without ever knowing who I was.

Most likely, I would never forget the warmth of his hand when he'd reached out to me on that freezing winter night. I placed the flowers I was carrying on his grave and stood up. With this, I had nothing left to tie me to this town.

"Abel!"

A voice called out to me. I'd reunited with her when I'd made the decision to set out.

"I knew it. You're here."

Standing in my way was a familiar girl. Maybe it was just because I hadn't seen her in a while, but she'd really grown up. After everything that had happened at the orphanage, all the surviving children were taken to a safe place, to be monitored by the state.

"Are you really serious...about leaving?" Maria asked, her eyes tinged with unease.

Her clothes were decorated with a pattern of a dragon and a sword—famously, the symbol of a certain noble household in this town. That's right—she'd been taken in by a noble family. I'd thought that, with her extraordinary talent and beauty, Maria would immediately be picked up by someone, but...I'd never expected the ones who adopted her would be nobles.

"Yeah, I'm leaving today."

For the past few days, I'd been going around trying to pull together the funds for my journey. My current objective was to relocate to the royal capital. Talented mages gathered there, pooling their power in case of a demon attack. I intended to focus on blending in, and also improving my strength, knowing it was necessary for what was to come.

"Please, would you take me with you?!" Maria asked, resolute, though she watched me carefully.

Just the fact that she was here at all told me exactly what her objective was. That was why I had to make sure to shut her down.

"No. You'd just be dead weight."

"But..."

“Enough. You heard me. Now get going. I don’t ever want to see you again.”

Maria shivered, and a single tear rolled down her cheek. I knew that Maria had talent as a mage, but she needed time for that talent to develop. I didn’t want her to be spurred to follow me by fleeting feelings. She’d finally found happiness, and I didn’t want her to just toss it to the wayside.

“I’m...I’m going to become strong! Strong enough to be your equal!” Maria yelled from behind me.

Her voice was tinged with frustration, anger, and sorrow. It was a while before her voice stopped echoing in my ears. Ultimately, the next time I met her would be almost ten years down the road.

◇

Now I’ll discuss what happened shortly after that point. I successfully uprooted my life and moved to the royal capital. After a year or so, I was able to prove that it was impossible to produce the soul of a living organism through magecraft, and as a result, put a complete stop to the Human Transmutation craze that’d swept the world.

I’d done so under a pseudonym, Depornix, publishing my “Final Theorem,” which, coincidentally, would appear as a question on my entrance exam two hundred years into the future. Of course, my past self had no way of knowing that would happen.

Afterword

Hello, it's Yusura Kankitsu. Thanks to all your support, I've completed volume 3 of the series.

Even now, I have trouble coming up with situations that fit my idea of what the ideal school life would be. Also, this time, I tried something new and wrote a short story about Abel's past instead of a bonus story. It's honestly content that's better suited for a prequel series, but if people seem to like it, I might try writing something similar in the future.

I have a little bit more space in this volume, so I think I'd like to have a more candid conversation. I actually received a fan letter for volume 2. It's the second fan letter I've received since I started as an author (lol).

When I debuted back in 2012, I worked on various things, but the first time I got a letter from a fan was in 2018. Before I started as an author, I always assumed that you'd just be bombarded by fan mail as soon as you put out a series, so imagine my surprise when I found out that that isn't common.

Thank you very much, Mr. N from the Ibaraki prefecture!

Things are different nowadays, and there are a lot more ways to show support for the works you like. We definitely live in a time when online comments drive popularity. If you liked this book or want to read what happens next, I encourage you to recommend this to people you know!

Now then, time for some advertisements.

With the release of volume 3, the manga version has also been released. The author overseeing the storyboarding of the manga version is Nekohako Yotaro, the same person in charge of *Saikyo no Shuzoku ga Ningendatta ken*, a series we worked on together.

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!*

Also, incredibly, this manga will also be run in the Jump+ app! Personal bias aside, I think you'll find that the manga version is high quality and very faithful

to the source material.

At the end of this volume, there's also a page dedicated to an advertisement for the manga, so please check it out if you're interested! The manga will have stuff like bonus comics that you won't find anywhere else! I think it's extremely enjoyable content, so I cannot recommend it enough!

Anyway, I hope to meet you all again in the next volume!

- Yusura Kankitsu