

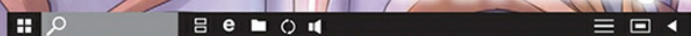
Iris

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Noboru Kannatuki

Magical★ EXPLORER

6

Reborn as a
Side Character
in a Fantasy Dating Sim





Magical★Explorer

Reborn as a
Side Character
in a Fantasy Dating Sim

6

Iris

ILLUSTRATION BY
Noboru Kannatuki



“Ngh... Why do I...?
Please let this be
over with... Hurry
up and end this!”

Ludie

“Hya, nghh...
Haah, haaah.”

Yukine Mizumori

Super-Chaos Benefit

Enemy Dungeon

-Posing Battle-

“I lament...
that you
humans are
so selfish
and foolish.”

Rue Sakura

Tsukuyomi Magic Academy's librarian. Beloved by a segment of the student body for her kindness and beauty. In truth, she is an angel.



“The perfectly
plump line
from my butt
to my thighs
really has quite
an impact,
after all.”

Nanami



Hatsumi Hanamura



Iris

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New York

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Magical★Explorer: Reborn as a Side Character in a Fantasy Dating Sim, Vol. 6

Iris

Translation by David Musto

Cover art by Noboru Kannatuki

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MAGICAL★EXPLORER ERO GAME NO YUJIN KYARA NI TENSEI SHITAKEDO, GAME CHISHIKI TSUKATTE JIYUNI IKIRU Vol. 6

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First published in Japan in 2022 by KADOKAWA CORPORATION, Tokyo.

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First Yen On Edition: December 2023

Edited by Yen On Editorial: Maya Deutsch Designed by Yen Press Design: Andy Swist Yen On is an imprint of Yen Press, LLC.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Names: Iris (Light novel author), author. | Kannatuki, Noboru, illustrator. | Musto, David, translator.

Title: Magical explorer / Iris ; illustration by Noboru Kannatuki ; translation by David Musto.

Other titles: Magical explorer. English Description: First Yen On edition. | New York, NY : Yen On, 2021— Identifiers: LCCN 2021039072 | ISBN 9781975325619 (v. 1 ; trade paperback) | ISBN 9781975325633 (v. 2 ; trade paperback) | ISBN 9781975325657 (v. 3 ; trade paperback) | ISBN 9781975350482 (v. 4 ; trade paperback) | ISBN 9781975350512 (v. 5 ; trade paperback) | ISBN 9781975367558 (v. 6 ; trade paperback) Subjects: CYAC: Video games—Fiction. | Role playing—Fiction. | Magic—Fiction. | Fantasy. | LCGFT: Light novels.

Classification: LCC PZ7.1.I76 Mag 2021 | DDC [Fic]—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2021039072>

ISBNs: 978-1-97536755-8 (paperback) 978-1-9753-6756-5 (ebook)



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Afterword

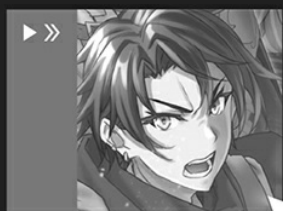
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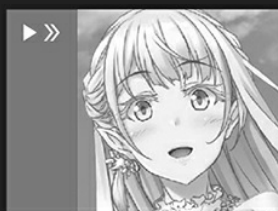
Characters

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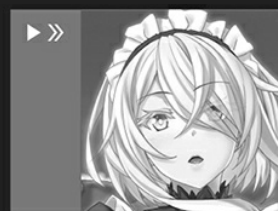
Kousuke Takioto

The best friend character from *Magical ★ Explorer*. The soul of a Japanese eroge aficionado dwells within him. Possesses a unique ability.



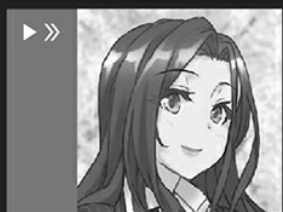
Ludie

Ludivine Marie-Ange de la Tréfle. Highborn second daughter to the emperor of the elven Tréfle Empire. A main heroine who appears on the game packaging for *Magical ★ Explorer*.



Nanami

A maid created to assist Dungeon Masters. Belongs to the angel race, who are few in number.



Marino Hanamura

Principal of Tsukuyomi Magic Academy, the game's main setting. Receives limited screen time in the game, so she's shrouded in mystery.



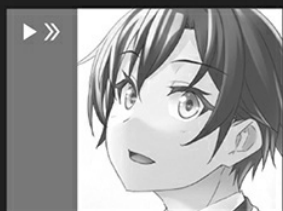
Hatsumi Hanamura

Marino Hanamura's daughter and Kousuke's second cousin. Generally very quiet and reserved. Teaches at Tsukuyomi Magic Academy.



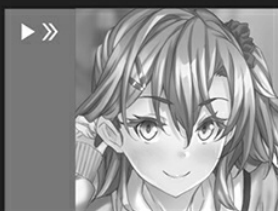
Claris

Elf who serves as Ludie's bodyguard and maid. Serious and devoted to her mistress, she has a tendency to beat herself up over her failures.



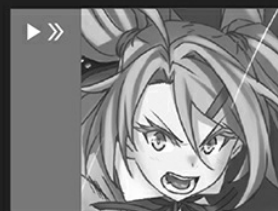
Iori Hijiri

The main character in the game version of *Magical ★ Explorer*. Ordinary in appearance. When developed, however, he becomes the strongest character in the game.



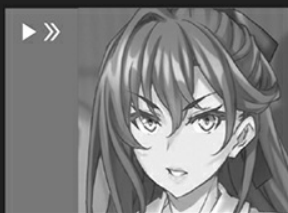
Yuika Hijiri

Iori Hijiri's younger stepsister. A main heroine who is featured on the game's box art. Transferred to Tsukuyomi Magic Academy.



Rina Katou

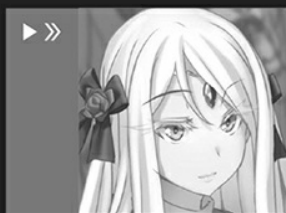
Katorina. One of the main heroines present on the *Magical ★ Explorer* box art. A competitive spirit who is sensitive about her meager bust.



Monica

Monica Mercedes von Mobius.

The president of the Student Council. One of *Magical★Explorer's* Big Three and a main heroine who features on the game's packaging.



Stef

Stefania Scaglione.

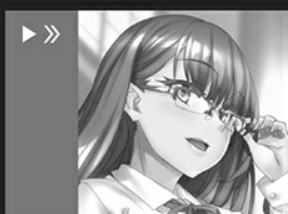
Serves as the captain of the Morals Committee. The Acting Saint from Leggenze. Although she is beautiful, compassionate, and popular with the students... is there more to her than meets the eye...?



Benito

Benito Evangelista.

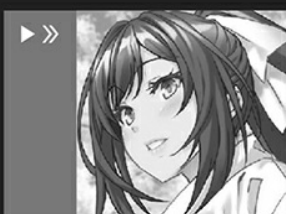
Serves as the ceremonial minister, the president of the Ceremonial Committee. Despised by the students of the Academy, but beloved by eroge players.



Fran

Franziska Edda von Gneisenau.

Serves as vice president of the Student Council. An extremely earnest and diligent girl. Sees Yukine and Shion as her rivals.



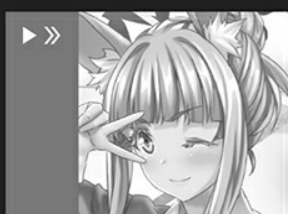
Yukine Mizumori

One of the officially recognized overpowered characters who are collectively referred to as the Big Three of *Magical★Explorer*. Lieutenant of the Morals Committee.



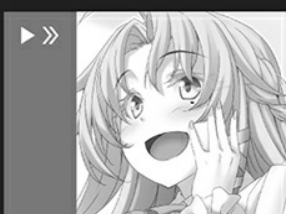
Shion Himemiya

Serves as ceremonial vice minister of the Ceremonial Committee. Always clad in a kimono instead of her uniform. Her strength is on par with the other main heroines'.



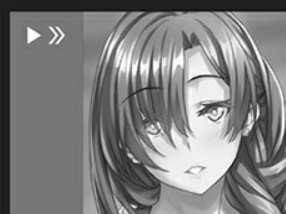
Ivy

Head of the *Tsukuyomi Academy Newspaper*. A rabbitfolk girl who's always fired up. Knows the roles the Three Committees play.



Ms. Ruija

Instructor at Tsukuyomi Magic Academy. Loose with money and indebted to the Hanamura family. Was Hatsumi's senior during their student days and challenged dungeons alongside her.



Rue Sakura

Tsukuyomi Academy's librarian. Has cared for many students over her long tenure at the Academy. Her true identity is...



CONFIG

[Chapter 1](#) [Momentary Peace](#)

Magical★Explorer

Reborn as a Side Character in a Fantasy Dating Sim

It happened when the other students in the house and I were relaxing after breakfast. My thoughts suddenly turned to Sis.

“Hey, Ludie. I sorta just remembered this, but...there’s been something on my mind lately...”

“Hmm? What is it?”

“Sis has been sleeping in my room recently... I mean, she’s always done that, so no big shocker, really.”

“Pretty much.”

“Uh, excuse me? That’s *definitely* not normal.” Yuika honed right in on my casual lead-in. “Ludie, you have to come back to your senses. That’s an absolutely buck wild thing to come out and say, okay?! Typically, she’d just sleep in her own room, right?! Right, Yukine?!”

“Y-yeah.”

Based on Yukine’s half-hearted reaction, she probably thought it was a pretty normal thing herself. I’ve already mentioned it to her, for one. I wasn’t the only person who had seen through her shaky response, either, as Yuika glared at Yukine with disgust.

“Yikes... Has the Hanamura house corrupted you all or something?”

“I wonder if it’s not you, Miss Yuika, who is the actual heretic here. You’ll start thinking the same way soon enough.”

I half agreed with Nanami’s point. Hell, I was terribly unsettled the first time Sis came into my room and jumped under the covers, but now there were times where I was super tired and joined her without a second thought. Nice and cozy warm.

Yuika still didn’t seem to be convinced, but honestly, I didn’t really care

regardless. There was something else on my mind.

“Anyway, that’s not what’s *actually* been bugging me. The truth is: Sometimes...I’ll catch Sis with a doll that bears a real close resemblance to me.”

As I said this, everyone except Yuika suddenly froze up.

“M-maybe your eyes are playing tricks on you?”

“Sh-she’s right, Takioto. Why would there be a doll of you out there?”

“Sheesh, it seems that these maid powers I exude are making you see illusions! I need to rein in my power level a bit.”

“Nanami’s weird comments aside, I’m being serious here. I really saw it.”

“It can’t be?! You don’t know anything about maid power?!” Nanami asked.

“Of course not! Why are you so surprised by that?!”

I bet no one in the entire world knew what she was talking about. She was trying to change the subject with this nonsense, but I wasn’t going to get taken in. Then, right at that moment...

The door clicked open, and Sis entered the room, lost in thought. We all looked at her, of course. From there, our gazes fell on a male doll wearing a red scarf that she had in her hands...

“It’s an illusion,” Nanami said while Ludie turned my face toward her in the same breath.

Yup, she had really long eyelashes, and her skin was flawless—a pretty face that anyone would find captivating. Except, this wasn’t the time for that!

Ludie didn’t have any real muscle strength to speak of, so I escaped her grasp and stared back at Sis again. Unfortunately for me, she had slipped into the kitchen, and I couldn’t get a good look at her. But there was no question she’d been carrying a doll with her.

“C’mon, passing that off as an illusion is way too much of a stretch. She’s *definitely* carrying around a doll that looks like me.”

I watched Sis as she nonchalantly took out a carton of 100 percent mixed fruit juice from the fridge and poured herself a glass.

After plopping a straw into the cup filled with the light-orange liquid, she started to head back to her room, completely heedless of our attention. She didn't immediately open up the kitchen door, though.

That was because a scarf-clad doll had slipped out of her arms.

"Oh, sorry, Kousuke."

Sis addressed the doll and picked up "Kousuke" like nothing had happened before departing .

.....

Silence fell over the room. Everyone besides Yuika refused to look me in the eye.

"...Just an illusion."

"I'd say it's pretty much impossible to stick with that explanation at this point..."

"See, even Yukine's agreeing with me! Also, Sis said 'Kousuke' when she picked up that doll, right? We all heard that, didn't we?" I asked.

"No, I think you misheard her. To me it sounded like she said Sukezaburou. It's most likely a doll from the novel Miss Ludie wrote, *Incomparably Brutal Sukezaburou*."

"Awah?!"

Pretty sure this was the worst suicide pass I had ever seen. Faced with the curveball, Ludie let out a strange yelp and stared at Nanami in confusion.

"...R-right, obviously. It was Sukezaburou... Right?"

It's okay, Ludie, you don't have to go along with her.

"You should probably hammer out this stuff a bit more ahead of time, considering Ludie's more shaken up about this than I am. Though, I am curious about the novel," I said.

"Well then, allow me to give you a brief summary... The protagonist, Hanagorou, is betrayed by a comrade he put his trust in and fosters a forbidden love with a married woman in his neighborhood as he tends to his fields in the

countryside. But when he is stabbed by one of the instructors from his days at the academy, he awakens to his love and elopes with a stray maid he comes across.”

“Where the hell did this Hanagorou guy come from?! And how is anyone supposed to know it’s a soap opera instead of an action story—or even a laid-back slice-of-life story?! That title’s not misleading, it’s straight-up false advertising!”

“What’s the ‘incomparably brutal’ and the ‘Sukezaburou’ stuff all about, then...?”

See, even Yuika was perplexed by it. If that was what the novel was about, how about calling it *Hanagorou, Writhing in Agony* instead?

“Now then, I believe our plan for the day is to head into a dungeon and focus on collecting magic particles. Oh, that also reminds me, I think Miss Ludie and Miss Yuika will be meeting up with Mister Iori as well.”

“Hold it, don’t think I’m going to let you change the subject here, Nanami.”

Just look at Yukine! Her smile was so forced that her eyes were about to start twitching.

“Okay, so let’s get back on topic—why exactly does Sis have a doll of me? That’s what we’re discussing right now.”

“Oh, Takioto. Right, now that you mention it, now that you mention it, now that you mention it.”

Why did she say the same thing three times?

“So about that doll. I actually got the feeling that I’d seen it somewhere before. And I just remembered that it was in Yukine’s room recently.”

“.....Yukine?”

The moment I went to look at her, she turned away from me. This was the first time I had seen her so agitated.

“You don’t mind if I pay you a short visit, right?”

“N-now hold on, Takioto. Um, well. Entering the room of an unwed young girl

isn't a very honorable thing to do."

"Then how come you normally let me in just fine?" I replied, but when I went to stand up, Ludie grabbed me by the hand and pulled me back down to the couch.

"Ludie...?"

She awkwardly averted her eyes and held her tongue.

All right, I could presume a couple things from this situation. Yuika was clueless about this whole thing. But Nanami, Ludie, and Yukine definitely knew something and were likely complicit in the matter. Now that I thought about it, they'd talked about a doll like this before, hadn't they...?

"That Takioto doll's pretty cute, isn't it? Heck, I'd like one for myself."

Whoa, whoa, Nanami and the others had formally denied it even existed, so if Yuika was asking them...

"Isn't it? Together, Miss Hatsumi and I obsessively designed it down to every last detail. I can provide two small-size versions free of charge. We'll need to discuss pricing if you want it medium-size or larger."

"Wait, you just came out and admitted it yourself! So I was right, after all! "

"Please, Master, calm down. I will admit that Miss Hatsumi and I designed them, but it was Ms. Ruija who actually made them. Honestly, I can't believe she'd do something so outrageous!"

"C'mon, why're you trying to drag Ms. Ruija into this *and* pin all the blame on her to boot? Though I have to admit, she definitely did a good job on them!!"

"She was searching for part-time work, so I hired her as a doll maker to give her a steady gig."

"As far as I remember, I'm pretty sure both Marino and I said she wasn't allowed to have any side jobs... Well done keeping her in check, at least. Seeing as you commissioned her, it's in a bit of a gray zone, but yeeaaaah, I'm still mad either way that she was looking."

Speaking of Ms. Ruija, she was weirdly good at housework and sewing, wasn't she...? Hold on—maybe she'd be willing to make an item for me if I asked her...

“In that case, I shall put in the request with Ms. Ruija. Let’s call the meeting here!”

“Wait, wait, wait.”

Like hell this is over! I grabbed Ludie and Yukine by the arms as they tried to stand up and made them sit down again.

“Fess up—you two have dolls, too, don’t you?”

“...Yeah, we do.”

“Yukine?!”

“No use trying to hide it at this point, Ludie. Every woman in this house has one, Takioto. Except for Yuika, since she wasn’t living here when we were planning it all out.”

“Is that right...? But why?”

I asked this while looking at Yukine, but the answer to my question instead came from Ludie.

“I mean, they’re so well-made and cute. But well, we thought you’d say they were unnecessary and tell us not to make them, so...”

“Ah, right. I probably would say something like that.”

I would cringe myself to death if I had a plush of myself.

“I promise you don’t need to worry about this, Master. All the dolls are made from safe, Wakoku-sourced materials.”

“Y’know, I wasn’t the least bit concerned about how they were sourced.”

“Then you must be concerned about the sizes. Rest easy. Since we blew past the target goal of our unofficial crowdsourcing campaign, we’ll also be producing a life-size doll to serve as a nightly companion.”

“I want a list of everyone who donated to that, and I want it now!”

Nanami glanced at Yukine, who proceeded to avert her eyes. Huh? Yukine? Uhhh?

“In that case, there’s no other choice. Let’s make a deal, Master.”

“What kind of deal?”

Nanami drew close to me and whispered into my ear.

“Why don’t we have Ruija make you a doll of your woman of choice. A very, very lewd doll, of course. In exchange, you’ll pretend you didn’t see anything today. How does that sound?”

Yup. Today sure was a wonderfully quiet and uneventful day.

After a fabulously pleasant morning, I went to the Academy with Nanami and called Ms. IOU—er, Ms. Ruija—as I had something to discuss with her.

Normally, her very existence was like full-body aromatherapy, but she’d taken to cowering like a rat staring down a cat lately. Once we got to talking, however, she would always return to normal.

“Good day, Ms. Ruija.”

“G-good day, Nanami. Also, I don’t have any money I can return to you...”

The fact that she was bringing up money right from the get-go sounded pretty terminal to me.

“That’s fine; you can pay it back with your body.”

“Eep!”

Ms. Ruija seriously stiffened up. Just what in the world had Nanami done to her? She looked so pitiful that I decided to come to her aid.

“Nanami’s joking.”

“Yes, about five percent of that was a joke... Oh right, you’re living in a luxury apartment building that Master owns at the moment, yes?”

Wait, so 95 percent of that was serious?

“Y-yes.”

“Renting that out to repay your debts might not be a bad idea, either... Yes, I believe there was a rather large cardboard box in the neighborhood trash dump this week...”



“Y-you want to make me live in a cardboard box?!”

Cardboard box design had come a long way, so it might actually be surprisingly comfortable living.

“I never said anything of the sort. I was merely commenting on how I saw a cardboard box; that’s all.”

“Right, right, of course. It’s just, knowing you, Nanami, I thought you might actually make her live in one.”

“Even I’m not that much of a monster, I’ll have you know. Instead, I’ve prepared some acrylic boards with an outstanding level of transparency!!”

Nanami handed something to Ms. Ruija, claiming it was a sample. Ms. Ruija accepted it with a smile and held it up to the sky.

“Woow, it’s totally transparent, how pretty—wait, you can see everything with this stuff!” Ms. Ruija said before slamming the piece of acrylic down on the ground.

“It’s the latest model.”

“That’s not the problem here.”

Nanami must have ordered it online somewhere. Ama**n’s chock-full of “up-to-date” models that are just the same as last year’s.

“To be serious for a moment, we thought it was best to have everyone help keep an eye on you, as it’s too much for the two of us to manage.”

“You’ve got a point there,” I chimed in.

“Why’re you impressed by this, Takioto?! She doesn’t have the slightest point whatsoever here! I’m allowed to have privacy, too, okay?!”

“Fine, fine, in that case, we can build the walls and ceilings out of two-way mirrors.

Are we shooting a porno here? Did those kinds of places actually exist in real life anyway?

“I guess that’s a bit better... I would be really uncomfortable if people could look in on me from the outside.”

“There’s no need to worry. I’ll make sure to set it up so you can see into it from the outside but can’t see outside from within.”

“That’s the exact same issue as the acrylic boards, then, isn’t it?! Anyone who looks in will be able to see everything!”

“Why don’t we meet in the middle and go with one-eighth-inch-thick plywood, then? ”

“How is that ‘meeting in the middle’?! That’d be freezing in the winter and boiling in the summer. At least take thermal insulation into account before you suggest another type of material!”

“Yeah, the plywood would give you privacy, but the walls would be so thin that sound would leak out like a sieve, right? That’s one hundred percent auditory access to her daily life, right there.”

“However, I will construct it with the perfect amount of air circulation and natural sunlight. We can ensure clean air at all times by intentionally leaving out a roof!”

“Then I’d just be exposed to all the elements, instead! That’s even *worse* than cardboard; the place would turn into a swimming pool whenever it rained!”

“I was simply trying to get ahead of the times, though...”

“You’ve gone so far forward that you’ve looped back to the era before cave dwelling! And why are you getting so discouraged by my objections, too?! And what are you doing, Takioto?! Stop acting like an innocent bystander and say something to your maid!”

“Well, I can’t really let anything happen to you, and since we need to keep an eye on you, I guess we can keep things as they are.”

“*Tch*, you’ve been spared this time,” Nanami said.

“What’s going on, Takioto? Did you call me out here just to abuse me like this...?”

Ms. Ruija looked almost ready to cry. It was kind of cute.

“No, no, I promise that wasn’t the idea... I’ve come here because I’ve got a request for you.”

“A request...?”

“Two, actually. First, I’d like you to introduce me to a particular dungeon. It’s not absolutely necessary, but I can pick up something there that would make things a bit easier.”

Ms. Ruija cocked her head.

“Introduce you to a dungeon? I don’t really mind, if it’s one I’m familiar with.”

Nanami nodded.

“Please do. Now, for the other favor. Could you make a life-size, super-sexy doll of the beautiful maid Nana—*mrngh*; what is it, Master?”

“Please just ignore what Nanami said. As for the other favor... While this is all a bit further down the road, there’s some behind-the-scenes work I’d like you to do to help save someone.”

Ms. Ruija cocked her head with her mouth half-open. She looked like a bit of an airhead.

Huh? Just then, I started to feel a little uneasy.



CONFIG

[Chapter 2 Super-Chaos Benefit Enemy Dungeon](#)

Magical★Explorer

Reborn as a Side Character in a Fantasy Dating Sim

Well, it seemed the time had finally come.

The place Ms. Ruija told me about was set in some ruins, just like the panties dungeon.

Of course, I knew how to lift the seal on the dungeon, so entering it was no obstacle.

That's right, I was able to delve into the Super-Chaos Benefit Enemy Dungeon. We gentlemen referred to it with the acronym SCBE and pronounced it like the Japanese word *sukebe*, or pervert. Yeah, this was the Pervert Dungeon.

On top of how the place completely ignored the vague naming conventions of the dungeons that had appeared before it, instead going with an all-English title, it was so lewd that the developers even referred to it as the Pervert Dungeon in official interviews.

"I broke the seal... Time to head in."

The dungeon was also a breeze to solo.

Just how easy, exactly?

Well, the good thing about this place was that your stats were largely irrelevant for taking down the monsters inside. Your physical strength meant nothing here—it seriously wasn't a factor at all.

In the Pervert Dungeon, clashes with monsters were resolved with "posing battles" instead of conventional fights. This cutting-edge, capital-s Sexy battle system was the first of its kind, and it was well received not just within Japan, but also among our overseas comrades in arms.

Here's how it worked: By putting on a sexy costume and striking an alluring pose, the player dealt damage to the enemy's clothing, creating a wonderland of erotic delights. As may be obvious, the dungeon was filled with enemies of

the beautiful and attractive female variety. *Bweh-heh-heh*.

On the other hand, enemies could damage the player's outfit by striking lewd poses of their own. But much to my delight, this only extended to your clothes; their moves didn't hurt you in the slightest. The dungeon also gave you special costumes when you entered it, and you couldn't progress through it without putting them on. This meant you got to watch sexily clad characters being stripped bit by tantalizing bit free from the fear of your favorite outfits ending up in tatters.

Conversely, if you could endure going the exhibitionist route of putting your nether region on full display, you could also clear the whole dungeon by simply strolling through it in the buff.

Naturally, most players tended to make their party members lose their clothes on purpose when going through the SCBE Dungeon.

Doing so let you enjoy the beautiful rewards of the heroines' gripes at the dungeon's irrationality, their shame-induced verbal abuse to the player, and the reactions of the characters as they stared at Iori's crotch. Seeing them desperately trying to cover up their bodies was several times more arousing than simply presenting them in the nude without any hint of embarrassment.

Oh, right. There was also an item you could get there, if you cared about that stuff.

Alas, in an extremely unfortunate turn of events, I wasn't going to be able to fully enjoy running through the SCBE Dungeon in this world. Just think about it. There was no way I could actually invite someone with me knowing what was to come. As such, I had sneaked off by myself to run through it.

Basically, I would just have to stroll through dungeon in my birthday suit, collecting items along the way. I'd removed the seal on the dungeon, so it was time to wrap this... Huh?

"Kousuke."

Someone called out to me from behind in this dungeon that I was supposed to have all to myself. I slowly turned around to face where this familiar, royal voice had come from.

There stood Ludie, glaring at me with reproach, Yukine, wearing a forced smile, and Nanami, beaming triumphantly.

“Wh-what are you doing here?! ”

I calmed my pounding heart as I unconsciously backed away from them.

“You were *totally* planning on running through another dungeon in secret, weren’t you?”

“We talked it over and decided we can’t let you rush off on your own like this.”

“My Eden will always be at Master’s side...”

One of these comments was clearly out of place.

“I’m happy to hear that—pleased as punch, really—but this place isn’t to be messed with. I’m one hundred percent serious when I say that this dungeon is one hundred and ten percent danger... Let’s get out of here.”

I took out a dungeon escape item as I said this. But it didn’t respond at all. To be honest, I’d never even considered slipping out of here early before, so this was my first time learning I couldn’t use them here.

“What’s got you so panicked?”

Yukine gazed anxiously into my eyes. She and the others didn’t know.

“This place is truly terrifying.”

Just how terrifying was the SCBE Dungeon, exactly?

Well, the scary thing was your physical strength was totally irrelevant for taking down the monsters here. Your levels didn’t count for shit.

Instead, clashes with monsters were resolved with “posing battles.” This cutting-edge, first-of-its-kind, capital-s Sexy battle system was such unbelievable crap, it couldn’t be praised at all.

Here’s how it worked: By putting on a sexy costume and striking an alluring pose, the player dealt damage to the enemy’s clothing—talk about absurd. Once you stripped the enemy bare, they ran away. I wanted to flee myself. Conversely, the enemy could deal damage to the player’s outfit by striking lewd

poses of their own. However, the only thing this scuffed up was your clothes. Their attacks might not have inflicted any physical damage, but they certainly dealt a tremendous amount of psychological damage. Oh, and if you were thinking you could avoid all this by having the heroines put on layer after layer of clothing, you were mistaken—it was impossible to get through the dungeon unless everyone was wearing a pervy costume .

Hey, wait a minute! All those merits I waxed on about earlier went and turned into demerits!

“What’s up with you?”

I suddenly came back to reality upon seeing Ludie stare at me with concern.

“Sorry.”

It was my fault for keeping quiet. The girls were always worrying about me, and they’d come here with the best intentions. I was really happy to have them around, but I felt guilty.

“This place is dangerous, in many senses of the word.”

“What senses?”

“Just what sort of dungeon *is* it?”

Faced with Yukine’s and Ludie’s questioning, I pondered how to explain things.

“It’s, well... Let’s start with the name first—it’s called the Super-Chaos Benefit Enemy Dungeon.”

“Super-Chaos Bene—whatsit now?”

Yukine didn’t seem to catch it at all.

“The Super-Chaos Benefit Enemy Dungeon, Yukine.”

“That’s a really weird name.”

An extremely astute observation. Of course, the simpler explanation was that this was the Pervert Dungeon. But I couldn’t tell them that.

“So there was, uh, that dungeon a while back. R-remember? The one where you had to do those sexy poses?”

“Of course I remember! I’d never forget *that*..... Wait. You’re not serious, are you?”

It looked like that was enough for Ludie and Yukine to wrap their heads around it. After a long silence, Ludie’s voice came out hoarse. I couldn’t bear to see her look like this, so I turned away from her.

“This dungeon’s a powered-up version of that!”

When I spat out the truth, Ludie fell to the ground where she stood, while Yukine’s face froze.

“One thing you can rest easy about is that you won’t really have to take physical damage, but well...”

“The *mental* damage will be unfathomable, right? That’s what you’re getting at, isn’t it...? That’s why you sneaked off here alone...”

Well, if that was the extent of it, I wouldn’t have thought much of it. That wasn’t it, though.

There was a system here that I could only describe as the ultimate manifestation of a certain fetish. However, it only came up in the absolute worst-case scenario, so a part of me thought it would be fine not to bring it up, since there was a chance we wouldn’t have to deal with it.

“...Takioto, I get that it’s hard to talk about, but you can say it.”

Yukine’s comment suggested the truth was showing on my face a bit.

“She’s right; you always try to take everything on yourself. More importantly, we’re all in the same boat here, right? We’re ready to hear it already, so just tell us.”

“I understand what you’re trying to say, Master. The fact that you think the curves from my butt to my thighs are incredible is just... *Kyah!*”

“Nope, you’re way off the mark.”

I did acknowledge that Nanami’s curves were truly divine, though.

“Look, if you can say that Nanami’s on the wrong track, then that means there is *something* you aren’t telling us, after all!”

I mean, sure, that was true. But I just couldn't reveal it to them.

"Wouldn't it be more dangerous to waltz on into the dungeon without saying anything? As long as you don't fill us in, Master, I won't be able to come up with a plan to stop whatever's coming."

Nanami didn't just have a point here—she had *all* the points. I could understand where she was coming from, but would I actually be able to tell the girls what lay in store? That would require trying to explain the advanced-level erogé nonsense of this place to a normal person. No way they would understand that level of intense fetish brain rot.

"I—I guess you're right."

I really did need to let them in on it, didn't I?

"W-well, let's see, uhhh... Well. For kids to grow up big and strong...they gotta eat, they gotta drink a lot of milk, that sort of stuff, right? That's just how things work, so like, I don't think it's done out of *malice*, really."

"Hrm, he's gotten incoherent."

"I have a terrible feeling about this."

"Looks like I should charge up my maid power, then. *Hnaaaaaah...*"

"Well anyway, um, so. It's a totally natural bodily function—and a necessary part of development, right? So I don't really want you to worry too much, but..."

"Just spit it out already."

It was time to steel my nerves.

"If you get hit with an additional attack after your clothes are tattered...you'll start lactating."

"Uh?"

"L-lactating."

"Ohhh, that's all? Lactating, huh? *Tee-hee-hee-hee-hee.*"

"*Ha-ha, ha-ha-ha...*"

"*Tee-hee...* Um..."

Whaa

“Eep!”

Just how many times had Ludie screamed by now? Her voice echoed louder than any monster’s roar and pierced straight through my heart.

“Stupid, right? It’s totally stupid, isn’t it? How am I supposed to think of it as anything else? It’s extremely and utterly stupid, okay? Stupid, stupid, stupid! Just so very stupid, *tee-hee!* ♪ *Heh, heh...* Please... I don’t care anymore; just tell me it’s stupid... Stupid, stupid, stupid, stuuuuupid!”

Ludie was coming apart at the seams! In the few seconds since I broke the news, her emotions had been bouncing up and down like a bungee cord. I had to get her to settle down a little bit, and calm my damn self while I was at it. Gaaaaaaah! I mean, even Yukine had her hand over her chest and was turning her body away from me here!

“J-j-just stay c-cool, okay?! You’ll only produce the m-milk for a day; it won’t go on for a week or anything like that!”

“That fact that we’ll lactate at all is the problem here! One day is too many!”

That was fair... But...

“Okay, but listen: Apparently, the dungeon actually activates the cells in your body when it starts the milk-producing function, and you could see that as good for your health, so really—”

“That’s! Not! The! Point! I don’t care about that!”

Incidentally, the developers made it so that drinking the milk restores your HP. Like hell I could mention that right now! I couldn’t even imagine what would happen if I did.

Dammit. The only person here who could get this situation under control was Nanami, who looked completely unconcerned right now.

When I glanced at her, she nodded and said, “You could use some help, Master.”

She came up to me. “I’d like to confirm something first—is the breast milk light with a clean finish? Or full-bodied with a strong finish?”

“Don’t make things even more chaotic! This subject’s already delicate enough as it is!”

Light with a clean finish?! Give me a break—we’re talking about breast milk, not a Bordeaux! One of humankind’s great mysteries and a blessing of nature. This half-hearted, superficial banter was going to turn Nanami into the enemy of breast milk fetishists everywhere!

“Personally, I think the creamier, the better. Don’t you agree, Master? ♪”

“Stop. Don’t. Ask me. To agree. With you.”

For some reason, my response came out all stilted. But hold on, where did she get off choosing a third option?!

Wait, no, that wasn’t important here!

“Dammit, what are we supposed to do?”

“Please, please, don’t fret, Master. Even if you can’t drink it all in one sitting, refrigerating or freezing it can preserve it for a while.”

“Look, I’m not asking about how to preserve the stuff. The fact that it’s coming out at all is the issue here!”

Why was Nanami assuming I was going to be drinking it in the first place?!

“Jokes aside, it’s really quite simple. We just need to make sure we don’t get hit.”

Well, that was true, but even so...

“And in the worst-case scenario, you can just dri—”

“La-la-la-la-la la-la-la la-la-la, la-la, laaaaaaaaaa!”

As I drowned out Nanami’s voice with my own, Ludie closed in on her. Then she grabbed her maid outfit.

“Why the hell are you so composed about all this, Nanami?!”

Now that Ludie mentioned it, Nanami had been just as unperturbed in the last lewd dungeon, too.

“I have heard of dungeons where adult activities can strengthen one’s

abilities, so I'm not surprised that a dungeon like this also exists. I'd say we're lucky that the effect doesn't make us three thousand times more sensitive, at least."

Only ninjas from a certain somewhere would have been able to handle that. Actually, those girls couldn't handle it for the most part, either.

"Nanami's right. We just have to march ahead and avoid the worst-case scenario. Gotta steel ourselves," Yukine said, patting Ludie on the shoulder.

Ludie let go of Nanami's clothes and let her arms fall limply to her side. She wore the face of someone who'd sank their life savings into crypto.

Hey, did you know? She's actually an elven imperial princess.

The body produces breast milk after giving birth to provide the baby with nourishment to grow big and strong. A natural principle, known to all.

However, you couldn't apply that pedestrian perspective on breast milk to the world of erogé. In those games, characters didn't need to have given birth to start lactating. It was par for the course. Each erogé had their own internal logic on the subject, and whether breast milk came out was decided based on that.

Put simply, the presence or absence of breast milk was entirely at the discretion of the director or scenario writer.

Moreover, in the world of erogé, breast milk was sort of like a poisonous drug. Sometimes, those mystical drops of life were revered and praised, while at other times, they would be reviled. It was a contentious issue. Developers even put breast milk settings you could toggle on or off in some games to please both camps. There were also times when this setting wouldn't only affect breast milk, but it would also hide semen or other mysterious fluids. Hold on, though—none of this was important. The problem was what we needed to do to ensure there wouldn't be any breast milk today.

"First, we have to choose which path to go down. Our options are... Ah, they're written over there," I said, before leading the other three to a location that looked to have some type of explanation written on it.

In the Pervert Dungeon, you first chose which situation, *ahem*, which floor to head to, and they were all optimized in unique ways. I mean...

“Let’s see, our options are...”

ORTHODOX —DESERTED LATE-NIGHT PARK—

ORDINANCE-DESIGNATED CITY LABYRINTH —DOWNTOWN ALLEYWAY—

STAND THERE AND PULL UP YOUR SKIRT —BESIDE A CONFERENCE ROOM TABLE—

ARE YOU FREE AFTER SCHOOL? —DILAPIDATED OLD SCHOOLHOUSE—

MYSTERY OF LIFE —GRASSLAND BRIMMING WITH LIBERATION—

“...That’s it. You’ve got to be joking,” Ludie spat out.

The developers were absolutely playing around. Personally, I liked *Are You Free After School? —Dilapidated Old Schoolhouse—* the most. Incidentally, if you cleared all the stages in game, two extra floors unlocked: *No Stopping Once Things Get Started —Limited Express Train—* and *Unexplored Bookstore Aisle —Technical Book Section—*. These were both difficult, and I had quite a hard time with them on my first visit.

“A lot of them sound like the sort of places exhibitionists salivate over.”

Nanami was right on the money. I think the developer probably thought up the exhibitionist situations first, then made up this dungeon to accommodate them. Okay, okay, I can admit it, it was genius on their part but also an absolute disaster.

“So which do we choose?” I asked, prompting an answer from Yukine.

“Let’s go with *Mystery of Life —Grassland Brimming with Liberation—* since it sounds like the most spacious and will let us keep close watch of our surroundings.”

I thought that was a pretty good choice. When it came to pure clearing difficulty, *Orthodox —Deserted Late-Night Park—* was also a decent option. Not that I said that out loud in case the girls mistook that to mean I was interested in that sort of thing. I couldn’t exactly deny it, for starters.

With our destination set, we stepped inside the magic circle.

The first thing we saw after we teleported was a treasure chest. With a *certain something* inside it, of course.

“I have a terrible feeling about this.”

Yukine was right on the mark. She opened up the chest and let out a very large sigh.

“Not these outfits again...,” she mumbled, looking through several different pieces of clothing. Her voice, mixed with embarrassment and a slight feeling of frailty, was fantastic.

However, it seemed she and Ludie had grown a bit more accustomed to these sorts of erotic situations after experiencing them a number of times, because they merely grumbled with displeasure as they changed their clothes. If this kept up, they might eventually don a super-micro bikini without a single complaint. It made me feel guilty; it was as though I was gradually conditioning them to be like this.

After quickly wrapping up our clothing change, we went into the next magic circle.

“Aren’t you embarrassed in that outfit, Kousuke?”

Ludie, Yukine, and Nanami were all in bunny suits; the girls had worn the outfits before, and they were pretty easy to move around in. Ludie bashfully tried to hide herself with her hands, but she couldn’t conceal that gorgeous body of hers. If anything, her trying to hide herself in embarrassment only made things even sexier.

Yukine seemed to be just as uncomfortable, her face a little pink. However, she stood up straight and dignified. In complete contrast, Nanami and I weren’t showing the slightest hint of shame.

“I mean, I’ve gone through so much embarrassment at this point I’ve just... gotten used to it.”

I had gone through something like this before, so wearing this sort of stuff didn’t faze me at this point. Besides, compared to everyone’s bunny suits, a see-through top was nothing at all. Actually, I had a few questions for the designer of this outfit, given we hadn’t even begun to progress through the dungeon and my nipples were already out for all the world to see here.

“What about you, Nanami?”

At Yukine's question, my maid rubbed her face with her hands like a cat.

"Kyah, Master, don't look at me! Nanabunny's so embarrassed I can feel my face burning! Hippety-hop!"

"So even more extreme, then," Yukine muttered with a sigh. I could sort of understand where she was coming from.

C'mon now, don't shake your butt like that, Nanami! I would've loved to have my face smacked by that fluffy tail.



“Can we hurry up here? I don’t want to be in this costume any longer than I have to.”

“Ludie’s right. You’re up, Takioto. I’m guessing you’ve already done your research on the place.”

I nodded. I had cleared this dungeon enough times to unlock all its CG, milk included. What else would you expect from an eroge aficionado?

This floor had a clear blue sky without a cloud in sight. I took a deep breath while bathing in the warm sunshine, getting a whiff of earth and grass mingling together. Being greeted with weather like this in the morning would surely be the best possible wake-up call I could ask for.

Unfortunately, we were all, save for one of us, warriors proceeding to the battlefield. Nanami seemed to be here to have a picnic. I mean, she was carrying a basket out of nowhere and everything.

“Are there any ways to counter the monsters here?”

“I was planning on accepting all the damage and just running from them. Except now we have a lot more people, so clearing it normally might actually be the better way to avoid taking too much damage.”

“I see.”

“Also, the rules here are a bit unique: As more of your skin gets exposed from taking damage, your attack power actually increases.”

Uh-oh, Her Royal Highness was looking disgusted. Meanwhile, Yukine placed her hand on her chin as she lapsed into thought.

“Master, you mentioned that we can damage our enemies by making sexy poses, yes? Is it safe to say that their attack power changes depending on the pose?” Nanami asked.

“That’s right. How do I put it? Uh, the more, y’know, *aaahn* feeling to it, the better?”

I had absolutely no idea what the nonsense coming out of my mouth was supposed to mean, but it seemed to have gotten the point across to the other three.

“I get it... How agonizing to think about it like that. A double-edged sword.”

Very true. The enemy was weak to sexy poses. On top of that, we were dressed in titillating outfits, so our sexy poses would do even more damage. But from another angle, that would increase the *mental* damage we were dealing ourselves. An honest-to-goodness double-edged sword, just like Yukine said.

“It might be best to just bear the shame if we can defeat all the enemies with a single attack, right?”

Indeed. But the real big issue this time around was that taking too much damage meant producing breast milk. Physically speaking, however, this wouldn't harm anyone. If anything, it was actually healthy, since it created HP-recovering breast milk in the process.

“It is disappointing Miss Hatsumi and Miss Yuika aren't here, isn't it...? Miss Ruija, too.”

Nanami had a point there. Sis did seem like she would have been a mighty warrior in this sort of dungeon. After all, she was the type to hand over her panties without a moment's hesitation. I got the feeling that Yuika would prove pretty strong herself, too, but Ms. Ruija was honestly an unknown quantity here.

“Quite a shame, yes, Master?”

Oh, I got it now. Nanami wasn't talking about their strength here. Sure, it was a bit disappointing they weren't around, but if there were even more people along for the ride, I don't think I could mentally withstand it all. There would probably be milk overflowing, except it wouldn't be coming from breasts, that's for sure.

“...Oh my, it looks like we don't have any more time for jokes.”

At Nanami's comment, we all switched into battle mode. Appearing before us was a somewhat familiar monster silhouette.

“...A female centaur!”

Centaurs were monsters that were part horse, part human—an extremely common sight to those who loved fantasy settings. They could run at great

speeds on their strong legs, which they also used to deliver powerful kicks. Additionally, with the added stability of a four-legged lower body, they could carry heavy weapons that would be too much for normal humans to handle, even when making large swings. They were skilled at using both bows and spears and fought as balanced all-rounders.

Basically, my point was that they were powerful opponents when you were up against them in normal battles.

“This monster may look like trouble, but this is a posing fight,” I said, stepping forward to disgrace myself. Just then, someone stuck out their hand to stop me.

“I’ll go, Takioto. No, as your upperclassman, I want you to let me go first. Don’t worry; I’ve been training myself every day, too. I’m not going down easy.”

“Yukine...!”

Excuse me, just how badass could this beautiful woman get? Being who I am, I was able to get through this with just a lovestruck heart attack, but if anyone else was in my place, their heart would have permanently stopped beating on the spot.

That said, it was fair to say this “training” she mentioned wasn’t going to be reflected in her moves in this dungeon.

Yukine struck a pose, brandishing her naginata.

If I was to give my personal assessment, I’d say that her form was so flawless it looked like it would befuddle anyone trying to attack her, giving the illusion that anything that entered her attack range would be cut down instantly. A simply beautiful pose.

But given her bunny suit attire, her sexiness also came through just as strong.

At this, green hearts, like masses of mana, appeared in front of her. They then flew in a direct line right at the centaur.

The monster passively accepted the heart attack, which tore holes in her clothing, as if chunks had been bitten out of it.

“Aaahn!”

The centaur screamed. Looking at her again, why, it appeared the underboob

her clothes were hiding had come out to play!

Her underboob said hello like a shy young maiden hiding behind her mother, peeking out from behind to see what was going on. My, how they had grown!

I replied with a hello of my own in my mind. I was dangerously close to saying it aloud.

However, our opponent wasn't beaten yet. She propped up her ample bosom with her right arm, looking at us with upturned eyes.

What happened when she did? Small yellow hearts appeared and flew straight at Yukine. She tried to slice through them with her naginata, but her weapon slipped through the projectiles as if cutting through fog, slashing the air. It appeared physical attacks couldn't erase them .

The hearts hit Yukine, and her clothes flashed with light for a brief moment before they were torn slightly.

"Hya, nghh... Haah, haaah."

Uh-oh, Yukine's voice nearly made me faint right on the spot. Actually, though, why were both the centaur and she letting out such titillating moans? I didn't remember hearing anything about *that* aspect of the system here...

Likewise, Ludie gulped next to me. This was just a guess on my part, but a part of her must have thought this shitty dungeon system was all some big joke. Now that she could see it was for real, however, she stiffened up.

Nanami didn't seem the least bit concerned.

"I-I'll do it this time!" Ludie announced, stepping forward to get into position. She lifted one arm up to expose her armpit while placing her other hand on her stomach—a classic pose for a modern pinup model.

Perhaps because she hadn't been through a sexy dungeon in a while, her embarrassment was winning out, and she stiffened her pose a little.

But thanks to the sexiness of Ludie's exposed armpit, hearts slightly larger and redder than Yukine's appeared and shot through the air toward the centaur.

The centaur took a direct hit, crying out as though it had made her feel good. But she still had a few scraps of clothing left over.

But hold up. After how much her clothes had been torn off, why were her nipples still just barely being covered up? Her clothes had torn away like a late-night anime, just barely trying to keep things safe for broadcast.

The centaur looked kinda peeved. I mean, I guess that was natural given that her outfit was in tatters. The way she was breathing sure was hot, though.

Just then, the centaur struck the same pose it had against Yukine, and a yellow heart appeared once again and flew toward Ludie.

Now it was Ludie's turn to have her clothes ripped up some. As she bashfully tried to cover up her exposed skin and let out an adorable scream, I engraved the sight—and her beautiful voice—into my memory.

“Dammit, how dare you do that to Yukine and Ludie...!”

“Master, get on all fours!”

While agonizing over what to do, I heard Nanami call from behind me. Why the hell was this maid stuffing rice balls into her basket? One of us was clearly in a world of her own here.

After a brief second of worrying, I got on all fours.

I didn't know if this would have any effect. After all, in the game, Iori never strikes any sexy poses of his own. What in the world was a guy's pose going to be good for?

There was a time when I, too, thought this way. But my position had an effect, all right. However.

“Why is it pitch-black?”

“...I wonder why it looks so ominous.”

The heart that appeared in front of me was, simply put, murky black.

Even the centaur, having meekly accepted all the attacks prior, seemed to be terrified of the projectile and took off on its powerful legs to escape. Nevertheless, the heart doggedly pursued behind it.

It landed a direct hit, and the centaur lost her balance, a black mist rising from her outfit and the fabric turning ragged, as if it had been splashed with acid.

Letting out an agonized cry, the centaur covered her breasts with both hands while falling to her knees where she stood... So um, why was she in so much pain, exactly?

“She’s certainly letting out a strange squeal...and writhing around while she’s doing it. Oh, now she’s collapsed and stopped moving.”

It was just as Ludie said. The centaur’s breathing was ragged, and sweat gushed from her every pore. Even then, she never took her hands from her chest.

After that continued for about ten seconds, there was a change in her.

“Ahn... o▽×w★●y-yes—×κ.”

Suddenly, her voice grew seductive. I didn’t know what language she was speaking, but I could clearly tell that she was pleading for it all to end.

Then, looking at me with glassy eyes, she turned into magic particles and vanished.

“.....”

“.....”

Both Yukine and Ludie were at a loss for words. I hadn’t actually done anything bad, yet I felt intense guilt weigh on me and couldn’t bring myself to look them in the eye. Just what sort of faces were they making? What face was I supposed to make here? I didn’t have any clue at this point .

“...Impressive as always, Master. I can’t help but be awestruck by how your pose broke the enemy’s spirit. I would love to be hit with it myself, just once.”

It was Nanami who broke the silence. But was that really for the better?

“Maybe all the monsters, um, get like that after their clothes are gone. Don’t let it bother you, okay?” Yukine said before patting me on the shoulder. Then she changed the topic slightly, as if throwing me a life raft.

“I guess the power changes based on the strength and color of the heart?”

“It seems that way, doesn’t it? But why was Kousuke’s the only one that, well, looked a bit sinister?”

“But in her final moments, the centaur looked happier than anyone else in the world. A happy ending! All’s well that ends well. The end!”

Hmm, was that really what was going on here?

“Anyway, putting that aside for a moment, our clothes got torn up.”

“What do you say we try changing into one of the other outfits they gave us?” Yukine and Ludie speculated.

“Want to try out a few?”

“No, I believe it would not be prudent to challenge the dungeon’s rules. There’s a chance, particularly with these silly dungeons, that they have an equally silly punishment for such behavior. Though, many don’t.”

“For example?”

“You might produce breast milk for the rest of your life.”

“Let’s shelve that idea, then. Immediately.”

It was too dangerous. *Way* too dangerous.

“...It appears we can’t afford to take our time,” Nanami murmured.

Another centaur had shown up. I wanted to figure out what exactly was the deal with my abilities and went to attack again, but Nanami stepped out in front of me.

“Master, please leave this to me. Though I’m not certain, I believe I have a grasp on how this system works,” she said, stepping forward and brimming with confidence. Why was she still carrying that basket, though?

The centaur was the first to make a move .

She whirled around on the spot and hoisted her spear straight up to the sky. It was the sort of post you’d see on the logo for the Olympics.

When she did, what looked like a heart-shaped magic missile appeared in front of her and flew at Nanami. It was yellow and about the size of a person’s head.

Conversely, Nanami campily dropped something from her basket, then froze in the middle of picking it up.

“I see, so that’s what the basket was for.”

Yukine nodded, impressed. I couldn’t help admiring the move myself. This was powerful, all right.

That instant, an enormous red heart that far outstripped the centaur’s appeared and flew off toward the centaur.

When the two hearts crashed into each other, the yellow heart was erased, and Nanami’s heart slammed into her foe.

What happened next was spectacular. The centaur’s clothing quite literally flew off of her. It was far beyond fabric ripping in places to give some teasing peeks. Her outfit had been completely torn off.

The centaur immediately covered her voluptuous breasts with her hands and stamped the ground as she looked at Nanami with frustration, letting out a lewd cry all the while, before she began transforming into magical particles.

Realizing what we had gotten ourselves into, Ludie glared scornfully, as if calling the whole predicament ridiculous. Oh, she actually said “ridiculous” out loud, too. Meanwhile, Yukine had her hand on her chin again and seemed to be thinking something over.

Nanami had won out by showing a glimpse of her boobs from her stooped position, along with accentuating her thighs and butt. Her pose must have been so effective because it seemed accidentally arousing, like something that could happen in real life, rather than purposefully erotic.

Indeed, she’d embodied an everyday, believable eroticism instead of an implausible sexiness.

The fact that she was in a bunny suit that emphasized her beautiful butt and legs was another factor that deserved high marks.

“Well, that’s all there is to it.”

“I get it. I don’t really *want* to, but I sort of understand how this system works now,” Yukine said, a sorrowful expression coming to her face. It must’ve really sank in that the more pervy the pose, the more powerful.

“Doubt I’ll forget about this day for a long time.”

“That’s true.”

I agreed as well. I sneaked a glance at Yukine’s costume. It was unforgettable in all sorts of ways, and I’d keep the memory with me for the rest of my life. Even if I got amnesia, I was sure this memory would remain.

Taking these two fights into account, our policy going forward was simply to run away.

We would fight when it was absolutely necessary but generally avoid combat where we could.

Our skilled battling was a once-in-a-lifetime feast for the eyes. When we arrived at the last floor of the dungeon, Yukine and Ludie both ended up wounded all over (*though physically, they were totally unharmed), and I had earned some emotional scars of my own, though they weren’t nearly as bad as theirs. Meanwhile, Nanami was mysteriously unfazed by the whole experience.

“We’ve arrived at last, by the looks of it,” Nanami murmured, looking at the spatial magic circle.

“Now it’ll fiiiiinally be over,” Ludie said, as if she were spitting up the words from the pit of her stomach.

“Hmm, but jumping into that circle likely isn’t going to be the end of it. Better stay on guard.”

Yukine was right—there was still a boss to contend with.

There were some floors in this dungeon that didn’t have a boss at the end, but it was impossible to avoid taking a lot of damage on them. More importantly, I couldn’t choose any of them and risk the others thinking those were the sorts of fetishes I was into. Man, I’d been so ready to dash through no matter how much damage I’d take at the start.

“Here it comes,” Yukine muttered. When we approached our end goal, the magic circle, the area at our feet began to glow. The transporter was enormous.

The next moment, particles of light began gathering together from this magic circle of hereto unseen size. Appearing from it were...two carplins. These oft ridiculed and derided monsters were lower than Dragon **st slimes, or a

magik**p that didn't know Tackle .

The three girls were surprised. Why carplins?

But the answer was simple.

They were the weakest of all monsters, and not only did they look completely ridiculous, but they also couldn't even swim despite their fish heads. These would be our sexy posing battle opponents.

Without a doubt, erogé players' brains would leak from their ears just imagining the heroines' anger at demeaning themselves and damaging their pride before these weaklings, along with their shame from the costumes and the poses—and being ever so slightly intoxicated from pleasure.

Incidentally, there were some areas in this dungeon where goblins or orcs appeared at the end. They were classic monsters, in more ways than one, after all.

“Caar, caaar!”

It didn't seem like things had really sunk in for Ludie and Yukine yet, but Nanami appeared to instantly recognize how troublesome these monsters would prove to be.

“I can see a fierce battle ahead of us here... There's a chance even I might not make it out unscathed.”

The carplins were the first to make a move. One of the humanoids? Fishes? Creatures? Whatever sort of classification it fit, the strange monster turned its butt toward us and flipped up the worn-out rag covering it. Its smooth and surprisingly pretty buttocks was kind of infuriating.

At this, the other carplin faced its compatriot's butt and raised its hand up into the air. Then it slapped its partner's cheeks over and over again with abandon.

“Not a butt drum...”

“This is dire. Quick, Master! Take off your pants and get on all fours!”

Why exactly did Nanami have a riding crop in her hands? Okay, obviously that was going way too far. Oh crap, the hearts were already flying toward us!

I immediately slammed into the large purple heart heading for our party. If Ludie or Yukine got hit, there would be no going back for them. It'd be all over in more ways than one.

As I gritted my teeth through the assailing pleasure, a thought suddenly came to me. Given this was an erogé world, I understood why the attacks would make Ludie and the others start to feel good, but why the hell did that feeling of pleasure extend to me, too?

"Are you all right, Master?!"

"No problem; I'm fine."

There might have been a problem with my outfit, though. I mean, just that last attack left me so ragged it was a wonder how my most precious place wasn't on full display.

"Come on, Kousuke...you're in tatters!"

"You all right, Takioto? Hmph, that attack's trouble."

"Dealing with their combo attacks is annoying. Let's separate the two of them. I'll take on one of them myself," Nanami said.

Wait, just how exactly was she going to lure one away? Right as the thought crossed my mind, Nanami threw a rock at one of the carplins. It stuck out its tongue at Nanami and was easily baited toward her.

"Ridiculous."

Princess Ludie was observing it all with a downright polar look in her eyes!

"Takioto. Ludie. You both have to hurry, too. We can't waste this chance Nanami has given us," Yukine said as she posed at the other remaining carplin. Yet in a truly awful development, the carplin widened its eyes and gawked right at her. Not only that, but the damn thing took a camera-looking item from its pocket, too.

"*Hngh*, you dirty coward...!"

Yukine froze in place, as if she were being stared down by a dragon. Though, in her defense, getting a camera pointed at you by a strange, leering, depraved creature... Yeah, that would make it real hard to strike a sexy pose, wouldn't it?

How was Nanami doing? I looked over to find, for some reason, a school desk and chair, where she was standing with her hand raised. The carplin had been hit with the enormous heart she produced and was moaning on the ground.

At this point, I didn't understand anything that was going on with her.

Noticing my gaze, she shouted, "I sent for these, thinking this might come up." C'mon, it was far weirder to actually expect something like this .

When I looked back to the front, I saw Yukine striking a pose, although she seemed somewhat daunted. Ludie was making a pose of her own right next to her. Oh, the camera had a flash function, too. I wondered how much money I'd need to save up to get this carplin to hand it over?

The carplin looked unphased as it was hit with their heart. I immediately made my own pose, but the monster easily handled this attack as well.

It was just wrapped up in tattered rags, so why was its defense so damn high? What were those things, ratty tunic +99?

Next, it was the carplin's turn. The unbearable sight of the creature spreading its legs into an M shape produced a black and sinister heart that flew toward the three of us.

Looks like I'm not gonna want to drink any milk in the near future... With that thought in the back of my mind, I stepped out in front of the group, when—

Ludie and Yukine intercepted the attack for me.

"Uhhnnngh, hnrgn, nnnnh!"

"Ahhh—eeyaaaaaah, aah!"

"Yukine! Ludie!"

F-F-Funbags?!?!

Uh-oh, I almost just screamed out an eroge title out of nowhere. Wait, no, that wasn't important here.

They must have jumped out because they thought my clothes were at their limit. But the thing was: Yukine's and Ludie's outfits were at that same breaking point themselves. Ludie was hiding her chest with her arms, but her underboob

was still out there for the world to see. I rushed over to the two as they teetered back and forth.

It was like sweat had erupted from their every pore. I tried going up to catch them since they looked like they were about to collapse and discovered they were sticky all over. Then, for some bizarre reason, a heavenly smell of body odor, shampoo, and other feminine fragrances filled my nostrils. On top of that, I felt something soft and warm fall onto me. Yukine threw her arm over my shoulder and stretched her armpit open, but it smelled simply delightful. Also unable to stand on her feet, Ludie leaned on to me with all her body weight, and boy, was it soft. Where exactly was I right now? Heaven?

“Takioto, our attack power should be really high right now, yes? ”

I nodded. They were so mighty I could barely keep my sense of self intact.

“Let’s decide this here,” they said before walking toward the carplins.

Their clothing was torn all over, and it seemed like their most private places could be exposed to the world at any moment. In other words, it was like they had the most powerful weapon of all in their hands.

Conversely speaking, if things weren’t settled here, it would be the end of the road for us.

However, the merciless carplin sent another attack our way. It turned its butt toward us and smacked it again.

A black heart appeared. Yukine went to jump out in her shredded costume, but I pushed her aside.

Then I looked at her and Ludie with a smile. My heart whispered to them both.

Thank you.

“Kouuuuusukeeeeeeeeeee!”

I collided with the carplin’s projectile. That instant, I felt a surge of pleasure, and then a sensation of mental and physical release welled up inside me.

“Let’s go, Ludie. Avenge Takioto!”

Finding her resolve with Yukine's words, Ludie took both her hands away from hiding her skin. I looked at them both, experiencing what felt like a kind of post-nut clarity. Then a thought came to mind.

...Ah, I get it now. This is the world I'm in.

If it were possible, this moment should have been engraved in a lithograph that would never weather away. The ultimate erotic moment that needed to be preserved as a several-thousand-year legacy, worthy of being passed down for as long as humankind survived.

Why look, there was Ludie, unable to fully hide her embarrassment or fully commit herself to her pose, along with Yukine, whose pose was also off due to the subtle look of shame on her face, despite her attempts to feign defiance and acceptance .

The obscene harmony of their sexy yet half-hearted poses, along with their embarrassed expression and lewd bodies, was torture. It was going to burn me alive.

Oh, how unbelievably, so very superbly sacred this sight was. In fact, it was so noble that even expressing it with words felt profane.

The carplin stared at them with a blank look, mouth agape, but slowly, its face dissolved into a smile. Our once-mighty foe was dissolving into magic particles. Its camera fell on the ground where it had been standing.

The carplin must have attained its long-cherished desire. I mean, its smile was so serene it looked as if the Holy Mother, Mary, herself had blessed him with her love. Not that it was a surprise after witnessing such a sight. Honestly, I was feeling close to ascending to heaven myself, in every sense of the phrase.

After a brief moment, Nanami, still unharmed, approached me.

"Master... Um. We times two."

Huh? Wasn't "we" already plural? Oh, no, she meant "we" two times. As in, "we we." Oh, so she must have been referring to the nineteenth highest summit in Indiana, the 750-foot-tall Wewe Hill.

Yeah, that definitely wasn't it, was it?

I immediately hid my crotch with my hands. Yukine drew close to me and, with a look of embarrassment mixed with remorse, covered me with a blanket. Then in a barely audible voice, she informed me:

“Takioto, um, well...take a look at your chest.”

I followed her gaze and stared down at my own chest.

Yup, it was all over.



[Chapter 3](#) Their Respective Opinions

—*Katorina's Perspective*—

“So you can’t get ahold of him?”

“Kousuke said something about working through a big emotional scar or something. That and he’d be a bit busy for a while. There wasn’t much else I could do, so I mentioned the title of the book to him, but then he stopped replying altogether.”

Gosh, he was seriously so aggravating.

“So basically, we can’t ask him ourselves? And when we’re at such a critical juncture, too, that asshole. If he’s sitting at home practicing his stupid comedy routine with Nanami or busy clearing some stupid dungeon, I’m going to kick in his teeth.”

“C’mon now, knowing Kousuke, I’m sure he has some sort of plan about this stuff. He definitely knows something, at least; that’s for sure.”

“Gaah, seriously what is *with* him? We’ve got all these things we gotta think about right now, too. Is he just screwing with us?”

Once my complaining was finished, I heaved a sigh.

“...Why did he even introduce us to a dungeon like that in the first place?”

“*That’s* the real question. Even I want to go ask him about that myself, but... There’s that thing we discovered yesterday, too, and all.”

There were no words after that. It was too early to draw any conclusions. We’d already asked for an analysis from that weirdo, and there was still other stuff we could do in the meantime.

“You’ve got a look of pure disgust on your face. Did you not get along with, um, Magistrate Anemone, was it?”

“My gut’s been telling me the whole time that woman’s bad news.”

“Th-that’s true, in a lot of ways, but...putting her aside for a moment, we need to get a handle on ourselves first. The vice president said she had finished her preparations, too.”

“Ludie should also be showing up soon. She’ll be early; I guarantee it.”

“Yeah... Hey, Rina, do you think those two know?”

I shook my head. How would I have any idea about that? After all, this was *Kousuke* we were talking about here.

“It wouldn’t be that strange either way, right?”

“Fair enough.”

With this, our conversation fizzled out. A few moments later, the two stragglers appeared.

“Sorry for being late, you two,” said Ludie.

“Morning, Big Bro. Morning, Katorina,” said Yuika.

“Sorry for calling you out here like this,” Iori responded, at which Ludie smiled.

“No need to apologize. What’s the matter?”

Iori looked over at me for a moment. I nodded.

“We’ve stalled out on this dungeon we’re trying to clear. We were wondering where the two of you were at.”

Ludie looked at Yuika.

“I haven’t been to the Tsukuyomi Academy Dungeon, but I’m confident I’ve gotten stronger. Lately...,” she said, segueing into an explanation.

I tilted my head, and she explained everything to me. But it was so unbelievable, I couldn’t help asking her again.

“Wait, he’s really doing that?”

All I could do was let out an exasperated sigh. Ludie nodded at my question.

“Indeed, and with incredible efficiency, too.”

According to her, Kousuke was collecting the magic particles you needed to

grow stronger at a tremendous clip.

I felt a little jealous of Ludie. The power gap between her and me was large enough as it was, and it was only growing wider.

Not that it mattered, but the emotional damage was all true, too, apparently. Though, it sounded to be a different dungeon from this one we were talking about.

“He’s definitely raising his level, sure, but he’s spending money like it’s going out of style. Can you believe it, Big Bro? That’s totally inconceivable for us. ”

“I’ll say! Though, I would like to know more about it. Kousuke’s magic particle collection strategy, that is.”

“He told me he’s figuring out an easier version that cuts down on how much money it requires and is going to present it to the public, free of charge. I would figure you and Katorina would be the first one’s he’d tell, though. Wouldn’t you agree?”

“Is he screwy in the head or what?” I blurted out.

What the hell was he thinking, publishing this method of his or whatever? There was nothing else to say. Not only that, but...

“Well, he didn’t just start this out of nowhere. Not only that, but Kousuke goes and takes all the money he uses inside a dungeon from his own expenses, too,” Ludie said, making sure to avoid any mention of *how* he was farming so efficiently. Yuika nodded vigorously.

“It’s exactly like Ludie says, Big Bro. Even when we try to object, he’ll just stare at us blankly and say *Huh, but I never planned on taking any for myself, though?* Honestly, I debated over whether to sock him in the face.”

Yuika angrily muttered some stuff I didn’t really understand about feeling like she was watching the protagonist from a show she had seen before, an all-powerful character who gets reincarnated in another world.

“But you *did* smack Kousuke. With a smile on your face.”

“I mean, he was happy about it, so what’s the big deal? Honestly, I deserve some recognition for holding myself back from doing more.”

At this, lori gave a strained smile.

“Uhhh, he probably wasn’t too pleased about it...”

“Takioto doesn’t just have a screw loose; it’s like he’s got all the cosmos packed in that head of his. You never know what that guy’s thinking. Don’t you feel the same way?”

“I suppose that’s true,” lori replied, siding with Yuika. “Sometimes I don’t really get what Kousuke’s thinking, either. That’s exactly why we called you two here today.”

“What do you mean?” Ludie asked.

“I think you two are aware of this already, but Kousuke’s introduced me to a few dungeons.”

Yuika and I nodded. He hadn’t limited his recommendations to lori, either—he was introducing different dungeons to everyone .

“And well, about that. Lately, I’ve gotten the sneaking suspicion that he told me about those dungeons for a particular reason.”

What did he mean? I thought as I looked at Yuika. However, she looked just as confused as me.

“So you two really don’t have any clues, either... I was thinking about asking Lieutenant Mizumori about it, too...”

“Do you want me to try asking Yukine for you? Though, it’d probably be better to ask Kousuke directly.”

“Actually, Yukine’s been kind of busy these days, hasn’t she? A little bit standoffish, too,” Yuika said.

“Really? I thought she was always busy.”

“I mean, sure, but it’s a little weird.”

“Huh? Then I guess I’ll have to ask Kousuke... Or at least, I’d *like* to.”

“It’s, like, *impossible* to get ahold of him right now. What about at home?” I asked, picking up where lori left off. However, the other two both looked at each other and said:

“He’s basically the same as always, right?”

“Hmm, well, if you’re really curious, Big Bro, I could ask him about this at home for you.”

“Sure, I guess, but I still feel like he won’t tell you anything. I bet Nanami wouldn’t, either.”

I seriously couldn’t imagine talking to that maid of his. I glanced at Iori; he looked unsure about how to broach the subject, so I jumped on it.

“Well? Go ahead and ask them about the book,” I told him.

“Yeah... Sorry, you two, but can I bring up something else for a second?”

Iori’s expression grew solemn as he spoke.

“Do you two know about the Book of Raziel?”

“The Book of Raziel?”

Ludie and Yuika exchanged looks.

“I know the legends and stuff about it, but... Wait, did you get your hands on it, Big Bro? C’mon, lemme see, lemme see!” Yuika said half-jokingly with a smile. Had they not heard of the book?

In complete contrast to Yuika’s smile, Iori’s face remained clouded.

“Of course I don’t have it. But if I told you it might actually exist, what would you say? ”

Yuika made a sober expression. If the Book of Raziel did actually exist...

“A war would probably break out, in the worst-case scenario.”

Iori nodded at Ludie’s response.

“That’s why I want to share this information with you. Also, I’m not totally sure about this, but we could be dealing with something far worse than war if the book really exists.”

Something even worse than war? Just what exactly would that even be?

“...I probably don’t have the same knowledge on the subject as you three, but Raziel is a famous angel, right?” Yuika asked.

“I think I don’t know much more than Yuika. Raziel is supposed to be an almost godlike figure, even among angels. An archangel said to know all the world’s secrets.”

“You two are both right; Raziel’s an archangel who governs knowledge. The Book of Raziel she possesses contains information on everything and anything. Even the fundamental laws of the world.”

Ludie nodded.

“Raziel gave the book to someone, but all the other angels grew jealous of them, then stole the book from them and sealed it away, right?”

Yuika nodded at Ludie’s question.

“I read about it a reeeal long time ago, so I don’t remember everything, but... Didn’t someone who read the Book of Raziel scheme to take over the world with the knowledge it granted them? Wait, no, or was it that the person who received it went mad?”

“I tried looking into it, and both those accounts are out there, just like you said. The more popular theory is that the person who obtained the book tried to take some sort of action against the world.”

Most people who weren’t from Leggenze would know about as much on the subject as Ludie and Yuika did. I figured the vast majority had learned about it from old fairy tales and picture books.

“You said it might actually exist? This Book of Raziel?”

“Yeah. Actually, in the deepest part of a dungeon, I discovered a bunch of documents that talked about the Book of Raziel. It was in one of the dungeons Kousuke showed me.”

“Calling what we found *documents* is a bit of a stretch—they were more like scraps of paper. ”

I tacked on the extra clarification. The notes were in pretty rough shape and written in characters I couldn’t read.

“The papers discussed events from the past, along with things involving the Book of Raziel. If we’re to believe them, then apparently the Book of Raziel is

sealed away right now.”

“Sealed?”

“Yup. Apparently, the tome was so dangerous it got locked away. But now the seal has weakened to the point it could break at any minute. We have to reseal it before the book is released completely. That’s what all the stuff we found said.”

“But,” lori said, pausing.

“I sort of questioned it a bit. Why was it sealed instead of *disposed* of?”

“Seriously, if the Book of Raziel is really that dangerous, it should just be destroyed for good instead,” I said. When I looked at Yuika, she seemed to be mulling something over with a frown.

“Do you think maybe there’s some reason they couldn’t originally destroy it?”

I tried theorizing about why that could be, but there just wasn’t enough information to go on. The only thing I could say was:

“I mean, destroying it, sealing it away, whatever it is, we gotta do something if we can.”

“Yeah. That’s what we were thinking, so we considered bringing it up with the teachers and everyone. But I’d like you all to wait a little bit to do that.”

“We don’t know if the underlying information on the Book of Raziel is true.”

Everyone nodded. Well, it made sense.

“The thing is: The information we got in the dungeon was a bit different from what I heard in fairy tales growing up, but it was all consistent. So we think it might actually be factual and are acting accordingly.”

“We do, huh?” Yuika murmured with a sigh. “You got these documents from a dungeon, I get that, and I understand where you’re going with this, but...”

“Hold on; I have a bit more to say. See, one of the reasons why I’m questioning if these documents really are the whole story is because they claimed that the angel Raziel had fallen from heaven.”

“Raziel was expelled from heaven?”

“That’s right. It said she fell from heaven and rampaged about with the Book of Raziel. Except, Raziel is said to be an archangel in most of the world’s fairy tales about her, right? So it’s questionable if she really did fall.”

“It’s just...,” Iori said with a sigh. “All the documents we found in that dungeon were consistent and claimed that Raziel used her book to go on a rampage.”

Hearing this, Yuika furrowed her brow.

“...Hey, Big Bro? There’s no chance that Raziel was sealed away along with the Book of Raziel, right?”

“Yeah. That’s what I was getting at when I said we could have something worse than a war on our hands.”

If Raziel had fallen from heaven and was sealed away with her book, then—

“The seal comes undone, and she swoops down to rampage across the world. The absolute worst scenario of all, basically.”

“*Bleeeh*. That certainly makes this a lot worse,” Yuika whispered. Looking at her, Ludie and Iori both winced.

“You two catch on quick. Yup, that’s the thing. According to the documents, the location of this seal is somewhere close to campus, but we don’t know where, specifically. If we did, we could go there and see the real thing, but... That’s when a question came to mind.”

Iori paused. Then he continued with a sigh.

“What if someone already has the Book of Raziel?”

“Oh, come now; there’s no..... Ahhh, I get it.”

Ludie nodded; it was clear the same person had come to mind for her, too.

“I’ve talked with the people in the Student Council, too, but there’s one person who’s been hiiiighly suspicious.”

“You mean Kousuke?”

Ludie offered his name. I agreed.

“The way he acts is totally strange. He gives us info about dungeons that no one even knows about, and he’s getting stronger way faster than anyone else.”

“Almost as if he found the Book of Raziel,” Iori said, adding to my comment.

“Hmm, well, you definitely have a point,” Yuika said.

Ludie was living with the Hanamura family, so she’d spent the most time out of any of us with the dude. She lowered her eyes, as though she was thinking something through. Glancing sidelong at her, Iori continued.

“It’s possible that he’s working to undo the seal to try using the archangel Raziel—or being manipulated by her to do so, right?”

“But even if Takioto does have the book, his behavior still doesn’t make sense, right? Why would he tell us where all these dungeons are when he could just get stronger himself instead?”

“Maybe it’s all part of his strategy?”

“Hmm, I get it. Ha-ha, you say some funny stuff, Big Bro... Ha-ha-ha...” Yuika laughed for a moment, then smiled. “C’mon, that’s absurd.”

“And you’re not just arguing based on emotions here?”

“It’s still absurd, even when looking at it logically. I’m sure you already know this, but Takioto isn’t stupid even though he’s an idiot.”

“He’s an idiot, but he isn’t stupid...?”

“Sure, Takioto keeps a lot of secrets, is a pervert, talks like a creepy old guy sometimes, and likes older women just as much as he likes little girls, but—”

Yuika glanced at me.

“Th-that’s a little bit too scathing, isn’t it?”

I sort of got where she was coming from, sure, but there was one comment I had to make here.

“Why’d you look at *me* when you said *little girls*?”

Hey, don’t ignore me! I mean, not that I wasn’t aware I was petite already.

“It’d be weird for him not to do something obvious. I know what you’re trying to say here, Iori. But even if that was the case, the way he’s been acting wouldn’t add up.”

“Something obvious?”

“If Takioto did have this big scheme thought up, then do you really think he’d risk his life trying to save me?”

“Now that you mention it, I might not even be here right now if Kousuke hadn’t saved me,” Ludie said.



“No, no, it’s different for you, Ludie. You’re forgetting your title here. I mean, you’re a beautiful elf—and an imperial princess! Compared to a nobody like me, the sky’s the limit on how much value he’d get from using you. Wait, what am I saying? That’s not even the point here!”

Yuika loudly smacked the desk.

“Do you really think the Takioto you know would do something like that?”

“Well...”

Iori hesitated to continue. Yuika then pressed in closer to Iori.

“Big Bro, I can pick up on what you’re thinking clear as day, okay? So hurry up and tell us who put this idea in your head.”

Iori looked at me when Yuika said this. All I could do was shake my head—what was I supposed to do here?

“Sorry. I would be behind that.”

Just then, another girl showed up and butted into the conversation.

“Vice President Fran?”

She nodded at Yuika’s quiet question and adjusted her glasses as she lowered her head in remorse.

“I know testing you like this was a bit rude, but to be perfectly honest, we never once distrusted Takioto.”

“Hmmm,” Yuika hemmed, looking at the vice president dubiously. “*Ooooh*, so that’s what it was! Makes total sense.”

Despite what Yuika had just said, her eyes were still filled with reproach. Faced with Yuika’s overt irritation, which she clearly could’ve hidden if she wanted to, the vice president forced a smile.

“However, we were all in agreement that we needed to corroborate things, which was why we asked you.”

“I still think Kousuke knows something and is getting up to something, though.”

“Yeeeeeah, he does love doing things on his own.”

Yuika followed suit with Ludie’s observation.

Iori agreed, explaining that the three of us all shared their view.

“Do you really think there’s a seal on Raziel?”

“There is certainly *something* going on with Raziel. The Academy must be related as well, I think. And I doubt we have much time before the seal comes undone,” Ludie replied. Yuika nodded with her.

“The way Kousuke’s been acting lately all starts to make sense if that’s true. ”

As she said this, Ludie glanced over to look at the vice president.

“If Nanami and Kousuke are going to dodge our questions, why don’t we hold off on that for now? There’s another way to get important information without asking either of them. We have someone to go to instead. Yuika and I should be able to ask her right away.

“We can ask principal Marino Hanamura herself.”

After Vice President Fran was called away by that Ceremonial Committee woman and left, we immediately made for the principal’s office. We thought it would take time to get an appointment with her, but it turned out she could see us immediately, and she readily showed us into her office.

“*Mmm-mnhhhh!* These snacks are soooooo tasty!”

Sitting down on the sofa in the principal’s office without a moment’s hesitation, Yuika stuffed her cheeks with snacks, sparkles in her eyes.

Treats aside, we were dealing with Marino Hanamura here. She was the top authority in the school, as well as a powerful figure in the magic world and a member of the Hanamura Group.

“Yuika...!”

Iori admonished Yuika under his breath since we were dealing with an authority figure—I guess he didn’t know the principal didn’t expect that level of politeness.

“Oh please, Iori, you don’t need to worry about any of that. Go ahead, help

yourself, too.”

The principal looked at Yuika and Iori with a bright smile.

“Now then, what brings you to my office?”

Iori seemed a bit concerned about Yuika’s complete lack of reservation but began speaking anyway.

“Principal Hanamura... Do you know of the Book of Raziel?”

She answered with a giggle...

“Oh wow, Kou also asked me a similar question.”

...her expression completely unchanged. Then she reached for her cup of tea.

“Now, how should I answer that...? I suppose it’d be correct to say I know about it, but I don’t know about it.”

“What does that mean?”

“I know it exists. And I know where to find it, too. ”

“You do?!” Iori asked with surprise. The principal nodded with a smile.

“But since you’ve investigated this far, I’m assuming you must already have some leads on where it could be located.”

“Well...”

Iori hesitated. Without ever losing her smile, the principal nodded.

“Sorry, that was a bit of an odd way to put it, wasn’t it? See, the truth is: I wasn’t too knowledgeable on the book until recently.”

“What do you mean?”

Marino nodded at Ludie’s question.

“I only know what I do now because of Kou. In fact, he stopped by just recently to talk about the same thing...down to the tome’s precise location, too.”

“Gaaaaah...!”

“Ugh, I knew it...!”

Yuika heaved a huge sigh. Conversely, Iori mumbled begrudgingly. Kousuke *had* known something, after all.

“Can you tell me what exactly you’re aware of? Then I’ll tell you what I understand on my end,” the principal asked.

“According to our research...the Book of Raziel does actually exist, and we know that it’s been sealed away somewhere in this region.”

“*Ding, ding, ding.* ♪ What else?”

“Also, that it’s possible the archangel Raziel fell from heaven.”

“Oh my!”

Marino continued smiling while she chimed in with her acknowledgments. There wasn’t any surprise on her face, but her eyes were filled with anticipation as she stared at Iori.

“Ummm, that’s it. I figured you might have some additional information with your knowledge of the Academy, Principal Hanamura.”

“That’s all...? Really. I guess so.”

Hmmm, Marino hummed as she nodded. Then a look of surprise finally crossed her face.

“Marino?”

When I wondered aloud about where she was going with this, she changed the subject.

“Oh, it’s nothing. So you want to know where the Book of Raziel is—or if the archangel Raziel really is a fallen angel, I’m guessing?”

“That’s right.” Iori nodded .

“All of this is only what Kou told me, though. If that’s fine with you...”

Marino suddenly tilted her head.

“Actually... Kou never told me not to mention it to anyone else, so what’s the harm?! Sure, I can tell you all about it! ♪”

Her words brought a strained smile to Ludie’s face. Maybe she was reminded

of something that had happened before.

“Let’s see. Before I talk about Raziel, there’s something I want to predicate this all on, okay? The Academy’s scale is in a class of its own compared to any other academic institution in the world, even next to Amaterasu Academy or Susano Martial Arts Academy. I take it you feel the same way, Yuika?”

At the question, Yuika’s serious expression turned sour. After seeming to recall her time at Susano Martial Arts Academy, she nodded.

“I totally thought the same thing! I mean, first of all, the campus site itself is just way too darn big! How the heck am I supposed to remember how to get around? I mean, is this place a dungeon or something?”

“Tee-hee-hee, hee-hee-hee.”

Marino audibly chuckled.

“A dungeon, hmm? I suppose it’s more spacious than the floor of a small dungeon, isn’t it?”

“When I first heard we move around with spatial magic circles, I was like *Are you kidding me?! Now I can see why.*”

“Right, right. That’s exactly why. I can’t possibly have a perfect grasp of the entire Academy. Of course, I’m sure I know more about this academy than anyone else, though.”

That was only natural. The higher and higher you went up the ladder, the harder it was to understand and administer everything all by yourself. At a certain point, you had to start delegating things to other people.

The same must have been true for Ludie’s family, the Tréfles. Her father wasn’t aware of absolutely everything going on throughout the empire’s domains. Instead, he placed administrators in each region and entrusted them with the details.

The same principle applied even on a smaller scale, like back at my home. The yard was maintained by a gardener, who had been selected by a trusted butler. It was those two, not Father, who managed every last nook and cranny of the estate’s greenery.

“Kou said it was the library. ”

“The library...”

Iori widened his eyes before letting out a sigh.

“Yup, the library. Did you expect as much?”

“Assuming that the Book of Raziel was at the academy...the library was one of the potential spots. Katou said that a forest would be the best place to hide a tree.”

He looked in my direction.

“Sorry, I was sorta just saying that.”

“I figured,” Iori mumbled after hearing my reply.

The next instant, he got a message and pulled out his Tsukuyomi Traveler. Then his face went pale, and he turned toward me.

He showed us the screen, having finished deciphering it.

I need you here immediately. That was all it said.

“I’m sorry to do this in the middle of our conversation, Principal Hanamura.”

“Oh no, don’t worry about it. I’ve basically said everything I have to say anyway. You can ask Kou to tell you the rest, right?” the principal replied. We thanked her and stood up to take our leave when she addressed Ludie.

“Oh, right, that reminds me. I have something to talk to you about, Ludie.”

Hearing this, Iori, Yuika, and I all gave our thanks again before exiting the office.

“...Something felt off, didn’t it?”

Yuika was the first to speak after leaving the principal’s office. She hemmed and hawed while crossing her arms.

“She’s definitely hiding something; that’s for sure. Hrmmm.”

I was surprised. I didn’t think anyone else would have thought the same.

Hearing this, Iori cocked his head.

“I agree that she’s keeping quiet about something, but it has to be something she can’t tell us, given she’s the principal, right?”

“*Seriously?* This is why you are who you are, Big Bro. You’re definitely Big Bro, and honestly, that’s really what makes you *you*, Big Bro. I guess Big Bro will be Big Bro, after all.”

“I have no idea what any of that means, but I’m pretty sure you’re making fun of me. ”

“Sounded a bit complimentary at the end, right?” I said.

It was just a hunch, though. The real question was just how many different meanings did the words *Big Bro* have for Yuika anyway?

“For someone who’s skilled at taking the initiative in a conversation, it’s really easy to steer the topic in the direction they want. Anyway, I’m going to send a message to Ludie, okay?” Yuika said, fiddling with her Tsukuyomi Traveler. “Also, this isn’t necessaaaaarily related, buuut...you’re hiding something, aren’t you, Big Bro?”

Iori nervously scratched his cheek in response to her question and averted his eyes.

“I’m not really *hiding* anything, exactly...”

“Spill it,” Yuika replied to her nervously fidgeting brother.

That was enough to get him to give in. He began talking about what he’d been keeping quiet.

“When Marino brought up the library, a thought popped into my head.”

“About what?”

“I’ve always been a bit uncertain about Ms. Sakura.”

“The librarian?”

Iori nodded.

“She’s really looked out for me, even before you transferred to this school, Yuika, but...”

“Yeah, but?”

“She sure does say some mysterious things sometimes.”

“What do you mean?”

“So back when I registered to use the library, I really didn’t have any plans on checking out any books to begin with.”

“Really? Then why did you sign up in the first place?”

“Well, here’s the thing. Ms. Sakura told me that I would be using the place really soon.”

Iori closed his eyes and pointed his head toward the sky, as though recalling that moment.

“At the time, I thought she meant we’d be using the library in class. But I misunderstood her.”

“You did?”

“I have definitely used the library a bunch of times; that’s true. But not for class... I go there to borrow books to help with clearing dungeons. None of what I’ve checked out has been related to my studies. ”

Yuika went quiet, thinking through something. And then...

“Has Ms. Sakura worked here for a long time?”

...she asked her first question. Now I could see why Iori always said his sister was amazing. Her cognitive abilities were really impressive.

“Yeah, that’s right. I heard Ms. Ruija say that Ms. Sakura helped her out when she was a student here.”

It wouldn’t have been unusual for Ms. Sakura to tell Iori to register with the library if he needed it for class.

But Iori had only ever used the library for help with things outside his coursework. It didn’t make sense for Ms. Sakura to tell Iori that he would be using the library when he wouldn’t have to visit for class.

Yuika had deduced all that from Iori’s anecdote.

“Hmmm,” she murmured while mulling over something again.

“Yuika?” Iori asked when she didn’t say anything for a while.

“So basically, what you’re trying to say here...is that Ms. Sakura predicted the future?”

Hearing this, Iori smiled with a wince.

“I don’t have to say much for you to put everything together, huh...? I think that’s amazing, you know.”

“Yup, yup, thanks. Well?”

“Yeah. Apparently, Ludivine didn’t get pressed to register herself. Even though she’s way more bookish-looking than I am. Actually, I’m the *only one* Ms. Sakura asked to register.”

“I see, and that’s what made you start questioning things, right? Hmmm.”

Yuika was thinking something through.

“It’s suspicious, right? And on top of that, she introduced me to one of the dungeons where we found documents concerning the Book of Raziel.”

“Well, there’s probably something going on there, but it should be fine, right?”

“...Why do you think that?”

“I mean, Takioto’s already doing something about it,” Yuika replied, unconcerned.

I could admit that he engendered a weird feeling of trust, and he actually had the skills to back up the crazy game he talked. However, I sensed that Yuika placed a different, indescribable type of trust in him .

Iori forced a smile and murmured, “Fair enough.”

But once we heard what Anemone had to say, none of us were able to smile anymore.

When we showed up to where we’d been called, a slight gloom hung in the air. Though, only the class rep and Vice President Fran were really in low spirits; Anemone was the same as always.

“Here’s what I got after collecting all the information out there on Raziel,”

said Anemone, bringing up a display of a summary based on her translations and the other documents we had collected up until now.

- The archangel Raziel used the Book of Raziel to attempt world domination.
- Defeating Raziel was difficult, and she was sealed away.
- The seal on her slowly weakened over time and would eventually disappear entirely.
- The angel's form was shown in the attached materials.

"According to our research, Raziel does actually exist, and it's clear that she did go on a rampage at some point. Though there's nothing written on where exactly it happened. That being said, we might have an answer to that question soon enough."

"What do you mean?" lori asked.

"I mentioned in my summary that there's an image of the angel in the additional documents, didn't I? Take a look, and it'll click."

"lori, I need you to brace yourself for this, okay?"

The vice president said this before nodding at Anemone. When she did, a picture appeared on the screen.

"!"

"Whaaat?!"

"Are you serious?"

We looked at the image and were completely bewildered. lori seemed to take it the worst, whether because he was unable to fully digest the truth or because his brain was outright rejecting it. He trembled as he stared at the image. Then, keeping his eyes locked on the screen, he took a few steps forward.

"It can't be."

Another step .

"No, no, it's not true."

Another step.

“...Why? ...Why, Ms. Sakura?!”

There on the screen was a picture of the librarian, Rue Sakura.

Orange’s face went pale as he stared in astonishment. He was so shocked that he’d completely dropped his class clown persona. Class Rep averted her eyes; she’d arrived ahead of us, so she must have already known the truth.

Vice President Fran sighed and pushed up her glasses.

“I’ll share this information with the president and the others.”

Then she immediately took out her Tsukuyomi Traveler and began typing.

“This is certainly unexpected,” remarked Anemone. “I didn’t have any real connection to her, but I would’ve never expected a person... Pardon me, carefully scrutinizing all the information we’ve gathered, I can say she’s an angel. Anyway, I never thought she would ever be the type to do something like that.”

Everyone shared the same sentiment.

“For the time being, I’ve contacted President Monica, the Three Committee members, and the principal... I’ve also secured a meeting room.”

“After this, the plan is to talk things over before taking action.”

“I have a question.”

I could take a guess what Iori had questions about.

“Do you? And what might that be?”

Iori then replied to Anemone’s inquiry.

“The place we found these documents... Ms. Sakura indirectly introduced it to us. I can’t fully believe this. We should go run this by her,” Iori said, making to run off. Orange began to chase after him before Vice President Fran stopped them both. Watching all this, Anemone heaved a sigh.

“Now, now, hold on there, my hasty Iori and Orange. What you boys need is presence of mind and calm thoughts. For now, you should calm yourselves down by watching videos adults use to cheer themselves up.”

“Is there *anyone* in this school who calls me by my name? ”

Orange’s complaint quietly escaped his lips. I couldn’t tell if Anemone had heard it. She pointed to another room.

“I’ve prepared some coffee, chairs, and monitors over there. Please, rest assured that they’re all videos I’ve personally selected, featuring au naturel subjects aplenty. Go ahead and relax.”

At Anemone’s beckoning, the pair, along with a conflicted-looking Class Rep, went into the other room.

“Wait, this is just a cute animal video!”

It wasn’t long before we could hear Orange’s voice reach out. He must have been expecting a different type of “au naturel” video.

“Still though, an angel. The timing of this commission of his, and the amount, too. It’s all a bit too convenient. Don’t you find it suspicious, Fran?”

“Yes, I do. I mean, it’s so perfectly on the nose...”

I didn’t know what they were talking about. However, Ludie seemed to understand what their conversation was referencing.

“You’re talking about that item Kousuke commissioned you to make, right?”

The vice president nodded meekly.

“...It’s always like this with Kousuke.”

Hearing this, Anemone placed her hand up to her chin, looking deep in thought.

“...Really now. Then it’s possible he’s the one pulling the strings behind all this, yes?”

“I can’t deny that. But...”

“But?”

“Even if Kousuke *is* the one behind all this, I’m still going stay at his side.”

Ludie said this in her usual frank tone of voice as if it were perfectly natural, like applying skin lotion after getting out of the bath.

When Ludie said this, Vice President Fran's jaw half dropped, while Anemone burst into a fit of laughter. I was convinced.

"I mean, I'll admit he's not a bad guy. Annoying as hell, though."

When I voiced my agreement, Anemone nodded, savoring every minute.

"Even if he's the one behind all this, you'll still side with him, you say? Hee-hee, ha-ha-ha-ha. Why, depending on the situation, that's basically a declaration of war. This is certainly a surprise. I never would have expected you to give such an interesting answer, Princess Ludivine. Hilarity aside, why, though?"

"I don't think for a moment that Kousuke would lead all this in a bad direction. Though I regret to inform you that, based on my experiences, I'm certain he's planning *something* here."

"I see, I see. Intriguing, very intriguing. What about you, Katorina? Do you share the same reason as Ludivine?"

"I guess that's part of it. Except, the bigger thing is my gut's just telling me that he's not doing anything like that."

It was an uncertain call, totally different from Ludie's. But when it came down to it, my gut was what I trusted most. That was especially true in scenarios like these. Most times, people didn't really understand why I made decisions like these, and they would sometimes even laugh at me for it, but my intuition had never steered me wrong in important moments.

Anemone laughed.

"Your gut? I can appreciate an answer like that. Though you can hardly call that perfectly reliable, can you?"

"Um, Magistrate Anemone? We should get going..."

Vice President Fran chimed in, prompting Anemone to shake her head with resignation.

"Sorry. I do apologize if I have offended you. If Kousuke truly was pulling strings from the shadows, he wouldn't have had me make him those items the first place, after all. Though, that in itself is suspicious, isn't it?"

“Magistrate! Now!”

“Uh-oh, someone’s getting testy. Joining the Ceremonial Committee was the right call. Shion doesn’t nag me at all, you see. Not that she still isn’t noisy herself, mind you. *Ha-ha-ha.*”

All I knew about Shion was her choice in outfits and her high-handed tone, but I could agree that she looked like she’d be a bit annoying.

“I considered the possibility that Takioto messed up somehow and undid Raziel’s seal himself and is now working to atone for it, but... Judging by the ancient texts, that’d be pretty much impossible.”

“Then the question is: What *is* he doing? Do you not wish to find out what that is, Princess Ludivine? ”

“Of course I do. I’m sure Kousuke will talk to me if he needs me. If not, he won’t. Though, he did tell me before in a roundabout way that he would need my assistance, and...I believe this might’ve been what he was talking about.”

“Just need to ask him, then... Kousuke Takioto...”

Anemone seemed to chew on his name as she spoke.

“When it comes to Kousuke Takioto, I only have others’ evaluations of him to go by. We’ve met a few times at most,” she said before sipping her tea. “That said, I have a general idea of the boy. He claimed to have cleared some dungeons solo, so I thought he must be quite capable himself. But now I see that his greatest strength is his friends, not his personal ability.”

Anemone looked from Ludie to Yuika, and then her gaze fell on me.

I was about to chime in and insist that Kousuke would’ve gotten this far whether we were there or not. At that moment, however, we heard Orange shout.

“Hey, Iori! Where are you going?!”

Right as all our eyes turned in the direction of the voice, Iori burst out from the other room.

I ran after him, clicking my tongue. Iori’s figure had grown small in the distance.

“Ugh, that idiot. What the heck does he think he’s doing?!”

The words slipped from my mouth. Then I turned to glare at Orange, who was supposed to have been right beside him.

“Sorry, once he saw a cat, I couldn’t stop him.”

I understood that it wasn’t Orange’s fault.

“I know you’re not to blame here. C’mon. We have to hurry.”

When we finally got to the library, Iori was already pressing Sakura.

“Tell it to me straight!”

He slammed the desk. However, Sakura just sat there wearing her usual smile.

“Ms. Sakura, you’re Raziel. An angel planning to use the magical Book of Raziel you created to conquer the world. Is that true?!”

“*Hee-hee*, what do you think?” Sakura playfully muttered. Rejecting her nonreply, Iori once again slammed the desk.

“Don’t play dumb. I didn’t come here to joke around,” Iori said .

Sakura slowly rose to her feet, still smiling.

“Let me tell you something, Iori. People? They’re the most selfish and egotistical things in the world.”

Sakura demurely closed her eyes, and the color of her hair slowly began to change. That wasn’t all—the presence she gave off—her very being itself—changed as well.

“Whoa, whoa, hang on, Ms. Sakura...,” Orange mumbled as he watched her change, his lips twitching nervously.

“They act solely out of self-interest and greed, cause problems to everyone but themselves, ravage the earth if it serves them, and ultimately start wars with their fellow humans.”

She began to walk. The moment she picked up a returned library book, she turned into particles of light and dispersed.

“At first, it irritated me to no end. But then, at some point, a revolution took

hold of me. I had a thought—what if I controlled it all?”

Suddenly, I heard her voice right beside me, so I took out my dagger and backed away.

When had she circled around next to me? She had been across the room just a moment ago.

“Could there be any sight more amusing than people dancing in the palm of my hand? But I don’t need so *many* of them. A single town should suffice.”

Sakura placed the book in her hands back on the shelf without any concern. Then she vanished again, reappearing near Ludie this time. She returned another book to the shelf.

“You truly...you truly think that, then?” Ludie murmured, looking like she couldn’t believe her ears.

“Yes. It’s been on my mind these past hundred years.”

Once Sakura finished returning all the books she had to the shelves, she again disappeared, this time going deeper into the library, out in front of all of us.

“...Ms. Sakura.”

Iori shook his head and mumbled in pure disbelief. But her words weren’t the only thing that was unbelievable—her appearance was, too...

“Black...wings.”

They were not the pure white seen in fairy tales. They almost looked like they belonged to a demon .

“Hello, everyone. I am the angel of knowledge, Raziel. More importantly, why are your heads not bowed when I am showing you my true form?”

“It can’t be...,” Iori mumbled. “This can’t be! I don’t believe it! You always supported me, Class Rep, and the other students with whatever we tried to do! You always were nice enough to give us a place to study! You always made coffee for us!”

Sakura stared hard at Iori, not moving a muscle.

“Whenever I was in trouble, you’d always be there to—”

“Enough.”

“Huh...?!”

“‘Ms. Sakura’ this, ‘Ms. Sakura’ that. It’s all so grating.”

Her voice was cold and dispassionate.

Faced with reality, Iori gritted his teeth without saying a word. He made a slightly remorseful expression.

“Once I began thinking humans would inevitably face destruction, everything in the world seemed so amusing. Especially the young boy who talked to me about his silly dreams. Think about it—the world would end before they could ever come true.

She lifted her hand, and several crosses of light appeared around her.

“But I don’t hate you, you know. Why, the more you look to the future, the funnier it becomes. If you’d like, I could even invite you to join my new world. Why, you could be flanked on all sides by your ideal women.”

I doubted Iori would want a world like that. If he did, then we wouldn’t have been working together with him to begin with.

Iori didn’t say a word. He answered by readying his sword.

“A pity.”

Raziel waved her hand and launched the cross-like objects toward Iori.

He tried to deflect them with his shield, but they vanished before they could connect.

“Whoa, that was close... Looks like I made it in time for the big moment.”

Just then, Anemone showed up, out of breath...

“Stone Bullet!”

...alongside Vice President Fran. She fired sharp pointed rocks at Raziel with the force of a rifle. However, none of them hit her.

“...That’s a rather strange phenomenon. ”

There must have been some sort of invisible wall around Raziel. The pointed

rocks stopped right in front of the angel. She flicked her wrist, and the rocks crumbled away, falling to the floor and dispersing into smoke.

Even faced with this abnormal phenomenon, Anemone simply smiled. Then she addressed the angel in a cheerful voice.

“It’s been quite a long time, hasn’t it, Ms. Sakura? Thank you for finding that book for me before. It was a huge help! In fact, I’m actually looking for a different one right now. Maybe you could help me locate it...”

Anemone’s pleasant demeanor vanished.

“It’s called the Book of Raziel. Ever heard of it?”

Her final words were filled with anger.

“I don’t need to answer that.”

“Hmph, so *that’s* still sealed away, then. It would appear you’re not in the best of shape, either, Ms. Sakura.”

“...I won’t deny that. But even at my current level of strength, you all are powerless to stop me. Yet if still you wish to try...then come farther into the dungeon. I’ll be waiting in its depths.”

She formed a light in her hand, then sent it flying. It swept in front of Iori and then began to fade. He placed his hand inside and grabbed something. It looked to be some type of key.

“Though, of course, I don’t expect you’ll even make it that far.”

Watching Iori grab the key, Raziel turned around, and the bookshelf facing her slid open. Then she stepped onto the magic circle that appeared on the floor.

“Wait just a— Huh?! Wh-what’s going on?!”

“The ground’s moving; I can’t stand up!”

Not only the bookshelf in front of her, but all the bookshelves in the library began moving. Magic circles materialized all over. In the space behind each one appeared a number of stone statues resembling demons.

“I’ve waited long enough, right, Takioto?”

I didn’t fail to catch the angel’s faint whisper.

Raziel stepped into the magic circle. I instantly tried to follow her, but soon I realized that was the least of my worries.

“Wh-what the—?! ”

With a steady rumble, one of the bookshelves moved aside to reveal a magic circle. In front of it was a statue shaped like a demon.

Once the bookshelf stopped moving, the magic circle radiated light, and a glimmer came to the statue’s eyes.

“Hmm, gargoyles maybe? Though, it seems like there’s more to them than that,” Anemone murmured before the statue slowly began to move.

“Get ready, everyone. Stone Bullet!”

Each of us readied our weapons and faced off against the monsters.

Bookshelves started moving all around the library, and a swarm of tomes flew from their shelves.

Then monsters resembling dolls with angel halos appeared. They were all equipped with various weapons, and they moved in to attack us.

I let slip an annoyed click of my tongue. After evading the attacks from the one in front of me, I thrust my dagger at its heart.

I delivered a critical hit. Then I instantly opened the space between us, regained my stance, and looked around.

“Just how many of them are there?”

They weren’t very strong at all. Still, their numbers posed a problem.

There were so many monsters that it was getting annoying. I didn’t see myself losing at all one-on-one. But I couldn’t say the same against so many at once, and there were still the gargoyles mixed in among their ranks that I’d really need to focus on to have any hopes of defeating them.

I evaded one of the gargoyle’s attacks and fell back.

As I reapplied my enhancement magic, a spell flew right past me. A sharp, pointed stone stabbed into the gargoyle. As the monsters shook off the attack, a guy holding a sword came up and asked me a question.

“Are you all right?”

A memory from back then flashed through my mind.

I recognized this person. As for whether I liked him, I didn’t just dislike him—I hated his freaking guts. He annoyed me as much as the freckles that would pop up on my cheeks.

Still, he was also a guy I had sworn to put in his place one day.

“Uh, I didn’t ask for any help.”

At my comment, he flashed a slightly strained smile.

His little sister had gone to help Iori and the others. I could hear her voice, energetic and loud, from all the way over here .

I turned my eyes away from the younger sister to look at the elder brother. He seemed to be a little bit at a loss. Well, I did have to admit that, in this one specific instance, he had actually protected me.

“I guess I should still thank you though, so... Thanks.”

“You’re very welcome, mademoiselle. I do apologize, but I have my own complaints to lodge with these monsters, you see. May I have your permission to join in on the fight?” he asked with a wink. That cool act of his really worked, but it irritated me to no end.

“You already plan to fight either way, right? What do I care?”

After all, he, Ceremonial Committee Minister Benito Evangelista, was already standing in front of me to protect me. No matter what I told him, it was clear he planned on fighting.

The fact that I found it reassuring made me really annoyed with myself.

“Hmm, you guys are trying to escape the library and wreak havoc, aren’t you?”

Benito parried the attack a gargoyle sent at him. He made it look all too simple, too. Frustratingly so, given I couldn’t hope to fight with nearly as much ease.

“Sorry to say, but I’m not letting any of you go any farther.”

Then he put his entire body into shoving the gargoyle back. Once he got the monster off-balance, he swung his sword.

“You’re not hurting the other students.”

The gargoyle began to dissolve into magic particles.





CONFIG

[Chapter 4](#) [Hopeless Battle](#)

Magical★Explorer

Reborn as a Side Character in a Fantasy Dating Sim

—*Takioto's Perspective*—

“Sorry for being late.”

When I arrived at the meeting room, I found more people inside than I had ever seen before.

The Student Council, the Morals Committee, and the Ceremonial Committee were there. Not only their leaders, but the members, too. There was also a selection of teachers, including Sis and Ms. Ruija.

“There you are. Okay, here’s a simple breakdown of the situation.”

“Right now, the academy is in danger.”

“The cause being this librarian, Rue Sakura,” the vice president said, touching a projector-like machine to produce a hologram of Ms. Sakura.

“Rue Sakura is a fake name, and in truth, she is an angel. Her real name is Raziel. We’re relying on her own description here, as we cannot confirm this ourselves, but she claims to be the angel of knowledge.”

I could hear some of the Three Committees members who had been in the dark talking to each other in low voices.

“Apparently, the angel Raziel has been accumulating power while conducting research in several dungeons to eventually control humankind.”

“...Is this really *that* Raziel?”

From what I had researched myself, the being known as Raziel was talked about in this world like legends from pictures books and myths were back on Earth. That was to say: People weren’t sure if they actually existed. On top of that, the theories I found largely concluded that the angel Raziel was nothing but a made-up fairy tale.

“Right now, a horde of monsters has appeared inside the library.”

“Monsters?! From the library?!”

“According to Magistrate Anemone and Ms. Ruija, while the cause of their appearance is unknown, the present situation is very similar to a stampede, when monsters overflow en masse from a dungeon.”

The same thing happens in the game, too.

“Why do you think we made sure to wait until you got here to talk about anything?” Monica asked me.

“Weeell, I get it.”

“You knew about this from the start, didn’t you?”

“Yes, I knew. I knew that Ms. Sakura was an angel, and I’m pretty well-informed about angels themselves, too. I mean, well, Nanami here’s an angel, for starters. It’s probably fastest to ask her for the rundown.”

“N-Nanami’s an angel?!”

“Stunningly beautiful maid and pretty angel Nanami, at your service.”

Several people gawked at her. Yeah, that wasn’t a very “angelic” thing to say, huh?

“You can check with Marino about it. Nanami is undoubtedly an angel, and she’s made a contract with me.”

“Really now...?”

“My heart, my body, and everything else belongs to Master. I couldn’t be happier.”

“Hey, Nanami? Can we avoid making comments that people might take the wrong way for now?”

“Pardon me. The only thing I can say is that I do not know if Rue Sakura is Raziel. She is definitely an angel, though, and an upper-ranked one at that.”

“What’s this upper-ranked thing?”

“We angels are grouped into different classes, which can be roughly divided into the lower rank, mid-rank, and upper rank. To be precise, there is another even higher rank, but since it would be difficult to conceptualize for humans,

just think of it as something even more advanced than the upper rank.”

“So out of those classes, what does it mean for an angel to be upper rank?”

“It means they possess a tremendous amount of power. However, given that Raziel is the angel of knowledge, she might not have as much strength as angels purely focused on combat. Though, I will say that compared to physically powerful meatheads, a cunning foe is much more troublesome.”

“Right, that’s a good point.”

A number of people shifted their gazes to the representative of all things wily and shrewd, Anemone. Others looked at the meatheads in the room—Holger, said to be the Morals Committee’s muscle, as well as Orange.

“Sorry, but I can’t believe it. Is she really scheming to take over the world?” a member of the Morals Committee asked. The students who knew Ms. Sakura the best would naturally think that she didn’t have any ill intentions. However.

“We thought the same thing.”

“But Iori and the rest of us all heard it straight from the source.”

Anemone backed up Iori’s statement.

“We don’t really have another way to look at it, given that she’s attacked us already.”

Hearing this, President Monica let out a big sigh.

“...Monsters pouring from the library.”

“Consequently, we’ve come up with a plan. We will split into several different groups and clear the dungeon, with the Three Committees playing the central role.”

“The Three Committees? Shouldn’t that fall to the teachers?” Esmeralda asked.

“That’s an excellent question, but it looks like Rue Sakura already came up with countermeasures for that,” Vice President Fran answered, prompting President Monica to nod.

“The instructors can’t get inside. There’s some sort of restriction on the

dungeon preventing teachers from entering. A few haven't tried entering yet, but I'm sure it'll be the same, right?"

If the setup here was the same as it is in the game, then Rue Sakura had generated a barrier around the library to ensure the teachers couldn't clear the dungeon. The vice president looked at Sis as she spoke next.

"After talking it through with the teachers, we decided to break up into several different groups and make our move."

"Some will be on defense, and others will be on offense."

"The Book of Raziel may be in her possession, but it's still sealed away at the moment. We need to clear the dungeon quickly in order to prevent her from using it."

"But who's going? And how will they accomplish that? "

The moment the question came up, a single voice echoed across the room.

"I am."

"Iori..."

"I'm going. Even if someone tries to stop me, I can't stand staying behind here after learning all this."

I had wondered when he would speak up. If anything, I thought he might go rushing off without even saying a word—so sharp was the gleam in his eyes.

Someone let out a small sigh. It was Minister Benito. He stepped out of the gathering and waved his hands to try to calm things down.

"Listen here, young Iori Hijiri. Our enemy here is Rue Sakura... Someone you know very well."

Iori stared at Minister Benito without saying a word. Benito continued walking and stopped right in front of him.

"This isn't some average, everyday monster we're up against. We're talking about Rue Sakura, okay?"

Benito narrowed his eyes, making a face like a carnivorous predator trying to intimidate his prey, and got even closer to Iori. Then, bringing his face right up

to lori's...

"You're sure you're ready for this, then?"

...he asked a question in a different voice than usual. From there, he raised his head up and looked at everyone in the room.

He'd been asking if lori would be able to harm someone he was close to, but now the words weren't only directed at lori. He'd posed it to all of us.

"Absolutely," replied lori resolutely, without hesitation, a flicker in his expression, or even a single blink of an eye.

"Supposing...you go to swing your sword at Rue Sakura, but you hesitate a second, and she hits you with a counterattack. That mistake could throw off everyone else; we might not be able to come back from it. Are you sure you understand that?"

Naturally, he was directing this question to everyone else as well. Benito was telling us that only people who wouldn't have any second thoughts should go .

lori kept his gaze trained on Minister Benito the whole while. Without a single twitch of his eyebrow, he waited with a solemn look on his face for Minister Benito to return his gaze. When he finally locked eyes with Minister Benito after he finished looking around the room, lori nodded sternly.

"Really now."

Minister Benito glared at lori with a stern look of his own, but before long, he cut the tension by showing his usual smile.

"I won't stop you from going. But there's something I want you to remember."

Minister Benito lightly patted lori on the shoulder.

"What's that?"

"You're too eager. There are others here with you. You're not alone."

"...I know."

"If by any chance you might fail, I'll be there for you. Monica and the others will be, too. Go with peace of mind."

From there, Benito told everyone else to really think hard about whether to go, giving us all the time to do so. After speaking with the president and others for a while, he called me over.

“Takioto.”

“What is it?” I replied, heading over to him. The leaders of the Three Committees were all looking at me.

“Be sure to tell us everything you know, then.”

“Sure, I mean, as long as it’s stuff I *can* talk about.”

Or so I said, but of course, I couldn’t tell them *everything*, so I only conveyed to them what was necessary. Once that was over, Minister Benito gave a heavy sigh.

“You’re planning on going, too, aren’t you?”

He hadn’t even needed to ask.

“Of course.”

“Well then... I guess that means I’ll stay behind here.”

The source of this flood of monsters was Ms. Sakura. They would continue to appear unless we stopped her.

However, given that monsters were pouring out of the dungeon, several people would need to stay behind to protect the Academy. Plus, the monsters that poured out of the dungeon in the game were fairly strong, too .

That was why it was important to have some personnel stay behind. I agreed that one of the Three Committees’ leaders should abstain from going into the dungeon.

“What about President Monica and Saint Stef...?”

“Please, do you really need to ask?” President Monica replied. She was raring to go.

“If we’re dealing with an angel, then I don’t really have a choice.”

Stef’s tepid lack of enthusiasm was par for the course, yet it set me at ease.

The biggest apprehension I had about this latest event was regarding character deployment.

In the game, you can decide for yourself who you would position where, but that wasn't the case here. I couldn't outright force someone to go if they didn't want to, and more importantly, President Monica was always going to be put in charge here anyway.

This time around, I saw President Monica as an absolute necessity. I also thought it would be much easier to clear the dungeon if either the Saint or Minister Benito were there, too. It looked like I'd gotten pretty lucky for this scenario.

"Now then, Monica, you know what I'm going to say, right?" Minister Benito asked.

"Yes, I know perfectly well what your feelings are here. And just how much you want to go yourself. Good job holding back. I would've charged right on in if I were you."

"Well, there's still the students to think about. So with that in mind, I'm leaving this all up to you. Takioto will be there, too, so I'm sure it'll work out fine. Oh, but I can jump in and help if anything happens, so don't push yourself too much," Minister Benito said, giving me a pat on the shoulder. I couldn't help letting out a sigh.

"What? Where'd that look of admiration come from?"

It appeared that President Monica had picked up on my reaction.

"Just impressed about what a good boss can be like."

I answered honestly. Normally, most people wouldn't want to leave such an important task up to a newbie like me.

One thing I had come to learn from my experiences in modern society was how wonderful it was to have a boss entrust things to you. Not only that, but come to clean up any messes for you, too. Could I have asked for a better work environment ?

"Heh-heh. Praising me like that isn't going to get you anywhere, you know."

“Hmmm? I mean, if you came to the Student Council, then you’d get to work under me, you know?”

I could agree that President Monica was definitely more charismatic. However.

“You can’t necessarily say that your charms and Minister Benito’s are the same, though. It’s hard for me to determine which is better, really. Besides, Saint Stef is just as charming herself. She has her own unique appeal, too.”

“Well, I certainly don’t want to hear that from you,” the Saint said.

I unconsciously let a dry chuckle escape my lips.

“Don’t worry, Takioto. Miss Stefania here may talk like that, but she really doesn’t think that way. Last time, when you came up to—”

“Knock it off, Benito.”

“Okay, okay,” he said with a smile. “Monica?” he continued, gazing at the president.

From the students’ point of view, Minister Benito and President Monica were part of two different organizations, the Student Council and the Ceremonial Committee, which were at odds with each other.

But in reality, the two of them both acknowledged the other’s strength and had great trust in each other. In fact, their faith in each other never wavered, even during important moments like these, where people’s lives were on the line.

This was likely why the two didn’t see a need to say anything more to each other.

They both raised their arms in unison and bumped fists—Minister Benito with his usual grin and President Monica with a cocky smile.

The Library Dungeon was, as its name suggested, a dungeon fashioned after a library. The walls were bookcases, and antique light fixtures illuminated the ground.

The area was thick with the scent of old dried ink, and the Saint grumbled about the dreary atmosphere.

This place would have been heaven to a bookworm, but I could understand why it wouldn't be to some people's tastes. But it definitely beat the sewer dungeon, I'll tell you that. That being said, the sewer dungeon had this rock track for the background music for some reason, and man, was it badass.

DUNGEON RAID PARTY LIST



PARTY LIST

TAKIOTO'S PARTY

WARRIOR	ARCHER/THIEF	MAGE	HEALER/WARRIOR	ALL-ROUNDER
Takioto	Nanami	Ludie	Yuika	Yukine

PARTY LIST

THE SAINT'S PARTY

HEALER	ALL-ROUNDER	MAGE	WARRIOR	THIEF
The Saint	Iori	Fran	Orange	Katorina

PARTY LIST

MONICA'S PARTY

ALL-ROUNDER	ARTIFICER/MAGE	MAGE	NINJA	HEALER/MAGE
Monica	Anemone	Shion	Hanzou	Gabby

PARTY LIST

REMAINING PARTY

(Group tasked with taking down the monsters appearing from the magic circle at the entrance to the dungeon)

VARIOUS JOBS:

Members of the Three Committees under Benito's command

“Master, here they come.”

At Nanami’s warning, I readied my weapon.

When I did, the books all around us flew off the shelves of their own accord and opened.

The magic circles inscribed on their pages lit up, and white wolves materialized in front of them.

From there, a number of books also flew off the shelves farther up ahead, also summoning white wolves of their own.

“Let’s do this.”

Yuika and I jumped out in front. The monsters before us were known as Holy Wolves. To the veteran RPG aficionados out there, the name alone was probably enough to figure out their elemental attribute.

“These’ll be a bit annoying to deal with,” Yuika murmured.

I blocked the attack of the pouncing Holy Wolf with my Third Hand and sent a punch out in front of Yuika with my Fourth Hand.

“Element overlap?”

In *Magical Explorer*, an opponent’s elemental resistances are usually linked to the element they specialize in. Our enemies were light attribute monsters this time, which meant they had a resistance to light magic. Showering a fire-wielding monster with a bit of fire was basically meaningless.

“That’s part of it, but agile enemies are also just a pain, don’t you think?” Yuika said, spinning around to send a roundhouse kick into the Holy Wolf I’d sent flying her way.

“You look like you’re doing just fine to me.”

Conversely, characters like Yuika and Saint Stef, who could also serve as healers and possessed significant light magic resistances, were right at home against all the light attribute monsters in this dungeon.

While we were finishing off one of the monsters, Yukine stepped out in front of us and butchered a freshly summoned Holy Wolf.

We continued through the dungeon, then came upon an open area with three stone statues.

The statues, shaped like female angels, held books in their hands and stood in a triangle pattern, with their backs facing away from each other.

In the middle of the triangle was a single tome .

“These seem to be regular statues, so they won’t start moving on us,” Nanami said, prompting us to lower our weapons.

“No traps, either,” Katorina declared after investigating the statues. Hanzou, a third-year Student Council member with a thief-like class himself, nodded. Looked like he agreed.

Hearing this, Yuika picked up the book in the middle of the triangle.

“What do you suppose this is, then?”

It was well made, wrapped in a leatherbound hardcover.

“That’s the ancient language,” Katorina murmured, looking at its text.

“These are also written in the ancient script. Though, they won’t open... Anemone.”

Shion and President Monica checked the books the angel statues held in their arms. Sexy Scientist answered their summons, taking a tome in hand and activating a magic circle before she used appraisal magic.

“Yuika, give me that book.”

After she passed me the tome, I handed it to Nanami.

“I see... It says *Book of the Past*.”

Nanami flipped through its pages and set it back down after about a minute of skimming. “You can speed-read, too?”

Nanami nodded at Yukine’s question.

“I thought I would be praised as a capable maid if I learned.”

“We all know you’re capable, so save the stupid stuff and just tell us what’s in the book already.”

“IAAM—impeccable as always, Master. I made sure to read through everything,” Nanami said, eliciting a nod of admiration from President Monica.

“That was fast.”

“I’m only able to decode the ancient language, but Nanami can actually translate it. In fact, she’s practically reciting it. She speaks so naturally that it’s almost like she lived through that time period herself,” Sexy Scientist commented as she continued her appraisal. In the game, it seemed like she read the ancient language instantly, but apparently it wasn’t as fast in reality.

“All in a day’s work for a beautiful maid like me,” Nanami boasted.

“Shouldn’t you be emphasizing the fact that you’re an angel, instead? Forget it... So what did it say? ”

“The book I have seems to be titled *Book of the Past*.”

Nanami flipped through the pages in front of me. No matter how many pages she showed, though, it was nothing but paragraphs and paragraphs of indecipherable text to my eyes. But as she kept flipping through, we also saw pictures of familiar monsters illustrated in its pages. Iori let out a cry of recognition.

“You told me the name, already, Nanami. I want to know the content. What does it say?”

“From my reading of it... Hmm, let’s see. It’s a diary, or no...a novel of fantasies, maybe?”

“A novel of fantasies?”

“For example... Say that you imagined a world where you’re the absolute strongest, where you’re too powerful to lose to anyone else.”

What the hell kind of example was this?

“Then you, Master, stop a carriage from being assailed by bandits with your awesome might. A princess emerges from the carriage, and she falls in love with you. In the end, you build a harem for yourself and get all lovey-dovey with a stray maid beauty you pick up. You’ve had fantasies like that, yes?”

Was this some sort of wish-fulfillment web novel? Also, what the hell was up

with this “stray maid beauty” who showed up out of nowhere?

“That’s a terrible example. Come up with a more concise setup for me.”

“But, Master, you *have* fantasized about a world where you’re all-powerful and stronger than anyone else.”

“The thought came to me with the last example, too, but why are you so sure of all this, exactly? Well... I guess if I had come down one way or the other, I have indeed dreamed up something like that before, sure.”

What was this, using my cringey past for a public execution? Everyone has their glory days in the second year of middle school, all right? Hey, Anemone, wipe that shit-eating grin off your face. Also, Vice President Fran, please don’t look so excited.

“But now that you mention it, Nanami, the contents of this book are a bit like that. A collection of ideas for the best dungeon ever. *This kind of dungeon would be interesting, This could be cool*, and such.”

I flipped through the tome.

“This picture here is one of the Holy Wolves we just took down, right? ”

Illustrated on the page was a picture of the monster that had just appeared before us.

“The gargoyles that showed up in the library are in here, too. So this...”

“If this book has info on all the monsters that have shown up, then maybe it can tell us the monsters that are *going* to show up, too?”

“I don’t think that’s possible with this book.”

Nanami repudiated me and showed the tome to us. I understood what she meant—she had already reached the last page.

“While I can’t say if it is true, it also describes the way to advance from here as well.”

“So what do we need to do for now?”

“It says we can activate a magic circle by placing the books the statues are holding in their proper places...”

We looked at the three angel statues, then back to the books we'd collected from them.

"Tch, I don't have a clue about what to do. Like, I know there's *something*, though."

Katorina appraised one of the books. But perhaps because her skill was still too low level, she couldn't completely analyze it. Fortunately, we had Anemone and Hanzou with us, too.

"Hmm, it appears it'll activate by having a unique type of mana flow into it."

"No traps. Either."

I hadn't heard Hanzou's voice in a long time, so I'd forgotten he spoke like this. The combo of not saying anything more than was necessary with that idiosyncratic tempo. Though, if you ever brought up one of his special interests, he'd start blabbing away.

"I agree. Let's give it a try," Anemone said, activating the magic circle.

A hologram appeared, and I saw that Katorina looked a little frustrated.

"I can show you a great dungeon to polish those thief skills of yours. I'll give you the info for one magic sigil stone."

"Excuse me?" Katorina replied to my quiet whisper before stomping down on my foot. "Don't go selling your knowledge for so cheap."

As I admired her for getting upset at *that* point specifically, Nanami stepped on my other foot.

"You seemed to be enjoying it, so...I couldn't help myself."

"Geez, stop goofing off and just look at the book!"

While we bickered back and forth, the book opened up in front of Anemone and floated in midair. Another magic circle and a projection of what looked to be some kind of monster appeared above it.

"Is this a...beast?"

The image showed a creature resembling a lion standing on four legs. Besides that, though, nothing else appeared from the magic circle.

“What about the other book?” Shion asked, prompting Hanzou to activate it. Nanami took the other tome from Katorina and did the same.

The image that appeared from Hanzou’s book showed what appeared to be a golem, formed from a collection of large rocks.

Meanwhile, Nanami’s book showed several angel-looking creatures.

“What does all this mean?”

“Maybe these’re the monsters that are going to show up from here on out?”

“I see,” Nanami murmured, “that is very likely, indeed. I know a number of dungeons like that myself, and if one was to write a novel of fantasies like this, then it would not be strange to come up with this type of gimmick.”

“Assuming that’s the case, then where exactly are we supposed to place these?”

Ludie spoke up this time. Vice President Fran answered her.

“Take a good look around. In a room like this, they could go anywhere.”

We all glanced around the chamber.

“Uuugh, I really didn’t want to believe it, but that actually is the answer, isn’t it?”

“Seriously, picking at random in a huge room like this? The answer can’t possibly be that absurd, right?”

Everyone’s eyes went in different directions, but we were all looking at the same thing.

This dungeon was built with a library motif. As such, the walls were all made of bookshelves.

“Even if we divide and conquer the best we can, this shall still be quite a painstaking chore.”

Did we really need to try one spot at a time, though ?

No, we didn’t. In fact, the statues were pointing to where they needed to go. In the game, there were exclamation points over those spots in order to make them stand out even more.

Now obviously, we would be able to go forward if we placed the books in these locations. And judging by how the statues were positioned, it looked like the books would have to go in the same places they did in the game, so...

“Why are these statutes facing in three directions?”

Yuika reacted to my question.

“I think it’d look a lot nicer to have them face each other, personally.”

“We can’t move them, right? Maybe the direction they’re looking’s got something to do with it?”

I then tried touching the statue. This wasn’t an especially chilly room, but the statue itself was so cold it was like it had been stored in a freezer.

“Yeah, it would make sense if their eyes were gazing out at something. Why don’t we take look?” Yuika said before rushing over to the bookshelf that one of the statues was staring at. “Yeah, yeah, I found something! There’s an empty space just big enough to fit a book!” she happily announced. Everyone immediately gathered around her to check the location.

“...When we considered which angel statue was facing this way and which tome it held, I thought the beast book should go here,” Vice President Fran said, before Hanzou then investigated the area. There didn’t seem to be any traps, so she slowly inserted the book.

“It fit.”

When it slid on the shelf, a magic circle then formed between three statues in the middle of the room.

“It looks like a transportation circle.”

Anemone carefully observed the circle before shaking her head.

“Unfortunately, it seems to be restricted to transporting a single party.”

With everyone thinking to check what would happen if we returned the two other books, we all sprang into action.

Next, we placed the golem book where the angel statue holding it was looking. Finally, we placed the book featuring the angels in its respective place

as well .

The results were pretty clear.

“Placing one of the books on the shelf activates a magic circle. When returning them in multiples, the magic circle will correspond to the last book placed. Only a single party can enter each circle. That’s it, basically.”

Just like how it was in the game.

“We now technically have three choices: Each party could continue down their respective paths, we could let one party continue on and wait for them to come back, or we could leave for now,” President Monica said. Judging by that *technically* added in there, I imagined she’d already decided what to do.

“Obviously, we’ll all continue on from here, right?”

Everyone nodded. Monsters were pouring from the library, and Raziel’s revival was at hand—we needed to hurry forward. Standing by and waiting around wasn’t an option.

“Then the issue is...who’s going where? Anyone have any preferences?”

“All right if I give my opinion?” I asked, raising my hand.

“Go ahead, Takioto.”

“I’ll preface this by saying that your team is the strongest among all of ours here, President Monica.”

“Well, I am in it, and all.”

Her response was brimming with confidence. She wasn’t really exaggerating, either.

“With that in mind, I figured your team should cover whatever the other two can’t handle. I’m confident in our party’s agility and defensive abilities, so I was thinking we’d be a pretty good match for the beast.”

I was good on defense, while Yukine, Yuika, and Nanami could all act with a fair amount of speed. Ludie had the skill necessary to fire off her magic quickly, too.

“I think Saint Stef’s team would probably handle the golem the best.”

“Oh, and why would that be?”

The Saint replied.

“Assuming that it’s a power-type golem, then you have Katorina and Orange to take care of its attack. More than anything, I think your powerful healing skills would be more suited to a one-on-one fight than fighting multiple enemies at once.”

“That’s a good point, actually,” lori replied.

“Well, you’re not wrong, I’ll admit. Let’s go with that, then,” the Saint agreed.

“We’ll be off, then,” they all said before disappearing into the magic circle.

Watching them depart, I breathed a sigh of relief. Honestly, it didn’t really matter which path the Saint’s group took. The important point was that I had let lori go on first.

Now, this was where things really got hard.

President Monica’s group went to place their book on its shelf and depart on their own path next. But before they could leave, I jumped out in front of them.

“...What’s the idea here, Kousuke Takioto?”

President Monica was shooting daggers at me. Faced with her eyes’ kingly gleam, I almost backed down instinctively, but I couldn’t afford to do that right now.

“Right after Saint Stefania left, huh? That’s some timing, isn’t it?” Anemone commented. As the words left her mouth, Hanzou readied his weapon.

They must have found my behavior here suspicious. I had to admit that this did seem rather dubious. Still, I hadn’t done all this to set up the Saint’s group or anything.

I was doing it all to get the true ending.

“I’ve got something to say.”

—*The Saint’s Group, Katorina’s Perspective*—

After bringing down the monsters summoned from the books, we reached the end of our path and found a golem waiting for us, just as we’d expected.

We finished it off easily, largely thanks to lori's efforts.

When he brought down his sword on the monster, the golem collapsed beneath its own weight and crumbled on the spot. His shoulders heaving with every breath, lori watched the golem expire.

"You've gotten quite strong," Vice President Fran murmured.

President Monica and Vice President Fran, along with Orange and me, had been around lori, so we knew just how much his abilities had changed since he started at the Academy.

lori was gaining strength at an explosive rate. His level of growth was seriously crazy, and it took all I had to even comprehend it.

On top of that, I felt like he had this mysterious power dwelling within him that allowed him to surpass the limits of his power when it really mattered. Though, it wasn't perfect and didn't always come up.

When the golem had completely dissolved into magic particles, something unexpected happened.

"A door?" lori murmured.

Just as he'd said, a door had materialized.

I knew that, by defeating the boss, a spatial magic circle taking us forward would activate at the end of the room. In fact, that was what had actually happened. Except, right as the boss became magic particles, this door had appeared.

There was nothing behind it, either; it was just alone in the middle of the room.

"A door, huh?"

The Saint glanced at me. I tried investigating it further, but...

"There's some sort of spell on the door...er, Your Holiness."

The door itself was normal. It looked like the sort of extravagant entryway piece that a wealthy family would have. However, I'd never seen the type of magic that was cast on it before.

Additionally, the door was locked with a physical keyhole, not a magic one. The door wouldn't budge when we pulled on it, so it seemed to be functional.

That aside, I had never felt such a strange sensation before, and I guessed that not even Hanzou from the Student Council could've understood it. Perhaps Nanami or Anemone would have been able to investigate it further.

Something about the door needing a physical key made me feel uneasy.

"Okay," the Saint curtly replied, as if she had never expected anything from me to begin with. It was so mortifying. I felt as if I were totally useless.

"Thank you very much, Katorina. "

I needed to get stronger. As loath as I was to rely on that idiot, I didn't know what else I was supposed to do.

Looking at my troubled face, the Saint let out a small sigh.

"You found traps on our way here and made sure to tell us about them. You also opened up a treasure chest for us... You don't need to be so courteous toward me."

The Saint said nothing more before she turned around and began to examine the door.

What exactly did she mean by all that? Wait, no, it couldn't be...

As I thought this over, there was a tap on my shoulder. Vice President Fran was smiling at me.

"Don't be discouraged; you're just as strong as the top second-year students, okay? That said..." She turned her gaze to the door. "So...it needs a key."

She was probably thinking the same thing as I was. This was true for Iori and Orange as well. Iori took out the key Sakura had given him.

"That's the one you got from that librarian, right?"

The Saint took the key. She gave it a long, hard look.

This was just a guess, but it must have fit right in the hole. My intuition was telling me that it would work here. However, we had no idea what would happen once it opened.

“Saint Stefania. This key will open this door. I’d like to open it.”

lori spoke up, convinced that the door would be unlocked.

“Do you really think it will open?”

“I think that this key was a message from Ms. Sakura.”

“Do you...? It could be a trap, you know.”

“Even knowing that possibility, I still want to open it.

“Fine. I mean, if no one’s against it, why not? Let’s unlock it.”

“It’ll probably be fine, right?”

I nodded. The vice president also nodded and looked at lori.

The Saint returned the key to lori, who placed it inside the keyhole and slowly rotated it. The lock opened with a mechanical *click*.

When it did, the key in lori’s hands glowed with light and crumbled to dust, as though announcing its duty had been fulfilled.

Clenching his now-empty fist and taking a deep breath, lori put his hand on the doorknob. Then he opened the door.

The moment it opened, a light poured from the door. Immediately afterward, I felt the illusion of my body floating for a moment .

Except, it wasn’t an illusion, after all. We were all floating in the air, as if we were being sucked in by a massive vacuum cleaner.

“loriiii!” I shouted.

He was the first to get sucked in. Actually, no, it looked as if he’d flown into the door of his own volition. The Saint was the next to get sucked inside. She glared harshly at the light beyond the door, but she let herself be taken without any resistance. The vice president looked a bit flustered, perhaps because her glasses had been blown away.

“Gwaack!”

Orange seemed to have slammed back-first into the doorframe. He let out a hideous wail as he was sucked into the door.

I shot out my hands and managed to grab the frame. But the suction was so intense that my hands felt like they were going to be ripped off. When I looked at what lay beyond the door, I saw the Saint and the others falling inside.

Based on the fact that they were gradually turning into particles of light, it appeared there was some spatial magic being triggered right now. I looked at the door one more time, then looked back at the light that had now completely erased Iori and the others.

“Tch!”

Clicking my tongue, I let go of the frame to follow after them. Then I watched as the door closed behind us while light particles enveloped me.

From there, I was immediately hit with a feeling of weightlessness. The moment I realized I was falling, I felt the impact. Right to my butt.

“Owwwww...!”

“I’m the one in pain here...”

I heard a voice coming from where my butt was and looked down. Iori had fallen face-first, and it looked like I had landed on his back.

“You two look all right.”

“First time seeing someone literally get sat on before.”

I took Vice President Fran’s hand to help myself stand up while Iori used Orange’s. The Saint immediately healed us with her magic.

Vice President Fran had clearly been able to recover her glasses, and she adjusted them like usual.

From there, I immediately checked our surroundings and sighed.

“What the hell; this place is totally different.”

The endless corridor of books had disappeared completely, replaced by a passageway that looked straight out of a magnificent castle. The corridor was lined with vases and pictures. A nearby angel statue wrapped in a white cloth was so finely detailed it looked ready to jump out at us at any moment.

I immediately scanned the area, but there didn’t seem to be any traps.

“Looks like choosing one of them is our only option,” the Saint said, gazing at the two doors that stood at the end of the passageway.

“A normal door...and a giant door.”

One was an absolutely massive door, while the other was a small entryway that would lead into any normal room.

“The big door seems like it would have something, doesn’t it?”

“Yeah, it’s almost announcing that this dungeon’s boss is sitting behind it.”

Orange and Iori both murmured this, looking at the two entryways.

“Which one do you think’s better?” Saint Stefania asked me, perhaps since I was the party’s thief.

“Well, Your Hol—er, I mean, may as well check the small door out, right?”

I couldn’t help being conscious of how respectful I was being and ended up sounding a bit weird. Still, the Saint didn’t seem to mind at all.

“Why?”

“I agree that something’s up with the big door. I assume either Raziel or the boss is behind it. But it would also suck if a monster popped out of the small door and attacked us from behind, so I’d like to start with that to give whatever’s behind the bigger one our full attention. Besides...”

“Besides, what?”

“If we’re gonna be fighting Raziel up ahead, I wanna shift my focus on her or, like, psyche myself up for it. To be honest, I want to look through the small door while I get mentally ready for it all.”

Hearing this, the Saint nodded.

“Let’s do that, then. No objections, right?”

Iori and the others nodded. We went over to the smaller door only to find that it was locked by some sort of spell. None of our skills could get it to open.

“The other one’s our only option, then. ”

We all stared at the big door.

How were we going to open it up? I pondered the thought for a brief second, but it was unnecessary. As we drew closer, the door opened on its own.

Did it have a human-detecting sensor or something? With a low rumbling, the door opened up, and we all stepped inside.

Behind the door was what appeared to be a church.

Beautiful light was filtering through a massive piece of stained glass, and white angel statues were set up all over the place. Although the decor was simple, it had an elegant and luxurious air.

It felt like the pope or the Saint would start to lead a prayer at any moment.

The air in the church wasn't cold, necessarily, but it was heavy enough to make it difficult to breathe. Was the oxygen concentration in here lower or something?

No, that wasn't it. It was her. It was her fault.

"Ms. Sakura...", Iori murmured.

We all trained our eyes on a single angel floating in the air. Neither Kousuke nor President Monica were anywhere to be found. It appeared that we were the first ones to arrive.

Raziel, otherwise known as Sakura, had two sets of wings on her back, and she was being bathed in the colorful light of the stained glass.

While she had a holiness and tranquility about her, there was something empyrean and oppressive as well. It felt as though my lungs were being crushed in her presence; I could hardly breathe.

Actually, it wasn't just my breathing that was under pressure. Her invisible power was making me feel as though my entire body was being crushed.

As we were assaulted by this pressure, the angel Raziel, Sakura, slowly opened her eyes.

My instincts blared the moment I met her gaze.

"Tuck your tail between your legs and run, right now."

A single magic circle materialized, and Raziel activated it. When she did,

several books floated up in the air around her. She reeled in one of the books with a single gesture, and it was enveloped in pale light before its pages began to flip on their own.

“I lament...”

I wasn't the only one being exposed to the torrent of her power. Iori, Orange, and the vice president all seemed to be in agony. If anything, I appeared to be handling it the best out of the group.

“...that you humans are so selfish and foolish.”

Unexpectedly, the person who should have been the strongest and most capable person here because of her wide variety of dungeon experiences—Saint Stef—was suffering the most.

“I agree; humans can be greedy. Stupid, too. Staying positive's nice, sure, but it doesn't make it any less obnoxious,” Saint Stef said while she got her breathing under control.

“Um, Saint Stefania? Why are you staring at me...?”

Orange sighed. Unfortunately for him, everyone else seemed to agree with Stefania. I figured she was trying to ease the tension, but just telling a joke didn't do anything to change this pressure bearing down on us.

Still, it brought a moment of levity to the situation.

“I'll supplement Captain Stef's statement by saying that not all humans are fools. Also, that Orange here is kind.”

“V-Vice President Fran...!”

Orange's eyes artlessly sparkled as he looked at the vice president, but she shook her head.

“I'm very sorry, but I'll have to decline.”

“I haven't even said anything yet!”

“Ugh, enough already! You knew what she was going to say; don't wildly overreact to everything,” I said, smacking Orange on the back.

The Saint and Vice President Fran were both cracking jokes, but I doubted

they were actually in the mood for humor. They were bantering in an attempt to keep themselves together while under the gaze of such a terrifying foe. Who the hell could tell with Orange, though?

“...If only you hadn’t come here, you could have spent your time happily together just as you are now.”

“Excuse me? Like hell we could’ve done that! You would’ve just killed us anyway,” I said, to which Vice President Fran nodded while adjusting her glasses.

“If you were going to come and destroy us eventually, then we never had the option to run away, whatever the end result. ”

“I’m not dying until I get my chance to be popular with the ladies,” Orange chimed in.

“Well *that’s* never happening.”

Despite my retort, he wasn’t a bad guy, really, and I knew there was one girl who had a thing for him. I didn’t plan on letting him know about it, but maybe he’d catch on.

“I may have given up on the future, and I couldn’t care less what happens to this world, but here’s the thing.”

It was the Saint who spoke next.

“I’m not fond of being smothered under someone else’s power.”

Iori stepped out from beside the Saint.

“Ms. Sakura. We’re going to forge our own future. You have no right to stop us.”

Iori brandished his sword, and the Saint began incanting her spell. The remaining three of us raised our weapons in unison and began incanting magic and enhancing ourselves. However, all of us knew full well.

After facing her down and feeling her power, it was abundantly clear...

...that there was no way we could win.

“Okay, everyone, let’s go!”

As I watched a magic circle appear above a book floating in front of Sakura, I prayed. My pleas may not have had any chance of being fulfilled, but it was all I could do.

Please, hurry.

Of course, regardless of these prayers of mine, Sakura's magic came hurtling my way.

"How the heck could we have expected this?! I seriously don't get it."

I had long thought it was extremely important to have an image in your mind when you were fighting and training.

Even mid-battle, there had been times when I would imagine myself facing off against a massively powerful foe. Take Minister Benito, for example. I'd watched how he fought and thought about how best I could catch him off guard—or what I would need to do to get a hit in.

"I thought I'd only be able to imagine myself losing. But somehow, I'm lasting through it all."



The book floating in front of Sakura gleamed, and a large magic circle formed behind her. From it appeared several golden crosses, shaped like daggers, which then pelted us like rain.

Iori stepped in front of the Saint and tried to ensure that none of the damage got past him. Though Orange took some damage from the attack, he managed to slip behind a magic wall that Vice President Fran had summoned.

It looked like Iori was in agony after being hit with the flurry of daggers. Each one wore down his magically enhanced shield, and though he dug in his feet to endure the attack, he couldn't completely halt their flow and was slowly being pushed back.

Slightly separated from the rest of the party, I escaped the area of the attack and ran toward Sakura as she cast her spell.

It looked like the Saint had jumped in to give Iori backup, so I didn't need to worry about them.

The real problem lay in front of me.

Despite her continued flurry of magic, Sakura still managed to send an attack my way, in a manner I was very familiar with.

"...It's almost like what Takioto does," Iori remarked.

Sakura's clothes stretched out, and the golden decorations lining the trim flew in toward me.

Although I managed to dodge one somehow, another one of the ornaments came flying in from the opposite side, so I parried it with my dagger. Then I leaped backward to put space between the angel and me.

"That's a pretty dangerous outfit you've got on."

In addition to its sharply pointed edges, there was quite a bit of mana coursing through the ornaments. A direct hit would definitely deal some serious damage.

What was most troublesome of all, though...

"So she can use both long-ranged and melee attacks. This sucks."

Takioto was pretty much limited to close-ranged combat. However, Sakura could send in physical attacks while she cast long-ranged magic spells.

“C’mon, is she bad at *anything*?!” Orange shouted.

“But we have a way to fight her,” Iori replied. “We’re not up against her alone, after all.”

“Iori’s absolutely right,” Vice President Fran said as she cast her spell. Sharpened rocks floated in the air around her before they fired at Sakura, spinning like bullets.

The angel manipulated her clothes again to intercept the swiftly flying rocks.

Seizing the moment, Iori sent a fireball at her, which Sakura dodged by flying backward.

She was fulfilling two roles at once, that was true. But there were five of us here. We weren’t fighting her one-on-one.

If we were going to bring her down, we’d need some sort of combination attack. That was going to be difficult, though. Sakura continued to launch rapid-fire attacks at us, making sure we didn’t have the leeway to coordinate.

Then she brought one of the other books floating around her in with a flick of her hand. When she did, the book glowed and summoned a large magic circle.

“Holy Lance.”

Out of the tome appeared spears of light.

The javelins were very long, six feet or more, and once again, they shot at Fran and the others like bullets.

Seeing this, Vice President Fran shouted.

“Dammit! Get out of the way!”

Orange and the vice president then jumped out from the wall they had been hiding behind. Right at that moment, the spears hit the wall and pierced straight through as if it wasn’t even there.

“What the hell’s with that power?”

A gaping hole had been left behind in the place where the spears had struck.

“A direct hit from that’d tear a hole clean through you,” Orange grumbled as his face went pale. Iori whispered something, too, as he looked at the spears. Judging by his expression and the way his mouth moved, I guessed it was “Why?”

Then he dashed forward.

“Your sword slashes are awfully soft. You’re magic’s tepid, too. What a shame.”

With his shield, Iori repelled the light arrows flying toward him, and he easily slipped into melee range of the angel. There, he swung his sword down on her .

“Is this it?”

His blade came to a halt in midair. Sakura had made some sort of shield out of light magic.

It sure was frustrating fighting against someone with such a wide variety of spells. The next moment, she changed the book at her side.

“Another one?! She’s going to use a different spell!” Vice President Fran shouted. Iori dodged the incoming light daggers as he backed off a bit.

Orange tried to push in after he saw an opening, but Sakura blocked this, too, by manipulating the ornaments on her clothes.

As I watched the angel and the swarm of books around her, an idea suddenly came to me.

Maybe, just maybe, we could do this. I had an image of our success.

I went over to the Saint, who was healing Orange after he had been blown back, and whispered to her.

“I sorta think I can make an opening.”

“Then do it.”

“Except, I don’t think it’ll work more than once.”

The Saint clicked her tongue.

“...I’ll try to switch over to offense as best I can. Pick your moment carefully and do it.”

I ran up next to lori as he fought on the front lines. Getting in closer had been easy since Sakura was holding off Fran's and lori's attacks.

When was I going to do it? Not right now. This chance would only come once. I watched the angel intently as I joined in on the attack, searching for an opening.

From there, I lost track of how many times we exchanged blows.

"You still don't seem to be at full power, Raziel."

Sakura didn't say anything in reply to the Saint's comment.

"Have you noticed? Raziel's movements are growing sluggish," the Saint said to us. *This* might have been my chance. However, there was one thing bugging me.

lori was acting strange.

During the fight with the golem earlier, he'd turned his superpower switch on

.

But right now, he seemed to be losing spirit. It wasn't just from exhaustion, either.

"To think you've gotten so strong...or that *this* would be all the power I could muster," Sakura murmured. lori swung his blade at her without saying a word.

Nevertheless, his sword was deflected by the shield she generated, so he backed away. Seeing this, Sakura immediately summoned her light spears.

"Ugh, you idiot!"

Stone bullets flew right past lori, courtesy of the vice president. But Sakura dodged them all, drawing another book closer to her to summon and launch more light spears.

These landed next to lori, though fortunately, he seemed to be unharmed.

"...I knew it," he murmured. Then he tightened his grip on the hilt of his blade and ran toward Sakura.

"Take this!"

Orange slashed at her from the side. She easily deflected his blow, but his

attack created a brief opening.

“Stone Rain!”

The vice president fired her sharp rocks at Sakura. The Saint also launched light arrows of her own.

Now, I thought. This is our greatest chance.

Sakura backed off and gathered power. I moved out of her line of sight.

“Ngh!”

She had a pained look on her face. I mean, anyone would with their hands full trying to defend against so many opponents. The ornaments on her clothes were also working overtime to stave off our offensive.

Still, not yet. This time, Iori would attack.

When he did, what would Sakura do? I knew already. She would pull in a book, fire off a different spell, and drive Iori back.

See, look, what did I say? That was why I had my sights on...

“...These stupid things instead!”

The books. Not Sakura. I was going to physically interfere with her magic!

“No!”

She never would have thought her *tomes* would be attacked, would she? The one she tried pulling in flew off, denying her any means to defend herself. Iori’s slash closed in on her. There was nothing to get in its way.

It was the first big opening we had managed to create.

The one we had long been hoping for.

It was also an easily countered one-hit-wonder type of opening, so I thought this would be the first and the last time the chance would present itself.

Iori brandished his sword high. In that second, Sakura was completely stunned. Still, there almost seemed to be a slight smile on the edge of her lips.

* * *

But his blade.....never came down.

“What are you doing?! Hurry and swing your stupid sword!” Saint Stef yelled loudly, looking seriously ticked off. However, lori didn’t just fail to attack the angel, but actually sank lifelessly to the ground.

“lori...?”

“Hey, lori, c’mon!”

Even as everyone called out to him, he didn’t move. Sakura remained frozen, looking shaken and unsettled as well.

“Why aren’t you attacking, Ms. Sakura? I’ve given you this huge opening,” lori said as he walked several steps backward and, in a truly unbelievable move, sheathed his sword.

“Are you actually trying to conquer the world, Ms. Sakura? You’re not, are you?”

She wordlessly conjured her spell.

“lori!”

A light spear shot past lori, but he didn’t move an inch.

“If anything, you’re trying to get killed.”

“...The next one won’t miss,” Sakura said before generating another javelin and pointing it straight at lori.

“Why didn’t it hit me in the first place? Go ahead, hit me. I...I won’t try to dodge it.”

At lori’s words, Sakura activated her magic.

“Why?” she murmured.

lori didn’t make any attempt to evade the attack. This time, she fired the spell in a straight line directly at him...but it didn’t hit him .

Because that idiot we had been waiting for literally came flying in.

“Whoa, whoa, c’mon, Ludie. Can’t you be a bit gentler with that? I mean, sure, we got here in time—there we go,” he said as he dusted off all the dirt and sand he was covered in, smiling.

“Heya, Iori. Kept you waiting, didn’t I?”

“You’re late, Kousuke.”



CONFIG

[Chapter 5](#) [Sakura's True Motive](#)

Magical★Explorer Reborn as a Side Character in a Fantasy Dating Sim —Kousuke's Perspective— I thought I was gonna die. Seriously, I thought I was a goner. Phew, that was scary.

Sure, I may have told Ludie to send me flying here with her wind magic because I was worried about not making it in time. But that had definitely been a mistake. The trip felt like being on a roller coaster without any safety equipment. That couldn't have been good for my heart. But anyway, what was with that Holy Lance? I'd thought it was going to burn a hole straight through my stole for a moment there.

Following my arrival, everyone else gathered one by one.

"Yiiiiikes, that really sent us flying. I knew we shouldn't have done that..."

"Iori, Rina, are you all okay?"

"Sorry for the delay."

"Waaait a second. I figured there'd be sparks flying back and forth here, but the vibe's pretty weird right now..." Yuika commented.

Iori nodded.

"Kousuke, Yuika, I want you all to listen to me."

"What?"

"Ms. Sakura isn't a bad person," Iori declared.

"Why's that?"

"She's acting strange. She had no reason to leave behind hints about her being an angel inside those dungeons. It would have been better to just erase all records of that."

He was absolutely right. I'd even questioned that point myself when I first played *Magical★Explorer*.

"That, and when I first found the records about Ms. Sakura, it was in a dungeon that she herself had introduced me to."

In the game, the dungeon that Ms. Sakura tells Iori about contains proof that she's an angel working to take over the world written in the ancient language.

The same thing must have happened in real life, which explained his suspicions.

I mean, obviously that sorta stuff should've just been disposed of right away, right? Why would Ms. Sakura need to leave something so damning behind?

"But more than anything..."

It was all to guide the person who saw it. Ms. Sakura didn't sincerely follow through with her plan. I felt that she should have left behind stuff suggesting she was a villain in a more natural way. Several pieces of evidence were so obvious that it was like she was hoping, somewhere in her heart, that someone would come and save her. You couldn't help thinking that way.

"...Ms. Sakura isn't the type of person who'd try to conquer the world, or whatever. There has to be some reason she's doing this."

The Saint and the others didn't say a word. Even Ms. Sakura herself didn't. Everyone listened carefully to Iori.

"I've spent a lot of time with Ms. Sakura. The same should be just as true for all our upperclassman, and you too, Takioto. So you all know, don't you?! Just what she's actually like!" Iori shouted.

He gazed at us. After passing his eyes over everyone one more time, he looked at the magic circle in front of the vice president and tightened the grip on his blade. Then he turned back to Ms. Sakura and started walking.

"I trust my intuition."

One step.

"Why do you look so sad when you attack us? Why do you intentionally miss with your deadliest spells?"

Another step. The expression on the Saint's and Vice President Fran's faces suggested that Iori's words had brought something to their minds. They both looked surprised.

"If you insist on killing her..."

He walked in front of Ms. Sakura. Slowly.

Standing in front of her, he turned to face us. He pointed the tip of his sword our way. Not to save humankind, but to protect Ms. Sakura.

“...You’ll have to get through me!”



Iori was, without a doubt, the protagonist. A hero who saved anyone in trouble, even those who everyone else had long given up on.

All the pieces were cleanly fitting into place. Everything up until now was going exactly as expected. Just a bit more.

"Iori, do you seriously mean that?"

I confirmed what Iori said.

"Kousuke, wait..."

"Ludie, be quiet for me here. I'm asking Iori if he's being serious. Depending on what happens, it'll mean he's betraying all of us, okay? There's a chance humankind could get wiped out, too."

Failing to save Ms. Sakura here could result in a bad ending where she died—or one in which the whole world was destroyed. Though, due to various circumstances, the world is put on the brink of destruction later on in the game regardless.

"I said it just now, right? I can trust my intuition. Just take a look at Ms. Sakura's face."

She gazed at Iori with a furrowed brow, practically pleading with him to stop what he was doing. If I was in her position, I'd probably start crying, too, watching all my plans go awry.

"It looks like she's screaming for me to help her," he said.

"Putting aside the fact that you pointed your sword at us... Do you want us to hear you out?" Saint Stef asked, turning her eyes to Ms. Sakura. Everyone waited for her to speak.

"It's set in stone that my survival will destroy the world."

Ms. Sakura spoke with complete resignation. I didn't feel a hint of the intensity she had been radiating before.

"But I can't kill myself... That's why I wanted someone to end my life."

Everyone looked on gently and listened to her speak.

However, I was likely the only person here who knew the true meaning

behind her words.

“There are a few questions I still have after hearing everything... She said she can’t die by her own hand, so does that mean the death of Raziel will then allow us to avoid global destruction?” Vice President Fran asked me.

“I can answer that for you, but I think it’d be better to ask Ms. Sakura herself.”

“So you knew, then,” Vice President Fran replied, shooting me a cold look. I’d said too much. Ms. Sakura looked at me and murmured:

“These questions were on my mind, too. Why do you know so much about me, Takioto? How could you guess things about me with such accuracy?”

“Remind me again who I’m related to?”

“*Hee-hee*, when you put it that way, I suppose it makes sense... You’re that mischievous little Ryuen’s blood relative, after all. The Hanamura family is filled with nothing but troublemakers.”

Ms. Sakura laughed for the first time that day. Still, her chuckle was frail and weak.

“Y-you’re treating Mr. Ryuen Hanamura like a child...”

The Saint was speechless. He was the head of the Hanamura family, Marino’s grandfather.

“Well, I have known him since he was one. Though, that’s beside the point right now.”

“I want to hear why.”

“Right, well... To start, I’ll need to talk about myself. Once again... I am the angel of knowledge, Raziel. I govern all there is to know. Despite how I look, I’m very smart.”

Well, we were all aware of that much already.

“For various reasons, I ended up creating a magical life-form in the form of a book that could serve as both a receptacle for my knowledge and an assistant.”

“A book?”

“Yes. We’ll call it the Book of Raziel for now. It was crammed with every bit of knowledge I possessed. Magic studies, physics, biology, mathematics, language, any kind of information you could think of. By passing my mana through the tome, I ultimately gave it an ego. After a while, that ego went out of control.”

Basically, the book was very similar to a highly advanced AI with an exceptionally large database. Only, it was probably more accurate to imagine it not like current AI, but the sort of highly efficient AI that far surpassed humankind, developed beyond the point of modern comprehension.

“It went out of control?”

“At first, it acted as normal and tried to guide humans. To ensure they created a good world, that is. Also, it independently combined its knowledge, my knowledge, and divination magic to gain the ability to predict the future with a high degree of accuracy. It was a unique kind of precognitive enchantment that doesn’t exist in this world, a fusion of magic and insight. It was very accurate.”

“I always sorta felt like...those fortunes you gave me came true an awful lot. So wait...”

Sakura nodded at lori’s comment.

“They all came true, didn’t they?”

Several examples appeared to pop into lori’s mind. He stared at Ms. Sakura, dumbfounded.

“Eventually, the Book of Raziel came to a conclusion: If things progressed as they were, humankind would continue down the path to annihilation. It also realized that by reducing the population down to lower numbers, complete extinction could be avoided. So well, in a certain sense, it was trying to save the world with the best intentions.”

“So in other words, the book aimed for world domination to ensure humankind’s continued survival.”

“W-wait, like taking over *the world*?! Is that even possible?!” Orange shouted after listening to my summary.

“Well, it’s just highly likely, that’s all. I believe that there’s a possibility to

avoid it.”

“But the book...”

“Right, it tried to cull the population. That was why I needed to dispose of the Book of Raziel.”

“I’d like to ask *Then, why not just get rid of it?* but I’m assuming you would’ve already done that.”

“Yes, but to explain that, I first need to talk to you about the restrictions placed on angels. Angels are prohibited from doing several things, such as suicide.”

“They’re garbage restrictions imposed by a certain set of angels. Your soul won’t be saved; you’ll be removed from the cycle of reincarnation... I didn’t think there were still such outdated and backward angels still around,” Nanami spat out. She spoke as if she was criticizing problems caused by the elder generation and their hard-hearted, outdated ways of thinking.

“Not all the restrictions are bad,” Ms. Sakura replied with a wince. “Well, a passage still links the Book of Raziel to me and my restrictions... Let’s see, why don’t you think of it like this: The Book of Raziel can’t exist without my mana. As a result, its existence endlessly grew closer to my own.”

“I—I see. No, wait, I don’t really get it.”

“You just keep quiet.”

Katorina smacked Orange.

“Ms. Sakura and the Book of Raziel basically exist together. Disposing of it would break her angelic restrictions, which is why she can’t kill herself.”

Ms. Sakura nodded.

“There also isn’t anyone among you who has the power to defeat the Book of Raziel, either. This was my only option.”

“Huh? Hold on, you’re saying that because you can’t take your own life, you want us to murder you instead?”

Katorina had caught on. Ms. Sakura nodded.

“That’s right. Honestly, between Takioto and Iori... Just what is with you two? I swear. I never expected something like this would happen.”

Ms. Sakura was smiling. But she was also crying. Tears traced down the cheeks of her smiling face.

“I knew how kind you all were, so I didn’t really want to ask in a way that would leave you feeling guilty.”

“...What are you saying, Ms. Sakura?”

Iori looked on the verge of tears himself. He posed that question knowing full well what she was going to ask us to do.

“If you really care about me, I want you to kill me.”

Iori’s hands were trembling. He looked down and wiped his eyes with his arm, then lifted his face back up and attempted to speak. But his voice wouldn’t come out, and he gritted his teeth in frustration.

When he did finally manage to speak, his voice was hoarse.

“Why do we have to kill you?”

“Believe me, I don’t want to let the book have its way with me, either. But it’s just impossible. The only way to save the world is to take my life. That book is maintaining itself through the mana passage connecting us. Once the source of its power is gone, it’ll be unable to maintain itself and disappear.”

“No, that can’t be...”

“The truth is: I think this world really is beautiful. And I love the people in it, too,” Ms. Sakura explained. “I couldn’t possibly bear the thought that I would be responsible for destroying it all, indirectly or not.”

“But in that case, if we destroyed this book ourselves...that would solve everything, wouldn’t it?” Vice President Fran asked.

“I wouldn’t have gone to all this trouble if you could do that. How can you expect to take on something even stronger than me when you already struggled to fight me while I was going easy on you?”

“W-wait, that was *going easy* on us...? The book is seriously even stronger

than that?”

“*Tch*, and all I could imagine was us getting killed the whole damn time.”

Orange’s face twitched while Katorina cursed.

“Though the president’s absence was a factor, there wasn’t very much hope of us winning,” Vice President Fran said, adjusting her glasses.

“That’s why you must kill me to save the world.”

Silence fell. I purposefully remained quiet as I checked my surroundings, thinking about the future.

The first to make a move was the Saint.

“I’ll do it.”

“Saint Stef?!”

“It’s what she wants, right? And it’ll save the world, too. It sounds like a win-win.”

“But that means killing Ms. Sakura.”

“Obviously, if I had a choice, I wouldn’t *want* to kill her. But what other option do we have? At the end of the day, I’m still the captain of the Morals Committee—and the Saint. If I don’t do it, then who will?”

Saint Stef was trying to take charge of the situation, given that no one seemed willing to do the deed.

But *he* and I had come to stop her.

“Saint Stef. Can you give us some time to think things over?”

“Time...? Why?”

“We’ve all just heard a lot of really shocking information. We need time to process it all. Rushing to a conclusion while we’re all still shaken up is a recipe for regret.”

“Shaken up? You, who doesn’t look shocked in the slightest, are shaken up?”

The Saint’s gaze was ice-cold.

“Fine, then,” she relented. “But you can’t take too much time.”

“Thank you very much,” I replied.

“Call me when you’ve made up your mind,” Ms. Sakura said before she went in front of the stained glass. Nanami walked away to go to her.

Meanwhile, I...

“Hey, Iori. What do you wanna do?”

...immediately addressed Iori. The person who needed to stop the Saint from killing Ms. Sakura.

From here on out, he was going to be forced to make many more difficult decisions, and he needed to find his resolve.

This was why I couldn’t tell him the right way out of this situation. If I did, there was a chance that he wouldn’t be able to endure the torrent of developments that were to come.

Of course, even if I supported Iori, him losing heart would mean a bad ending for him, the world, and all the heroines.

“Sorry, but my head’s still kind of all over the place. But...there’s one thing I’ve set my mind on.”

“Oh yeah? What’s that?”

“I want to save both the world and Ms. Sakura. That’s why I’m going to go defeat the Book of Raziel.”

Really now? Right, of course. I hadn’t even needed to ask. There was no way this would be enough to break Iori’s spirit.

“You’ll have to face off against a super strong enemy; you get that, right?”

“Yup, I know. I’m going, even if I have to do it alone. So, Kousuke, lemme ask you something.”

Iori paused.

“What?”

“Do you think I’ll be able to defeat the Book of Raziel?”

C’mon, did he even need to ask?

“You sure can. After all...,” I replied, flipping up my thumb toward myself. Then, with a wink, I added:

“...I’ll be right there with you.”

Iori smiled and nodded.

“Saint, I’m sorry. I’m going to defeat the Book of Raziel.”

“You’re going to *what* now?” Stefania replied, clearly angry. “You couldn’t even beat Sakura just a moment ago, so how the hell are you hoping to defeat something even stronger?!”

“If you go alone, I’d estimate your chances are exceedingly close to zero.”

Vice President Fran agreed with Saint Stef. However, Iori didn’t show any signs of changing his opinion.

“Even then, I’ll go by myself if I have to. If something should happen to me... I’ll leave the rest up to you,” he said, bowing his head. This was his way of telling them to kill Ms. Sakura in his stead.

Seeing this, Katorina heaved a sigh.

“Iori’s the type to end up dying first, isn’t he?”

“Yeah, but he’ll have us with him... So it’ll be fine, right? Wait, you’re coming, right, Katou?”

At Orange’s question, Katorina loudly snorted as if the answer was plain as day.

They were ready and raring to go. I couldn’t feel any grim resignation coming from either of them.

“Uhhh, hold up? Orange, you’re *totally* the type who bites it first, right?”

“That is a fair point; in movies, it is usually the class clown characters who go down first, isn’t it?”

Yuika and Ludie looped themselves in.

“You sure it’s okay for us to be the only ones going to take this book down? Seriously. I’m talking to you, Fran.”

Yukine provoked the vice president.

“I was only referring to Iori’s chances by himself, Yukine. I was testing his resolve. Personally, I have imagined myself poking a hundred different holes into this book. I don’t plan to lose.”

“Ha-ha-ha.” Yukine laughed.

I took a seat next to the Saint as she watched us all with an ice-cold glare. At this, the Saint made a truly repulsed face and put a little space between us. Well, someone sure was displeased.

“That really hurts my feelings, you know.”

“As if I would care about that... Seems like our group’s full of idiots with death wishes. I’m sure the same goes for you, too, doesn’t it?”

“Yeah, I plan on going with them. Aren’t you, too, Saint? C’mon.”

She let out a long, deep sigh.

“How can I not go in this situation? It’s just—I don’t get it at all. ”

“Get what?”

“Everyone being so ready to throw their lives away. I’m not scared of losing mine. But you all live free lives doing whatever you want, so I can’t fathom why you’re all so eager to die.”

Facing the Book of Raziel seemed downright foolish at this point. The Saint pretty much said as much. That was why I replied:

“It’s foolish. But the thing is, we’re all just really kind people—stupidly kind. We’re all foolish enough to put ourselves and our problems on the back burner to save other people.”

“Fools, huh?”

“Naturally, that extends to you as well. From my perspective, you’re very kind yourself, not to mention considerate of others. Fool material. That’s why I’m going to save you, whatever it takes.”

“.....”

“Make sure you’re mentally prepared for a life of freedom, okay?” I said

before departing.

“So have you decided which one of you is going to kill me, then?”

“We have.”

Iori stepped forward. Then I stood next to him. Seeing this, Ms. Sakura smiled gently.

“Thank you for everything. Please don’t let the guilt take hold of you even though you have to harm me. You’re fulfilling my wishes by saving the world. Be proud,” Ms. Sakura said, letting the tension leave her body.

“We know. We’re very proud of the decision that we’ve all come to.”

Tears welled in her eyes as she nodded.

“We’re going to defeat the Book of Raziel.”

The look on Ms. Sakura’s face changed.

“Huh?! Ah, no, what?!”

“We’ve all decided on this together.”

“I-it’s impossible. You don’t even know where it is, so how exactly are you planning to get there?”

“Because of how you are, Ms. Sakura, I figured you wouldn’t tell us. But we have Kousuke here with us,” Iori replied, looking at me.

“So, Ms. Sakura, I actually know the reasons why you’ve remained a librarian here alllll this time. One of them being that you actually sealed the Book of Raziel away in this dungeon yourself, right? ”

“How...how are you aware of that?”

“One other reason is...because you’re kind. You intentionally waited here to stop anyone from mistakenly fighting the Book of Raziel and getting themselves killed. You couldn’t let us go any further.”

“...No, it can’t be?! I can’t let you go!”

“Sorry to say, Ms. Sakura, but I’m your opponent here.”

I stood in her way and threw three angel binding items at her. As I watched

grotesque sets of tentacles appear, I couldn't help but admire just how outstanding Sexy Scientist's work was, in every sense of the word.

"Go, Iori. It's the magic circle behind Ms. Sakura. That's where the book is."

When I said this, Ms. Sakura's face twisted.

"Your expression is screaming *How do you know that?*"

I had known this from the very start. This floor continued on to a path that led to the Book of Raziel. I quietly had Nanami verify this fact for me earlier.

"I'm not letting anyone get killed. Not my friends, not the people of the world...and not you, Ms. Sakura."

And I had been working my ass off to make sure of this.

"Iori, everybody. Leave this to me and go on ahead."

"What are you going to do, Kousuke?"

"C'mon, I can't leave a beauty like this behind... That, and I'll need to persuade Ms. Sakura if we're going to defeat the Book of Raziel. So..."

I looked Iori in the eye.

"Go on ahead of me."

Iori was quick to act. Maybe my words sounded like orders from the pope or something. Not considering for a moment that I could've been talking out my ass, he immediately flew past Ms. Sakura to jump into the magic circle.

"Whoa, Iori! Hold up, dude!"

"Iori! Ugh, there could totally be traps in there or something, moron!"

Orange and Katorina rushed after him in a tizzy.

"You mustn't go any farther!" Ms. Sakura shouted, trying to stop them. However, the tentacles were getting in her way, and I was still standing in front of her .

Watching it all unfold, Vice President Fran and Saint Stef sprang into action as well.

"Now then, if you'll excuse me, I'll be going," Vice President Fran said, looking

a bit worried about the other three who went on ahead, and stepped into the magic circle.

Saint Stef glanced at me and muttered:

“I want to enjoy this brief bit of freedom, okay? Don’t give us any trouble. If you end up dead, it’ll turn into a huge pain...so don’t go dying on me.”

“I’ll see what I can do.”

“Hmph.” The Saint huffed before disappearing into the magic circle. Ms. Sakura looked dumbfounded as she watched them disappear.

“As we discussed with everyone, I want you to go and help out Iori and the others, Nanami.”

“Geez, Master, you have a stunningly beautiful maid right at your side, and you’re still getting caught up with some angel from who knows where...?”

She’s saying that as a joke, right?

“Seriously! All while he has such a cute little sister, too!” Yuika said.

You aren’t my little sister; don’t drag our past conversation into this!

“Y-yeah, honestly. All while you have such a b-beautiful upperclassma—”

“Yukine, you don’t need to force yourself to join in on their nonsense. So, Kousuke,” Ludie interjected.

“Hmm?”

“We’ll take care of them.”

“Got it,” I replied with a smile. A thought suddenly came to mind when I saw how confident she looked.

“Oh, right, Ludie. That place right off of the shopping district... You know it?”

At this, Ludie smiled.

“That ramen joint outside the shopping district has a free marinated egg add-on campaign going for a limited time, yes? What, did you think I didn’t know already? Let’s wrap this up quickly and go. Together with everyone else, obviously.”

“Pretty sure it’d be normal to *not* know that, but I’d like some, too. C’mon, Big Bro Takioto, you’ll treat me, right? ”

“Master, you can eat me up anytime you’d like. *Omigosh!* ≡”

“Why are *you* getting embarrassed here? Forget it; we’ll go once this is over. My treat, why not? All right, let’s do this,” Yukine said, urging everyone onward.

Once everyone was gone, Ms. Sakura came back to her senses and tried to kill herself.

So I stopped her. From here, I needed to convince her, then chase after the others.

Otherwise, they would end up dead.



CONFIG

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Magical★Explorer

Reborn as a Side Character in a Fantasy Dating Sim

—*Rue Sakura's Perspective*—

Iori Hijiri, his friends, and the people who sought to protect me teleported away one by one.

As I watched them leave, I thought back to the past.

When I first descended from Angel Country down to the surface, I thought of humans as foolish creatures. This was likely because the first ones I came across were bandits.

As a result, I was puzzled—why did some angels never return to the land of their birth? I had heard that a majority of them were charmed by the hearts and souls of the humans.

It also puzzled me that there were even some of my kind who died devoting everything they had to humans, elves, and beastfolk. At the time, I couldn't believe it. Though I was born the angel governing over knowledge, I didn't really understand the hearts of others.

Thus, I found myself wanting to know about this world, about the people inhabiting it. This place that angels wished to dedicate their lives to and never return from.

A few months following my descent to the surface, I finally got the opportunity, and I posed a question to the elven queen, an ancestor of Ludivine's.

Do you feel any fascination toward this world or its residents?

Living far longer on the surface than I had, she replied:

“Divine angel, these words of mine do no justice to this world. You must see, hear, and feel it for yourself.”

She continued.

“Perhaps you should walk through mountains and forests, pass through towns, and try talking with humans and elves. Questions will pile up like snow, no doubt, but much like the coming of the spring thaw, you will come to understand before long.”

At her suggestion, I decided to journey to a wide range of places, seeing, hearing, and feeling everything as I went.

After visiting the elven homeland, I communicated and interacted with several people, and although my initial bad impression of them had faded, they didn’t compel me enough to abandon returning home.

The scenery was a different story. I realized that this was an extremely beautiful world, one that possessed a variety of different faces.

Vast expanses of untouched nature, perfectly transparent lake waters, massive waterfalls, white snow-tipped mountain peaks. I could wrap my head around why angels would want to stay in this place forever rather than return to Angel Country.

Though I still couldn’t understand their affection for humans.

But eventually, I came upon someone who caused me to greatly readjust my thinking: a little girl.

I found her near a slum, wearing slightly dirty clothes. A young girl clearly not living a good life, by any standards. She had an incredible aptitude for certain light magic spells, which drew my attention. I wondered what girls like her thought about.

She must have noticed my staring, for she called to me.

“What’s wrong, Miss?”

I knew perfectly well that asking a child wasn’t going to teach me anything. Still, my interests were piqued by her rich talents, so I decided to ask her anyway.

“I’m wondering what everyone has on their minds.”

The girl tilted her head.

“That’s easy. We’re thinking about what we’re gonna do today, what we’re

gonna eat, and what we gotta do to find happiness.”

“Find happiness?”

“Yeah, happiness. You know about happiness, right, Miss?”

“Happiness.”

“Yup, that’s right. You don’t know about it? Okay... Want me to teach you?”

I found her proud, smiling face so wonderful that I grew interested in what her concept of “happiness” was.

“What do you have to do to become happy, then? ”

“Oh, that’s easy! C’mon, follow me!”

The girl pulled me by the hand. I was led to a small flower field just outside town.

“Isn’t it pretty?”

I nodded. The girl opened her arms wide and spun around in the middle of the field. After that, she sat down.

“C’mon, let’s make flower crowns,” she said, collecting flowers from the field. I plucked a flower just like she did and went to pass it to her, but the girl didn’t accept it.

“That’s all wrong; you gotta have more of the stem. You really don’t know anything, do you?”

It was the first time anyone had ever spoken like this to me. In fact, those who knew my identity worshipped me like a god. Yet I wasn’t bothered by the girl’s lack of manners. If anything, I was a bit delighted. Though, I didn’t understand why.

“Look, aren’t I pretty?” the girl asked, pinching the skirt on her dress and twirling in place.

“Very pretty.”

Her outfit was made of low-quality fabric. It was a bit out of style, and it was in tatters from how often she wore it. Nevertheless, she looked beautiful as she smiled against the backdrop of the field with her flower crown on. Above all,

her smiling face looked happier than any other, more gorgeous than any flower.

“Right? It makes me really happy to be called pretty.”

I watched her joyfully take the flower crown off her head in delight; then, in a surprising turn of events, she held it out to me.

“Huh?”

“I got to be pretty, so now I’m happy. It’s your turn to be happy next.”

The moment I took the flower crown from her, I was able to grasp, albeit vaguely, what happiness was to this girl. Just like her, I spun around in place.

“Am I pretty, too?”

“You’re not too bad. Not as pretty as me, of course!”

That was the first time I really laughed from the heart.

“By the way, Miss, I haven’t really seen you around here before. Where are you from?”

I worried for a moment about how I was supposed to answer her. However, I decided to come out and tell her everything .

“I’m keeping it a secret from everybody, but the truth is, I’m actually an angel.”

“An angel? Like one of *those* angels?”

“I don’t know what ‘one of those’ angels are, but yes, I am an angel.”

“But you don’t have any wings, though,” she replied as she walked around behind me.

“I normally keep them hidden,” I said to her, before materializing my wings to show her.

The girl’s eyes sparkled with delight, and she immediately touched them without a moment’s hesitation.

“They’re so silky and fluffy and pretty.”

“Oh, just how pretty are they?”

The girl spread out her arms wide, but then she seemed to remember

something and put them down. She then made a show of putting her hand up to her chin.

“Hmmm, they’re really pretty, sure, but... Not as pretty as me!”

This was what made me grow to love this world even more.

It was also the moment that made me come to appreciate my wings.

I must have been laughing too much, as the girl, who would go on to be called the Founding Saint, got a little upset. I never would have imagined how much her personality would change when we reunited sometime later.

Then I made a promise with her. A concise, yet solemn vow.

After that, I was filled with the desire to do something for this world and the people I had grown to love, so I created a book. Later on, it would come to be known as the Book of Raziel, after my own name.

I created the tome to protect the world and humankind, and it was filled with all the knowledge at my disposal. I also incorporated magic into it, so that it would develop independently. In the end, the tome grew exactly as I wished, becoming something greater than myself.

The matured Book of Raziel guided the world’s prosperity for a long time, but it wasn’t to last forever.

The initial spark was the Book of Raziel’s forecast of the world’s destruction. Unfortunately, I could see the same future myself.

In order to save humankind, the Book of Raziel concluded that it needed to cull the human population and isolate the remaining groups of people. While it seemed to be the worst possible conclusion of all, it was because it was what would lead to the best possible outcome .

Then the Book of Raziel started to go out of control.

For a period of time, it began engaging in demon-like activities and almost completely fell from divinity. Since I possessed a strong mana connection with the book, I suffered the repercussions, and my once-pure-white wings gradually blackened.

The wings the little girl had praised, the wings that were practically my very

identity, were slowly turning black. It came as a huge shock.

The wings I would see on the surface of the water, or in the reflection of a mirror, had gotten so black that I couldn't imagine how my fellow angels would look at them. They would hurl curses and torrents of abuse at me; that much was certain.

But seeing my wings like this allowed me to find my resolve. I had created the Book of Raziel, so I would need to be the one to destroy it.

When I thought about how, suicide was thing that first came to mind.

My self-annihilation would bring the Book of Raziel's demise with it.

However, that was something I was forbidden from doing. Nevertheless, I didn't have any hesitation or second thoughts about suicide itself.

I didn't care at all about the ancient angel restrictions. Even if it meant being cursed to never-ending agony, that was fine with me.

But that wasn't the problem.

In my visions of the future, the world would still be enveloped in darkness, even if I took my own life.

In that case, the project the Book of Raziel was attempting—culling humankind and keeping them under its supervision—would still result in a better outcome.

When I tried to come up with a way to avert this future, the answer I arrived at was to give my power and knowledge to someone who couldn't foresee the future and who possessed the ability to bring peace to the world; I would entrust the future to them.

By the time I arrived at this conclusion, the Book of Raziel's power had already eclipsed my own. I only managed to seal it away by a stroke of fortune.

But my action was not without consequence.

By sealing away the Book of Raziel, I also restricted my own powers. It took a significant amount of my strength to keep her stifled inside the dungeon.

First of all, I was no longer able to travel far from the seal's location. If I went

away, it would weaken, and the Book of Raziel would revive. In other words, I was wholly unable to view the scenery I once loved. I could no longer see the massive oceans, the forests thick with vegetation, animals, and insects, the avenues seasonally changing from greens to reds, and the snowcapped mountaintops. I couldn't even eat the foods I had adored.

Furthermore, I lost almost all my angel abilities, too. Even flying in the sky became difficult.

When the Book of Raziel ran wild, my entire body screamed in pain. At times, it would feel as if my muscles were being torn apart. I used to think it would've been easier just to die back then.

But I couldn't.

I needed to continue waiting, for however many years, decades, centuries, for the child of possibility to come. I also battled with the fear that they might never arrive.

This unbearably agonizing time did, in fact, last for several centuries. But right when I truly wished someone would end it all for me...

...*they* appeared.

Iori Hijiri, the one I had chosen.

He had a strong sense of justice, and an unbelievable power dwelled within him. I believed that guiding him would bring peace to the world.

That was why I decided to give him my knowledge, my strength, and items through dungeons I told him about, ultimately having him absorb as much of me as possible before he killed me.

On top of this, I could also play the role of the villain, to prevent him from feeling guilty about my death.

Finally, to ensure hope for the future, I would die at his hand. But just when he was about to strike the fatal blow...

...Iori stood in front of me and blocked Stefania and the others. He jumped onto the next floor in an attempt to save me.

Iori and his friends. The people I wanted to protect, this world. The future, all

of it, had collapsed completely. The light of hope I had waited centuries for was snuffed out.

I immediately came to my senses and tried to kill myself with my magic. But Takioto wouldn't let me .

"Ms. Sakura, if you die right now, it'll ruin everything I've worked for up until now."

But from my perspective, this wasn't the time to worry about any of that.

"You'll just end up dead if you keep me alive. Please, hurry up and kill me!"

The Book of Raziel wouldn't hold back like I had, nor would it purposefully sacrifice itself.

"No, just leave the tome to us. I've got the perfect plan to stop it."

"So you say, but this isn't as easy as you think it is!"

"Nah, you're wrong there. I'm positive of that," he said with a serious look on his face. I fixed my eyes on him.

"There's no way you can know that!"

"But I do. No matter what happens to you and the Book of Raziel, I know that something terrible will happen in the future."

I was too stunned to speak for a moment. He was a member of the Hanamura family, so perhaps...

"They told you all of that, too?"

He sadly shook his head.

"Truth is: I mentioned the Hanamura family earlier, but I haven't asked Marino, Sis, or any of my relatives about this."

"Then how?!"

"I know a lot more than that, too. You might not believe it, Ms. Sakura, but I know all about you—and a number of possible futures, too."

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm also aware of the way this world will go from here. At this point, I know

that you don't actually care about the angel restrictions at all and could easily kill yourself if you wanted, along with the reason why you haven't yet."

"Well, why's that, then?" I asked.

"You asked me before, didn't you? If I liked this world."

I suddenly recalled that time before. Nanami and Yukine had been with him as well.

Takioto had known what I was doing. At the time, I was going to put my plan into action, but I put it on hold after he told me to wait.

"That's why I'm selfishly trying to save you."

"If that's the case, then let me die."

"Nope, I won't. I'd be sad if you were gone, and Iori and the others would be, too. More importantly, though, I'd lose the whole reason for my existence!" he said before brushing off the tentacle fragments clinging to my clothes with his hand.

"I know that the Book of Raziel has been hiding and building up power, along with the fact that there's a hidden path inside this dungeon. I've already put a strategy in motion to address this."

He patted off the dust and dirt clinging to me. Then he stared hard into my eyes, wearing a solemn expression.

"I'm going to protect you, Ms. Sakura, along with the future of the world. So please, lend me your strength," he said, taking my hand. "I promise I will defeat the Book of Raziel and bring you happiness. Please, believe in me."

I could feel all the feelings that had built up in me thus far, centuries worth of pent-up emotions, threatening to explode out of me. Takioto's words clamped down like a vice on my heart, shaking me to the core. Tears welled in my eyes.

But I couldn't let myself cry. Besides, it was a little frustrating to think that a centuries-old angel could be brought to tears by a kid who had yet to see his twentieth birthday. That, and for some reason, I didn't want to show myself looking weak.

"...I certainly didn't expect to get proposed to at a time like this."

I settled on my comeback. Obviously, I knew it was just a poor choice of words on his part.

The boy looked flummoxed. His lovely features were riddled with confusion, but this, too, reflected handsomely on his face.

“Oh, er, no, that’s not—”

“Takioto, you player, you...”

“Okay, sure, it may have sounded a little bit like that, but um.”

The serious look returned to his face, but I could tell he was still a bit unsettled. I guided the flustered boy back to the topic at hand. That was just a little bit of teasing, payback for the curveballs he had been throwing at me.

“Listen. You’ve got your eyes set not just on what’s happening here, but also everything that lies ahead, right?”

He nodded. In that case.

“Okay, then. I’ll bet it all on you, Takioto. But remember.”

I suddenly recalled his previous comment about us being similar. I had to admit, we did resemble each other quite a lot ...

“...Remember what?”

In the way we both could put our lives on the line for the sake of the world and the safety of those around us.

I didn’t just want to protect Iori or the world at large. I wanted to protect Takioto, too. And if I determined that he was trying too hard and putting his life in danger...

“I’m going to kill myself if things start looking hopeless.”

—*Takioto’s Perspective*—

The act Ms. Sakura described, taking her life if she determined it was all hopeless, was a clear violation of angel taboos.

It would also lead to the worst possible ending in the game version of *Magical Explorer*, which I had sworn to prevent from happening at all costs.

Iori and the others must have taken care of everything for us. There were no signs of any monsters as we advanced through the dungeon.

Thanks to this, Ms. Sakura and I made it through without incident.

About ten minutes later, we arrived.

Our destination looked very similar to where Ms. Sakura had been waiting earlier; it was the inside of a holy temple, beset with beautiful stained glass.

I couldn't help letting out a dry laugh when I laid eyes on the Book of Raziel. The battle had already started.

"She's so beautiful, but all I can really see is a demon."

I watched as everyone fought against a foe that had taken on Ms. Sakura's own appearance.

The Book of Raziel may have mimicked Ms. Sakura's form, but her eyes were red, and her wings were jet-black. Her entire body was slightly ashen-colored as well.

Additionally, there was a kind of heat haze floating about her that stemmed from her powerful mana, enhancing her overall eeriness.

The tome had noticed our arrival. Orange glanced at us. Seeing this, Katorina shouted in desperation.

"Orange, you idiot! Eyes front!"

It came with almost no incantation. The Book of Raziel summoned a magic circle in front of her, and out of it poured several volleys of light arrows. Orange tried to dodge them somehow, despite their unseen speed.

Despite his best efforts, one of the arrows from the volley managed to pierce his leg. And then his arm.

"Aaaaugh!"

Iori and Katorina slashed at the Book of Raziel in response. At the exact same moment, the Saint cast healing magic and began treating Orange's wounds.

However, the Book of Raziel paid no heed to the duo's attacks. Before they could hit her, they slammed into what appeared to be a thin membrane that

neutralized their damage.

Yuika jumped out from behind them and slammed her gauntlet at it, but this didn't seem to have an effect, either.

"What are we even supposed to do about this?!" Yuika spat.

Yukine also joined the vanguard to attack, but this time, the Book of Razel appeared to consider her attack as dangerous. It generated multiple magic circles at once.

"Here they come again!" Ludie shouted.

A group of stone angel statues appeared from the circles. A moment later, however, they all began to change colors, almost as if they were ripening into living creatures. They then swarmed Yukine.

Unbelievably, eight of them assailed her at once. Unlike normal angels, their wings were jet-black, signifying that they had fallen from grace.

Yukine watched them approach, slowing down as she advanced just ten paces outside their attack range.

Then, mentally collecting herself with a deep breath, she swung her naginata at the attacking angels.

"...Her swordplay is beautiful," Ms. Sakura murmured. She couldn't help being struck by Yukine's artistic flash of steel.

A fallen angel tried to brandish its sword at Yukine, but it came to a halt mid-swing before its body finally slid apart and dissipated into magic particles.

Yukine immediately dashed forward. But the Book of Razel's attack was far from over.

It summoned even more enemies, a group of four snaked-headed angels casting magic.

"At last, my power has returned, along with my control of it," the Book of Razel commented. Her voice was exactly the same as Ms. Sakura's .

I took off running, but I was still far away from Yukine.

As if to demonstrate the truth of the Book of Razel's words, numerous icelike

crystals manifested around her. She aimed them at Yukine and sent them flying.

It didn't stop there. Next, the Book of Raziel elongated her clothes, almost exactly like I did with my stole, and attacked Yukine with the ornaments adorning them.

Although Yukine and the vice president were holding off the snake-headed angels, there were still too many other attacks to worry about. Even Yukine had been forced onto the defensive.

Nevertheless, the Book of Raziel began to summon even more monsters.

The situation was already dire, and there would be no way we could hold out if it summoned more. I used my stole to deflect several of the attacks heading Yukine's way while I called out a name.

"Ms. Sakura!"

Just as we had planned, she transferred her mana to me and the others. Not just a little, either, but as much as she could possibly handle. Our mana all began to recover.

"What are you doing?"

The Book of Raziel's weakness was its intense connection with Ms. Sakura—it would die if Ms. Sakura also lost her life. In addition, they actually shared their mana to some extent, and Ms. Sakura could tap into this common pool.

The light disappeared from some of the many magic circles the Book of Raziel had generated, and her spell only ended up summoning a few more monsters.

I sent the angel that had just materialized in front of me flying with a punch from my Third Hand.

"Hopefully, this will weaken her power a bit."

I had wanted to persuade Ms. Sakura to help us not only to stop her suicide, but also to limit the mana available to the Book of Raziel.

However, our opponent just heaved a sigh, as though disappointed at what Ms. Sakura and I had done.

"Petty tricks... Did you really think you could defeat me with such a cheap

ruse?”

The Book of Raziel held up her hand. When she did, a magic circle formed, and several books appeared from within it .

“Your dirty tactics won’t work on me!”

The vice president gulped at the sight.

“Looks like she has mana stored in those books,” she murmured.

The tomes Ms. Sakura and the Book of Raziel possessed were unique, capable of both storing and enhancing mana. Normally, just managing one of these books would have put a tremendous strain on the mind, so manipulating many at a time was unfathomably difficult. However, as upper-ranked angels and angels of knowledge, this came easily to both of them.

The Book of Raziel drew one of the tomes to her, extracting mana from it as she cast her spell.

Then a truly innumerable host of angels appeared.

To prepare for our next move, Yukine and I returned to where Nanami and the others were fighting. When we did, Nanami flatly addressed me.

“The fallen angels’ numbers are still swelling. I’d say things here are as critical as Ms. Ruija on a revolving line of credit.”

“Damn, now *that’s* an emergency. Just how many more are there?”

The “Ms. Ruija and a revolving credit” combo would definitely shoot straight up to the debt ceiling. Naturally, I had already canceled and destroyed all her cards. We used the Hanamura family’s connections to put her on a blacklist, too, so it shouldn’t have been anything to worry about.

“Nanami’s right, though. Are we going to make it to the ramen lunch?” Yuika commented.

“Of course we will. Though, they better have marinated eggs and extra noodle servings ready for us, or it certainly won’t be worth all this,” Ludie replied, prompting Yukine to smile.

“Go ahead and eat as much as you like. It’s my treat... We’re getting outta this

alive, got it?”

The fallen angels numbered in the several dozen at the very least. In fact, there may have well been over a hundred. That wasn't all—there were also Holy Wolfs in the mix. I felt a strange laugh well up inside me.

I glanced over at Iori's group. They had gotten into formation and were preparing to intercept the monsters' attack.

“Don't die on me now, guys.”

The army of fallen angels swarmed in .

A sword from the right, a spear from the left, and magic in front—the attacks came from every direction at once.

“Takioto, I'm going over to those books. Cover the front and my right.”

Yukine pointed to the left and started running toward the Book of Raziel as she began to cast a spell.

I drew my blade and slashed the angel to my right, then blocked the magic coming from up ahead with my Third Hand. At that same time, Nanami let an arrow fly and attacked a snake-headed angel.

Next, a sword-wielding angel appeared from the left, but I defended against it with my drawn blade. Yuika backed me up when I proceeded to guard against another fallen angel's attack on the left.

We had never been more coordinated than this.

Even then, there still were too many attacks to handle. An arrow grazed my cheek, and I was sent flying by a blow from a fallen angel's mace, but I immediately got back into my stance, slamming my Third and Fourth Hands over my assailant's head.

Next, I drew in a fallen angel heading toward Yuika and cut it with a drawing slice. On top of all this, I still needed to block the fallen angels that were making their way toward Ludie and Nanami.

“Shit!”

I cursed reflexively.

It would have been incorrect to say that we were merely on the back foot. No, the accurate way of describing this situation was an “absolute thrashing.” I would have loved to be the one giving the thrashing, of course, but needless to say, we were being pushed back by our foes’ overwhelming numbers and getting slowly whittled down.

“How many of these stupid things can she summon?! Yuika yelled, half enraged. I didn’t know how many we had taken down at that point, but their numbers didn’t look to be thinning in the slightest.

Yukine was having the toughest time out of everyone.

“*Hyah!*”

The angels’ numbers were too great, and since it took a lot of effort to handle them, we couldn’t afford to split people off to fight the Book of Raziel. As such, she was handling the Book of Raziel’s attacks almost entirely on her own.

Suffice it to say, she wasn’t getting through it unscathed. Blood was gushing from her body, yet no matter how many times she got blasted away, she rose valiantly to meet her opponent again, ready for more.

Every now and then, the Saint would heal her, or Vice President Fran would cast support magic, but it wasn’t nearly enough. As long as either Yuika or I were cut off from Yukine, she would only continue to take more damage.

“*Haah, haaah*, haven’t we taken down enough of these things yet?!” Ludie complained as she gasped for breath. The fallen angels were being summoned one after another. I couldn’t help thinking they might *never* stop.

“All I want is at least *some* sign we’re making progress here!” Yuika demanded as she slammed her fists into an angel.

I agreed that the scary thing here was that we didn’t know how long this would keep up for. In a normal fight, you could measure your opponent’s exhaustion by how much damage they were taking, but it didn’t really look like the angels’ numbers were thinning, and the Book of Raziel herself seemed basically untouched.

And yet. Although it may have seemed impossible to tell how exhausted our opponent was at a glance, there was a surefire method of determining her

limits.

“There’s a way to estimate how much mana she’s used. It’s the number of books in her possession,” Ms. Sakura said, an agonized look on her face. She had provided us with almost all her mana, so now she was barely able to move at all. And whenever her mana recovered a little, she would immediately use it to cast some sealing magic and restrict the Book of Raziel’s movements. That being said, I had made sure to provide her with magic sigil stones and angel-capturing items so she could defend herself and provide some degree of backup for Ludie and the others.

“Now that you mention it, the number of tomes has dwindled.”

At the beginning of the fight, there had been too many books to count, but now the number of tomes had dropped into the just barely countable range. However, I could see we were reaching our limits.

“Iori?! Orange?!”

Katorina’s voice echoed to where we were.

It looked like an angel had been summoned right next to the pair and landed a clean hit on the two of them. Vice President Fran and Nanami immediately moved to support them, and the Saint was quick to follow with healing magic.

Though Stefania was standing the farthest back from our enemies to focus on healing, she might’ve actually had the most intense job of us all. An extraordinary amount of sweat poured down her face; it was clear her mana was reaching its limits. Ms. Sakura was sucking up an excessive amount of mana from the Book of Raziel and sending it the Saint’s way, but even then, she was beginning to run dry.

I called out Stefania’s name and threw my item bag at her. There were a number of mana recovery items inside, but how long were they going to hold out?

I lost track of time after that. The repeating cycle of being hit with attacks and getting healed over and over again had reduced all our clothes to tatters.

However, the tomes surrounding the Book of Raziel had been culled down to an amount you could count on one hand.

“If we get rid of all those books she has, will her mana run out?”

“She herself should still have some left over, but it won’t be very much,” Ms. Sakura replied to Ludie’s question.

“The end’s in sight!” Orange said before slashing through a nearby fallen angel.

Right after we excitedly pumped ourselves up for a final push, the Book of Raziel let out a sad sigh.

“Is this really all you’re capable of?”

The disheartened angel spoke matter-of-factly.

“Did you think those were the only books I prepared for this? Fortunately, time was the only thing I had in abundance. Readyng them all was an easy feat.”

I couldn’t help but smile as she spoke.

“Is something amusing?”

“Go ahead and bring them out here, then. If you can, that is!”

“If you’re so eager to die, I’ll happily oblige you.”

At my words, the Book of Raziel immediately went to activate a magic circle, but nothing happened. Even when she tried again, there was no reaction.

She glared at us .

“What’s going on?”

“I mean, a room gets all stuffy if you pile up a bunch of old books in it, right?”

“What is the meaning of this?!”

“*Hah*, it’s simple. I figured that might happen, so I disposed of ’em all.”

It had been an essential element for our victory. Magic books showed up during her second phase, too. More than double what we just went through? No thanks, that was definitely going to be impossible to deal with.

When I said this, the Book of Raziel looked at me with surprise.

“How? You need a device to get to the chamber where I store my tomes.

More importantly, there should've been a guardian protecting it."

"True, there was a guardian there."

A fairly strong one at that. That was why I'd decided to throw the academy's most powerful student at the thing. Though, that was also why we were in such dire straits here.

All right then, now that the Book of Raziel was unsettled, this was our chance.

Putting my Third Hand out in front of me to block her attacks, I tried to step into her melee range. However, she wasn't going to let me.

The ornaments on her clothing stretched out and flew toward me. Despite my attempts to deflect them with my Third and Fourth Hands and forge ahead, the Book of Raziel's spell activated before I could reach her.

Spears of light closed in on my stomach. I tried to layer both my Third and Fourth Hands in front of me to divert them, but it was futile. I was pushed back.

"...I can't possibly imagine what gambit you pulled to do that. But so what? There is still no chance I will be beaten here. I still have tricks left hiding up my sleeve as well. They should be enough to defeat the likes of you."

This wasn't offensive magic, defensive magic, or healing magic. It was a close-ranged spatial magic spell.

"I had thought about using this elsewhere, that it wouldn't even be necessary here. It's certainly a surprise that you forced me to play my hand here. Now come to me, beasts of the heavenly realm!"

The Book of Raziel began warping in monsters that were stationed on other floors, which she had originally set aside to release into the world. But now, she had called them here. The fact that she was teleporting them instead of summoning them herself was surely an indication that her mana was waning.

Nevertheless, there was a staggering number of them.

Since we were already dealing with the angels and now had to face the beasts bursting from the magic circle, a few members of our group started to think this was truly the end of the line. Save for Iori, everyone in the Saint's party had all gone pale, thinking there was nothing more to be done.

Our clothes were in tatters. We only had a little bit of mana left to spare. Their expressions made it clear they had no clue how they could fight on from here.

However, lori and my party were different.

lori had steeled himself for the worst, and my party already knew what they were up against.

“Kousuke, I’ll buy us time so you can gather everyone and run.”

lori readied his sword and addressed me with a solemn look on his face.

“Whoa, hang on, lori, don’t talk like that. And here I considered you a friend, man.”

“Yeah, and I do, too, which is why I want to protect you even more,” he said before stepping forward.

“...lori, are you trying to get yourself killed?”

“I’ll stop them here.”

lori was showing us the depth of his resolve. I was sure all his party members felt the same. They were all prepared to die. But I couldn’t allow that to happen.

I grabbed lori by the back of his neck with my Third Hand.

“Whoa—what the heck are you doing, Takioto?!”

“You don’t have to go that far. Look—they made it.”

An incandescent fireball flew right past us. It wasn’t the only one. Several more, and even more after that, zoomed past us.

“You’re late,” I said to her. Honestly, I was very relieved. The girl I had been waiting for had finally arrived.

“...How unpleasant. Truly aggravating, I swear.”

Having launched her fireballs, she pushed back her hair. Her flaming crimson locks glowed a pale red, teeming with mana. The image of her beautifully silken hair dancing up into the air before collecting itself back together again was worthy of hanging in the Louvre.

Some of the monsters turned to her and attacked. But she paid them no heed, treating them as if they were nothing more than buzzing flies.

She waved her hand, and a singular shadow sped toward us and began to butcher the horde of enemies. That must have been Hanzou.

She walked on, still unconcerned with the foes closing in on her.

Finally, when they were just within an arm's reach of her, she unsheathed the sword at her waist, shredding the monsters before her into confetti, then sheathing her sword again as they dissolved into magic particles.

When exactly had she swung her sword? Even after that display of transcendently dexterous swordplay, she spoke as if nothing had happened at all.

"See, there's a few things I absolutely can't stand," she murmured, turning to look at me.

"First, liars."

She deployed her magic without any incantation, creating crimson flames that looked almost as scorching as the sun itself. It annihilated all the monsters that stood in her way.

"Second, people who can never make up their mind."

She came up to us, brushing aside her flaming-red hair.

Perhaps it was because of the mana coursing through her veins, but each individual strand of her hair shone beautifully, like fire in the dark.

Ah, she was so unbelievably cool. Her flames began to consume our enemies. All the inconsequential monsters that stood before her turned to ash.

"And third..."

This was who she was. The Student Council president, the strongest student at the Academy, and the one who shone at the top of the *Magical Explorer* character popularity poll.

"...people who start a party without me."

It was the Terror of the Big Three, Monica Mercedes von Mobius.





CONFIG

[Chapter 7 The Climactic Battle and Aftermath](#)

Magical★Explorer

Reborn as a Side Character in a Fantasy Dating Sim

“Oh man,” I began, campy and exaggerated. “I’m surprised to hear there’s someone out there with weird enough tastes to want to join a party like this, honestly.”

President Monica giggled.

“Why, of course I’d want to join in on the fun here. These sort of blood-pounding and adrenaline-filled parties don’t come around often, you know.”

A heat haze enshrouded her and seemed to warp the very air as she shrugged, one hand on her hip.

Then she generated a magic circle and cast a spell.

“Burn them to ashes.”

Red blades shaped like birds descended on the books one after another.

“Hanzou!”

A throwing dagger flew toward another summoned angel in tandem with the president’s overwhelming spell.

A paper talisman was attached to the tip of the knife. The moment it hit its target, lightning boomed from the talisman.

“Lightning Escape!” the man named Hanzou shouted. His outfit made it abundantly clear he was a ninja. Naturally, the field of magic he was most adept at was ninjutsu.

“I shan’t have you forgetting about me, either.”

Shion flapped her fan, and black blades flew out from a magic circle. Her dark magic dealt massive damage to the angels, which were still light affinity despite their fall from grace.

“Ohhh-ho-ho-ho-ho-ho! Grovel before my magic!”

Perhaps it was because she had joined the president's committee, but I felt like Gabby's signature way of speaking had gotten even more intense. She seemed to have switched over to a healer role, and she began patching up Iori.

"You've all worked very hard. Here, I'll smack your butt as a reward," Anemone said before slapping Orange's behind. I thought I heard a disgusting noise escape Orange's mouth, but surely that was just my imagination. Upon closer inspection, Anemone had slapped a healing item on his ass.

"Honestly, Kousuke, when you told us to dispose of some books, I hadn't the slightest idea what the point of it all was."

"Right, but you really saved our hides. Thanks, Gabby!"

"N-not at all, I'm honored to have helped."

As a flushed Gabby and I talked, the Book of Raziel murmured knowingly.

"I see. So you destroyed the book archive under my nose."

"Yup, that's right. I knew you had stored your mana in those things. So I had the president's group go and stamp 'em all out before you could use them."

Thinking that we'd be at a disadvantage if she summoned all her books, I had prioritized crushing the items that would power her up.

If I hadn't done this, we wouldn't have been able to gain any ground in this fight.

As we conversed, the beasts' and angels' numbers rapidly dwindled.

Sexy Scientist threw a triangular flask she was holding, and it exploded the instant it fell to the ground. I assumed the liquid inside was reacting with mana somehow, but I hadn't the slightest idea about the science behind it all. I mean, I didn't really understand Anemone herself, either, to be fair.

"There we go. Oh, you still lived through all that, did you? How intriguing."

Hanzou silently chopped up a nearby enemy. Meanwhile, President Monica...

"It's like she's firing off missiles."

Compared to our dinky little sword swings, each of her attacks was like a ballistic missile. Hardly any of the monsters could hold out against them. Right

now, the Book of Raziel was the only being who could completely handle her offensive.

The President's flames closed in on the Book of Raziel. However, even these were nullified .

When Vice President Fran explained about the Book of Raziel's barrier, the president's reply was tepid.

"Hmm, a shield? Oh, that's easy, isn't it?"

"Is it?"

Mana gushed from the president's body.

"Sure, if she's got a barrier, that just means I have to burn it all away, right?"

She refers to the heavy hitters on the Morals Committee as "meatheads," but is Monica really one to talk? The thought naturally popped into my head.

"If I had to rank women by how badly I wanted them to burn me alive, you would absolutely be at the top," I commented as I passed her in the opposite direction.

"Really? I'd be happy to reduce you to a crisp whenever you'd like. I'm always ready to accept a challenge."

I'd actually like to avoid getting charred alive, thank you.

Now the tide of battle had reversed course.

Everyone had recovered to some extent. We had gained a bit more room to work with.

In fact, there was only one tome left floating around the Book of Raziel.

"Takioto, it's time for Flash," Yukine said to me unexpectedly.

"Yukine?"

"Flash can cut through a wall just fine. In fact, I'd guarantee it's the strongest skill we have at our disposal here. We'll create the opening. Send her off for good with that sword of yours."

I nodded. President Monica even chimed in, albeit with a bit of a

condescension. “Fine, I’ll give you the honors, just this once.”

The Book of Raziel must have been at her limits, too. She was down to her last tome; once it was used up, she wouldn’t be able to do anything.

Iori, Yukine, and President Monica all dashed forward. I followed their lead and broke into a run.

The Book of Raziel strained her remaining mana and created four mirror images of herself. They then moved to block our advance.

“Bwah-ha-ha, that shan’t be enough to stop us!”

Shion activated her spell, and an enormous pitch-black hand sprouted up from the mirror image closest to her. The hand then grabbed the mirror image from behind, as if it were picking up a figure, and slammed it into the ground.

“Can’t let you get in Takioto’s way.”

Yukine was up next. She hit one of the clones trying to attack me with water missiles and knocked it off-balance. Then she cut down the light spear it launched with her naginata and closed the gap.

Nine flashes of steel cut the mirror image to pieces.

“I certainly don’t know what exactly you’re thinking, but we’ll be the ones to decide our future.”

President Monica was the next one to start fighting one of the clones. She wreathed her sword in flames before instantly closing in on the copy, stabbing it countless times, faster than the eye could register.

“Right here, I’m going to bring out the most power I possibly can.”

Iori stepped out in front of me and deflected the copy’s attack with his shield before stepping into melee range and slamming it with his shoulder. The clone was thrown off balance, and he swung his sword down on it.

Iori shouldn’t have had the strength to rival President Monica or Yukine yet. However, the power I felt from him right now could stack up against both of them. It was probably the ability to surpass one’s limits, only ever bestowed to the protagonist. All the conditions must’ve lined up for it to activate here.

“Hrrraah!”

Iori’s blade cleaved through the last mirror image.

“Takioto!”

The same moment I heard him shout, I flew past him and rushed toward the Book of Raziel.

She wasn’t pulling punches, either. Given the sheer number of magic circles she was summoning, this might have been the moment.

Okay, I needed to focus. My mind entered the same mode as usual.

I could see the light spear flying in toward my flank. I deflected it with my Third Hand.

This time, a light, like from a ray gun, came at me, but I dodged to the right.

It occurred to me that I could now consciously enter this state, where everything around me appeared to move in slow motion.

Heck, this massive boulder wrapped in light flying at me was a perfect example—it was moving so slowly. On top of that, I could tell with a single glance where I could smack it to make it break. I unleashed my Fourth Hand and pulverized it.

I felt as if I alone were moving inside another dimension.

The Book of Raziel’s attacks were sluggish. Cross-shaped knives flew at me, but I dodged them without breaking a sweat. That same instant, the Book of Raziel tried to skewer me with the ornaments on her clothes, but I managed to block them with my Third and Fourth Hands.

At this point, nothing could scare me, no matter how much magic she would send my way.

The tome in front of her shone more brightly than ever before, and a single beam of light, like a laser, bore into the ground as it closed in on me. I’d probably get vaporized by a direct hit. But in my current state, even this attack seemed to move at a glacial pace.

And it seemed like if I cut through a part of the laser, I could render the attack

ineffective.

So I sliced right through it.

The Book of Raziel widened her eyes. I heard the others shout in surprise from behind me.

All right, now it was time to sheath my sword once more and build power in my blade. I gathered even more. The ultimate chance was closing in right before me.

I couldn't have fought against the Book of Raziel on my own. It would've been impossible with just the usual Hanamura house group, too. It was Iori, the president, Ludie, Nanami, Yukine, Yuika, Katorina, Gabby, Orange, along with the Three Committees members under Minister Benito's command, who had gotten us this far.

It was because they were all here. Thanks to them, I could save the angel who had tried to end her own life to protect the world.

All right. I couldn't let this chance they all created for me slip by.

I needed to seize this single moment.

Everything I had done had fallen into place, and right here, right now, the result was materializing.

It was time—I placed my right hand on my katana and built up power.

I'd pour everything into it.

Get in range of her.

My breathing was steady.

I could see the line I needed to cut.

"Book of Raziel, leave this world to me. I'll lead the way to peace."

The angel seemed to smile at my words.

"It's in your hands, then."

Hearing her response, I grasped the Book of Raziel's true intent. So it was only fair that I release absolutely everything at her right now—every last drop of

power in me—to ensure her peace of mind.

All that was left now was to do exactly what was ingrained in my body and draw my katana.

I would end everything faster than the blink of an eye.



“Okay then, where are you bringing me?” Ms. Sakura asked.

“We’re almost there.”

Our destination lay a few minutes farther into this floor, whose walls were entirely covered with ivy.

“Ms. Sakura, are you feeling okay?”

“My body feels a bit heavier than before, but that’s all. I had been using my power to seal away the Book of Raziel to begin with, so it doesn’t really feel like much has changed.”

Ms. Sakura had exhausted quite a lot of her strength in our efforts to bring down the Book of Raziel. Well, the Book of Raziel had basically died while still possessing some of Ms. Sakura’s power, really.

“Perhaps you’re just a bit bloated,” Nanami said.

“Nanami, why are you so savage with Ms. Sakura? I thought you were only like that with Marino.”

“My power should eventually return, though it may take many decades to do so. However...maintaining my body weight might be a bit more difficult.” She grinned.

“Ever since the Book of Raziel’s malfunctioned, I’ve generally spent all my time on campus. Now I want to go around and eat all sorts of different things. Not that I mean to imply the food on campus isn’t good or anything.”

“Then why don’t you hit up a bunch of restaurants? You’ve pretty much been working three hundred and sixty-five days a year, so you must have a ton of vacation time.”

“I was never officially contracted as a staff member, so who knows? I do recall

Ms. Ruija complaining about the Academy not really letting her take time off.”



“Ms. Ruija—or should I say Ms. Debt—only has herself to blame.”

“You didn’t have to clarify like that.”

Currently, my stance was: *Stop referring to Ms. Ruija as Ms. Debt and vice versa!* Actually, she was doing a great job of paying back what she owed. Er, perhaps it was better to say she was being *forced* to pay off her debts.

“I truly find it hard to understand how quick she is to discover something she wants despite owing a lot of money. I also don’t get how she convinces herself to take out more loans elsewhere to pay back her debts that are due. I worry she has a screw loose, if I am being honest.”

“In her academy days, she was a popular honors student, too. I would’ve liked to caution her, but honestly, I never would have imagined that she would do something like that for me.”

Ms. Sakura was referring to how I had asked Ms. Ruija to negotiate behind the scenes to allow her to keep her position as the school librarian.

This had involved controlling information about Ms. Sakura’s identity, direct bargaining with Marino, and silencing a select group of instructors. All the work proved fruitful, so Ms. Sakura was able to remain in her position. The other faculty didn’t distance themselves from her, either.

In another big surprise, the Academy elected to keep the regular student population in the dark about the Book of Raziel incident. To me, it was clear that Marino was familiar enough with Ms. Sakura to know that the librarian would take her own life before letting any student come to harm—and had consequently decided to cover it all up. Of course, Marino sidestepped my questions about this.

Our lives had basically gone back to how they had been before everything happened.

“I’m so happy. I get to continue the same relationship I’ve had with all of you, just like before. It’s truly all thanks to Ruija.”

“Putting Ms. De—er, Ms. Ruija—aside for a moment. Do you have anywhere else you want to go outside of work, Ms. Sakura?”

She now had the ability to leave campus.

“Hmmm, I’ve never been to Tsukuyomi Leisureland. Going by myself would be a bit lonely; would like to join me, Kousuke?”

“Sure, if I have the time.”

“Master... You already have an angel at your side, and yet you’re trying to buddy up with some dubious heavenly messenger from who knows where... Fine then, I shall accompany you. Please understand, though, I am quite particular about the *dashi* stock used in rolled omelets.”

“When did we decide Ms. Sakura was making our lunches?”

Was Nanami checking her cooking skills or something? Was she playing the harsh mother-in-law here? “*What the hell is this lousy excuse for miso soup, Ms. Sakura?!*” Yeah, I could see her saying that.

We entered into the spatial magic circle as we talked. Our destination was up ahead.

“So at the end of the day, was the Book of Raziel really evil?” Nanami asked abruptly. She must have been chewing on this question for a while now.

“That’s...not exactly it. The method the Book of Raziel ultimately arrived at to save humankind was killing everyone. Still, I don’t think she really wanted to do it.”

“What do you mean?”

“I bet she didn’t want to kill any humans, or Ms. Sakura, either.”

Ms. Sakura looked slightly surprised.

“You think so, too?”

She had the same read of the situation.

“Yup. Otherwise, how would something more powerful and knowledgeable than you get sealed away in the first place?”

Given the nature of the Book of Raziel’s last words, which she delivered with a smile, it was impossible for me to see it any other way.

I had to work even harder from here on out—for her sake as well.

“...All right, we’re here.”

“This is the place you wanted to show me?”

It was somewhere that one would normally think was impossible.

This world had four seasons just like Earth. Summers so hot they sapped you of the will to do anything, autumns where the trees would change colors before losing their leaves, winters that covered everything in a blanket of snow and left you chilled to the bone, and springs where ice thawed, and life bloomed anew.

Right now, it was summer. The time to head to the pool or beach and feast your eyes on swimsuits. But the grand sight before us had no place in the hottest months of the year.

“What a beautiful...sakura tree. ”

There stood a single cherry tree. The lawn around it was cleanly cut and bathed in sunlight from the sky above.

“It really is pretty. I’ve seen what I could of the row of trees in front of the campus, but this tree has a different beauty to it.”

“This is one of my favorite spots.”

“You like cherry trees?”

“Yes, I do. That’s why I come here occasionally to look at it.”

To remind myself of what I’d sworn to lori.

The two angels both silently looked at the sakura tree, but eventually Ms. Sakura broke the stillness.

“I also have something I’d like to speak to you about, Kousuke.

“What would that be?”

“I’m an angel. You might already know this because you made a contract with Nanami, but upper-ranked angels can confer power on humans.”

“I’m aware.”

“While I have lost some of mine, I can still bestow powers to others. But I’m a bit hesitant to do so.”

“Why is that?”

She nodded at my question.

“It would be one thing if I had fully recovered my strength, but presently, I can only bequeath my power to a single person.”

“So it’s one and done. I get it. So that means lori’s a part of all this, isn’t he?”

“That’s right. I’m not sure whether to give my power to you or lori.”

“Oh, so that’s what this is about. Please, give it to lori. I don’t need it.”

When I answered, Nanami looked at me with surprise. Seeing her reaction, Ms. Sakura smiled.

“I expected you to say that. You really don’t need it?”

“I’m sure I don’t. If I was only worried about making *myself* stronger, then I might’ve taken you up on the offer. ‘Cause I am pretty weak.”

“Oh, don’t say that. I don’t think so at all.”

“But it’s true. I’m well aware of my shortcomings.”

This finnick ability of mine had advantages and disadvantages. Against certain enemies, I boasted unrivaled strength, but against others, my weaknesses could be totally exploited, and I’d be left with no choice but to flee .

A contract with Ms. Sakura might have shored up some of my drawbacks. But...

“I have Nanami on my side,” I said, patting her on the shoulder. This prompted Nanami to turn and look at me with true bewilderment on her face.

“M-Master?”

“Nanami’s got my back. She always goes above and beyond to help me out. I couldn’t ask for anything more. Besides, I don’t need your power to become the strongest guy around, Ms. Sakura.”

“I see. That’s quite a wonderful master you have, Nanami.”

“...He’s the best master I could ask for. But there are times when I don’t know what more I can do. I’ve already dedicated my body and soul to you, so what

else is there for me to devote to you?”

“You’ve given me plenty already. If anything, I’m worried about how I can pay you back for it all.”

“*Tee-hee*, I’m jealous of your relationship... Now then, not to change the subject, but there’s actually something I have to talk to you about, too, Nanami.”

“Me? If you’re asking about a signed Polaroid of my master, then a set of three will run you fifty yen.”

“Uh, I don’t remember signing anything...”

Putting that aside, wasn’t Nanami’s price a little *too* cheap? Any old postcard would run you more than that!

“I’ll take ten, but what I wished to discuss was you yourself, Nanami. You’re an angel, but not a normal one. Does Takioto know that?”

She wasn’t a normal angel. What exactly did Ms. Sakura mean by that? I could think of one thing, but...

I glanced over to Nanami. I didn’t know if it was okay to talk about this. I jerked my chin at my maid, telling her that I was leaving this up to her, and she nodded back.

“Yes, you’re right. The old hag... Pardon me. *Marino* should also understand to some extent, as well.”

Y’know, it sure didn’t seem like she was trying to fix that habit of hers.

“I see. I’m not sure if that explains this, but you’ve deviated from other lower-ranked angels, Nanami,” said Ms. Sakura.

“Deviated? ”

“I don’t know the extent of your strength. You may very well end up surpassing me at the height of my powers.”

“Well, that’s a given... But is that actually true?”

“I’m not joking. There’s a sort of power that angels can sense within other angels. How should I put it...? It’s difficult to translate and pronounce in this

world's language, so to make it simple, think of it as one's existential power."

"Existential power?"

"Yes, the shining power of an individual's existence. A few of the people in your raid group felt overwhelmed just from looking at me, right?"

"Right."

"That was me releasing my existential power to intimidate everyone. It's something angels and those with an elemental affinity for light possess, and it has an even greater effect on those with an affinity for darkness."

Interesting. That explained why one member of the group had been especially affected by it.

"The latent existential power I feel in Nanami, though, is probably even stronger than I was during my heyday."

"Huh?!"

I whipped my head around to Nanami, only to see her standing with one leg up on a chair that she had pulled out of thin air, lifting her skirt.

"The perfectly plump line from my butt to my thighs really has quite an impact, after all."

I had to admit that this anatomical wonder was downright cheating. If Nanami was a card in a trading card game, she'd definitely get banned... Hmm?

"That's not what she means. You did mean something else, right, Ms. Sakura?"

Nanami had spoken with such confidence that I couldn't help doubting my response for a moment.

"Well, Nanami's jokes aside, she really does have a tremendous power dwelling within her."

"Hee-hee, I'm sure that's because I am a special maid."

She purposefully made it sound like she was joking, but it was true. Nanami was a dungeon maid, after all.

"I'm not sure exactly why, but Nanami's power has been sealed away.

Eventually, I could lift some of the limiters placed on her, but is that something you'd want me to do?"



What...was all this about?

“Nanami, what’s she talking about?”

“I’m aware that limiters are sometimes placed on angels of my model to curtail their strength but...I don’t believe any were put on me?”

“Would lifting these limiters put Nanami in any danger?”

“Oh no, it’s totally safe. I’m just taking off her shackles.”

“Then I suppose I’m okay with letting you do that.”

Why was Nanami speaking down to her, exactly...?

“If you wish to grow even stronger, you should go to where all the angels live.”

“It feels almost like twenty-pound weights wrapped around my arms have been taken off.”

“Doesn’t sound like that’s a significant increase.”

“If you want to strengthen your angel powers, it might be a good idea to head to Angel Country. I’ll tell you how to get there,” Ms. Sakura said before suddenly looking down at her hands.

“The Angel Country... I might not ever be able to go back there. My wings have been defiled into something unsightly and horrible.”

“How are they unsightly?”

“Well, you know, they’ve gone black like a fallen angel’s, haven’t they?”

“I don’t see them like that... Right, so this happened a while ago, but the mother of a friend of a mine was a farmer.”

Though, strictly speaking, this story had happened in my original world.

“She would always apologize for her dirty hands before serving us sweets or home-grown tomatoes sprinkled with sugar. She’d water her crops, plant them in the dirt, and spread pesticides...and obviously she’d wear gloves, but she couldn’t prevent her hands from getting rough and dry, and they looked kind of dirty from all the muscle she’d built up there.”

I could remember her hands and the look on her face even now.

“But here’s how I saw it: Her hands got like that because she worked so hard to raise her kid, right? And the vegetables her farm grew really were delicious, too.”

If anything, I thought it was cool. Though, my friend’s mother seemed seriously concerned about it herself .

“That’s why I told her that her hands were lovely.”

There might have been guys out there who thought her hands were dirty, but I wanted to shout back at them that her hands were cool and beautiful. And that I respected her for them.

“Your wings may be black, Ms. Sakura.”

But what of it?

I could only imagine the agony she must have gone through. She had holed herself up for so long that anyone else in her position would have been driven insane, enduring immense torment from keeping the Book of Raziel sealed as she searched for a way to avert disaster.

All that suffering and agony, all to ultimately get killed? Have you heard anything more ridiculous?

“You’ve been putting up a fight this whole time, unbeknownst to me or anyone else, right? An agonizing battle that robbed you of the ability to do what you love and went on for so long that it would’ve driven anyone else mad. You and the Book of Raziel ended up in your positions because you both fought for this world and its people without caring what happened to yourselves. That’s why your wings ended up the way they are.”

That wasn’t something any normal angel or I could do. Which was all the more reason why...

“If some angel out there makes fun of your wings, I’ll tell them to watch their damn mouth.”

Ms. Sakura’s wings only got that way because she was trying to protect all of us—and protect our world, after all. Heck, they weren’t ugly at all, if anything...

“I think your wings are the prettiest in the world.”

“...So my wings are pretty, are they?”

Tears spilled from her eyes. I turned away and looked at the sakura petals dancing in the air as they fell.

“I didn’t really want anyone to see me like this, you know.”

After a brief silence, Ms. Sakura spoke.

“What are you fighting for?”

If I had to sum it up...

“I’d say my answer is that I love this world, so I want to guide it to its happy ending. That’s why I fight.”

“I see,” she replied before looking me in the eye. “You and I might actually be pretty similar, after all. ”

Ms. Sakura produced a letter of some kind.

“Even if we don’t form a contract, I still wish to help you however I can. If you ever need my knowledge, you can consult me anytime, okay?”

“Got it.”

“Oh, also.”

“Is there something else?”

After she passed the letter to me, she drew in close and whispered in my ear.

“I remember what you said when you faced off against me, you know. That you’d bring me happiness.”

At this, she went around in front of me and placed her thin index finger up against my forehead.

“You even proposed while saving me, so you better be sure to make me happy, okay?”

Then I witnessed the most beautiful smile, capable of stealing the heart of any who laid eyes on it, I had ever seen Ms. Sakura make.



[Chapter 8](#) [The Future](#)

Magical★Explorer Reborn as a Side Character in a Fantasy Dating Sim

—*Rue Sakura's Perspective*—

It was often said that humans would show you who they truly were when cornered, and I believed the same went for angels.

Normally, I consider myself calm and collected, but that really isn't true. The thought came to me when I gazed at the sakura tree that Takioto showed me.

It was so unbelievably pretty.

Maintaining the seal on the Book of Raziel placed quite a few restrictions on my abilities, which shrunk the world around me. Yet that didn't diminish the tree's beauty.

Perhaps this was because it was the first time in a long while that I had been able to see a real cherry tree so close, since I almost never left the library.

However, it wasn't only this sakura tree that stunned me. The scenery, the library, the Academy, the cafés, the supermarkets, the town—the whole world itself now seemed so much brighter.

Thanks to Takioto, I had grown to love sakura—the sakura in my own name.

"It was you who gave me the name Rue Sakura, wasn't it, Marino?"

Marino smiled tenderly.

"That's right; I really gave it a lot of thought at the time."

"What made you land on that name?"

"I wanted to work the character for *sakura* in there somewhere, since you would always say the only thing left for you was to wither away."

She was right; I had said that to Marino. Back then, it all seemed totally hopeless, and my only wish was to leave the slightest bit of possibility behind and disappear .

"I couldn't stand the idea of you blooming only to wither away, though. But

because of my position, I wasn't able to do anything about your dilemma either," Marino said apologetically.

"You did everything you possibly could in your position. You allowed me to use your facilities here."

"Yes, but you also did a whole lot of good for our library, too, didn't you? Well, that's not important. But going back to the name Sakura. I gave it to you because that's what I wanted you to become."

"Like a cherry tree?"

"This time, your petals may scatter and wither away. But the sakura always blooms the next year, as they do every year. I wanted you to blossom once again, too."

"So that explains my name."

"That's right. And you really did bloom again, too," Marino said with a smile. I couldn't help but smile with her. She was exactly right.

"Who would've thought things would end up like this."

"Did you never foresee this kind of future?"

"I couldn't. Though, there were certain people who showed some promise."

"What do you mean?"

"While some people have hazy futures, there are others whose fates are totally unseeable. Their destinies were just as impenetrable for the Book of Raziel, too."

"Hazy? Unseeable?"

"The ones with hazy futures are Ludie, Katou, Monica, and Yuika. The possible futures they hold are too many to count.

For those with too many futures, what lay ahead was always hazy. I was especially in the dark about how Katou's fate was going to play out from here.

"I'm worried about Katou."

Marino was looking at me with the question *Why?* written on her face. There was a chance that she didn't know. Katou herself didn't know, either—not that

it was very strange she didn't. But *he* knew. I figured that if she was unaware, then there was no reason for me to tell her, either.

That Katou had demon blood in her veins.

"Then what about the people whose futures you can't see? "

"There are three. The first is Nanami. I wonder if you actually know more about her than me."

Nanami was a lower-ranked angel.

Angel though she was, however, there was something about her that set her apart from regular angels like me. As an upper-ranked angel, I was technically her superior, but I wondered if that was actually the case.

"I don't know anything about Nanami's destiny, either. But it does seem to me like she's involved with people on my side of things."

"...There's the possibility this topic could extend far past the boundaries of this world alone."

"You might be right... And what about the other two?"

"The second is Iori. Hmm, how should I put it? He shines too brightly for me to see anything."

He would likely be able to accomplish a great many different things.

"The last one is Kousuke. He's... Let's see. He's similar to Iori, but if I had to describe it, I'd say his fate is far more muddled. I can't see anything through the pitch-black."

"It may be a bit odd for me to say this, but I think I understand what you mean."

Marino smiled with a wince.

"Tell me, Sakura. In the end, did you tell everyone that the world would face destruction whether the Book of Raziel was defeated or not?"

"I haven't revealed anything to them. Even if I could, things will turn out fine."

Since Takioto already knew.

“Let me tell you something, Marino. Now that I’ve lost my powers, I can’t predict the future. But there’s something I can assure you of.”

“Is there?”

“Yes. I say this with absolute confidence. I predicted the world would be destroyed, right? But now...I’m sure it won’t be.”

“Oh, and why is that?”

“Because this world has Takioto.”

“Oh my, because of Kou? *Tee-hee. Hee-hee-hee.*”

“Marino Hanamura, I’m going to tell you something right here, right now.”

“My, my, just what sort of declaration will this be, I wonder. ”

“Kousuke Takioto will bring light and avert disaster. After all...”

He was the person who’d bested me, who’d had made me cry my eyes out, who’d showed me what hope looked like. And...

“He’s going become the strongest in the world. ”





CONFIG

[Afterword](#)

Magical★Explorer

Reborn as a Side Character in a Fantasy Dating Sim

Hello, Iris here. I'm still alive.

—Acknowledgments—

Kannatuki, thank you for your superb illustrations. Ms. Sakura's design, in particular, is godly. She's ascended above being an angel into the ranks of divinity. Just seeing her makes my creative juices start to churn.

To my editor, Miyakawa, I truly apologize for all the trouble I've caused you. It's thanks to your efforts that *Magical ★ Explorer* is still running. Thank you so much.

Thank you to TwinBox for your extremely cute rendering of Katorina. She looks amazing herself, but I personally enjoy the swimsuit design you went with, too. Seriously, it's so cute.

—Other Stuff—

When I lived in Tokyo, I once learned firsthand to be careful of spicy foods.

It was a Friday. Thinking *The weekend's almost here; I gotta work my ass off today*, I stopped by a convenience store, purchasing an energy drink and a bakery item for my lunch later.

At noon, right as I was about to chow down on my bread, Coworker A came over to talk to me. They mentioned something like, "Our epicurean boss recommended this restaurant! Want to go?"

Of course, I immediately jumped at the idea. I couldn't turn down an invite from Mr. A.

Wait, you don't know Coworker A?! Coworker A is the guy I immediately hit it off with, who shares my fondness for Mugi from *K-On!* and her pickled daikon eyebrows. He even gifted me the *Mugi* pickled daikon collab they put out. (I was surprised they partnered with a proper pickle company for the thing.)

I've never spoken about him with you all, so it's only natural you wouldn't know of him.

Here I was being presented with a tasty restaurant that my close friend Coworker A had heard about from one of our bosses, a man who had a spotless record when it came to gourmet eateries (and negative reliability when it came to work). I mean, I couldn't help getting my hopes up at this point.

This restaurant was a serious curry place. The interior had the prototypical Asian decor that made it feel like we had somehow ended up in India, and while I couldn't tell if he was Nepalese or Indian, the owner was a foreigner who looked like he was from the region. There was also only one other customer besides us. I'm pretty sure they were a reincarnated god of some kind.

Anyway, we began to look at the menu. Listed on it was a genuine style of curry with lots and lots of spices. There was a warning that asserted first-time customers should be careful, but I didn't pay any attention to it at all.

Even the owner looked at me with a face that was screaming *Do you seriously think you can eat that?* Well now, I wasn't going to let anyone belittle me like that, was I? "I'll tell you right now, the man you're looking at has given himself diarrhea from eating weird stuff plenty of times at this point and has had more than enough stomachaches to build up his tolerance." I raised my voice and really let him have it. Inside my head.

The moment I had anxiously awaited came, and the curry was brought out. Just from the smell, I knew it was different from normal curry.

It was definitely spicy. But *intensely* spicy. The taste and smell were so strong, honestly it was painful just to choke it down, that's how bad it was. Hmph, this place wasn't all talk, after all. (I was dying here.)

Then, looking at A, who ordered a regular curry, why, I'd describe his visage as that of someone who had suddenly encountered a boss monster while strolling through a grassy field.

"Iris, I might not be able to handle any more," he told me.

It appeared even the normal curry was too spicy .

"What, is that all you've got? That's not like you, Mr. A. Truth is, though, I'm

in rough shape, too.”

Both of us had been brainwashed to never let a single scrap of food get left behind on our plates, but in the end, we tearfully left our meals unfinished. Even when I had visited Paris and was faced with food that didn't really suit my tastes, I still finished all my meals. Though, when my host family in Canada brought out a huge salad filled with raw celery, I did leave some of that left over. An impossible amount of food to eat.

The two of us left the restaurant disheartened. The entire time I suspected that the other person who had been in there since our arrival, and who finished his meal like normal, must have been a reincarnated god, and that our boss who recommended the place was a demon wearing human skin.

We both consoled each other. “We really tried, and sure, we may have lost, but we battled right up to the end.” However, the real battle was yet to come.

I was assailed with violent diarrhea.

The most fortunate part was that this was Friday. No matter how much stomach pain I felt, tomorrow was the weekend. I sent a polite but vitriolic email to this boss of ours, worked while spending probably more time in the toilet than at my desk, and returned home that night.

Then came Monday. It happened when I opened up my desk drawer. The painful memories came flooding back to me.

There was some bread in my desk. I remembered, since I had gone out for lunch with War Buddy A, I still had the bread I had bought for lunch left over. Oh, incidentally, War Buddy A and I had banned the word *curry* from our conversation for a little while.

Hold on, though, when I took a closer look, the bread was actually past its best-by date.

It was fine, though. I was a slightly unique man from the sticks. A man who could eat expired food as long as it hadn't gone rotten or moldy.

When you reached my level, you became easily able to judge whether something was rotten. That's right; you just needed to take a bite and see. I remember taking a bite of the bread and thinking to myself:

Yeah, this is safe. All right then, I thought as I ate. I'd energize myself again with this lunch, get home without having to do any overtime, and play games all night.

However, when I got home, I couldn't focus on playing any games. I was assailed with violent diarrhea.



It's fun when
Yuika hassles Kousuke.

神保 康福

(Noboru Kannafuki)

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