

Dagashi-ya Yahagi:

Setting Up a Sweets Shop in Another World

3



Author **Bunzaburou Nagano**

Illustrator **Neruzo Nemaki**

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Originally made as a hobby, the “Mani 4WDs” (created by the self-proclaimed mechanical god, Mister Mani) was instantly popular.



•Yusuke•

Sisters
shouldn't
fight.

•Michelle•

Don't compare
Yusuke's product
to something so
indecent!

What?
I just shared
my opinion!

•Chichi•

After Chichi said that the Doctor Pepper smelled just like a love potion,
a sisterly feud broke out. It's a distinctly divisive product.

**YUSUKE,
I LOVE
YOU!**

I love you to death.
I'll love you even if I die. I'll love
you in my next life. I love you
spiritually. I'll love you even if
you turn into a frog!

AND I LOVE
YOU SO MUCH, I WANNA
SEND ALL THE CUSTOMERS
HOME SO WE CAN MAKE OUT IN
THE MIDDLE OF THE STORE.
I PROBABLY WON'T LET
YOU SLEEP A WINK
TONIGHT!

**IF YOU DIE, THEN I'M
DYING TOO! LET'S BE
HAPPY IN HEAVEN
TOGETHER!**





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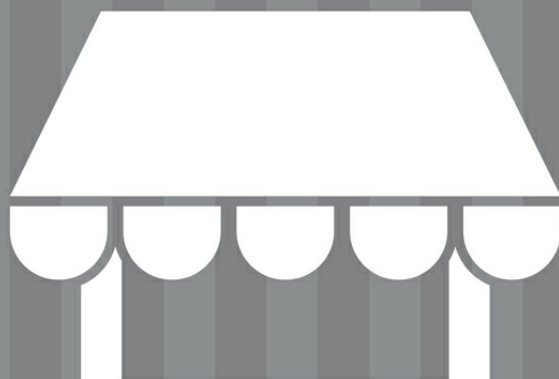
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Character Introductions



◆ Michelle ◆

A first-rank adventurer and a witch passionate about her research. She's earnestly devoted to Yusuke, but she occasionally wreaks havoc because of her yandere nature.



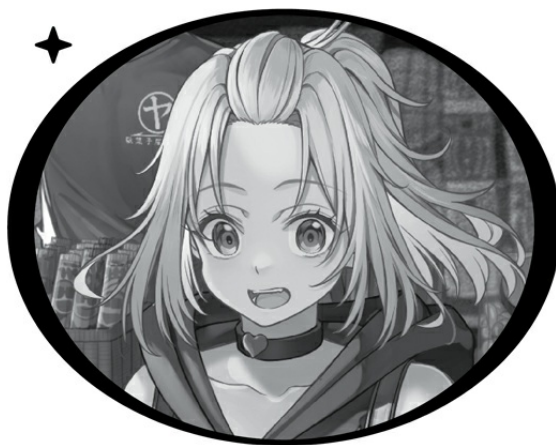
◆ Yusuke Yahagi ◆

A young man who, after obtaining the power of a dagashi-ya, was transferred to another world. He runs a dagashi-ya that caters to rookie adventurers, but he's also a feudal lord now.



◆ Mira ◆

A mage from Team Harukaze. She has a calm disposition, but her luck with lotteries is something else.



◆ Meryl ◆

The leader of Team Harukaze. She easily gets fired up in competitions, but her luck sucks when it comes to lotteries.

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◆ Garmr ◆

The leader of Team Garmr. He fools around, but he dreams of becoming a first-rate adventurer.



◆ Rigal ◆

A mage from Team Harukaze. He's gradually acquiring more abilities as an adventurer.



◆ Chichi ◆

Michelle's younger twin sister. She was once a wicked woman, but she's been reformed somewhat. She's dating Marco.



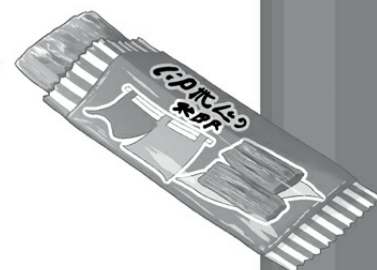
◆ Marco ◆

Part of Team Harukaze's vanguard. He works with the Legendary Spiked Bat and is devoted to Chichi.

✧ Summary ✧



With Michelle's wanted status repealed and Yusuke now able to rest easy, the dagashi-ya worked hard on a dungeon map in order to support his beloved customers: the rookie adventurers. Before long, he leveled up and gained the ability to summon his dagashi-ya as a traditional wooden live-in store. Things were going pretty well. He obtained treasure, his business thrived as he sold new goods one after another, and he deepened his relationship with Michelle even further. Meanwhile, the imprisoned former queen Chichi was planning her escape. Once she'd twisted the servant Marco around her finger, she had him earn money to fund her escape, gradually advancing her preparations. In the process, Marco began working as an adventurer and became a customer of Dagashi-ya Yahagi. Winning the Legendary Spiked Bat as a prize, he joined the team Meryl started—Team Harukaze—and gained abilities as an adventurer.





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When Marco handed over the goods he'd bought from the dagashi-ya to Chichi, she learned about Yusuke and Michelle's whereabouts and cooked up a plan for revenge. She finally succeeded in escaping and used the Sunprints to carry out a scheme to force the couple apart, but right in the nick of time, Yusuke summoned the SSSR Archangel Lunadian from his Monster Chips and put a stop to it. Having heard Marco's desperate request and witnessed Chichi's reformation, Yusuke used the Young Donuts as a tool for negotiation with the king to petition to save Chichi's life. The matter was settled on the condition that Chichi be banished and that Yusuke become the feudal lord of Luganda—the remote region that Chichi was being banished to.



Though bewildered by his new nickname of Sir Snacks, Yusuke decided to head off to Luganda as both a dagashi-ya and a feudal lord, with Michelle and his rookie adventurer regulars tagging along.



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Prologue

The distance between the Royal Capital and the Lugandan Forest was around 350 kilometers. The deeper we went into the countryside, the rougher the main road became. However, our journey would soon be coming to an end, and even though the path ahead seemed especially steep, our band of pioneers was thriving.

“Mister Yahagi! Let’s have snacks already!”

Girls and boys between the ages of twelve and thirteen crowded around me to beg for snacks. As of this spring, they were all freshly graduated from their orphanage. Well, I called it “graduating,” but it wouldn’t be a stretch to say that they had just straight up been kicked out. Because that meant they had nowhere else to go, I’d taken them in. At the beginning of our journey, they’d all had dark and gloomy faces, but with the passage of time they’d grown more and more accustomed to the other adventurers and me, and they could now smile without worry.

“You kids must be hitting your growth spurts,” I mused. “You’re already hungry?”

“Heh heh. Well, we’re fine, but Old Man Sanaga and Miss Mirai are looking real tired. We were thinking that maybe they should take a break?”

The master blacksmith, Mister Sanaga, and Miss Mirai, who sold recovery tea, had also made the decision to immigrate to Luganda.

“Hey, you young whippersnappers! Don’t use other people as an excuse just to get what you want!!! I’m still up and at ’em!” Mister Sanaga cried, angrily waving his fist at the kids. Miss Mirai stood by his side stifling a laugh.

“Now, let’s calm down, Mister Sanaga,” I said. “I’m also exhausted, so let’s settle down and have a break.”

Mister Sanaga sucked on his teeth. “Well, I’ll comply if you, as the feudal lord, tell us to.” Seeing his grudging acceptance, Miss Mirai chuckled again. Recently,

the two of them had been conversing much more often. Michelle and I had been gossiping about the possibility that they might have feelings for one another.

“Well then, I guess I’ll pass around Kabayaki-san-suke today again.” This snack increased stamina once eaten, so it was very useful to pack as a high-energy food for a trip. Even so, the kids gave me looks of disappointment.

“Whaaat? I mean, it’s tasty but we’ve gotten a little tired of it. And it’s gonna make us thirsty.”

It was true that we’d been having it every day because of how convenient it was...

“Then how about this instead? It’s sweet and delicious.”

Product name: Kuriko

Description: A delicious box of caramel. If you consume even one piece, you can run for three thousand meters without fatigue! A small toy is included.

Price: Sixty rims (Six pieces)

“Whoa, what is this?! Wow, there’s a toy monster inside!”

“And this one has a boat!”

The children oohed and aahed at the plastic toys they had found upon opening the boxes. If they’d been middle school students born and raised in Japan, they might’ve turned their noses up at them, but in this world, thirteen-year-olds were still pure enough to find delight in them. Those still-innocent children then carefully put the toys in their pockets.

Chapter 1: Arriving in Luganda

By the time we arrived at the forest's entrance, it had been about ten days since we'd left the Royal Capital. We'd be going off the main road to traverse the smaller paths through the forest. Even though it was actively being cleared, vast, untouched forest apparently still stretched beyond this point. Of course, the dungeon we were seeking to enter lay right in the middle of it.

"This road is due for some repairs..." I mumbled. We'd really come a long way from home. When I looked at the dilapidated path, I couldn't help but sigh. Seeing me in such a gloomy state, Michelle kindly offered some encouragement.

"Hey, don't look so glum. I'll burn down this forest for you if it'll make you feel better!"

I laughed awkwardly. "There's no way I can let you make enemies of the elves. Once I start making a steady income, I'll repair it bit by bit."

The hinoki cypress trees endemic to Luganda were tall, with an average height of thirty meters. The sunlight filtering through the trees dimly lit the patchy path. It felt like a giant creature would attack from the shade of the trees at any moment.

"Hey, everyone, be careful!" I shouted. "Michelle, be on the lookout ahead of us. Team Harukaze, watch our backs!"

By that time, Chichi and Marco had exited the paddy wagon and were walking around freely, so I had the two of them accompany me. We might've had a lot of kids in our midst who lacked combat power, but a majority of our members were young adventurers. We could handle a bear or two just fine. We all carefully advanced along the narrow, weed-choked path.

We had been walking for two hours or so since straying off the main road when we reached the abrupt end of the forest. A wide area had been cleared of

trees, and the evening light dyed the gentle slopes of the land in an orange hue.

“We’re here. This is Luganda!” gleefully exclaimed my aide, Mister Nakaram, and with that, the other pioneers all breathed out sighs of various mixed emotions.

“So this is Luganda...” The circular area bare of trees, surrounded by the vast forest, brought to mind a giant with a patch of hair loss shaped like a ten-yen coin... Or, well, here it’d look like a ten-rim coin.

Thanks to what the king had arranged, mages had already prepared the soil for us, but there wasn’t a single shop or anything of the sort around. It was just like a freshly cleared housing construction site, before any of the work had begun. *They look like lots for sale...*

“Hey, Yusuke, isn’t that the entrance to the dungeon over there?” Michelle asked, pointing at a rock that looked like an ancient burial mound farther down.

“There’s no doubt about it,” I agreed. “It’s the same as the one drawn in the documents we were given. First things first—we should go and check it out. Everyone else should put down their bags and rest. Michelle, Chichi, Team Harukaze—all of you follow me.”

Monsters could apparently emerge from the dungeon every so often. I’d heard that the entrance had been blocked off, but it was probably good to check it anyway.

“Why was I roped into this...” Chichi grumbled as she sulkily got to her feet.

“Because you’ve been exiled, so we’re gonna need you to work. And, your personality aside, I have high expectations of your magic.”

“Hmph! Of course I know that! Well, it’s my personal motto never to pay anyone back for what they give me, but I’ll pay you back as a special favor.”

“I’ll give you some of that Carol Chocolate you like once you get the job done, so do your best.”

“You can’t tempt me with snacks! But if you’re going to give me some anyway, make sure it’s the strawberry-choco and milk ones, got it?” Apparently, the two sisters had similar tastes. Michelle also loved the strawberry-choco and

milk flavors.

I then felt something tugging on my sleeve. I looked down and found Michelle there. For some reason, she was looking at me like she wanted to say something. It seemed she didn't like that I was only giving chocolates to Chichi.

"I'll give you lots of them too," I assured her.

"Will you feed them to me? Like, 'Aah'?" she whispered in my ear.

"G-Got it. Let's do that at night..." I whispered back to her. Now with a satisfied look on her face, she stood up.

"Now then, we'll go conquer the dungeon!" she declared.

No, you can just blockade the entrance for now...

The surface part of the dungeon was reminiscent of an ancient burial mound arranged out of gigantic rocks. The entrance was sealed up with Lugandan hinoki cypress tree logs, and I didn't see any signs of damage. With this in place, the monsters inside were unlikely to pop out.

"Just to be safe, I'll cast a barrier magic spell on it," said Michelle. "Chichi, lend me a hand."

Chichi said nothing in return, but she cooperated, and the two of them set up a double barrier. They were both excellent mages, so the barriers probably wouldn't be broken so easily.

"It should be fine now," Michelle said. "Let's conduct the real investigation starting tomorrow."

"Right," I agreed. "Let's rest up for today. Good work, everyone!"

Meryl, who had also come along, let out a sigh. "Man, we gotta use a tent again... I'm not asking for something luxurious like a nice down quilt on a soft bed, but I at least wanna sleep in a house."

"I know..." her partner Mira sighed. "We don't get tired thanks to the snacks Mister Yusuke gives us, but I'm mentally tired. I want to take it easy and rest soon."

Meryl and Mira weren't the only ones. Rigal and Marco also looked tired.

“Come now, don’t be so glum,” I said, trying to cheer them up. “Baron Ethel will be dispatching a group of carpenters soon. Each of you can have a house of your own.” As for the construction materials, there was a huge pile of Lugandan cypress trees that had been cut down over the winter, so they’d be using that.

“Yeah,” Meryl said, vigorously nodding. “That’s why we came here.”

“Yes. We also need to go into the dungeon to save up money to pay the carpenters—for a house with the garden of my dreams!” Mira had regained her usual positive attitude. I had to make Luganda’s development a success, for their sake. Our convictions renewed, we returned to the top of the hill where everyone was waiting.

Once I arrived, I brought out my three-story store.

“Oh, we have a manor house already?!” Mister Nakaram exclaimed in surprise. I hadn’t intended to set it up as one, but it was a pain to go out of the way to have a manor house constructed, so I felt this was good enough. The first floor was the store, the second floor was for storage, and the third floor was a living space, so it was extremely convenient. It was probably a bit unusual, but this would be the Manor House of the Lord of Luganda.

“All right, we’ll pass out the rations,” I said. “Help me carry the goods from the second floor!”

After distributing five days’ worth of food, we disbanded for the day.

That night, I decided to make yakisoba using one of the iron plates in the store. I also invited Chichi, who’d helped me blockade the dungeon, and Team Harukaze.

“Oh! I can make Monjayaki now!” I exclaimed. “Maybe it’s because I leveled up.”

Product name: Monjayaki

Description: Made simply of cabbages, flour, and dashi.

Customers prepare it themselves. It’s okay to bring

dagashi and the like to mix in!

Reduces fatigue and increases HP upon consumption.

Price: Two hundred rims

To my amazement, there were ingredients to make Monjayaki inside the refrigerator.

“What is Monjayaki, Yusuke?” Michelle asked me, brimming with curiosity.

“It’s a dish that consists of cabbages and flour. To be honest, I’ve never eaten it before myself.” From what I knew, even in Kanto, monjayaki was a very regional item. They hadn’t had any where I’d lived. “But I’ve seen videos on how to make it, so I kinda get it. I’ll get the dough ready, so Michelle, can you chop up the cabbages?”

“Understood. Chichi, lend me a hand.”

“Why me?!”

“You usually don’t cook at all, right? You’re going to have a difficult time like that. There aren’t any stores here.”

“Mar-Marco will cook for me,” she stammered.

“Even Marco’s going to be busy exploring the dungeon,” Michelle pointed out. “You can’t keep depending on him, right?”

“O-Okay, I get it...” Pressed by Michelle, Chichi hesitantly picked up the kitchen knife.

“Talk about unsuited to the task...” Rigal murmured next to me. Along with his growth spurt, he was getting a bit more of a nasty tongue.

“Mistress Chichi is cooking...” In contrast to Rigal’s underhanded comment, Marco was gazing at Chichi, deeply moved.

“Now then, I’ll show you how to do it, so copy me.” Michelle showed Chichi how to cut the cabbages, but the results were a mess.

“Eek!” she shrieked. “There’s blood coming out of my finger! A cursed weapon! Murderer!!!”



“You’re just clumsy...”

It turned into something of an endless loop. Chichi cut her finger with the kitchen knife, healed it with her Recovery Magic, cut her finger again, used Recovery Magic, so on and so forth. However, I now understood well that Chichi’s Recovery Magic was handy. From here on out, I’d work her hard as a witch of Luganda.

Making the Monjayaki had been hectic, but it was very tasty. It was also pretty good when it was grilled with Baby Moon Ramen.

Product name: Baby Moon Ramen

Description: Fried noodle-like snacks. Features flavors like chicken and mentaiko.

Raises agility upon consumption.

Price: Thirty rims

In my opinion, food like this tasted best when shared among a big, merry group of people. We brought beer from the storage room to celebrate our arrival, drank with everyone, made yakisoba on top of that, and had a fun party that night.

We got up early the next day, split into two groups, and began our activities. One team, led by the aide Mister Nakaram, was the town-planning team, and the other was a team of adventurers who’d go dungeon diving. I was a dagashiya, so I decided to head into the dungeon to support the adventurers.

Each lot was planned to be about 990 square meters. That was probably spacious enough to build a house, a pen for livestock, and a garden. They’d later determine the owners through a lottery.

Observing how they were planning out the town, Meryl let out a depressed sigh. “Man... I’m worried. I don’t have any luck with lotteries, so I might get a plot of land next to the dungeon or the public toilet...”

“We’re not gonna make any residential areas around places like that, so don’t worry. Well, having a spot next to the dungeon may be pretty valuable in the future, business-wise.”

“If that’s the case, then I can just be near the manor house. It’d be convenient for me when I wanna stop by.” Meryl remained childish no matter how much time passed, but that was part of her charm.

“Don’t worry over silly things like that,” I said. “We’re about to head into the dungeon. We’re only gonna check out the first floor, but don’t lose your focus, everyone!”

With Michelle in the front, we stormed the dungeon.

The Lugandan Dungeon was so small, its size couldn’t hold a candle to the Royal Capital’s. The entrance was only about 2.5 meters wide, and even the ceiling was less than 4 meters high. Having said that, this was only B1 of the dungeon, so I didn’t know what its depths would be like.

“I need each team to map this place out properly. Later, we’ll put it all together to grasp the whole layout. Also, if you run into some trouble, blow this whistle and call for help.”

I handed out my store’s new product to the adventurers.

Product name: Whistle Mints

Description: Candy. Features four flavors - Ramune, lemon, orange, and plum.

Slightly increases water-and ice-related magical power upon consumption.

Price: Thirty rims

This candy came in a small plastic box whose lid made a whistling sound when you slid it open. The whistle resounded farther than you’d expect.

“Whoa, this is pretty tasty!”

“Stup— Garmr, what are you eating them all for?!”

Garmr was tipping the Whistle Mints into his mouth all in one go, and he wasn't the only one. His buddies were doing the same thing.

“I mean, I can't use Water or Ice Magic,” he shrugged. “Give me the orange flavor next time, Mister Yahagi.”

“If you want it, then pay for it,” I sighed, exasperated. “No matter how much money we have, it's never enough because Luganda's development drains it.”

“Okay, I got it. We'll work hard to get magic stones, so use them to develop this place.”

The feudal lord purchased the magic stones and then sold them wholesale to the country. The price difference turned into profit and went into the feudal lord's pocket. Although, it looked like we'd have to keep coughing up money for a while longer, so I didn't think we'd see any profits for the time being.

“I'm seriously counting on you. And hold on to that whistle. Don't throw it away. You're gonna need it if you run into trouble.”

We split up into ten teams and began scoping out the dungeon.

Just like in the Royal Capital Dungeon, there weren't any real enemies on B1. Generally, the deeper into the dungeon you went, the denser the magicules. Strong monsters appeared in places with dense concentrations of magicules, so the ones near the surface were nothing but weaklings. However, this dungeon had never been touched by humans before, so the monster population was abundant.

Marco lowered his Legendary Spiked Bat and wiped off his sweat as he picked up the copper coins and magic stones that had been dropped. “Whew. Most of these enemies aren't that tough, but you earn a pretty decent amount when there's a lot of them all at once.” Marco was working hard on the front lines again today. Since Chichi was also here, it looked like he was more motivated than usual.

“How much did you make?”

“I think we got at least 10,000 rims.”

Team Harukaze had four members, so each person would get 2,500 rims. Earning that much before noon wasn't too shabby.

“You could probably earn a little more if we went to B2,” I said. “I'm relieved—it looks like you all can get by just fine.”

As we walked while making pleasant conversation, a rock suddenly moved before my eyes and pounced on Chichi.

“A Stone Crab!”

Stone Crabs were crab monsters that camouflaged themselves as rocks. They had high defense, so they were troublesome enemies to defeat. Even in the Capital Dungeon, they were formidable foes that appeared on floors B3 and below. With these kinds of unexpected surprises, you could never let your guard down in dungeons.

“Ngh! Wind Cutter!!!” Chichi aimed her magic at the Stone Crab, but it dispersed against the thick shell. You dealt with these enemies with Fire Magic spells, but Chichi probably didn't know that since she was inexperienced with dungeons.

“Mistress Chichi!” Marco quickly slipped in between the Stone Crab and Chichi and raised the Legendary Spiked Bat. This weapon that dealt guaranteed damage was perfect for hunting monsters with high defense.

Bang! Bang Bang! Countless holes gaping across its body, the Stone Crab sank to the ground.

“Mistress Chichi, are you hurt?” Marco asked.

“N-No, I'm fine,” Chichi stammered, staring at him, dumbfounded.

“I'm glad. I'm sorry I wasn't paying attention and put you in danger.”

“O-Oh, no, you didn't. Th-Thank you. (*Oh no, Marco's so cool...*)”

They were emitting lovey-dovey vibes for some reason.

“Ahh... All righty. After you collect the magic stones and the money, we'll be heading onward,” the team leader Meryl announced, clapping her hands and

hurrying everyone. However, Michelle murmured something under her breath.

“I’m jealous... I wanna be protected too.”

Well, she was the strongest adventurer around, so...

“I’ll make an effort,” I assured her. “If you’re in trouble, I’ll protect you no matter what happens.”

“Really? Then give me a dagashi that lowers one’s abilities!”

“Why?!”

“I’ll use it to get weaker and have you protect me!”

“I don’t have any dagashi like that.” *My shop doesn’t carry cursed dagashi...*

Chichi sneered at Michelle as she watched her. “Shall I curse you then? Something that’ll make you as weak as a slug.”

“That’s a good idea too!”

No, it’s not...

“But if it’s a curse that *you* cast, then it’ll easily wear off...” she added.

“Excuse me?!” Chichi shrieked. “Gah! Then shall I cast a curse on you that makes you keep spitting out earthworms?!”

Rigal shrugged his shoulders at the sudden quarrel between the two sisters. “Can’t you just have Mister Yusuke handcuff you?”

No, don’t give her any ideas! She’ll seriously make me do it!

“That’s not a bad idea! Don’t you have a toy like that, Yusuke?”

She was talking about the Police Officer Play Set. In this other world, the police didn’t carry police IDs, guns, or handcuffs, so no one understood that product. Moreover, the pistol could actually shoot bullets and the handcuffs were relatively well-made, so I couldn’t sell them to just anyone.

“No handcuffs. You shouldn’t think of doing stupid things in the dungeon. Please hurry up and return to your senses.”

“Aww, I just kinda wanted us to be tied together though...” Thanks to Rigal, she’d awakened a new fetish! In the end, I satisfied her at night in our room by

role-playing a bodyguard. The plot was about the forbidden love between a princess and her guard. It was fun, but it kinda wiped me out...

By the fifth day, they had finished dividing up the lots. A fine thread stretching around Luganda divided the area into roads and residential lots. Meryl had been worried that she'd draw a plot next to the toilets, but she was relieved that she'd gotten one next to Mira's.

Everyone must have been really happy to have their own land now, as the residents were all smiles as they trimmed the grass on their plots and such. Of course, Meryl and Mira were no exception; they were now devoted to fixing up their lots.

"There! Wind Cutter!" Mira used magic to cut the shrubs on her plot of land. Meryl cooperated with her, doing things like moving rocks out of the way.

"You wasted no time, huh?"

"I want to live here as soon as possible!" Mira exclaimed in a lively voice, a bit of sweat dampening her forehead. "In the future, I want to build a house around here and plant grapes and apricot trees in the garden. I also want a pergola with wild roses twisting around it." Judging by her eyes as she spoke dreamily of the future, it looked like she was really having fun.

Meryl was also working hard digging up the earth with a hoe. "Gah! Why do the roots go so deep?!" She seemed to be using her Body Enhancement Magic to forcibly dig up a stump.

"Hey now, don't overdo it," I warned her. "How about you hire someone who can use Earth Magic?"

"Earth Magic users are in high demand, so it's gonna take forever before I have a turn. Oh right! Sell me a Jumbo Katsu, Mister Yusuke. I'm gonna try to pull it out using a power boost."

She might have been able to dig it up if she ate the Jumbo Katsu. However, you could only use the power boost for three seconds. There was also the risk that she'd fail. However, if she used *this* snack instead, then there was no need to worry.

“I may have just the thing for you,” I said.

I took out one snack.

Product name: The Woodcutter’s Stump

Description: A chocolate snack that looks like a stump, featuring a pairing of chocolate and biscuit. You can easily dig up a stump upon consumption. (One stump per snack)

Price: One thousand rims

This snack’s ability was way too specific, so it was a product that hadn’t really had any good use until now. There had been no opportunities to dig up stumps in the dungeon. However, that would change when it came to dealing with the cleared land here. I was sure that the demand would now be through the roof.

“Here, have a try,” I said.

“Oh, that looks tasty...but my hands look like this.” Meryl’s hands were covered in mud from using a hoe to dig up the tree stump.

“Looks like I have no choice. I’ll feed it to you, so open your mouth.”

“Okaaay.” She readily opened her mouth wide. She looked just like a fledgling swallow. I put the snack in her mouth, and as she chewed, her eyes lit up. “This is tasty! One more, dad!”

“Who are you calling dad?!” I cried, taken aback. “Was I a seven-year-old when I became your father?! That’s impossible!!!”

“Ha ha ha, sorry, sorry.”

“Also, you can uproot one stump after eating one of these. Now hurry up and try before it wears off.” If you didn’t do anything, then the effect would reset. If that happened, then all it’d be was a tasty snack that she’d happened to enjoy.

“Got it. Let’s see...”

She once more lay hands on that stump she’d been fighting such an uphill

battle against. Then, she firmly planted her stance and put her strength into it. “Hup!”

Pop!!!

“Huh?!” It had probably come loose way too easily. Unbalanced by her own excess strength, she staggered back several steps and fell onto her behind. However, she hadn’t let go of the stump, so the long roots kept popping from the ground, flinging dirt everywhere. “Ow, ow, ow... But this is amazing!”

“The effect shouldn’t have worn off yet, so keep pulling until it’s all out.”

“Got it!” Meryl clung onto the stump as she moved, successfully removing it all.

“Its effect is incredible,” Mira marveled. “Usually, even carrying a stump is impossible.”

“Seriously, this snack’s power is something else,” I agreed. “However, it’s only effective on stumps. As strange as it is, it’s still pretty sweet...”

“Of course it is—you’re a dagashi-ya.”

Mira and I cackled together.

“Our pioneering of the land will probably gather steam with the help of this,” she said.

“Looks like it,” I agreed. “I’ll go and distribute these to everyone. I’ll leave this box here, so you two make good use of it.”

“Thank you, Mister Yusuke. We’ll gratefully accept it.”

As I was walking around handing out the Woodcutter’s Stump to everyone, I noticed Rigal watching me from the shadows.

“You and Miss Meryl let your guard down too easily,” he said.

“What’s the matter?”

“How would you have explained that act of infidelity just now if Miss Michelle had seen it?”

“What are you talking about?”



“You fed that snack to her, right?”

That’s an act of infidelity? “That was like feeding a baby bird. It’s nothing like cheating.”

“Do you think Miss Michelle would accept that excuse?”

Well...

“Of course not,” he concluded. “Luganda’s development is going well, so please don’t go stirring up trouble for no reason.”

“S-Sorry...” Meryl and I both apologized. *That really was careless.*

“Really, please be careful,” he sighed. “She might use her Wind Cutter to chop off *your* stump!”

“M-My stump?” I stammered. “What’s going to be chopped off?”

“Use your imagination!”

My neck? My leg? Or...

I was too scared to let my imagination carry me any further.

The Adventurer Meryl's Diary: Entry 1

After walking for a long time, we finally reached Luganda. How should I put this... This place is kind of crazy. There seriously is, like, nothing. I lived in the Royal Capital for so long, it's making me a little anxious. All I can see are trees and the forest and the river... Well, no matter where I go, I guess I have the dagashi-ya to rely on. Weirdly enough, my anxieties disappear when I see Mister Yusuke's face. Also, when I think about building my own house somewhere on that gentle hill, I get excited. What kind of house will it be? I'd like it to be cute.

Apparently, Mira's gonna plant grapes and apricots in her garden. Should I plant apples then? I'll harvest lots of them in the fall and make tons of jam.

My house's layout should feature a bedroom and a kitchen and a dining room... And—I'm only talking hypothetically—if I live together with someone in the future, then the rooms should be a little on the bigger side. Eek! So embarrassing! Man...my own house. My dreams keep getting bigger.

They hosted the land plot lottery today. I'm a woman who has no luck with lotteries in the first place. I was totally ready to draw a terrible lot, but I unexpectedly pulled a pretty good one. Moreover, it was next to Mira's. Did I already use up my entire life's worth of luck with that? I feel like from tomorrow on, I'll no longer win anything at all from Ten-Rim Gum, Ten-Rim Chocolate Coins, or Scratch Cards.

"You've never had that much luck drawing any wins anyway. Don't be so down." Rigal "comforted" me, so I smacked him. He's gotten cheekier recently. Where did the cute Rigal I once knew go? Although in turn, he's gotten more dependable. His mana still leaves much to be desired, but his one-shot offensive power is catching up to Mira's. Our power as a team will increase if our members keep developing like this. I also need to work hard so that I can keep up.

We examined the Lugandan Dungeon. We've only seen B1, but it looked smaller than the one in the Royal Capital. However, it feels a little off... This is just my intuition, but I feel like this dungeon holds a lot of secrets.

There were a lot of monsters on our first day. It's probably because nobody had entered that dungeon before now. It's dangerous, but it looks like we can make good money. All members of Team Harukaze sensed the same potential. Today, each person got 5,000 rims. Will we earn a bit more if we go to floor B2? Feels like my "home sweet home" plans will go smoothly at this rate.

Tomorrow, I plan to do some maintenance on my plot of land. I'll cut the weeds and pull out the remaining stumps. I need to be ready for the carpenters whenever they arrive. I'll have to keep living in the tent for the time being, but my dreams keep getting bigger and bigger.

Chapter 2: Greeting Our Neighbors

Two weeks had passed since we'd migrated, and Luganda's development was going well. We'd conquered B2 of the dungeon, and there'd recently been teams who'd gone to challenge B3. With this came an increase in magic stones. Also, there was a new group of pioneers that Baron Ethel had sent. Most of them were the third or fourth sons of their farms with no inheritance rights. They'd apparently come because Luganda was not only offering free plots of land but free livestock as well. We entrusted them right away with the cows and chickens and such, so we started getting a slightly more stable supply of milk and eggs.

The roads and other basic infrastructure were gradually taking shape, making it look more like a town. Chichi was unexpectedly working hard, using her magic to help in many ways. Even though she complained all the while, she was currently cooperating with Michelle and doing her best to build a defensive wall to protect the town.

Everything about our pioneering activities appeared to be going smoothly, but one problem did arise. It was the matter of food. The majority of the population were young adventurers, so they all ate a lot. We'd thought that the wheat would last for four weeks, but it looked like it was about to run out.

I talked to Michelle about my plans for the day as we sat down for breakfast. "We'll be in trouble at this rate, so I'm gonna go out and buy things."

"Then I'll go too! It's been a while since we've been alone together."

Many people came and went through our door since this was both the manor house and a dagashi-ya. My aide Mister Nakaram also had his office here, so Michelle and I didn't have many opportunities to be alone together. We'd been working nonstop, so it'd be a nice change of pace to go to the neighboring town to buy more supplies.

"Let's go to the town of Bethel then," I said. Bethel was a town about fifteen kilometers away from Luganda. It was a large town, so we probably wouldn't

have any issues purchasing what we needed.

“But are you okay on money?” Michelle asked. “I can pay for now, and you pay me back later.” She was a brilliant mage, so she was extremely rich. However, I didn’t wanna become a kept man.

“We have a lot of magic stones thanks to everyone’s hard work. If we have them purchase those, then we won’t have any issue procuring supplies. Also, we haven’t done our move-in greetings, so we should show our faces to the feudal lord of Bethel. I’ll also introduce you as my fiancée.” That was right. We were finally engaged.

“Yusuke!!!” she exclaimed, cutely rubbing her face into my chest like a cat.

We traveled to Bethel by horse, electing not to take a wagon because the road was so narrow. The store could serve as a dimensional storage space, so we could carry things no problem. Michelle wanted us to ride on one horse together, but I felt bad for it, so I had her give up on the idea.

“Still, this road’s pretty rough,” I muttered. “We can’t facilitate a steady flow of trade like this.”

“Yeah. We need to gradually widen this road.” Thanks to Michelle using her Wind Cutter along the way, the jutting branches and creeping undergrowth were cleanly removed. That alone made it much easier to walk. We probably needed to do some construction work sometime to expand it and make it easier for people to come and go.

In about two hours, we’d arrived in Bethel, a large, splendid town surrounded by stone walls. It was located near the main road, with a population of about four thousand people.

“Let’s go say hello to the feudal lord first,” I said. “He may introduce us to some merchants who’ll sell us food.”

The two of us walked side by side through the heart of the town.

We then met the baron of Bethel, Mister Laimas, who was a gentleman of about forty years of age. He had a big belly and gave the impression of being an easygoing person. His wife was also a kind-looking, plump woman who seemed pleased by our visit. Apparently, Mister Laimas's family had been the feudal lords of this town for generations.

"You've come a long way, Mister Yahagi. Come now, have a seat, please. We'll bring some cold cream for you," Mister Laimas welcomed us. He was happy when I presented him with a souvenir of wine I'd bought back in the Royal Capital. "I humbly thank you. When you live so far from the capital, wine is a precious commodity." It was apparently too cold to cultivate grapes around here. Instead, apples were a local specialty, and they often made apple wine. "Hansel, Gretel—you two should say hello to Mister Yahagi as well."

Mister Laimas had his children introduce themselves next. The older brother, Hansel, was ten, and the younger sister, Gretel, was eight.

"Hello, Mister Yahagi."

"How do you do?"

Aristocrats valued social skills, so although these children were young, they gave us a proper greeting. Both of them seemed honest and sweet.

"Hello. I also have presents for you two." I took out my Mobile Force units Gungalf and Kian, and handed them over.

"Thank you. But what are these?"

"These toys are all the rage back in the Royal Capital." Once I'd explained the Mobile Forces to them, they got right down to assembling them. Even now, the number of competitive Mobile Forces players back in the Royal Capital continued to rise, and per my agreement with Baron Ethel, I sent him five hundred units every month.

"When you've finished, put it against your forehead."

Michelle showed the children how to move the Mobile Forces. She had formerly taught at a magical academy, and she was the champion of the first Mobile Forces Tournament, so I felt I could rest easy and leave it to her. When they finally got the Mobile Forces to move, the children cheered.

“It’s moving!”

“So is my Kian! How wonderful these are!” The two of them were in high spirits, excited to have dolls they could move with their own power. Mister Laimas also looked very interested.

“So these are the rumored Mobile Forces,” he mused. “I’ve heard that a tournament using these is being hosted at the capital.”

“You’ve heard of them, Mister Laimas?”

“I have, only from rumors. This is my first time seeing the real things. How incredibly fascinating!”

The children had quickly grown accustomed to using the toys and already had their units play-wrestling each other in a sumo-esque match.

“Just playing with them like that also trains their magic. Many people have gained new magical abilities from using Mobile Forces.” The primary example was Rigal. Thanks to his Mobile Forces training, he’d gained the ability to use Fire Magic.

“That’s wonderful. Let’s see, allow your father to have a try.”

“Your mother would like to as well,” said his wife. The two of them borrowed the Mobile Forces from their children and began playing with them.

“This is rather nice...” Mister Laimas muttered.

“Let’s have a match, dear.”

Now it was Mister Laimas and his wife’s turn to become completely engrossed in the Mobile Forces. At first, Hansel and Gretel waited quietly, but they began to grow impatient with their parents, who wouldn’t let their toys go.

“Give me back my Gungalf, father.”

“My Kian...”

“Hold on and wait a little. Whoa!”

“That’s right. We’re in the middle of something right now. Ack!”

Hmm... Even the parents were totally immersed in the Mobile Forces. Looks like I have no choice but to give them Gufufu and Zako as presents too.

“I apologize, Mister Yahagi. I, Laimas, forgot my own children in the midst of battle.”

If I'd known they were going to get this obsessed with them, I would've gifted them four units from the start...

Mister Laimas, in high spirits thanks to the Mobile Forces, wrote us ten whole letters of introduction to give to merchants who sold wheat and food.

“Thank you. With this, we should be able to manage our food supply.”

“Oh no, you gave us such fun gifts. It's no problem at all.” He gently patted his Gufufu. *He really likes it.*

“There's a blacksmith back in Luganda who makes weapons for Mobile Forces,” I told him. “Also, the residents actively engage in matches among themselves. Please visit if you'd like.”

“Oh! That sounds like fun. By all means, I will pay you a visit.” Mister Laimas even promised he'd send merchants who sold daily necessities to Luganda, and then sent us on our way.



Eight days had passed since we'd stopped by Bethel to greet its lord. As the feudal lord of Luganda, I started my mornings early—but not so that I could work hard in government affairs. I wasn't good with that kind of work, so I was having my aide, Mister Nakaram, take care of that for me. Early every morning, and in the evenings, I headed out to the dungeon entrance to open my shop and sell my dagashi to adventurers. My lifestyle was mostly the same as the life I'd led back in the Royal Capital. And look, here was Meryl, rubbing her sleepy eyes as she stopped by the shop this morning once again.

"Good morning," I greeted her. "What'll it be today?"

"Um... Gimme ten Bascos."

"Ten?!"

"There's a huge outbreak of Killer Hummingbirds in the dungeon," she explained. Killer Hummingbirds were ferocious bird-type monsters. Real hummingbirds were cute and colorful little birds, but when it came to the ones inside the dungeon, you couldn't deal with them by ordinary means. A long time ago, there was a black-and-white movie in which birds attacked humans—these birds were totally like that. "Individually, they have weak offensive power, but they attack in groups of at least a hundred. That's why you use a strategy of laying out nectar to round them up."

"Oh yeah, Killer Hummingbirds are attracted to sweet nectar."

"That's right. With that in mind, I'll lay out a jar of nectar, and when they've gathered in a large group, we plan to have Rigal annihilate them with his Fire Magic." While she set up the nectar, she'd have to endure a small number of attacks, hence her purchase of Basco. Eating Basco would strengthen your body, raising your defense fivefold. The effect lasted for ten minutes, which was probably plenty of time to set up the lure.

"Be careful." As the leader of Team Harukaze and a member of its vanguard, Meryl often had to perform dangerous tasks.

"Don't worry. I'm used to it. Also, each Killer Hummingbird drops 50 rims, so if we gather together one hundred of them, we'll get 5,000 at the very least. If it's

150, then it'll be 7,500. I'm just itching to go."

It sounded like they'd make some good money, if the plan went well.

"Oh, right, we have this new product," I said. "How about you use it together with the Bascos?"

Product name: Wata Ame

Description: A pouch of cotton candy. Upon consumption, it erases your presence for exactly five minutes.

Price: Eighty rims

Back in Japan, it seemed it was common for this to be called "wata ame" in the east, and "watagashi" in the west. Incidentally, it was called "cotton candy" in the US but "fairy floss" in Australia. If you took the name "fairy floss" literally, that meant it was fluff that came from fairies. I felt that name better suited the product I was selling.

"Huh, it looks interesting. I'll buy one," Meryl said. True to her novelty-loving nature, she purchased it right away.

As I began to close up shop after seeing the adventurers off on their dungeon explorations, a horse-drawn wagon appeared, headed in my direction. There was a single driver, and the back of the wagon carried a huge load of items. It was rare for visitors from the outside to come by. *What could he be here for?* The wagon came straight my way.

"Hello. I'm a peddler from Bethel. Is that the manor house?" the man asked, pointing at the three-story store at the top of the hill to confirm he had the right place.

"That's correct, but what business do you have there?"

"I'm Joshua. I'm a peddler who came here at the request of Bethel's ruler, Lord Laimas. I have a letter, so I'd like to give it to Luganda's ruler, Lord Yahagi."

Whoa, Mister Laimas wasted little time fulfilling his promise. We were

chronically low on daily necessities, so this was extremely helpful. The residents would probably be pleased as well. “Perfect timing then. I’m the feudal lord, Yahagi.”

“What? That’s you...?” He looked at me doubtfully. I still had my street stall open and wore a black apron around my waist. Feudal lords were technically considered aristocrats, but I probably didn’t look the part just at the moment.

“Mister Yahagi is undoubtedly the feudal lord of Luganda,” said Miss Mirai from her neighboring store, vouching for me.

Mister Sanaga also nodded. “Though he mightn’t look much like one.”

Thanks to them, Mister Joshua was finally convinced. “Pardon my rudeness. I shouldn’t say this, but I thought that you were all surely in the same line of business.”

It was natural to think that way, considering that I was sitting at my street stall in my waist apron. “I was originally a street vendor in the Royal Capital. Before I knew it, I had become a feudal lord.”

Surprised, he stared at me in wonder. “Such things *can* happen, I see... I’m a mere peddler, but if I continue working like this, will I become a baron one day?”

I couldn’t speak to *that*, but he had come a long distance to reach us out here in Luganda. *I’ll treat him to some tea in the manor house or something.*

“By the way, what are these products?” He was gazing at my dagashi and toys with curiosity.

“They’re the snacks I sell,” I replied. “Most of their prices range from 10 to 100 rims for one piece.”

“Ten rims?!” he cried. “That’s cheap. Um, is it possible for you to sell me some as well? I’d like to bring back some souvenirs for my children.” Since there wasn’t much sugar to go around, sweets were apparently valuable in the countryside. Bringing home some snacks would probably make his kids happy.

“Go ahead and choose what you’d like. If it’s for your kids, then I’d recommend things like the chocolate and candy over here.”

“Chocolate?! I’ve only heard of it! I’ve never eaten it in my life!”

That’s right... Even in the Royal Capital, only high-end restaurants had the stuff. “Have a sample. I’ll give you one on the house.”

After eating a Carol Chocolate, he pressed both hands to his face, almost as though his jaw would fall off if he didn’t. “To think something so delicious exists!”

“Apart from the milk chocolate flavor, Carol Chocolate features flavors such as strawberry, cookies and cream, and there’s even currently a limited-time pistachio flavor.”

In the wake of his first taste of chocolate, Mister Joshua quivered in his boots.

“What’s the matter?”

“Can you sell these snacks to me wholesale?!” he asked, breathing heavily as he earnestly made this request of me, but I politely turned him down.

“Please, make an exception!” he pleaded.

“I absolutely cannot,” I said. “It’s my personal creed not to ever sell these for anything other than a fair price.”

He kept persisting, but I flatly refused. In the end, we agreed that he’d only buy enough for souvenirs, and he spent 2,000 rims on snacks and toys. I’d made some decent sales, so I was personally happy, but this would turn into a bit of trouble for me later down the line. I had slightly underestimated the passion of someone who’d just discovered a rarity.

Three days after Mister Joshua had gone home, he once again showed up in Luganda. He hadn’t simply come to visit. There were several people riding in his wagon with him.

“What’s going on, Mister Joshua?” I asked.

“You said I couldn’t resell them, so I put together a hands-on tour of the dungeon and dagashi. Everyone on board is a customer.” To my amazement, Mister Joshua had become a travel agent.

He turned to his customers. “Now, this is Luganda’s specialty—a dagashi-ya. You can buy the rumored chocolate here! They sell Mobile Forces as well!”

Indeed, this wasn’t considered reselling. However, how had he managed to find twelve customers? Though I was a bit astounded, I found his strong commercial spirit impressive.

The people Mister Joshua had brought were the wealthy of the area. People such as merchants and landowners, officers from the main-road garrison, and their wives were among the tour’s customers. In this region, dungeons were rare, and the one in Luganda was the only one that had been found so far. Apparently, everybody had come here from a great distance to see the dungeon and my dagashi.

“Oh my, so this is chocolate!”

“This is my first time seeing gum!”

“Oh, there are the Mobile Forces that Lord Laimas had! Sell me one too, please!”

Peering from the corner of his eye at the customers absorbed in buying up all the dagashi and toys they could manage, Mister Joshua whispered in my ear. “We’d like to tour the dungeon after this. How much is the entrance fee again?”

The entrance fee for all nonresidents was 1,000 rims per person, but did they seriously intend to enter? “It’s dangerous. I can’t guarantee you’ll survive once you’re inside.”

“We’ll just take a peek at the entrance. We’ll go down the stairs, take a quick tour, and return immediately. Please allow us inside.”

“Still, you never know what’s going to happen in a dungeon,” I insisted. Well, just the entrance might not be *that* dangerous, but it was absolutely possible for monsters to appear. An ordinary person couldn’t just waltz in there.

“Then could you introduce us to some adventurers who could guard us?”

“Unfortunately, they’re all off exploring the dungeon.”

If Garmr and his team had been here, it would’ve made some good pocket money for them. They had a tank, Grapp, on their team, so they were ideal for

the job. Grapp was a fearless fighter who was nicknamed Tiger Lily. He doused his body in plenty of “The French’s Perfume,” which drew the monsters’ aggro and made them ignore anyone except Grapp as their opponent. If his team had been here, I could’ve left this group in their care, even if the artificial lily smell was pretty intense...

“Hmm... What should I do?” Mister Joshua was gazing at the dungeon with a troubled look on his face. *Oh right, I’ve got just the thing.*

Product name: Deruderuderune

Description: A candy you make yourself by adding water. Upon consumption, it gives you an out-of-body experience for fifteen minutes.

Features two flavors - Grape and ramune. Grape offers a juicy out-of-body experience while ramune offers a refreshing one.

Price: One hundred rims

Using this to have an out-of-body experience would let you safely tour the dungeon. However, this was a product I had discontinued until now. This candy was fun because it allowed you to feel like you were doing a science experiment while making it, but there’d been a guy scheming something nasty. Believe it or not, he’d tried to use this out-of-body experience for the wicked purpose of peeking into Hot Spring Yahagi. Apparently, he’d been aiming for Mira. Luckily, Michelle had noticed, and everything had ended without incident, but that situation was why I had stopped selling this. However, if I limited its sales to this location, then there probably wouldn’t be any issues putting it back on the market.

Still, what on earth does the description mean by a “juicy” out-of-body experience? I guess I should experiment with it next time. Oh, I won’t abuse it, of course.

I suggested the group use the Deruderuderune to experience a disembodied tour of the dungeon. “So basically, if you eat this, it’s possible to enter the

dungeon in a spirit-like state.”

“Um, isn’t that dangerous?” asked an older man from the tour as he read the Deruderuderune’s package.

“Your body will remain here,” I assured him. “Even if you encounter a monster, it’ll be fine. Monsters can’t sense your spirits either.”

“I see. By the way, what happens when the time runs out?”

“After fifteen minutes have passed, your soul will automatically return to your body. Don’t worry.”

After my thorough explanation, the tourists happily approved of the out-of-body dungeon tour. They all immediately purchased the dagashi and wasted no time in making the candy. I explained the instructions to everyone. “Now then, pour the number one powder into the tray. Once you do, add in water using the spoon that was included, and knead well.”

The group of adults looked like they were having fun making their snacks.

“Oh my, the colors changed!”

“Indeed, it’s a vivid shade of blue.”

“Mine’s green.”

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. It’s fun making a snack that feels all science-y, isn’t it?

“Next, you put in powder number two and mix well.”

“The color changed again.”

“It’s expanding and getting fluffier!” Despite being grown adults, they were getting really excited.

“Lastly, you put the candy chips from bag number three into the hollow beside it, put it on the deruderu, and eat it.”

The preparations were now complete. After about a minute, the people who’d eaten the Deruderuderune lay down on the grass and entered their out-of-body experiences one after another. It seemed Mister Joshua’s soul had also left his body, so he might be heading for the dungeon tour right about now.

After I'd watched over them for fifteen minutes, the first person abruptly arose. "I'm back. Man, there were so many scary monsters in there!!!" Following that, people woke up one after another and began exclaiming about what they'd just seen inside the dungeon.

"I saw those adventurers battling against monsters! They were using traps and successfully herding them in!"

"Magic stones appear like that, huh? I never knew that."

A dungeon tour using Deruderuderune probably wouldn't get in the way of the adventurers. It seemed I'd gained yet another new specialty.

I received an average of 5,000 rims per person that day and made over 60,000 rims total. Because of that, I once again leveled up, and I felt like my mana had increased too.

As I watched the tourists head home with satisfied looks on their faces, I had the feeling something new would soon happen at Dagashi-ya Yahagi.

One day, as I began closing up shop after sending the adventurers off, Mister Sanaga called out to me. "Hey, Yahagi. You got a minute?" He was acting strange—he was fidgeting an awful lot. *Is he in some kind of trouble?*

"What is it? If you're okay with me hearing you out, say whatever's on your mind."

"Um...there's somethin' I'd like to discuss. Ah... Sorry, can ya come with me? It won't take much time..." Mister Sanaga wasn't making himself very clear, and he was avoiding eye contact. Was he about to confess that he was unsatisfied with his life in Luganda and wanted to return to the Royal Capital? That'd be a real problem. He was the only blacksmith we had. I didn't know of any other blacksmiths who would come all the way out here. Also, even though Mister Sanaga wasn't talkative, he got the job done, and he didn't charge exorbitant prices. The adventurers adored him, and I deeply trusted him. *I need to make sure we talk this through properly.*

"Then let's sit down on that rock and talk."

At the now-deserted dungeon entrance, we sat down, just the two of us. “Did something bad happen?” I asked.

“That ain’t it,” he sighed. “I like my life here. This place is full of good-natured fellas, even if they are stupid.”

I unhunched my shoulders. It sounded like he didn’t want to return to the Royal Capital. “What’s the matter then?”

Even after I asked straight out, all he did was fidget and keep beating around the bush.

“Is it about money?”

“No... I just fell in love with a woman.”

This time, all the tension completely left my shoulders. I had a hunch about who it was. “Is it Miss Mirai?”

“How did you know?!”

“Anyone could’ve guessed that by watching how you’ve been acting recently, Mister Sanaga.”

“I see...” He was glaring into the air with a cranky expression, maybe to try and hide his embarrassment.

“So what are you going to do, Mister Sanaga?”

“I don’t know.”

“Really?”

“Up until my big ol’ age, I’ve lived my life only hitting iron. Yeah, I’ve fallen head over heels before—when I was younger—but before I realized it, I was still a bachelor at fifty-two years old.”

Oh, he’s younger than I expected. His hair was so coarse, short, and completely white that I’d totally thought he was sixty or so.

“Hey, Yahagi. What should you do when you’ve fallen in love with a woman? You’re a womanizer who could get even that cursed witch wrapped around your finger. Please teach me how to woo a woman!”

That was a terrible way of putting it. I’d never wrapped her around my finger.

I was constantly putting my life on the line to catch her way-too-heavy, blazing blasts of passion. *Well, it doesn't look like Mister Sanaga meant any ill will.*
“Let’s see... Maybe a straightforward person like you shouldn’t fumble around trying any strategies.”

“By which you mean...?”

“You should go on a date and just straight up ask her to go out with you.”

“I see... As expected of someone who went from a peddler to a feudal lord.”

Please, this advice isn't that incredible.

“But where would we go on a date?” he asked. “There ain’t nothing but that dungeon here in Luganda.”

“How about you go looking for medicinal herbs and mushrooms in the forest?” I suggested. “Fall flowers are blooming this time of year. Miss Mirai enjoys that kind of stuff.”

“As expected of you, Yahagi. Everything you say is perfectly sound!”

“You can continue to get closer like that,” I said, but he slumped his shoulders, crestfallen. “What’s the matter?”

“I dunno how to ask her out.”

“Shouldn’t you be up-front about that too and just ask if she’d like to harvest medicinal herbs in the forest with you?”

“W-Will she say yes?”

“I don’t know *that*, but nothing will happen if you don’t take action, Mister Sanaga. You should first gather up your courage and ask her out.”

“Hmm...”

Miss Mirai was a widow who’d lost her husband to illness more than ten years ago. I’d once overheard her confiding in Mira about feeling lonely sometimes. Mister Sanaga wasn’t a big talker, but he worked hard, and he had his nice side. I suspected they’d be much happier than they were now if they could share their lives in mutual support. “I think you’re a good match for each other,” I said.

“I see. I got it...” he mumbled, smacking his knees as if he’d made up his mind.

Several days later, it seemed that Mister Sanaga had succeeded in inviting Miss Mirai to go picking medicinal herbs in some undisclosed location. I spotted them heading to the forest with baskets in hand. From what I could see, Miss Mirai had a nice smile on her face. I was secretly expecting it to go well, judging by that.

After I waited all day in excitement, the two returned that evening. However, they had conflicted expressions on their faces. Had something happened? I decided to indirectly feel out the situation.

“I see you two headed to the forest,” I observed. “Oh, you’ve gathered a lot of medicinal herbs.” There weren’t only medicinal herbs in their baskets—there were even flowers and mushrooms.

“Yeah...” Despite their fruitful harvest, they both looked gloomy. I was getting more and more disappointed, thinking that the date hadn’t gone well, but it seemed that wasn’t the case.

“Did something happen, Miss Mirai?” I asked.

“Well, we found a small shrine inside the forest.”

“By a small shrine, you mean a small building that enshrines a god, right?”

“Yes. It was a small, ancient shrine that was completely covered in moss. It was made of stone and looked so old that I couldn’t guess when it was put there.”

That was a rare discovery, but that didn’t clear up why they looked so worried. “Did you sense that it was something sinister?”

“No. There was actually a thin, old man sitting there with a vacant expression on his face.”

“What? Inside the Lugandan Forest?”

“Yes.”

I hadn’t heard about any people indigenous to this area. Well, we were so far

inside the forest, I guessed it wasn't too strange for there to be a settlement that we didn't know of. However, the man had apparently been by himself. "Does he live in the forest alone? I'm surprised he can survive like that."

"He didn't look dangerous, but there was something a little strange..." she trailed off, hesitating.

"In what way?"

"He said he was a god."

Not just "a little"—that was *totally* strange. With my interest now piqued, I decided to take Michelle and go see that old man for myself.

The Adventurer Meryl's Diary: Entry 2

A peddler arrived from Bethel. His name is Mister Joshua, and he's thirty-six years old. He said he has a wife and two kids. I've been bored, so I got all nosy and asked him stuff. He was the first peddler to arrive in Luganda, so most of the residents were purchasing all sorts of things. Even if you can earn money in the dungeon, the only thing you can use it on is the dagashi-ya. I think everyone was dying to go shopping. His merchandise sold like hotcakes, so Mister Joshua promised he'd come again. And that wasn't all. He said he'd hear out everyone's requests and buy stuff for us.

Mira requested some woolen yarn. She apparently wants to knit a sweater for herself. The men were all clamoring for her to make them one too, but it was funny to see her completely refuse them. She's as popular as ever. Well, it does seem like she's still carrying the scars of her first love, though...

I also requested three pairs of socks from him. Adventurers walk pretty long distances for all sorts of reasons. Of course, battles also put a burden on your feet. That's why socks wear down so quick. I've been mending mine up until now, but they're reaching their limit. I'm sure everyone else is in the same boat—needles and thread sold well today.

Oh right, thanks to Mister Joshua, I could buy more thread, so I patched up Rigal's shirt. As the leader, I can't allow my members to look unsightly. Rigal has been cheeky as of late, but he was grateful for once. His face was red when he said thanks too, which was cute.

Don't tell me he's fallen for such a wonderful young woman as me? I guess there's no way (LOL).

Old Man Sanaga apparently confessed to Miss Mirai! Man, it just kinda feels like "Finally!" Those two have been getting along well for so long now. To think that spring would come early, even in fall...

I heard from Miss Mirai that the way he confessed was to ask, "You wanna live together?" What the hell?! That's so blunt! No, it was very like Mister Sanaga, so it was refreshing, if anything. When Miss Mirai asked why, he said it was because she's a good woman. Then he went, "Humph!" and rubbed his nose with his fist. So Old Man Sanaga of all people said things like that, huh? People really are a mystery.

I wonder if someone will ever confess to me too? Then would we date, settle down here, and live together? I don't even have a foundation for my house yet, though. Mister Yusuke's fortune-telling has been scarily on the mark, so I actually want him to tell me about my future boyfriend, but he always dodges the subject. He says to save it as something to look forward to in the future. I at least want to know what he looks like and his personality...

Chapter 3: Mani

We followed the path Miss Mirai had told us about, and soon the hollow that she'd spoken of appeared. There weren't many trees around here, so the afternoon sunlight shone brightly on our surroundings. Flowers of various colors bloomed all over the grassy fields, making for a scene out of a fairy tale.

"What a beautiful place. I had no idea somewhere like this existed," Michelle marveled, ecstatically sniffing the flowers. Seeing her like this, it struck me that she'd changed a little. Before, her vibes had seemed to perfectly suit the nighttime, but right now, she didn't look out of place at all under the sunlight. This Michelle, who affectionately caressed the flowers in the bright afternoon light, was lovely.

"Ah! Wolfsbane! And there're Tsukumo Vines over here as well. Oh no, oh my gosh, there're Methane Speedwells too! You can make an amazing numbing drug with these. I want to try having you drink it—"

"Hey!"

"Don't worry. It'll just make you unable to move."

"Wh-What are you going to do when I can't move?"

"I'll have you all to myself. ≡ While you're numb, I'll have you be my one and only Yusuke."

Michelle was the same as ever after all; I couldn't help but sigh. Though I was leaving the business affairs to Mister Nakaram, as the feudal lord, I still had to tend to all sorts of miscellaneous things. I was too absorbed in my duties, and spending less and less time with Michelle, so I might have been making her lonely. That was probably why she fantasized about having me all to herself.

"I'll be with you all day today, so please don't poison me."

"Whaaat? I just wanted to try it out a little."

So, far from making a joke, she'd actually been pretty serious when she'd said

that. “Then...you can make me immobile for just ten minutes.”

“Really?! You’ll seriously let me?! I’m so happy...” She merrily began picking the poisonous plants. If I flatly refused, she wouldn’t poison me by force. She at least had enough common sense to not do that. However, she’d probably build up stress if she had to hold back. I felt that it was for our own good that I just decide on a time to satisfy her. *Am I too naive?*

“What are you going to do with me once I can’t move?”

“Whaaat? That’s a secret. It’s embarrassing.”

Jeez...

“Oh, isn’t that the shrine over there?”

Among the shrubs beyond the grassy field, I could see a small building in the shadows.

“Let’s have a look,” said Michelle. Setting aside the numbing drug for the time being, we headed for the shrine.

It was a small, stone shrine a little smaller than a storage shed. There was a stone staircase in front, and an old man was sitting atop it, alone. *That’s the person that Miss Mirai was talking about.*

All in all, he was an old man with a unique atmosphere about him. Though we were in the forest, his white kimono didn’t have a single stain on it. His hair was pure white and mostly gone in the front, but both sides of his head and the back had hair that flowed down to his chest. What was strange was the antenna-like hair ornament on top of his head... *That is a hair ornament, right?* This was just kind of a hunch, but I had the feeling that it was growing directly from his scalp... His curiously designed monocle and his mechanical cane also caught my eye.

“Hello.”

When I called out to him, the old man squinted at us as if it were too bright. “Yes, yes, hello. Welcome.”

It seemed that this was his home, judging by his manner of addressing us, but

—this was strange. The door to the small shrine was open, but I didn't see any furnishings inside whatsoever. It was just a big empty space. Did he live somewhere else?

"I'm Yahagi, the new feudal lord of Luganda. Are you from around here?"

"Hmm...possibly," he murmured, pondering the question with a troubled expression. Had he forgotten where he lived? That was common when it came to old people with dementia. Or had he been abandoned here by someone? There was one Japanese folktale called "Ubasute Mountain." It was a story about people abandoning the elderly on a mountain when they weren't useful anymore. *That'd be way too sad if that was what happened here...*

"Is your house around here?"

"Hmm..." The old man's reply didn't give me a clear answer. If he happened to be someone from Bethel, it would be difficult for him to go back by himself. In that case, we would probably have to take him there in a wagon. However, if he couldn't even remember the town he lived in, then that was a bit of a problem. *Does he at least remember his own name?* If he knew that, I could inquire about him with the feudal lord of Bethel, Mister Laimas.

"What's your name?"

"I'm the machine god, Mani," he replied.

This was what Miss Mirai was talking about! This old man was a self-proclaimed god. However, in a world like this, you couldn't dismiss such a claim as nothing more than nonsense. I had personally died once and seen the afterlife. Back then, I had certainly felt something close to the presence of a god.

"Err, what are you doing here?"

"I was gazing at the flowers. Are they not pretty?" he smiled, pointing at the flowers in the grassy field. With how he was acting, I couldn't puzzle out at all if he was simply a good-natured old man, a god, or a senior citizen with dementia.

"What should we do, Yusuke?" Michelle asked me.

"We can't leave him here..."

Michelle and I discussed what to do, and decided to take him back to town.

“Why don’t you come to my house, Mister Mani?” I offered.

“Hmm? To your house, Yahagi?”

It seemed he remembered my name at least. “That’s right. We have food and a bed as well.”

“Food... I haven’t eaten in a long time.” He was so skinny that his arms were as thin as withered branches.

“That’s no good. How long has it been since you last ate?”

“Hmm... I’ve forgotten.” Whether god or human, it seemed he was extremely forgetful.

“Then I’ll make you some tasty yakisoba. Let’s go.” When I reached out to him, he took my hand and smiled again.

“Oh my... You’ve been given the god of commerce Elmera’s divine protection. He is my older brother. We get along well. If you’re his favorite, then you’re also like my nephew. I must protect you.”

That was how I came to take the self-proclaimed machine god under my care. Well, on his end, it seemed *he* intended to protect *me*.

It was already early evening when we brought Mister Mani back to town with us. The sun was sinking in the westward sky as the adventurers, who’d finished their work for the day, headed home one after another. It was just around the time Team Harukaze were climbing the stairs. Meryl spotted me and limped over. “Mister Yusuke...Ramune, please...” she wheezed.

“What’s wrong, Meryl?” I asked. “You sound out of breath.”

“I ran too much... My throat is dry...”

Apparently, the group had encountered a sheep with golden wool down on B3.

“That was the legendary Golden Sheep!” she exclaimed. Revitalized after downing two bottles of Ramune, she passionately gave me all the details.

“Golden Sheep aren’t just any regular ol’ monsters. They’re legendary monsters that are well-known for dropping Golden Fleece!”

“Wait, is it made of pure gold?”

“No, but a lot of rich people want it. According to the rumors, you’re protected from ever losing any of your fortune just by donning a cloak made from it.”

I see, I thought to myself, so it’s an item that’s particularly attractive to rich people. The more money you had, the more you probably wanted that fleece. “But conversely, it seems like something that wouldn’t do anything noteworthy for the poor,” I pointed out.

“That’s true, but you can trade it in for at least 3,000,000 rims at the Royal Capital! I’m definitely gonna snag some and earn a fortune!” Golden Sheep moved fast, and no matter how hard Meryl had tried to chase after it, it’d still gotten away. Other teams had apparently tried as well, but there hadn’t been anyone who could chase down a high-speed sheep in the dungeon.

“Man, I can’t stop my excitement,” Meryl said. “I’m gonna do a Mobile Forces match with someone. Anyone wanna go up against me?”

She sure was lively. She took out her Red Shoulder Mobile Force unit and started doing warm-ups in the arena. Then, someone suddenly picked up her Zako. “Ho ho ho! How fascinating this is!”

To my surprise, it was Mister Mani, who’d been quiet until now.

“Give me back my Zako, old man,” she said. “You snapped our link.”

“My apologies. I was simply too excited.” He continued to inspect her Zako. “Hmm. This unit seems easy to handle. Its low mana consumption is also one of its attractions.”

Meryl’s eyes lit up. “Right? Although its output being low compared to the other Mobile Forces is a downside.”

Mister Mani pondered to himself with a hand on his chin. “Hmm... That is a little unfair. Let’s see—I shall remodel it.”

“Huh?”

Mister Mani ignored her reply and raised Zako until it was level with his head. Then, the space between his brows shone, and a thin string of light connected him with Zako. “I’ve finished. Try moving it.”

It had only taken him a few seconds to remodel it, but Zako’s appearance had drastically changed! All of its armor had been completely transformed, becoming even sturdier. It somehow looked way stronger now. Meryl immediately tried moving it, and its mobility also appeared to have improved.

“Amazing! Its output is *much* better! It’s not as good at turning sharp corners now because of that, but I can totally manage it! Thank you, old man!”

“Do you like it?” he asked. “It’s also possible to have it hover run for a short period of time. I shall call it ‘Renewed Zako II.’” If he could do this much, then I supposed Mister Mani really was a god. “Yahagi, starting tomorrow, you’ll be selling the Renewed Zako II instead of Zako. I’ve received my brother Elmera’s permission as well.”

“I don’t particularly mind but...it’s amazing that you remodeled it,” I remarked.

“Remodeled?” he asked, making a face like he didn’t understand.



“You remodeled Meryl’s Zako just a second ago, right?”

“Me? I did that...?”

Hmm... He definitely was a god, but his dementia seemed to be at a significantly advanced stage. It was enough to make me a little worried.

“Oh, that girl’s moving something that looks rather fun!” he exclaimed, getting excited about the Renewed Zako II he had remodeled himself just moments ago. It seemed that he really didn’t remember.

“Hey, gramps, give my Gugurecas a remodel too!” Garmr said, but Mister Mani just tilted his head.

“Remodel?” he asked innocently. “What might you mean by that?” He wasn’t just playing dumb—it appeared he had seriously forgotten.

After that, he stuffed his cheeks full of the yakisoba I made for him and raved about how delicious it was, happily watched the Mobile Forces matches, and fell asleep before I knew it.

“Marco, Rigal,” I said, “I’m gonna carry Mister Mani, so lend me a hand.” I brought out my live-in store and laid out a futon in the back tatami room. Even if Mister Mani was a god, I couldn’t bear to leave an old person outside. *I should probably have him live here for a while.*

“It’s too early to give them the convertible Gungalf...” he mumbled, smacking his lips.

“What does he mean by convertible?” asked the Gungalf-user Rigal, reacting to the old man’s sleeptalk.

“Who knows...” I shrugged. I couldn’t understand what a god was thinking.

“Maybe it’s a new Gungalf model?”

“I wonder. Even if he was just talking in his sleep, he did say it’s too early to give it to anyone, so I don’t think you should get your hopes up too high.”

“Aw, man...” he said dejectedly. “It’s no fair that Miss Meryl is the only one who gets an upgrade.”

“Don’t say that. Even from my perspective, Zako was the most lacking in

power out of the bunch.” Because of that, I had plenty of them left in stock. Would I really get the Renewed Zako II tomorrow? If I did, I’d have to remember to send them Baron Ethel’s way. He’d certainly be thrilled by a new model.

“Zzz...”

Completely ignoring all of our comments, the machine god Mani continued soundly snoozing away.

When I paid a visit to my live-in store early the next morning, Mister Mani was absentmindedly sitting in the tatami room. “Good morning. Did you sleep well?”

“Hmm? Who on earth are you?” he asked.

It’s too early for this. “I’m Yahagi,” I told him. “I’m not really aware of it myself, but I’ve apparently been given the god of commerce’s divine protection.”

“What?! You’re my brother?! Oh, Elmera, my brother—you look so young again!”

“That’s not what I meant...”

Mister Mani was looking at me with wide eyes. “Oh my... You’ve been given the god of commerce Elmera’s divine protection. He is my older brother. We get along well. If you’re his favorite, then you’re also like my nephew. I must protect you.”

He was saying the same thing as yesterday. We might have a repeat of this again tomorrow morning, considering his state. I didn’t know if gods needed to eat, but maybe I should let him have breakfast? “Hey, Mister Mani, are you hungry?”

“No, I’m not. For some reason, I’m full. Did I eat something?” So, he’d also forgotten that he’d eaten the yakisoba. Well, I’d let him be if he didn’t wanna eat. A god would probably be fine skipping breakfast.

“All right, then, I’m gonna head to work,” I said. “Please make yourself at home.”

“Work?”

“I’m gonna open up a street stall in front of the dungeon.”

“Oh, I see. Then I shall accompany you,” he said, standing up so smoothly I couldn’t reconcile it with his elderly appearance.

My morning sales had concluded and all of the adventurers had gone down to the dungeon. However, there were several children still gathered outside of my store. The kids who usually tagged along to work with Mister Nakaram had been given the day off.

“Hey, I’m gonna close up shop soon,” I called out to them.

“Whaaat? You can wait a little longer, right? Please, Mister Yahagi!”

“What am I gonna do with you guys?” This world treated twelve-and thirteen-year-olds the same as adults. In Luganda, they wouldn’t be forced to do heavy labor or the like, but they were also working as hard as they could to earn their daily bread. Even so, they were probably still in the period of their lives when they most wanted to play around. I felt that for one day at least, I should let them have as much fun as they pleased. “Fine, only for today.”

“Hell yeah!!! Hey, let’s have a Mobile Forces match. Whoever loses treats us to some Ten-Rim Gum!”

“Bring it on!”

A match with a wager was some good entertainment. The adventurers also often engaged in this sort of exchange. Mister Mani’s eyes crinkled in enjoyment of the Mobile Forces match that soon commenced. It seemed he loved challenges with stakes involved. “Well now, perhaps I shall take a gander.”

He smiled as he watched over the match, making various adjustments to any Mobile Forces that weren’t doing well.

“Amazing! Its movements are smoother now! Thanks, gramps!”

“Look at my Gufufu too!”

He was totally popular. Before long, one of the children took out a snack. “I’ll give you one of these as thanks, gramps.”

Wait, hold up!

Product name: Sonomama Grape - One Super Sour Ball in Every Three!

Description: There’s one sour-grape-flavored gumball in every three.

Your senses sharpen when you eat the sour gumball.

Let’s share them with friends and have fun!

Price: Thirty rims

That sourness was no joke. “Be careful!” I cried. “That—”

I was too late. After putting the gum in his mouth, Mister Mani crouched on the ground, writhing in agony. Bafflingly, he had managed to get the one sour ball.

“Are you okay?” I asked. Was that sourness too overwhelming for an old person, even one who happened to be a god? I was looking him over in concern, but he roared with laughter.

“Ho ho ho! How fascinating! It truly is quite fun! This is the first time I’ve laughed aloud in a while,” he chortled. Seeing Mister Mani laughing with the kids, I was filled with relief. “My, this may be the first time in a hundred years I’ve laughed so much. I’ve thought of a good idea. Hup!” He gave a hearty shout, and his hand shone with a dazzling light. Then, a palm-size toy appeared from it. *What is that?!*

“I’ll give this to you kids,” he said, presenting it to them. By all appearances, what he had brought out was a model of a motorcar. *Don’t tell me...*

“What is this, gramps?”

“It’s something I made myself—the Mani 4WD!”

“Hey!” I butted in without thinking about it. I mean, no matter how you looked at it, that was a Mini—

“I made it myself as a hobby,” he told me. “Do you have any objections?”

“No, it’s not that...” I said, trailing off. This wasn’t Japan—it was another world. Even if it greatly resembled the product I was thinking of, I shouldn’t say too much.

“Ho ho ho! All right, kids. Play with it by moving it around.” With a wave of his sleeve, a racecourse appeared from the ground. As expected of a god. *Yeah, when I was a kid, my classmates who owned Mini 4WD courses were treated like divine beings!*

The children were ready to happily play with their car, but they tilted their heads. “Um, how do we play with this?”

“You make it race around and compete with each other to see who is fastest, of course,” Mani told them.

“But it won’t move.”

“What?” He accepted the unit the children gave to him and turned it over. “Oh?! This is where the energy pack should be, but there’s nothing here...”

“Then put in that energy pack thingy,” one of the children said.

“Hmm... Yes, but...” Mister Mani crossed his arms and appeared to be thinking to himself.

“What’s the matter?”

“I’ve forgotten how to make it,” he replied. *Oh dear.* “Hmm... What shall I do?”

Michelle came to the disheartened children’s rescue. “My research may come in handy here.”

“Your research?” I asked.

“You don’t remember? I’m researching an orb that can store mana,” she reminded me. *Oh, right! Michelle may be able to make an energy pack.*

“Hurry up and make it for us, miss!”

“Yeah! Hurry, hurry!”

“I suppose I must. I have some prototype models, so I’ll adjust the output of one to match the Mani 4WD.” When she put in the small orb she had been holding, the Mani 4WD sprang to life.

Starting the next day, the new Zakos and Mani 4WDs lined the shelves of Dagashi-ya Yahagi.

Product name: Mani 4WD

Description: A toy motorcar that you race by using mana.

Price: One thousand two hundred rims

Like the Mobile Forces, these also had to be assembled, but the construction was a little more complex. You didn’t need glue or anything, but there were still a lot of steps, like installing the shafts and greasing them down. It took nearly an hour to assemble these, yet adults and children alike were absorbed in making them.

“Hey, everyone. Don’t you all have work to do?” I asked.

“We decided to take the day off today, so it’s fine. Never mind that, Mister Yahagi. Show us how to assemble this part here.” Apparently Garmr and his team had decided to temporarily stop working. Luganda was a place with few recreational activities, which explained why they would devote so much time to this. The price was by no means cheap, yet huge crowds of people were throwing all the money they had at me to buy one.

“Go, my Avantila!” Meryl, who had finished assembling hers first, sent her Mani 4WD racing. It was moving pretty well. However...

“Wahhh!!! It went off course?!” she cried. It had too much force, so it couldn’t make the curve. “Oh, why?”

“If the energy pack is at full charge, then the force the car exhibits can be too strong. You should try having it spin its wheels in the air for a while before

giving it another go,” I told her. *I did the same thing as a kid...*

The energy pack was the magic orb that Michelle had created and it was more or less taking on the role of a battery. It was easy to use—you could just fill it with your mana using two of your fingers. It wouldn’t take even thirty seconds to fully charge. Because the structure of Mani 4WDs was simpler than that of the Mobile Forces, you’d need less mana accordingly. The young rookies repeatedly recharged them with mana and raced them around.

“It’s crazy that you made fifty energy packs in one night, Michelle,” I told her.

“Heh heh heh. It *was* for you, Yusuke,” she giggled. “If everyone buys the Mani 4WDs, then all of that money will go into our wedding fund, right?”

“But wasn’t that difficult? I’m worried that you might become sleep-deprived.”

“I’m all right. Besides, it’s relatively simple to make energy packs. All I have to do is knead the fine magic crystal powder using a specific fixing method. Mani 4WDs only need a small bit of power as well, so they’re also easy to stabilize.”

“As expected of the renowned, talented lady, Michelle,” I smiled. She was too good for me.

“This is nothing, really. (*Oh no, oh no. ≡ Saying I’m a witch gifted with both beauty and intelligence... He’s praising me too much! Ahh, I have to work even harder and make seventy tomorrow. Oh, but he may be a little assertive tonight... Yeah, he’s looking at me a little more passionately than usual. I’m sure that’s it. There’s no time to sleep. I need to get down to business and start manufacturing them now!*)”

For some reason, Michelle planted her butt on the ground right then and there and began making the energy packs. Mister Mani watched over her intently. “Hmm. Your energy packs are well-made. What’s the greatest amount of mana one can output?”

“At the moment, 248 migamatts,” she replied. “I’d like to raise it to 746 migas by the end of this year, though.”

Mister Mani scratched his head as if he were thinking. “Then would 1.21 jigomatts be impossible?”

“1.21 jigomatts?!” she exclaimed, shocked. “Of course such a high volume would be impossible! That’s the mana equivalent of 120 shots of Maximum Magic!”

“I see. What a shame...” Dejected, he dropped his shoulders.

“Why is it such a shame?”

“With your energy pack, I thought that perhaps I could make *that thing* move once again. I’ve forgotten how to make energy packs myself...”

“What do you mean by ‘that thing’?”

“It’s a mechanical creature I created around one thousand years ago. Hmm, I shall show you.” When Mister Mani lightly tapped the ground with his right foot, a fissure ran along the earth.

“Whoa! What is this?!”

“Be careful, everyone!”

The chaos in front of the dungeon peaked, triggered by the sudden rumbling of the earth. However, the moment everyone saw what came out of the ground, they all went speechless for a moment. That was understandable. After all, what had appeared before them was a massive, mechanical being.

“I-It’s a dragon!!!”

“Run awaaay!!!”

I, and many other people, had lost the strength to stand and sat frozen in fear on the ground, unable to believe our eyes. *I mean, I knew something that looked a lot like this.* Well, in my previous life, it had been at a 1/72nd scale, plus it’d been a toy... “What is that, Mister Mani?”

“It’s my masterpiece,” he replied, “a mechanical creature called a Zolid.”

“Hey!” I shouted, way too casually considering that I was talking to a god. I mean, could you blame me? Even then, Mister Mani was smiling like he wasn’t worried at all.

“Its overall length is 23 meters, and it’s 13.7 meters tall,” he told us. “I believe this Genos Breaker could be useful for your pioneering if it could move. It also

has convergent, charged-particle guns.”

No, this thing doesn't need a weapon! However, Michelle reacted first. “So can we borrow it if we can make it work?”

“I won't say something as cheap as ‘borrow,’” he said. “I shall *give* it to you. Ho ho ho!”

Michelle nodded to me. “I'm going to do it, Yusuke. I'm going to increase my energy pack's output!”

“But...” Sure, if we had something like that, our development of this remote region would advance by leaps and bounds. We'd be able to level the ground and cut down trees as much as we wanted, no question. “How are you going to increase it? Mister Mani might know something if you ask him, but...” I trailed off. We looked at Mister Mani. He responded by pointing a finger at the Zolid with surprise.

“What in heaven's name is that huge thing?!” he cried.

That's something you made! Hmm...his ability to recognize things was the same as ever. Wasn't there a way to bring back his memories? We both sighed as we considered the problem.

The mechanical creature known as a Zolid didn't move a muscle, standing next to the dungeon like an art installation. It looked exactly like an impressive iron dragon. Its deep crimson body was sturdy, and with its well-honed claws and fangs, it was equipped with several sharp blades whose purpose was unclear. You wouldn't think it, looking at its inorganic body, but apparently, this Genos Breaker, as this particular Zolid was called, was alive.

“This is a living being, so if we leave it like this, it'll die. That's why it's currently frozen,” explained Mister Mani, who'd returned to his senses.

“So do we have to thaw it before we put in the energy pack?”

“Precisely. If we don't restart the circulation of mana inside its body within thirty minutes after thawing it, its metal cells will sustain grave damage. Additionally, once it's been thawed, it's impossible to freeze it again.”

In other words, failure wasn't an option. "So, about how to increase the capacity of the energy packs..."

"Energy packs? Are those tasty?" he questioned. *He forgot just like that?!* Just when I'd thought his memory had come back a little, it immediately went again. Trying to get some proper information out of him was like pulling teeth.

The residents who had initially been afraid of the Genos Breaker heard that it couldn't move and approached it. Meryl, brimming with curiosity, stood at the front of the group and gazed up. "Man, so it's a mechanical dragon. And it might move, huh?"

Mira was also inspecting the details of the Genos Breaker. "The claws are so big. They look like they could easily dig up large tree stumps."

"It'd probably make the construction of roads and levees easier too," I sighed. "I also want to get it moving, but..." The problem here was Mister Mani's condition. Just when it seemed his memories had returned, he'd forget again three minutes later; rinse and repeat. "At this rate, we'll never be able to make those high-capacity energy packs."

"Hmm... In short, we just need the old man to recover his memories, right?" Meryl grinned with a spark of mischief in her eye.

"Did you think of an idea?" I asked.

"I heard he came back to his senses when the kids gave him the Sonomama Grape. So maybe he needs a big shock to his system?"

"Should I give him Dodon Pachin or something?" He might be able to remember something if he had some popping candy in his mouth. However, she clicked her tongue while wagging her finger.

"That's too weak to do anything," she said. "Yep, we're gonna need to have him scarf down a bunch of Hyper Lemons."

"That's..."

Product name: Hyper Lemon

Description: An absurdly sour candy.

Because of its incredible sourness, you forget one unpleasant memory upon consumption.

Price: Ten rims

This was the most ideal candy to change your mood, but it was doubtful that this could bring back his memories. Adventurers in Luganda passed time among themselves by stuffing their faces full of Hyper Lemons, but I couldn't imagine Mister Mani playing along.

"So what should we do?" Michelle asked.

"Let's see..." I mumbled.

Mira suddenly raised her hand. "How about you have him eat a Young Donut?"

"Your strategy to recover his memories is to make him younger, huh?" I mused. "But there may not be much of a difference since it would make him only five years younger."

Your body became five years younger when you ate a Young Donut. Each pack had four inside, so if you ate them all, you'd wind up twenty years younger. It was a product with limited stock, but there was one bag left. However, I also felt that making a god—who'd lived for an eternity—twenty years younger wouldn't have any effect.

"Let's give it a try," said Michelle.

"I'm fine with it, but will Mister Mani eat it?" I asked with uncertainty. Mister Mani had an unusual lack of appetite. He was a god, so there was probably no problem with him forgoing food, but he hadn't had a proper meal since the yakisoba from the other day. Nevertheless, with a completely composed face, he had told me that he didn't want dinner.

"Leave it to me. I know just the thing to do," Chichi said, appearing on the scene uninvited. With a bewitching smile, she took a seat next to Mister Mani. "Hey, Mister Mani. I have a delicious snack. Won't you have a bite?"

However, Mister Mani abruptly turned away. "I don't need it. It looks

crumbly...”

“How about one bite, though? It’s very delicious. Here, say ‘aah,’” Chichi cooed, trying to wheedle him, but Mister Mani once again turned away.

“Oh, you’re just a stubborn old grandpa, aren’t you?!” she cried.

Mira received the Young Donuts from the huffy Chichi. “Mister Mani. It’s okay if you don’t like it, but Mister Yusuke’s snacks really are tasty. How about it?”

Mister Mani looked between Mira and the Young Donuts many times before he opened his mouth wide.

“Here you go.” She split the Young Donut in half and tossed it into his mouth. She looked like a mother bird.

After he chewed, he affirmed, “Yes, it is delicious.”

“Right?”

“What the hell! He’s completely changed his tune!” Chichi shouted angrily, but Mira and Mister Mani just continued their pleasant conversation.

“Would you like some more?”

“Yes.”

“Eat the next one by yourself, okay?”

“All right.” In the end, Mister Mani ate the entire pack of Young Donuts. *That should have rejuvenated him by twenty years—now what’s going to happen?*

He’d eaten all of the Young Donuts, but on the surface, nothing appeared to have changed. His wrinkles and his white hair remained the same, and his body was as stick thin as always.

“No good after all,” I groaned.

“If he’s been alive since the beginning of the world, then twenty years is probably almost nothing to him,” Michelle said. “It’s like us becoming younger by just five hours. No, it may even be less than that.”

The two of us sighed. Mister Mani smiled at us, offering comfort as we slumped our shoulders. “What’s the matter? You look so sad.”

“It’s nothing. We were just kinda mistaken about something.”

“Oh, I see. Well, it’s important to not give up.”

“Yeah. After all, we might be able to raise the capacity of the energy packs one day.”

Mister Mani gave us a grin. “What? You want to raise the capacity of the energy packs?”

“Huh? Can it be done?” I asked.

“How much do you want to raise it to?”

“T-To 1.21 jigomatts.”

“That will be difficult.”

“Is it impossible then?”

“No, you can just use this.” He stamped the ground with his right foot, and a metal box appeared from the earth. It was as big as an industry-grade refrigerator. “Here ya go, an energy conversion device. With this, you can convert the energy from lightning into mana.”

“Amazing...” Michelle murmured in admiration, examining the energy conversion device.

“But there is a problem,” he said, the creases between his brows deepening.

“What kind of problem?” I asked.

“You have to install an energy pack inside the Zolid in order to use it.”

In order to install it in the Zolid, we had to thaw it. However, once it had thawed, we needed to restart the circulation of mana in its body within thirty minutes. If we didn’t, its metal cells would sustain serious damage.

“In other words, we have a time limit of only thirty minutes?”

“Precisely.”

Hearing this conversation from off to the side, Chichi started making a fuss. “That’s impossible! We don’t know where lightning will strike!”

Installing a metal rod at the top of a tall tree or something might increase the

probability, but we couldn't predict the right time. If we failed after thawing him, the Zolid might die. We couldn't just take our chances.

"Let's adjourn for the day. I'll think of a way to revive the Zolid," I said. I exchanged glances with Michelle, and we began closing up shop. It seemed Michelle had guessed what I was thinking, so she had a complicated expression on her face.

I might know when and where lightning would strike. I had my Clairvoyance—the magic that had blossomed inside of me thanks to my Mobile Forces training. Michelle and I were currently the only ones who knew of my ability. I was hiding it so I wouldn't be forced by the government or anyone else to use it, but it seemed it was finally time for it to shine.

It was just that, although I'd seen into the past and present, I had never seen the future before. That was because I needed an immense amount of mana to do so, and it was likely to put a heavy burden on my body. I had leveled up considerably as a dagashi-ya and my total mana had also increased. However, I'd discover that in order to see into the future, I still didn't have nearly enough.

Relaxing in the living room after dinner, Michelle and I discussed the possibility of using my Clairvoyance. She was normally clingy, but today, we were sitting a bit apart.

"I really am worried," she said. "Your health always deteriorates after using it."

"Yeah, but there's no other way, is there?"

"But you're going to be seeing into the future this time," she protested. "No other burden you've shouldered up to this point can compare to the toll this will have on your mind and body. I simply cannot believe that you'll be able to handle it."

Yeah, you could say that... In my current state, I'd have to borrow the power of a snack, Stick Chocolate, to increase the strength of my mana, and only *then* use Clairvoyance.

"But if I level up even more, then I should be able to use it safely, right?"

“It is possible if you raise your total mana, but...”

“Then I’ll first put my full focus on working hard to level up. There’s no reason to rush to revive the Zolid.” We could just take our time with Luganda’s development. At the end of the day, if we could make it even a little easier to live here, then that was fine. I saw no need to push ourselves.

“But you’ve been leveling up more slowly recently, right?”

“Yeah.” It seemed to be related to my proceeds. Since leaving the Royal Capital, the money I earned from my dagashi-ya had drastically decreased. That was probably why the rate at which I was leveling up had been slower. “Maybe we’d better open up a branch in Bethel.”

“That may be a good idea!” she said, her face lighting up. I’d just suggested it casually, but she approved more enthusiastically than I’d expected. Bethel had a lot of kids too, so they might be happy if we opened up a branch there. I decided I’d discuss it with Mister Laimas soon.

Maybe Michelle had relaxed once she understood I wouldn’t do anything reckless, but she drew closer to me then, sidling up and snuggling against me like always. Right now, she was playing with my hair, twisting it around her finger. “Oh yeah, those Young Donuts were wasted,” she murmured.

The ones we had Mister Mani eat, huh? “It’s fine. They were close to their expiration date anyway.”

“In that case, I wanted you to eat them.”

“Why?”

“So I could fool around with a Yusuke who’s younger than me. I thought that might be a refreshing change of pace,” she replied. She seemed to have thought up something weird again. “But you know, I think I do like it better when my boyfriend is older. Hey, Yusuke.”

“What is it?”

“Don’t you have Old Donuts?”

If she meant old-fashioned donuts, then I knew of those, but there were no snacks in my lineup that would make you older. “Did you wanna make me an

old man?”

“No, but I thought a handsome, gray-haired version of you might be wonderful too. I kind of wanted to see it.” She was shyly averting her gaze. She’d be able to see me in my middle age in the not-so-distant future, yet it seemed she was impatient.

Although I guess I can never show anyone what I was like as a teenager, I thought to myself. I’d left behind all my pictures from when I was younger back in the other world. “I might get that kind of snack if I level up. Like, a snack that makes you younger for just ten minutes or one that makes you older.”

“Really?!”

“Well, I’m just thinking if they *did* happen to app—” I started, but Michelle cut me off.

“That’s great!” she exclaimed. “Whether it’s your current self, your boyhood self, or your middle-aged self, I want to love every version of you to my heart’s content!”

“I’m telling you, it’s a what-if.”

“Let’s go to Bethel tomorrow, Yusuke,” she said hurriedly. “We need to move forward with the plan to open a new branch as soon as possible!!!”

Jeez, I didn’t know what to do about her wild fantasies. Still, a Michelle in her late teens, and a Michelle in her thirties... I kinda wanted to see both. I had no idea whether a snack like that would pop up at my shop, though.

The Adventurer Meryl's Diary: Entry 3

Mister Yusuke brought in a weird old man. He says that he's a god, so I thought that he was a total wacko, but it turns out he really is a god!

You think I'm just dreaming? There's no way. After all, Mister Mani gave my Red Shoulder a huge upgrade before my very eyes! Thanks to him, my Zako evolved into the Renewed Zako II. Its appearance is way cooler now! I'm just so happy, I don't know what to do with myself! I tried moving it right away, and I was impressed once again. Its frame has gotten pretty solid, but its movements are still fast. Why is that?

"I changed the material of its armor. It's using a lighter material than the old Zako."

"I see! So that's why even though its output has increased, it's still the same weight!"

It has the power to challenge Mira's Dome and Garmr's Gugurecas! Even though it's only for a short time, it can even hover now! It's way too amazing! You need to put more mana into it to handle it now, but I still feel Zako's ease of use is exceptional. "Now I can aim for victory!"

"Ho ho ho. It seems that its output really stands no chance against other units."

"No way... Tell me you're lying, Mani!"

I dropped the god's honorific without thinking. Well, it isn't like Zako's lack of output is something new. Still, now that it has become the Renewed Zako II, it's starting to gain on the other units.

"Now it depends on you and how hard you work."

I already knew that without him telling me. With this, I can no longer use the excuse that my unit's abilities are the problem. I'll really polish up my skills and become Luganda's best Mobile Forces user! W-Well, I'd have to beat Miss Michelle in order to achieve that, but, you know—I have to set my goals high.

So, about Mister Mani—he made this crazy thing emerge from the ground. Apparently, it’s a mechanical creature called a Zolid. I thought it was a mechanical dragon, which...seems to actually be correct. That thing is called a Genos Breaker, and Mister Yusuke and Miss Michelle apparently intend to get it moving again. If we can get it to help us, Luganda’s development will probably go well.

When Mister Mani, who seems to have dementia, ate this one sour snack, his memories returned. Whether it be Sonomama Grape - One Super Sour Ball in Every Three, or Hyper Lemon, I feel like sour dagashi have been rising in popularity recently. But I’m not good with sour stuff. And yet, the other day, Garmr tricked me into eating some! I thought it was strange that he’d give me a snack!

He laughed at me for writhing in agony at just how sour it was. I’ll definitely get my revenge one day! But he’s an idiot, so he enjoys anything he eats. He even ate up every bite of the most spectacular of my failures—my Mizuame Yakisoba—saying it wasn’t that bad. Seriously, he has such terrible taste that I’m amazed.

Chapter 4: Let's Open a Branch Store

I headed to Bethel the next day due in part to Michelle's suggestion. If I could secure an agreement about a location, rent (or land rent), and taxes, then I intended to open a branch there. Increasing my earnings even by a little would likely increase my level as well.

In a stroke of good timing, the feudal lord, Mister Laimas, was at home, so I didn't have to wait to meet with him. I hadn't expected to arrive in Bethel and meet with him on the same day. I had even been thinking that, in the event that he was absent, I'd have to wait around for two or three days at a hotel. In this world, it was very common for people trying to meet up to miss each other since letters were the only means of communication.

Among my products was something called an Assembled Glider, but that was out of the question. Assembled Gliders used a propeller enchanted with Flight Magic to fly to whatever place and person you called to mind. It was an exceptional product that could work as a letter if you wrote a message on its wing. However, I was unilaterally prohibited by the government from selling this to the general public. The king had told me directly that I couldn't sell them to adventurers, and I could *never* sell them to foreign countries. Information could become an extraordinary weapon in both military affairs and diplomacy. Apparently, selling the Assembled Gliders would significantly benefit the enemy.

Having said that, it wasn't prohibited to *gift* it to a nearby feudal lord. As next-door neighbors, we'd probably be exchanging messages more frequently, so I figured I should leave several of them with Mister Laimas while I was at it.

Oh right, I need to send an Assembled Glider to Prime Minister Ethel too. It'd tell him about the Mani 4WDs. Knowing him, he'd send someone to get the product for him. His high-ranking position was probably filling him with stress, so I'd at least give him a toy to blow off some steam with.

"Welcome, Mister Yahagi. You've come a long way!" Mister Laimas exclaimed,

greeting me cordially in his living room. His wife and children were with him, making for a pretty warm welcome.

“Hello, Mister Yahagi,” said Hansel. “We’ve gotten even better at moving the Mobile Forces!”

“I can also make Kian dance now,” Gretel told me. The two siblings smiled radiantly at me.

“I’m glad to hear it,” I replied. “Michelle’s also good at making Mobile Force units dance. Will you show us your Mobile Forces dancing together next time?”

“Yes, gladly!”

“I brought souvenirs again today.” I first took out a Renewed Zako II.

“Whoa, it’s a new Mobile Force unit!” Hansel exclaimed, happily accepting the present.

“Let me see it too, brother!” Gretel cried, waving her hands in small, frustrated movements over how her brother had snatched up the Renewed Zako II.

“I still have some presents left, Miss Gretel,” I assured her, taking out my second gift. “See, it’s my new product—the Mani 4WD.”

“Wow!” she gasped. When I handed over the Mani 4WD to her, Mister Laimas and his wife drew closer.

“Mister Yahagi, what is this?” inquired Mister Laimas, brimming with curiosity as he examined what Gretel held. This couple loved toys, so I’d anticipated this reaction. I brought out three more varieties of Mani 4WD and a racecourse.

“You play with this product by running it along this racecourse. You can also customize it,” I explained and then proceeded to give the family the details of the Mani 4WDs. As they listened, they began assembling the toys one by one.

“I see. Depending on the kind of chassis it has, the form of customization also changes,” Mister Laimas noted.

“And depending on the type of racecourse, the motor you should choose also changes,” his wife chimed in.

“Should you prioritize power or reaching top speeds? That is the question...”

This couple... Aren't they catching on way too quickly? “I-It seems you are very knowledgeable about this,” I said. The couple were way too engrossed in the 4WDs, so they replied without raising their heads.

“The Laimas family has handled magical tools for generations. My wife Emma’s family has the same hobby.”

“I-I see...”

Finally, the four finished assembling their respective cars.

“Now then, let’s have a family race!” Mister Laimas declared.

They apparently weren’t gonna waste any time. They got right down to racing. *Oh well, I guess I’ll throw in a Starting Signal as a bonus too...*

One hour later...

“My, Mister Yahagi, I’ve had my fill of pleasure thanks to you. It’s truly a fun toy,” said Mister Laimas, holding his hand out to me, his face flushed with excitement.

“I’m glad you’re pleased with it,” I said, accepting his handshake. “I actually still have a lot of goods for customization, so I’ll bring them next time— Ow, ow, ow!”

His eyes had gone wide and his grip strength had kicked up by three notches.

Quickly returning to his senses, he grew flustered. “O-Oh, pardon my rudeness. I simply got so excited...” he apologized, although I didn’t mind it that much. He awkwardly changed the subject. “Incidentally, I suppose giving us presents isn’t the main reason you’re here?”

Whoops, I’d gotten so caught up in his family’s excitement that I’d forgotten the important purpose I’d come here for. “Actually, I was thinking of opening a branch of Dagashi-ya Yahagi in Bethel, so I wanted to seek your approval to—”

“Let’s do it!”

“Really?!”

“Will Mobile Forces and Mani 4WDs be sold at the branch?”

“Yes, I also plan to sell the customization parts and any useful tools.” I’d already requested that Mister Sanaga manufacture nippers for detaching the plastic model parts.

“By all means, please open one here! Leave the location to me.”

“Um, as for taxes and licenses and such—”

“You don’t need to pay any taxes! If you can pay just a small amount of rent, then that’ll be plenty!”

“Th-Thank you...” I stammered. This had gone better than I’d anticipated.

“Let’s have the store located next to our residence, dear,” Mistress Emma said to Mister Laimas. “That would be more convenient in a variety of ways.”

“You’re right,” he exclaimed, “and convenience *is* the most important consideration. We’ll have the warehouse at the corner renovated for his use. We can make our purchases there after just a two-minute walk!”

Hmm, I’ll just keep my mouth shut. I decided to simply accept Mister Laimas’s kindness.

A week after my visit to Mister Laimas, a glider arrived to inform us that they’d completed the preparations for the building. *As grateful as I am, isn’t this a little too quick?* I could sense Mister Laimas’s extraordinary enthusiasm. I needed to take along my branch manager candidate to Bethel soon. Before work that morning, I called out to the aforementioned candidate, Bat, where he was sitting by the roadside and gave him a heads-up. “Bat, I got a message from Bethel last night. We’ll finally be departing.”

Bat was one of the children who had been assisting Mister Nakaram. I called him a child, but he’d soon be sixteen and was already treated as an adult in this world. He was a lively boy with memorable characteristics, such as his eyes that were constantly gazing around and his freckles. His unkempt brown hair was tied back so that it wouldn’t get in the way.

“Finally!” He sprang up as if he’d been impatiently waiting for this moment.

When I'd begun recruiting candidates for branch manager, he'd been so full of energy that he'd been the first to raise his hand. For the past week, I had been having him help at my street stall, and he was such a fast learner that he'd immediately memorized all the prices and descriptions of the products. He didn't make any calculation errors either. Mister Nakaram had also given his stamp of approval, saying he was a good and honest boy. I had arrived at the conclusion that I'd be able to leave Dagashi-ya Yahagi's Bethel Shop in his hands.

"Don't worry. For now, I'll be going with you."

"Then there's nothing to fear." Bat smiled at me. I'd be staying in Bethel too until he got used to things. Afterward, I planned to commute between Bethel and Luganda once every three days to replenish his wares.

Dagashi-ya Yahagi's Bethel branch had been created by remodeling a tall warehouse that faced a main road. It was a sturdy building made of bricks, far more splendid than I'd imagined. Mister Laimas wore a triumphant look on his face as he showed us around, but I felt a little embarrassed the whole time. "How do you like it, Mister Yahagi? With this much space, you can display as many products as you wish."

"Thank you, but isn't it a little too big? To think you'd prepare such a splendid shop for us..." I murmured. *Not to mention the dirt-cheap rent.*

"Oh no, don't worry one bit. There are Mobile Forces arenas and Mani 4WD courses in the back. So that I—I mean, *everyone* can play whenever they wish."

"That's really nice..." We took a peek inside, and I saw that over half of the floor space was taken up by arenas and racecourses. *Now I understand why it's so big.*

Once Mister Laimas had gone home, we immediately began preparing the store.

"Store, open—Dagashi-ya Yahagi!" I installed my booth-type shop at the front of the warehouse.

"Huh? Isn't there a smaller variety of products compared to the main store?"

Bat asked, tilting his head as he checked the shelves.

“There’re a lot of children here, right? I decided I wouldn’t sell any dangerous toys that are meant to be used against monsters.”

“I see. However, it’d be a good idea to offer snacks that raise your stamina or your agility.”

“You think?”

“They would be indispensable for people like farmers and travelers.”

“Oh, I didn’t think of that. Then we should place Kabayaki-san-suke in a prominent location.”

While we talked about this and that, Bat and I put our products on display.

“We open tomorrow, so we’re gonna wrap this up by evening,” I told him.

“Got it”—he nodded—“but are we gonna be okay? Won’t we get too many customers and find ourselves short of hands?”

“We haven’t advertised at all, so we won’t get that many customers. Why, the first time I opened my shop at the Royal Capital, Meryl was the only one who stopped by.”

“You’ve known her for that long?”

“Yeah. When I came here, Meryl was my first friend.” Thinking about it, Meryl buying that Ten-Rim Gum had been the start of everything. After that, Mira had come, and then Garmr... It felt like time had passed by in the blink of an eye. “It seems Mister Laimas is going to come celebrate the shop’s opening, but there probably won’t be many customers.”

“Then would fifty of these celebratory gifts be enough for our grand opening crowd?”

Product name: Choco Cake

Description: A simple-flavored sponge cake topped with plenty of chocolate.

You feel rich when eating it, and it livens up a party.

Price: Fifty rims (Two pieces)

Eating this would probably get our customers pumped up even if the shop was deserted. As long as they ate snacks and enjoyed playing with our toys, I'd be happy. That was the kind of place a dagashi-ya was. "Having thirty customers come in one day would be enough."

"Can you afford to pay me, Mister Yahagi?" Bat asked.

"Don't worry. I definitely will," I confidently assured him. The cost of my products was my own mana, so I'd never go into the red.

Bat and I had dinner early then retired to our respective rooms in preparation for tomorrow. Bat had a room on the second floor of the store, so he'd be living there from now on. As for me, I'd be sleeping on the sofa in the office tonight. I wouldn't have minded being in the same room as Bat, but Michelle had said some crazy things like, "I'll die if you suddenly awaken to your love for boys!" Hence, the current state of affairs. *Her worrywart tendencies are truly something.*

I lay down and read a book, and sleep beckoned me before I'd even reached the tenth page.

I awoke the next morning with a sense that things were astir. When I entered the store, Bat was already awake and peeking out a window. "Good morning, Bat. See something interesting?"

"What are you so calm for, Mister Yahagi? Please look!" Bat seemed extremely excited. He stepped aside so I could also peer out through the gap in the curtains.

"Gah! Seriously?" I cried. There was a line of people waiting impatiently for the store to open. "There're already twenty people out there." People were gathered in groups of various sizes, including those who'd brought their families along, couples, and people who'd come alone.

"I just overheard some of their conversations," Bat said. "They seem to have their eyes on the Mobile Forces and Mani 4WDs." Mister Laimas had probably

boasted about them. Otherwise, there was no way this many people would have gathered. “What should we do? Do we open up a little earlier than usual?”

“Yeah. I won’t be able to stomach my breakfast if I’m worried about what’s going on outside.”

Bat held up a small signboard that read “Dagashi-ya Yahagi’s Bethel Shop.”

“Time to put this out,” he said.

This was a happy miscalculation—it looked like we had a busy day ahead of us. After sending an Assembled Glider to Mister Nakaram to ask for some reinforcements, Bat and I opened the doors to the shop.

When Bat and I opened up, we were greeted by fifty people waiting in line.

“Good morning,” I called. “Please come in slowly.”

“No pushing! Please don’t push!” Raising our voices, Bat and I guided the customers inside.

“Today, each person can purchase one Mobile Forces unit and one Mani 4WD,” I announced. “We ask for your cooperation so that our products can reach everyone!”

“Gufufu, please!”

“I want Gugurecas!”

The Mobile Forces were a major hit since they were cheap. Every person who bought one assembled it right away and began playing in the area out back. After a while, richer people with their eyes on the Mani 4WDs started to appear.

“Ha ha ha! It looks like business is booming, Mister Yahagi,” Mister Laimas laughed in a jovial voice when he stopped by. He appeared to have brought the whole family with him.

“Oh, here you are, Mister Laimas,” I greeted him. “As you can see, this is all thanks to you.” I paused. “Right, I received a product that you requested from the blacksmith, Sanaga.”

“Oh!” He had requested specially manufactured nippers embellished with the Laimas family crest. It was a tool indispensable for making plastic models, and when it came to making Mani 4WDs, the difference between having this and not was like night and day.

“This is wonderful,” he marveled. “I shall try it out right away on the Mobile Forces and Mani 4WDs.” Mister Laimas bought new cars and several parts for customization. He wasn’t the only one. The customers waiting to be rung up had formed a queue. Amusements were few in this region, so I supposed it was only natural that they’d be interested in a new store with novel products.

It was more than Bat and I could have handled alone, but with the help of servants of the Laimas family, we managed to finish the morning sales.

In the afternoon, some assistants from Luganda also rushed over, so it became a little easier. After reviewing my profits, I found that they were miles ahead of what I earned in Luganda. Sure, it being the first day was probably a factor, but I expected I’d level up again if I could regularly sell this much.

Our main attractions were toys, but our snack sales had been decent too. Drinking Ramune facilitated the circulation of mana in your body, allowing you to move Mobile Forces units smoothly. Once that fact had become known, it had sold out in an instant. Even Mister Laimas had guzzled down three of them by himself.

I went around my shop, checking up on my customers. It was nice to watch them having fun. Then, I noticed Gretel. *Oh, she looks gloomy*, I thought. *Did her father scold her?* “What’s wrong, Miss Gretel? You look pretty sad.”

She gazed at me. “Ah, Mister Yahagi...”

When I asked her what was wrong, I found out that she was depressed about being unable to win the Mani 4WD races. “My father and my mother aside, I’m even losing to my brother...” she lamented.

It seemed it was the Laimas family’s principle to not cut any corners when it came to competition, so the lordly couple had used their customized cars to win an overwhelming victory over Miss Gretel. I didn’t intend to criticize the Laimas House or their traditions, but I couldn’t bear to see a girl look so sad.

“Mister Yahagi, isn’t there a way to make my car faster?” she asked.

“There is.”

“What should I do?!”

“There’s a method where you shave down the parts...”

“What is it?!” she cried, her eyes sparkling. *The color of her eyes... Specializing in magical tools throughout the ages is part of the Laimas family’s heritage, huh?* I felt an extraordinary passion from this eight-year-old.

“I can’t guarantee it’ll be effective, though...” I warned before I told Miss Gretel everything I knew.

I thought we’d have fewer customers on day two of the shop’s opening, but there were *more* than on the first day. Rumors invited more popularity, so the number of customers had increased. Thanks to that, I leveled up for the first time in a while, and a new product was added to my shelves.

Product name: Dark Thunder Chocolate

Description: Love is lightning grade! If you eat this, you’ll get the courage to confess your love.

Price: Thirty rims

So, dagashi like this exist too, huh? I guessed it’d be a hit with young people regardless of gender. I had Michelle, and there was nothing to confess this late into our relationship, but I still ate some to see how it tasted.

The lightly crisp texture and the rich chocolate were extremely delicious. There was no doubt that this would suit Michelle’s tastes. Just as I was wondering how I’d get home to let her eat some, she arrived in Bethel.

“Welcome. If you have something you’re looking for, let me know.” As expected of the Lord of Luganda’s fiancée, Michelle walked in and began serving customers with a calm demeanor. In the past, she would’ve run up to me shouting, “I was so worried about you that I couldn’t stay away!” This

Michelle, with her mellow and mature air, was even more charming to me.

“I heard that things were hectic here, so I came over to help.” She smiled bashfully. I’d had her stay behind in Luganda in order to develop the energy pack for the Zolid, but I’d wound up worrying her in the end.

“I’m happy you came,” I said. “The long journey here was probably tough, right? Here, I’ll make you some coffee, so sit down and eat some of my new products. I’m sure you’ll enjoy them.”

I sat Michelle at a table in the corner of the store and handed her the Dark Thunder Chocolate. “Oh my, chocolate?” she asked.

“The texture is really good. Also, it says that if you eat this, you’ll gain the courage to confess your love. Isn’t that kinda interesting?”

“Yeah. I wish you’d sold this before we started dating,” she said before biting into the Dark Thunder Chocolate. Then, she smiled broadly. “It’s delicious! I could eat this every day!” Even now, Michelle’s love for sweets hadn’t changed. She especially had a weakness for chocolate.

“Do you wanna take these along on your dungeon exploration next time?”

“Yeah, I’m gonna bring ten of them! Also...” Michelle started fidgeting, squirming in her seat.

“What’s the matter?”

“Yusuke, I love you!”

What? She’s confessing now?

“I love you to death,” she continued. “I’ll love you even if I die. I’ll love you in my next life. I love you spiritually. I’ll love you even if you turn into a frog!”

“O-Okay, all right, I love you too...”

“And I love you so much, I wanna send all the customers home so we can make out in the middle of the store. I probably won’t let you sleep a wink tonight!”

A mellow and mature air? My mistake! Fortunately, the customers were so absorbed in the snacks and Mobile Forces that it looked like none of them had

heard this way-too-heavy confession. I let out a sigh of relief when I didn't spot anyone who'd noticed. I was going to be busy around the clock for a while, so I decided to eat some stamina-recovering dagashi.

One week had passed since we'd come on this business trip to the Bethel branch. The burning curiosity of the customers had run its course, and the shop was finally calming down. I felt like I could soon leave the branch store to Bat.

"All right, I'm gonna take a trip home to Luganda," I announced. "Take care of things here for me in the meantime."

"Whaaat? Yu, my man, you're heading home?" Laimas whined, looking wistful. He'd been hanging around the shop for the past several days, so we'd become really close.

"Sorry, Lai Lai," I said, "but I *am* Luganda's feudal lord. I can't be away forever."

"Yes, I suppose that's true."

"I'll come by in three to four days to restock the store. Take care of Bat for me."

"Leave him to me," Laimas said confidently. "I will be coming to this store daily anyhow!" Laimas was setting aside time every day to hang out at the dagashi-ya, so his words put me at ease. It wasn't likely anyone would walk through the door itching to stir up trouble at a shop where the feudal lord regularly dropped by. I could return home to Luganda with peace of mind.

I'd traveled to Bethel with Bat, but I returned home with Michelle. In the end, Michelle had continued to stay in Bethel without returning to Luganda. Because of the Dark Thunder Chocolate she ate as a snack every day, she'd given me multiple heavy-handed confessions, though that was nothing new. None of it had fazed me—except for her declaration that if I died, she'd revive me with necromancy and "continue to love me."

"By the way, how much did you level up?" she inquired. I *had* originally set up

the branch shop in order to raise my level. Our goal was to use my abilities to discover when and where lightning would fall, so her question was reasonable. However, the truth was that my level hadn't risen as much as I'd hoped.

"Honestly, I haven't leveled up that much," I admitted. "I'm far from being able to use Clairvoyance to see the future." As I was now, I probably wouldn't be able to see the future even if I tried. Or rather, I felt that my mind and body would undergo severe damage as a result of the magical recoil.

"Whatever you do, don't push yourself," she said, gazing up at me with worry.

"I won't."

"You know, I regret saying that to you."

"Saying what?"

"I mean, when I said I'd use necromancy to revive you if you died..."

"Oh, that..."

"Let me correct myself. If you die, then I'm dying too! Let's be happy in heaven together!"

Both of these were heavy statements, but maybe this one was a little better?
Looks like I'll avoid being turned into a monster.

"Don't think about me dying. Let's only think about our happiness." I couldn't tell her to keep on living even after I died; I didn't know if that would be good or bad for Michelle. *Living is happiness and dying is sorrow...* That might be a living thing's most basic instinct. However, as someone who had died once myself, it was a question I really couldn't reach a conclusion to.

The road suddenly turned rough once we left the main thoroughfare. The path to Luganda was still very much in disrepair. It'd probably be convenient for the residents if we could eventually use the Zolid to improve this road.

"I need to work a little harder..." I murmured. When I reached out my hand to Michelle, who was on a horse next to mine, she silently squeezed my hand back.

The Adventurer Meryl's Diary: Entry 4

Mister Yusuke opened a branch of his dagashi-ya in Bethel. Apparently the main store has a better selection of goods, but I'm curious. On foot, it takes about two and a half hours to get from Luganda to Bethel. Maybe I'll take a peek for myself?

I also wanna know about Bat, who's become the branch manager. I tried to scout him for Team Harukaze since he's smart, but he turned me down. Oh, but it's not like I'm holding it against him or anything! Being the branch manager of a dagashi-ya is obviously better than life as an adventurer, which goes hand in hand with danger—although I still have no intention of making a job change. The life of an adventurer does pay well. My dream is to find treasure, rake up a fortune, and open a general store in Luganda one day. Also, rather than being a branch manager, I'd wanna be the customer. If I became one of the shop's employees, I wouldn't be able to enjoy the lottery snacks or Scratch Cards like I do now.

Maybe it's only natural, but I hear that the Mobile Forces and Mani 4WDs are getting popular in Bethel as well. Also, I heard there are a variety of different racecourses and arenas installed in the back of the store. Apparently, a person named Laimas, who's the feudal lord of Bethel, dumped a lot of money into making them.

Hearing about that stuff just makes me wanna go to that branch even more. I wanna try challenging the players over there too. Even the Mani 4WD racecourses are probably different from the ones we have... I want to play in new arenas and on new racecourses too, but I can't ask that of the busy Mister Yusuke. Mira scolded me as well, telling me to be patient. If I could use Earth Magic, then I could make some, but it's Body Enhancement Magic that I'm good at. In the same way, Rigal, Mira, and Marco wouldn't be of any help either.

I tried asking Chichi just for the hell of it...and what do you know? She said, "Sure, I guess..." I know that I'm the one who asked and all, but wow! I never

would've thought Chichi of all people would hear out my request. When I asked if she was really sure about it, she said it was a token of her gratitude for me taking care of Marco. After all is said and done, those two really do love each other. They don't really show it in front of others, but Chichi apparently gets clingy with Marco when it's just the two of them. Maybe she's like a pet cat who's hostile to anyone she sees aside from her owner, whom she clings to? If you ask me, though, Chichi is the one who acts more like the owner.

I guess Chichi isn't too good with Earth Magic, so the Mani 4WD course she produced is pretty rough. Still, it's been a big hit. It seems to be what they call a "rally" course. Mister Mani made some Rally Cars right away and put them up for sale.

We gotta be grateful to Chichi for opening this new door for us, huh?

Chapter 5: Golden Sheep

We arrived in Luganda before sunset. I'd only been away for a week, but seeing the town again somehow felt nostalgic.

"Sir Yahagi!" Rocking his macho, massive body, Mister Nakaram jogged over to me. He looked as intense as always, though he was actually a caring person who disliked fights—it was just his appearance that was really scary. His hobbies were taking care of rabbits and planting soft grass in his garden.

"I just got back, Mister Nakaram. Did something good happen?" I asked. He looked antsy but not unhappy, so he probably had some interesting news.

"Welcome back. Actually, the Golden Sheep was finally defeated the day before yesterday."

So, the jackpot monster that'd had Luganda in a frenzy had finally been taken down. "What about the Golden Fleece, then?"

"It did drop," he confirmed. "I'm currently holding on to it, but having such a valuable item around puts me on edge. I couldn't even sleep well last night." His macho body was cowering, and he wore a troubled expression, with pitiful dark circles under his eyes.

An adventurer named Zonda had been the one to take down the Golden Sheep. He was in his early thirties, and it seemed he usually worked alone. He'd originally been a member of a veteran team from the Royal Capital, but everyone except for him had been wiped out on floor B5. As the sole survivor, Zonda had thenceforth explored the dungeon solo without ever teaming up again.

"I wanted to turn a new leaf and start over in a new land, but I never imagined I'd get to take down such an amazing catch," Zonda said humbly. This middle-aged adventurer with short hair, a masculine face, and numerous scars all over his body, was quietly beaming.

"Congratulations regardless," I replied. "With this, you'll be able to get a

sizable sum of money, huh?”

“Well, yes, but it’ll also be difficult to sell it...” he murmured. “What should I do, your lordship?”

He could get a better deal selling a Golden Fleece in the Royal Capital. However, that was a long way away, and there were also many risks, such as encountering robbers. It was even possible he’d get robbed of all the cash he earned from the transaction. “If you’re worried, would you like to go to the Royal Capital together?” I offered. “I plan to go there at the end of this month in order to sell the magic stones we’ve accumulated. I’ll also be seeing Prime Minister Ethel, so I’ll have him introduce you to some trustworthy aristocrats and merchants.”

“By all means!” he exclaimed. “I’d be much obliged.”

This was also part of a feudal lord’s duty. I took out my carrying-pole store and fastened the Golden Fleece to it. Then, I chanted, “Store, close,” so the fleece was stored away along with my carrying pole in the gap between dimensions. No one could steal the treasure anymore.

“All right, just prepare for the journey to the Royal Capital, okay?” I said. “We’ll have Michelle as our guard, so it’ll be totally safe.”

“She’d be able to kick down even a troop of soldiers,” Zonda agreed.

“I can even kick down a whole battalion,” she chimed in. “For Yusuke’s sake!”

I wasn’t yearning to turn this world into the Sengoku period of Japan, with all the wars and fighting. It’d be enough if she could just protect our comrades and assets from robbers. “Don’t overdo it. You can’t alter the terrain either. We’d be bombarded with complaints from the Royal Geographical Survey Institute.”

“I know.”

When I placed a hand on her shoulder, she happily rubbed her cheek against it, startling everyone around us.

Time passed in the blink of an eye, and the day of our departure for the Royal Capital arrived. Our group consisted of Michelle, me, and Zonda, as the one

who'd obtained the Golden Fleece.

"I'm jealous. I also wanna go to the city every once in a while," Chichi complained.

Without even thinking, I retorted, "If you go to the Royal Capital, you'll be hanged for sure this time!"

"I know," she huffed. "I just wanted to joke around a little!"

Does she really understand? She gave me the impression of an exile who didn't grasp her position, but she *was* currently working hard as a healer in Luganda, so I decided to let it go. She'd helped save lives more times than I could count.

"Lady Chichi, let's go visit the capital of a foreign country once we save up some money," Marco suggested. "You won't be hanged there."

I was dumbfounded, staring at Marco as he smiled. "Marco, you're on your way to becoming a big shot, huh?" I said.

"You think? I need to work hard then."

Being an overserious person, he took my words at face value. Rigal, who'd been watching our exchange, let out a loud sigh. "If you ask me, they're both equally helpless. I'm impressed you two are getting by."

Seriously, Rigal had become so cheeky lately. *Well, he still treats me well in a variety of ways.* I left the rest up to Mister Nakaram, and we departed from Luganda.

We used a stagecoach, so our trip went by fast. I'd stored our belongings away in my live-in store, so we didn't have much to carry. Our journey proceeded smoothly, and we reached the Royal Capital in no time at all.

Once there, my first order of business was to sell the magic stones to the National Purchasing Department, located in one section of the warehouse district. This time, selling them wholesale netted me a total of 16,720,000 rims. After I subtracted the ten percent tax and what I'd pay to the adventurers, the rest of the money would go into my pocket, as the feudal lord.

It'd only been roughly a month since we'd started heading into the dungeon, yet these were some pretty decent earnings. With this money, we could probably start building some levees along the river. I also wanted to build things like proper washhouses and places to draw water from because the ones we had right now were pretty shabby. Once I got home, I'd recruit some tradesmen right away.

I split up with Zonda, who said he was going to see an old friend, and paid a visit to Prime Minister Ethel at the Administrative Palace. This was where the Prime Minister's Office was located. I'd sent him a notice in advance through a glider, so my visit went without a hitch. Prime Minister Ethel really was the man of the hour, so I'd heard it was extremely difficult to get an audience with him, but he'd apparently gone out of his way to make time for me. Indeed, when I arrived, evening was already upon us, but there were fifteen people in the long hallway waiting for their turn.

"Long time no see, Sir Yahagi." Prime Minister Ethel spread out his arms to warmly welcome me into a luxurious office.

"It's been a while," I agreed. "At any rate, this office is impressive." The floor and walls shone with the glow of carefully selected wood, and stately furniture was arranged tastefully around the room.

"Ha ha ha. It seems this place was originally the former queen's playroom. I wonder—is Chichi doing well?"

"She is," I said. "She still complains a little, but she's living as if the evil spirit which possessed her has left her body. She's currently adored by the adventurers as a healer and a mage. She won't say it herself, but in her own way, she probably intends to redeem herself for her past crimes. She barely charges for her services."

"That former queen, hmm?" he mused. "You really never know where life will take you."

"This *is* a world where a dagashi-ya can become a feudal lord."

"Ha ha ha. By the way, Sir Yahagi..." Prime Minister Ethel chafed his hands

together as if ashamed by what he was about to ask.

“Is something the matter?”

“Well, it concerns *that*—the new item called the Mani 4WD that you wrote about in your letter...”

It seemed the astute prime minister couldn’t help but be interested in the new toy. Would it be cruel to keep him waiting any longer? *I should hurry up and give him his gift.*

“I’ve brought it, of course,” I said, taking the toy out. “Here it is.”

“Oh!” the prime minister exclaimed, his eyes sparkling at the sight of the Mani 4WD.

“Also, the new Mobile Forces model—the Renewed Zako II.”

“Oh my!!!”

“And here are some nippers embellished with the Ethel family’s crest.”

“Nippers?”

“You use them like this.” I took the Mani 4WD parts out of the box and gave the prime minister a demonstration. *Snap!*

“Whoaaa!!!” He was soon using the nippers to snap off the Renewed Zako II parts himself. “This is incredible! The finished profile of this unit is absolutely stunning!”

“It seems you’ve taken a liking to it,” I observed.

“Of course. I am so glad I could see you today, Sir Yahagi.”

It looks like he’s in a really good mood right now, so I guess I should take this opportunity to ask him for that favor. “By the way, Prime Minister, I have something to ask of you.”

“Hmm? What is it?” he inquired, putting on an air of nonchalance, though I got the sense that his guard was slightly raised. His position was one where he had to accept petitions day in and day out, so he might be tired of requests like this.

“It’s nothing major,” I assured him. “Could you introduce us to some

merchants who deal with treasure?”

“Oh? Treasure?” Once he understood that my request wouldn’t put him through too much trouble, he calmed down and reassumed his previous demeanor.

“There’s an adventurer who got a drop of Golden Fleece in the dungeon, so he’s looking for a place to sell it.”

“Golden Fleece!” he exclaimed. “Is that not the item that simply wearing ensures that you will not lose your fortune?”

“Indeed.”

“I shall purchase it!”

Things were moving along way too quickly. “I don’t mind you being the one to purchase it,” I said, “but you sure jumped on it quickly.”

“Oh, I simply know of no wealthy person who does not desire the Golden Fleece.” He then paused, thinking to himself. “Hmm, I would like some more time...” The prime minister took the bell atop his desk and lightly rang it. Immediately following that, a secretary opened the door. “Visitations for the day have ended. Hand over my business cards to those who remain. I shall receive them first thing tomorrow morning.”

The secretary bowed once and left the room.

“Is it okay to do that?” I asked.

“I am being worked to the bone from morning to evening every day,” he said. “I likely will not be punished if I choose to take the day off and enjoy a breather with you.” Now that he mentioned it, I could glimpse fatigue showing in the creases between Prime Minister Ethel’s eyebrows. It might be a good idea to let him indulge in his hobbies, at least for today.

“Now then,” he said, “let us continue our conversation over dinner. I will send a messenger to the hotel and have Lady Michelle join us. I would like to request a match with the champion using the new Mobile Forces model!” He was as excited as a kid on summer break.

Prime Minister Ethel bought the Golden Fleece for 5,000,000 rims. The offer was a little higher than the going rate, but after we'd discussed it with Zonda, he'd agreed to that price for his fleece. Because Prime Minister Ethel was the buyer, the transaction went smoothly. I personally bore witness to the exchange of money, and as before, stored it away in my carrying-pole store, in the gap between space and time.

Aside from the Golden Fleece, I handed over the Mobile Forces units that were a part of my consignment deal with Prime Minister Ethel—three hundred boxes in total. In addition to that, I handed over one hundred boxes of the new Mani 4WDs I had set aside. He was greatly pleased and promised that he'd popularize those in the Royal Capital as well.

"These will most certainly become popular among those in high society," he predicted.

"High society?" I blinked. Even though I'd become a feudal lord, that was a world that remained completely unrelated to me.

"That is right. These days, there is not a single famous salon that does not have Mobile Forces arenas in its playrooms. From now on, they will probably set up racecourses for Mani 4WDs as well."

"Huh..." So, big shots played with Mobile Forces and Mani 4WDs in lavish playrooms, huh? I kinda couldn't believe it, but as far as I was concerned, they could just do whatever they wanted. I was too busy being a dagashi-ya to worry about it.

"I would be most grateful if you could continue to bring them to me periodically," he said.

"I'll come again in around two months."

"I would like you to come next month if possible. They will sell out in a flash anyhow. I shall provide the travel expenses, so—please," he pleaded. Apparently, the merchandise that I left with Prime Minister Ethel sold out really fast. "In the near future, I also plan to hold a Mobile Forces tournament in the Royal Capital. This time, I have decided that I shall sponsor it."

"A tournament sponsored directly by the prime minister?"

“Yes. I shall have it named the Ethel Super Cup and make it a grand event.”

My level would likely increase accordingly if I sold more through the tournament, so I promised him I would fully cooperate with his plans. With that, our fruitful trade concluded, and we departed from the Royal Capital.

We reached Luganda in the evening, so our arrival happened to overlap with the time that the adventurers began heading home at the end of their work day. I’d only been away for about twelve days, but I already felt nostalgia for this place. Everyone said they were happy for our return, but Meryl was the one who gave us the most passionate welcome.

“We-We-Welcome b-b-baaaaack!!!!!!” she bawled.

“Wh-What’s wrong, Meryl?” I sputtered. “You don’t have to cry so much!”

“I mean, you’re the one who made my body this way!” she sniffled.

“*What?*”

“Meryl is experiencing withdrawal since she hasn’t been able to draw from any lotteries,” Mira explained to me with an awkward smile. “Scratch Cards and Ten-Rim Chocolate Coins were her daily routine.”

Were the dagashi I sold that crazy?

“Lucky numbers... My lucky numbers...” Meryl mumbled, shakily reaching out to me.

“Okay, I’ll bring out my street stall right away, so relax!” I cried. “I got some new products too.”

Product name: Getter Noodles!

Description: A bite-size ramen-like snack.

Comes with a redeemable lottery coupon (100 rims, 50 rims, 20 rims, or 10 rims).

You can shoot one low-power beam (magic with the light attribute) out of your mouth!

Price: Ten rims

“Getter Noodles...” she said weakly. “Gimme...one...” Gasping for breath, she handed me a ten-rim coin.

“That beam is dangerous, so be careful,” I told her. The low-power beam was weaker than a stun gun and only worked as a method of intimidating monsters. Still, it could be dangerous, so I made sure to warn her. Then, I noticed something. “Ah, she stopped trembling.”



The second I handed the product over to her, life returned to her face. *Hey now...*

Paying no mind to all of our worried expressions, she enthusiastically tore off the sticker. “Let’s see, the coupon... Gah! I lost!”

This again? The scene was just so typical, I truly felt that I’d returned to Luganda. Meryl angrily released a beam that hit Garmr squarely in the butt, which caused him to get upset and buy Getter Noodles to return the favor. Mira, who moved at her own pace, bought one and won a one-hundred-rim coupon like usual, which triggered Meryl’s jealousy... But, despite it all, Luganda was, for the most part, peaceful.

“Cheers!” the adventurers shouted with joy, raising their ceramic beer mugs. One after another, they gulped down the ale that had filled the mugs to the brim. We were gathered in a shanty that didn’t even have any decent walls, with some people sitting atop barrels and others remaining standing as they clinked their glasses. This building was the first place of business that had been constructed in Luganda, and it was currently its one and only tavern, “Golden Sheep.”

Zonda had used the money he’d earned from selling his Golden Fleece to establish it. His 5,000,000 rims had gone toward purchasing a donkey and a wagon, procuring alcohol from the nearest village, and opening this place. It currently only offered ale and a distilled liquor called bakschi, but the adventurers seemed happy enough that Luganda now had a tavern. Today was its grand opening, so it was packed with people, and cheers of joy resounded from here and there.

“Congratulations, Zonda,” I said to him. “I’m also happy that Luganda has a tavern now. Here—something to celebrate your grand opening.” I gifted him pots of Curry Rice Crackers and Skewered Squid since I felt they’d be good beer snacks.

“Thank you very much for these, Mister Yahagi,” he said gratefully. “I’ll offer them at the store right away. Enjoy yourself tonight.” He’d continued receiving orders even while we were talking, so he hurriedly left to pour his customers

their drinks. The ale in my mouth tasted a bit sour, but I swallowed a few gulps without caring. I was pleased that Luganda was developing, little by little.

“You look happy, Yusuke.” Her cheeks flushed, Michelle was sitting next to me also drinking from her beer mug.

“Yeah, really happy.” It was also nice to be out drinking with Michelle. Actually, we hadn’t done this since leaving the Royal Capital. “Let’s come again sometime.”

“Yeah!”

With a small toast, we emptied our mugs of ale and called for Zonda.

“More please, Zonda!” I said.

“Me too.”

“Got it!”

That day, people didn’t stop coming by Golden Sheep until late into the night.

The exploration of the Lugandan Dungeon was moving right along. Michelle, who fought off enemies on the front lines, and Chichi, who healed at the recovery point, had both contributed tremendously. Thanks to the two sisters, we’d had no casualties so far. Michelle and Chichi were also in the process of gathering materials for the large energy pack that needed to be inserted into the Zolid. According to Michelle, it was about fifty percent complete.

If anything, the problem here was my (lack of) level-ups. Well, it wasn’t good to expand my sales network in a panic either, so I didn’t intend to rush it. *If I could at least figure out when and where lightning will strike, then we wouldn’t have any trouble, though...*

“You’re a god, so don’t you know when lightning is gonna strike?” I asked Mister Mani, who was leisurely sipping tea in the shop’s tatami room.

“I’m the machine god, so I don’t know things like that,” he replied. “That’s what my older sister... My older sister...” He blinked. “Huh? What was her name again?”

This was hopeless. It looked like I couldn't expect anything from Mister Mani, so I really would have to work hard after all. I needed to raise my level so I could take a peek into the future using my Clairvoyance.

It was almost noon. There were no customers around at this hour, and I had more free time than I knew what to do with. "Oh right, Mister Mani—you're the machine god, but you don't see machines in this world that often." I'd just been making an idle observation, but his expression turned sad.

"The machine civilization perished several thousand years ago," he said wistfully.

"Really?! That happened here?!"

"What are you talking about?"

"The machine civilization that fell into ruin."

"There's a machine civilization?!"

He's back to the usual old Mani... But we had the Zolid, so if we used it to dig things up, some ancient machines might surface. If the machine civilization had perished, maybe that was why Mister Mani wasn't doing well. Would he be rejuvenated if we could restore the Zolid? Having to propagate an entire machine civilization sounded like a pain, but if it'd make him happy, then I wanted to help him a little. "One of these days, I'll show you the Zolid moving again."

"The Genos Breaker is going to move?" he asked. "I want to see it fly—it's been so long."

"Huh? That thing flies?!"

"Of course." Happily sipping away at his tea, Mister Mani seemed to be sitting taller than before.

"I think your posture has improved, Mister Mani," I pointed out.

"Ho ho ho, you think? It may be because the number of people living in this region has increased, along with the number of Mani 4WD users," he said. So, the more believers he had, the stronger he'd become? The more people raced those Mani 4WDs, the more his power might be restored.

As the two of us drank our tea, the tavern owner, Zonda, dropped by for a visit.

“Welcome,” I greeted him. “What’s up?”

“I’ve come to purchase more beer snacks. Curry Rice Crackers and Skewered Squid, please.” Zonda was a good regular who’d buy pots and pots of the stuff.

“I’m glad business is booming for you.”

“Well, yes, but my customers have grown more and more demanding recently.”

“The adventurers?”

“Yes. They’re telling me to increase my alcohol variety or prepare more-filling meals. They’re just so annoying that I don’t know what to do with them. I’m a former adventurer, so I’m not good with cooking,” he admitted. For alcohol, Golden Sheep only offered ale and bakschi, and for beer snacks, nothing but Curry Rice Crackers and Skewered Squid. To me it seemed inevitable that he’d be receiving a few more complaints from his customers, but...

“Are you going to buy other snacks today? Everyone might be happier if you added more variety,” I suggested.

“You’re right. Something cheap and filling...” He paused. “Wh-What’s that?” he stammered, pointing to one section of my shelves.

Product name: Octo Rice Crackers

Description: A large and thin rice cracker with ingredients like octopus powder mixed in.

Upon consumption, the calluses on your hands and feet will be removed.

Price: Twenty rims

Each bag of Octo Rice Crackers contained twenty crackers, but they could also be sold individually. They were huge, so even just one might satisfy a hungry adventurer. However, since we were discussing it, there was a dish that would

be good to use these in.

“Oh right, let’s make tamasen.”

“Tamasen? I can’t cook anything difficult...”

“It’s okay. I think even you could make this.” Tamasen was a food that had apparently originated in the Nagoya area, and the ingredients included Octo Rice Crackers.

“First,” I started, “you fry an egg on the iron plate, slightly flattening it.” I turned on the iron plate that I used for Yakisoba and Monjayaki and cracked an egg over it. “While it’s cooking, you spread some sauce and mayonnaise over the Octo Rice Cracker.” I repurposed the yakisoba sauce. As for the mayonnaise, I used some that Michelle had premade. “If I remember right, you’re supposed to put in green onions, but we’ll substitute in the wild rocamboles that Miss Mirai picked in the mountains.” Wild rocambole was a wild grass that grew in sunny places. The stem part tasted like chopped green onion. I actually wanted to add in bits of fried tempura batter too, but I’d just forgo that today. “You put the fried egg on top of the sauce-and-mayonnaise-slathered Octo Rice Cracker and sprinkle the chopped wild rocamboles over it.”

Zonda swallowed back saliva.

“Lastly, you split the Octo Rice Cracker in half and make the ingredients into a sandwich... And there you have it! I made three, so let’s all sample them.”

We all sank our teeth into the tamasen.

“It’s tasty...” Zonda murmured.

“Ho ho ho, I’ve never tasted something like this before,” Mister Mani marveled. The two of them were beaming as they stuffed their faces full of tamasen. Even Mister Mani with his scanty appetite ate his entire portion. A thick fried egg sandwiched between crispy rice crackers made for a filling dish. The sauce and mayo combination was also outstanding.

“Even you can make this, right, Zonda?” I encouraged him. “I’ll sell you the sauce as a special favor, so try offering these at your store.” If it’d help improve one of Luganda’s businesses, then I was willing to cooperate to some extent.

“That’d be great!” he exclaimed. “Then give me two bags of Octo Rice Crackers and a bottle of sauce. I’ll try making some as soon as I get home.”

Starting that night, Zonda added tamasen to his menu. The new item was a huge hit and became Golden Sheep’s signature dish. Before long, Zonda, having awakened to his love of tamasen, would go on to make his own mayonnaise and tempura bits. Eventually, he even started developing his own original sauce and tamasen, such as varieties with cheese or yakisoba added.

Zonda earned a lifetime fortune from selling tamasen to his nighttime customers at the tavern and to the Luganda Dungeon’s Out-of-Body-Experience Tour’s customers during the day at a street stall. He would later build a refined house in Luganda. The people would come to pay their respects to Zonda, who’d worked himself to the bone, and his residence would come to be known as the “Tamasen Palace.”

The Adventurer Meryl's Diary: Entry 5

Mister Yusuke went to the Royal Capital to sell Mister Zonda's Golden Fleece. I'm lonely... I'm just way too lonely! And everyone else is lonely too! But I'm lonelier than all the others! I mean, a life of not being able to pull from any lotteries awaits me!

Man, it's only been three days, but I'm already experiencing withdrawal. I totally did not expect that being unable to buy Ten-Rim Gum would be this rough on me. I even cried seeing the dungeon entrance with no street stall in front.

"That's not normal, Miss Meryl," Rigal said to me, astounded, but I couldn't help it. I hate Mister Yusuke for making my body this way.

It's lonely now that Mister Yusuke has gone to the Royal Capital, but I do have some things I'm looking forward to. I actually secretly requested that he make some purchases for me. I want him to buy me a new bedspread. I heard that winters are pretty cold here, so I just couldn't keep myself from asking. It's because the ones from the Royal Capital really are cuter!

I actually wanted to choose one myself, but it can't be helped since I can't go. I'll have to put my faith in Mister Yusuke's tastes. I think it'll be fine since I specified that I wanted one with warm colors. At the very least, it's preferable to Miss Michelle choosing one for me. I mean, Miss Michelle seems like the type to pick black-rose lace bedcovers, or gothic lolita ones. Her sense of cuteness is dangerous. That woman really is out of step with the world. It might've even been better to ask Mister Zonda, with his middle-aged man tastes, than her.

Yippee! Mister Yusuke finally came home. I was so happy that I wound up begging him to open his street stall. But as expected of Mister Yusuke, he immediately brought it out at my request. He even recommended a new product to me. I lost at the Getter Noodles lottery, but I don't care. I'm just really glad that Mister Yusuke and the others came back safely.

The only thing was that I got excited without thinking, did something stupid, and accidentally shot a beam from my mouth that hit Garmr's butt. I was kinda embarrassed that I got carried away by my good mood. I had to hide it. Maybe Garmr felt the same way. He bought some Getter Noodles and launched a counterattack against me, but he looked really happy.

I think everyone was relieved that Mister Yusuke and the others came back safely. Even Mira used the Getter Noodles to shoot out a beam!

Chapter 6: Screening

Luganda had developed a bit more once again. The number of cows, goats, and chickens had increased, and three immigrants had settled here this month. Even the housing district that had been full of little shanties was starting to boast some proper houses.

What was currently a cause of headaches was how few women lived here. The population's gender ratio was about seven to three, so there were always men left over. It might be for that reason that they just wouldn't stop fighting over women. Conversely, women were extremely popular, since there weren't enough of them to go around. *Except for Michelle...*

"How should I put this..." Garmr hesitated. "You're the only one who can support her. She'd flatten any other human being in an instant. She's scarier than the legendary Gravity Magic."

Well, I was personally glad that it meant I didn't have to worry about her having an affair...

"It's annoying to always have guys coming after you," Meryl chimed in, but she didn't seem to resent it. You could catch glimpses of her taking pride in how popular she was. Rigal might've been annoyed by it, judging by how he looked a bit gloomy. He adored Meryl, so maybe he was a little jealous.

Mira was more popular than Meryl, but that was nothing new. With her airheaded, breezy nature, she ignored all of the guys and often spent leisurely time with Mister Mani instead. Our resident god seemed to really like Mira, so he looked after her in various ways.

Wandering adventurers had started coming to the dungeon as well. The entrance fee was 1,000 rims, so the traffic made a good profit for us. However, there were a lot of ruffians among the adventurers, so public order seemed to have worsened some. I couldn't leave this be, so I asked Michelle to become Luganda's captain of the guard.

“Leave it to me,” she declared. “I won’t ever allow any troublemakers in your domain! I’ll send every last one of them to hell!”

“Don’t break the law when you’re punishing them...”

Thanks to Michelle, the crimes abruptly stopped. It seemed those low-grade baddies had received severe punishments and run away with their faces black-and-blue. Chichi had apparently joined in on dishing out punishments, but she wouldn’t tell me what they’d been. *What exactly did they do to them...?*

Oh yeah, the hands-on dungeon tour was very active. Luganda was apparently *the* place to go for the area’s rich people. My store and Zonda’s stall were also flourishing. There were even people who went out of their way to make the two-hour journey here by horse-drawn wagon just to eat our Monjayaki and tamasen.

In the midst of all this, an unusual customer came by today. I saw an especially fine carriage stop in front of my street stall, and a slender gentleman stepped out. He was a tall person whose silhouette reminded me of a lollipop. He perused my goods with a happy look on his face.

“Welcome,” I greeted him. “Are you looking for something?”

“I am Viscount Pepeau, ruler of the town of Balast,” he said to me. “Are you the feudal lord of Luganda, Sir Yahagi?”

Huh... Balast was a large town on the opposite side of Bethel. It should be about a two-and-a-half-hour journey by carriage.

“Well, well, you’ve come a long way into this forest.” I started to invite him to the manor house, but he looked like he was having fun browsing my street stall’s goods. Deciding that he was probably interested in my shop, I offered him a seat. “Our work on the road leading here hasn’t progressed as much as I’d hoped. Was the trip very difficult?”

“Not at all,” he assured me. “It was for the sake of seeing the rumored dagashi-ya, after all. A few small difficulties like those are nothing.”

Yep, he came here with his heart set on my dagashi-ya. “The sunlight has been intense today—it was hot, wasn’t it? Here, have some Ramune.”

When I handed him the bottle, he exclaimed, “Oh my! So this is Ramune!”

“You know about it?”

“Mister Laimas boasted about it to me in his letter. It is apparently the most popular drink in this region.”

This is reminding me strongly of the rise of cola in my previous life...

“And when I went to Bethel the other day for some business,” he continued, “I popped in at Dagashi-ya Yahagi’s Bethel Shop. The drink was unfortunately sold out, but as of this moment, I have finally obtained it.”

“Thank you for even patronizing our Bethel branch.”

“No need to thank me. Because of that place, I was able to purchase Gungalf and Gugurecas. I even obtained the Mani 4WD on top of that,” he told me. *This guy likes toys too, I see...* “I am so hooked on them that I immediately ordered some tradesmen to make me some arenas and racecourses. How about one match later?”

“Ha ha ha, go easy on me...” I said weakly. Viscount Pepeau was leaning toward me, eyes blazing with passion—I didn’t think I could turn him down. Well, it was nice that yet another person had been added to the competitive populace.

As we were talking, a line of livestock emerged from the forest. I counted three cattle, ten goats, and many caged chickens. There was even one horse.

“Wh-What’s going on?” I stammered.

At my surprise, Viscount Pepeau merrily explained, “I brought some gifts for you today. These are vital for new territories, no? Please tell me you will accept them.”

“Thank you. I mean, I am grateful, but...” I trailed off. I wanted those livestock so badly that I could taste it, but could I really just accept them? I wouldn’t know what to do if I was hit with a weird request or something because of it...

“In exchange, I do have one request...”

I knew there was a catch! I reflexively put myself on guard. “I’ve only recently become a feudal lord myself, so I’ve got a lot going on right now... I don’t know

if I can live up to your expectations. So, what is it?" I asked, interrogating his true intentions while intermingling my question with some light caveats.

"What do you think about opening a Dagashi-ya Yahagi branch in Balast as well?"

"What?"

"Those Mobile Forces and Mani 4WDs... I should also like to pla—I mean, bring in the culture of another land."

Hmm... His ulterior motives were heavily leaking out. They were spilling out even more than when he'd opened his Ramune bottle. However, as someone who desperately wanted to raise his level, I was extremely thankful for this topic. "I am most grateful for that proposal," I said, "but as for taxes and such..."

"Just some rent is fine!" he said hurriedly. "As for location... I'd like it to be close to my residence... All right, I'll have a proper house built for you."

How generous! He seemed to be a rich man who'd spare no expense to satisfy himself.

As we discussed the new branch, a wagon packed with pigs pulled up. When I looked over, wondering what was going on there, a gentleman with a large build stepped out of the carriage that followed behind.

"Hello, Viscount Pepeau," said the man. "And you're the feudal lord of Luganda, Sir Yahagi, correct?"

"Yes," I affirmed, "but who are you?"

"I'm the feudal lord of Toskea. I'm called Gogolic." Bethel, Balast, and Toskea were the three main towns in this region. Mister Gogolic laughed heartily, jiggling his big belly. "Ha ha ha. Today, I've brought Toskea's specialty as a gift to you—twenty of our pigs. The sweet taste of their lard is our pride!"

"Th-Thank you. However, for you to suddenly give us these—"

"Oh, we're neighbors," he hushed me. "Feudal lords must help one another. Incidentally, I have something to ask of you, Sir Yahagi."

Huh? Don't tell me...

Indeed, it was about opening a branch store. Additionally, the conditions were very ideal. Of course I gratefully agreed to open one. Now, it'd probably be easier to level up. An added advantage of these branch stores was that they let me get acquainted with my neighboring feudal lords.

I handed over numerous snacks, all varieties of Mobile Forces and Mani 4WDs, and their extra parts as gifts to the two feudal lords, Pepeau and Gogolic.

Probably thanks to me opening three branch stores, on one slightly chilly evening, I once again leveled up. It was something to count my lucky stars for.

"How about it, Yusuke? Do you think you can see the future?" Michelle asked me excitedly as we sat alone in the living room.

"I dunno. I feel like it's still impossible." Even as I denied it, I drank my Ramune and circulated my mana. Then, I held a magical stick in my right hand and lightly waved it as I activated my magic.

"Clairvoyance!" I cried. I felt the usual sensation of all my mana releasing from my body, but it didn't feel as dangerous as before. I wasn't that dizzy—I just had that slight tipsy feeling you get when you've had a bit too much to drink. As my consciousness floated up to the middle of the room, beginning an out-of-body experience, a question posing a choice was sent directly to my brain.

"Will you move forward? Or will you go back?"

If I ignored the question, I could explore my current circumstances, and if I said, "Go back," then I'd be able to look into the past. However, what I needed to try was the "move forward" option. I tried to keep a grip on my consciousness, which threatened to slip away if I lost focus, and chose "move forward."

I felt a pair of invisible hands wringing out my brain like a washcloth. My whole body stiffened at the sharp pain. Feeling like I'd die if I continued to suffer this agony, I instantly canceled my magic.

"Yusuke! Yusuke!!!" Michelle was shouting my name in the center of my blurry vision. The rims of her eyes were swollen and red as tears spilled out, reminding me of jirai-style makeup. Dazed thoughts of how well the look suited

her crossed my mind...

"I-I'm good," I said. "I did think I was gonna die but..."

"I'm sorry!" she cried. "It's all because I asked if you could see the future!"

I managed to sit up and take Michelle into my arms. "It's not your fault. It's just that my level isn't high enough yet. Don't worry about it."

It took a long time before I got Michelle to calm down and stop crying, but I felt better while I was holding her. That was probably also because I'd leveled up. My Clairvoyance didn't put as much of a burden on my body as before. With the Clear Stream Ring that the gnomes had given me, my body returned completely to normal within five minutes.

"It looks like it'll be a while longer before I can use Clairvoyance to see the future," I noted, "although I have more new products to sell since I've leveled up."

Product name: Tabekko Monster

Description: A monster-shaped biscuit.

Information such as the monster's name, strengths, and weaknesses is written on the front.

Price: Fifty rims

"It's tasty, so you should have a bite too," I said, recommending a snack to the depressed Michelle. "Here, it's a good one for learning about monsters, right?"

"It's tasty..." she murmured, smiling a little after eating it.

"Everyone here knows monster names, so I think it could help them learn how to read too."

"Yeah, that may be true."

"There still aren't many people who can read, so I'd like Luganda to set up a school once we get some leeway."

"A school in Luganda?" she asked. *That reminds me—she used to be a teacher*

at an academy back in the Royal Capital.

“If we make a school here, do you wanna be a teacher?”

Michelle began squirming at my question. “Whaaat? It’s been so long—it makes me kinda embarrassed.”

“Why not? Rigal complimented the way you teach. He said that you’re really good at it. By the way, what do teachers wear in this world?” It wasn’t like I especially liked cosplay, but I *was* interested. It really was just a bit of curiosity! *It’s not like I want to fulfill my sexual fantasies or anything!*

“In academies, I think it’s the norm to wear a mortarboard cap. And then you’re provided with a cloak with purple hems when you become a professor. I have one too.”

“Do you have them here?”

“I actually do.”

“Show me!”

She was shy about it, but she took the cap and cloak out from among her belongings and donned them for me. “Th-This isn’t *that* cute, is it? This only makes plain old me look even more plain.”

“Not at all. It gives you an air of intelligence, and it’s wonderful. With a teacher like you, even going to school would be something to look forward to.”

“Really? You honestly think so?”

“Of course I do.”

Michelle shyly nodded her head and quietly whispered, “Tonight, I’m gonna give a private lesson just for you. Close up shop early today, okay?”

“O-Okay...”

My exciting everyday life continued on just like this.

At the end of the day, while I was merrily closing up shop, Mister Nakaram approached me with a report.

“I’ve collected the dungeon entrance fees,” he said. “Here they are, and this is the receipts journal.”

“Thank you for your hard work.” I accepted the journal and looked it over. “Oh, we got 62,000 rims in entrance fees today.”

“Yes, business has been good at the dungeon lately, although improving the roads is still far out of reach.”

“Nothing we can do about that. Let’s work toward it little by little.”

“Is the Zolid still not up and running?” he asked. No doubt he wanted to hurry up and use the Genos Breaker to pave the roads.

“No, we have a small problem,” I admitted. “It’ll be solved if I can raise my dagashi-ya level, but that’s not happening anytime soon.” My Clairvoyance was a secret, so I tiptoed around the topic.

“Your level? If I remember correctly, you level up if you increase your earnings, right?”

“Yes. It’s been going well thanks to our new branch stores, but it seems that’s still not enough.”

Mister Nakaram folded his bulging muscular arms, seeming to ponder the issue. “Hmm... I have a proposal.”

“What is it?”

“What do you think of holding a festival in order to increase your profits?” he suggested. Many sightseers came to Luganda already, so large crowds might gather here if we held a festival.

“But what kind of festival should it be?” I asked.

“How about something like a Mobile Forces Tournament that pits the four cities against each other?” By “the four cities,” he meant Luganda, Bethel, Balast, and Toskea. The other three cities’ feudal lords loved Mobile Forces and Mani 4WDs, so it was entirely possible that they’d cooperate.

“That’s a good idea,” I said. “I’ll go ahead and contact Lai Lai from Bethel and the others.”

“Please do. I’ll go and draw up a rough budget.” Mister Nakaram was unparalleled when it came to things like that. I gratefully left it to him and wrote letters on gliders to send to the feudal lords.

I sent out the gliders regarding the Four Cities Mobile Forces Tournament and received replies immediately—or rather, all the feudal lords hopped on horses and came to Luganda the very next day. Unexpectedly, all four of us ended up gathered in the same room, where we conducted a conference. Given their enthusiasm, you can probably easily guess how quickly we decided to hold the tournament.

As a result of our discussion, the following was agreed: From here on out, a tournament would be held once a year, and the location would cycle among Luganda, Bethel, Balast, and Toskea. Each city would arrange a team of five representatives, and a round-robin tournament would commence. The first tournament would be held here in Luganda.

We decided to hold the first tournament one month from now, so each feudal lord would immediately begin their preparations. I would be busy with my own portion of the workload. My first task was to figure out who our representatives would be. *I should hurry up and make some flyers for a qualifying competition.*

Despite the fall weather, when I next leveled up, a freezer made its debut at my store. Chilling inside were things like ice cream and Anzu Sticks. They were selling pretty well even though it was cold outside. There were very hot areas in the dungeon, so adventurers who were headed there would buy some for the road.

“Don’t they melt along the way?” I asked Meryl, who’d bought three sticks of ice cream.

“Mira can use Ice Magic to freeze them,” she replied, “so there’s no problem. Eating Home Run Grandmas in a hot place is the best.” Even if you couldn’t use ice magic offensively, it seemed it was possible to keep the ice cream cool if you had at least some knowledge.

Product name: Home Run Grandma

Description: Milk-flavored ice cream.

Eating one makes it easier to deal a critical blow. The effect lasts half a day.

Price: Fifty rims

The ice cream's package featured a grandma wielding a bat.

"Now then, I'm raring to go earn some more money today, so I'll be off," Meryl declared before she let out a small shout. "Ah!"

"What's the matter?" I asked. "Did you forget something?"

"No, that's not it. I'm talking about that," she said, pointing at a handwritten flyer on the wall.

Announcing the Four Cities Mobile Forces Tournament!

The tournament will be a round-robin among five-member teams. In order to select the Lugandan representatives, a qualifying competition will be held. If you believe you have what it takes, please feel free to participate. For further details, please inquire with the shopkeeper.

"Mister Yusuke, what is that?"

"It's just as you've read," I said. "Well, it'll also be kinda like a festival. Are you gonna throw your hat in the ring?"

"I am!" she told me excitedly. "This time for sure, I'll guarantee that the names Red Shoulder and Meryl are known far and wide!"

"Yep, that's the spirit. I'm gonna host the qualifying competition soon, so make sure to join in. Let your friends know too."

"All right! Starting today, I'll do some intensive training!!!"

Meryl left the shop that day with a spring in her step.

Using her Earth Magic, Michelle built a venue for the competition that was similar to an amphitheater. It was rather elaborately made, even including beautifully detailed decorations

“The fact that you made something like this in just ten days...” I marveled. “You’re as amazing as ever, Michelle.”

“Spectators from outside Luganda will be coming too, and I don’t want to make you look bad,” she said. “At any rate, the arena is finished now, but I’m going to be touching up the spectator stands even further.” Thanks to Michelle, I felt that we’d be able to host a grand festival.

With the venue completed, I held a qualifying competition among the residents right away. I treated them to stew since it was a cold day, and the peddler, Mister Joshua, came by to sell seasonal fruits like apples, so it turned into something like a village festival. Most of the residents took the day off to participate.

The tournament to decide the representatives had two stages. First, a knockout stage determined the best sixteen. Then, these sixteen were pitted against each other in a round-robin tournament. At the end, the following five emerged victorious:

1. The accursed, super-yandere witch who’d once had a 100,000,000-rim bounty on her head, Michelle. (Kian)
2. The remorseful wicked woman and exiled former queen, Chichi. (Jujiong)
3. The girl who, despite being the leader of Team Harukaze, has hopeless lottery luck, Meryl. (Renewed Zako II)
4. Big brother to all the rookies, Garmr. (Gugurecas)
5. The pleasant mage, Mira. (Dome)

Seeing the list fully written out like this, I noticed that each of them used a different unit. Well, Michelle’s win had been expected, and Chichi also hadn’t

lost to anyone except Michelle. Those two were Luganda's best.

"Hey, Yusuke," Michelle said, worried, "isn't it a bad idea for Chichi to participate in the tournament?"

"What makes you say that?"

"I mean, she's a criminal. It'd reflect poorly on us to have someone like that as a representative."

Hearing that, Chichi immediately shot back, "What the hell? Now that I've been banished, they shouldn't be prying into my criminal past. Also—!"

"'Also'? What else is there?!"

"Even I..." she mumbled, "want to be of some use to Yahagi. He saved Marco and me. I more or less feel indebted to him."

Michelle hesitated. "That's... Well, in that case..."

It seemed that the two sisters' quarrel had fizzled out this time. I hadn't expected Chichi to think that way. *Well, as long as she's planning to do her best, then it's fine.*

"Are you going to participate in the tournament, Mira?" Mister Mani asked.

"That's right, Mister Mani," she replied. "Please root for Dome and me." Mister Mani and Mira were having a relaxed conversation with no sense of competitive tension. It was just like a grandpa and his grandchild chatting while lounging side by side on a veranda. Mister Mani especially doted on Mira, and his affection for her was clear as day.

"Oh, I see," he nodded. "You're going to do your best, Mira. All right, then I shall cheer you on. For now, perhaps I shall put some magnetic coating over your Dome unit."

"Hold it right there!" I cried. I'd just heard a phrase I couldn't ignore.

"What is it, Yahagi? All I will do is modify it a little."

"That's cheating," I said. "Altering units is not permitted in the real tournament."

"Then I shall give it a giant bazooka. That won't modify the unit—"

“That’s also not allowed. Firearms are prohibited.”

“Surely just giving it a diffusion beam cannon in its chest is—”

“Also not allowed,” I finished his sentence for him.

After learning how many things were prohibited, Mister Mani pouted. “What? It’s not as if I’d give it a psychic frame...or funnels.” Sometimes, during the moments when his senses returned, he said some wild things.

“Is eating dagashi okay, Mister Yahagi?” Meryl asked. “I want to drink Ramune before my matches.” Drinking Ramune regulated the circulation of mana within your body, so that would make it easier to control her unit.

“I don’t mind. Players from the other teams will probably eat the snacks from my shop too, after all.” Increasing my profits was my goal in the first place. I couldn’t just not sell snacks. If they all used my ability-enhancing dagashi, then it wouldn’t be unfair.

“Then I will give a convertible Mobile Force unit to Mira—” Mister Mani started again.

“I told you, you can’t!” I snapped.

“Youngsters bully their elders every chance they get,” he sniffed.

“Hey, no, that’s not it...”

It was difficult to console Mister Mani, who had honestly fallen into a depression.

The cold was growing more severe, but the five people who’d been selected to represent Luganda were undergoing intensive training for the tournament every day. They took down monsters in the dungeon during the day and then started their training at night. It seemed pretty tough to me, but the five of them refused to slack off.

“Garmr, your defense is sloppy. That’s where you’re lacking.”

“Got it, ma’am.”

Michelle had transformed into a demonic coach.

“You’re too careful, Meryl. You have to attack more aggressively when you see an opportunity.”

“G-Got it.”

“Mira, your movements are a little too predictable. Dish out attacks that will catch your opponent off guard!”

“Okay!”

“As for you, Chichi...” Michelle hesitated. “You’re doing well. You shrewdly outwit your rival and your attacks are persistent—not bad. It feels like you’re making the best use of your unique traits.”

“What? Are those supposed to be compliments?” Chichi asked incredulously.

This somehow reminded me of after-school club activities. Michelle was strict, but their abilities definitely were improving. Everyone was happy since they could put these skills to use when fighting in the dungeon as well.

“All right, you brats. I’ve completed the weapons you requested,” Mister Sanaga announced, arriving at the venue with Miss Mirai. He had made weapons that suited each representative.

“Thank you, Mister Sanaga,” I said.

“Tch,” he spat. “Aside from Michelle, the others are so unreliable that I dunno what to do with ’em. I gotta at least give ’em some half-decent weapons.” With a sour look on his face, he lined up the Mobile Forces weapons. While they reflected the requests he’d been given, artistically, each of them was of an elaborate construction.

“You did some excellent work. Thank you.”

“You bet I did,” he scoffed. “Loads of people are gonna be coming. It’s annoying, but I’m not gonna make tools that aren’t worth their salt. Jeez, thanks to this guy, my shoulders are stiff like nobody’s business!”

Miss Mirai suppressed a laugh, watching Mister Sanaga grumble his complaints. The two of them had recently started living together. Seeing them like this, they looked like a well-matched husband and wife. “That’s what he says, but he’s the one most looking forward to the tournament,” she giggled.

“Even these weapons—he happily put them through trial and error over and over every night, so you don’t need to be too thankful.”

“Tch. I’m not looking forward to it that much! It’s just that if I’m gonna do it, I want the guys representing us to win.” He remained as tsundere as always.

“All right, everyone. Let’s all try out your new equipment.”

The players all happily took up their weapons.

The drills lasted for around two hours. The day had long ended, and their surroundings had grown pitch-black. The wind was so cold that Meryl and the others were shivering.

“Oof, it’s freezing! I don’t think I can keep going.” Meryl trembled. The other four’s lips were also blue. It looked like it was finally my turn.

“Leave it to me,” I said. “I’ll bring out something that’ll warm your bodies up right away.”

“Curry Rice Crackers?” she asked.

“Nope.” Curry Rice Crackers, which warmed up your body, were a staple item, but I intended to bring out a new product today. I called up my carrying-pole store and took out a dispenser that gleamed with a silver sheen.

Product name: Hot Doctor Pepper

Description: A carbonated drink that combines more than ten flavors to create a peculiar taste.

You’ll be addicted after three sips!

The warmth makes your soul quiver... Is something going to happen?!

Effects vary depending on the individual. One effect per person.

Price: Fifty rims

Dr. Pepper hadn't been a major beverage back in Japan. It had only been distributed in certain areas of the country, such as the Kanto region and Shizuoka City. However, the hot version of it had been a legendary drink. The dispenser I'd taken out was silver colored, with a large logo drawn on it. However, there had apparently been old dagashi-ya where they'd warmed up the drink bottles in a pot of hot water or had heated the drink itself in a kettle and then poured it into cups. Records had even remained of coffee shops and such offering this beverage.

"It has a kind of peculiar smell," Michelle murmured. "Is this...cinnamon?"

"That's right," I said. "You could tell, huh? As expected of you, Michelle."

Sniffing it in the same fashion, Chichi also butted in. "There's vanilla too. It somehow smells similar to something like a love potion—"

"Hey, don't compare Yusuke's product to something so indecent!" Michelle scolded her.

"What? I just shared my opinion!"

"Sisters shouldn't fight," I sighed. "More importantly, drink it before it gets cold. Apparently, you'll get a good effect, although it happens only once per person."

Responding to my encouragement, they stopped fighting and put the Hot Doctor Pepper to their lips.

"It's delicious!"

"Hmm..."

Apparently their tastes differed. Michelle, Meryl, and Garmr liked it, but Mira and Chichi seemed to not be so big on it. Dr. Pepper had been a distinctly divisive product. Incidentally, I liked it a lot, though I preferred it cold. "So did you feel anything?" I asked.

Meryl responded first. "Ah!"

"What's wrong?"

"I feel like I can use emission-type magic now..."

“What?!”

To our astonishment, she could release nonelemental magic from her sword.

“That effect is amazing,” I marveled. “How about everyone else?”

“I...” Chichi started.

“Yes, Chichi?”

“I might like cats now...”

“Say what?”

“Before this moment, I just couldn’t bring myself to like cats,” she explained, “but right now, I’m in the mood to fluff them up and sniff them to my heart’s content.”

“Th-That’s, um... Good for you...” So, it seemed that the product’s effect wasn’t guaranteed to enhance your abilities. Nevertheless, it had still caused a pretty drastic change in Chichi. “How about you, Mira?”

“I feel like I could eat green peas, which I’ve hated until now,” she replied. *Yeah, it’s a good thing to become less picky.*

“How about you, Garmr?”

“My upper arms got thicker by one centimeter. Heh heh heh, I’m so cool!” Garmr the meathead looked happy.

“And you, Michelle?”

Michelle was already strong as it was—what would happen if she became even stronger? While I was nervously awaiting her response, her cheeks shyly flushed and she let out a sweet sigh close to my ear. “I...seem to have gotten better at kissing. I might be able to tie a cherry stem knot with my tongue right now.”

“What?” Effects like that existed too?! *That’s amazing, Doctor!*

“D-Do you want me to try it out tonight? Um, if you’re okay with it at least...”

“Y-Yeah,” I stammered, flustered, “please do, I think...”

Everyone was watching our secret conversation with curiosity. The most

unreserved of the bunch, Garmr, loudly asked, “What effect did you get, ma’am?”

“It’s a secret!”

“Whaaat? Don’t say that. Just tell us.”

“No! I won’t tell anyone except for Yusuke!”

Everyone seemed to more or less get the idea from Michelle’s behavior. Nobody pried any further.

“Ho ho ho, this drink has a strange flavor.” Surprisingly, Mister Mani was also sipping away at some Hot Doctor Pepper.

“Good evening, Mister Mani,” I greeted him. “Did you come to watch them practice?”

“Yes... Huh? What is this?” Whoa, it looked like the Hot Doctor Pepper’s powers had also affected the god, Mister Mani.

“What’s wrong, Mister Mani?”

“I suddenly remembered.”

“How to make the energy packs?”

“I don’t know anything about that,” he replied. *What do you mean you don’t know? You’re the one who developed them...*

“Then what did you remember?”

“About the lift.”

“By lift, you mean an elevator?”

“That’s right. The dungeon elevator.”

Well, that was a word that had come totally out of left field—what was going to happen now? In order to unravel my tension, I also drank some Hot Doctor Pepper. Compared to when the drink was cold, the cinnamon and vanilla fragrances felt stronger.

Now, what effect will I get? If I’d had a choice, I’d have wanted it to strengthen my mana and make me able to see the future through my

Clairvoyance.

But nope, it turned out to be something entirely different. My soul quivered, and once the ability I'd had sleeping inside me blossomed, I became a Menko master. *It's not gonna be very useful, but I guess I'm happy...*

More importantly, I'd worry about the dungeon elevator first. I needed to get more information out of Mister Mani while he still remembered.

It was already late at night, but I was just so curious about the existence of that dungeon elevator that Mister Mani had mentioned. "Hmm... I want to confirm that it really exists while your memories are still clear." I didn't expect much of Mister Mani, whose ability to focus was fuzzy. He might forget again by tomorrow.

"Are you going to head into the dungeon?" Chichi asked, her face pale with tension.

"Well, the only thing is...it's late, you know?" I sighed. The monsters that roamed the dungeon grew more active at night and were more ferocious than during the day. Also, there'd been cases of stronger monsters from the floors below heading to the upper levels at night.

"Let's go, Mister Yusuke. I'll help out. If there is an elevator, then that'll make dungeon exploration a lot easier," Meryl said, offering me her assistance. At times like this, I found her assertiveness encouraging.

"Indeed," Mira chimed in. "It would be nice to be able to reach our destination without wasting our time and endurance. I'll also assist you." Her kindness encouraged me further.

"Where is the entrance to the dungeon elevator, Mister Mani?" I asked.

"The control room is on the first floor."

"That's doable, I think..." I mumbled.

"Heh heh, forming a temp team every once in a while isn't so bad," Garmr chuckled. "It's been a hot minute since I was in the vanguard with you, Meryl."

"Don't charge in like an idiot, Garmr. I've had it up to here with cleaning up

after you.”

“What did you say, you cavewoman?!” Even as they fought, they looked like they were having fun.

“Oh dear. You lot are hopeless, so I’ll tag along as well,” Chichi sighed. After all was said and done, she was also willing to lend a hand.

“Let’s go, Yusuke,” Michelle said. “We’ll have no trouble managing the dungeon with this group.” The people here were Luganda’s representatives, and their Mobile Forces strength would translate to strength in battle. Thanks to her words, I was also able to make my decision.

“All right, Mister Mani,” I said, “lead us to the dungeon elevator.”

“Ho ho ho, I hear you.” With the air of someone taking a mere nighttime stroll, Mister Mani tottered off with unsteady footsteps.

Before we headed into the dungeon, I brought out some of my store’s snacks and passed them around.

Product name: Yamada’s Crackers Tonight

Description: Enables you to see better in the dark.

Price: One hundred rims

This was a popular product with the adventurers since it made it possible to maintain your field of vision even in the gloomy dungeon. It saved candles and oil too, so it was also often bought by those who worked night shifts. Only half a month had passed since I started selling them, but the effects had been advertised through word of mouth, and Yamada’s Crackers Tonight were selling well even at my branch stores. It’d probably become a top product at Dagashiya Yahagi in short order. From what I’d heard, they were crackers with a long history, starting when my grandparents had been kids.

A brief moment after eating one, my field of vision brightened, as if I’d just taken off a pair of sunglasses.

“Convenient as ever,” Michelle said, “even though I’ve eaten too many of these recently, so I’m a bit tired of them.” Michelle ate Yamada’s Crackers Tonight every night as she knit. She was apparently hand knitting me a sweater.

“Don’t push yourself,” I had told her.

“I’m not,” she’d assured me. “I’m good at knitting and I’m having fun.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. It’s fun to put my love and magic into each and every stitch.”

“You’re putting in magic too?”

“That’s right. It has reflective magic and physical defense, and I’m also making it effective against poisons.” *No wonder it’s taking so long to make.* “Once finished, it’ll be stronger than plate armor that’s been enchanted with support magic.”

Um, I wouldn’t have expected a sweater covered in a heart pattern to have those kinds of effects...

“I won’t be able to finish before this winter,” she’d continued, “but don’t worry—I’ll finish it by next fall. It’ll be okay. It’s not heavy like plate armor. ≡”

“G-Got it.”

Love was heavy, but I’d accept it!

We only encountered a monster once along the way, but Michelle cleaned it up in an instant. She was as strong as always. Rushing in, drawing her sword, slashing the enemy—all three movements had seemed like one. I couldn’t keep up.

In the meantime, we’d reached the eastern part of the dungeon. It was a dead end with nothing of note in sight.

“We’ve arrived.” Mister Mani touched the wall in front of him as if he were checking for something and spoke in an inhuman voice. Maybe I could describe it as a divine message? It was a low and heavy sound but somehow also a high-pitched tone like hard metal being struck. Hearing the unreal, dissonant

harmonies, only now did I finally begin to tremble. Mister Mani really *was* a god.

The moment he closed his mouth, a door that hadn't been there before appeared and opened. It belonged to a retro elevator like those I'd seen before in black-and-white movies. A needle like an analogue clock's indicated what floor the elevator was on. You had to manually operate the door and use a lever to move the carriage up and down.

Michelle saw how many floors were marked on the dial and asked Mister Mani, "This dungeon has ten floors?"

"No, I feel like it goes deeper," he said. "Below B10, you must continue on foot."

"I see. Perhaps I'll look around tomorrow."

"You shouldn't," he warned her. "Even you will be unable to face the monsters on B10 by yourself."

"I see..."

Michelle could even handle the Royal Capital Dungeon's depths by herself—it was more dangerous than that?

"If it's dangerous for you of all people, then maybe it'd be better to seal this elevator up," I suggested. "If someone makes a mistake and heads to the floors below the one they intended, something terrible might happen."

"There's an elevator hall on each floor, and monsters don't appear there, so be at ease. If you'd like, you can restrict it so the lowest it will go is B4."

I was still uneasy, but I figured it would be fine if we did that. If someone wanted to go below B4, they could just obtain a permit. *We may as well hire someone to be in charge of the elevator so no mistakes happen.* That way, we could collect fees for using it from nonresident adventurers, which would mean we'd be killing two birds with one stone. I had Mister Mani teach me how to use the elevator on the spot.

"By the way, what's in the deepest part of this scary dungeon?"

"In the dungeon depths, there's a forgotten civilization's..."

I waited for his next words with bated breath.

“What was it?” He blinked. “I forgot.”

I knew it! Maybe there was something sleeping down there that was better off forgotten. Pandora’s box always led humans astray, after all. For now, I’d leave it untouched. There wasn’t anyone here that could go there anyway.

With the Four Cities Mobile Forces Tournament just around the corner, a big lodge was completed in Luganda. It was three stories high, with fifty guest rooms. It could accommodate a maximum of two hundred people and was the biggest structure in Luganda.

Man, I’m so glad we made it in time for the tournament. I planned to have the tournament’s participants and spectators stay here in Luganda. Many tourists would come here on day trips, but among them, there seemed to be those who’d come to stay the night too. We’d already received reservations, and at this rate, it looked like we’d be fully booked the day of the event.

The lodge would be put to good use even after the tournament. We planned to rent out rooms to wandering adventurers. News spread. Rumors said that you could make good money at the Lugandan Dungeon, so people like farmers from the neighboring areas were coming here to work for the winter. They stayed for an average of twenty days, but most of them built shacks and such in the forest to stay in. As the word “shacks” made clear, they weren’t nice. They were simple constructions made by gathering long, fallen branches, hemp ropes, and vines; tying them together to make a frame; and placing stuff like pine needles on top as a roof.

The real cold would be rolling in soon. Living in a shack during Luganda’s harsh winter would likely be rough. I planned to keep the fees reasonable for the sake of those adventurers.

Lodging fees, dungeon entrance fees, and elevator usage fees were Luganda’s principal revenue streams, so I wanted as many adventurers as possible to come here. To that end, opening this lodge—and making other such infrastructure improvements—was essential.

However, troubles did arise when there were more wandering adventurers. Crime had even increased. Michelle and the others were watching like hawks, so no truly heinous crimes had happened yet, but there were some idiots who'd get drunk and start fights. Among them were men who'd hit on girls, or—conversely—hopeless female adventurers trying to kidnap pretty boys. It was a pain to rein in people like that. Fortunately, many of our residents were strong, so thanks to everyone's cooperation, Luganda remained peaceful.

Today too, Garmr and his group had seized three ruffians. They'd been extorting people in broad daylight. I was really glad they'd been taken care of before anyone had gotten hurt.

"Mister Yahagi," Garmr announced, "we took those three idiots who drew their swords in the plaza to jail."

"Thank you, Garmr. Are you hurt?"

"Aww, what? Guys like them are nothing." Garmr and his team had also gotten stronger. After all, even if they'd only been lower-ranked ones, Garmr and company had still managed to capture some sword-wielding adventurers.

"This is nothing much, but please accept these." In addition to the reward money, I handed some of my store's products to them.

Product name: Gold Medal Chocolate

Description: A chocolate that imitates a gold medal with a red ribbon.

Hanging it on your neck elevates your mood, while eating it slightly improves your physical strength, your agility, and your mana.

Price: One hundred fifty rims

The fact that just one of these raised three different abilities made them convenient, but not many people bought them since they were expensive. It was probably because it was cheaper to eat three individual snacks with those corresponding effects. I had plenty in stock, so they were just right to use as

rewards.

“This is cool!”

“Heh heh, it’s kinda embarrassing when people compliment you, but this is nice.”

“Let’s go show these off to everyone!”



Garmr and his group were happily wearing the chocolates around their necks. Older teens in this world weren't as jaded as the ones I remembered from my past life and still had their innocence when it came to things like this. They were a tough-looking bunch, but seeing them with dagashi happily hanging around their necks was heartwarming. *Is this a kind of "gap moe" too?*

I perked up. "Oh, right, I have something to ask of you guys."

"What is it, Mister Yahagi? If it's something we can do, just say the word."

"We'll be having a Mobile Forces Tournament here soon, right? If possible, I want Team Garmr to work as security. Well, Garmr, you're one of the representatives, so I can't have you do too much."

"When you say security, what do you want us to do?" Garmr asked.

"Many things, like guiding spectators, helping lost kids, mediating fights, and apprehending criminals. Of course, I'll pay you guys properly."

Although they were tough, they were all good-natured. Plus, going into the dungeon all the time together had taught them to coordinate well. I felt that they were perfect for the role of security.

"So we're basically guards?"

"Yep."

Garmr turned to his team. "We'd be doing this for Mister Yahagi, who's looked after us all this time. You guys wanna give it a go?"

"Yeah!" they cheered.

"That'll be a huge help," I said, relieved. "Now the tournament will go smoothly. I'll prepare uniforms and a security manual, so I'll leave the rest to you."

"Uniforms?"

"Yeah. Wearing uniforms will make it easier to identify you guys. I'll give them a cool design, so please wear them."

The group was over the moon with joy when I told them about the uniforms. They might have been at that age when they liked things like that.

Luganda was growing colder and colder. It was finally the time of year to put the magic heater to use. I gave Michelle a heads-up about Garmr and his team while she was replenishing the magic crystals in the living room heater.

"I asked Team Garmr to work as security," I said. "I think they'll be able to get the job done."

"I'm glad to hear it," she replied. "I'll also keep an eye out on the day of the event, so don't worry. I'll seize every last bad guy and properly punish them all."

"Not so fast. You have another important job to do, don't you, Michelle?"

"Huh?"

"As the feudal lord's fiancée, you have to make our guests feel welcome."

"Ah..." She then collapsed.

"Michelle!" I cried. Steam was rising from her head. "Get a hold of yourself, Michelle!"

"I'm sorry," she murmured. "I was so happy I passed out. Wait, then maybe I should do some intensive training in how to smile? Or maybe I should get a slightly flashier dress?"

"You're charming enough as you are," I said. "If you want a dress, then I'll prepare one for you." The tournament was in one month. My hope was that it would increase my earnings and let me level up, so I had made all sorts of preparations. "By the way, how about those energy packs?"

"We have most of the materials but we'll need larger amounts of them," she replied. "We're gathering the rest little by little in the dungeon, though, so don't worry."

"Don't push yourself too much."

"I'll be fine. Exploring the dungeon has been easier lately thanks to the dungeon elevator." She puffed out her chest with full confidence. If things kept going at this pace, I felt like it wouldn't be long before the Zolid was up and running. However, before that happened, a bit of trouble would arise with the dungeon elevator...

The Adventurer Meryl's Diary: Entry 6

Finally, the day has been decided... That's right—the day that the adventurer Meryl and her Red Shoulder will become known throughout the country will be the day of the Four Cities Mobile Forces Tournament!

Man, I'm so excited. They say that it's gonna be like a festival. I'm sure there are going to be a lot of street stalls too. I want to represent Luganda, so I'm obviously participating in the qualifying competition. My Zako isn't the same as before, thanks to Mister Mani. It's the Renewed Zako II now. I'll really polish up my skills and become one of Luganda's representatives!

A qualifying competition to select the Lugandan representatives took place. Long story short, I actually won third place! Of course, I couldn't beat Michelle and Chichi, but I was third place in the knockout tournament. Even in the round-robin tournament, I lost three times and got third place.

Incidentally, not only did Michelle and Chichi beat me, but so did Rigal. Seriously, he is really becoming uncute, daring to gain a point against me. You know, he seems to do his homework on me well. It felt like he honestly knew the tricks I'd have up my sleeve, so I'm super frustrated!!! I gotta come up with some new techniques. Adding more variety to my battle-axe attacks is a must.

Intensive Mobile Forces training for Luganda's team has started. Miss Michelle's coaching is strict, but everyone has become remarkably stronger. My mana management has improved dramatically, and even my combat power during my dungeon dives has increased. Compared to before, the mana efficiency of my Body Enhancement Magic has improved, and my specialty—my three consecutive attacks—has evolved to four. Not only that, after I drank the Hot Doctor Pepper that Mister Yusuke gave me, I finally grasped how to use emission-type magic!

It's a technique where you take a sword that's been infused with nonelemental magic and release its mana. Although it isn't that powerful, it's still a long-range attack, which I didn't have any of until now. That means that the scope of my potential attacks, such as creating diversions or launching surprise attacks, has broadened. I was so happy that I used it to my heart's content in the dungeon today. Although, because of that, I used up too much mana and had to buy twenty pieces of Ten-Rim Gum. Yet why is it that I didn't win a single time even after I bought so many? Mira won after just four tries.

Garmr and his team are so annoying, flaunting their Gold Medal Chocolate everywhere. They apparently got them as a reward from Mister Yusuke after cleaning up some baddies. They kept going, "Are you jealous?" so I wanted to shout back, "Are you guys just a bunch of children?!"

Well, it's not like I don't understand how they feel. They've never been complimented before. I think they're happy that someone they adore has acknowledged them. I'm the same way.

All right, the Luganda Team and I are gonna blow the Four Cities Mobile Forces Tournament out of the water! I'm gonna do my best!!!

Chapter 7: Chichi's Secret Scheme

The Lugandan Dungeon's first aid station was a small room in the middle of B2. Chichi had formerly been reviled as a wicked siren—a temptress who led men astray—but she was now working hard as a healer there.

“Okay, you're good as new,” she said as she finished treating an adventurer. “The wound is closed, but it'll open again if you push yourself. You should stop exploring for the day.”

“Thank you, Doctor Chichi.”

Chichi stared, dumbfounded, as the patched-up adventurer left, then murmured to herself, “Doctor Chichi, huh...?”

She was living a pretty simple life now compared to when she'd been queen. She sometimes mocked herself, saying she'd fallen into ruin, but deep down in her heart, she felt that this peaceful lifestyle wasn't all that bad. Chichi had definitely changed. What with her exile to Luganda, her shared life with Marco, and her new role as a healer in the dungeon, that fact was gradually becoming more and more apparent.

(Well, I'm still causing trouble for Marco, as always...)

She still couldn't cook at all nor was she capable of doing laundry, so she completely relied on Marco in those areas of her daily life. Chichi *did* have the motivation. However, she left things dirtier than they'd been before she'd “cleaned” them. Even when she cooked, she wasted a ton of ingredients.

(I'm good at making poison, so why?)

In an attempt to soothe her worries, Marco had told her that all people had their strengths and weaknesses, but she couldn't shake that feeling of being indebted. It was that same way she felt about her past.

Today was rare in that there weren't many patients. With nothing to do, she rose from her chair and gave a big stretch. This room was about forty meters square, give or take, and there were all sorts of murals of golems on the walls.

At the entrance was a strange-looking statue. Was describing it as a rhinoceros head on top of a human body accurate enough? It was a statue of a rhinoceros-like creature which had pervy eyes and stood in an upright posture. It was a pretty fascinating statue, so she often stared at it when she got bored.

“It’s ugly...” she said aloud, tracing a finger along its horn. Unlike a normal rhinoceros’s horn, there were innumerable warts of various sizes on it. “If you at least lost this horn, your face would be slightly more pleasant to look at. Hmm...can I take it off?”

As soon as the idea occurred to her, she put in some elbow grease and tried twisting the rhinoceros’s horn. And as for the result? When she roughly turned the horn, the statue’s mouth, which had been firmly shut, opened wide.

“Ew, that made it even uglier? Hmm, what is that?” Driven by curiosity, she peered into the mouth and found a piece of paper neatly folded up inside. It looked pretty old and was fairly damaged. Thinking that something important might be written on it, she carefully opened it.

“This is...a map?” she murmured. “And it’s using an ancient form of writing. I think Michelle could read it, but...” Chichi couldn’t read it completely since she’d mostly fooled around during her student days. Still, she could at least pick out some words here and there. “A shrine... An enshrined deity maybe? Underground... Sixth floor... A Golden Golem Statue...” She paused. “A Golden Golem Statue!”

She was suddenly convinced that this was a treasure map she’d gotten a hold of. However, B6 was a dangerous place. Excellent mage though she was, even she likely couldn’t handle it through ordinary means. “But if I at least have this...”

Nobody else was in the room, but she put the map in her bosom in order to hide it from prying eyes.

Yusuke’s Side

The morning rush had come and gone when Chichi stopped by my shop alone.

“Welcome,” I greeted her. “It’s rare for you to come by yourself.”

“W-Well, it’s nice every once in a while...” she trailed off. Chichi usually came to my shop with Marco. As far as I recalled, this was her first time coming alone. I knew she’d turned over a new leaf, but she’d put me through a terrible time, so I stayed slightly on guard.

“Are you going to the first aid station?”

“Yes. I thought I should buy some snacks to leave out there, so...” She answered me without pausing for a moment, her hands busily putting snacks into her basket one after another. It wasn’t a normal amount—she was putting everything in, from Ten-Rim Gum to Odama Candy to Tasty Sticks to Stick Chocolate and more.

“Hey now, what’s going on?” I asked, slightly alarmed. “It’s like you’re about to go off and fight monsters.”

“I’m just doing a little bulk buying. You don’t have those monster card chips?”

“Not here. Just give me a second.” I had no stock left on my shelves, so I grabbed a box from the back. “How about this one too while you’re at it? It’s a popular product at the moment.”

Product name: Wheat Chocolate 666

Description: Contains 666 beads of wheat chocolate.

When you eat it, you’ll get a cool-looking suntan. It’s also a vitamin D supplement.

After one bag, you won’t need a tanning salon!

Price: One hundred rims

Adventurers spent the majority of each day in the dungeon, so many of them were pale. As a result, this snack was especially popular with young adventurers. “Do you wanna try getting a tan too? You’ll probably look like one of those gyaru from back in the day.”

“What’s a gyaru?” she asked before brushing me off. “I don’t need a snack with that kind of magical effect. More importantly, I want dagashi that’ll

enhance my combat ability.”

“Why?” Chichi had been spending her time healing at the first aid station recently, so this wasn’t adding up.

“I-I want to act out every once in a while, okay?” she stammered. “Gosh, can you not ask me all these questions? I’ll tell on you to Michelle.”

I didn’t know what she’d tell on me *for*, but I didn’t wanna stir up any trouble. She could be very cunning, and Michelle was deeply jealous. In order to evade this potential mess, I decided to just ring her up. “All right, it’s 4,020 rims total.” It was an unthinkable amount to spend on dagashi, but Chichi slapped the money on the counter and hurried out.

And then an incident occurred.

Michelle barged into the store just before noon. All the adventurers were off at the dungeon, so my store was currently empty. Michelle would normally throw herself into my chest without a second thought, but she was acting differently today.

“Yusuke, this is bad!” she gasped.

“What’s the matter?” I asked. “Did something happen in the dungeon? Is someone injured?”

“That’s not it. The dungeon elevator is acting weird. It shouldn’t be able to go past B4, but it’s stopped at B6. I’m glad I happened to find it, but what’s going on?”

Had the controller malfunctioned? Or had someone tampered with it? *But you have to press the buttons in a certain order to change the settings.* There were extremely few people who knew the right code. The only people whom Mister Mani had explained the elevator to were Meryl, Mira, Garmr, Chichi, Michelle, and me. Had someone among us taken a risk and headed down to B6? *It would be great if nothing has happened, but...*

As my mind raced through the possibilities, the members of Team Garmr appeared.

“I’m hungry,” Garmr sighed. “One large serving of Yakisoba, Mister Yahagi.” They took up spots in front of the iron plate and began innocently waving their spatulas around. Had they just come back from B6? *I’ll feel around for more information.*

“You’re early today,” I noted. “Have you finished exploring already?”

“No. We just defeated a Cockatrice on B3 and it dropped some meat!” When you defeated a monster, it left behind money and magic crystals before disappearing. However, there were rare occasions when they dropped items. “It’s easier to resurface now thanks to the dungeon elevator, right? So we decided we’d have lunch aboveground. We wanted to make some Yakisoba with the Cockatrice meat.”

I softly whispered in Michelle’s ear, “It seems Garmr wasn’t the one who tampered with the elevator settings.”

“Yeah,” she agreed. “I didn’t think he could have memorized the passcode in the first place.”

That’s a good point... Because of his larger-than-life personality, Garmr didn’t care much about finer details. He was vulgar, but he was also an honest person, so he would have spoken to me if he’d wanted to go to B6.

“By the way,” I said, “did you spot Team Harukaze?”

“Hmm, Meryl and the others?” He blinked. “They’re on B2.”

“B2?” That was weird. They normally worked on floors B3 and below.

“They said that Marco took the day off today. That’s why they decided to work on B2—for safety.” He paused. “Oh yeah, Chichi wasn’t in the first aid room, so maybe they went off together somewhere?”

“Ooooh—!” The adventurers hooted suggestively and began making a ruckus, but I wasn’t on the same wavelength. *There’s no way... They didn’t go to B6...did they?*

“Yusuke, if we wait until something happens, it’ll be too late,” Michelle said.

“I know. I’ll check where Marco and Chichi are in the back. I’m leaving the shop to you.”

Grabbing a Stick Chocolate to boost my Clairvoyance, I entered the back tatami room.

Chichi's Side

Seriously, what the hell?! The monsters on B6 were way stronger than I'd expected. I might've kicked the bucket a long time ago if I'd come alone. *I'm really glad that Marco tagged along...*

"Chichi, we can't keep going any farther," he said. "Let's leave for now."

I silently handed him a Morocco Yogurt, conveying my refusal through this action. My will was resolute.

"You want the golden statue that bad?" he asked.

"Yeah... If you don't agree, then go home. It won't be worth even one rim to you." I didn't intend to share any of it. That was why I'd come here without inviting anyone else.

"I got it, Chichi. You can do whatever you like, so let me stay with you until the end." Without waiting for my response, he readjusted his grip on the Legendary Spiked Bat and began to walk once more.

I hung my head, watching his back. Even now, I couldn't be honest. Even when this situation had us dancing with the possibility of death, I still couldn't say thank you—I really did hate myself.

By the time we reached the room depicted on the map, Marco and I were thoroughly exhausted. I'd fixed up our wounds with my magic, but I was on the verge of exhausting my mana. Thankfully, the room was free of monsters, but once I'd barricaded the door, I sank to the floor.

"Chichi, here's the last Ten-Rim Gum," Marco said as he offered it to me. I'd bought us dagashi in bulk, but we'd already eaten up most of them. My arms were so heavy, it was almost impossible for me to take the gum from him.

"Sorry, Marco, but can you feed it to me?"

“Huh? Yeah...I can.” Men were so stupid. They got happy just from a little wheedling. Still, his embarrassed smile made me happy too. It was only a small amount, but the sweet gum restored some of my mana, making me feel a bit better.

“Now, let’s see the treasure for ourselves.” Putting all of my energy into my legs, I somehow managed to stand up and survey our surroundings. Just from what I could glean at a glance, it wasn’t any different from the countless other rooms that existed here. However, we’d come here by following the map. *This should be the correct place.*

“Chichi, look!” Marco exclaimed. “There’s a small crest carved near the bottom of the wall.” The crest Marco had found was about the size of a fingertip and shaped like a gear. The treasure map had the same symbol drawn on it.

“There’s no mistaking it. It’s definitely here.” Weren’t there any other hints? I once again carefully reviewed the ancient text I couldn’t even read half of and singled out the words I could. “‘Golden Golem Statue’... ‘Altar’... This is...‘rotate’?”

Rotate... Did this gear rotate? This might be a trap. However, I couldn’t hang back, not after coming all this way. “Marco, step back a little.”

“Sure, but why?”

“It’s nothing,” I snapped. “Just do as I said.”

After having him step back against the opposite wall, I placed my fingers on the gear crest. That way, I should be the only one to get caught in any traps.

First, I would rotate it to the right... *No good.* Nothing had happened. Next was turning it to the left...

The wall let out a low rumbling sound. *I did it!* The wall slid aside and revealed the room it had been hiding. And in there was—

“Whoa! Is this real?” Marco gasped. On a low pedestal, a Golden Golem Statue at least sixty centimeters tall was enshrined. It was a sort of roundish Rock Golem, but its entire body shone with gold.

“Hee...hee hee...” I’d finally done it. Feeling a mixture of fatigue and triumph, a dry laugh spilled from the corner of my mouth.

“Th-This is amazing,” Marco whispered in awe. “How much do you think it’s worth, Chichi?”

“Let’s see...” I hummed. “At least 300,000,000 rims for the gold alone. If you account for the artistic merit and historical value, the price might go a little higher.” I carefully checked the pedestal, but there didn’t seem to be any traps or the like set up there. The problem was how to carry this to the elevator. I used both hands to pick it up and see how heavy it was, but it had a substantial weight to it. “Whew. This is tough.”

“Yeah. It’s so small, but it’s as heavy as you are.”

“Don’t say such tactless things,” I lightly scolded him. *I should be a little lighter than this thing.* But what should we do? Our endurance was at its limit.

“Chichi, let’s head back after all. We’ll ask for help.”

“No! I’m going to bring it back even if I have to drag it!”

“If you do that, it’ll wear down the precious gold. Miss Michelle should understand if we explain. Let’s try talking to her.”

“No way. I don’t want to rely on my sister!” I cried. “I’m having you help me, but I was originally supposed to do this by myself. I’m going to put this away in the National Treasury, just like I planned. That’s why I came here without calling on anyone else!” I’d suffered this much already. At this point, I couldn’t ask for Michelle’s help.

“Are you really sure about this, Chichi? We could live a comfortable life in a foreign country with the money from selling this.”

“Humph,” I huffed. “Back when I was queen, I used billions of rims. What’s a few hundred million? Also, I want to pay back a little of what I used, even though this pitiful amount won’t be enough to compensate... Aren’t *you* mad? You’re going to such pains, yet you won’t get a single rim out of this.”

“If it satisfies you, then I’m happy.”

Marco would never lie to me. That was why my chest hurt. “I’m sorry. This is

all because you got involved with me...”

“I’m really happy.”

“Marco...” I just couldn’t put my feelings into words anymore, so I let my emotions guide me and dove into his chest.

Yusuke’s Side

The heavy-kissing scene had begun, so I ended my Clairvoyance. Still, I was surprised. I hadn’t known that a golden statue like that was sleeping below the Lugandan Dungeon. And what had surprised me even more were Chichi’s words.

Hmm... I figured I had to help them somehow. Steeling my resolve, I pulled open the door of the built-in closet.

Chichi didn’t want anyone to know what she was doing. In that case, I wanted to respect her wishes. To that end, it was probably good to help her in a way that she wouldn’t notice. I also didn’t want my Clairvoyance to be discovered, so it looked like the best option was to lend a helping hand from a distance.

I took out a snack I’d actually been planning to start offering at the shop this afternoon.

Product name: Exciting Slime

Description: The kind of dagashi you make.

If you mix the two types of powder in order, you can make a slime-like jelly.

Consuming it lets you camouflage yourself as a slime for just fifteen minutes.

Price: Two hundred rims

It was on the pricier side for the kind of dagashi that customers made for themselves. Once transformed into a slime, you wouldn’t be affected by enemy

attacks anymore, so it was a product that seemed useful for things like scouting. It was also fun that there was a one-in-a-hundred chance of getting a Metal Exciting Slime. Eating one of those would turn you into a rapidly moving slime—it truly was an exciting slime. With this, you'd probably even be able to safely walk on B6. No adventurers hunted for monsters there either, so there was no need to worry about being mistaken for a real slime and taken down. My plan was to go to the room Chichi and Marco were resting in and secretly give them some snacks.

Michelle opened the door to the back tatami room and studied my face. "Well? Did you find out where Chichi is?" Even if they didn't get along, she was still worried about her little sister. Since coming to Luganda, they'd been talking more, and while it was only occasionally, they'd begun to smile in each other's presence.

I explained the situation to Michelle.

"I wouldn't have guessed that Chichi was thinking that way..." she murmured.

"Well, it's a good thing, isn't it? So...I'm gonna head out for a bit."

"Are you gonna be okay on your own?"

"It's all right—all I'm doing is giving them some dagashi. I won't be attacked if I go there as a slime."

"I got it," she said. "But don't you cheat on me with a female slime!" I had no interest in doing such a thing. Also, I didn't think monsters born from the magical fog could even harbor amorous feelings. The barrier between species was much higher and thicker than my yandere witch imagined.

I soothed the uneasy Michelle and headed to the dungeon.

When the elevator door slid open, I found myself in a small hall. According to the information Mister Mani had given me, there weren't any monsters here. I promptly opened the Exciting Slime and began making the snack.

"Aw man, it wasn't the metal slime." I'd been hoping for the high-speed movement effect, but I'd have to wait until next time. "Oh well. Let's just get on

with mixing it. I guess I'll make the juice first."

I put powder one into the attached bowl and filled it to the line with water.

"If I don't stir it well, this batch will fail." Using the spoon, I stirred it thoroughly, until there were no clumps left. As an accomplished dagashi-ya, I even checked the bottom to make sure there weren't any lumps stuck there.

"All right then!" When I licked the spoon I was using to stir, it tasted faintly of ramune.

"Then, if I add powder two in here..." When I stirred in the rest of the powder, the liquid turned into a gel, and finally, I had a completed jiggly jelly.

"Before I eat this, I guess I should check where Chichi and Marco are one more time." Thanks to my recent level-ups, even using Clairvoyance put almost no burden on my body. So long as I didn't look into the past or future, I could probably use it multiple times.

"Let's see, Marco and Chichi are— Ack!" They were still making out in the same room... *That's fine*. As engrossed as they were, they'd probably stay put for a while. I immediately ended my Clairvoyance and ate the Exciting Slime.

"Hmm. Its texture is chewier than jelly," I noted. Once I'd finished eating, my body began to feel creepy-crawly. It seemed I could turn into a slime any time I wanted. When I circulated the mana inside me, not only my body but even the objects I had on me turned to slime. My preparations were complete.

The fact that my armor and weapon could both be camouflaged as slime made this effect amazing. On top of that, it was an exceptional item that let me immediately cancel the effect at any time. It was a tad pricey, but I had a hunch that it would become a hit product.

Upon exiting the hall, I immediately encountered a monster. *How scary...* It was a bearlike monster about four meters long. It had a gnarled exoskeleton and bared muscles, and you could tell just by looking at its face that it was ferocious. If I hadn't been camouflaged as a slime, my head would've definitely been taken off in one bite. Thankfully, the creature only took a brief look at me and went lumbering off through the dungeon passageways.

Seriously, I was so scared, I was about to wet myself. I was surprised Marco and Chichi had been able to take down something like that. At the end of the day, Chichi really was a brilliant witch.

To give myself a little extra time, I went to a small, safe room, ate even more Exciting Slime, and proceeded along the path. I then finally arrived at the treasure room.

Were they still here? When I placed my ear against the door...

“Chichi! Chichi!”

“Oh, Marco! ≡”

They’re still at it?! Ugh, hurry up and come out already. I took the bag I’d prepared, filled with plenty of snacks like Exciting Slime and the stamina-recovering Kabayaki-san-suke, put it down at the door, and made myself scarce.

Chichi’s Side

Having recovered our endurance and mana, Marco and I left the room and found a strange bag beyond the door.

“Marco, was this here before?” I asked.

“No, I don’t think so.”

It might have been an unknown monster disguising itself as a paper bag. I nervously checked it, but inside there were only dagashi-ya snacks.

“Why are there dagashi here?” Marco remarked, looking into the bag. “Oh, a new product.” I’d never seen the snack that Marco took out—the Exciting Slime. “Was Mister Yahagi here?”

Why would Yahagi have come here? Had he come to rescue us? But there was no way that could have happened. I’d come here without telling anyone. “I don’t know but...let’s use it for now. If we disguise ourselves as slimes, we should be able to reach the elevator hall safe and sound.”

Marco and I briefly returned to the room, and after preparing the dagashi, we began to move.

Thanks to the dagashi that had been left, we managed to return to the surface. I hid the golden statue in my house and cast a sealing barrier on it. Now nobody could steal it. Next, I'd try to get in touch with someone like Prime Minister Ethel, who would likely come here to pick it up.

I visited the dagashi-ya to get some Assembled Gliders.

"Welcome," Yahagi greeted me. There wasn't anything out of the ordinary in his demeanor.

"I want you to share some Assembled Gliders with me," I said.

"They're not for sale, by order of the government."

"I just have a bit of business to take care of. I want to get in touch with the higher-ups in that government..."

"Well, in that case..." He brought the product from the back.

"Hey, were you at B6 today?" I suddenly asked.

"Hmm? Ah...well, I was just patrolling around. Nothing good happened—I even dropped my bag full of snacks. How did you know?"

"No particular reason... Thank you."

"Huh? What are you thanking me for?"

"Shut up! It's nothing." It was clear as day that Yahagi was playing dumb—but I'd been able to express my thanks, so I'd leave it be. I still hated myself, but I might have been a slightly better person now than I'd been yesterday.

"Thank you..." In a voice too small to hear, I once again murmured my thanks before crossing the threshold of the dagashi-ya.

The Adventurer Meryl's Diary: Entry 7

Marco has been acting weird lately. He is locked in during battle, but during breaks he looks like he's thinking really hard about something. Did he have a fight with Chichi?

I casually investigated, but it seems that wasn't the case. I spotted them together outside the dungeon, and they were happily walking together. They seemed to be having fun talking, so I figure the problem must lie elsewhere.

Still, Chichi has really changed. It's like she's mellowed out. She's lost her old gaudiness and now gives off the impression of being a calm beauty.

Oh right, recently, Marco has stopped calling Chichi "Lady Chichi." He's started to address her normally, without a title. I don't know if something happened between them, but maybe they're growing to be on equal terms? As someone with no relationship experience, I don't really understand the feelings behind things like that.

I want a boyfriend already...but Luganda has a small population, so no matter what, the dating pool is limited. Garmr? Nuh-uh! Rigal? Hmm...I wonder. If only Mister Yusuke was a little more wild... Well, I'm scared of Miss Michelle, so I'll never say that out loud. If by some chance she misunderstood me, I feel like she'd blow the newly completed arena to smithereens.

I tried out the new product, Exciting Slime. It's a little pricey, but as expected of something that Mister Yusuke recommends, it's a useful snack. We used it today on B3, and that was the easiest time we've ever had scouting. When we disguise ourselves as slimes, monsters don't even notice us. Apparently, there are teams who've used it to disguise themselves and launch surprise attacks in unison from behind the monsters' backs, but that's the way teams with cash defeat monsters.

Each Exciting Slime costs 200 rims, so if we did that, we'd be coughing up 800

rims each time. It's something we'd have to carefully consider. It might be a good idea if the enemy is a big shot, like a Metal Golem... I should discuss it with the team.

Personally, I wanna eat the Metal Exciting Slime and experience the high speediness. But you know, I am a drop-dead gorgeous woman with hopeless lottery luck, right? (I'm just saying that—I'm not serious.) That's why I think it'd be impossible to pull it myself. Thus, I decided to give the money to Mira and have her buy it.

It was on the fifth day of having her buy me a box a day that we finally succeeded in pulling the Metal Exciting Slime! Unlike the other slimes, it was the color of lead. I really struggled to bring myself to eat it, but the taste was the same as usual—ramune flavored. I used it right away in the dungeon, and it was amazing. I think it increased my speed tenfold.

Running around the dungeon in the blink of an eye, I found a descending staircase to B4. Looking back, I'm a bit scared for myself, but I'm impressed I didn't get lost. I was really careless.

Also, I realized the Exciting Slime's fatal flaw. If you're camouflaged as a Slime, monsters won't attack you, but conversely, adventurers will come after you. While I was scouting today, an arrow whizzed by and nearly got me. I immediately canceled my disguise and explained that I was human, but that was a really close call.

Even my equipment mimicked slime, so I didn't have anything to indicate that I was human. It's really ironic that the perfection of the disguise is its fatal flaw. It's also a little annoying that you have to make the snack yourself in order to use the disguise. You wouldn't have the time in an emergency.

When I told Mister Yusuke that it might not sell well after this, he was bummed out. It was kinda cute.

Chapter 8: The Mobile Forces Tournament

The day of the tournament was finally here. The number of tourists had started increasing a few days ago, but today, there were so many people crowded together that I feared Luganda might collapse.

“It’s just like the Shibuya Scramble crosswalk,” I remarked.

“Shi-boo-ya? Scramble?” Michelle asked.

“It was a place in my former life that had a lot of people.”

As we exchanged idle conversation, Michelle and I continued to move our hands without pause. A line of nearly one hundred people stretched in front of the dagashi-ya street stall.

“Here you are, the Super Orb lottery. Oh, congratulations. You got number 3.”

“Welcome. Hot Doctor Pepper coming right up.”

We had the aide Mister Nakaram, Team Harukaze, and Chichi helping us out, but the customers just kept coming. I might have been in for a huge level-up, just like I’d planned from the beginning.

“Sir Yahagi, we’ve run out of Yakisoba ingredients,” Mister Nakaram, who’d thrown an apron over his brawny muscles and happily taken charge of the Yakisoba, reported to me with his eyebrows knit together.

Mister Nakaram was a double threat, as adept at preparing application documents as he was at cooking. Particularly when it came to Yakisoba, he made it tastier than even Michelle could, so today, he was displaying his abilities to the fullest, as if he were the star of the show.

“Nothing we can do about it,” I said. “Let’s stop selling Yakisoba. Go over and assist Mira—she’s in charge of the drawstring lottery.”

“Understood. It’s about time you start preparing for the opening remarks.” As the feudal lord of the town hosting the tournament, I had to give the opening speech—but I wasn’t used to speaking in front of so many people.

“Do I really have to do it?” I asked. “I’m kinda embarrassed.”

“What are you saying? This is your duty as a lord.”

Michelle quietly sidled up to me. “If you’re worried, do you want me to hold your hand as you make your speech?”

During the opening remarks? “No, it’d be more embarrassing that way. Don’t worry—I’m not used to it, but I can at least greet people.”

I left the store to the others and began to prepare for the event’s opening.

The Mobile Forces arena was overflowing with people. Seats were reserved for guests, so everyone else had to stand up to watch, and many of them had climbed on top of trees and roofs to do so. When I ascended to the stage, the audience burst into loud applause.

“Thank you very much for coming here today to attend the very first Four Cities Mobile Forces Tournament.” I raised a hand to quell the roaring cheers and explained the schedule and rules for the day.

“The five-member teams of representatives shall compete in a round-robin tournament,” I said. “Each team’s first, second, third, fourth, then last fighter will compete, and the team that racks up three victories first wins.” No matter how strong Michelle was, it wouldn’t be so easy to win the championship. It was the kind of competition in which the *total* wins mattered. “Also, for this event, I have a special present to give to today’s participants.”

Product name: BEZ (Limited-Edition Dragon Series)

Description: A peppermint-flavored tablet candy.

Various character heads are attached to the dispensers.

It’s designed so that a tablet is pushed out when you bend the head back.

If you eat the dragon series BEZ, a portion of a dragon’s power will dwell within you for just ten seconds.

Price: Not for sale

BEZ really took me back. If I remembered correctly, my cousin had been collecting a certain red-bowed kitty's series of dispensers. I also really treasured the transforming-robot series that a relative who'd gone overseas had bought me as a souvenir. They were probably still at my parents' house somewhere. The series I was handing out this time consisted of dispensers featuring dragon heads. There were twenty varieties, including Earth Dragon, Wind Dragon, Fire Dragon, Water Dragon, and Thunder Dragon, and their elaborate construction gave them a high-quality feel. Normal BEZ dispensers were made of plastic, but the limited-edition ones were made of metal. They also gave off a vibe of toughness, so they'd probably be perfect as participation prizes for the representative players.

"This is a limited-edition series meant for our representative players," I said, "but Dagashi-ya Yahagi is also selling BEZ for the general public. Series such as monsters, animals, and Mobile Forces are available, so please take this opportunity to purchase some. Each one is 100 rims." I shrewdly advertised my dagashi-ya, but a dash of self-promotion shouldn't be a big deal. "The first match between Toskea and Balast will commence immediately after this. Everyone, please wait right where you are."

And so, the Four Cities Mobile Forces Tournament commenced.

Balast won in the first match, but it was way too early to predict who the overall winner would be. How well you were matched to your opponent was a significant factor in battle, and sometimes the outcome was as unpredictable as if it had been decided by rock-paper-scissors. Well, powerhouses like Michelle, who *would* be predictable winners, did exist but...

"Stop! The winner is Luganda's last fighter, Michelle!" Shouts of joy welled up in the arena. In the Luganda versus Bethel match, the first and second fighters Garmr and Mira had lost back-to-back, but the third fighter Meryl, the fourth fighter Chichi, and the final fighter Michelle had won consecutively and turned the match around.

“Yusuke!” Having won the battle, Michelle ran over to where I sat on the bleachers. “Did you see my match?”

“You were amazing,” I marveled. “You’re Luganda’s guardian deity.”

“Oh no.” She blushed. “I’m not that special. (*Oh my gosh! Yusuke praised me.*≡)” She happily seated herself next to me.

“I just leveled up,” I told her. “Apparently, when the spectators saw the BEZ I’m giving out as participation prizes, they all immediately wanted to buy them. Right now, Rigal and the others are going around the bleachers acting as vendors.”

“That’s such great news,” she replied. “The festival has turned out to be a huge success.”

“Yeah, and I have all of you to thank for it. By the way, which BEZ do you want?” Each participant was allowed to pick the BEZ that they wanted as their participation prize, starting from the person with the most wins. Michelle would almost certainly get to pick first.

She hummed to herself in thought. “Hmm... Yeah, I think I want the Dark Dragon Lord, Haderer... I would’ve liked a cuter one, though.”

All of the dragon heads featured in this particular series *were* very menacing.

“I wish there was a dispenser with your head on it...” she mumbled.

“Mine?” I asked, baffled. “That would be like displaying a severed head—it’d be gross.”

“It wouldn’t be gross!” she insisted. “If you ever sold one, I’d buy them all up and put one in every pocket. I would also decorate the living room, the kitchen, and the bedroom with them.”

Please don’t. We live together, so please put yourself in my shoes.

The dragon series wasn’t worth much to Michelle. Well, even if a dragon’s power would dwell inside her, it really was only a portion of it, and it lasted a mere ten seconds. It wasn’t an especially great item. I’d already explained that to everyone.

However, in this world, there were always people who wouldn’t listen, or who

just couldn't seem to understand.

Luganda emerged as the tournament's victors with three wins and one loss. The team's one loss was against their third opponent, Toskea. That team was full of veterans who were better at strategizing. They'd made total fools of the young Garmr, Mira, and Meryl. However, that had also been a good experience for them. In the final battle, they'd moved past their feelings, and the rookies had single-handedly decided the victorious outcome.

The tournament-goers' excitement reached fever pitch, and the Mobile Forces all sold out. The Mani 4WDs and my dagashi had also sold pretty well, and I'd leveled up a whopping three levels today alone. However, an incident occurred during the closing ceremony.

To my surprise, the BEZ participation prizes that should've been left inside the street stall had disappeared. They had clearly been stolen. Nothing else had been touched, so the criminal had probably been after them from the start.

Michelle glared at the now-empty space with a frightening look on her face. "Who on earth stole them?" she demanded. "I will never forgive them!"

"I'm gonna look into it, so just hang tight a sec." When I sat down on the spot, she worriedly touched my shoulder.

"You're going to use your Clairvoyance?" she asked.

"Leave it to me," I soothed her. "I think I'll be able to see into the past more easily because of my level-ups." If I put in the keywords "limited-edition BEZ," no doubt I could easily find their whereabouts, but I wanted to verify that my abilities had improved. I was going to look into the past to find out what had happened and test how much of a burden it would put on my body.

"Clairvoyance," I said and at my quiet murmur, my magic activated. I hadn't used a Stick Chocolate this time. I was confident I could do this even without it.

I felt a pain like my heart was being squeezed, but as I'd predicted, the burden on my body had been reduced—another benefit of my level-ups. As I was now, I might even be able to take a peek into the future. However, searching for the missing BEZ took priority for the moment.

Selecting “go back,” I peered into a vision of the past. Not much time could have passed since the theft. In the reverse playback, I successfully pinpointed a group of suspicious men carrying the BEZ away. As I wondered why they looked familiar, I realized they were the guys that Garmr and his team had arrested the other day for extortion. They’d been let off the hook with a reprimand since it had only been an attempted crime, but that might’ve been a mistake. *To think they’d turn to theft this time...*

When I played back the footage normally, I heard their voices.

“So these are the special items that are gonna be given to the representatives.”

“They look pretty valuable.”

“Apparently, if you use one, you’ll get a dragon’s power.”

“We could probably sell them for over 100,000 rims each...”

The three of them gulped before exchanging glances with one another and nodding. Then, hefting the cardboard box full of BEZ, they blended into the crowd and slipped away. *So the BEZ really were stolen.* However, it seemed they also really hadn’t listened. You’d only get the might of a dragon for a mere ten seconds, and that was only a small portion of the dragon’s full power. There was no way you could sell those things for 100,000 rims a pop. Collectors might cough up the money, but probably only 5,000 rims at most.

Once I stopped my magic, Michelle reached for my cheek. “How do you feel, Yusuke? Are you hurting anywhere?”

“I’m fine,” I told her. “The load on my body has been significantly reduced since I leveled up. I think I’ll be able to take a peek into the future tonight.”

“I’m so glad...” she sighed. “So, where are the BEZ?”

I explained the vision I’d seen through my Clairvoyance. “The thieves are on the run, taking a shortcut through the forest headed toward the main road. Let’s hurry after them.”

“Leave it to us!” Meryl cried with enthusiasm. I looked over and discovered Team Harukaze assembled in full force. “They have some nerve, stealing my

Bahamut. Let's catch them red-handed and really let 'em have it!"

Since everyone had taken swift action, we immediately caught the thieves. Incidentally, in accordance with the kingdom's laws, the three criminals were sentenced to one month of hard labor. *Well, I guess I'll have them work hard to tidy up the road.*

With the closing ceremony safely concluded, most people were heading home. Those who were still fired up from the tournament were holding matches here and there around the arena. The Mani 4WD racecourse that had been set up outside the arena was also popular; it was crowded with people racing their cars.

"Mister Yusuke, we've sold out of BEZ!" reported Rigal, who'd been circulating in the stands as a vendor for me.

"Good job! I'm gonna hold an after-party tonight, so you should come too."

"Really?! Thank you!" he exclaimed. Rigal had recently earned a reputation for being cheeky, but at moments like this, he was still very much a child. His eyes sparkled with happiness. To show appreciation for all those who'd helped, I planned to grill some beef tonight. I was envisioning a grand yakiniku event.

"I fell out of the qualifying competition this time, but I'll become a representative next year," Rigal declared. "I'm gonna use Gungalf to contribute to my team!"

His abilities had shot up, so I could see that actually happening next year.

"I'll be waiting," I said. "For the yakiniku tonight, I'll be counting on our up-and-coming mage's Fire Magic, Rigal."

"Whaaat? I don't think I can cook an entire cow."

"Now, at a time like this, you need one of these. Take a look at my dagashiya's new product."

Product name: Fiery Hot Muchos

Description: A snack with chili powder.

Increases Fire Magic power by fifteen percent upon consumption.

Price: One hundred rims

“But I’m not good with spicy food...” he said.

“It is moderately spicy,” I affirmed, “so I won’t force you, but isn’t fifteen percent a lot?”

“That’s true...” he agreed, thinking it over. “Will it make Miss Meryl and the others happy too?”

On the small, gradually dimming path, Rigal and I walked side by side.

The Adventurer Meryl's Diary: Entry 8

The Four Cities Mobile Forces Tournament happened. Luganda is normally deserted, but there were so many people today! There were loads of street stalls along the road, and the festival was so lively. I bought candy apples, fried bread twists, and a pink mug. I had a lot of fun. However, I had to work hard today as a representative of Luganda, so I made sure to not get carried away.

I got a little panicked in the first match since Garmr and Mira lost back-to-back. They were both too nervous. If I, the third fighter, had lost, that would've been the end for us. My strategy was to take advantage of Zako's special trait—its low mana consumption—in order to drag out the match and exhaust my opponent. They eventually lost their concentration, and I brought them down with my battle-axe.

The people of Luganda cheered me on, and everyone praised me when I won! I really kinda felt moved. Even Garmr was like, "I'm sorry, Meryl! You did good!" with tears in his eyes. I even put my arm around his shoulder without thinking and shared in the joy.

Was it the result of my experience losing to Rigal in the qualifying competition? I mean, I was so frustrated, I came up with a new technique. I use a sword when I'm in the dungeon, but maybe I'll start using a battle-axe too, just like my Red Shoulder?

Even Mira and Garmr, who started out super nervous, were able to fight comfortably by the final game. That might be why the three of us decided the final outcome.

I was really glad that we could take the trophy for our town. There was that incident at the very last moment when the participation prizes got stolen, but we managed to recover them.

I'm gonna display my Fire Dragon BEZ dispenser in my house as an heirloom.

I tested my BEZ's effect recently, and it isn't half bad. It increases your defense and offense for ten seconds after you eat it. This is just the vibe I felt, but I think it roughly doubles them. It's convenient how you can quickly eat the BEZ out of the dispenser, but I think where it falls off is how short the effect's duration is. It's also a shame that it can't be combined with other dagashi effects. You can't expect to combine it with the agility-raising Odama Candy or anything.

Still, it's easy to use, and some say it's better than other products since you don't need to eat so much. But you know, I think I'm firmly into the other dagashi instead. I mean, BEZ doesn't have a lottery!

Chapter 9: Inside the Resounding Thunder

At night, when everything around us had fallen completely silent, Michelle and I prepared for me to use my Clairvoyance in the bedroom. Finally, the time for me to see into the future had come.

“Are you really going to be okay?” she asked.

“Oh, Michelle, you’re really a worrywart. It’ll be different this time,” I assured her. “My mana is circulating well because of the Ramune, and I’ve got the Clear Stream Ring from the gnomes. If I use a Stick Chocolate to raise my mana, then I should be able to see into the future.”

“But—”

“Worst-case scenario, you can use your Healing Magic,” I said, “so it’ll be okay. I’ll be counting on you.”

“Yeah...”

I sat on the floor and took a deep breath. My last attempt had left me on the brink of death, but things probably wouldn’t get to that point today.

“Clairvoyance!” I closed my eyes and unleashed my magic. Then I heard that call:

“Will you move forward? Or will you go back?”

When I chose “move forward,” I felt a grating pain assail me, all over my body. It felt like a vise was tightening my brain, but I didn’t reach the point of passing out. *All right, I did it.*

As I held fast to my consciousness, which threatened to cut out at any moment, two search bars and a map showed up. It seemed there were two ways to look into the future. The first type would let me select a time and place. The other would let me pick from the results I got from searching keywords.

The map showed the area within a ten-kilometer radius, and I could specify a time up to twelve hours into the future. That was probably my current limit. If I

leveled up some more, the available time and space should expand further.

For now, I tried looking up “lightning” and “lightning strike,” but not a single result appeared. So, that meant that within the next twelve hours, lightning probably wouldn’t strike anywhere within a ten-kilometer radius of me. *Oh well. I guess I’ll probe into a different part of the future.*

I thought about it a little and used the map to set the time to tomorrow morning in front of the dungeon. When I did, a vision immediately popped up.

Whoa. I could see myself opening my store. It looked like tomorrow, the adventurers would once again work hard without taking a day off. Oh, Team Harukaze was running over. Meryl was pulling a Scratch Card as always... *Hmm? Hold on! That’s amazing!* Meryl was winning the lottery for once!

After checking that far into the future, I ended my Clairvoyance. I couldn’t tolerate the headache any longer, and an unbearable pain was running from my shoulders down my back. “Whew...”

“Yusuke! Stay with me!”

“I won’t die, so don’t worry. I leveled up, so I didn’t lose consciousness like before,” I said before wincing. “Ouch...”

“Are you hurting somewhere?”

“My shoulders and down my back—it’s pretty bad. Sorry, could you use your Healing Magic?”

Michelle’s cool fingers touched my neck. Then, a steady stream of soothing mana flowed into me. “I’ll give you a massage too, so just take it easy.”

“Sorry, I’ll have to depend on you today.”

“Oh, you can depend on me all around the clock. ≡”

She was definitely trying to turn me into a useless human being. Feeling the smooth motions of her hands up and down my back, I closed my eyes in bliss.

“So, did you see the future?” she asked.

“I can only see up to twelve hours ahead right now,” I said. “However, if I choose a day with bad weather, I think I’ll be able to see where lightning is

going to strike. We can prepare ahead of time if we have half a day, right?”

“Yeah. With that much time, preparing the energy pack and converter will be easy. I just need to hurry up and complete the energy pack.”

“How’s that going?”

“It’s mostly completed,” she replied, “but we’re still lacking some materials. They’re monster drops, but the rare materials are pretty hard to come by.” The items weren’t guaranteed to drop, so no matter how strong Michelle was, the task remained difficult.

“Then let’s ask for help from the other adventurers,” I suggested. “Make a list of the necessary items. I’ll make a bulletin board and post the list there. If we purchase them at a good price, it’d be a win-win situation.”

“That’s a good idea,” she agreed. “Luganda will finally have a place to trade things in.”

That’s right. In the Royal Capital, a guild had put out requests and bought items like this. That meant that Luganda could implement a similar system. Mister Nakaram and I would manage things for now, and we could probably just launch an official guild further down the line. *Yeah, Luganda is looking more and more like a proper town. It’s great to see.*

“How about this, Yusuke? Does it feel good?”

“Thank you. I feel better now. I’ll massage you next.”

“You don’t have to...” she mumbled shyly. “I’m happy as long as you feel good.”

“Come on, let’s switch.”

I knew how this would turn out even without using my Clairvoyance. Experience told me that this would turn into a make-out session. With an air of anticipation and affection, we entwined our fingers.

Early the next morning, Mister Nakaram and I made a bulletin board. If there was one thing we had plenty of around here, it was trees, so we wouldn’t be short on materials. The powerful Mister Nakaram pounded away with his

hammer and finished the bulletin board in no time at all. We placed it right next to my shop, where those who stopped by wouldn't be able to miss it.

"Is this acceptable?" Mister Nakaram beamed proudly at his handiwork.

"It's amazing," I said. "This was a huge help."

"Oh no, it was nothing." His biceps were twitching. I'd only realized it recently, but when Mister Nakaram was happy, his muscles had a habit of trembling.

"Huh? Mister Yusuke, what are you making?" a new voice chimed in.

"Good morning," a second voice added. "What is this?"

Meryl and Mira had arrived.

"Oh, perfect timing," I said. "Lend me a hand too, Team Harukaze."

"Lend you a hand?" Meryl inquired before studying the bulletin we'd just posted. "Hmm... Oh! It's a trade-in list!"

Here in Luganda, we will purchase the following drops:

Numbing Eel Whiskers - 8,000 rims

Hell Priest's Cane - 12,000 rims

Silver Pynus Wave Horn - 20,000 rims

Metal Golem Heart - 50,000 rims

If we could get our hands on those four materials, the energy pack could be completed in a snap. We might be able to gather them within the next few days if the adventurers worked hard.

"The trade-in prices are a bit better than the ones in the Royal Capital," Mira noted.

"Our plan to get the Genos Breaker up and running hinges on getting these materials, after all. I'm leaving it to you guys—especially the rare Metal Golem Heart. If you bring one of those, then I'll let you fill an entire basket with my dagashi."

“Really?!” Mira had grown unusually interested.

“Of course.”

“Th-Then, can I pour as much condensed milk as I want over my Milky Rice Crackers...?”

“Go for it!”

Milky Rice Crackers were apparently Mira’s recent new favorite.

Product name: Milky Rice Crackers

Description: A snack with a lightly crisp texture.

You can levitate for seven seconds upon consumption.

Price: Twenty rims

At Dagashi-ya Yahagi, you could choose from three toppings—Worcestershire sauce, plum jam, and condensed milk—to put on your Milky Rice Crackers before eating them. Plum jam had been ubiquitous in Kanto, while condensed milk had been common in Osaka. Mira loved to eat her Milky Rice Crackers with condensed milk on top.

“Let’s go, Meryl!” she cried. “I’m going to eat my fill of Milky Rice Crackers with condensed milk!!!”

“Okay, okay! I get it, so don’t pull on me...” Meryl whined before she paused. “Wait, huh?! I won! I got a win on a Scratch Card!!!” She was gripping a Scratch Card marked with three swords in a row.

Nice. This also proved that my Clairvoyance worked. I was looking forward to using it more and more.

With the announcement of my drop item trade-in system, the look in the adventurers’ eyes had changed. In particular, the Metal Golem Heart with its high trade-in value was a popular target. Thanks to that, this dagashi was selling well.

Product name: Compass Chocolate

Description: A compass with chocolate beads inside.

It not only helps you find directions, but the needle will also point toward the location of any large mass of moving metal.

In addition to vibrating to signal a reaction, it also features a lamp function to light the area around your hand.

Price: One hundred rims

It was selling really well, as it offered numerous functions at the low price of 100 rims. Just eating it was enjoyable, but it was also fun to use the container itself. Because it had numerous colors and designs, there were also passionate collectors trying to round up every variety.

Metal Golems were powerful monsters, but now that everyone was hunting them down, it probably wouldn't be long until we got the materials we needed. However, the first aid station's doctor had many complaints.

"Really, this uptick in injured patients is a hassle," she groaned. "There are so many idiots out there who throw themselves at challenges without considering what they're actually capable of that I just don't know what to do. I'm the one who has to heal them, so put yourself in my shoes."

Metal Golems were powerful but slow. There was an endless stream of rookies who would challenge them thinking they might have a chance. They usually scurried home after discovering they were unable to handle them, but...

"Don't say that, Chichi," I said, trying to placate her. "We can get the Genos Breaker running once we have those Metal Golem Hearts. I'll deliver Yakisoba to you later, so hang in there."

"Ugh, *that* garbage..." she grumbled. "Throw a drink in there too, okay?"

"You got it. Are you all right with Mikan Water?"

“Yeah, thank you...” Her shy side was a little similar to Michelle’s. Apparently Chichi had her hands full, but we needed to keep her working. To help her along, I decided to give her a generous helping of Yakisoba.

It was lunchtime, so I decided to go and deliver the Yakisoba to Doctor Chichi. The first aid room was located at the center of B2, so I did feel a bit uneasy going there alone. If there had been adventurers heading into the dungeon just then, I’d have gone along with them, but today just had to be a day when no one was around. Michelle was already down in the dungeon depths.

“Nothing I can do. I guess I’ll go alone.” As I muttered to myself, I donned a simple breastplate. I then also prepared all sorts of dagashi and toys. I had my monster cards and Rocket Bombs too, so I’d probably be all right. Now fully prepared, I headed toward the first aid station.

As I walked down the B2 passageway, something suddenly vibrated in my pocket—the Compass Chocolate I’d left in there was reacting. I checked it and realized that there must be a Metal Golem nearby. The vibrations were getting stronger and stronger. *Actually, I don’t think I’ve ever seen a Metal Golem before.* My curiosity was immediately piqued.

I had a Black Panther R monster card on hand. It was a powerful, swift monster with strong fangs and claws. With a Black Panther on my side, could I win against a Metal Golem...?

It wasn’t like I had no chance of success. Also, I might run into other adventurers if I continued down this passageway. *For now, I’ll go and have a look.* The Metal Golem Heart drop rate was low, and we just couldn’t get enough of them. Normally, I avoided risk to the point of cowardice, but today, my desires won out.

I continued along the passageway, guided by my Compass Chocolate, and found a Metal Golem standing in a slightly more spacious hall. I hadn’t run into any other adventurers, so I had no one to back me up. On the other hand, the

golem was completely defenseless, with its back toward me.

Metal Golems boasted outstanding offensive capabilities and high defense, but their weakness was that it took them time to get back up again once you knocked them down. *I guess I'll risk it...*

I took a Jumbo Cutlet from my bag and ate it. I also didn't forget my agility-boosting Odama Candy. I ate them back-to-back, so the Worcestershire sauce and ramune flavors got mixed up in my mouth, but I didn't have time to be grossed out.

Sneaking up on the Metal Golem from behind, I cried, "Power Boost!" and tackled it. The Metal Golem lost its balance and fell to the floor with an earth-shattering crash. Just like I'd planned, it was squirming where it had face-planted on the ground.

"Monster summon, activate! Go, Black Panther! Go after its left arm!"

The Black Panther's claws were sharp but not powerful enough to prevent the Metal Golem from moving. However, I just needed it to draw away the enemy's attacks. I held a small Rocket Bomb in each hand and thrust them toward the back of the golem's neck.

"Fall back, Black Panther!"

The two of us jumped back at roughly the same moment that the two bombs exploded. A small fragment grazed my cheek, but the wound it left wasn't a big deal. *More importantly, what about the Metal Golem?*

Nice! It was turning into a mist and disappearing, leaving behind 30,000 rims, magic crystals, and...

"Whoa! So this is a Metal Golem Heart!" I exclaimed. My Metal Golem had left behind an item known for its low drop rate. It was a cylinder around forty-centimeters in height which had a number of pipes sticking out of it, like a boiler. A window on one side let you see the machine construction within, made up of many moving gears and cams. It was pretty heavy once I picked it up, but it wouldn't burden me in the slightest. I placed it on top of my carrying-pole shop and stored it away in the gap between dimensions. With this, we'd gotten one step closer to reviving the Genos Breaker.

Once the rush of battle had worn off, I felt pain here and there all over my body. It seemed I'd been wounded in various places without realizing it. *Damn*. I decided I'd deliver the Yakisoba to Doctor Chichi and have her heal me while I was at it.

But I was glad I'd gotten hold of a rare item. My body was heavy with fatigue, but my heart was light.

The worst of the cold had passed, and a slightly more comfortable season was approaching. This was the first winter we'd spent here, but everyone was getting by just fine. Even though their breath turned white in the air, the regulars who gathered at my store early each morning were lively.

"At first, I wondered what we were gonna do, but we have heaps of wood, right? Thanks to that, we can keep things warm, at the very least." Meryl was drinking Hot Doctor Pepper as she shaved down a Scratch Card. She had completely taken to the unique flavor.

"Are there any people who have come down with colds and such?" I asked.

"Yeah, but Miss Michelle and Chichi fixed them up."

There still weren't a lot of people here, so it was enough to have just the two of them providing medical care. However, more and more immigrants continued to arrive, and Luganda's population had recently exceeded 250 people. This was a happy development, but with Luganda's meager food production, it was also a cause of headaches. I wanted to revive the Genos Breaker soon to clear more building lots and agricultural land. It was winter right now, so all the trees were dry. It was just the right season for cutting lumber.

With noisy footsteps, Garmr and his team approached. "Mornin'!"

"Good morning, Garmr," I greeted him. "I didn't see you last night. Don't tell me you went on a nighttime dungeon crawl?"

"No way. Even I'm not that overconfident. I just had a bit of trouble yesterday and went home late."

“Well, that’s fine.” There was no end to our supply of reckless adventurers. That trend was especially apparent among wanderers who paid the admission fee and headed into the dungeon. There had even been several casualties.

“More importantly, Mister Yahagi, buy this off me. You’re still collecting materials, right?” Garmr took out a Silver Pynus Wave Horn.

“Oh, good job!” I exclaimed. “I was a bit worried that we were still missing the last one we needed. Just sit tight. I’ll bring you the money.”

When I handed them the payment, the group erupted into cheers of joy. Grapp was stamping the ground with excitement. “Yes!!! We’re gonna drink our fill tonight at Golden Sheep, aren’t we, Leader?”

“Aw hell. Only for tonight, got it? We’ll earn it by working hard again tomorrow!”

Meryl was sullen as she observed the group’s excitement. “Tch. I was planning to get the silver horn,” she grumbled. “Man, that musclehead beat me to the punch.”

“Don’t be so down, Meryl,” I said. “I put out a new request this morning. We don’t have enough medicinal herbs, so it’s got a good price attached to it.”

“Really? Hmm, I’ll check it out before I head into the dungeon.”

The trade-in request bulletins were working really well, and the system had put plenty of items into circulation. The materials from the dungeon were sometimes exported outside of Luganda through the peddler, Mister Joshua. Using the money from that, we could buy food and procure necessary materials.

However, Mister Nakaram was the one handling the exchange of money, so the burden on him was becoming significant. In the near future, we would need to establish an organization like an adventurer’s guild.

At any rate, we had gathered all the materials we needed for the energy pack. Now, I had to tell Michelle.

Michelle had acquired an abnormal ability to concentrate. Nowadays, once

she'd set her mind to something, she could immerse herself in it forever. She truly was a born researcher. It'd been three days since she started constructing the energy pack, but she'd been forgetting to eat and sleep. Seeing her so absorbed in her work was a bit scary.

And then, it happened on the night of the seventh day.

"I did it..." Michelle whispered, her breathing labored and her eyes punctuated by dark circles. Atop her workbench stood a large sixty-centimeter-tall energy pack. "I'm...at my limit..."

I embraced Michelle, who looked like she was about to collapse. "You did well. Thank you, Michelle. How do you feel?"

"Hee hee hee. Just you being worried about me makes my hard work feel worthwhile." Michelle fawned on me as I held her.

"Do you want me to carry you to bed?"

"Not yet. I want to stay like this for a while," she murmured. "Hey, Yusuke. Help me drink some Blackbeer."

Product name: Blackbeer

Description: Bubbles rise up when you dissolve it in water, creating a beverage exactly like dark beer!

It amplifies dark mana when you drink it.

Price: Thirty rims

This had been Michelle's favorite snack recently. Apparently, amplifying her dark mana made her feel better overall. As far as I was concerned, a product that let me steady her emotional state with just thirty rims was a steal.

I sat on the sofa, still holding Michelle, and had her drink the Blackbeer.

"Aah..." she sighed, "my dark mana is rising..."

"That sounds like something an evil heroine would say," I mused.

She responded with a bewitching smile.



“That’s right. I’m an evil witch. I’ll wrap you up just like this and won’t let go.”

“H-Hey, you should rest a little.”

“No. I’ve been spending all my time on the energy pack lately. I’m not gonna leave you alone today!”

“I got it, I got it, so let’s calm down a bit. This isn’t the right mood— Huh?!” The room suddenly went dark, scaring me. “What is this... Is this Dark Magic?”

“I reduced the reflectivity of the walls and ceiling,” she said. “It’s convenient for setting the mood, right?” Clad in a dark aura, she entwined her arms around my neck. Her eyes were moist, capturing me in their gaze and refusing to let me go. As her lips closed the distance between us, I smelled from them the sweet scent of almond flowers. “More importantly, Yusuke...” she murmured, trailing off.

I was the town dagashi-ya. Someone like me didn’t stand a chance against a dark witch. In a flash, I was entangled in a love spell, and we sweetly melted together.

“Yusuke, wake up.” Michelle’s voice roused me from my sleep. There was no light inside our bedroom and it was still dark outside the window, so I could just barely make out the contour of her face.

“What’s wrong?” I mumbled. “Is it morning already?” I generally had an easy time getting up, but right now I wanted more sleep. That told me it was probably still early—yet Michelle was waking me, which was rare for her. Apparently, she usually just watched my sleeping face.

“Yusuke, listen. You hear that? It’s raining outside!”

Rain? Not snow, but rain... / see. The pitter-patter of rain tapping against the roof was reverberating through the room. “Wow. It’s finally spring...”

“That’s not all. Listen closely.”

“Hmm...”

Rumble, rumble, rumble.

I sprang up from bed. It had been faint, but I'd heard the sound of thunder.
"So it's finally time!"

"That's right," she said. "It's time for you to use your Clairvoyance. I'll be your backup."

"Roger." I sat cross-legged on the bed and immediately activated my magic. Once I had the search results, I sought the lightning-strike location within a ten-kilometer radius that seemed easiest for us to conduct our work in. "This one is in the forest, and people can't enter. This one is...no good. We don't have enough time. Then, how about this one... That works! This is the one!"

Having chosen the ideal location, I turned off my Clairvoyance. I was about to double over from the pain in my heart.

"Yusuke!" Michelle cried.

"I'm all right," I said. "Don't worry about me. Just sound the bell. The lightning will strike in three hours at a cedar tree in the eastern forest. It's near Mister Mani's shrine."

"Understood." Michelle hurried off. We had asked for help from Luganda's residents ahead of time. The plan was for us to notify them if it looked like lightning was about to strike and for them to come running when the time came.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Michelle rang the alarm bell outside our window. From this point onward, it would be a race against time. In this task, failure wasn't an option. Gritting my teeth against the pain, I finished changing my clothes and headed to the plaza.

Most of Luganda had convened in the still-dark plaza.

"Everyone, thank you for gathering here so early in the morning. Finally, the day we undo the Zolid's seal has come. I'll be counting on your cooperation!"

Everyone was eagerly awaiting my instructions, excitement filling their faces at the news that the Zolid would soon move again.

"First, we'll carry the Zolid to the cedar tree in the eastern forest." As casually

as I'd said it, this was a tall order. The Zolid weighed 130 tons. For a point of comparison, it was roughly as heavy as three armored tanks. What made our task even more impossible was the fact that we'd be using raw manpower to carry this massive object. However, this was another world, and I was a mysterious dagashi-ya. In a world like this, it was okay to try seemingly impossible tasks.

"I'm making Jumbo Katsu Yakisoba," I continued. "Everyone should eat some and use its effect for the task at hand." Adding Jumbo Katsu to Yakisoba extended the duration of the power boost effect to twelve minutes. "Also, eat this new product too!"

Product name: Fried Dondokodon

Description: Worcestershire sauce-flavored snack.

Improves synergy between teams upon consumption (lasts about one hour).

Price: Thirty rims

Like many of my snacks, this one had also had a long history back on Earth. The picture drawn on the package—showing people enjoying a festival—hadn't changed since I was a kid. I guessed that it would be good to pair with alcohol, so I'd consider recommending it to Zonda. For now, I was having everyone eat these as part of my plan to carry the Genos Breaker to the cedar tree. It was a crude plan, but I chose to believe in the power of my dagashi.

"Mister Yusuke, I brought Mister Mani!" Mira came up to me, the dazed Mister Mani's hand clasped in her own. This was another instruction I'd given beforehand—at the sound of the alarm, Mira would bring Mister Mani. I'd guessed that, if it were Mira asking, Mister Mani would obediently listen to what she had to say. My guess seemed to have hit the bull's-eye.

"What's wrong, Yahagi? Everyone's making so much commotion. Is it a festival?"

"Something like that. We're finally going to revive the Zolid!"

“Oh, the Zolid!” he cried before he paused. “What is that?”

His memories are gone today! I would need to make him remember, even if I had to force the memories back into him. Mister Mani was the key to the Zolid’s revival.

“Mira, do something,” I pleaded. She smiled.

“See, Mister Mani,” she said, gesturing to the Zolid, “that’s the Genos Breaker.”

“Oh my! You’ve dug up such a ferocious Zolid! Why didn’t you dig up something more like the Gorgodon of ancient times?”

You’re the one who dug it up! I chuckled a rebuttal at him in my thoughts, but I didn’t say it out loud. I didn’t want to get in Mira’s way. *Hmm. It seems like his memories are already back.*

“They say that right now, they’re going to use the lightning to pour mana into the energy pack.”

“Hmm, that’s fine. However, it looks like it’s frozen.”

“That’s correct. That’s why we want you to thaw it when the time is right.”

“If you don’t get the mana circulating inside the Zolid within thirty minutes after thawing it, its metal cells will suffer grave damage,” he said. “Will it be all right?”

“Mister Yusuke’s fortune-telling has identified where the lightning will strike.”

“I see, I see. Then I shall thaw it in time.”

Nice! We had Mister Mani prepped to play his part. As long as Mira stuck with him, things would probably work out somehow.

Taking advantage of the Jumbo Katsu’s power boost and the Fried Dondokodon’s team synergy effect, we finished moving the Genos Breaker to the cedar tree.

After attaching a cable to the cedar tree, we connected it to the energy conversion device. We then installed another line connecting the conversion

device to the Genos Breaker, which had an energy pack mounted on it. Once lightning struck, that energy should be converted into mana, and a massive 1.21 jigomatts' worth of mana would flow into the Genos Breaker. By now, the Genos Breaker was already thawed, and all our preparations had been completed.

"Everyone, get away from the cedar tree and the Genos Breaker," I cried. "You could be electrocuted!"

Their faces paling, the residents fell back, though none of them looked ready to go home. Even as they cowered away from the sound of crackling thunder, they were still excitedly awaiting the Zolid's revival.

As we waited, the rain grew increasingly intense and the wind grew stronger and stronger. It was exactly like the vision I had seen through my Clairvoyance. *Then that means that the lightning will surely—*

"It's almost time!" I called. My ears began to ring, and tingles ran along my skin. Signs of static electricity were showing up all over the place. However, just then, a thick dead branch fell from the cedar tree and landed on top of the cable connecting it to the energy converter. And, to our horror, the cable separated from the converter.

"Damn it!" Michelle bolted at once for the converter. I hurried after her.

"It's impossible, Michelle! We don't have time!"

"No! I'll definitely connect them!" She grabbed one end of the cable, planning to try and connect it to the converter again, but the branch was still in the way. It was obvious that we didn't have time.

In that case, we need this snack!

Product name: Don't Be Slackin'!

Description: A snack that uses fish paste. Upon consumption, it turns your body into metal.

Price: Fifty rims

Many adventurers would eat this before confronting monsters that had powerful attacks. I'd heard that you'd remain unfazed even if you were exposed to a Dragon's breath, because your body would become like a mass of iron. After eating this, you could probably endure lightning too. With bodies made of metal, the electricity should pass right through us.

"Michelle!"

She turned toward me, and I fed her the dagashi with my mouth. With her face frozen in an expression of surprise, her whole body turned to metal. I also couldn't move anymore.

The next second, a terrible sound and a torrent of light slashed through the air. Lightning split the cedar tree from top to bottom. Surging waves of energy flowed into the cable and, using our bodies as conductors, poured into the converter. Then, the converted mana flowed into the Genos Breaker.

The converter and the Genos Breaker both seemed to burn red, probably from the heat. In the midst of the people's screams of fear, the Genos Breaker's eyes glowed.

"Grrraah!!!" The pine needles on the surrounding trees shook with the Genos Breaker's roar.

"Has it finally been revived...?"

"Ha ha ha, it's been so long..." Almost anyone would tremble with fear in this situation, but Mister Mani alone was all smiles, a satisfied look on his face.

"You did it, Mister Yahagi!" I heard Meryl celebrating our achievement, but we still couldn't move. Right before the eyes of all the residents, the two of us remained chunks of iron, still mid-kiss.



Ugh, I was so embarrassed that I felt like I was going to die. However, I had a feeling that Michelle was unquestionably happy.

“Grrraaah!” Amid the rain and rolling thunder, the Genos Breaker was alive and well.

Thanks to the Genos Breaker’s revival, the town’s development raced forward all at once. Using the claws that came equipped as a standard feature, I could clear all the trees I wanted. Those things were amazing. They could chop down cypress trees like a lawnmower cutting grass. They could even dig up the resulting tree stumps one after another. Thanks to that, Luganda’s residential areas and farmland expanded in an instant. Of course, the Genos Breaker was also useful for leveling the ground. On top of that, it could move somewhat independently, so if I gave it some low-level commands, it’d work on its own.

“Mister Yusuke, let me drive it too!” Meryl cried, looking up at me with pleading eyes. She wanted to operate it so badly that she couldn’t sit still. However, I couldn’t honor that request.

“Sorry, but absolutely not,” I said. “Mister Mani has configured it so that I’m the only one who can drive it, and so that it won’t listen to orders from anyone except me.” To be frank, this thing was dangerous. Making it available for just anyone to use would be beyond risky. “Don’t go trying to use it behind my back either. You’re going to wind up like that wanderer from the other day.”

“I knooow...”

A few days ago, a wanderer had tried to steal the Genos Breaker. He probably hadn’t known that it featured biometric authentication and wouldn’t boot up for anyone other than myself. What was more, the controls were designed so that if you tried to tamper with them by force, an electric current would flow into the joystick and the seat.

After he’d been shocked with plenty of electricity, Michelle and Chichi had given him a hellish punishment. He was a thief and all, but I actually felt a little sorry for him. It had been a public punishment, so following that incident, no one had dared to mess with the Genos Breaker.

Every day, I mounted the Genos Breaker like a construction worker mounting a backhoe then prepared the land for housing, constructed levees, and worked to improve the roads.

I had made headway in developing new plots of land and the main road, so I decided to once again recruit people who'd be interested in immigrating here. I'd recently been partnering with the peddler Mister Joshua for an Immigration Practical Tour. Our scheme targeted second sons of farmers and young tradesmen who were about to finish their live-in apprenticeships. We were having them immigrate here as part of a special admissions category. After all, if we didn't get some tradesmen here, the settlement couldn't operate smoothly.

Our aim with the tour was for them to see the plot of land they'd receive and Luganda's way of living. It was pretty popular, although most people wanted to live in the city, so we still hadn't attracted that many new immigrants.

"Man, and right now, they'd get a plot of land and a house, and I'd give them every variety of Mobile Forces tool," I sighed.

"How about gifting them a completely new model?" Mister Mani suggested in an attempt to comfort me.

"A new model?"

"The next-generation units, like Zetter Gungalf and Gap Moeran."

"Huh..."

"I have Asshikun, Shirosai, and Hakushiki too."

"They sound like fun, but I don't think people would move here just for those..."

"You don't?" Puzzled, he tilted his head.

"There're a lot of people who love the city," I said. "It's probably because there's a lot of work there and the wages are high."

Mister Mani tapped his fist against his palm. "Oh, so that's what you were worried about."

“Well, it’s not a pressing issue or anything.” We could get by for the moment. I also felt like we should take it easy for a while. However, Mister Mani gave me a vigorous nod and began pulling my hand.

“Yahagi, we’re going to the dungeon.”

“And what are we going to do there?”

“We’re going to activate a teleportation portal.”

“What?” He’d thrown some crazy words at me out of left field.

“All dungeons are connected to one another by teleportation portals,” he explained. “The portal can send you to any big city you wish. If everyone can visit the city as they please, then it’s problem solved, right?”

No, not right. On the contrary, I felt like an even bigger problem would rear its ugly head. However, I *was* interested in that teleportation portal. I might as well start by seeing if it even existed.

“For now, can you show me what this thing is like?”

“All right.” Mister Mani set off, as unsteady as always. Was this what they called a god’s divine guidance? I didn’t know where this was headed, but I decided to follow him.

After arriving at the dungeon, I confirmed the portal’s location with Mister Mani. “The teleportation portal is on B2, right?”

“That’s right. It’s near that prissy girl’s room.”

By “that prissy girl” he meant Chichi. In other words, the portal was hidden near the first aid station, so getting there should be no problem. Strong monsters seldom appeared in that area, so as long as I didn’t forget to prepare beforehand, even I could get there by myself.

We rode the dungeon elevator down and arrived at B2.

“Over here.” Mister Mani continued confidently tottering along. I had been worried that his memories might turn hazy like always, but it looked like that wouldn’t be the case. Eventually, we reached a dead end.

“We’re here.” Surrounded by three stone walls, there was a narrow depression in the floor with something that looked like a slightly enlarged shogi board inside. It was made of stone and just big enough for a human to step on. Like a shogi board, it bore a grid pattern on its surface. “Yahagi, you wanted to go to Lulusunjohn, right?”

“That’s right, the Royal Capital.”

“Lulusunjohn is the Royal Capital? But it’s just a village in the boonies,” he scoffed. It sounded like he was talking about the distant past.

“No, it’s not. Right now, Luganda is a rural area in the boonies, and Lulusunjohn is the big city.”

“Oh my. Times really do change,” he marveled. “Well, never mind that. Watch my finger carefully.” Mister Mani traced the dots and lines engraved on the board, moving his finger methodically. It reminded me of someone unlocking a smartphone.

“Does the way your finger moves change depending on the destination?”

“Precisely.”

I wouldn’t be able to memorize all of the patterns anyway, so I was fine just knowing the way to get to the Royal Capital for now. Once Mister Mani finished moving his finger, the portal glowed with a bluish-white light.

“You can be teleported if you step onto the portal while it’s glowing. You can come back the same way.”

“Huh,” I said. “It’s connected to the dungeon over there, right?”

“Yes. On B2 as well,” he replied. *So, around Hot Spring Yahagi then.* I had made a map of that level, so I knew the geography well. I figured I should check to see where the portal on B2 of that dungeon was located.

“Can I use the teleportation portal right now?” I asked.

“Sure. Do as you please. I’ll head back now and drink some tea.”

Just to make sure, I used my finger to reactivate the portal.

Nice. It was running like it should. I hesitated for a second but then stepped

up onto the glowing portal and leaped across space.

My body felt no shock or anything. The transfer ended in an instant, and I found myself standing in the Royal Capital Dungeon. I recognized this place. *That's right, I'm right by Hot Spring Yahagi.* I hadn't known there was a teleportation portal so close to where I'd been conducting my business.

I stepped down from the portal and carefully surveyed the area. *Oh yeah, I've seen this before, when I was making my map.* I hadn't guessed such a small pedestal was actually a portal.

Still, it'd really been a hot minute since I'd come to the Royal Capital Dungeon. I wasn't even one hundred meters away from the spring, so I decided to stop by for a bit.

When I passed through the familiar doorway, I was immediately enveloped in the smell of the hot water. *Yep, this is the place... I took so many baths here.*

"Huh? It's Mister Yahagi! Long time no see."

While I was looking all around the place, absorbing the nostalgia, familiar-looking adventurers called out to me one after another.

"You came back to the Royal Capital. Are you going to do business here again?"

"No, I just decided to stop by the hot spring today—" My hesitant response was interrupted by the sound of noisy footsteps. An injured person was being carried inside.

"Move! Our comrade's arm has been hurt!"

I saw a pale-faced young adventurer with one arm covered in blood. The wound looked pretty deep.

"Bring out salve and bandages!" The adventurer's comrades had delivered some rushed first aid, but the medicine and bandages were of poor quality. They were a team of still-young adventurers, so they probably hadn't bought the good stuff.

“Leave this to me.”

“Huh? Mister Yahagi?!”

I took out my carrying-pole shop and grabbed my new product.

Product name: Super Tight String

Description: A 127-centimeter stringlike gummy. Half is cola-flavored and the other is orange.

You can enjoy eating it, but if you wrap it around a wound, it’ll quickly change into first aid tape.

Price: One hundred rims

“You’re a lifesaver, Mister Yahagi!”

I’d only intended to stop by, but at everyone’s request I opened my store. It had been a while since I’d set up shop here in front of the hot spring.

“Sorry, but I’m bringing out my store only for today. I might come here for business trips every once in a while, though...”

When I explained the situation, the adventurers bought in bulk and the goods on my carrying-pole store disappeared in the blink of an eye. Particularly, the Super Tight String, whose effects had been demonstrated before their very eyes, ran out of stock in a flash.

The teleportation portal sure was convenient. I could announce it officially, but I felt it’d also be a pain if people came over too freely. I figured that I should feign ignorance for a while, although I could use it to come here and sell my magic crystals wholesale or to buy supplies in bulk.

Once I finished up at the hot springs, I secretly rebooted the portal when the other adventurers weren’t looking and returned to Luganda.

The Adventurer Meryl's Diary: Entry 9

The Zolid has finally come back to life! Seriously, when the Genos Breaker moved for the first time, I was so surprised, I couldn't even speak. I really didn't think something so big could move.

I didn't know what to do when Mister Yusuke and Miss Michelle were struck by lightning, but they were fine thanks to the dagashi they'd eaten. Jeez, I could hardly stand to look at those lovebirds. They were so brazenly lovey-dovey that it was actually refreshing.

In celebration of the Genos Breaker's revival, Mister Yusuke treated all the residents to alcohol and snacks. Team Harukaze also had our fair share of booze at Golden Sheep!

Recently, a mixed drink called Poppy has been popular with young adventurers. To make it, you mix together the distilled liquor bakschi and the dagashi Blackbeer. The combination of fizzy bubbles, easy-to-drink sweetness, and faint bitterness is sublime. You just can't help drinking too much of it.

On top of that, Poppy has a surprising effect. When you drink Blackbeer, it amplifies dark mana, but for some reason, the attribute completely flips when it's used in Poppy—it amplifies light mana. Isn't that weird? The effect makes you really cheerful. It was super surprising how even Mister Sanaga, with his perpetual sour face, was smiling!

We drank, made merry, laughed a lot, and for a little while, really enjoyed ourselves.

Once the Genos Breaker could move, Mister Yusuke immediately got to work on the road through the forest. Pulling up trees, tamping down the soil—he finished it all in no time. He carried over pebbles from the river to cover the road, so it probably won't get muddy the next time it rains.

When I asked what he's going to make next after he finishes the road, he said he wants to expand the building lots and the farmland. Apparently, he'll even expand the pastures. I sure would love to be able to drink milk more consistently.

When I asked what he's going to do after that, he laughed and said he might dig up a hot spring. Thinking about it now, I haven't been in a big bath since moving to Luganda... In the Royal Capital, I'd regularly stop by Hot Spring Yahagi after work. Why is Ramune so tasty when you drink it after getting out of the bath? I have my favorite Home Run Grandma now too. I'm sure that combo would gently cool down my hot body.

I'll be able to experience that sensation again!

When I told him that he'd better find that hot spring, he smiled broadly and nodded. That means that, in due time, I'll be able to soak in a hot spring. I mean, Mister Yusuke has never lied to me before.

I was so happy, I went running to Mira to tell her about it.

Epilogue

Spring had arrived in Luganda. The snow covering the ground had melted, and in places with good sunlight, daffodils were even starting to blossom. The cold would persist for a while longer, but day by day, you could feel that the world was getting easier to live in.

Over the winter, our Zolid-based development of the area had significantly progressed. The path to the main road had been completely paved, transforming it into a good road that was wide enough for two horse-drawn carriages to pass each other. To be frank, I thought it was even better than the main road that the country controlled. It was like prefectural roads back in Japan if they had been wider than national highways.

And I hadn't stopped at paving the road. I'd made a lot of other stuff too. There were over three times as many fields and building lots now, and I'd even prepared public bathhouses. When I dug up a hot spring using the Genos Breaker, it struck gold like the star it was. Public hygiene was important, after all.

It didn't feel right to have a bath only, so I exercised the full extent of my knowledge from my previous life and even prepared two saunas: a stone one and a regular one. I also dug a hole beside the dungeon to make a cave bath. Not only did the locals get to enjoy these amenities, but so did tourists.

Yep, Luganda was developing as both a dungeon town and a town for tourism. There had also been a recent increase in wealthy people coming here for hot spring treatments. Currently, a new hotel was under construction. This had created jobs, and in turn the population had once again increased. There were currently as many as 316 people living here. Population growth had been so rapid that we couldn't build enough houses to keep up.

Wheezing and panting all the while, the aide Mister Nakaram was busy writing up government documents. Sometimes I thought he might as well become the feudal lord, but apparently, that was out of the question.

We were living peacefully like this when something suddenly happened. On one windy day when I had opened my store as always, Mister Nakaram, all his muscles stiffened from stress, came rushing in.

“Sir Yahagi, this is bad! This is no time to be leisurely making Monjayaki!”

“This isn’t Monjayaki. It’s my new product, Ankodama.”

“That doesn’t matter! A messenger from the Royal Capital has arrived!”

“What do you mean ‘a messenger’?”

“I’m not sure, but it seems to be an emergency. I’m having the messenger wait in the living room, so please hurry to the manor house.”

I didn’t recall doing anything wrong, so I didn’t think I was due a scolding or anything. *Oh, did they discover the existence of the teleportation portal? Or will it be about the Zolid?*

There was no point trying to guess. For now, I should go meet with that messenger or whoever.

“Sorry, everyone, I have to close up shop for today. See you tomorrow.” Bidding my worried customers goodbye, I returned to the manor house.

Once there, I met the messenger face-to-face. They bowed politely to me and handed over what looked to be official correspondence from the king. There were no soldiers here to make an arrest, so I assumed I wasn’t about to be captured.

Let’s see. What on earth does the king have to say to me? “Um... To the feudal lord of Luganda, Yusuke Yahagi. As of now, I— What?!”

I involuntarily let out a surprised cry at the contents of the decree. Michelle, who’d been sitting next to me, immediately asked, “What’s wrong, Yusuke? What did the king say?”

“These...are draft papers...”

“What?”

“These are orders from His Majesty,” I said. “He says to bring soldiers to go to

war.”

This had come totally out of nowhere. It seemed that I, a dagashi-ya feudal lord, was being drafted into war. Although, skipping ahead to the conclusion, this particular battle would end immediately. Only after the war would my fate greatly change once again.

END OF VOLUME
BONUS

Dagashi-ya Yahagi



RECOMMENDED
PRODUCTS!



Mira

Welcome!
I'm tending the store today!





MANI 4WD



A toy motorcar that you race using mana.



PRICE:
1200
RIMS

Meryl

Go, my Avantila!



★★★★★

DARK THUNDER CHOCOLATE

★★★★★

Love is lightning grade!
If you eat this, you'll get the courage to confess your love.



PRICE:
30
RIMS

Yusuke

Michelle buys this every day.
Her love is heavy—No, it's lightning grade.

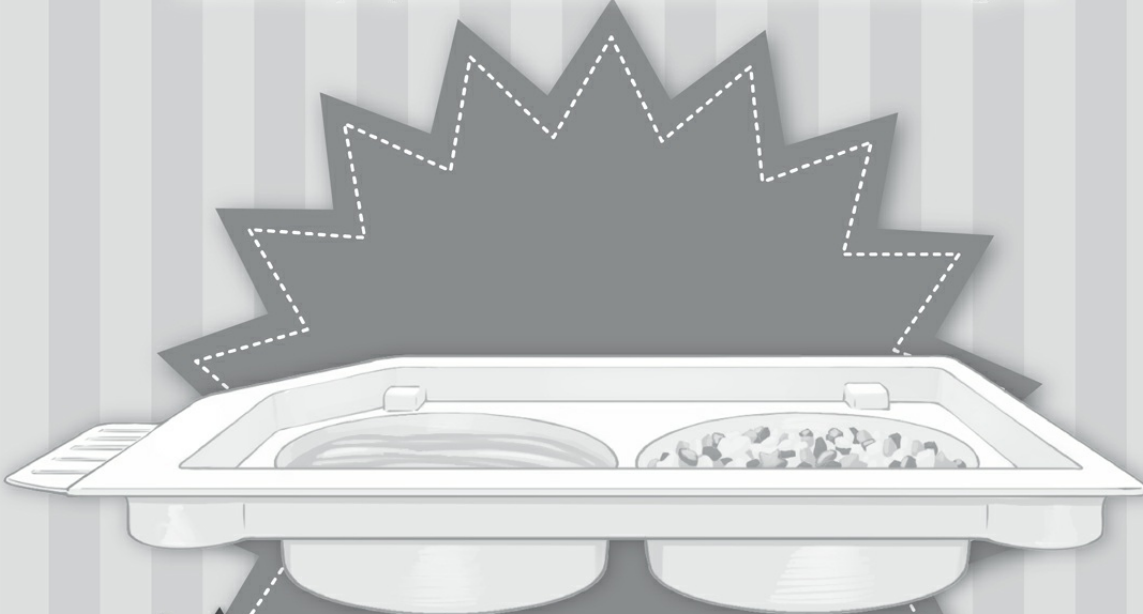


★★★★★

DERUDERUDERUNE

★★★★★

A candy you make yourself by adding water. Upon consumption, it gives you an out-of-body experience for fifteen minutes. Features two flavors - Grape and ramune. Grape offers a juicy out-of-body experience while ramune offers a refreshing one.



PRICE:
100
RIMS

Mira

The more you knead it,
the more the color changes...
It's delicious!



★ ★ ★ ★ ★

HOT DOCTOR PEPPER

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

A carbonated drink that combines more than ten flavors to create a peculiar taste. You'll be addicted after three sips!

The warmth makes your soul quiver...
Is something going to happen?!

Effects vary depending
on the individual.

PRICE:
50
RIMS

Michelle

I got better at kissing because of
Hot Doctor Pepper. I'm glad I drank it...



★★★★★
**GOLD MEDAL
CHOCOLATE**
★★★★★

A chocolate that imitates a gold medal with a red ribbon.
Hanging it on your neck elevates your mood, while eating it slightly improves
your physical strength, your agility, and your mana.



Meryl

Garmr and his gang are getting all excited
over the Gold Medal Chocolates. They're such
children... I want one too, though!



★★★★★

BLACKBEER

★★★★★

Bubbles rise up when you dissolve it in water, creating a beverage exactly like dark beer! It amplifies dark mana when you drink it.



PRICE:
30
RIMS

Michelle

Ahh... Both my dark power and my heart are being refilled. With all this love, I'll have to give Yusuke his fill next!



DON'T BE SLACKIN'!



A snack that uses fish paste. Upon consumption,
it turns your body into metal.



PRICE:
50
RIMS

Meryl

Whoa! It really makes
you stiff like metal! It can also protect
against lightning-type magic.



★★★★★

GETTER NOODLES!

★★★★★

A bite-sized ramen-like snack.
Comes with a redeemable lottery coupon (100 rims, 50 rims, 20 rims, or 10 rims). You can shoot one low-power beam (magic with the light attribute)



Afterword

Thank you for purchasing *Dagashi-ya Yahagi: Setting Up A Sweets Shop in Another World*. Thanks to all my readers, we're finally at volume three! This spring, Sanjo Imu-sensei began the manga adaptation as well. Please support us even further.

And to all those who helped to make this third volume's publication possible, as well as Neruzo Nemaki-sensei who once again provided us with wonderful illustrations, I will take this opportunity to express my gratitude. Thank you very much.

The world is filled with pollen! I love traveling, so I go out often, but so much pollen is flying around that it makes me think twice about leaving the house. I often get around by motorcycle, but it's just terrible now. You see, my beloved motorcycle, the Triumph Speed Twin 1200, is painted black. It's *supposed* to be black, yet it's totally yellow! Obviously, with all that pollen, my face gets itchy too.

Even so, I do go out anyway. In order for me to continue creating, travel is essential work. Well, just because I go out on trips doesn't mean I'll immediately be able to write, though...

Pollen is a problem, but spring really is nice. The spring flowers, like plum blossoms, cherry blossoms, and peach blossoms, all have their charms. Plum blossoms smell the best, and peach blossoms are the most gorgeous flowers. Every April, I go to Yamanashi to see the peach blossoms.

This year, too, I plan to gaze at the flowers and set my sights on what will happen to Dagashi-ya Yahagi from here on. I have a rough idea of how things will go, but I'll decide on the details in the future. I'll do my best to once again deliver another fun story.

Because of the nature of my work, I always look over the snacks section carefully each time I go out shopping. I'm really grateful that some supermarkets have dagashi. With traditional dagashi-ya disappearing, stores like this sell dagashi instead.

The quality of my work depends on it, so I observe the dagashi with a passionate devotion so intense that it puts strangers off. I won't let my passion lose to kids who select their snacks so seriously either! If you come across a man looking at dagashi with a bloodcurdling aura, that might be me. I may still be very inexperienced, but forgive me for the sake of this devotion of mine and continue to support me.

—Bunzaburou Nagano

Afterword

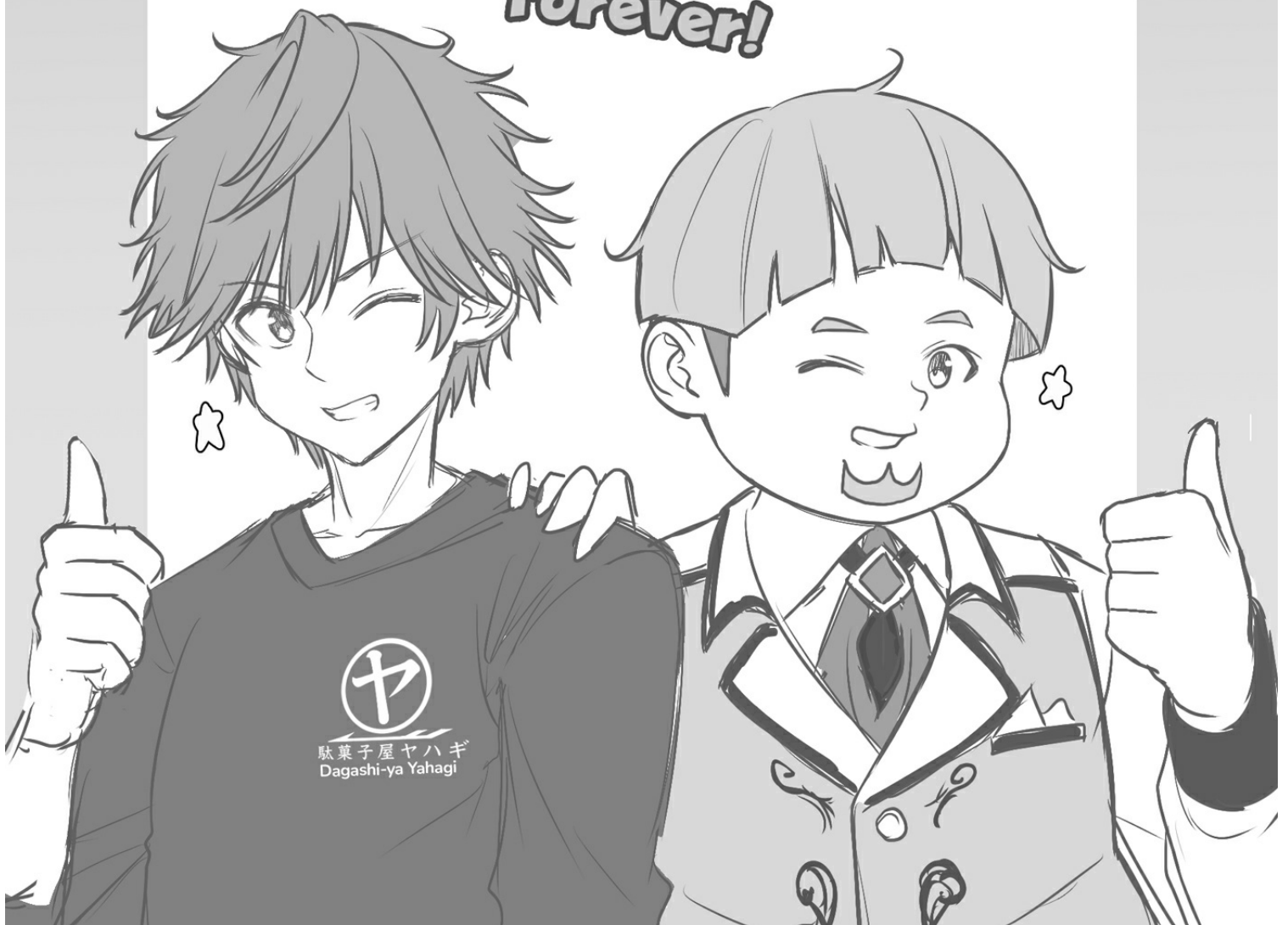
I'd never seen the snack that Don't Go Slackin' was originally based on. When I looked it up, I saw that there was a person who looked like a rock 'n' roller on the packaging.

I thought that the snack's metal-changing effect depicted in the story was influenced by rock (like a stone), so I also matched the design with that concept and depicted a metalhead.

I think I'll try it next time if I see it at the store!
Thank you for letting me take part in this!

- Neruzo Nemaki

**Besties
Forever!**



Bonus Short Story

Inspection: Deruderuderune

My name is Yusuke Yahagi. I'm a dagashi-ya from Japan who has arrived in another world. In this world of swords and magic, it's my job to sell dagashi to rookie adventurers. Well, I call them dagashi, but these aren't just any ordinary snacks. My store's products are all special items that grant various magical effects upon consumption.

That being said, my dagashi are cheap, so please don't expect any earth-shattering results. Don't go thinking you'll be able to use the legendary magic Black Dragon Lightning Attack by eating my Dark Thunder Chocolate. It's a mere snack that only gives you the courage to confess your love. It's completely incomparable to forbidden magic.

What characterizes my dagashi is that they give a bit of support to novice adventurers in tasty and enjoyable ways.

As a responsible dagashi-ya, I want to get a good grasp on what my products do. To that end, today I once again put my full focus on inspecting my dagashi with my girlfriend, Michelle.

Michelle and I sat across from each other in the inner parlor of my Showa era-esque wooden live-in store. On the tea table were two varieties of Deruderuderune.

Product name: Deruderuderune

Description: A candy you make yourself by adding water. Upon consumption, it gives you an out-of-body experience for fifteen minutes.

Features two flavors - Grape and ramune. Grape offers a juicy out-of-body experience while ramune offers a

refreshing one.

Price: One hundred rims

“We’re going to inspect this one today,” I said.

“This is the snack that’s used for the out-of-body dungeon tour,” noted Michelle.

“Yeah, becoming incorporeal lets you safely observe the dungeon.”

“Oh right,” she said, “wasn’t there a guy who tried peeking into Hot Spring Yahagi using this?” Ever since that incident, I hadn’t been selling it to the public. We had established a rule that the tourists had to make and eat the Deruderuderune in front of us. “Hee hee. It must be rough for all of you. I can use magic to create an out-of-body experience without the help of a snack.”

“What, really?”

“Ah...” Regret was suddenly written all over Michelle’s face.

“Michelle,” I said, “have you used an out-of-body experience to sneak a peek at me?”

“N-No...” She was vigorously shaking her head, her face bright red. She really was a terrible liar...

“Really?”

“Ac-Actually, just once...”

I stared at Michelle wordlessly.

“Ac-Actually, two times,” she stammered. “Yeah, just two times! I thought better of it afterward. I restrained myself!”

It sounded like that was the truth. We’d been dating long enough for me to read her. “When was the first time?”

“A long time ago,” she admitted. “Back when we weren’t dating...”

“Back when I was mistaking you for a man?”

“Yeah. Do you remember the Swindoll Con Inn?” That was the cheap hotel I’d

been staying at back when I was freshly arrived in this world. “I was just so curious about you on the other side of the wall that I went to check up on you.”

“All the way back then?! Wh-What did you see?”

“Your face while you were sleeping. You looked cold, so I slept next to you as a spirit...”

She’d done such a thing...? *You can’t share body heat if you sleep beside me as a spirit!* “And the next time?”

“When I was exploring the dungeon depths in the Royal Capital.”

I was baffled. “What? You induced an out-of-body experience in such a dangerous place?”

“I was worried you might be cheating!”

“There’s no way I’d do that.”

“Yeah, you weren’t,” she mumbled. “I was embarrassed that I couldn’t trust you.”

“So that made you reflect on your actions and quit your out-of-body experiences?” I asked.

“Yeah...”

Jeez, what would she have done if her real body had been attacked by monsters while her soul was out?

“Seriously, don’t look into my private time,” I told her. “I don’t peek at you with my Clairvoyance either.”

“I’d be fine if you did!” she blurted out. “If anything, I want you to always watch me.”

“We can’t be doing that,” I told her. “Promise me you won’t.”

“Yeah... I got it...” There’d been an awkward pause in her response, but that was as usual. She had an honest personality and wouldn’t break promises—she was a woman with a stalking tendency and all, but her honesty was something I trusted.

We tested the Deruderuderune together then. I chose the ramune flavor.

Okay, so it really is a refreshing experience. There was no burden on my body at all, unlike when I used Clairvoyance.

Having broken free of the yoke of our flesh, we ran about the hills and dales of Luganda, sometimes as if we were flying and sometimes like we were swimming.

“This feels so good, Yusuke!” Michelle exclaimed. In her spirit form, she threw her arms around me.

“We’re snuggling against each other on a spiritual level, huh?” I said, amused.

Michelle must’ve liked my phrasing. Her whole spirit body glowed pink.



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Dagashi-ya Yahagi: Setting Up a Sweets Shop in Another World: Volume 3

by Bunzaburou Nagano

Translated by Mizuki Sakamoto Edited by Rhys Martinez

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