

Iris

ILLUSTRATION BY
Noboru Kannatuki



Magical★EXPLORER

7

Reborn as a
Side Character
in a Fantasy Dating Sim



Magical★ explorer

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Side Character
in a Fantasy Dating Sim

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Afterword



“Good day. It is a pleasure
to see you again. Thank
you for coming.”

Amaterasu Girls' Academy
Student Council President
Hana Kujou



Amaterasu Girls' Academy
Student Council Vice President
Christine von Gauss





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Magical★Explorer: Reborn as a Side Character in a Fantasy Dating Sim, Vol. 7

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. 7

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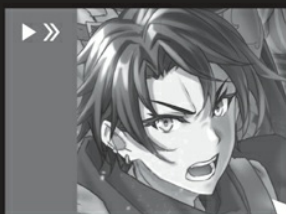
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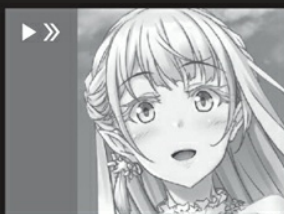
Characters

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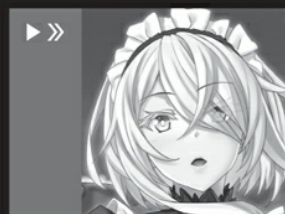
Kousuke Takioto

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



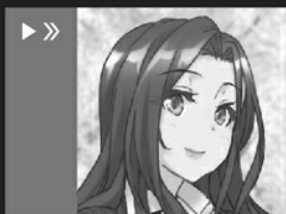
Ludie

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*.



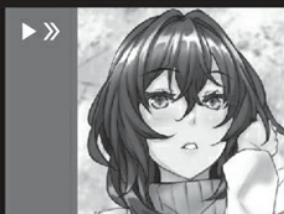
Nanami

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



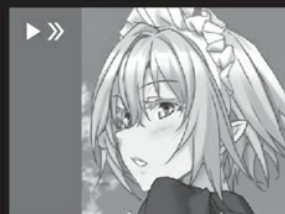
Marino Hanamura

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



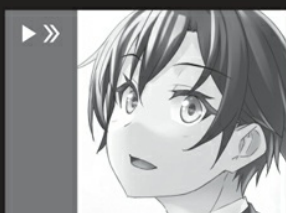
Hatsumi Hanamura

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



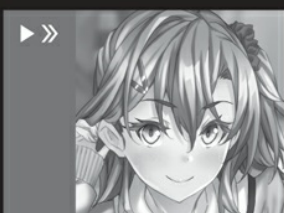
Claris

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.



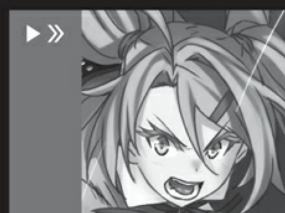
Iori Hijiri

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

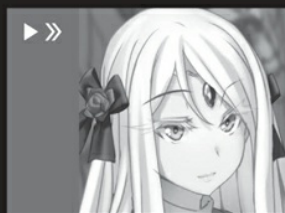
Katorina. One of the main heroines present on the *Magical ★ Explorer* box art. A competitive spirit who is sensitive about her meager bust.



Monica

Monica Mercedes von Mobius.

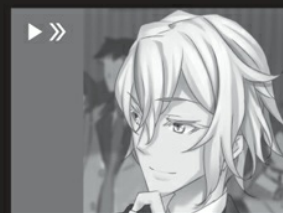
The president of the Student Council. One of *Magical★Explorer's* Big Three and a main heroine who features on the game's packaging.



Stef

Stefania Scaglione.

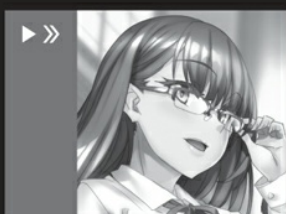
Serves as the captain of the Morals Committee. The Acting Saint from Leggenze. Although she is beautiful, compassionate, and popular with the students... is there more to her than meets the eye...?



Benito

Benito Evangelista.

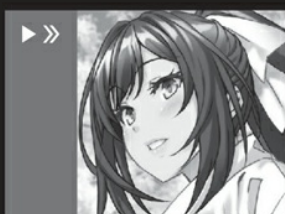
Serves as the ceremonial minister, the president of the Ceremonial Committee. Despised by the students of the Academy, but beloved by eroge players.



Fran

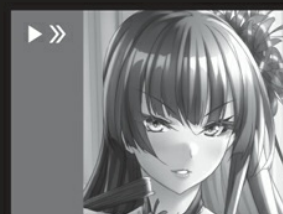
Franziska Edda von Gneisenau.

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



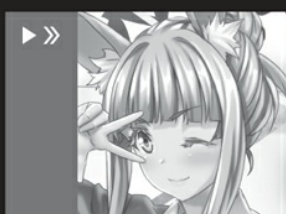
Yukine Mizumori

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



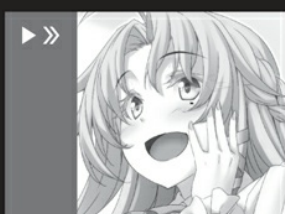
Shion Himemiya

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'.



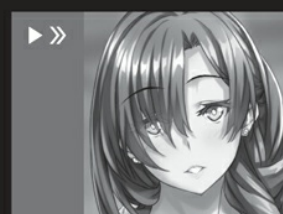
Ivy

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. In truth, she is an angel.



CONFIG

Reborn as a Side Character in a Fantasy Dating Sim —*Monica's Perspective*— “You’re right.”

Principal Marino Hanamura sighed with a frown.

Across from her, the principal and the student council president of Amaterasu Girls’ Academy both nodded meekly in their seats.

“Normally, our academy would resolve something like this on our own, but...,” murmured Hana Kujou, the student council president of Amaterasu Girls’ Academy.

“Of course I’d like to assist you, Hana, but it’s a bit tricky, isn’t it?”

Hana nodded at my words.

“Still, it seems like we’re going to need help from a man to solve this.”

“Please, is there any way we could enlist such help from you?” the principal of Amaterasu Girls’ Academy asked, looking concerned.

If they could somehow enroll a man in the Girls’ Academy, the situation would change. However...

“...I have a good idea. We could have them handle it. What do you think, Marino?” Rue Sakura chimed in after listening to the conversation. Marino nodded, appearing to have an inkling about who she was referring to. A name also came to my mind when I thought about a man who might be able to do something about the situation.

“I agree that those two should be able to handle it, but how exactly?”

“Actually, there *is* a secret angel art that will probably do the trick... If we can get Nanami to cooperate, she should be able to use it on them.”

Rue Sakura laid out a plan that was groundbreaking and revolutionary, yet also very high risk. It would allow us to meet all the requirements. That being said...

“Can you really do something like that?” I asked in spite of myself. The angel had suggested something that would normally be impossible.

“The magic’s difficult to work with. Even among us angels, only a chosen few can wield it, and it requires a strong degree of trust in the target. But I believe that Nanami has what it takes to pull it off,” Sakura said.

“Nanami does seem like she’d be capable,” the principal replied. I was of the same opinion, and anyone else with a degree of familiarity with Nanami would have agreed, too.

“And these boys you’re talking about are trustworthy?”

“Absolutely. Why, one of them is like a son to me.”

The principal of Amaterasu Girls’ Academy nodded.

“Ah, so it’s the boy I’ve heard so much about. Very well. Let us place Amaterasu’s future in his...in Kousuke Takioto’s hands.”

Kousuke Takioto had yet to learn that he had been tasked with a heavy responsibility, one that could greatly influence his life.

—*Takioto’s Perspective*— “*Acchooo!*”

“*Blegh*, gross. Can you not blow spit on me?”

Yuika glared at me, arching her brows disparagingly.

“My bad. But hey, at least I made sure to cover my mouth.”

“Miss Yuika, please look at this from a different angle. Even Master’s maid would relish being sprayed with his spittle.”

“Uhhh, excuse me? Sounds to me like it’d be time to hand in your two weeks’ notice and slap him across the face.”

If it was coming from a beautiful mistress of the house, there were probably guys who’d actually see it as a special reward. In fact, they might even make a tiny mistake on purpose, just to make them angry. Nah, actually, probably not.

Anyway, putting that aside.

“I sure have been sneezing a lot lately. It’s not allergies or anything, either.”

“If it’s not allergies, then perhaps someone is talking about you somewhere,” Ludie said before taking a sip of her tea.

*“Haah, haah—*if gossiping about someone really made them sneeze, then Takioto—*haah, haah—*would be sneezing nonstop twenty-four seven.”

Yukine’s voice drifted in from elsewhere. She had a point. After everything I had gotten myself into, people had *plenty* of stories to tell about me.

Since Yukine’s breathing was ragged, she must have been using the treadmill. Oh, there goes the end goal music.

Nice job. Keep it up, you got this! Your stats have increased.

Yukine had chosen me as her Maid Traveler, so I heard my own voice say those lines from the other room. Y’know, it was always embarrassing to hear my own voice like that. Though, that being said...

“I’ve never heard that jingle play before. Did the treadmill always have that feature?”

I had used it several times by now, but this was my first time hearing it play a fanfare.

I’d noticed a change in Ludie and Yuika’s demeanor when I asked about this.

“That song plays when you get an SSR rare photo,” Nanami replied nonchalantly.

“Oh, an SSR rare photo, sure... Wait, what do you mean, ‘rare photo’?”

Pretty sure this was the first I’d heard about this. Had Nanami updated it? More importantly, just what type of photos were they?

“Ignorance is bliss, you know.”

Hearing this from Yuika filled me with a *terrible* feeling. I headed over to the exercise machine right away, and Nanami passed me something with a weird button on it.

“Now, this would be the Quiz Nanami Academy.”

That sounded a lot like a game you’d find in an arcade somewhere. Whatever, that didn’t matter.

I took a good look at what she’d handed me. It looked like one of those buzzers that people used on a quiz show, the kind that would play a sound and

reveal an answer when you pressed on it. Except inexplicably, there was a chibi illustration of me on it.

“Please don’t spring some weird stuff on me. What the heck is this thing?”

Nanami nodded at my question.

“This project is designed to teach Master all about his maid Nanami.”

“Teach me about you?”

“Indeed, the idea is to strengthen your bond with me, Master, so we can work better together in the future. Think about how important synchronization rates are in mech anime and the like.”

Well, I did agree that strengthening our bond would make it easier for us to use combination attacks, sure.

“I’m not going to pilot you, though.”

“It’s more than possible that you could end up piloting me, Master.”

“When the hell would I have to do that?!”

“While you currently know absolutely everything about my body, from the strands of my hair down to the tips of my toenails—”

“Uh, no I don’t.”

“—I thought to go one step further by teaching you about my mind as well. Hence the buzzer. Here is yours, Miss Yuika.”

“You really aren’t listening to me, are you?” I remarked.

“And why exactly am I supposed to be getting in on this, too? I thought this was just between you and Takioto,” Yuika grumbled.

Nanami passed her another quiz buzzer. Including my own, there were one, two, three, four of them in total. Why were there that many?

“I guess I have nothing better to do anyway...,” Yuika said before pressing her button. The answer sign flipped up energetically, and the buzzer played a voice clip of Yuika saying, *“I know!”*

On closer inspection, I saw that there was a chibi illustration of Yuika drawn

on the device, with her hand acting as the answer sign.

I examined the buzzer I'd been given... Oh, yup, mine also had a picture of me on it.

It was really well-designed for how simple it was, but why exactly had Nanami made them anyway?

"The person with the highest number of correct answers will be gifted a complete set of five key chains from the popular ramen spot, The Four Elements."

As she spoke, Nanami produced several key chains that you could get for a few bucks from a capsule toy machine.

To no one's surprise, Ludie put down the magazine she had been reading and came up right next to me. She was so raring to go I thought she might just steal my buzzer right out of my hands.

"...Um, so I'm guessing you want to win those, Ludie?"

"Of course I do. Those are the legendary key chains that were only available from capsule toy machines in the Four Elements when it first opened, you know. After a short while, they removed the machines and started selling the key chains directly for a limited time, but at some point, they sold out completely. They're really valuable, and super hard to get ahold of these days!"

"In other words, the key chains weren't all that popular, so the restaurant got rid of the machines, right?" Yuika whispered to me. That was definitely what had happened. They must have handed out the unsold key chains to kids getting ramen.

"I never would have imagined I'd get to see them like this. Nanami, can I take a closer look at them?"

"Of course. Ah, but the one I showed just now is a sample. *These* are the ones that will be given out."

"Why, look, they're in a bag! How could I ever bring myself to open it?!"

"Ludie really plays dumb pretty a lot, doesn't she?"

"No, that's not it. She isn't playing dumb, she's just naturally that way."

Despite having always felt so embarrassed about it, Ludie had stopped trying to hide her ramen mania outside of school lately. All the LL diehards knew that she loved ramen, and they even had this code to ensure that their knowledge of this never got revealed to her. What were they, parents watching their child grow up or something?

“Kousuke, look at this reproduction of the pork back fat. The minuteness of the spicy onions. These key chains are perfect replicas of The Four Elements’ ramen.”

“O-oh, yeah, sure. Really...makes you want them, huh...”

“Indeed, I would kill for them. There’s *no way* I’m losing this time.”

While we spoke, Sis came into the room. She picked up one of the buzzers without any hesitation at all and stood next to Ludie.

“Mm-hmm.”

Had she heard what we were talking about, or...? I wanted to believe she had, but these days, I got the feeling Sis could readily get involved in things without having a clue about what was going on. She glanced at me and pressed a button on one of the buzzers.

“*Mm-hmm.*”

A clip of her voice played, and a thumbs-up sign (meaning yes) lifted up. Very attentive to detail.

“Well then, now that all the contestants are here, I have prepared a special event space for us,” Nanami said, looking into the garden. There stood the set of a quiz show.

“Why the heck is that thing there?” I muttered as I looked out into the garden. It wasn’t Nanami who answered me, but Sis.

“I wanted it a while back, so I bought everything for it. But I gave up ’cause it felt empty doing it by myself.”

It seemed I’d opened some emotional wounds.

Once we went outside and took our seats, the quiz began right away.

“Well then, let’s get right into it. One of Nanami’s signature dishes is called a ____ Special. What word goes in the blank?”

I didn’t even have to think about the answer to this one. However, I glanced to the side, wondering if I should press the buzzer so readily.

Yuika seemed to know the answer, too, but it also looked like she was debating whether to press the button or not. The same went for Ludie. Sis was tilting her head in contemplation. Only one of us appeared not to know the solution.

Well, if no one else was going to do it, then I figured that I might as well go for it. I pressed the button. Then, my voice came out just like when Yuika had pressed the button on her device.

“Nhn, ahhh ♡!”

The hell?

“Hold up, why is there a weird voice coming out of mine?!”

“Bzzzt. That is incorrect, Master. The answer is not the ‘Hold up, why the hell is there a weird voice coming out of mine’ special.”

No, no, I didn’t want to answer Nanami’s stupid question. I wanted to ask about why the buzzer had just played a clip of “me” moaning. Nobody wanted to hear that!

After watching this all play out, Ludie pressed the button on her device without a moment’s delay. This time, it played a voice clip saying, *“Coming!”*

“The answer is ‘Nanami’!”

“Brilliant, Miss Ludie! That’s absolutely right!”

“Hooray!”

“Who cares about the stupid answer. Why the hell did my buzzer groan in pleasure?!”

“I thought if we were going to do this, I would program the buzzer to have a one in two hundred fifty-six chance of playing a sensual moan instead.”

I pressed the buzzer again. Once more, I heard myself moaning, *“Nhn, ahhh*

♡!” There was no way something with those odds would come out twice in a row, was there?

“Forgive me. I simply wanted to show my favor for you, Master... So I adjusted your buzzer to make the special voice that has a one in two hundred fifty-six chance of coming out play a hundred percent of the time.”

“Like hell that’s showing me favor!”

If anything, it feels like you’re showing me contempt here!

“Huh? W-wait just a second. That doesn’t mean that our buzzers have a one in two hundred fifty-six chance of playing a moan, too, does it?”

“Now then, for the second question. Ba-bam!”

Yuika looked ready to blow her top, Ludie was wearing a deadly serious expression, and whatever was on Sis’s mind was a complete mystery. What was going on here?

Nevertheless, Nanami pressed forward without another word.

“Who is rumored to use power—”

“Mm-hmm.”

A voice played from my side. I looked over and saw that Sis’s buzzer sign was raised in the air. She appeared to have pressed the button on purpose, but it was way too early for her to figure out the answer, right?

“Kousuke.”

“That’s correct! The answer is Master Kousuke. The full question was, ‘Who is rumored to use power and authority to force his maid to obey him, has been using his authority lately to surround himself with other girls in his class, is totally fine with breasts big or small, and is also Nanami’s master?’”

“I object to that question!”

“Uh, Takioto? I hate to say it, but I’ve heard the first half of that rumor before. Thooooough, it’s not completely off the mark, is it?”

“I’m not making anyone obey me!”

However, I had to admit that the last part of that question was right on the

money.

“Next, for question three—”

“We’re still doing this?!”

The quiz continued for another twenty-odd minutes, and Ludie ended up winning.



CONFIG

Reborn as a Side Character in a Fantasy Dating Sim “Haah...”

“What’s the sighing all about?”

Ludie cocked her head after I quietly exhaled as we stepped into the spatial magic circle.

“I just have a bad feeling about this.”

“Why?”

“I mean, think about it. Marino calling us to see her in the principal’s office?”

“Hmm, I supposed she could just send you a message in your case, Kousuke,” Iori chimed in. He was right.

“But,” Ludie said, continuing the conversation, “if we’re the ones being called there, this probably concerns the Three Committees, right?”

Me, Ludie, Iori. Sure, we all did belong to the Three Committees.

“In that case, why didn’t Yuika get called with us? Could say the same for Gabby, too.”

“True it would make sense for them to come with us if she needed to speak with us about something that concerned the Three Committees. Rina, too.”

Iori nodded.

That reminded me, Katorina had gotten an official recommendation to join the Morals Committee, right? Apparently, the Saint approved her immediately, too. Though there was no telling whether Katorina was going to accept the invitation or not.

“By the way, where’s Nanami? She wasn’t with you when we met up, either, was she?”

“She’s been real busy with something lately.”

Nanami hadn’t even been at the house, even during the evenings. What was she doing?

Knowing her, she might have gotten ahold of some information about what was coming up ahead. Either way, she wasn't around to explain herself, so thinking about it wasn't going to get us anywhere. We could simply ask Marino why she had called us when we arrived.

We discussed it on our way to the principal's office. Thanks to the spatial magic circle, our destination was just a stone's throw away.

"Excuse us," I said, pushing open the door to discover that Marino wasn't the only person inside. Behind her stood Nanami, along with Ms. Sakura. In addition, the presidents of the Three Committees were all standing against the wall.

Lastly, there was also someone sitting on the sofa across from Marino—a girl dressed in another school's uniform. As soon as I laid eyes on her familiar face and uniform, everything came together.

This had to be the start of *that* event. After all, she and Ms. Sakura were here, too.

"Good day."

The new girl looked over and greeted us. It appeared that Ludie knew who she was.

"Oh, why, good day," the elven girl replied with a smile. Picking up from there, Iori and I returned her greeting.

"Good day."

"G-good...day?"

Iori stuttered a bit, perhaps because he didn't use the phrase very often.

"There you three are. Come over and take a seat. Now, let's get right to business—but first, I suppose introductions are in order, aren't they? Ludie aside... Do you know who my guest is by any chance, Kou?" Marino asked, turning to me.

"I've heard about her at least. You're Hana Kujou, the student council president of Amaterasu Girls' Academy, right? They say you're strong enough to stand toe-to-toe against President Monica. My name's Kousuke Takioto. Nice to

meet you,” I said before glancing at Iori. He was staring absentmindedly at Kujou, so I lightly poked him with my elbow.

“Oh, nice to meet you, too. I’m Iori Hijiri.”

“Forgive me for not introducing myself sooner. I’m Hana Kujou. It is a pleasure, Mr. Takioto, Mr. Hijiri. It’s good to see you again, Princess Ludivine.”

Kujou bowed.

“I believe we haven’t been in each other’s company since the Tréfle ceremony, correct? How have you and your family been, Miss Kujou?”

“We are all doing just fine, thank you.”

As the two of them conversed, we all sat down on a sofa. Marino got up from her spot and headed over to her office chair.

Once she was situated, Nanami brewed some black tea and served it to us. Then, she presented Kujou with a fresh cup of her own.

Hold on. What exactly had Nanami been so busy with this morning? She almost *never* did any work for Marino.

“Oh my, thank you very much, Miss Nanami. It’s quite delicious.”

“I am delighted to hear that. Also, as I mentioned earlier, you do not need to address me so formally.”

I inferred from the word “earlier” that Nanami had already talked with Kujou. I didn’t understand what her reason was for getting involved with Kujou, but, well, I could always ask her later.

Kujou replied to Nanami with a pleasant smile and took a sip of tea. I had a hunch that Kujou would continue being formal with her.

When you were speaking with nobility above a certain level, even their most unassuming gesture made it feel like they lived in an entirely different world. Sometimes that thought would even cross my mind when I was looking at Ludie, though it hadn’t happened lately.

“Now that introductions are out of the way, why don’t we jump right into the topic at hand?”

“Certainly. To put it in simple terms, Amaterasu Girls’ Academy is facing a problem right now.”

“A problem at Amaterasu? *The* Amaterasu Girls’ Academy?” Ludie asked, prompting Kujou to nod.

“Indeed. Teachers and students alike are suddenly growing unwell. According to the people who’ve experienced this phenomenon, they say it’s as though their mana is being sucked out of them.”

“Apparently, the mana levels of everyone who’s been effected have dwindled, too,” Marino added to Kujou’s explanation.

“Many of our students merely assumed they had used too much magic and rested in their rooms to recover. As such, it had not proven to be much of a problem until recently.”

“Up until recently?”

“Yes. It just came to light that a far greater number of students have experienced this phenomenon than we had imagined.”

“That means it’s pretty widespread, then. Why did it go undetected for so long?”

Iori must have found this suspicious. However, there was a reasonable explanation for this.

“Using too much magic can often make you feel under the weather, so we imagine no one paid it any thought. Students at magic academies will sometimes overextend themselves,” I said.

If someone with migraines noticed that their head was hurting a bit, they probably wouldn’t think it was worth bringing up.

Which was why Amaterasu hadn’t been able to detect that the phenomenon was affecting so many of their students.

“Mr. Takioto is correct. In truth, many students didn’t think their symptoms were unusual. On top of this, the source of their symptoms is still a mystery.”

“I see.”

“We’ve been searching for a cause, but we haven’t turned up any answers. While we haven’t publicly announced this to the students, the principal and I are also considering the possibility of magic terrorism.”

“Magic terrorism...!” Iori murmured with surprise.

“Yes, we believe someone is either stealing our power to cast a large-scale magic spell of some kind, or that this person has already cast this spell, and it’s causing the health of Amaterasu’s staff and students to deteriorate.”

“Is that even possible at a place full of magic specialists like Amaterasu Girls’ Academy?”

“Assuming it is, then first and foremost, there has to be a mole working with the person behind the spell. With that in mind, everyone besides myself and the principal are being tasked with a public-facing investigation while we secretly request for help from those we can trust.”

“And so, they came here to talk to me first,” Marino continued.

“You can’t look at this and tell what’s going on, Marino?”

“I have no idea. I didn’t actually do any investigating myself, either. I just couldn’t dismiss the possibility of magic terrorism being involved and decided to help out.”

Interesting.

“Also, we found a note,” Kujou said before looking at Marino, who operated something with her hand to make a hologram appear before us.

“What’s this...?”

“This symbol you see here was written on it.”

“And just what is it, exactly?”

“It may just be someone’s doodle. However, it might also mean something, and we can’t say for certain it’s not the mark of some criminal organization.”

“I see, so this is what brought you here to Tsukuyomi Magic Academy. But then why were we called here?” Ludie asked.

I mean, yeah, it was a reasonable question. I knew why, but I couldn’t reveal

this, of course. From Ludie and Iori's perspective, things were probably going to veer off in a completely unexpected direction.

Pfft—whoa now, that was close.

I'd almost giggled when I thought about what was going to happen from here. This was a pretty serious topic, so I really couldn't afford to crack up right now.

"As it stands, there are a few things we have learned from our investigation into this matter."

"The victims of this incident are largely female. Previously, when multiple people fell ill simultaneously at the same location, the male guest lecturer at the time didn't complain of feeling sick at all, even though every woman in the same location did."

There's a scene like that in the game, too. The male guest lecturer gets investigated afterward, but this doesn't turn anything up.

"We did some digging and discovered that none of the men working on campus have been affected by the phenomenon."

"Could that mean men don't succumb to it as easily?" Iori asked, and Kujou nodded.

"We have considered that possibility. Per academy policy, there aren't many men on campus, but not even one of them has fallen ill. Meanwhile, the female teachers are getting sick left and right. We floated the idea of bringing men to campus...however, that would be impossible."

"I talked with their principal, and she doesn't want to turn this into a big ordeal at this point. I get it, really. That school values its image, and their alumnae are really outspoken."

Any sort of scandal would devastate a school that sold itself as being noble and virtuous. If Amaterasu tried bringing in men for the investigation, the alumnae would probably start an uproar. *"Allowing men into the sacred halls of Amaterasu Girls' Academy?!"* they'd cry.

Even back in Japan, there were places with obnoxious and vocal alumni. There was this prestigious high school I knew of where the alumni said it was

unbecoming for the students to go on a field trip to Galactic Studios...and insisted they all go to shrines instead, resulting in temple-and shrine-hopping being the main focus of the trip.

I liked shrines myself, so I wouldn't have cared, but I really felt for the poor kids.

"Sounds stressful enough to give yourself an ulcer."

"Quite. Setting my own difficulties aside, the principal has been at her wit's end. Still, if she forces through the investigation, or lets men into the school, and ends up with nothing to show for it, that will cause its own set of problems..."

The whole thing was a huge mess.

"However, the principal believes that people's lives come first and foremost, so she has begun considering the possibility of temporarily locking down the campus or requesting the aid of magic knights."

Marino nodded.

"When the principal of Amaterasu Girls' Academy came to visit earlier, she told me that she wanted to try investigating and resolving the problem before doing something so drastic. Secretly if possible, and with a man who wouldn't cause much trouble..."

Normally, that would be considered a tall order. But boy, do they make it work in the game.

"So she asked if I had any good ideas. Then Ms. Sakura came up with a great plan."

When Marino said this, Ms. Sakura beamed beside Iori. Kujou watched on with a pained expression on her face.

Shit, I can barely contain my laughter.

Sorry, sorry, this wasn't the time for chuckles. I knew I couldn't let myself laugh, but the times when you need to be serious are always when it feels hardest to hold back. The Saint had to be chortling her ass off inside her mind right now.

“What exactly did Ms. Sakura suggest?”

“I’m glad you asked, Ludie. We just need to have Iori here become a girl for us. Simple, isn’t it?”

“Oh sure, if I become a girl, then sneaking in and investigat.....? Uhhhhhhhhhhhhhh?! ”

Iori’s look of understanding quickly changed to one of shock.

“N-n-no w-way, impossible! Th-that’s not simple at all!”

Don’t laugh. Hold it in. Keep it together. Why the hell are Iori’s reactions so comically perfect?! He’s going to solve this whole problem, isn’t he?

“I’m a boy, first of all, and um, well, I’ve got one of *those*, too.”

“My, my, your face is beet red. Rest assured, you won’t need to worry about that ♪!”

“Pffft. Pweh, heehee, hah hah hah hah hah!” Dammit, I couldn’t let myself laugh here, but stopping myself was impossible.

“Nuh-uh, nope, nope, nope! If I gotta cross-dress or something, everyone’ll figure out it’s me right away!

Iori was so flustered that his typically polite style of speaking had vanished. *C’mon, man, just calm down a sec.*

“Mr. Iori, I understand your concerns completely. Please allow me to prepare your bra and panties for you.”

Why did Nanami always make these absurd remarks? At this point, I should just come up with a word for it—“absur-Nami” works, right? Gotta register that in my personal dictionary.

Stop looking at me, while you’re at it. There’s no way I have anything like that (massive lie)!

“No, no, that’s not what I’m worried about here! *Th-that* thing is what I’m concerned about!”

“Don’t worry, we have a very good spell to take care of it. Don’t we, Ms. Sakura?” said Nanami.

“Indeed, it’s a secret angel art that I am only able to use on you, lori.”

“That you can only use on me?” asked lori.

“That’s right. By using this secret art, I can give you the body of a girl.”

“Ohhh, if I turn into a girl, then it won’t matter if I’m cross-dres—W-whaat?!”

It sure had been a while since I’d heard a shriek that long.

“*P-pfft*. Y-you can really do that?”

I finally giggled a bit, and my voice cracked slightly. But, c’mon, it was impossible to bear.

“Apparently, she can.”

lori’s jaw dropped. It looked like his soul had left his body.

Pffftt, s-sorry, *pfft*, I can’t, *bwahaha*, stop laughing, *pffft*.

“Well, lori...y’know...*pfft*, you got this buddy.”

“Hey, Kousuke?! You’re cracking up because this isn’t your problem, aren’t you?!”

lori was practically clinging to my clothes, on the verge of tears.

“No, no, I’m not laughing, promise.”

“Liar, liar, liar! This is ethically crazy, isn’t it?!”

“Ethically, yeah, I get what you’re saying. But if people’s lives are on the line, then there’s not much you can do about it, right?”

lori went quiet when I said “people’s lives.”

“I’d really like you to do this for us, lori.”

“B-b-but I’m nervous. There’s no way I’d last in an all-girls school. I’ll slip up right away and blow everything, I just know it.”

“You don’t need to worry, lori. We’ve prepared plenty of backup for you.”

“Ludie will be one of them. She has the education and etiquette to immediately fit in at Amaterasu Girls’ Academy. Plus, with her status, the

transfer process will be a breeze.”

“Wait, do I really have to go?” Iori asked, unable to conceal his displeasure as he listened to everyone talk about the proposal like it was set in stone.

Sorry to say it, buddy, but there’s no way you’re getting out of this!

“Iori, I get why you’re so confused here. But, between ethics and people’s lives, I would choose people’s lives.”

“T-Takioto...”

“Now, now, Iori. Just try to calm down and really think for a moment. There’s another angel here right now, isn’t there?” Marino said, glancing at Nanami. True, she *was* an angel.

Huh?

The angel secret art required an angel and human to have an emotional bond and a trusting relationship? What?

I happened to look around. Marino, Ludie, the Three Committee presidents—everyone was staring me. As was Kujou, for that matter, looking very apologetic. Their eyes were all on me.

Just then, a thought crossed my mind. Why the heck was I here sitting across from Kujou anyway?

If Iori was going, they didn’t need me, right? So why was I here? And for that matter, why had they intentionally sat me down right across from Kujou? I was just an onlooker, so shouldn’t I have been okay to stand against the wall with the leaders of the Three Committees?

Uh? Ahh...huh.....?

“Awuh?”

I didn’t want to put two and two together. Nope, nope, no understanding for me!

“I’m so glad you’re going to be there with Iori, Kou! You definitely have a trusting relationship, too.”

Yet the conversation continued to move forward.

“I take pride in being of one heart and mind with Master. That, and um, you *did* witness the moment of my birth...♪ So, um, we’re already past that point anyway... Blushies!”

Blushies my ass! I didn’t remember seeing what she looked like—no wait, I did. Yeah, I definitely did. Okay, so I’d seen the moment of her birth, but she certainly hadn’t been naked!

“You were wearing your maid outfit straight from the get-go! Please, I’m begging you, don’t say things that will give people the wrong idea, okay?!”

“Well, we have formed a contract. I am set to be your maid for life.”

“Could you revise that statement to not sound as sketchy as you’re making it out to be?!”

I wasn’t keeping her in my thrall or anything. She was totally free!

Hold on just a minute. I was letting Nanami set the pace here. There had to be a way I could get out of this.

O-oh, I know.

“W-wait a second. Is this angel secret art really that easy to use?! Nanami hasn’t even been alive for a year!”

In the game, people talk about the skill like it’s very difficult to pull off, and I’m pretty sure only Ms. Sakura is able to use it. Even her peers in the Angel Village shouldn’t have been able to use it!

“Wielding this secret art is a very strenuous feat, yes.”

See, what did I just say? Ms. Sakura was frowning. Phew, this was it. I could use this. This was my ticket outta here.

“But, when we brought it up to Nanami, she trained for us to learn the technique, even forgoing sleep to do so... And while it’s still a bit imperfect, she’s developed it enough that I don’t think there will be any problems.”

“It was a long, harsh battle,” Nanami said.

But why, though?!

“Nanami, why do you have a faraway look in your eyes? Why have you been

working so hard on this? There's a lot of better places to dedicate those efforts, right?" I asked.

"Don't worry, I've already thought up a name. Let us combine our names and go with Takioto Nanako."

"There you go with more absur-Nami! There isn't a single element of my name in... Oh wait, no, there is!"

Right, right, Nanami + Kousuke = Nanako! See, usually she didn't incorporate me into her gags. So why the hell had she roped me in this time?

Quit screwing around and tripping me up here.

"Well, who cares about that. C'mon, lori, you gotta say something," I insisted.

"Ohhh, *phew*. If you're going with me, Kousuke...then I guess it's fine..." he said.

"What are you so relieved about?! Now's not the time, buddy. You're gonna be suffering the same fate as me here!"

"Th-that's fair, yeah."

"Don't give me that! This is a really important moment. A vital, critical junction."

This was a major point in our lives. We were about to lose something we absolutely couldn't afford to lose.

As I was making my impassioned speech to lori, Ludie shot me an apologetic glance.

"Um, Kousuke...I hate to say this, but I sort of have the feeling you've already lost a lot at this point. Personally, it might not be that much different for you."

Don't make me face reality while looking like that! Give me a break!

I got what Ludie was saying here, sure. But that didn't mean I could afford to give up.

"But, still, don't you think it's a bit ethically dubious to have a dude infiltrate an all-girls school like this?"

"Oh, but didn't you *just* say something about that, Kou? About how people's

lives are more important than ethics?”

I had dug my own grave. All of the stuff I said to convince Iori earlier was coming back to haunt me.

“Thank you very much for your help. “

Kujou bowed, a worried look on her face. I could only nod along.



We jumped right into trying out the secret art. I could understand this line of thinking. I could also understand that though Kujou wished to be presented, she had business of her own to attend to, and had left with Marino. However...

“Why is this dangerous weirdo here, too?”

This dangerous weirdo in question, Anemone aka Sexy Scientist, placed her hand on my shoulder, not concealing her displeasure in the slightest.

“Oh, come now, Takioto. Why are you treating me like I’m a threat?”

On a list of people who should have been barred from watching what was about to happen, anyone would clearly put Anemone at the top. She was the obvious winner and would even beat out Orange with a huge lead.

“I’m pretty sure everyone else would share my opinion if you asked them.”

Even I had fallen victim to her before. I needed to destroy that horrible horned mana-measuring machine as soon as possible.

“Sorry, Takioto. The truth is, Anemone just happened to overhear us talking about everything among ourselves. We couldn’t stop her.”

“You don’t need to apologize for anything, Vice President Fran... Um, actually, why are you here as well?”

Vice President Fran didn’t answer my naïve question, just apologized profusely over and over again. Ah, so you were just as interested in this yourself!

“...Fine, I guess I’m okay with you here,” I said.

“Wait, really?”

Vice President Fran must have noticed the resignation in my eyes. She gazed at me with a strained smile.

“Hold on now, then why am I not allowed to be here?” Anemone asked.

“Try putting your hand to your heart and really think about the things you’ve made.”

Anemone put her hand to her chest like I’d said. Then she nodded with a smile.

“Yes, of course, I’m sure you’re delighted with them, Takioto.”

“Y’know, I can’t help but hear malice in the word ‘delighted’ there.”

“By the way, Takioto, don’t you find that the words ‘undercover’ and ‘investigate’ have this poorly concealed eroticism to them?”

“It’s still not too late to make you leave!”

Anemone was touching on what was, depending on the work, a real spicy genre, even in the world of erotic entertainment. Was her mind composed entirely of porn magazines and eroge?

Despite pleading with Ms. Sakura, President Monica was the one to answer me.

“Hold on, Takioto. Anemone’s knowledge is top of the class among the third-years, so she’ll help out if anything happens. Think of it that way.”

“President Monica... Do you really need to be here, too? Aren’t you pretty busy?”

And hey, Stef and Minister Benito were also present! The only people who needed to be here were Ludie, Iori, me, Nanami, and Ms. Sakura.

“After coming this far, I have a duty to see things out to the end,” said Stef.

Hey, Saint, you weren’t supposed to say that with a shit-eating grin on your face! I wanted to laugh earlier, too, but I had been able to hold it in. Kind of.

“Now, now, why don’t we get started, okay? We’ll start with me and Iori,” Ms. Sakura said to try calming things down. Well, it looked like it was time for him to pay the piper. Not that he’d done anything wrong.

“Okay...”

Iori seemed despondent, perhaps because he was anxious. Ms. Sakura came up beside him.

Then she materialized her wings and wrapped them around Iori. When she did, they gave off a blinding white light. We all covered our eyes with our arms and hands, waiting for the glow to subside. Once the light had dissipated, we found ourselves staring at Iori—but not the Iori we knew.

First, his clothing had changed. His pants had been swapped out for a skirt, and from them extended two pale, uncovered legs that I would’ve loved to rub my face against.

His entire body had gotten softer and plumper, and his hair seemed to have lengthened slightly.

But what really stood out about the new Iori was his chest.

He—or rather, *she*—had boobs.

“I-is that you, Iori?”

“What’s wrong, Takioto?”

I borrowed the mirror President Monica was holding and handed it out to Iori.

“...Is that *me*?!” femme Iori yelped, his voice unchanged. His voice had been pretty high-pitched to begin with, so it didn’t really sound that out of place.

“Wonderful, truly wonderful, Iori! Look at how cute you’ve gotten! Oh, how mysterious. That’s the secrets of the angels for you. Now how about you entrust your body to me?” Anemone said, giving a standing ovation. The vice president then dragged her off into a corner of the room.

Iori suddenly startled and touched his chest. Then he bolted out of the room, flustered.

“What was that about, I wonder?”

Ludie cocked her head and went to go after him, but I stopped her.

I sympathized. He wanted to double-check to see if *that* was still there.

After a short while, Iori returned with crimson cheeks. He looked slightly

exhausted. Yup, it was gone, all right.

As Iori hung his head, the leaders of the Three Committees told Iori that he shouldn't worry, and that he was very cute. He appeared to be in a pretty complicated mental state. Hell, I was just as conflicted.

Then, after making sure his body was okay, Iori undid the secret art. He was bathed in the same blinding light as before, and he and Ms. Sakura unfused. With that, *she* was back to *he*.

Ms. Sakura checked Iori over once again, then looked at me and Nanami and nodded.

"Master, it's our turn next! My, how long it has been since we were one!"

"Nope, this will be the *first* time, thank you very much! Don't slip in a lie like that!"

"Please calm yourself and relax your body. Ten percent of me is made from pure gentleness, after all."

"At least say fifty percent, c'mon!"

"This will only hurt a second. Then it'll start to feel good."

Was I getting drugged with something here?

I'm gonna become an addict!

From there, Nanami closed her eyes and chanted something. When she did, wings appeared from her back just like Ms. Sakura.

Her wings looked different than Ms. Sakura's, but they were unquestionably those of an angel. *Nanami really is an angel!* I reaffirmed to myself, as her wings enveloped my body.

Nanami wrapped her arms around me and hugged me tight, pressing into me with her chest. As I was filled with a sensation of immense happiness, a light too bright for me to look at slowly spilled out from Nanami's body. Then it enveloped me, just as it had Iori.

"Ah, something's going inside me...?!"

An instant later, a strange phenomenon took hold of my body.

At first, it sort of felt like my abdomen was warming up, until my body started to get all ticklish, like someone was gently caressing me. Then I started to feel totally invigorated and—*Nhmmm?! Wait, not there...! You can't touch there...?!*

That was when I lost consciousness.

When I came to, I found myself standing in the same place where I'd just blacked out. Iori was peering into my eyes with worry.

"Are you okay, Kousuke?"

"Y-yeah. I'm fine. Wait, I've got Nanami's voice now?" I asked.

Ms. Sakura soothed me, telling me to remain calm.

"I said earlier that Nanami's technique was imperfect, didn't I? This is one of the consequences. Your and Nanami's consciousnesses have mixed with each other."

I turned Ms. Sakura's words over in my mind. Our consciousnesses had intermingled, huh? Intermingled consciousnesses, sure.

Huh? Intermingled consciousnesses?! I'd told everyone I was fine out of reflex, but was I really going to be okay? Wait, it wasn't just my mind that was different, either. It felt a bit like something was off... Everything seemed a little higher than usual, and my body felt a bit heavy.

"Hey, Iori, what happened?"

Iori passed me the mirror with bashful, upturned eyes. What the heck was *that* reaction about?

Huh, wait, there was a super pretty, older girl in the mirror. Silver hair. An exotic woman, the type you'd want to curse you out. She had an amazing rack on her, too, but just who was she? Who was this girl?



It was me!

The next moment, I went to check my crotch, but stopped myself just in the nick of time. I didn't have to look to know it was gone. I mean, I couldn't feel anything hanging down there!

"Master, Master, can you hear me?"

"Nh?! Nanami?! Wait, hold on, what's going on?!"

"Phew, that puts my mind at ease. Looks like we got the results we expected."

Ms. Sakura let out a sigh of relief. But I wasn't relieved at all here— Are you telling me this was the *expected* result?!

"Nanamiiii, she's greatest maid that ever was ♪!"

"Hey, don't sing!"

"What's wrong?"

Judging by the looks on everyone's faces, I seemed to be the only one who could hear any of this. And it seemed like Ms. Sakura was the only person here who understood what was going on.

"I guess I'm the only one who can hear it, but to put it bluntly, I can hear Nanami's voice in my head."

"Slurp. That is quite an interesting phenomenon."

Why did Anemone just suck her drool back into her mouth?! Hey, Vice President Fran, why are you just standing around?! Get Sexy Scientist away from here this instant!

"According to Ms. Sakura, we have the ability to converse inside our minds, Master. If you think something really hard, I believe you will be able to talk back without saying it out loud."

What the helllllll was Nanami saying?

"No way am I gonna be able to do something so convenient and expedi— You're kidding."

"It appears you've gotten the hang of it. To be honest, my explanation was

completely improvised.”

So she was just talking out her ass.

I spoke to Ludie, who was shooting me a worried glance.

“I don’t know how to explain it, but I can sort of converse with Nanami telepathically. Let me test it out for a sec.”

“I guess if I’m able to talk in my head like this, I won’t get looked at like a weird oddball... Wait, does this mean you can read my mind?!”

“Master, please imagine your favorite region of a woman’s body.”

“I can see that I’m being misinterpreted, so I request a different question, thanks.”

“The butt, just like I thought. No wonder you’re always staring at mine. Honestly, what am I going to do with you, tee-hee?”

“Can you spare me the suggestive laughter? I didn’t think anything.”

I couldn’t deny that I’d stared at her ass, though.

“Then, try imagining a color.”

A color? Uhh, red?

“If you have already come up with one, then it appears that I am unable to pick up on it. Tch!”

“Don’t click your tongue at me. So there’s at least a bare minimum level of privacy, huh.”

“Unfortunately.”

“What the hell do you mean, ‘unfortunately’? Okay then, let me ask you: Wouldn’t it bother you if I read your thoughts instead?”

“Not at all. They would simply convey all of my love for you, Master.”

That could actually be embarrassing to hear.

“However, while I cannot read your thoughts, I get the feeling I might be able to move your body instead.”

“Wait, for real?”

“If you mentally relinquish control of your body, I believe it should work.”

“A-all right, then, I’ll give it a shot... What should I do?”

“Relax your body... Surrender everything over to me.”

Seriously, what the hell was that even supposed to entail? Anyway, I imagined giving her my body and... Was this really enough to make it work?

“So this is Master’s body...”

On top of Nanami’s voice coming out of my own mouth, my body was moving on its own, too. Welp, it had worked, all right.

What the hell. This all-too-convenient setup was like something straight out of a comedy eroge...! Hang on, stupid—that was *exactly* the type of world you were living in!

“But it seems like I have the higher position of authority over my body,” I said aloud, taking over from Nanami.

All I had to do to regain control was think about moving on my own.

“This should allow me to help you at Amaterasu,” Nanami said.

“True, I’m no good with girly stuff, so I could just leave that all up to you instead.”

“You’re in good hands. When it comes to girls, it’s all about the sound they make when they walk, yes? Allow me to vocalize it for you.”

“I don’t need that, girl or not! Anybody who makes their own footstep sound effects is weird as hell!”

“Squish ♡, Squish ♡”

“What am I, a walking human obscenity?!”

Y’know, I’d never heard a sound effect like that outside of a hentai manga before! That was the last thing you should be mixing together with an all-girls school! Though it would definitely be a hit in the *doujin* scene.

“Sluuurp, ahh, how truly wonderful...”

Someone, anyone, rein in Sexy Scientist! Just look at her eyes—she wants to

dive headfirst into human experimentation. Somebody get her into a full nelson, stat!

“Kousuke, with this one-person comedy performance of yours, anyone would see you as a weirdo.”

The thing was, I wasn’t trying to do a comedy routine here! Though, Ludie was right. If there was a mother-child duo here, the mom would definitely be warning her kid to avoid eye contact with me!

“You were a weirdo to begin with,” the Saint said, wearing a sullen look for some reason. Wait, what was that expression about? I’d assumed she was going to end up laughing herself to death over me.

“Now, now, Takioto. You’ve become very cute, but you’ve still got plenty of your masculine energy left over. I’m sure it’ll be tough, but I hope you’ll give it your all for the students of the Amaterasu Girls’ Academy.”

“Minister Benito...!”

Sheesh, how suave could this guy be? Complimenting my current appearance, reassuring me that my normal form was still just as cool, and cheering me on as the cherry on top! *Stop, stop, you’re freaking perfect! Let me give him the right to go to Amaterasu Girls’ Academy in my stead, please.* I was sure he’d be able to pull it off without a hitch. *Do it!*

“Are you sure you two aren’t meant to become entertainers instead of mages?”

“Don’t say that, President Monica. Of course we’re not... Hm? What is it, Nanami?”

“Master, it’s time to begin the long-awaited Nanami Revolution!

“You haven’t given up on being a comedian?!”

Suddenly, I sensed someone glaring at me and turned to see who it was.

The Saint was still sulkily staring at me.

“Tch!”

Our eyes met, and she conspicuously clicked her tongue.

Before Nanami and I fused, she had been wearing a gleeful and sarcastic smile from ear to ear. Yet now, she was clearly in a sour mood.

Thinking about what could have prompted this change, I followed the direction of her gaze. The Saint's eyes were locked onto my chest. Then I looked at hers.

"Oh..."

If I were to describe myself as Mt. Fuji, then she was like an open savanna. Okay, well, she had them. They were very small, but she had them.

"A rather level roadway, isn't it?"

Nanami, you cannot say that out loud, okay? Seriously, zip it.

"Why does a guy like you have such a big chest, while I...", the Saint grumbled.

She was annoyed that a guy like me was so well-endowed as a girl. Then I realized that everyone else had gone over to where lori was. Perhaps they were trying to run away to not get caught up in the Saint's anger.

Just as I turned back to the Saint, I felt my chest get groped.

"Ahn..."

A slight jolt of pleasure coursed through my body, and a weird moan escaped my lips.

The Saint squeezed my breasts several times before looking down at her own. Then she seemed to notice something in my eyes. The Saint glared up at me, on the verge of blowing her lid.

"If you have something you'd like to say, then say it. Go on, spit it out."

Well, it seemed to me that no matter which option I chose, I was bound to get hit with some irrational anger here. I was destined for hell whether I said anything or not.

"What the heck am I supposed to do here?!"

"Leave this all to Nanami. Tell her that a flat chest is a status symbol."

Like hell I'd ever be able to tell her that!

“Y-your chest has a charm of its own.”

It didn't work, that was for sure. I thought I was going to be called up to the pearly gates.

A short while later, I was summoned by an unusual individual.

“What is it, Vice President Fran?”

It wasn't that Vice President Fran hadn't ever called me over to talk before. This was, however, the first time she had asked me to come alone.

“Well, I actually had something I wanted to discuss with you.”

Something about her seemed off.

Normally, she had this bigshot CEO vibe and gave off the impression of being a super competent secretary who was all business, but...

“What's wrong, are you feeling under the weather?”

She didn't seem to have her usual spirit. Her voice was lacking enthusiasm as well.

“Sorry, this isn't because I'm feeling sick.”

If she wasn't ill, then what the heck was going on? There isn't an event like this in the game, so I didn't have the faintest idea what was happening.

“Takioto... Um. Do you like anime? Particularly magical girl anime?”

Once I heard this, everything came together.

“I watched a few magical girl shows when I was younger, yeah.”

I answered like this, just to be safe. I wasn't lying. I mean, they would come on between the anime I *did* want to watch, so it was just a way to pass the time. I was just killing time, I swear, please let's just leave it at that, I beg you.

“Well, um. This is a bit difficult to bring up, but...”

This was the first time I had seen Vice President Fran acting this way. She took out...several pieces of clothing. Then she picked one up and spread it out.

I wasn't especially knowledgeable about such things (a big fat lie), but the clothes looked a bit like something a bothersome witch, or maybe a guardian in

a sailor outfit, or perhaps someone offering a pretty little cure would wear.

“Takioto, are you interested in...c-cosplay at all?”

“I mean, a little, sure,” I replied, for the time being.

He-he. The truth was that I knew all about how into magical girls Vice President Fran was. If I recalled correctly, she’s seized by the urge to dress lori in magical girl cosplay after he gets turned into a girl in the game. From there, the two of them pose together. I made sure to get that CG, believe me.

Hm, wait a minute. Why was she confessing all this to me? Shouldn’t she have been telling this to lori?

“It’s surprisingly fun when you give it a try. And it kind of makes you feel like you were able to fulfill one of the dreams you had as a kid.”

“Huh.”

I didn’t fully catch whatever she had just said to me, but I just made sure to give her some sort of response. My voice might’ve cracked a little bit.

“So that’s why, um...I’d like Nanako Takioto to cosplay this.”

“Huh?”

Vice President Fran’s brave confession left me at a loss for words.

I mean, how could I not be? I was totally confused. Here I’d been thinking she would ask me to convince lori to cosplay, and instead she says that she wants *me* to cosplay. And she’d chosen an outfit for an enemy character at that! The curve ball she’d thrown had me feeling flustered.

Vice President Fran must have seen my confused expression and thought she’d screwed up big-time. But it was too late to back down now, so she shouted at me while blushing.

“I am absolutely positive it’ll look great on her. So that’s why I really, really want you to cosplay the evil leader Silver. Please, please, I’m begging you. I’ll never ask for anything from you again.”

Saying this, she vigorously bowed, thrusting the black outfit out in front of me.



“The day’s finally over.”

Today had been the most exhausting day I’d had in a while.

In the end, it was decided that Iori, Ludie, and I would infiltrate Amaterasu Girls’ Academy. Oh, and I’d be cosplaying at some point in the future. Though, I guess I didn’t have to think about that last part for now.

“Hmmm. The infiltration needs to get underway as soon as possible, so we’ll be starting the day after tomorrow. I’ve gotta make sure to give Ms. Ruija her allowance for the month at some point.”

After I mumbled that to myself, I heard an “mm-hmm” from Sis. For some reason, she was already in my room, even though I’d just gotten home.

“What’s wrong, Sis?” I asked.

She patted the spot next to her on the bed. I took a seat where she indicated, and she pushed me into her lap. My head on her thighs. I got a whiff of her pleasant scent, not soap; she hadn’t showered yet.

“Um, Sis? What’s this all about?”

A lap pillow. A supreme lap pillow.

“I heard about what’s going on. You’re working real hard. But it’ll get even harder from here.”

“You mean the Amaterasu Girls’ Academy stuff?”

“Mm-hmm.”

Well yeah, of course she had already heard about it. I was going to be spending at least a week at Amaterasu Girls’ Academy, away from the house.

“Sis...”

She softly patted my head.

“There, there.”

She ran her warm hand through my hair, slowly combing through the strands. That simple act filled me with a strange feeling. It was like someone was casting

healing magic on me.

“It might be tough.”

Sis spoke in her usual subdued tone.

“But I know you can get to the bottom of things, Kousuke.”

Nevertheless, there was power to her words.

“Yeah, I’m gonna go figure it all out.”

“Mm-hmm. Don’t get hurt,” Sis said, before patting my head a little while.

“Thanks, Sis.”

I lost track of how long she spent stroking my head. Eventually, I became too embarrassed to look her in the eyes.

Just as I began to wonder what exactly I needed to do, Sis murmured: “That’s right. I want to give you something. Something you’ll need from here on out. Also...”

Something I’d need?

“Something that’ll cheer you up.”

Something that would cheer me up, huh...? I was happy to hear that. Truly overjoyed.

There was someone in my life who was giving me her support. Just knowing that gave me so much strength. And now she was going to give me a present on top of that, too?

“I’m really happy to hear that, Sis. Anyway, you said this’ll cheer me up, right? I wonder what it could be...!”

I couldn’t help feeling nervous and excited. Had she gotten me some food? Maybe a magic item? Something that’d cheer me up... Seriously, I had no clue what it could be.

Sis got to her feet and went to my closet.

Hm? My closet?

She opened it without hesitation. Then she rummaged around through it,

searching for something.

The pounding in my chest grew severe. My anticipation turned to an ominous shiver.

“Hey, Sis? A-actually, you know, thanks for the, uh, consideration!”

I couldn’t possibly tell her that I appreciated the thought but didn’t need what she was giving me! Thanks to that, my words had come out all jumbled.

Sis approached me, hands behind her back.

She may have seemed experienced to the average person right now, but I could tell for a fact that she was wearing one heck of a smile! I hadn’t seen Sis with such a big grin in a while. It sure made me happy!

Not! It just made me worry even more!

“Kousuke... Here.”

Sis held something out for me. It was black, fixed with a cute ribbon, and had two cups with wires inside...

This was a freaking bra!

“Don’t worry. I haven’t washed it.”

“Are you telling me that thing has been fermenting?! Go wash it right now!”



CONFIG

Reborn as a Side Character in a Fantasy Dating Sim Many works about sneaking into a prim and proper girls' school involve convenient plot devices and go to the extreme looking for laughs.

The game version of *Magical★Explorer* is a school adventure fantasy at its core, and perhaps because the event I would be going through this time was more of a side story, there are a lot of humorous gags and points to riff on. Better yet, it was wholly dedicated to being humorous.

If you don't need to see all the events on Ludie's route, then you can also ignore the Amaterasu shenanigans entirely. Personally, however, I thought that it featured the most compelling scenes in the game, comedy-wise. Iori gives it his all, which makes it really funny.

The enemies in this event aren't strong to begin with, and Kujou also shows up to help you fight them. At his current level, Iori would be able to defeat them with ease. If Ludie joined the fray, it would be a question of when, not if, the enemies went down.

That was why there had been a period of time when I'd assumed that Iori and Ludie would finish the event really easily and be back in no time.

I never thought I'd end up going with them, too. Rather— *"Is it just me, or is everyone staring at us?"*

"They're definitely staring, particularly at Miss Ludie and yourself, Master. Though, for you, it might be unavoidable."

"I can sorta get what you mean."

Why were we getting so much attention?

I figured it was the out-of-place vibe we gave off, like eels simmered in soy sauce showing up at a French restaurant.

Incidentally, Iori didn't stand out whatsoever, just like in the game.

However, people do notice him all of a sudden as the event starts to get underway. He's a little plain, but extremely charming and cute.

In his case, it was an example of when “plainness” shifted from being a negative to a positive.

“Good day.”

The students greeted me, and I responded in kind with Ludie and Iori. That being said...

“I can’t believe I’m hearing Nanami’s voice come out of my own mouth.”

I didn’t think I’d ever get used to the feeling. It was like my whole body had been taken over...though I guess that was the exact situation I was in. I had fused with Nanami to become a woman and everything.

“I know exactly what you’re thinking, Master. You wish to record what it sounds like to do lewd things with your ‘Nanami voice’ for future reference, yes?”

Was she a genius or what?

“Future reference for what exactly?! Huh?!”

“You don’t need to go that far. I would be more than happy to say them and repeat it all for you as much as you desire.”

“All right, enough nonsense, let’s get a move on. We still have to go greet the student council.”

The Amaterasu Girls’ Academy student council. It was fair to call it the first hurdle we’d have to overcome.

Here was what would happen: With Ludie leading the way, we would stop by the student council to introduce ourselves. Apart from the student council president, the school principal, and Kujou, no one else knew that Iori and I had transformed into women to infiltrate Amaterasu Girls’ Academy.

The student council would be helping us in several different ways as we conducted our mission, so we didn’t want them to have a weird impression of us. Though, well...

“I guess it’s just a good thing we have the Super Sister on our side here...,” I murmured, prompting Iori to cock his head, a question mark practically written on his face.

“It’s not something you’d normally hear about, so I get why you wouldn’t know. But you’re aware of it, right, Ludie?”

Amaterasu Girls’ Academy was a bit of a unique school, and the Super Sister system exemplified its peculiarity.

“But of course. Many notable figures in many different fields were once Super Sisters at Amaterasu Girls’ Academy.”

True to Ludie’s word, their ranks were filled with incredible names throughout history.

But it was still a bit hard to explain what exactly a Super Sister was, given the uniqueness of the position. The gist of it was...

“Basically, the Super Sister is a sort of ‘ideal older sister’ figure chosen by popular vote, who is separate from the student council.”

The concept closely resembled the “elder sister system” in a certain game where some maidens might be falling in love. The person who wrote the narrative for this subevent had to be a fan of that work.

There were probably more people than you could count who’d had their brains twisted by that game—myself among them.

Putting that aside, I needed to finish explaining things to Iori.

“Once elected, the Super Sister becomes a model for all students to follow. In exchange, their voice becomes even more influential than the Student Council president’s.”

“Apparently, she holds more sway than even the principal in certain areas,” Ludie said.

“Amaterasu really emphasizes its students’ autonomy. Though I guess you could say the same about our skill.”

It was like the Three Committees.

“Even with all that in mind, there’s another important point—the Super Sister actually doesn’t have any final decision-making authority. Ultimately, that power still lies with the student council. So that makes the Super Sister more like an adviser with influence and popularity.”

“The school set it up like that to prevent authority from being concentrated in a single place. That said, President Kujou really is quite remarkable for making history like she has,” Ludie said with a sigh.

“President Kujou made history?” Iori asked.

“That’s right. In this academy’s long and storied history, President Kujou is the only student to have been appointed both student council president and Super Sister at the same time.”

“Huh.”

Iori sighed in admiration.

“Is that really all right? Does that not defeat the point?” Nanami thought, finding this questionable.

What Nanami was trying to say was, wouldn’t someone occupying the positions of Super Sister and president simultaneously run the risk of concentrating the authority in a single place?

“That actually became a problem here at the Academy, but a bunch of stuff happened, and it was decided that Kujou was one exception who could manage it. Everyone said she’d be just as put out if she made a mistake, too, so they’d cope with this by implementing a student voting system for important matters, and other stuff like that. But, more than anything, really—”

“That’s simply just how incredibly charismatic President Kujou is.”

“Some people even call her the ‘Perfect Sister,’ after all. They say that Tsukuyomi has Monica von Mobius, but Amaterasu has Hana Kujou.”

Incidentally, Susano had their Beast King, a strong guy on par with Monica and Kujou, but that was beside the point.

“And that same President Kujou is cooperating with us—it’s reassuring, right?”

“That being said, you are quite knowledgeable on the subject, Master... Don’t tell me.”

“Tell you what?”

“That in truth, you were considering infiltrating this school without me?!”

“Of course I wasn’t!”

Although I immediately put my hands over my mouth, Ludie and Iori both turned to stare at me.

“Listen, we get what’s going on, Kousuke, but you’re going to come off as a weirdo who talks to herself if you do that in front of other people, okay?” Ludie said.

I mean, she didn’t need to tell me that.

“I get it...”

“Ha-ha... Try your best, Nanako. Also, it looks like we’ve arrived.”

Iori was gazing at a magnificent door that screamed *There are important people in here.*

And so, we stepped into the student council room.



Five girls appeared before us. One among them we had already met before—Student Council President and Super Sister, Hana Kujou.

“Good day. It is a pleasure to see you again, Princess Ludivine, Miss Hijiri, Miss Takioto. Thank you for coming.”

After she greeted us, the other students followed her lead.

“Good day, Miss Kujou, everyone,” Ludie replied with a smile. Then Iori and I greeted them, too.

“First, introductions,” Ludie said before introducing the two of us, with Kujou then introducing the other students to us.

When I saw who Kujou was going to introduce first, I spoke up to Nanami inside my mind.

“Nanami, remember this girl. She’s a second-year, so she’s the one we’re going to interact with the most from here on out.”

“I’m Christine von Gauss, the vice president. Welcome to Amaterasu Girls’ Academy. We’re happy to have you.”

She was Christine von Gauss, said to be Kujou’s successor. Even in the game, she has a pretty important role.

“It’s nice to meet you, Gauss.”

“Likewise, Takioto. And you can just call me Chris. We’re both second-years, after all.”

My first encounter with Christine, who was going to end up like *that* in the future, was a greeting with a smile.

“Just Nanako is fine with me, too.”

“Then I’ll do just that.”

“Nothing really happened, huh. Went smoother than expected.”

“True.”

I had attempted to make painstaking preparations for this moment, mapping out every way this conversation could have gone. But in the end, we’d only touched on conventional topics, and everything ended without incident.



"I guess officially, this is just supposed to be an interschool exchange type of thing, and all."

The cover story was that Ludie was the primary exchange student, and Marino had sent Iori and me along with her to act sort of like her bodyguards-slash-servants.

"Still, I'm the only one who's a second-year, huh."

"It is advisable to equally distribute people across the school years for the investigation. Miss Kujou will cover the third-years, Master and I will cover the second-, and Miss Ludie and Mr. Iori will handle the first-years. Everyone is balanced out."

Well, yeah, that was true.

"The same year as Chris, huh. I just hope it doesn't turn into a headache."

The thing was, she was in a really important position for this event. I had to be careful not to make things go down a weird route instead.

"Anyway, we're really here, huh?" I murmured to Nanami with a sigh.

"This building is magnificent, isn't it?"

Before us stood a statue of the goddess Amaterasu and a large building with a historical air about it, from which students were coming and going.

This was the Amaterasu Girls' Academy dorm.

After we crested the first peak, a much higher mountain to climb appeared before us.

"A girls' dorm? You've got to be kidding. A girls' dorm? Seriously?"

I was a dude. What exactly *was* a girls' dorm? It felt like if I thought about it too deeply, it'd lead to *gestaltzerfall*.

"Hey, Iori. You ever been inside a girls' dorm before?"

"No, Kousuk—I mean, Nanako. I've never actually been in one before," he responded.

"I'd be a lot more worried if you actually had..."

Ludie was spot-on. If Iori had said yes, then I would have needed to put some distance between us or be obligated to report him to the authorities.

“Hey, Nanako, what should we do? I’m super nervous. This is a girls’ dorm, a real-deal girls’ dorm. I don’t really get it, but maybe I should wash my hands and rinse out my mouth before going inside?”

“Calm yourself, Iori. You might need to pray first, but the handwashing can be done in the building.”

“Are you two sure you’re not mistaking a girls’ dorm for a sacred temple? How many girls do you think pray before going inside?”

Zero, of course. They simply weren’t conscious of it at all.

“Calm down, you two.”

Right, right, I needed to compose myself. We hadn’t come here to have fun.

“You’re right, we have things that we need to accomplish here.”

Iori seemed to recall something after I mentioned our mission. He fished through his belongings before taking out some kind of vial.

“That reminds me, Magistrate Anemone wanted me to get ‘fresh Amaterasu Girls’ Academy dorm air’ for her... I just remembered...,” he murmured, like he wished he hadn’t remembered at all. Anemone could be perplexingly forceful sometimes, so I assumed he hadn’t been able to turn her down.

Ludie put her head in her hands.

“That woman, I swear...,” she groaned.

“Put some air from the bathroom in there for her. Actually, wait, no, sorry. She might enjoy that.”

“What do you think Miss Anemone will use that for?” Nanami asked me.

“Nothing good, that’s for damn sure.”

“Yeah, you’re right. I’ll just tell her I never got the chance,” Iori said.

Wait, there’s an event in the game where Anemone picks holes in his excuse and grills him about why he couldn’t do it, right? She says all sorts of stuff to him, and in the end he gets used as a guinea pig for her lewd magic items. Rest

in peace, brother.

As we chatted, another girl showed up.

“Sorry I’m late.”

It was Chris, who we had just spoken to earlier. Kujou had asked her to show us around the Amaterasu Girls’ Academy dorm, which was also called Goddess Hall, and Chris had cheerfully accepted the task.

“I’ll show you around. Let’s go.”

Chris headed into the building and encouraged us to follow. Iori wore a solemn grimace, and Ludie a bright smile.

“Help, Nanako. There’s this sweet smell in the air, everything seems to have this pink color to it, and I’m starting to feel lightheaded...”

“Get ahold of yourself, Iori. This is the same air that we breathe all the time ourselves. Also, you’re not surrounded in pink, either. I’d say it’s more of a light purple...”

“That means it’s hitting you just as much, Kousuke!”

“I was just joking, duh. C’mon, we’re gonna get left behind,” I said before catching up to Ludie and Chris. They were talking about our belongings.

“So then, our luggage is already here?”

“That’s right, it arrived and was all brought up to your rooms. Be sure to unpack and organize it all later. Anyway, this is the cafeteria.”

As Chris guided us, a tiny girl popped her head in from the side.

“Oh, Sister Gaaaauss—huh?”

She looked at the three of us and her words cut off. She must have thought Chris was alone.

“Nao, where are your manners? You’re in front of guests. Greet them properly.”

“M-my apologies. Good day. My name is Nao Takematsu.”

The student quickly curtsied.

“And good day to you, as well. I am Ludivine de la Tréfle from Tsukuyomi Magic Academy.”

“Wha—P-Princess Tréfle?!”

The girl was absolutely gobsmacked to learn she was in the presence of the elven imperial princess. And sure, I got that, but this same elf had been buying up all the tonkotsu ramen–flavored potato chips she could get her hands on just a few days ago. This lady was a princess of the people.

“It’s okay, there’s no need to be so formal.”

“I’m Nanako Takioto.”

“I’m Iori Hijiri.”

We introduced ourselves, but Takematsu was so flustered that there was no telling if she’d actually heard us or not.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you. Thank you for all your help while we’re here.”

“Y-yes, of course, Princess Tréfle, Miss Hijiri, Miss Takioto. It’s my pleasure to meet you as well.”

“Nao. I’m sure you’ll hear this again soon, but Miss Iori Hijiri and Princess Tréfle are first-years who will be joining your class. Please lend them a hand if they need it, okay?”

Nao’s eyes widened so much they looked ready to pop out of the sockets.

“Oh, is that so...? Wait, me?!”

“Yes, you.”

“Whaaaaat?! B-but are you sure I can handle it?”

“You’ve got this. Just relax and do things like always. Now then, I was still showing them around, so we’ll be on our way.”

“Okay, relax and enjoy!”

After Takematsu saw us off with a weird choice of words, Chris sighed, pressing a hand to her forehead.

“Nao may seem a bit unreliable and clumsy, but she’s a very serious and

intelligent girl. She'll warm up to you if you ask her for advice. If anything comes up, just reach out to her...or me for help."

I smiled awkwardly, agreeing that she sounded a bit unreliable, then heard someone call out to Chris ahead of us.

"Good day, Gauss. Why, I never expected to run into you here."

Addressing her was a girl with long blue hair, her bangs cut across her forehead. She was staring at Ludie, Iori, and me with intense curiosity.

"Oh, good day. And yes, it's a stroke of bad luck for the both of us, isn't it?"

"Well now, I don't think of it as bad luck at all."

Chris heaved a sigh, as if to call the student out for lying.

"By the way, Gauss, who are these companions of yours shuffling behind you?"

"I was instructed by the Sister to show Miss Ludivine's group from Tsukuyomi Magic Academy around the dorm. "

"Her Highness Princess Ludivine?"

"Good day."

After Ludie gave that greeting, Iori and I followed suit. However, the girl barely so much as acknowledged us before turning her attention back to Ludie.

"I don't believe we've ever had the pleasure, Princess Ludivine. I am Mary Wortley Vestris. It is an honor to make your acquaintance."

"There's no need to stand on ceremony, we're all students here."

"No, no, that shall not do. I am still, after all, a child of House Vestris. Please, if you need anything at all, do not hesitate to ask. Oh yes, I know—Gauss?"

"What?" Chris asked.

"You're quite busy, aren't you? Why don't I take over showing Princess Tréfle and her companions around?"

"No thanks. The Sister specifically requested that I give them the tour. Besides, I'd like to speak more with Princess Tréfle myself."

“Oh, is that so? Well then, though I am loath to do so, I’ll excuse myself.”

As Vestris passed by Chris, she whispered something into her ear.

I wondered what the girl had said, as I noticed Chris’s eyes glazed over for a second. However, her smile immediately returned, and she suggested we keep going, urging us ahead.

I watched as Chris began speaking with Ludie; it didn’t seem like anything was off.

Just before I could join in, lori whispered to me.

“You know, I think that Vestris girl and I might not get along very well.”

“What makes you say that?”

“I think it’s...the air about her, I guess? I’m not really sure.”

Although I was the one who asked lori why, I did sort of get how he felt.

“Setting aside how she spoke with Ludie, Vestris didn’t even give us the time of day,” I replied to lori, in a quiet enough voice that Chris couldn’t hear us. It was true—Vestris had barely even glanced at us. If I were part of a famous noble family, I’m sure things would have gone much differently, though.

“That girl’s a second-year, huh.”

The same grade as Chris and me. From what I’d heard in the student council room when we briefly went over our future time here, I was going to be in the same class as Chris.

“Yeah. But who knows? Maybe she won’t be so bad if we try talking to her.”

“That’s a good point, we haven’t really chatted with her at all, so it’s really too early to say anything.”

If memory serves, there’s a small subevent in the game where you get to do *that* with her, too. Of course, that means you have to expose yourself as a man.

We followed Chris as she gave us a tour of the dorm for a little while, then arrived at the rooms where we would be staying.

“Now, Princess Ludivine, please use this room here. Miss Nanako, and Miss lori, your rooms are over there.”

Giving our thanks, we each went into our separate accommodations.

The room was about forty square feet in area, with several cardboard boxes set on the floor, which contained our belongings.

"This is quite a nice room."

"Yeah, it's great."

I had no complaints about the size. It was simple, but had everything I needed. While I wasn't going to use this huge mirror, I figured it would be a very welcome furnishing for a girl.

As I placed my luggage down, I opened up the door immediately beside the entrance. Inside was a toilet, and even further back was a shower with a door.

"Soaking in the bath will have to wait until this case is taken care of."

For the regular students, the rooms would have been a bit small, and the shower and toilets must have been shared. Instead of using the dorm showers, they would go to the grand communal bath and wash away the day's dirt and grime.

If you asked me whether I wanted to go check it out myself, the answer would be yes, of course. The thing was, I simply didn't know what that trip would do to my mind. It would probably grind my consciousness into dust.

As I was briefly unpacking and putting away my belongings and conversing casually with Nanami, there was a knock on the door.

"It's Iori. Ko—Nanako, can I come in?"

"Sure, come on in," I replied, to which Iori opened the door and stepped inside.

"It's just, well... I can't really relax at all..."

"I get where you're coming from."

It would be one thing if this was a hotel, but we were in a girls' dormitory. The feeling of being foreign and out of place was unbearable.

As I was speaking with Iori, Nanami chimed in.

"Master and Iori alone in a locked room together. Something's bound to

happen...!”

“Nothing’s happening, okay?”

“You’ve done a lot of unpacking already.”

“Yeah, for the most part. How about you?”

“I’ve pretty much gotten everything put away, too.”

There was another knock on my door.

“Kousuke, it’s me.”

“Ludie? Come on in.”

“Looks like your place is pretty much the same as mine. And look, you’re almost done cleaning up.”

“Yeah, as of just a few moments ago. Oh, and you two are totally free to pop in here whenever you want.”

“Hmm, in that case...perhaps we could use your place when we need to discuss our investigation?”

“Sounds good.”

Both Ludie and Iori would have an easier time convening in here, too.

“Still, today was exhausting.”

“Right? I’m already tired myself, so given the positions you’re both in, you two must have it even worse,” Ludie said.

“I might just fall asleep right after I eat...”

“Yeah, I think I’d like to spend the rest of the day relaxing... Oh, actually, Ludie, why don’t you check out the grand bath? You can also go if you want, Nanami.”

“Actually, it was already on my mind,” Ludie said.

“It’s the bath everyone talks about, after all,” Nanami added, taking control of my voice.

“Huh? Is the communal bath here really that famous?” Iori asked.

Honestly, I would have been more surprised if Iori *had* known about it.

“So, there’s actually a hot spring that comes up on the Amaterasu Girls’ Academy grounds.”

The water of this grand communal bath was said to not only promote beautiful skin and heal wounds, but also restore mana. It was extremely popular, by the sound of it.

So popular, in fact, that some of the students seemed to have come to Amaterasu just to step foot in the bath.

“Now I’m a little curious... B-but I’m not going in or anything, okay?!” Iori said.

“I know, I know. Hot springs really are the best, though, huh,” I commented, to which Nanami quipped: “In that case, I shall secretly go and draw some of the water for you. Be sure to tell me how it tastes afterwards.”

“No way is that stuff going down my throat. You’re not even supposed to drink from hot springs to begin with!”

You were supposed to soak in them, okay?! In the game, there’s an event where you’re invited by a student to go inside, and you have a chance to grab several different CGs in the process...

“Talking about baths reminds me—what are you going to do about your clothes, Iori? Underwear in particular.”

I’d already abandoned my pride. Sis’s underwear fit me like a glove. Though, y’know, I had absolutely no idea why her used lingerie was in my closet in the first place...

“I, erm, well, I’d prefer boxer briefs or regular boxers, but, well...you know. Yuika, uh, took me with her...to a...lingerie store...”

Iori’s voice gradually grew quieter and quieter, and he trailed off at the very end, but I got the gist of it.

“In short, you are dressed in panties and a bra. For future reference, would you be willing to show me what you look like wearing them?” Nanami used my body to ask.

“Future reference for *what*? There’s nothing to even learn from that.”

Also, please stop using my body to make your weird comments.

“Ha-ha-ha...”

“That reminds me, didn’t you get a bunch of things from everyone?” Ludie asked, prompting me to nod.

“Yeah, but I haven’t looked through it all.”

I glanced behind me. Sitting there was a lone cardboard box. Everyone had given me a gift before I left for Amaterasu, but...

“I’m sort of too scared to open it.”

The things from Yukine and Minister Benito would probably end up being useful.

The things from Yuika and the Saint were just as likely to be silly as they were serious.

And the things from Sis and Anemone would be downright scary.

“I wouldn’t mind seeing what Yukine sent me... But I’m already pretty tired, so I’ll wait until tomorrow to open it up.”

Ludie nodded.

“That might be for the best.”



CONFIG

Reborn as a Side Character in a Fantasy Dating Sim “*Mhn...mhnnn.*”

I awoke with a yawn to find Nanami working on something at the desk.

“Good morning, Master.”

“Morning, Nanami. You sleep all right?”

Stretching out my arms, I twisted my waist to loosen my stiff body.

“Well, I... *Honestly*, Master... How could you ask me something like that when you know full well yourself?”

“Stop being so suggestive.”

When I got up to use the bathroom, she'd been asleep just fine. In my bed. Why? Hadn't there been a mattress on the floor for her?

“What will you do this morning?”

I assumed that this question was regarding my usual routine of running and practice swings.

“Whenever I take a day off, my body starts to tremble, and I really can't focus on anything for the rest of the day.”

“Someone could easily think you're talking about drugs. Oh, no, but I don't mean to imply...”

“Didn't I tell you to stop being so suggestive? But seriously, where exactly can I do that stuff?”

This wasn't Tsukuyomi Magic Academy, after all. My best bet would be somewhere I could use freely, without anyone getting mad at me for it.

“For now, I guess I'll find some quiet section of the school building to do my practice swings. I can ask Kujou later if she has any spots she'd recommend.”

“That seems for the best. Then, let us fuse and head out.”

For an instant, I wondered why we needed to fuse, but then it clicked.

I really didn't want to remember, but this was an all-girls school. Perhaps it

wasn't that I had forgotten, but rather that some self-defense mechanism in my mind had tried to alter my memories. Why was I in a place like this?

Though, complaining about it in my head wasn't going to do anything, was it?

I quickly fused with Nanami and exited my room, walking down the empty hallway.

"Next struggle is class, huh... Am I gonna be all right?" I asked Nanami in my mind. It had been nothing but anxieties and worries since I had arrived here.

"That will be yet another tall hurdle to overcome, I imagine."

"Sure will."

After getting through my meeting with the student council and the dormitory, the next mountain to climb was my first class. Was I supposed to be traveling across the Japanese Alps here or something?

"I will be sure to provide backup whenever necessary, so please don't worry."

Nanami was a perfect maid, so when it came to the home ec type of classes, yeah, sure, I could relax.

"That's definitely reassuring, but still, not having Ludie around is tough."

Ludie had full knowledge of my true identity, so it was decided she would go with Iori to the first-year class. That way, no one with full knowledge of my circumstances would be with me while I infiltrated the second-year classes. Though, I'm sure if I was with the third-years, Kujou would back me up.

"Class itself shouldn't be an issue—the more pressing matter will be socializing. The first thing you'll need to do is open up and fit in with your classmates," Nanami said.

"That's true. What am I supposed to talk to the other students about? Should I hand them some money after we're done chatting?"

I seriously doubted that an older guy had anything in common with the students of a prim and proper ladies' school.

"You are not trying to be their sugar daddy, so money will not be necessary. If anything, they're the ones who will have the privilege of speaking with you,

Master, so it should be them paying. Otherwise, it just wouldn't be fair."

"Just what sort of celebrity are you mistaking me for here...?"

"If you are still worried about this, how about you shock them to the bone with a party trick? Perhaps a tuna-filleting performance?"

"How is a literal shock to the bone going to help? The fish's poor bones are gonna end up just as shocked here."

"Or rather, how about you act as the tuna, Master?"

"Then I'd be the one getting gutted, dammit!"

My bones would definitely get a shock, that's for sure!

"Putting the jokes aside for a moment, you can leave all of this to me. I am confident that my party tricks are better than the goddess's herself."

"That's definitely still a joke, isn't it?"

We continued through the halls, conversing between ourselves.

After walking a little further ahead and finding a space free of people, I readied my wooden training sword and began doing practice swings.

"Yeah, I guess I shouldn't have expected to find somewhere I could run."

There were areas where it seemed doable, but I just didn't know if it was okay for me to run there or not. Maybe I should have brought the treadmill with me and set it up in my room. Would that have reverberated down to the floor below me?

"Well then, I will keep quiet for now."

"Oh, sorry about this. Sorta forcing you to come along with me, aren't I?"

I apologized to Nanami. Personally, I felt downright awful when I used up another person's time like this.

"Nothing makes me happier than being able to assist you, Master."

"You've always been helping me out, though..."

"Quite. That's why I am the happiest person in the world."

All of a sudden I started to feel a bit embarrassed.

B-back to practice swings.

Out of all the students in uniforms, only one was wearing a massive red stole along with it—me.

And because of that, I could tell I was the target of many inquisitive stares. However, in quite a surprising turn, the young ladies who were to become my classmates didn't grill me or ask questions about me or my bright-red scarf.

They only asked me the usual questions. The girl across from me, Milena, was no different.

"Miss Takioto, what will you do about dungeon practice?" asked the girl, who had gently curled brown hair.

"I will be joining you all, without a doubt."

One thing I learned from my time pretending to be a girl in online games was that when you were using a female character, the basic thing to do was talk politely and formally. With refined speech and the feminine looks to match, the other person would assume you were a woman all on their own. Why had they always been so quick to give me money and items without me ever asking?

In any case, the experience was coming in handy here, so I guess I could say it was probably worth it.

"Will you be challenging it right away, then?"

"Hmm, let's see. I'd love to give it a go sooner rather than later."

My trip to Amaterasu Girls' Academy wasn't all bad.

This event would let me snag some exclusive items and give me the right to challenge the Amaterasu Dungeon.

The Amaterasu Dungeon was on the grounds of Amaterasu Girls' Academy, and only the institution's students and staff could enter the place. It would feature heavily in our current investigation.

As for the inside, it was more or less similar to the Tsukuyomi Magic Academy Dungeon. The monsters started out weak on the lower levels, and their levels increased the deeper you went. The dungeon had a variety of different floor types as well, and fully clearing it required overcoming a multitude of different

elemental terrains, from caves and ruins to snowy mountains and volcanos.

There was a layer that was useful for grinding levels as well. With Nanami, Ludie, and Iori around, it wouldn't take long to eradicate all the enemies, and their repop (the appearance rate of monsters) wasn't too bad.

If I ended up with spare time, I would love to hole away in there for a little while.

Amaterasu also had a fair amount of facilities for magic users, though they weren't as extensive as Tsukuyomi Magic Academy's.

My highest priority was solving the current problem on campus, of course, but if I could do that while taking my own self-improvement into account, I couldn't ask for anything more.

"If you're lacking party members to accompany you into the dungeon, would you like to join us?" Milena asked.

I was inwardly surprised.

"I wouldn't expect you to invite me after witnessing all of that earlier."

It happened in class just now. Everyone saw that I was almost completely incapable of managing discharge-type magic. The teacher had personally tried to instruct me how to use it, but it was still all for naught. This constitution of mine showed no signs of getting any better.

"Everyone has their strengths and weaknesses. Some people are inept at long-range magic yet superb with body enchantment magic, for example. We have someone like that in our class, and the Beast King of Susano Martial Academy himself is that way, are they not?"

Milena was right that the Beast King was the undisputed champ when it came to body enhancement magic and their base stats. Though if you took the Seed of Possibility into account, base stats were ultimately meaningless by the end of the game.

"However, you can't say for certain that I am as skilled with body enhancement as the Beast King, can you?"

Milena chuckled when I said this.

“Oh, you jest. I have come across many different people. With your bearing and poise, I am sure you are adept at that type of magic. I imagine that the whole class, not just myself, has realized it as well.”

That must have been why no one said anything to me even when I was totally hopeless with discharge magic.

“Well then, what do you say? Would you like to come with us to the Amaterasu Dungeon?”

Milena extended her invitation once again. I would have loved to take her up on her offer, but I had one already.

“I am overjoyed that you would invite me to join you. However, Chris has already reached out to me, and I have asked her for her company.”

While Chris showed us around the dorm, she had invited us all to take on the dungeon together. I was sure her true intention was to gauge the abilities of Tsukuyomi Magic Academy students.

I bet she would be amazed by how powerful we were. That could end up guiding her down the route that makes her the most troubled and stressed. That said, that route also encourages her to grow the most, too.

“Miss Gauss has? That is too bad. Though, it’s a relief to hear she’ll be with you.”

“Why is that?”

In truth, I knew what she meant by “relief,” but I asked Milena anyway.

“Well, Miss Gauss may be a bit harsh with her words, but she always looks out for others. Plus, she is one of the strongest second-years.”

“Oh, really?”

“Quite so. In fact, we once made a foray into the dungeon together, and she helped me out very much. I am sure I’m not the only one who’s indebted to her, either.”

In the game, Chris’s abilities are about on par with the vice president and Shion’s. However, Shion and the vice president had clearly achieved a great amount of growth by this point, so I imagined that Chris was behind them both.

“I didn’t know that.”

As we conversed, a student came over and called out to us.

“Hey there, Nanako Takioto, was it? How’s this place treating you?”

She had short hair and blue earrings. The boyish girl took a seat on top of a nearby desk and rested one of her legs in a chair. She wasn’t very prim and proper, a rare sight to see at this academy.

Nanami got a brief glimpse at her underwear and reacted in my mind.

“Blue panties? A slightly mature design, wouldn’t you say? And those strings... They’re quite daring for a regular student...”

“You don’t have to update me on the details of everyone’s panties, thanks.”

“Miss Takioto?”

The brown-haired young lady stared at me quizzically, cocking her head. My frustration with Nanami must have shown on my face.

“It’s nothing. Pardon me, I don’t believe we’ve met.”

“Oh, feel free to just call me Satton. Is it cool if I call you Nana?”

“This here would be Satomi. By the way, I have never once seen anyone call her Satton before,” Milena said.

Satomi let out an exasperated sigh.

“Haah, you’re way too stiff, for real. Almost eeeverybody in this Academy’s like this, okay? Ain’t it a drag? Don’t worry, you can act however you want when the teachers aren’t looking. Heck, you can even scratch your ass, no problem. Want me to get it for you?”

“Oh, um, no thank you...”

I would have absolutely loved to take her up on her offer. Actually, I would have been fine if she let me scratch hers instead.

But a representative from another school couldn’t be going around scratching butts.

Milena jumped in for me, unable to watch me flounder for an answer.

“I’m sorry about Satomi here. Despite how she comes across, she’s not a bad person, I assure you.”

“‘How I come across?’ What the heck’s that supposed to mean? When have I ever done anything to warrant that?”

“There are so many occasions that come to mind, I don’t know where to start... For now, how about I begin with those indecent butt and legs of yours,” Milena said before lightly lifting up Satomi’s skirt. She was probably trying to tell Satomi off for sitting on a desk like this. I suddenly wished I could be turned into a string.

“You really only *look* like a prim and proper lady, huh,” Satomi said, this time flipping up Milena’s skirt. She had on a black thong, of all things...

The two of them were able to flip up each other’s skirts without any embarrassment whatsoever, because I looked like a girl right now. I was terrified of how they would react when they learned I was a man.

“Well, you see, I am quite different from *you*, Satomi.”

“I’m pretty sure you’re even worse than me, but... What are you grinning like that for?”

It appeared that my thoughts were showing on my face. Nanami hummed in acknowledgement.

“Grinning from ear to ear after glimpsing another girl’s panties, are we, Master? I am relieved to see you are the same as always.”

“Stop making me sound like I’m normally a huge pervert.”

I stopped talking in my head and responded to Satomi’s question. “Oh no, I was just thinking that you’re both so easy to talk to. Now I feel like I’ll be able to get through my time here at Amaterasu just fine.”

At my reply, Milena smiled as she pinched Satomi’s cheeks.

“I’m so very happy to hear that.”

“Hwo yeah, how dwid it gwo? You iwite her?” Satomi asked, prompting Milena to shake her head.

“Miss Gauss got the jump on us, unfortunately.”

Despite Satomi’s muffled speech, Milena picked up on what she’d said without issue.

“Ah well, she’s really on top of all that stuff. Nothing we can do about that. But let’s all delve into the dungeon together if we get the chance.”

“I would love to,” I replied, before Satomi heaved a heavy sigh. She then leered at me, looking me over from head to toe.

“Siiiiigh.”

“Is something wrong?”

“Oh, no, well... It might’ve just been my own bias that made me feel this way, but I sort of thought that you might come on strong and be real assertive. Just going off your looks, anyway.”

Nanami affirmed Satomi’s words in my head.

“She is very perceptive, isn’t she? Master does indeed come on strong. Particularly at night...”

“My drowsiness comes on strong, maybe, is that what you mean? I don’t have any idea what you’re talking about.”

I didn’t think I was *that* aggressive, really.

As I quipped back at Nanami, Milena remembered something and changed the subject.

“That reminds me, are you good at cooking and the like as well?”

“I whip up a meal from time to time, but that’s about it.”

“If you can cook, then Life Fundamentals should be fine,” Satomi said.

“Life Fundamentals?”

Milena nodded, appearing to understand my confusion.

“Ah, right, of course. You might not have such classes at a normal school.”

“Life Fundamentals are...well, they’re like home ec classes. Tomorrow’s cooking—no wait, it’s sewing, isn’t it?”

"I see," I nodded. They had those types of classes here, huh... Tomorrow? I might be in trouble. "I'm not sure I'll be any good at sewing."

Though in my case...

"You can leave that to me."

"It shouldn't be a problem with such a reliable maid at my back, right?"

"Oh, don't worry, you'll be fine. They're not really asking you to be super skilled or anything. Magic classes are the main thing here. Besides, you're a Tsukuyomi Magic Academy student and all, so it's not gonna affect your credits or anything if you can't sew, and no one's gonna care."

"That's a bit of a relief."

"More important than that, though, *tee-hee*," Satomi said before running her eyes slowly up and down my body. "So, I heard that tomorrow, we're gonna have a mock battle. I'm sorta looking forward to that."

"Oh, do we now?" Milena replied offhandedly.

"I overheard the teacher mentioning it just now. So Nana, what do you say? Wanna do it?"

Since I hadn't commented on how Satomi should refer to me, it appeared that Nana had stuck.

I guess it didn't really matter who my opponent was for the mock battle.

"I hope you will go easy on me, then."

However, I was here as a representative of Tsukuyomi Magic Academy. I couldn't go out there and disgrace myself in the ring, now, could I?

"Hm, a message?"

Just then, I got a message on the second phone that Marino had bought me. I glanced at it.

"Oh, it's from Kujou."

"From Sister Kujou herself?! So the two of you have already exchanged contact information. I'm quite jealous, honestly."

Milena glanced at me with envy in her eyes.

“Oh wow, what’s it say?”

Satomi seemed to be very curious herself, peering over to look at my phone.

There was a non-zero-percent chance that the message touched on things that other people shouldn’t see, so I turned around to check its contents.

“*I wonder why?*” Nanami murmured, looking at the message. The text itself didn’t touch on anything important, so I showed the screen to Satomi as she doggedly tried to get a peek.

It was a single sentence: *If you are available, please come to the student council room.*

There were several people in the student council room beside Kujou. Among them was Chris, who amicably spoke up when she spotted me.

“Good day, Nanako. How were your first classes?”

“Things are a bit different than at Tsukuyomi Magic Academy. There was a lot for me to learn.”

I went ahead and lied. After all, I had never really sat in on a class at Tsukuyomi anyway. Especially the magic classes—I had no idea what they were like, so I couldn’t even compare the two.

“Oh? Well, take in as much as you can, then.”

“I didn’t see much of you today, Chris. Were you busy with something else?”

“Yeah, some student council stuff. I’ll be able to join you for class tomorrow.”

Possibly out of consideration from Kujou, I had been put in the same class as Chris, who was also a member of the student council. But this school had a lot of electives, so unless we were taking the same courses, we wouldn’t have that many chances to speak to each other.

“So, what brought you here today?”

“Kujou called for me,” I said, and Chris glanced at the room in the back, signaling where Kujou was.

I thanked her, then knocked on the door to Kujou’s room and entered.

“Good day, Miss Takioto. How are you adjusting to school life here?”

She was as beautiful and elegant as always.

“To be perfectly honest, there’s a whole bunch of things that have me nervous.”

Kujou gave a strained smile at my response.

“Most of the student council is here. I’m sure there are some things you may find difficult to discuss, so would you accompany me for a short while?”

I nodded. After I exited the room with Kujou, she led me to a campus garden.

President Monica’s popularity on campus was nowhere near the level of Kujou’s.

Indeed, she was unbelievably popular. Part of it was also because there were three different fan clubs at Tsukuyomi Academy, splitting up the public’s favor among them.

If all of the favor was focused on President Monica, then maybe she would’ve been as popular as Kujou.

“Good day, Sister Kujou.”

“Good day, be sure to maintain your composure.”

Almost every single person we passed greeted Kujou. Some of the girls were so moved by this encounter that they got tears in their eyes, too. It felt like Kujou’s popularity was bursting beyond its limits.

Meanwhile, I was being subjected to some strange looks, as though people were saying, *Who the hell is this girl?* Some students even went so far as to ask who I was. Though when I told them I was a student from Tsukuyomi Magic Academy, they seemed satisfied with the answer and left.

“Seems like you’re extremely popular.”

I couldn’t help but say this as I walked along with Kujou, feeling envious eyes glaring at our backs.

“It is a blessing, to be sure. However, it does put me under a bit of pressure,” she said, glancing at me. Next, she looked over at the bench in front of the

garden.

I laid out my handkerchief atop the bench, then urged Kujou to sit on top of it.

“Thank you. If you’ll excuse me...” With these words, she lowered herself down on the bench and smiled.



“You don’t need to be so courteous and polite.”

“No, I wouldn’t want to be rude to someone I respect.”

“I’m not someone worth respecting. After all, take this situation as an example—I learned the limits of my own power and solicited Tsukuyomi Magic Academy and Miss Marino for help. It’s quite embarrassing,” she replied. Still, I didn’t think that was the case.

“I don’t believe there’s anything you should beat yourself up over. When I look at you, I feel admiration and respect.”

“Admiration and respect?”

“Asking for help from Marino was a wise and decisive step. At the very least, I’m not sure I would have been able to ask for help from another school if I were in your position. The same goes for inviting us here, even when knowing the risks.”

Kujou had realized she couldn’t handle it herself, searched for someone who potentially could, and bowed her head low to ask for help. In the name of helping her fellow students, she’d even done the unthinkable by allowing a man into the school, all while knowing her standing would sour if the truth got out.

A normal person would never have been able to do all that.

“I have nothing but respect for your ability to act, even if it means dragging your own face through the mud, in service to the school and students.”

When I said all of this, Kujou smiled with the tiniest hint of bashfulness on her face.

“I never would have expected you to say such nice things. It’s a little embarrassing...”

“So, what is going on? Why did you call me all the way out here?”

“First, another student complaining about feeling unwell has come forward from among the second-years. I’ll send you the overview now.”

“A second-year?”

“That’s right. As such, I’ve asked Christine to look into it. Also, I spoke with her

beforehand and told her to make reports to you regarding this strange phenomenon, so I believe she will have an update for you later.”

“I see. I think I’ll try asking around and investigating on my own as well.”

When I said this, Nanami spoke up from inside my mind— *“Since Kujou called you and you alone out here, I was convinced she was planning on declaring her love for you.”*

—and chimed in with some nonsense.

“Obviously, that wasn’t happening.”

Sure, maybe if I was good looking, but I did come off as a sleazy playboy and all.

After I quipped back at Nanami, Kujou changed the subject.

“Oh, right. How was your first day of school life here at Amaterasu Girls’ Academy?”

“I wasn’t really sure how I was supposed to approach everyone, but thankfully, a lot of the other students reached out to me on their own.”

Seriously, it had been a lifesaver.

“Really? Well, I’m glad to hear that.”

Kujou smiled. Then, I suddenly remembered something.

“Actually, you said that there was another reason you called me here, right?”

Given that she had started by saying “first.”

“Yes, there is one other reason. In truth, I wished to speak with you a little. I’m sure you are already aware of this, but the Kujou and Hanamura families are technically distantly related to each other.”

This was the first I’d heard of the Kujous and Hanamuras being related. What the hell kind of worldbuilding was that? Though, I guess that did explain why Kujou would have solicited Marino, the principal of Tsukuyomi Magic Academy, for help.

“Um, did you not know that?”

“I’m sorry. Even Marino being a relative of mine took me by surprise at first.”

Kujou must not have known about my familial circumstances. She took my hand in hers with a sorrowful look in her eyes.

“You’re not alone anymore.”

“I’ve met very many new friends since coming to Tsukuyomi. More than anything, Marino and Hatsumi have both treated me with empathy and kindness, so I don’t feel that way at all.”

“Of course, and you have me among your relatives as well. I know. From here on out, you can call me Hana instead.”

“I’m terrified of the stories that would go around if I started calling you Hana.”

Especially here at Amaterasu Girls’ Academy.

“*Tee-hee*, well, I can’t deny that. In that case, please be sure to refer to me like that when you’re Kousuke Takioto instead. Why, I even felt my chest tighten up the moment you said my name just now.”

I’d always wanted to hear someone tell me their “chest tightened up” at least once in my life. Oh wait, I guess I just had.

But yeah, what should I have been calling her? Well, I was sure we wouldn’t see much of each other, so I wouldn’t have to worry.

“Okay. When that time comes again. You’re free to call me casually by my first name, too.”

“Right, though maybe I’ll start using your name without any honorifics from here on out. How does that sound, Nanako?”

When I returned to the dormitory from the student council room, I met up with Ludie and Iori. Ludie was the same as always, but Iori looked exhausted. His shoulders were drooping so low, he looked a whole size smaller than normal.

“You okay, Iori?”

“Kou—Nanako. I don’t know if I can go on.”

I glanced at Ludie. She shot Iori a sympathetic look.

“He’s really tired.”

Just what had happened? I didn’t have any idea, but I knew he was absolutely gassed. Heck, I was tired, too.

“How about we grab some food?”

Dinner was set up to utilize the cafeteria in the dormitory. However, students all ate at different times, and since the dorms were equipped with a shared kitchen to make food for yourself, it seemed that not everyone was there for dinner.

“It looks like we use this to order.”

Iori held out that student ID that Kujou had given him over the terminal in front of his chair.

Then a display of the day’s menu was projected in front of us. There were prices listed on the menu, and it appeared that when you ordered, your credits would slowly drop. However, since Amaterasu Girls’ Academy was footing the bill for us, our remaining credit balance was absurdly high, right from the get-go.

I ordered the daily special meal set, and Iori ordered the same daily meal *plus* two desserts. I couldn’t stop myself from asking he if was really going to eat two.

Ludie agonized over her decision until she finally settled on the daily special. She had been deciding between that and the dried sardine ramen.

After finishing off our tasty meals, we each went back to our rooms for the time being. But not even an hour passed before Iori swung by.

“I don’t know, I just can’t relax...”

I got where he was coming from. I mean, even I was nervous and could barely keep my hands from shaking. Though that might have just been because I skipped out on my evening training.

“Oh yeah, you all right staying fused with Ms. Sakura like that, Iori?”

“Yeah. Ms. Sakura’s used so much power lately, so I told her to relax for a bit inside me. So I’m just staying like this for the time being,” he said with a wince.

“Gotcha.”

On Nanami’s end, staying fused for extended periods of time seemed to tire her out, and would release the spell at every opportunity, like when we went to sleep. Whenever she undid the spell, I was relieved to find that it was still attached to me. *Down there*, that is.

A short while later, Ludie came into my room, too. Figuring I was probably safe with everyone here, I undid my fusion with Nanami. I’d gotten used to being merged with her at this point.

Now that we were all gathered like this, there was something I wanted to get out of the way.

“Well, we’re all here, so—”

Right as I was about to finish saying “so we should report on the current situation,” lori tapped his fist in his hand.

“Oh, I know what you’re talking about! Don’t worry!”

I had no idea what I wasn’t supposed to be worrying about. I sat there in silence, unable to quip back at a very delighted lori as he stood up.

“Okay, I’ll go get it all ready!” he said, leaving the room. I immediately turned to Ludie to find her staring stupefied at the door, unable to make sense of what lori was doing. I was likely wearing the same look on my face.

“There he goes.”

“Indeed.”

So what was it that he needed to get ready? And why did he look so happy about it? These questions came to mind but were quickly dispelled.

lori returned with a huge grin on his face, carrying a deck of cards and a certain lifelike board game.

“...I-lori?”

“Huh? Oh, sorry. You wanted Uno, right...? After I played it with Orange, I ended up leaving it behind.”

No, no, Uno wasn’t the issue here. I was surprised to see him return with this

who's who of items to bring with you on a school field trip.

"Mr. Iori, there is no need for concern. I brought Uno myself. I also have mahjong and *hanafuda* as well."

"Oh thank goodness ♪!"

Hold on, I was starting to get confused here.

"Hey, Ludie? I'm not the weird one here, right?"

"Nope, not at all."

"Now, now, Master. We can consult with each other while we play cards. Let us begin."

Nanami manipulated the cards in midair like a magician. Evidently, her comment about being skilled at party tricks hadn't been a joke.

Iori stared at her blankly for a moment, but he quickly smiled.

"What are you... Ohhh, right. That's what you meant!"

Oh, that was such a relief. I let out a sigh.

Iori had an extremely diligent and serious personality. He would always make sure to do his homework, and he would always keep his promises. On top of that, he had a strong sense of justice.

That's why he's investigating this mysterious phenomenon affecting the students here—

"I heard that the pudding in the cafeteria's really refined and tasty!"

—or at least that's how it's supposed to be, I thought, holding my head in my hands.

"C'mon, Iori. I'll agree that's a pretty important tidbit of information, but we didn't come all the way here just to eat some pudding."

Hell, hadn't we lost some irreplaceable things to get this far?

It didn't seem like we would get to the topic at hand any time soon, so I asked if he was getting used to life in the Academy. Iori gave me an odd look, like he had ordered curry but had been served beef stew instead. What the heck kinda

face was that?

“Feels like I’ve sorta pulled through for now, but I can’t imagine how things are going to go from here.”

According to him, he was so focused on fitting in and getting used to the school that he hadn’t made any progress with the investigation.

I could sympathize. After coming to an all-girls school, we basically needed to use everything we had just to live a normal school life here. Even I wouldn’t have made any progress if Kujou hadn’t reached out to me.

“What about you, Ludie?”

“I tried asking around a little bit. One of the people who approached me was a victim herself.”

“Oh, wow,” I nodded.

“What’s that about? You didn’t really think I forgot about our original goal here, did you?”

“I mean, given Iori’s reaction just now, I was convinced that you might’ve been gathering intel about where the best ramen shops are nearby.”

“Listen, I did nothing of the sort, okay?”

“Sorry, sorry. Should’ve known.”

I had reason to believe that Ludie would focus her activities around ramen. But yeah, of course she wouldn’t actually do that, it was obvious!

“It’s a bit too embarrassing to ask people I just met about ramen shops. I’m saving that for when we get a bit closer, of course.”

I take everything back—she was a dyed-in-the-wool ramen lover! Ah well, I guess that was fine.

“Even then, I didn’t get any leads. All the student told me was that she felt under the weather.”

“I mean, if they knew what caused it, then Kujou’d already be resolving all this by now. Speaking of Kujou, when I talked to her for a little bit today, she told me that another victim popped up among the second-years. I also asked her

about a good place to do my morning training while I had the chance.”

Nanami finished dealing out the cards in perfect sync with the end of my sentence. It looked like we were playing President. I hadn’t played in a long time.

“A new victim already, hm? It’s only our first day here, can’t they be more considerate about the timing?”

“Seriously. I wish they’d spare a thought for us,” lori murmured as he put out a card.

“We wouldn’t be dealing with so much trouble if they did.”

“Actually, that does make me wonder if there is a regular pattern to where or when these incidents crop up.”

Ludie put out her own card. Hrmm. I passed.

“Well, if the pattern was simple, I’m sure Kujou would have caught on by now.”

Kujou and the Amaterasu Girls’ Academy principal were investigating the matter on their own, too, so it wasn’t very farfetched to think they would’ve picked up on that.

“I double-checked the information from Miss Kujou and that old hag. Looking at the periods of activity, I hypothesize that one of the students is behind this incident, or leading someone else to do it.”

Nanami put out her card and cleared the pile. Then she put out a low-numbered card, steadily whittling down the remaining cards in her hand.

“What makes you think that?”

“The victims may appear unconnected, but it appears that there was never any time when they were all asleep at once. Nevertheless, there are cases where they simply don’t notice their symptoms, because they are asleep. I have requested they run a check on the data output for those currently resting with these symptoms.”

“Hopefully that leads to some progress, then,” lori said, throwing out a card to finish off the pile. Our rules were that eights cleared the pile, tens let you

throw out extra cards, jacks caused revolutions, and multi-card sequences weren't allowed. I also put down a card.

"Guess that's all we're gonna get on the first day."

"I believe growing accustomed to the school here is the first priority," Nanami said as she played the last card in her hand.

"That's true. Our daily life here comes first. Oh, I also hear the Super Sister elections are coming up soon," Ludie said, to which Iori nodded.

"Oh, I heard that, too. And that this year the votes are a lot more split than they were last year. It's between Gauss and Vestris, I think they said..."

Riiiiight. In the game, that ultimately causes several different problems, and it ends up becoming one of the triggers for this latest case, too.

"That reminds me, I was surprised to see that almost everyone on campus refers to Kujou as Sister."

Iori played his card.

"Ah, yeah, they refer to the Super Sister as their big sister to show their respect and affection for her. Even if they're in the same year, too. I'm out," I said, playing my final card.

"Should we call her Sister, too?" Iori asked, and Ludie shook her head.

"I don't think we need to. I get the feeling that it would anger some students to hear guests from another school call her that. A simple degree of respect when speaking to her should be fine, I think."

Ludie played her last card. She was smart, and her occasional games against Nanami and Yuika had trained her to be pretty good at card games.

Iori looked at his hand. Then he looked for cards in our hands. Unfortunately, none of us were holding any.

"Can we play another round?"

After finishing our situation report (a game of cards), we parted ways. But we were in my room to begin with, so I actually just stayed put.



“What will you do tomorrow?” Nanami asked me.

“I was thinking I’d really start to collect information. Thing is, I’m still a little anxious about class...”

I already knew what was causing this whole incident, so I wasn’t worried about that. Instead, I was more uneasy about my classes here.

“Is this regarding our sewing course, by any chance?”

“If we’re just talking about sewing a button back on or something, I could probably do it myself, but...”

Cooking would have been a breeze, but I hadn’t sewn in decades at this point. I only vaguely remembered how to even tie a thread knot.

“As I mentioned earlier, please leave that to me. Sewing is a walk in the park for your perfect maid Nanami.”

“Really? Maybe I’ll take you up on the offer. I mean, I don’t really mind doing it myself.”

According to Milena, it wouldn’t matter if I could do it or not, either.

“I would be fine either way.”

“In that case, I might as well give it a try myself, huh. It could come in handy down the line, and could turn into a hobby. Though, I should still probably get the basics down ahead of time.”

Vice President Fran and Ms. IOU were really good at it, weren’t they?

“In that case, shall we practice a little?”

Nanami told me to wait a moment as she searched through her luggage. She then produced a large piece of fabric.

“Here’s a totally normal sheet of fabric.”

“This is just a guess, but I don’t think most sheets of fabric have ‘LOVE FOR MASTER’ written on them.”

I’m pretty sure you could search the whole world and not find another example.

Nanami turned the fabric over and began drawing lines across it. I got a vague idea of what she was planning to make.

“An apron?”

“Only the basic fundamentals are needed to make one. I would imagine there are schools that include them as part of their curriculum.”

Now that she mentioned it, I sort of remembered taking a class where we made aprons before.

“If you wouldn’t mind, let us make this while Master is in his girl form. It may prove easier to understand.”

True, it would probably be easier to get the hang of things while we were both in the same body. With that in mind, I had Nanami fuse with me.

She quickly produced a sewing machine, then dexterously prepared the thread. In less than thirty minutes, she had completed the whole apron.

“That was super fast,” I said to Nanami inside my mind.

“Well, it is a rather simple style... Now then, it is time to test the workmanship. Go ahead, Master. Please take off all your clothes.”

“Why exactly is that necessary here? Something’s off here if you’re defaulting to a naked apron for this.”

I could wear it over my clothes just fine—don’t try to get me to strip here!

“Do not worry, I have made sure to prepare the necessary garter belt.”

“Where the hell am I supposed to attach that? Do you want me to just clip it to my skin?”

“Please be careful when cooking. The apron has low defense, so any oil splatters will deal a not-insignificant amount of damage.”

All you naked apron enthusiasts out there, be careful! No stir-fry or deep-frying, okay?

“That aside, you are what is important here, Master. Do you think you will be able to handle it?”

“You’re the one who changed the topic in the first place! Anyway, I just

watched you sew everything, and I know how I'm supposed to move my body now, so I should be able to do it easily... Hm?"

"Hm?!"

I realized a very critical fact. *Wait, this can't be right*, I thought. I wouldn't know unless I tried it, right?

No way. I could feel this weird sweat, like brain juice, pouring out of me nonstop.

"Nanami, let me try it for myself."

I took hold of the fabric and began to work exactly like Nanami had earlier.

While I couldn't claim the end product was as flawless as Nanami's version, I'd managed to sew far better than I would have imagined. If I practiced another one or two times, I would probably be able to completely master it.

Nanami seemed to pick up on this abnormality herself, along with its practicality.

"This is quite amazing. Perhaps the reverse is true as well?"

"Let's give it a try."

That was the moment when, as we continued to grow stronger, we discovered the huge possibility residing in ourselves.



CONFIG

Reborn as a Side Character in a Fantasy Dating Sim “This is an unexpected bounty.”

“Indeed.”

After testing out several things last night with Nanami, I discovered that I was able to easily master the skills and defensive techniques that she had already learned for herself.

We believed this was because having Nanami directly move my body made it easier for me to understand how I needed to move to do the same.

Unsurprisingly, however, my poor long-range ability remained unchanged. Even when Nanami tried to cast a fireball while we were fused, she wasn't able to generate it exactly as she wanted to and sent it flying off in the wrong direction. That convinced us that it was impossible for me to learn long-range spells.

It was most likely just as impossible to learn any other skills I wasn't compatible with. Though we didn't test things out for very long, so I didn't know for sure.

But even so...

“I never expected I'd pull off a manga plot device like this myself...”

If I was going to get mana-like powers, then the ability to split myself up into a bunch of clones like the main character from that ninja manga would've been amazing. Being able to farm experience points with all my different clones would make me way too overpowered!

Though I guess I was already sort of cheating here anyway.

“It's unfortunate that there doesn't seem to be much of a benefit for you, Nanami.”

Although she said that it felt easier for her to use enchant magic and sword-drawing techniques, the change wasn't as big as it was for me. Perhaps it was due to my body acting as the base for everything. If I was able to move with Nanami's body instead, that might have changed things.

“Sorry about that.”

It was like I was stealing another person’s time away, and it made me feel guilty. Nanami shook her head at my apology.

“...Master, do you remember what happened at the Karakuri Trick Castle?”

“What do you mean?”

“If I recall correctly, you decided to go to that dungeon in order to level up your own abilities. Now I wonder if that is indeed true?”

“Uh, yup, that really was why.”

“No, I happen to believe that your first and foremost goal there was to help myself, Miss Yukine, and Miss Yuika grow stronger instead. I was probably the one who benefited from it the most.”

I mean, I had figured it would be a really good dungeon for Nanami. Though, I was able to grow stronger myself, so I really only ever saw the excursion as killing two birds with one stone.

“You’ve introduced me to all sorts of things, Master. Now I’m the one who should be returning the favor. In other words, it is Nanami’s time to duel.”

“What the hell do you mean, ‘time to duel’?”

“For now, I estimate that dividing up the work to obtain skills between us going forward will prove beneficial for you.”

“That’s fair. I’m happy that I get to learn the skill you picked up in the Karakuri Trick Castle.”

I was also able to get a skill that I had vaguely thought would be necessary at some point. Now then...

“I wonder what skill I should have you teach me next.”

“Party tricks would be my recommendation.”

“Thanks, but no thanks.”

I set up a schedule with Nanami about how I was going to train these skills going forward, then went ahead with my morning run and practice swings. After washing all my sweat off in the shower, I met up with Iori and Ludie.

“Ludie got a message from Gauss. It looks like she has something to talk about regarding this case,” Iori explained over breakfast.

“Ohh, that, right. When I spoke with Kujou yesterday, she told me that Chris would have a report for us later.”

“Ah, about that,” Ludie said before bringing her teacup up to her lips. Very elegant.

Every now and again I forgot that she was nobility, like when I saw her lounging around the Hanamura house, for example.

Thinking about nobility reminded me of something.

“I learned something pretty intriguing from Kujou yesterday.”

“And what was that?”

“Hmm, to make a long story short, it was about the Hanamura family and the Kujou family.”

Ludie seemed to understand what I was getting at.

“Ah, right. It’s thanks to the Hanamuras that the Kujous are where they are right now, after all.”

Apparently they had a deeper relationship than I thought they did. Well, I supposed I could ask Marino about it after. Actually, there was a chance Ludie knew even more about the Hanamura family than I did...

“Oh really...? Sounds complicated... Oh wow, this salmon’s delicious.”

“I’ll agree with you there.”

It earned a lot of points for the beautiful grill marks on its skin.

“But right now, the focus is on the case, not people’s families. We need to start collecting information on our ends, too, after all.”

“That’s true, but why don’t we talk with Chris first. What time did she say to meet up?”

“She asked me if we could grab lunch together in the school cafeteria while we chatted.”

Ludie showed me Chris's message.

"Should we tell her that sounds good? None of us are busy, right?"

"Nope, I'm good to go!"

Y'know, it had been on my mind for a while, but Iori's looks and way of speaking were pretty tomboyish. They were just as cute as any other girl's, really. I couldn't explain it, but it fit him to a tee. Iori was trying to sound more girly at Amaterasu, but for a long-time fan like me, that boyish aspect of him was the Iori I knew and loved. The only problem with this was if he continued talking that way, he would have had a higher chance of slipping up.

"Okay, I'll reply to her, then."

Ludie's voice brought me back to reality. I had flown into the world of the tomboy. Still, though...

"Lunch? I'm actually gonna see Chris before that, though."

We were in the same class, after all.

Once morning courses were over, Chris and I left class together and headed for the school cafeteria. There, we met up with Ludie and Iori, who were waiting for us. Chris had reserved a private room for us, so we wouldn't have to search the cafeteria for somewhere to sit together.

What followed was a discussion over lunch about the details of the case, just as Hana had told me to expect.

"A growing number of students are inexplicably falling ill, and it's all during a busy season for the Student Council, of course," Chris said with venom.

"Is that what's going on?" Ludie said, feigning ignorance. All of us knew the whole story!

"If anything happens, we'll totally...er, we would certainly love to help."

"That's okay, the student council is working to shed light on what's going on, so I only ask if you could report anything you know to us. Besides, we can't endanger students from another school."

It was the natural response.

“However, Sister Kujou told me that it may not be a bad idea to turn to you three, since you might have knowledge that we don’t. So I might have to ask for your assistance.

“The classes at Tsukuyomi Magic Academy and Amaterasu are different, after all.”

“Yes, so I hope you’ll cooperate should the need arise.”

Hearing Gauss say this, Nanami whispered in my head.

“Despite what she says, I doubt she actually wants to ask us for help—given we’re an imperial princess and her two servants right now.”

“That’s true. I wouldn’t want to rely on help like us if I was her.”

She was probably mentioning this all out of politeness and etiquette. After all, she couldn’t risk putting a well-to-do girl from another school potentially in harm’s way. As an imperial princess, Ludie was far too distinguished to request aid in the first place. If anything, she should be stepping back to keep herself safe.

While Nanami and I conversed with each other, Chris, Iori, and Ludie continued talking with one another.

“You mentioned that the student council was busy right now. Is there anything coming up?”

Chris nodded at Ludie’s question.

“Yes, the student council elections and the Super Sister vote are coming up.”

“I see... Wait, but there’s still a lot of the year left, isn’t there? Why do you swap everyone out at this time of year?” Iori asked, cocking his head.

“We vote now *because* it’s so early. From here on out, the Super Sister is sure to be busy with entrance exams and the like.”

“That does make sense,” Iori nodded.

“How do you hold the vote?” Ludie asked, prompting Chris to open her hand wide.

“The old-fashioned way. Everyone gets a piece of paper the size of my palm

here, writes a name on it, and places it in a box. All the students come together the day of to vote.”

“So, does that mean there’s, like, candidates for the position?” lori asked.

“Nope, no candidates. Or I suppose you could say everyone is a candidate.”

“Huh?”

Both Ludie and lori were surprised.

“If we had people declaring themselves as candidates, then everyone’s votes would be focused on them, right? That’s basically just an artificial Super Sister.”

“An artificial Super Sister?” lori asked.

“Say, for example, there was one person running to be Super Sister. In that case, things would be decided without a vote if one person ran, or it would come down to a vote of confidence on whether the candidate in question was the right fit. But can you really call that being ‘popular’?”

“Nanako’s absolutely right. Exactly. The Super Sister is who she is because she is chosen by the will of the student body, instead of being picked out from a selection of people others respect or wish to follow. That’s what makes her the Super Sister.”

lori’s eyes sparkled.

“That’s incredible!”

“But things have been a bit different recently...”

“What do you mean?”

“Some students had made it clear that they’re trying to become the Super Sister and are going around making a case about what they’ve done to deserve it, like a political campaign. It’s utterly ridiculous.”

“You’re not forbidden from doing that sort of thing?”

“If I had to say one way or another, then yes, it is allowed. Unfortunately,” Chris continued, a bitter look on her face.

“Personally, I believe there shouldn’t be any kind of campaigning to be Super Sister.”

“None at all?”

“Indeed. I said something similar a moment ago, but the Super Sister gains their title by naturally being themselves. Someone who earns everyone’s respect just by being who they are, without trying to purposefully market themselves, deserves the title,” Chris emphatically declared.

“That’s a good point... By the way, about how many votes does it take to become Super Sister?” Iori asked.

“You can become Super Sister if you get votes from eighty percent or more of the student body.”

“Eighty percent?! Is it really possible to earn that many?!”

Ludie was shocked by the number. Chris nodded, as though this was obvious.

“Eighty percent, exactly as I said. Generally, the votes are scattered. But, after the election’s over, the people who’ve been voted for can transfer their ballots over to someone they respect, so they actually reach that percentage a lot.”

“Uhhh?”

Seeing that Iori was confused, I jumped in to offer an explanation.

“Let’s say Chris and I both collect fifty votes each. However, I really respect Chris, so I transfer all the votes for myself over to her. Since that’s allowed, it would mean that Chris earned one hundred votes for herself.”

“You’re absolutely right,” Chris added after I finished my overview.

“Then what happens if there’s no vote transfers and no one gets eighty percent of the votes?” Iori asked. Chris nodded.

“A year without a Super Sister. Happens all the time, really. Personally, if it’s going to be nothing but people campaigning for themselves, then I think they should just ditch the Super Sister system altogether.”

I nodded along as I expanded on what Chris was saying.

“What’s really amazing about Kujou is that she got almost all the votes without anyone transferring theirs to her.”

After I said this, I addressed Nanami in my head.

“Normally, you’d think that’d be totally impossible, right? Since they’re not choosing from a pool of candidates, but simply writing down the name of the person they want to hold the position.”

“Realistically, without another fairly large achievement of some kind, it would be quite difficult to do. More pressingly, Master, Chris is looking at us very curiously.”

I turned to Chris and saw that Nanami was right.

“Is something the matter?”

“No, I was just thinking that you’re really well-informed.”

“Oh, right. I looked into the Super Sister system once I knew I would be coming here. Kujou is famous as well.”

Chris gave an understanding nod, seemingly convinced by my explanation.

It was then that a thought came to Nanami’s mind.

“Master. Why do you not tell her the truth? That you were planning on transferring here.”

“Because I wasn’t thinking that at all.” As I said this, Chris looked at me like I was being strange.

“Is something wrong, Nanako?”

Had I accidentally said all of that out loud?

“No, it’s nothing.”

“Sheesh, Nanako...you’re letting it show on your face, you know.”

Ludie quietly whispered the second part into my ear. Sorry, sorry, I’ll be more careful.

“A-actually, why did Kujou almost get all of the votes anyway?”

Iori tactfully brought up a different subject.

“The events at the inter-academy exhibition game from two years ago are a big part of that. That’s for sure. Before it happened, everyone was speculating that Miss Monica from Tsukuyomi Magic Academy would win with an

overwhelming display of strength. However, our Sister not only defeated the Beast King, but also drove Miss Monica right to the brink of defeat!”

Chris was very talkative when the subject came up.

“Since I’m the most proficient with fire magic, too, I could really tell. I can’t compare with Miss Monica in any aspect—her technique, her sheer power, her mana, nothing. If she was standing in front of me, I might just surrender immediately. But when our Sister faced off against her, she drove Miss Monica against the wall.”

“Giving President Monica a run for her money really is incredible... I can’t even imagine,” Iori murmured. Given his close position to President Monica as a vice president, he probably had a good understanding of how incredible it really was.

“Sister was already seen as very strong, and together with her position on the student council, she was very well-known among the other students in her year. The battle with Miss Monica then spread her name across the rest of Amaterasu Girls’ Academy, taking her popularity to even further heights,” Chris explained. I agreed that this must have made Hana’s popularity take off.

“Even without that, though, Kujou has just a wonderful personality, so it seems like she’d get more and more popular the more people got to know her anyway,” I said, prompting Chris to then squeeze my hand.

“You’re absolutely right, Nanako. Exactly! Our Sister’s a fantastic person, too. More and more people grew to adore her, and in the end, she accomplished the hitherto unprecedented achievement of holding the position of student council president and Super Sister at once.”

Iori nodded in admiration.

“Are you aiming to become Super Sister yourself, Chris?”

“I’m not sure if the word ‘aiming’ is really in line with the definition of the Super Sister, but I want to become the type of upstanding person to earn votes, and I’ve always acted to someday make that come true.”

In other words, she wanted to become the Super Sister. And with how confidently she spoke, she believed she could earn the title, too.

“Kujou must be a big influence on you, then, right?” Ludie asked, prompting Chris to nod.

“The biggest, probably.”

In the game, Chris is able to become Super Sister if you progress through the event normally. She’s able to, but...

“Well, I hope it works out that way,” I said, and she nodded.

“It will. And then, I’ll become just like our Sister.”

If you make the wrong choices, she is unable to become Super Sister. In the worst-case scenario, she ends up leaving the academy all together.

If you were battling as a magic user, the general consensus was that you needed a baseline level of physical stamina.

It was the same at Tsukuyomi Magic Academy, and this idea had been adopted here at Amaterasu Girls’ Academy as well. Consequently, almost every student here took a basic physical education course.

Furthermore, it was held jointly with the other classes in our school year, and it was one of the periods that Chris and I both shared together. The focus of today’s class was running, and the students of Amaterasu were sprinting around a track.

I’d finished up ahead of everyone and was watching Chris and Melina run laps. Just then, Nanami whispered something to me.

“A feast for the eyes, isn’t it?”

“It sure is... Wait, what the hell’re you making me say here?”

I’d unconsciously agreed with Nanami’s comment. Though really, how could I not? I mean, I didn’t even know where I was supposed to keep my eyes.

“Nanami, I’ve got a question. Why are our gym clothes so revealing?”

“Surely it must be because they’re easy to run in.”

Well, I could admit that they made it easier. But did they really need to show off so much thigh? They were basically booty shorts—booty shorts! Do you know what booty shorts are like? Why the hell were they booty shorts?! I was

starting to lose it.

I mean, assuming that I could barely accept that explanation for why our gym outfits included booty shorts, why exactly did it seem like everyone had chosen a pair one size too small for their butt? Chris, why was that squishy-squishy poking out so jiggly-jiggly all while it was scrunchy-scrunchy up tighty-tight?

And while we were at it, why had the school given everyone shirts that were easy to see through on top of that? Were they total idiots or something? Milena and the bombshells on her chest were less jiggly-jiggly and more badonga-badonga, and she was *haaah, haaah*-ing while sweat drip-dripped off her body. How I would've loved to sniff, sniff— *"Please calm yourself, Master. I can feel your restlessness right now."*

Yikes. The sight was so stimulating, I'd ended up expressing my every thought in sound effects.

Sniff, sniff?

"Sorry. I'll relax a bit."

"Make sure you do not let your disarray show on your face. Miss Milena and Miss Chris are coming over."

The two girls approached us as they wiped off their sweat. Milena was curvier than her usual outfit suggested, and Chris had an ass that was as outstanding as her athletic abilities. I fished drinks out of my item bag for them.

"Impressive, Miss Takioto. You're hardly out of breath."

Milena thanked me after I handed her a drink.

"Oh no, I still have plenty of room to improve. There are still others who have more stamina than I do."

My upperclassman, Yukine Mizumori, of course. I didn't think I'd ever have her beat when it came to basic physical stamina.

Chris began to talk as she accepted her beverage.

"But you're enchanting your stole, right? And then using physical enhancements on top of that. Forgive me for sounding rude, but it doesn't seem like you're even human like us."

It appeared Chris had caught on to Kousuke Takioto's abnormality.

"It's got me a little curious," Chris said, looking at me. So close. Such a lovely smell. I could almost catch a glimpse.

"Have you already chosen your opponent for the mock battle, by any chance?"

"Satomi invited me to be her opponent," I said.

"Satomiiii," Chris shouted, and Satomi approached us while wiping herself down. She was built like a sports model. Her suntan earned her high marks, too.

"Chris? Did you just call for me?"

"I heard you reserved a mock battle with Nanako, yes?" Chris said, and Satomi nodded.

"Sounds fun, doesn't it?"

"Indeed, I am quite jealous. Any chance you'll let me fight her instead? That's fine, right?"

"Sorry I can't give up the chance, even if you're the one asking. Truth is, I've been really looking forward to it."

"That's too bad... Oh well, then I guess there's no other choice—Nanako, why don't we have a mock battle right now, before you fight Satomi?" Chris suggested, flashing me a smile.

"Whoa, whoa, you're going into the dungeon together, yeah? Then what's the big deal with letting me fight her? C'mon."

Personally, I was okay with battling however much they wanted.

"I suppose you're right. But I'll still be coming to watch your mock battle before our dungeon trip. I better see just what Tsukuyomi Magic Academy is capable of."

Chris grinned broadly. I replied with a smile of my own.

"I'm sure you'll be surprised."

She'd be shocked, all right. Not only with me, but I imagined Ludie and Iori's strength would surprise her, too. I mean, we were all pretty strong.

Satomi put a hand on Chris's shoulder.

"That reminds me, are you free after class? I got invited by one of the third-years, so you want to do some training together?"

"Oh, sorry. I have student council today."

Right as Chris said this, a teacher called her by her name.

"Awfully cold of her," Satomi murmured as she watched Chris depart. Milena tried to soothe her.

"Now, now, Miss Gauss must be busy, don't you think? And the Super Sister election's coming up as well."

Satomi must have understood that for herself.

"Yeah, right. But, like, it's kinda funny that she's doing all this stuff to prepare when she's clearly the top candidate to become Super Sister, isn't it?"

It looked like Chris was just as popular with her classmates as she had been in the game.

"It was the same for Big Sister Kujou. She became Super Sister from the student council."

As we idly chatted, our conversation drifted in another direction—about the case that had brought me to Amaterasu Girls' Academy in the first place.

"That reminds me, Chris said that one of the girls in the class next door fell sick. Is that true?"

Milena nodded.

"That's right. There have been a lot of people falling ill lately, haven't there? I wonder if it's due to the drastic air temperature fluctuations?"

True, fluctuations in the weather made the autonomic nerves go out of whack and all. Still, that wasn't the cause of this latest affair.

"There's still an awful lotta them for that. Maybe someone's put a curse on them or something behind their backs? I'm not even really joking," Satomi said with a serious look. While it may not have been a curse, it had a pretty similar effect, I supposed.

“...I heard that this happened to a whole group before. Is that true?” I asked.

Satomi nodded. “One of the girls who fell ill came from a group of my favorite cute underclassmen, too.”

Milena winced the moment Satomi said “favorite cute underclassmen.” I sort of understood what she was getting at, but that wasn’t important right now, so I saved that topic for later.

“What did she say?”

“That it didn’t feel like she had used up too much magic, but more like she had gotten her mana sucked out of her.”

In *Magical★Explorer*, there’s a battle with some Amaterasu Girls’ Academy background characters. As a part of class, too.

The person you fight changes depending on the route you take through the event, but my opponent, Satomi, didn’t correspond to any of the potential options. I had seen her use several elements in class already, but I had no clue which she was the most skilled with.

In other words, I didn’t have a good idea of how she was going to fight.

“You ready, Nana?” Satomi said as she turned around. She was wielding a gauntlet, just like Yuika. Considering that she wasn’t carrying any other weapons on her, I predicted that she was another caster who excelled in close-quarters combat.

Her gauntlet was uniquely shaped. Typically, gauntlets were slightly curved, but Satomi’s were quite angular and jagged. It looked like there were a few holes in it, too. Perhaps she would fire something out of them.

“Yes, I’m fine. Though, I feel a little embarrassed,” I replied, and she agreed.

“Believe me, I’ve never been the focus of so much attention before, either,” she said before throwing back a laugh.

Part of it probably stemmed from the fact that a Tsukuyomi Magic Academy student was going up against one of Amaterasu’s own. And it wasn’t just the students who were watching—so were the teachers. Wait, was that the principal standing over there?

“Ha-ha, if you’re ready to go, should we get started?” Satomi said.

She looked at the referee, nodding, then readied her fists. Nanami said she would remain silent during the match, which was probably to keep this a simple one-on-one fight.

As I looked at the flow of Satomi’s mana, I lowered my hips and readied my fists. Then, I circulated mana throughout my body.

“Begin!”

Satomi was the first one to make a move. She kicked off the ground, vigorously rushing toward me.

My conjecture about Satomi focusing on melee combat was on the mark, as she thrust her fist out at me.

Her blow had less speed and less power behind it than Yuika’s. Familiar with such attacks from my regular spars with Yuika, I readily parried Satomi’s strike with my stole.

She thrust her opposite arm at me next, and I parried that, too. A moment later, she sent her leg at my stomach.

“?!”

I immediately guarded with my Third Hand. However, she quickly steadied herself on the leg I had blocked, then spun while launching a kick with her opposite leg up at my head.

Nevertheless, I blocked this with my Fourth Hand. The impact sent a shudder through my whole body. But that was all. I was unharmed.

Okay, now it was my turn. Her bold, dynamic kick had left her wide open. I attempted to drive my fist into her gut when— A powerful gust of wind burst out of the hole in her gauntlet like a cannon.

It was a strong gale, but I immediately blocked it with my Third Hand to avoid taking damage. Still, it pushed her perfectly out of my range.

“I see, so that’s how you open up space for yourself.”

Powerful body attacks left you open. There was always some kind of trade-off

for increasing the power behind a strike, whether that was breaking your stance or consuming a lot of mana. A few people could pull off moves like this without endangering themselves, like the Big Three, but that was usually how it worked.

But Satomi had closed the hole in her defenses by using her weapon's special feature.

"I was pretty confident about my surprise attack. That stole of yours caught me off guard."

"The material's wonderful, isn't it? If I put an ice enchantment on it during the summer, it can even become a personal AC unit."

"*Hah*, trying to fool me? You weren't using it like that at all. That piece of fabric felt like arms of steel. I can't believe you were hiding something like that."

"You were hiding something yourself, weren't you? That breeze of yours was lovely."

I made sure to provoke her.

"It looks like I might have to get serious," Satomi said.

She slammed her hands together. Then a magic circle appeared before her. I could've immediately tried to attack her. However, there was a bit of space between us for one, and I was also curious about what kind of magic she would use, so I decided to perfect my defenses by placing my hand on the hilt of my sword, ready to react as necessary.

Satomi cast an earth spell.

Deep-brown gemstones covered her gauntlet, and the weapon grew to twice its usual size. Then three razor-sharp stone claws sprouted at the tip of her gauntlet; they looked keen enough to tear my body to shreds with a direct hit.

"Those look almost like a beastfolk's claws."

"Nana, I'm going all out from here, got it?"

Satomi gradually closed in on me, jumping left to right as she went.

She was likely trying to confuse me by moving out of my line of sight. A

normal person would have to twist their neck back and forth just to keep track of her.

Watching her carefully, I tightened my grip on my sword. Satomi was already close enough that she could easily come into my range at any moment.

“?!”

It happened in a single second. She disappeared from sight, and I sensed her jumping in diagonally behind me. I opened my stole to meet her.

The clang of steel crashing against steel echoed through the area. She attacked me with not just one, but a flurry of strikes.

However, I had acquired a skill to address the low visibility through my stole. A skill that I had needed Yukine to help me obtain.

As I parried her attacks, I waited for the right moment, then raised my stole upward.

This was to repel her claws. As I expected, her right shoulder side was wide open. I took a step toward her and sent a punch into her gut much like Yuika would.

There was a thud. However, the punch didn't end up delivering a critical blow.

Even in her present situation, Satomi stepped back and put space between us.

“Hrk. *P'too.*”

It looked like she'd been injured, and she spit blood from her mouth. And then...

“*Ahaha, hahahaha, hahahahaha!*”

Satomi burst into laughter. She really seemed to be enjoying herself.

As I stayed on guard, a visible transformation began to come over her. What looked like cat ears sprouted from the top of her head.

“A bestial transformation? No, a half-transformation...”

Her head wasn't the only thing that changed. Her eyes did as well. They took on an amber hue and angled slightly, like a feline's.

The fact that she could use this ability meant she must have had some beastfolk in her family.

“Nanako, I’m coming at you with everything I’ve got, okay?” Satomi said, immediately leaping toward me.

I marveled at how fast she’d gotten.

She was rocketing toward me with speed wholly unlike anything she had shown before. The contrast was so stark that it was like I was fighting someone else entirely.

Her attack power had definitely gone up, too. I decided that I would layer my stole together to block her attack.

After she jumped toward me with enough power to carve deep holes in the earth, Satomi brandished her stone claws and swung them down.

An even louder noise than before echoed through the area. The power behind it was tremendous and it pushed me back around three feet from where I had dug my feet in.

Despite her slender appearance, the attack was like an excavator. She unleashed strength that was totally beyond what someone of her bodyweight could accomplish.

Nevertheless, it was an attack I was able to endure.

“You’re still able to hold out?” Satomi said, putting space between us with a back step. It looked like she was having the time of her life.

She didn’t know the half of it.

I could admit, she was fast, and strong. However, there were way more powerful people living in the Hanamura house.

This time, while moving her feet with a boxer’s footwork, she attacked me with a one-two punch. However, I was able to parry each quick, light attack with one side of my stole while waiting for an opening to deliver a punch of my own.

Just when I thought she had suddenly disappeared, I saw her leg close in on my stomach.

It was the shrimp kick. She'd turned her back to me, going down into a crouching running start position, and released a kick behind her. I quickly brought up my Third Hand, changing my stand. Her kick grazed me slightly.

"Is that sword just for decoration?" Satomi asked, sending out another blow to keep me on the back foot.

"This might be a practice sword, but I'd still end up cutting you in two, so..." I replied while guarding against her strike with my Fourth Hand.

"Haha, that's funny."

In the past, I would've shared her sentiment, but honestly, I wasn't so sure if that was a joke these days.

After exchanging several blows, I realized something. Satomi's attacks weren't the meat-headed blows that beastfolk often employed, which prioritized power over everything. Instead, they were the polished and refined strikes of a martial artist.

The shrimp kick from earlier was one example. A lot of her blows had been surprise attacks, coming from areas that were hard to see.

"You're a real fortress, huh?" she said, jumping far back and building mana in her stone claw. But instead of releasing it at me, she shot it at the ground.

"!"

The earth exploded, whipping up sediment high into the air.

If I were to describe it, it was like a bunch of sand had been placed over a sheet of plastic, which was then snapped inward. Satomi had created a smokescreen.

I could sense her presence move from in front of me to my left-hand side. Then she pounced at me.

I knew she was brandishing her claws high. It was the same attack I'd just seen. She was trying to take me by surprise and unleash this big, powerful move to finish me off.

But it would be fruitless against me. I could see exactly how she was moving thanks to my Mind's Eye skill.

“Hnraaaaah!”

She must have built up a lot of power in the attack, because she shouted as she swung her arms at me. But it was a mistake to use the same move I’d just stopped before. It was all too easy for me to divert it away in the direction I wanted.

I perfectly timed my stole to hit her downward swipe. Her claws were swept away from my body, cutting harmlessly through the air.

Then I stepped right into her wide-open stance, placing the hilt of my sword against her stomach.

“Will you admit defeat?”

There was a moment of silence. As it dawned on her that she couldn’t win, Satomi grinned and said: “Make it quick.”

I unleashed the mana stored in my sheath. Then I sent her flying, not with the blade of my sword, but the hilt.

The attack was nearly silent, but the shockwave was tremendous. Blowing away the sand and dirt around us, I slammed Satomi into the wall.

I returned my sword to its sheath and immediately headed over to her.

From the perspectives of the onlookers, it must have seen like Satomi had abruptly smashed into the wall, blowing up a bunch of dust in the process.

The audience was silent, unable to make sense of the situation due to the low visibility. The healer, who was there in case anything went wrong, was slow to react as well.

The healer and teachers came over to us when I took Satomi in my arms.

“Ngh...”

“Satomi? Are you all right?”

Fortunately, she was quick to regain consciousness. With her bestial transformation undone, a dry smile came to her face.

“Hey, Nanako, do you have eyes in the back of your head?”

“Just imagine I have three-hundred and sixty of them. That should give you an

idea.”

“Ha-ha-ha,” Satomi feebly chuckled. “What the heck, so you’re basically a monster?”

The healer used their magic to patch her up.

The truth was, I didn’t really know much about this school.

Apparently, Satomi was famous here for being tough and skilled, and she was popular for being boyish and cool.

Perhaps that was why word that Satomi had been utterly trounced spread throughout the school in the blink of an eye.

Once class was over, I returned to the dorm, and went over the current state situation. This latest Amaterasu Girls’ Academy event was, according to what I heard from everyone else, in between the first and second progression stages.

Ms. Sakura’s event had been the same way, but all the events in-game progressed in real time. Amaterasu Girls’ Academy was no different, and when it progressed to stage four, Super Sister Kujou would jump into action and essentially resolve things herself. In that instance, there would be all sorts of damage and injuries to the Academy, so I had been planning on sending Iori here before that could happen.

However, I didn’t understand what use there was in sending me along with him.

Speaking of events, over at Tsukuyomi Magic Academy I figured it was about time for *her* and the others to betray the Three Committees; I wondered how things were going on that front.

“How do you think things are going back at Tsukuyomi Magic Academy?”

“I assume everyone is going about their daily lives... That reminds me, Master. What happened to the items you received as parting gifts?”

“Ah. So President Monica and Minister Benito gave me sigiled stones. Always happy to get those.”

I was going to end up using a ton of them in a bunch of different places.

The Saint had gifted me a book of exercises for making your boobs bigger. What exactly was she telling me to do here?

From Yukine, I received a custom-made practice sword that would grow heavier and stiffer if I filled it with mana. I would get plenty of regular use out of this. I should have opened it up earlier.

Sis had given me a ticket for a free shoulder rub. Written out in crayon, too. Why?

The real problem, though, was Anemone's gift.

"What am I supposed to do with this?"

I took it out. In a vial the size of a nail polish bottle was a pink liquid. A scrap of paper featuring a sloppily scribbled note was affixed to it with masking tape.

If I were to believe what it said...

"It's apparently an aphrodisiac."

"So it is. How about you try drinking it? Don't fret. You were already an aphrodisiac-like person to begin with, so I'm sure it'll be awesome!"

"No way am I drinking that! And just who the hell do you take me for?"

Just tacking on "awesome" at the end of something didn't make it automatically okay, either.

"That said, it is rather frightening to see there is not any sort of explanation accompanying it."

She had a point. I mean, think about it. The word *aphrodisiac* alone written on a scrap of notebook paper? Downright terrifying.

This was Sexy Scientist we were dealing with here, too. I knew from the game that she made weird drugs, and there was a chance this was actually the real deal. She comes up with an item for hypnosis during that other person's route, too. I was extreeeeeeemely in her debt for all that, yessiree!

"Well, for now, keep that in your pocket. There will come a day when it will be necessary, I am sure."

"Why the heck would I keep this in my pocket? That's way too dangerous!"

“All right, then let’s settle this with rock-paper-scissors. If I win, you keep it in your pocket. If Master should win, then you keep it in your breast pocket—that should suffice, yes?”

“Suffice, my ass! It’s still in my damn pocket either way!”

The results of our rock-paper-scissors meant it was left in my pocket. Unacceptable.

“Anyway, what should we do for dinner?”

Right, right, dinner. I heard that Iori and Ludie were invited by a classmate and were going to eat with them. Off campus, at that.

I’d also been invited, but I figured it wouldn’t be great for their classmates to have a random unknown upperclassman along for the ride, so I declined. I wanted them to get along well and start to feel at home at Amaterasu.

Which left the question of what I was going to do for dinner.

“I mean, I’m fine with some instant ramen, honestly.”

I had always been fond of it, anyway, but after the whole thing with Ludie, we had a giant mountain of the stuff.

“No, no, you should have a proper meal. We could either go to the dorm cafeteria...or should I make you something myself?”

“This room doesn’t even have a burner for you to make anything, though. We’d have to go to the shared kitchen.”

I definitely couldn’t imagine it was okay to use a portable stove in here, either. Not only that, but it would be time-consuming to have Nanami make something.

“Yeah, why don’t we go out to eat? Might as well be off campus, too. Stopping by the bathhouse wouldn’t be bad, either. I wanna take a nice, long soak.”

There was a hot spring on this very campus, and I couldn’t use it. This felt like being told to stay still with a treat dangling in front of me.

“With Miss Ludie and the others gone right now, you can head into the

outside world without issue. The curfew here is surprisingly late, too.”

“Right. Let’s go out to eat somewhere. Also, if we’re off campus, then you and I will be able to eat together out in the open just fine.”

“While I do enjoy receiving my calories from your body, I do occasionally wish to get them from my mouth, too.”

“Stop, stop, don’t make it sound weird. Say you want my *mana* next time.”

Angels didn’t need to eat and could go without food as they received mana. Hearing that reminded me of that F*te servant. She sure ate a lot, didn’t she?

With everything settled, we fused and left my room.

I left my room in high spirits, excited to go out into town and enjoy some delicious food. However, I was unable to head off campus.

Because right when I exited my room, I discovered a student leaning up against the wall, an agonized look on her face.

I immediately cleared away any thoughts of hunger and sent them in a different direction.

Two other students were there, worrying over the girl. They tried to lend the suffering girl their shoulders, but she lost her balance and looked close to collapsing.

“Whoa, are you all right?!”

“Ah, Miss Takioto! Y-Yes... I-I’m fine. Just dizzy from the bath.”

She knew my name? Wait, that didn’t even matter here.

Was this really just dizziness from too much time in the bath? It definitely didn’t look that way.

While I was considering the situation, I heard Nanami’s voice in my head.

“She appears to be in the early stages of mana deficiency. Also, Master, be careful how you talk.”

My way of speaking had gotten a bit too masculine after I’d panicked.

I listened to the other two girls while I began to use Donate Mana on the dizzy

girl.

They told me they had just happened to be nearby when they'd called out to her out of concern, just like me.

"Nhn ♡! Gnn, ahhhhn...♡"

Why did everyone let out really lewd sounds when I donated mana to them? Ah, forget it, that wasn't important right now.

"How's that? Have you calmed down a bit?"

"Haanh♡. Ahn. Ummm, I feel a bit, better...♡"

The girl's slightly pallid face was growing pink. I sorta got the feeling there was something else affecting her here, but I didn't worry about it for now.

"Can you stand...? Wait, no, I can't let you push yourself too hard," I said.

I used my stole and one of my arms to carry her bridal-style while typing a message to Kujou with my free hand.

After bringing the girl to the nurse's office and leaving her there, I met up with Kujou.

Once Kujou checked on the student's condition and understood she was safe, she immediately asked me: "What do you think caused this?"

"The hot spring, most likely," I immediately replied.

In the game, this case is set up so that after managing several smaller, trivial events over and over again, you gather enough information to go to the place where it all originated. These smaller, one-off incidents happen in the school building and the gymnasium, among other locations. But this latest instance of a student falling ill leads the player to what is, in a certain sense, the most dangerous location of all.

"From what little I heard from the student, she ate dinner after classes were over and went to the hot spring. She said she was hit with a sudden bout of exhaustion after soaking in the water."

But it wasn't the hot spring that was causing the illness.

"I believe it would be best to head there immediately to check."

“The grand bath, then. Let’s go,” she said, walking off. I followed her.

“Ummm, what should I do?” I asked, and a smile of recognition floated to her face.

“Ah, yes, good point. Please help me turn people away outside the entrance. I shall seal it up temporarily.”

“Umm, is it okay to openly seal it up like that?”

The strange phenomenon occurring at the school still hadn’t been officially announced.

“I’ll say there is something wrong with the water and put up a cleaning sign on the door. I feel sorry for those currently enjoying their bath, but I will need them to get out. No one is allowed in until we resolve the situation. Just tell everyone that it’s currently under investigation.”

Hearing this, Nanami whispered:

“I see, that should be enough to convince the students as well. Since the Super Sister is the one telling them, after all.”

I thought that was a good way of looking at it.

“You’re right. Everyone’ll be satisfied with that since Kujou is telling them,” I replied as we headed for the grand bath.

After taking less than thirty minutes to finish investigating the grand bath, we went to Kujou’s room to discuss everything.

“I’m sorry for not cleaning up a bit before you came.”

Put charitably, Kujou’s room was quite minimalistic. Put critically, there basically wasn’t anything in it. She didn’t have a TV or video games to speak of, and there weren’t any books to read for pleasure on her tiny shelf.

On top of her table was basically the bare minimum amount of makeup and face cream, along with an electric kettle, cups, and nothing more.

“Not at all, it’s very clean. I need to take a page out of your book,” I replied as she cleaned up the makeup she had left out. Then— “Would you mind undoing your fusion?”

“I’ll turn back into a guy, is that okay?”

“It’s fine. No one’s coming here,” Kujou said as she got up to go over to the cupboard. She returned with two teacups.

“I’d love to hear what Nanami has to say as well.”

At this, we undid our fusion.

“Forgive me, Nanami. I have nothing to offer you as a host,” she said before placing tea bags in the cups, filled with what looked like expensive tea leaves, and poured water from the electric kettle.

“Not at all. If anything, I should be the one preparing refreshments, but my Master whined so much about leaving me that—”

“Nope, there wasn’t a single peep from me, actually. Please don’t say things that’ll give people the wrong idea here.”

Kujou giggled while watching Nanami and I exchanged quips with each other.

“Please think of this just like your own room and unwind,” she said while passing the tea to myself and Nanami.

“Thank you.”

“You are much too kind. I see your room is the same as everyone else’s, Miss Kujou,” Nanami said, looking over the space.

“I need to serve as the example for everyone else, so I mustn’t allow myself an extravagant room. Or at least, that’s what I say. The truth is that I really can’t relax in a big spacious room.”

Something appeared to cross Nanami’s mind for a moment, but she didn’t say anything.

I thought it was best to get to the topic at hand and began to speak.

“...Now then, about the grand bath.”

“Right. First, let me thank you, Kousuke.”

Kujou bowed.

“Oh no, I didn’t really do anything. Please, raise your head.”

“Your prompt action helped nip the situation in the bud. The girl you saved got through with mild symptoms, too. Thank you, truly.”

“I’ll accept your gratitude, so please, don’t feel the need to bow,” I said. Kujou raised her head at last.

“Now then... About the offending object,” Kujou said before producing what appeared to be a fist-sized rock.

“There’s ancient script written on it. So this thing was sucking up the mana,” Nanami said, looking at it.

At first glance, it looked like a normal rock, and it perfectly blended in with the small garden inside the grand bath. I bet no one had given it a second thought.

“Having you both here was a huge help. Thanks to you, we were immediately able to find what was draining the students of their mana.”

The item Kujou had taken out was the root source of the mana deficiency syndrome.

After Kujou had sent all the students out of the hot spring, I went inside to investigate, and Nanami immediately picked out the stone for us.

“However, I must apologize for my inadequacy, as I do not know very much about it. Forgive me.”

Despite Nanami’s statement, from my perspective, she’d done more than enough work. If she hadn’t discovered it for us, I would’ve had to conspicuously comment, *Wait, this is sorta weird, don’t you think?* and point it out myself.

“Not at all, Nanami. Why, I had no idea what was causing it all. Besides, if Ms. Sakura was here as an angel, she could know more about it, right?”

That thing was seriously indistinguishable from any other stone. It certainly didn’t look like a valuable item.

“I cannot say for sure,” Nanami began. Ms. Sakura’s own investigation would uncover a bunch of stuff anyway, and I knew the broad strokes already, too. I just couldn’t go off blabbing about them right now.

“But that being said...,” remarked Kujou with a concerned frown.

“That being said?”

She sighed slightly at my question.

“I can only assume that someone placed this rock there on purpose.”

Kujou was right. And this time, the person helping out the demons was—
“Either a student, or a staff member...”

Kujou continued my line of thinking.

“That has to be who’s behind the incident. I really didn’t want to consider such a possibility.”

Silence fell. After a short moment, Kujou heaved a sigh.

“I am very glad I entreated help from Tsukuyomi Magic Academy and the two of you. I certainly wouldn’t have uncovered this myself. Thank you for today. We can continue the investigation tomorrow.”

“Sounds good.”

It was already late. Iori would need to discuss things with Ms. Sakura, too, so he was going to have to put in some extra work.

“Actually, have you eaten dinner yet?”

I shook my head at Kujou’s question.

“No, actually I was thinking that I’d go out, grab some food...and then soak in the bath while I was at it.”

Though I guess I had technically already gone into a bath today.

“Oh? Going out to eat I understand, but going out to take a bath? Why, you don’t need to do that when we have the grand bath right here in the dorms for you. “

“Please, you know I couldn’t possibly do that,” I said with a laugh. If I could, believe me, I’d be sprinting there at this very moment! Okay, that was a lie. I’d end up crushed by my conscience.

“Why, if you went in as Nanako, there wouldn’t be a problem, right? You could even use a bath towel to cover up, if that would make it less embarrassing for you.”

What the heck was she saying with that saintly smile on her face? The sentiment must have come across on my contorted expression, prompting Kujou to laugh.

“*Tee-hee*. I’m sorry, about ten percent of that was a joke.”

“Ten percent? Then, what exactly about that *was* a joke?” I asked, but it was Nanami who replied.

“I know. The part about the towel.”

Of course, that couldn’t—

“That’s right, the towel part. You’re not allowed to bring it in with you.”

—possibly *not* be the joke! She really wasn’t serious about the towel bit!

“Uh, there’s definitely another part of that that’s supposed to be a joke, right?!”

“*Tee-hee*, forgive me. Let me explain it to you properly. The fact is, the grand bath is only open until one a.m. From there, it’s supposed to be cleaned, but the truth is the cleaning doesn’t happen until early morning.”

“Wait, so then...”

“There is an open slot where no one else is in the bath. Not only that, but only a select few people know about this time block, too. You wouldn’t encounter anyone else.”

“Huh?”

“I’ll give you my permission to go. If I put up the ‘cleaning’ tag on the door, you’ll be even safer.”

Was Kujou sure about this? I mean, I definitely would have loved to soak in the hot spring, don’t get me wrong... As I thought this over, Nanami appeared to have caught on to something besides me.

“You seem quite familiar with all this... Does this mean you normally take advantage of this time?”

Now everything made sense. *This* was why she knew no one else would come in.

“Shhh, no telling, okay?” she said while putting a finger up to her lips and winking. “I use it quite often when I want take a bath alone.”

“How does the water feel, Master?” Nanami asked me inside my head.

“Absolutely perfect.”

Deciding to immediately head over and jump in the water had been the correct call. The smell of the sulfur shrouding the area. The cloudy hot water. The small garden, resembling an outdoor hot spring bath.

It was pure bliss.

I was actually soaking inside Amaterasu Girls’ Academy’s hot spring... I never would have thought this possible.

“I’m exhausted after everything that happened today, so that’s probably making it feel even better,” I said, to which Nanami agreed.

“Indeed. We in ran into trouble right here, yes?”

“Right... Though this really does feel amazing, I wonder if I could come here again?”

“I imagine you would be safe to do so with Miss Kujou’s permission.”

“I might have to try asking her, then.”

As we conversed, I gazed out over the large, empty bath.

All that said—

“Even knowing it’s okay, I’m still worried...,” I murmured inside my head.

“I understand what is bothering you Master. The bra bags you will need for the laundry, right? Rest easy, I made sure to borrow them from Miss Yukine.”

“Right, right, you need those things to make sure the cups in the bra don’t lose their shape. Really, handwashing’s the best, but—hold on, that’s obviously not what I’m talking about!”

Why had Yukine lent them to her? Was she an accomplice here?

“That’s not it. I’m talking about if it’s really okay to have a guy take a bath in here.”

This place was a walled flower garden for girls. Closed to men. And here I was in the worst possible place for a guy to be—the communal bath.

“Then allow me to set up a bit of foreshadowing for you: ‘Nhh, nhhh! Well now, once I safely get out from my bath without incident, I’ll gulp down a bottle of milk fully naked. Just watch!’”

“Don’t imitate my voice. Also, don’t prognosticate like that. Seriously, if anything happened... Hm?”

I heard something just now, didn’t I?

The sound of the door opening?

Footsteps?

Uhh?

“Hey, Nanami? Did you hear something just now?”

“Funny you should say that, Master. I might have heard something. No, not just might—I definitely heard something.”

Huh? There was no way, right? So you’re telling me I was hearing something, and it wasn’t some auditory hallucination, either?! I could hear people’s voices, too!

C’mon, I mean, there was no way, right?

“Actually, Sister Kujou often comes here at this time of night.”

This voice belonged to...Chris?! But why? It was definitely past 1:00 a.m. at this point, so why was she here?!

“Oh, I had no idea.”

And worse still, she wasn’t alooouooooooooooooone! Whoa, whoa, hold up, wait a minute, that was Ludie’s voice just now! This can’t be happening!

“Please, calm yourself, Master! Suck in a big gulp of air or bathwater; either will do. Then let it out and calm yourself.”

“Sucking up bathwater would make it all worse, dammit!”

“You seem to have gotten your bearings enough to play off my jokes. Master,

you have two options.”

“What are they?”

“Hide within the cloudy bathwater, or shrug this all off as an accident.”

Diving in the water to conceal myself was a possibility, true, but it seemed like the damage would be huge if I was found out. And while I might have been able to get away with Chris seeing me if I tried shrugging it off, Ludie knew who I really was!

But, even if I dove under the water, I didn’t know if I would be able to remain under there while they soaked in the bath. Plus, there was only one entrance if I wanted to try to escape. Okay, seriously, what the hell was I going to do here?

“You’re not covering yourself up, Princess Ludie?”

“No, in the Tréfle Empire, we don’t cover up our fronts in a hot spring. Nor do we use towels. I believe the custom is the same here in Wakoku, yes?”

Elves didn’t cover up their fronts—that was one hell of a factoid to get ahold of. No wonder Ludie was on full display in her CG.

Hold up, that made this so much worse, right?! She was totally defenseless!

“Well, I suppose I’ll be just as bold today myself.”

Wait, don’t just rush long into all this! Chris, you need to scold Ludie, not join in with her!

We were in Wakoku, though. Actually, wait, Wakoku was another country where they didn’t allow you to bring a towel into the hot springs! They couldn’t hide anything! No, but the water was cloudy, so once they got in, I wouldn’t be able to see anything!

“...It looks like we have lost our chance to hide.”

Nanami’s comment made me realize something. Erotic girls’ most erotic areas were so erotic in the faintly erotic steam... At this point, it was too late. Everything seemed erotic to me.

Dammit, my only choice was to grit my teeth and shrug it all off.

“Hm! Who’s there?!” Chris shouted when she saw me.

“I-It’s me. Nanako.”

Chris sighed with relief.

“Oh, it’s you, Nanako. You surprised me there. *Phew*, I’m glad it really was just you.”

Ludie let out a sigh of relief, too. Then...

“Oh, Nanako, it’s just you...”

Hold on, Ludie was looking relieved here without covering herself up at all. Maybe there was a chance I could push my way through th— “Thank goodness it was you, Nanako. There was actually an incident before where a boy masquerading as a girl tried to sneak into the school. I was worried you might have been a pervert or something,” Chris explained. Ludie nodded along as she listened.

“You’re absolutely right, dressing up as a girl and sneaking into the hot spring, that’s awful... Hm? Nanako? Masquerading as a girl? Hm?!”

There was a moment where I foolishly thought, hey, I could push right through this.

Ludie looked at me again like she couldn’t believe what was in front of her. Then her eyes widened like saucers.

“Huh?!”

The instant she gasped, her entire face went beet-red, like she was being boiled.

“K-K-K-K-Kous...”

Uh-oh, she was trying to call out my name. If she called out my name here, that was going to be the end of me.

“Princess Ludiviiiiiiiiine! I’m N-A-N-A-K-O! Nanako! Nanako at your service!!”

I averted my eyes and shouted in the center of the bath.

Even selling my soul to the Malevolent Lord wouldn’t erase the grand view from my memory.

I could say with one-hundred-percent certainty that if I ever got amnesia, the

memory of this beautiful form would be the very first one I'd get back. This was Eden.

Ludie immediately picked up on what I meant. That said...

"K-K-K-Kous...course! Of coooooourse! I forgot to put on my perfume! S-silly me, what a mistake..."

Her excuse was way too much of a stretch. C'mon, Ludie. Didn't you have anything else to go with? First of all, it would be a cold day in hell before anyone believed you put on *perfume* before getting into the bath— "Oh, you put on perfume for going into the bath? Well, I suppose some people can't handle the sulfur smell."

A miracle had transpired right before my very eyes! I still couldn't really believe it, but Ludie's excuse worked!

"That said, spraying perfume everywhere would be a nuisance for the other students... What's wrong? Why are you hiding yourself like that?"

Apparently, Chris caught Ludie covering up her private areas with her hands, and found it suspicious. I mean, who wouldn't cover their body up in this situation, right?

"I-I figured that, for a proper lady like myself, it would be best to show some modesty..."

"But didn't you just mention something about not covering up back in the Tréfle Empire?"

Chris had everything on display while saying all this, too. Honestly, since I could see it all, I couldn't really look at her. What was I supposed to do here? At this point, I didn't have a clue.

"O-Of course, I was joking. You're absolutely right, fully open in body and mind."

Uh-oh, this was bad. Now she was saying some really weird stuff. Ludie was reaching her limit. I had to throw out a lifeline for her.

So, I looked around the area. Yet, the only thing here was the hot spring itself. Wait no, that was it!

“Princess Ludivine, please, please hop into the hot spring!”

The cloudy waters would definitely stop me from seeing anything. Hurry on in and soak in the water. I was at my limit here. My head was about to boil over!

Ludie’s eyes sparkled when she looked at the color of the water.

“G-good idea.”

Readily going along with my brilliant idea, Ludie went to dip into the hot spring. However, it was not to be.

“Wait, Princess Ludie. You still haven’t washed yourself off.”

C’m on now, you imbecile, what were you trying to pull here? Maybe I should have just split that wash bucket in half, how about that? I was doing everything I could to keep myself mentally stable right now. What was she going to do if I started to go wild?! Manners or chastity, pick one!

“O-oh yes, you’re right.”

As I listened to the sound of splashing water, I incanted the *Namu Amida Butsu* mantra to purge my worldly desires.

However, despite my effort to empty my head, the girls’ backs, their butts, their napes, their thighs, their butts, their upper arms, and their butts...were all calling to me.

Curse those well-shaped, elegant, and obscene buttocks! Tempt me not!

“It’s about time for me to finish up.”

As I heard the girls both enter the water, I immediately stood up. Shoot, I had spent too much time in the water and gotten vertigo. Combined with the slimy bottom of the hot springs, I lost my footing.

“Are you okay there, Nanako?” Ludie asked, reaching out a hand to support me. I tried to grab her hand, but I was unable to latch onto it.

I did, however, manage to grab onto something else.



A fruit of pure happiness. Yet also a forbidden fruit. Though a dreamlike fruit as well.

“Ahh... Nhn, nmh...”

Ludie’s innermost soul let out its voice. I immediately tried to adjust my position and accidentally squeezed.

I had squeezed, all right.

In that moment, an electric shock ran through my body. I felt a tremendous satisfaction, as if a problem that had confounded me for many years had finally been solved, along with a sense of fulfillment from something lacking being made whole.

I hadn’t forgotten.

I hadn’t forgotten at all.

I hadn’t forgotten this sensation that I had long been without.

Smooth, bouncy, soft, elastic.

Would I be able to forget? I could say without a shadow of a doubt that I would remember it for the rest of my life.

This, this was a boob.

I immediately came to my senses after that, vigorously removed my hand, and gave my sincerest apologies (in the form of buck-naked prostration) as I managed to successfully escape from the hot spring.

I really did feel sorry for what I had done.

I was sure a huge, unavoidable problem was going to come for me later.

As much as I wanted to convince Ludie somehow that this was all an unfortunate accident, that was definitely going to be a tall order.

As I changed into my clothes while feeling exhausted enough to collapse on the spot, Nanami whispered to me in my head.

“That was quite an unexpected bounty.”

Oh, it was a bumper crop, all right.



CONFIG

Reborn as a Side Character in a Fantasy Dating Sim Now then, my encounter with Ludie in the grand bath was not intentional, but an accident.

The cause of this was several unfortunate turns of events all compounding on each other.

The first bit of bad luck was that neither Iori nor Ludie had been with me when I found the most recent victim in the hall. As a result, they were unaware that Kujou and I had gone to the grand bath.

The second was that Ludie's shower had broken. Once she had returned to the dorm she took part in her daily meditation, magic training, and midnight ramen snack. Before she realized, it was late, and the grand bath had been closed for the night.

With even one of these strokes of bad luck, she likely would have made it in time to take a bath.

However, she must have wanted to avoid skimping out on her daily training, and it was difficult to fight against the urge for her own personal narcotic, her late-night ramen snack.

The third stroke of misfortune was that she had come across Chris, who was very familiar with how this dorm operated, in front of the grand bath after it had closed for the night, with the cleaning sign hung out front. She knew the grand bath's particulars just like Kujou did. Really, they were the only students here who did.

In other words, a miracle (bad luck) summoned a miracle, and I witnessed a miracle (full-frontal) and squeezed a miracle (boob). That was the miracle (outline of events) of the night.

"Saying all that doesn't really mean anything, though, does it?" I grumbled to Nanami, who agreed.

"You are absolutely right."

Well, after I'd groped her and seen her naked body, yeah, I could understand why Ludie was standoffish with me.

“The other problem here is that there’s not really anyone else I can talk to about this.”

Just to be safe, I immediately sent a message to Kujou. If Chris went to Kujou and told her all about what happened, it could possibly turn into an even bigger problem.

Thus, getting everyone on the same page fast was vital. I had simply wanted to soak in the hot spring. I was innocent, and happened to be there when they were.

I immediately got a reply. She must have been sleepy, as there was a typo, but it had been an apology.

She also asked me to come to the student council room before classes started because there was something she wanted to say to me about this recent matter.

“You think we’re too early?”

“She might not have arrived yet.”

With my early-morning training finished, I came to the campus straightaway. Part of that stemmed from the fact that it would be difficult to face Ludie. How was I going to explain this to Iori? I needed to say something to him at least, or it might cause a headache later down the line.

Still, though.

“Kujou must be exhausted from dealing with all sorts of issues, and here I am putting this weird responsibility on her.”

I felt bad for her. She had done something for me out of the goodness of her heart, and I had turned it into a huge problem. All while she was already wearing herself out dealing with this unsolved mystery, too.

“I do not believe this is cause for too much concern, Master. This is Miss Ludie, after all. She will certainly understand your circumstances. I believe resolving this will just be a matter of time.”

“I certainly hope so...”

While we were conversing, I arrived at the student council room. I entered

the password just as Kujou had instructed me and undid the lock. As I started walking over to where Kujou had asked me to wait, I realized something.

“Nanami, I sense someone’s here.”

“The door was still locked, yes?”

There was a hissing sound in one direction. It wasn’t the location Kujou had designated to me. There was also a mysterious smell, like paint thinner, enveloping the student council room. I brought my stole up to my mouth.

Alert and wondering what the smell was, I advanced forward.

Was there a chance some demons had appeared? No, this scenario shouldn’t have progressed that far yet, and even if it had, I had never seen an event involving demons occur in the student council room.

“We should be careful.”

“Yeah.”

Hiding my presence, I headed toward the stench.

“Hee-hee, hee-hee-hee-hee.”

I could hear a familiar voice. Someone was definitely here. Growing more cautious, I slowly and steadily moved toward the sound...

And stumbled upon Chris.

She was barefoot. She was sitting in a chair, her feet raised up high enough to reveal her panties beneath her skirt. For some reason, her feet were right up in front of her mouth.

On the desk in front of her was a bottle of mysterious purple liquid, a bundle of suspicious brown paper, and a spray bottle with *superpowered* and a big skull mark on it.

Unless my eyes were deceiving me, she had a look of rapture on her face.

I knew what this was! It was the only explanation!

This was way too big a problem for me to handle myself. I decided to leave this in lori’s hands and went to leave the room, when...

I accidentally kicked a bottle of anti-perspirant spray that had fallen on the ground.

“Huh?!”

Chris yelped and looked at me. Then she froze in place.

She sat there with her mouth agape and her eyes wide open, flashing me her red panties.

The sharp, determined look that was usually on Chris’s face was nowhere to be found. Her dumbfounded expression made it seem like the muscles in her face were asleep at the wheel. Incredibly, she was still as beautiful as ever.

She seemed like she was having trouble processing the situation. In a panic, she tried to hide the cologne in her hands. Uh, that wasn’t really what she was supposed to be hiding here. She needed to conceal those passion-colored panties of hers first.

Chris quickly realized how nonsensical her behavior was and put her foot down.

Then she suddenly stood up, but her eyes started spinning, and she let out a quiet groan. She finally sat back down and let her head droop, her face beet-red. And then...

Chris addressed me in a feeble voice, on the verge of tears.

“Sniff...did you see?”

“Sorry, I did.”

“Heh-heh, heh-heh-heh... The mistake.....of a lifetime.”

Chris gazed up at the sky. She probably thought it was all over. I thought it was, too.

She didn’t move a muscle. Unsure of what to do, I could only stare at the middle of the room and Chris.

It seemed like Chris had been drained of spirit and become a husk. Her expression reminded me of someone who had lost spectacularly after wagering everything they owned.

At a loss, I asked Nanami for help.

“Nanami, what am I supposed to do here?”

“I am sorry, Master. I was taking a break until just a moment ago to use up my paid vacation.”

“Why now of all times? There are clearly more appropriate moments for that, right?!”

“You were managing the situation without me, things seem rather hairy, and it looked like it would be amusing, so I thought it better to quietly watch on the sidelines.”

“Hey, you’re saying the quiet part out loud!”

“Well then, please do what you can, Master. Over and out.”

“Hey, wait, get back here! C’mooooon!”

As I conversed with Nanami like this, Chris broke her silence with a big sigh. Right as I shifted my focus back toward her, she began to speak.

“I have smelly feet.”

She seemed to almost spit out the explanation.

In actuality, I’d known that this was bothering her. In the game, she tells this to Iori once he becomes friendly with her. But the thing was, there definitely isn’t a scene where he just happens to walk in on her like this.

That was why I didn’t know how I was supposed to handle this situation.

“If you want to laugh, go ahead, laugh. Just say it, I don’t care—‘Oh my, what a truly hideous stench. Why, I do believe I have smelled vomit more fragrant than those feet of yours.’”

Could I actually laugh, though? Would I actually be capable of giggling at her while she said this not with a self-deprecating chuckle, but while looking like she wanted to disappear?

Incidentally, the nasty-yet-prim-lady tone Chris had used just now was something that a certain young lady from the game actually says to her. We eroge players were familiar with it due to how weird and jarring it was to read.

“Oh no, um... It’s not really something you can do much about it, is it?”

In the game, Iori actually says that Chris’s feet have “a unique smell” that he “doesn’t really understand, but feels a weird attraction to,” making him want to “sniff them over and over again.” However, Yuika had mentioned Iori’s sensibilities were a bit different from other people’s, and there were times he would perceive tastes and smells in a very bizarre way. I could agree that his sweet tooth was sending him straight toward one lifestyle disease or another.

“Oh enough, just be honest, okay? They reek.”

“They don’t stink at all! Really!”

“*Heh-heh*, yes, people have been kind enough to say that before. But I know full well. I’ve understood this from as early as five years old, okay?”

She lowered her face slightly and spoke as if bringing up some memory of hers.

“If I sat with my feet out, the person next to me would get sick. There was even one who said they didn’t stink at all while chatting with me up close, only to start foaming at the mouth and lose consciousness.”

Were these feet or biological weapons we were talking about? Foaming at the mouth and collapsing was a pretty damning reaction, but y’know, I sort of wondered if that kid hadn’t already been sick with something else. If Chris’s smelly feet really had been the cause of it all, I wouldn’t be surprised if the military tried to do research on their lethality.

“But, deodorant, with deodorant, then...it can counterac—”

“*Ngh!* If that was all it took, I wouldn’t need the Magic Knight Corps’ help!”

So it *was* a military-grade problem. *So uh, Chris, you’re saying some absolutely wild stuff, are you a bit confused?* I understood what she was feeling, but we both needed to calm down. *Also, don’t point your feet at me.*

“I mean, you can smell it, too, can’t you? This rotten stench.”

“I-I can’t smell a thing! Nothing at all. Besides, Chris, you don’t smell anything rotten, either, do you? Just a moment ago, you were smelling your feet with a rapturous look on your face.”

“No, no, you don’t understand! I just, well, how can I put it... I get that way when I smell my feet.”

“Huh? Get what way, exactly?”

Chris must have realized what her outrageous comment sounded like and rephrased it in a fluster.

“No, no, I don’t mean like that! When I imagine what it would be like to cure my smelly feet with deodorant, it just makes me get like that! That’s all!”

“Like I said, get like *what?!?*”

“You know, like my own smelly feet are getting a bit better... *Arrghh, nnnngh*—it just makes me feel amazing, okay?!”

Uh-oh, things were starting to feel a bit dangerous after all. She looked at me with a twinge of anger.

“What?! I don’t want to hear it!”

“Uh, wait, I didn’t say anything. I haven’t said a word.”

I hadn’t, right? Not a peep, I was sure of it!

“You haven’t said anything, but that face of yours won’t shut up!”

“What the heck am I supposed to do, then?!”

“Just smell them! Go ahead, give them a whiff. You want to smell them, don’t you?! Get down on your hands and knees and inhale!”

I didn’t want to smell them at all! Why was she making me do this? Why did I have to get on all fours to do this, anyway?! Was this some sort of BDSM thing?! Seriously, don’t make someone sniff something that’s strong enough to knock people out!

“J-just calm down for a moment, Chris. You’re really confused here, so—”

“Get down on your hands and knees!”

“Yeeees, ma’am!”

What was with this uncomfortable chill in my heart? I was being ordered around, but for some reason, it didn’t feel all that bad. I even felt like there was

some door inside of me that was about to be opened up for the first time.

And that wasn't all. It was strangely satisfying knowing that Nanami was witnessing everything right now, and this pushed me into an even more extreme state.

When I got on all fours, Chris approached and stretched her foot out at me while giving me a flash of her panties.

Sweat dripped down my brow.

When was the last time I had felt this nervous before? This unique sense of tension, like a swirling mixture of uneasiness and despair, along with a slight hint of anticipation and hope, was in the air around us.

I loudly gulped down my spit. Then I brought my face close to her foot. Holding my breath the whole time and moving sluggishly, painstakingly so, as if in slow motion.

With only a few inches left to go, a devilish voice whispered in my ear, telling me I could just get up and run away. That I could still turn back. That I needed to flee, before this new door opened.

And that depending on what happened, there was the possibility of both me and Chris getting hurt.



But I couldn't do it. I had realized the truth.

It wasn't just me.

I wasn't the only one feeling nervous. Chris was, too.

Her foot was trembling slightly. While her face was bright red to her ears, she was clenching her teeth. Her eyes were also closed tightly, her expression clearly conveying that she hated this but knew she had to put up with it all. Beautiful droplets traced her brow, neck, and thighs, and from the depths of her skirt, too close with everything on full display, I felt heat and moisture. Sexy.

There was no doubt. She was giving it her all. She was expending everything she had to make me smell her feet.

She was exerting herself to the fullest. Was I not going to meet her attack head-on? That would be rude to her, and rude to the smell of her feet. It would be rude to those red panties of hers, too, and by extension, rude to humankind as a whole.

I needed to meet this challenge with every fiber of my being. Touching her feet, I brought my nose in closer.

I steeled myself.

Here I go!

"Sniff, sniff. Sniff, sniiiiiff! Ngh, snooooort!! Bwooh!!"

Light rushed through my head.

For a second, I thought my consciousness had been expelled from me—so great was the shock that assailed my body.

What in the world was this stench?

It was difficult to put into words... If I was to describe it, it was like the future, desire, and worldly passions mixed together, multiplied by immorality...into a type of hope.

The fragrance of hope and desire.

"A new world...!"

Chris's expression changed to shock right as her anxiety seemed ready to crush her.

"What?!"

"A new world. It was a new world. It wasn't smelly. It didn't smell at all."

"...Okay, are you telling the truth? Is that the honest-to-goodness truth?!"

It didn't smell. It was unlike anything I had experienced before—a brand-new, unprecedented aroma!

I couldn't understand. Why? Why was it that I wanted to smell some more?

"Sniff, sniff. Sniff, sniiiff! Ahhh, it isn't smelly. Not at all. It doesn't stink! Hope. It's the aroma of hope. Your feet smell of hope that leads to a brand-new world."

"Nhn! No way, you're lying right? You can't be serious!"

"Sniff, sniff. Ahh, I want you to keep your feet uncovered from now on. Let them out, I want them to spritz the air. Hiding them is an affront to the world."

Chris looked at me. Looked at her own foot. Looked at me, then back to her foot... Then she lifted up her foot and took a whiff before saying this, with tears in her eyes: "I can't, I just... It's impossible. I don't believe it. How could I possibly believe you?!"

At this, she grabbed the deodorizer adorned with a skull mark on the desk and left the student council room.

"Ah..."

I reached out my hand but did not reach her. All I could do was stay put, vacantly watching the door close.

I placed the anti-perspirant Chris had left behind into a cardboard box and wrote her name on it. Then I sighed. From there, I brewed hot tea in a pot, took a seat, and waited for Hana.

A short moment later, a thought crossed my mind.

Something was clearly off with us both just now. Rude to all mankind? What was that nonsense?

The weather at Amaterasu Girls' Academy had been cloudless and fair lately.

The sunlight was intense enough to feel hot, and there was almost no breeze. The students wiping down their faces with frilled handkerchiefs must have longed for the days of their summer uniforms. I could spend my time in cool comfort by enchanting my stole with the ice element, developed from the water element, so I was able to enjoy a pleasant experience in both winter and summer.

That said, I felt ill at ease.

It didn't stem from the awkward tension between me and Ludie. It also wasn't due to the foot incident with Chris, though I couldn't deny that it played a bit of a factor.

I also couldn't deny that the fact that I was soon meeting Ludie for lunch wasn't hanging like a cloud over my head.

No, the most significant cause of my anxiety was that everyone was looking at me. Their gazes were completely different from what I had once experienced before. They were a bit like the looks Ludie or President Monica would get.

"Hey, Nanami? Do you feel like I'm getting a strange amount of attention?"

It couldn't have just been my imagination that I was attracting everyone's eyes. Nanami agreed as well.

"Indeed, it seems you are finally getting the reputation you deserve, Master. Normally, they should have all let out a shrill scream and fainted the moment they saw you."

"Are you confusing me with a type of monster?"

"In any case, knowing how you are, Master, I assumed that this would happen sooner or later."

"Why?"

"I can guess but cannot say with absolute certainty. Though if my hypothesis is correct, then I believe the students have heard about you from Miss Kujou or your classmates."

"From my classmates?"

“Yes, that is right. More importantly, Miss Ludie is here.”

Nanami was right. I picked out Ludie chatting idly with a smile several dozen feet up ahead. She was unleashing her “prim and proper lady” aura to the max, coming off as even more refined and noble than usual.

After chatting for a little while, she realized I was here. She finished up her conversation with the person she was talking with.

When she did, the person she was speaking with came running over to me and greeted me.

“Erm, um, good day, Miss Takioto.”

I didn’t really understand why, but she seemed a bit nervous. I stood looking at this girl. In her hair was a bright-red pin, a type of accessory not often seen at this school.

“Is something wrong, Miss Takioto?” she asked, likely because I had stood there staring at her pin.

“Oh, I was just admiring your pin. It’s cute.”

At my reply, the girl’s face turned as red as a strawberry, before she then placed both hands up to her cheeks and sped off.

“Huh?”

My actual voice slipped out. Witnessing this, Nanami began to speak to me.

“She might have gotten pregnant from that. What a joyous occasion.”

“Impregnating people just from talking with them? What sort of creature do you take me for?”

I was pretty sure that sort of plot device didn’t even crop up in eroge or erotic manga, either. Though the fact that I couldn’t say that with one-hundred-percent certainty spoke to the terrifying qualities of those mediums.

I hadn’t been the only one looking on dumbfounded. Ludie was as well. She was busy playing the role of princess, so the average person would have thought she was just grinning. However, this look of hers was the one she wore when she was in a bad mood or dissatisfied with something.

For now, I just apologized about what had happened earlier.

“I don’t care about that anymore. Just do whatever you need to do to forget it ever happened, and don’t mention it to me ever again. Every time you bring it up, I also have to remember it, you know!”

Ludie stared at me in embarrassment.

If she insisted, then it would be better to not bring it up. Unfortunately, forgetting completely was going to be impossible.

“Anyway...what was that girl’s deal?”

“You did something to her, didn’t you?”

I definitely didn’t recall doing anything to her, that was for sure.

“More importantly, did you do something to Vestris, too?”

Vestris was the girl we had met on our tour of the dorm, right?

“Not that I’m aware...”

“I was just chatting with her earlier, and she asked me all sorts of things about you. She also asked me when we were going to leave Amaterasu.”

“Vestris did?”

I got it now. I had vaguely picked up on it. In the game, she was handled like a background character, so I wasn’t sure how it would play out in reality, but I guessed where this was going.

“Yes. When I mentioned that we couldn’t stay here for long, she said ‘Oh that’s too bad’ with a very happy look on her face. She was obviously pleased, so I thought you must have done something to get on her bad side. Like embarrassed her in a mock battle or something.”

“Hmmm. But I haven’t. For starters, I didn’t fight her in my sparring match.”

Though, she might have been there to watch it. I made sure to ask Nanami about that, but she couldn’t recall anything, either.

As Ludie and I talked, Iori came up to us.

He, no, *she* sweetly rushed over to us while waving her hand. Iori had always

come off like some cute fuzzy animal to me, but I got the feeling this quality of his was growing stronger by the day. He had already become tens of times, no, *hundreds* of times cuter than the average girl.

“Huff, huff, huff. Actually, someone just asked me about Kou—oops. Someone just asked me about Nanako, and they talked about how cool you are!”

Whoa there, lori... What are you saying to me with that devilishly cute smile of yours? Even the gatekeeper of hell would break into a grin seeing that.

“Actually, people have also come up to me and said they wanted to know more about ‘Miss Nanako,’” Ludie chimed in.

“I wonder what that’s about. Do you think my secret’s out?”

“If that were the case, then it would be causing a much bigger problem!”

Iori was right. Things would be a lot worse than this, and Kujou would have wasted no time throwing me off campus.

“Oh right, Ms. Sakura said she has something she wanted to talk to you to about!”

“Did she finish her analysis?”

“Yeah, and she wondered if we could all get together after we finished our meal.”

“Okay. My room, then?”

“Has to be somewhere without anyone else, of course. It may just get a bit cramped with more people.”

“Good point. Guess I’ll try asking Kujou.”

A short while later, Ludie, Hana, Nanami and Ms. Sakura, and I all gathered in my room. It had been a while since I’d seen male Iori, huh.

“I apologize for the lack of space. There isn’t anywhere else we can be alone this time of day...,” Kujou explained.

“Not at all, it’s not your fault, Kujou! There was nothing you could do about it,” Iori said. Hana nodded. The student council room was currently occupied, and there wasn’t anywhere else that was absolutely safe we could use without

permission. Kujou had offered to share her room with us, but I figured she probably didn't want to have so many people there at once, and we decided to gather here instead. She'd said that if there was more time, she could have arranged a meeting room for us.

"I'll get right down to business if you don't mind," Ms. Sakura said, and we all nodded. She began to speak, concern on her face.

"I tried looking into the item you left with me, and I discovered that it is apparently quite dangerous."

"Dangerous?" Iori asked.

Ms. Sakura took out the stone Kujou and I had discovered in the grand bath.

"Yes, this item absorbs pure maidenly energy and instantly sends it to another location."

"Maidenly energy?"

Apart from Nanami and me, everyone was confused about what this was. I could see it written on their faces.

"Put simply, it is a substance similar to mana that only women possess. It's difficult to explain, so for now, please think of it as mana exclusive to women."

Incidentally, there was also virile energy. Not manly, mind you: virile energy. The event it comes up in is funny, but I didn't want to get involved in it.

"I'd like to know more about this 'maidenly energy...'"

"Iori, we gotta move the conversation along here, so let's just think of it as mana, okay?"

Iori nodded at my comment. Interestingly, both types of energy intermingled inside Iori when he was in his angel fusion form, which was why he'd gotten his energy sucked out. Also, there were some rare people who naturally had both types of energy mixed inside of them as well.

"It sends out maidenly energy. If such an item existed, it would be sure to revolutionize the whole magic world."

Ms. Sakura nodded at Ludie's comment.

“Yes, in order to make something that dispatches it to a different place like this, you need a very, very unique and rare material. Magic that sucks out maidenly energy is also very difficult, and utilizes a very valuable medium, but we can put that aside for now. The item dispatching the mana is far more important here.”

“Sending maidenly energy... We weren’t able to confirm if there was any mana output visible to the naked eye. So in other words, it’s sending off this mana in a form that allows it to be teleported. That’s why you said it was almost instantaneous earlier, yes?”

Nanami confirmed.

“Yes, that interpretation is fine. As for the medium required to accomplish such a feat, almost none exist. They’re not easy to get your hands on.”

“And this medium happens to be here on the Amaterasu Girls’ Academy campus. Was this used for this latest series of incidents?” Hana asked, and Ms. Sakura nodded.

“Yes, the incidents occurring at the Girls’ Academy may have all been caused in a similar way. Let’s go back and check where they all occurred. Nanami or I may be able to find some kind of clue.”

“Let’s investigate right away!”

Iori started to stand up, but I held him back.

“Whoa, just hold on a sec. We’ll still have plenty of time after we get the full story, okay? ‘Sides, what’re you going to do while you look like a dude?”

Though, I did get the feeling that even without fusing, Iori could wear the Amaterasu Girls’ Academy uniform and pass just fine.

“Yes, Master is right. There are still a number of questions we need to address. Why does someone need to obtain maidenly energy and teleport it elsewhere? What’s this all being done for?”

Ms. Sakura nodded.

“I’ve deduced a possible explanation for those questions. I can’t say with certainty that it’s the reason, but the possibility is quite high.”

“And what would that be?” Ludie asked. Ms. Sakura replied immediately: “Let me first talk about this stone. That should make it easier to understand.”

She laid her eyes on the stone.

“As I just said, this is an item that can send maidenly energy to another location. But what you might not know is that it’s extremely difficult to use.”

“Really?” Ludie asked, and Ms. Sakura nodded.

“Someone would need the support of demons or their kin to successfully use the stone’s powers.”

“Demons! Why would they be here?!” Iori shouted, looking shocked. He had previously battled against them in a dungeon with the President.

“There are various races of demonkin, and they all have their own ideologies. So it’s impossible to speculate why they would be involved.”

What Ms. Sakura was trying to get across was that there were many different varieties of demonkin, much like there were humans, beastfolk, and elves, and that they each had their own ways of thinking.

“I do know what this demonkin is involved with, though.”

“What would that be?” Hana asked. Ms. Sakura replied with a grave look: “To put it in a way the people of this world can easily understand, it would be the ‘Malevolent Lord.’ They have their religion that goes around causing problems, so I would assume everyone’s familiar with them.”

“The Malevolent Lord?!”

Ludie’s face stiffened. She must have been having flashbacks to when she was attacked by the followers of the Church of the Malevolent Lord. Her hands were trembling slightly.

“Ludie, it’s okay.”

I reassured her with a smile. Ludie wasn’t the main target for this latest event, but she would likely be targeted by them in the future. I wasn’t going to let them get their way, though.

Despite this, I doubted she could so easily feel true peace of mind. It didn’t

make the Malevolent Lord's involvement any less frightening.

"The situation here has expanded in scope," Nanami murmured.

They must not have expected the Malevolent Lord to suddenly be invoked. Everyone in the room was genuinely surprised.

However, I knew all the facts about this matter, along with all the people involved. I also knew what the perpetrators were trying to accomplish.

Ms. Sakura continued explaining: "The mana-sucking item looks like an ordinary stone right now, but it contains a fragment of the Malevolent Lord's horn. That's why it could only belong to a demonkin involved with the Malevolent Lord in some way. The device is high quality, too, so I imagine their followers had a hard time finding it."

Now that he knew the Church of the Malevolent Lord was involved, Iori was completely convinced.

"When you say 'quality,' you mean similar to a magic stone, right? The higher the quality, the more powerful it is?"

"Correct. Also, the higher the quality, the more difficult it is to manufacture. On top of that, the item needs to be regularly maintained, and it can only be used in certain areas. And this was set up in the grand bath? Normally, that would be impossible. Do you know what this means?"

Naturally, everyone had realized what she was implying.

"There's a collaborator inside the academy?" Iori asked. No one objected to his suggestion, and the area was enveloped in a somber silence.

A few moments later, Hana sighed quietly. Then she gave a sorrowful smile.

"I had considered the possibility, but to hear it with such certainty... It's honestly a little hard to bear," she said, lowering her eyes.

"But why was the stone placed in the bath if it was so valuable?"

I answered Iori's question:

"It can only be used in certain places, and they probably figured that it fit so naturally in the grand bath's garden that no one would notice. Besides,

someone bringing a stone inside over and over again would be more suspicious, right?"

"Fair enough," Iori replied, convinced.

".....I wonder why someone would assist such an evil being?" Ludie murmured.

"They might not even recognize what they're doing is evil at all. They could even think their actions are just," Nanami answered.

I could sort of understand what Nanami was trying to get at. If we were in their position, we'd probably see the Malevolent Lord as in the right, and our current selves as the villains.

If both sides confronting each other believed that they were right, then ultimately, true justice was determined by the victor.

"I've been able to narrow down where this maidenly energy is getting sent somewhat, but it's still too broad. Let's sit tight for a bit."

"Sit tight? You mean let the culprit act freely?"

"Right, leave them to do what they want and capture them. Either that or catch them in the act when they are performing maintenance on this item. That would really narrow things down."

Everyone besides Hana nodded at Ms. Sakura's words.

"I would rather not expose the students to danger..."

"I'm sorry, but I'm just going to need you to hang in there for now. Fortunately, neither the culprit nor anyone involved are going far enough to kill their victims. They could be trying to absorb the maidenly energy over a long period of time, without drawing attention to themselves."

"...Will this really be okay?" Hana asked, looking worried.

"It will be," I said to her.

"All of us are here, and we'll protect the students no matter what. Am I right, Iori? Ludie? Nanami?"

"Yeah, of course."

“I’ll do everything in my power, too.”

“I shall display the true power of maids.”

Hana looked at all our faces and smiled gently. Then she thanked us.

Iori beamed at her words of gratitude, but then he seemed to abruptly recall something, clapping his hands together.

“Right. Hey, Ms. Sakura, there’s one thing I’m still curious about.”

“What is it?”

“You said that you had narrowed down the location somewhat, right, but that it was still too broad. Where did you mean, exactly?”

“Ah, well... I was talking about the Amaterasu Dungeon.”

The place she gave was the dungeon on Amaterasu’s campus.

We all decided to think about how to let the culprit implicate themselves after classes were finished and we went our separate ways. The strategy was to lead as normal a school life as possible, get the culprit to let their guard down, find an opening, and finish them off in one fell swoop.

And so, I also returned to my classroom, meeting back up with Chris, Milena, and Satomi. Though given that we had a home economics course, I let Nanami handle most of it.

Once classes were over, I got up from my seat to head back to my room. Right as I picked up my bag to leave, I heard Satomi’s voice.

“Nanako, you got a sec?”

“Hm? What is it?”

I placed my bag back down as I asked, and Satomi came up next to me, stretching out her arm and putting it around my shoulder. Then she began to speak with a big grin on her face.

“Anything been different for you lately?”

“Different lately? Oh, I suppose I have been getting greeted a bit more.”

When I first came here, people treated me like Ludie’s plus one, but for some

reason the students had started to greet me directly these days.

“Oh, that makes sense, doesn’t it?” Milena chimed in.

“Yup. Otohime is real popular, so it can get pretty tough. There’s the whole Super Sister sitch, too, so there might be a bit of an uproar.”

“Otohime?” I asked, hearing her use a term I wasn’t familiar with. I knew about the Otohime who appeared in the fairytale of Urashima Taro, but we weren’t in Japan...

“My, my, so the girl herself doesn’t know, does she? Perhaps she’s actually a little dense,” Milena said with a wry smile.

“Uh-oh. Sounds like a rough time. Well, good luck.”

“Half of this is because of you, isn’t it?”

“Sure, but this isn’t a problem I can do anything about, right?”

“That’s true.”

Milena looked at me with pity in her eyes.

“Well in any case, give it your best shot, Otohime.”

Uh? Otohime?



CONFIG

Reborn as a Side Character in a Fantasy Dating Sim —*Chris's Perspective*— I couldn't get my mind off her lately.

Nanako Takioto.

Part of it was because I'd ended up making her smell my feet. There had definitely been something off with me back then. I'd always agonized over that stench.

After witnessing someone laugh my worries off, insisting that I was exaggerating, only to sniff them and collapse, foaming at the mouth, anyone would change how they thought about the subject.

Nanako Takioto had told me that my feet didn't smell, but that couldn't possibly be true.

I tried very hard to forget everything that happened, but with how famous Nanako Takioto had gotten, it was futile.

I'd hear her name whether I wanted to or not. Every time I did, I couldn't help thinking over all sorts of things.

As for why she had gotten so famous, I could point to a few different reasons.

The biggest was the fact that she had beaten Satomi, who was one of the five strongest second-years. And Nanako hadn't just beaten Satomi—she had trounced Satomi even after she had gone all out and used her bestial transformation.

Nanako had said that Satomi was the person she was most compatible with. However, Satomi had flipped this compatibility on its head with her beast form. She excelled the most at fighting in close quarters.

Even I would have very little hope of defeating her if she used her bestial transformation to close the distance. Getting right into melee range with her was basically suicide.

However, Nanako had defeated Satomi without even showing the blade of the sword on her waist, using nothing but the stole on her person.

It was no wonder, then, that everyone who witnessed this had given her the nickname of Otohime.

Otohime was a beautiful woman who served the Water Dragon and was said to have lived in the Dragon Palace. She wore a flowing celestial raiment around her neck and performed beautiful dances. She was believed to be very powerful, possessing the ability to change the weather itself and manipulate water like an arm.

Nanako Takioto and Otohime were similar women.

One of the sources of Nanako's nickname was her stole. She wore it around her body almost like the robes of a god, giving her a strong resemblance to Otohime and her unrivaled beauty.

People also compared Nanako's fighting style to Otohime's. It looked almost like she was dancing when she fought, the way she fluidly controlled her stole and repelled her opponents' attacks with only the slightest movements. Otohime was renowned for her dances, so I could understand why they had nicknamed Nanako after her.

Nanako's appearance was another cause for the comparison. No one could deny she was beautiful. Her height, great figure, and fine features—plus her signature red stole—had caused a tiny stir the moment she set foot in the academy. She was so beautiful that she didn't even seem out of place standing next to Princess Ludivine, crown jewel of the elves.

The humble figure she cut as she served Princess Ludivine with respect and reverence also resembled Otohime's service to the Water Dragon.

Nanako's nickname was a perfect fit.

This was in part why everyone began to take notice of her behavior. A great number of students had also witnessed her bridal-carry an ailing girl to treatment. I myself had seen students whispering about how dashing she was, or how they longed to be carried off by her, too.

It was widely known that she was on good terms with Sister Kujou. Many other students had witnessed them laughing together. There were even some who'd witnessed them conversing together and recounted the two goddesses'

moment of respite.

Otohime was now popular. No, she was *too* popular. To the point that it had become a fad to add the color red to one's belongings in adoration of her.

Hair clips, ornamental hairpins, hair ties, and other accessories had all gotten redder lately. I had never seen such a phenomenon occur except with Sister Kujou.

Why wasn't this happening to me?

Was I too plain? Was my strength not outstanding enough? But I had always tried to work for the betterment of everyone else. Or had I really?

At first, I'd idolized Sister Kujou, and I began learning magic for a rather impure reason, so maybe this was all being conveyed to everyone else, too.

I suddenly thought back to the past.

The reason I worked so hard to learn magic was because I hated the idea of an arranged marriage. The nobility thought it was normal for parents to force their child into marriage, and I had seen such people before myself.

My younger self at the time may not have insisted on waiting for her prince charming on a white steed, but I still wanted to marry a wonderful man. That, and I absolutely refused to have my parents decide my future partner via marriage interviews.

I thought that if I could achieve things as a magic user, I would be able to delay when my marriage interviews would start, giving me the freedom to do what I wanted. But the truth was that my family had a hands-off way of thinking about it; they didn't care who I married, as long as I tied the knot eventually.

But I hadn't known that at the time. I remember bringing a magic book to my mother and having her teach me, hoping it would let me get out of marriage interviews.

I ended up falling in love with magic, forgetting all about my original motive for learning it.

The first spell I cast was Fire. It took me quite a long time to merely produce a ball of flame the size of my fist.

The moment after my efforts finally paid off, something stirred inside me.

I remember saying “amazing” over and over again.

It was a tiny flame, barely bigger than a candle and easily blown out with a puff, but it still moved me.

That instant, my goals changed—I wanted to learn to use more magic.

I practiced almost every day because I had a knack for it, particularly fire magic. I had so much fun, and it filled me with happiness.

I wanted to grow strong, I wanted to learn how to use even more amazing magic. If things went well, I wanted to win a tournament. It was when these thoughts grew strong inside my mind that I first heard her name.

Monica Mercedes von Mobius.

A fire battlemage who boasted incredible strength. The student council president of Tsukuyomi Magic Academy, and unrivaled among her classmates. A woman powerful enough to be crowned strongest of all.

I was captivated by her strength and went to see her in a tournament. It was back when Sister Kujou and Miss Monica were first-years, and I had yet to enroll in school.

That was the first time I learned of Sister Kujou. She defeated the reigning Beast King of Susano Martial Academy, said to be the strongest contender to win the tournament after Monica.

The moment Kujou defeated the Beast King, there was a shocked silence followed by a thunderous roar of applause. No one there had thought she would win. Then, riding that moment, she fought Miss Monica.

Things played out according to people’s predictions, and President Monica’s strength was the real deal. However, Sister Kujou was also the only girl who had been able to fight her on equal terms. I can still remember how moved and emotional I was that day.

If I hadn’t watched Sister Kujou and Miss Monica’s bout, then I probably would have enrolled at Tsukuyomi Magic Academy.

That was how strong my feelings for Sister Kujou were. My own specialization

in fire magic made me understand all the better how incredible Miss Monica was. However, I think I was able to comprehend better than anyone how amazing Sister Kujou had been for seriously standing up against her.

Though both of them were incredible, their demeanors were slightly different. So, I agonized over the choice. Which school would I apply to?

If Miss Monica's presence was like a red rose, drawing in the attention of those around her, then Sister Kujou was beautiful and gallant like a white lily, more unassuming than the rose, yet still possessing a beauty that drew the eyes of others.

After I went back and forth over and over again, I chose Sister Kujou. I still don't believe I made the wrong choice. The better I got to know her, the more I idolized her.

She possessed magnificent ideas, worthy of respect. She had true strength. Then, seeing her look just like a regular noble, troubled by her parents pushing marriage interviews on her, like myself in the past, made me feel an even stronger affinity with her.

She was superb in every respect.

I entered the student council wishing to grow even the slightest bit closer to her. I worked for Sister Kujou's sake, and for the sake of the students. When the vote for Super Sister came around, needless to say, I supported her.

When she achieved the hitherto unheard-of feat of holding the titles of Super Sister and student council simultaneously, I was as overjoyed as if it was my own accomplishment, and I began to desire the title of Super Sister myself.

First, I believed that I needed to hone my skills and strength. From there, I hid the smell of my feet and spent my days trying to serve as a model for the students to follow, aiming to become a woman of impeccable conduct, beloved by all.

I trained every day and obtained the strength to vie for the top place in my class. It had required a tremendous amount of hard work, but I was able to do so because of Sister Kujou.

Then, little by ever so little, some girls began to show me reverence. That

made me so happy.

Yet in less than a week, Nanako Takioto had managed to achieve what it had taken me a year to build up.

I could only let out a self-deprecating laugh. It was far more frustrating than I could have imagined. There had been a night when the distress brought me close to tears.

It was the first time I had ever resented my lack of strength.

Part of me then felt that everything would have gone smoothly if Nanako Takioto wasn't here. I felt repulsed by my own awful thoughts, and my own spinelessness threatened to crush me.

I was sure that today would be another day plagued by this same self-disgust.

As I thought all of this, there was a knock on the door to my room. "Come in," I said, and Vestris stepped inside the place as if it was her own.

"Good day, Gauss."

"Good day."

The very last person I wanted to see right now had shown up. I regretted letting her in.

"I see your dwelling is as dismal as ever."

"Oh, and here I was thinking how much easier it is to live in compared to that gaudy room of yours."

Being surrounded on all sides by furniture purely meant to look pretty, adorned with golden ornaments, was tiring on the eyes. I preferred simple rooms, like Sister Kujou's.

"Aw, how sad. You don't seem to understand luxury, do you?"

"You and I are never going to get along. What are you here for then?" I said, with the sentiment that if she didn't have any business, she should get out.

However, Vestris brushed off my words like they were nothing, putting her hand up to her forehead and looking distraught.

"You see, I am incensed."

“Oh, what a coincidence. So am I.”

Both at her and myself.

“Incensed at that girl everyone is praising, with an Otohime this and an Otohime that. You too, I assume?”

I fought back the urge to point out that Nanako was at least taller and stronger than her.

“Not particularly...”

“Oh, that’s a lie, I’m sure you can’t help but have her on your mind. Especially for you, with your eyes set on being Super Sister, after all.”

When I grew silent, she nodded with a grin.

“People like us who aspire to be Super Sister can’t have the votes going to an outsider, can we?”

“Not that I’m campaigning to be Super Sister as overtly as you are.”

I absolutely hated Vestris’s stance on it.

I hated how she publicly announced she was aiming to become Super Sister, treated the children of families unable to go against her own like retainers, and gathered votes by behaving like she was campaigning for the honor.

I also loathed how she used her family as a shield to threaten anyone she didn’t get along with.

I truly thought that she was the type of person I would never be able to be cordial with.

“Isn’t she intolerable?”

“Not really? We’re not strong enough, that’s all.”

If I wasn’t going to be recognized for what I’d done, then I didn’t need to become Super Sister.

That’s how I was supposed to have thought about it.

Yet the fact remained that after working so hard and coming so far, my sentiment was wavering.

It seriously irritated me. Not Nanako Takioto. I was irritated at myself for thinking like this.

“I understand how you feel. I can’t stand you, but I’ve always liked that haughtiness of yours.”

I was a little annoyed to have her talk to me about having high pride. *You wear your pride so clearly on your sleeve that it’s higher than anyone can hope to reach.*

Feeling like this was all ridiculous, I looked away without saying a word. However, she put her arm around my shoulder and spoke to me.

“I have seen how hard you’ve worked. You may be a rival, but I’ve always been watching, you know. All the more reason, honestly... If Nanako Takioto is going to steal it away from me anyway, I would much rather have the title go to you instead.”

“You really say some nasty things, you know that?”

I couldn’t help letting the jab slip out. She may have been aware of it herself, as she didn’t react at all.

“That’s not all, either. We cannot let our prestigious academy, or its customs, be interfered with by a student of another school.”

I also questioned having a student from another school getting Super Sister votes. However, Sister Kujou didn’t seem concerned about it at all, and such a rule hadn’t necessarily been laid out anywhere, either.

“Above all, I cannot stand to have a girl who’s not from a noble family even be in the running at all.”

She bit her nails, grinding her teeth.

Looking at her, I suddenly thought that it was such a waste. Vestris definitely had a talent for magic, but the power and money of her family had deluded her. Perhaps it was that she was resting on her laurels. If she just trained as much as everyone else and grew stronger, her popularity and vocal support would grow with it, but since I’d known her, the only thing that had grown was her misplaced pride.

“Nanako Takioto herself doesn’t have any desire to be Super Sister, so why don’t we both eliminate her votes together?”

“That’s impossible.”

“It absolutely is possible. I have a plan.”

“There’s no way you could do something like that.”

“But I can. With my magic, and this plan of mine. You just have to lure her somewhere. I’ll take care of the rest.”

“But...”

“I’m sure you’ll regret it forever.”

I knew that her words were the devil whispering on my shoulder.

“So, you want to give up on being Super Sister, then? You’re fine with this girl popping up out of nowhere to make a mockery of the prestigious Super Sister institution, is that it?”

I didn’t. I wanted to become Super Sister. To become a Super Sister like Sister Kujou. I had always worked hard for it.

All my actions, all my thoughts up until now began flowing through my mind like a muddy stream. It was the first time I’d felt this way.

“Work with me.”

Vestris extended her hand, bearing a ring inlaid with a black magic stone, seeking my handshake.

I couldn’t let myself take it. No matter what turbid waters swallowed me up, I absolutely couldn’t shake her hand. I needed to desperately keep breathing, and search for the shore to keep myself from going under. Yet, there was nothing around me, and with no path to save me, in the end, I reached out my hand, too.

I took hers in mine.

“Here it is. All the students pray here before heading for the dungeon,” I said as I brought Nanako Takioto, Princess Ludivine, and Iori Hijiri there.

Vestris’s instructions were simple—just take Nanako Takioto to a shrine the

size of a small house located on the first floor of the Amaterasu Dungeon.

It was a spot many of the students visited before progressing through the dungeon. I'd been there several times myself.

Here my fellow classmates and underclassmen would pray to get through the dungeon safely, before heading farther inside.

"Looks like an actual shrine, doesn't it?" Nanako Takioto commented, staring at the structure. She was a native of Wakoku, so she was likely used to seeing such locations.

In my own country, these types of structures had been a rarity, so I remembered being fascinated when I first saw it.

"What's wrong? You seem a bit off today," Nanako said, looking at me.

"Nothing, I'm just excited to go through the dungeon," I said, dodging the question. Then, I tightly gripped the stone in my pocket.

Vestris asked me to hand this stone over to a girl working under her. A girl who seemed to be the one she mentioned was praying at the shrine with several of her friends.

She would do everything, I had been told.

A thought crossed my mind as the other three approached the shrine.

What was I doing? Did I really want to become Super Sister enough to do something like this? What exactly was the Super Sister title that I had idolized and longed for?

There appeared to be several other students praying here today as well, and there was quite a large number of people in the area. We lined up in the small queue that had formed, and before long it was finally our time to offer our prayers.

The instant I touched the rope hanging from the bell in front of the shrine, it happened.

"What?"

Suddenly, a flame lit up on the candlestick-looking object beside me.

Then the door to the shrine abruptly opened, and the inside was laid bare.

“What is this? A mirror?”

Up ahead, beyond the open door, there was a mirror within the inner shrine. It had a large crack along it, with a black light leaking out from the gap.

It was so hot!

Suddenly, I felt heat at my side, and I took out what was causing it from my pocket. It was the stone Vestris had given me.

The stone shined with a black light, and the crack in the mirror began growing even larger, until it finally shattered.

Then a magic circle appeared below the broken mirror. The shards of glass and the mirror stand disappeared, and in their places, several monsters jumped out. They looked like beasts made of paper. The creatures ran toward the nearby students and began attacking them with their claws and horns.

I quickly retreated far back while watching it all dumbfounded, when I then heard the voice of the noble girl Vestris kept as a lackey.

“Miss Christine just summoned monsters!”

“Huh?”

I was confused. I hadn’t done anything of the sort. Yet, she began running around saying I was summoning monsters. She raised her voice and ran around.

Hearing this, several of the nearby students started staring at me. The instant I met their gazes, it hit me.

I had been set up.

Vestris hadn’t been trying to go after Nanako Takioto; she had been trying to trick me from the very start.

“Nanako, lori, here they come.”

Princess Ludivine’s composed voice brought me back to my senses.

First and foremost, I needed to protect her. She was a student from another school, and the treasure of the Tréfle Empire. This thought made me understand the situation even more. Of course Vestris had wanted to make it

look like I was attacking Princess Ludivine. If a key figure from another country was attacked, it had the chance of turning into an international incident.

Vestris had even taken this into consideration.

When I tried to go to Ludie's side, Vestris's lackey was staring at me. I was sure she would say something else when I got close, too.

At that moment, there was a creature resembling a paper butterfly closing in, so I hit it with a fireball. This butterfly seemed to be attacking the students as well.

Princess Ludivine's group and several other students were fighting, but the monsters kept appearing one after another.

They were still coming out.

I thought it was poetic justice. I was trying to set Nanako up, but in the end, I'd gotten taken advantage of instead. All of a sudden, Vestris's words—*"I'm sure you'll regret it forever"*—flickered in the back of my mind.

I had regretted taking her hand, and I still felt guilty now.

I would probably regret it from here on out, too. Not only had I ruined everything I had built up until now, but I had actually made things worse for myself by tossing aside my own pride and the things I believed in.

This was truly awful.

Yet even so, I wanted to make sure my final moments before my fall were beautiful. Though my reputation might drop down into the dirt, I didn't want to cause any damage to the school or harm to the students.

Even if I had to give my life to do so.

That was why I jumped into the teleportation magic circle inside the shrine where the monsters were appearing from.

"Chris!"

I thought that I heard Nanako and the others shouting.

"Stop right there, Chris! Chris!"

I must have been hallucinating, but I thought I could hear Sister Kujou's voice

as well. She couldn't have possibly been there because she'd told me she had work to do. Besides, no matter who called out to me, I couldn't stop. I had to keep going.

When I finished teleporting, I searched for the source from which the monsters appeared. Before me was a path resembling a wide mining tunnel. It appeared this area had been turned into a dungeon, so I decided to continue down the path. Forgetting myself, I recklessly barreled forward.

Burning away the paper beasts that attacked me, I continued ever onward. I progressed through without any break, paying no heed to my remaining mana, and using all the items I had.

How many floors had I gone through? How much time had passed? Consuming over half of my mana, I finally arrived at what appeared to be the deepest section of the dungeon.

I saw what looked like a single human standing there. However, on closer inspection, it wasn't a person at all.

"Paper?"

It was made of paper. Paper folded into the shape of a person, one resembling a soldier. The creature was moving similarly to the other enemies that had appeared in the dungeon.

There was also a magic circle at the paper soldier's feet, and numerous pieces of paper were floating up from it. All of them folded automatically in midair without the soldier touching them, taking the shapes of beasts, butterflies, and more. The whole process only took a few seconds.

The paper creatures that were created flew straight toward the teleportation circle as if truly alive.

Most likely, this human-shaped paper was the source of it all.

If I could defeat it, then I'd be able suppress the monster summoning. That should do the trick. I readied my wand and strengthened my mana.

When I did, the paper soldier appeared to notice me, and turned my way. Then he directed a paper arm toward me.

At the same moment, the paper butterflies changed their direction and flew my way in a scattered formation. There were far more than I could count.

However, I had my magic.

“If they’re made of our paper, then I just have to burn them all up!”

I cast my spell and created a huge wall of flames.

Similar monsters made of paper had appeared while I was clearing the dungeon, but I managed to easily defeat most of them by burning them up. Even these strange butterflies were still paper, after all, so I just had to burn them to a crisp.

But this was the wrong move.

Several of the butterflies thrust through my wall of fire.

My flames definitely had some effect. Some of the butterflies were fully reduced to ash, but others didn’t burn.

Their numbers were overwhelming. There were so many that before the flames could spread, the butterflies charged through, and unbelievably, destroyed the wall.

“There’s just too many...”

Several of the butterflies, after piercing through the fire wall, flew at me even as they burned. My own attack had actually enhanced my opponent’s.

Still, their numbers had decreased, and I acted the moment the wall was broken through, so I had plenty of time to dodge.

Nevertheless, while I was evading their attacks, several pieces of paper floated up around the paper soldier. The sheets of paper folded simultaneously in midair.

“What is it this time? Dice?”

They were forming what appeared to be a square box. The boxes floated all around the paper soldier. Their movements were slightly different from the butterflies of before. Several were then scattered to various different locations.

One of them flew in close to me, and when it did, this box-like creation puffed

up with air until it looked ready to burst.

“?!”

Sensing the danger, I dodged. The cube exploded.

“Wait, those are bombs?!”

That wasn't all. The paper soldier had already finished folding something else and fired it toward me. His barrage flew straight at me, and at quite a high speed, too.

I immediately launched a fireball and hit the flat objects heading toward me. Unfortunately, they cut through my spell and flew right down at my feet.

I dodged desperately, but one of the paper creations scraped my foot. It was shaped into a star.

But by attempting to evade, I'd put myself in greater danger. One of the square boxes was right in range of me.

It was going to explode.

Seeing this box swell up, I instantly twisted my body and covered my face with my enhanced arms and hands in an attempt to prevent as much damage as possible.

A shockwave so powerful it forced my eyes closed and a concussive sound passed through my body.

I had blundered. I should have realized those boxes were mines the moment the paper soldier scattered them around. I should have examined my surroundings more carefully. If I had known how they functioned sooner, things never would have ended up like this.

“This is bad. My feet won't move.”

I had managed to cover my face, but I hadn't been able to protect my legs. Would my healing magic be fast enough? Would my recovery items make it in time?

The paper soldier stared vacantly at me, unable to move.

I had somewhat figured out that the longer that paper of theirs took to fold,

the more powerful it was.

The stars, taking longer to make than the butterflies, were strong, and the exploding dice had taken an even longer time to fold.

Now, it was making something else.

“Impressive, you can even fold something like that?”

Around the soldier, more than ten large pieces of paper began folding all at once. They had all been shaped into small lightning bolts. Once they had all taken their lightning-bolt shape, they began to combine with the other pieces of paper to form a different shape. I could do nothing but sit there and watch it happen.

In the end, the several dozen pieces of paper had transformed into a box resembling a chunk of rock candy.

“After making something so complicated with such big pieces of paper, I wonder just how strong it is.”

I couldn't dodge it, and I didn't think I would be able to defend against it.

A strange sensation hit me as I stared at the rock candy creation. I was clearly on the brink of death, yet my mind was filled with meaningless thoughts.

“...Amazing. You can even fold paper into a shape like that?”

Now that I thought about it, Sister Kujou was a native of Wakoku. If I recalled correctly, there was a tradition in Wakoku culture called “origami.” Was this a type of origami, then?

The paper soldier had crafted a mysterious object, like a jagged sphere. It seemed to be constructed from a very rigidly calculated design. It would have probably looked very pretty as a decoration in my room.

The paper soldier threw this rock candy creation toward me. It flew straight at me. A direct hit would probably kill me. But I couldn't dodge it. My feet wouldn't move. It didn't seem like a simple spell would be able to stop it, and I couldn't quickly prepare the magic necessary to guard against it.

As the rock candy creation approached, a thought crossed my mind.

“I wonder if Sister Kujou would be able to fold a shape like that?”

If she could, I would have liked to see how it all came together. I was talking about Sister Kujou, after all; she could probably fold something like it with ease.

So just like always, I would have Sister Kujou teach me how. She would probably slowly and deliberately show me how to fold it with those pretty hands of hers, all with a gentle smile on her face.

Sister Kujou was good at taking care of others, so she was bound to teach me very attentively until I managed to do it myself. Once I completed it, I would display it in the student council room as a memento of ours.

Then, we'd look at it together, and if the other student council members asked us what it was, I could jokingly answer that it was a secret between me and Sister Kujou.

Oh, right of course. I wasn't going to be able to see her again. Sheesh, I really was stupid, letting my mind run away like that.

Death was already closing in right in front of me. My remains might not be left behind in one clean piece. I would have preferred Sister Kujou and the others not see me like that. But I was sure the rumors had already spread about me summoning monsters, so they'd probably handle my body however they saw fit, and that would be the end of it. Depending on the circumstances, they might not find my corpse and become convinced that I had fled.

There was less than thirty feet between me and the rock candy creation now. It flew closer, right toward me... Just when it had nearly closed in on me...

I saw a red stole shoot out in front of me.

The person wearing it drew their sword. Or more accurately, by the time I made sense of things, they had already drawn their sword. Before I knew it, the person had finished slashing, and the rock candy mass split cleanly in two, each half flying to the left and right. I hadn't been able to see them draw their sword.

“Sorry for not getting here sooner, Chris.”

I thought it was her.

But it wasn't the person I knew.

Their hair color was different, and their physique, too. However, they were wearing the same celestial raiment around them, along with the katana they usually carried. Even then, it wasn't her.

"Nana...ko?"

It was *him*. He was a man.

An earsplitting explosion and a hot gust of air enveloped our surroundings. The rock candy he split in two had exploded.

It was a massive blast, unlike anything I had seen before.

However, the strong wave of heat, enough to sear the skin, never came.

Because his celestial raiment had protected me.

He turned his head to me and grinned.

"Leave the rest to us."





CONFIG

Reborn as a Side Character in a Fantasy Dating Sim —*Kousuke's Perspective*— As I watched her stare at me in confusion, I was filled with relief.

I had managed to make it in time, just barely.

Her uniform was a mess, her face was covered in dirt, and she was bleeding. She had been cut with something sharp, and her legs had gotten the worst of it.

The wounds weren't lethal, but they were close to it. She would have been in dire straits had I not gotten here in time to stop the bomb from hitting her.

"Leave the rest to us."

Saying this, I recalled the events of the past few days.

We returned the item in question back to the grand bath, letting the culprit act freely in order to catch them.

I could count on one hand the number of days it had taken, after the discovery in the grand bath, to discover the culprit and where they were sending all the mana.

Since I knew who the culprit was, I thought about trying to steer things a little bit, but that hadn't been necessary. That was because they were so careless. Boldly collecting the stone left in the grand bath the way they did was so utterly foolish, I never would have even considered it.

The perpetrator was the dark magic expert Vestris. As for the location, that was the shrine on the first floor of the Amaterasu Dungeon.

Though, everyone besides myself likely believed that Vestris was a follower of the Church of the Malevolent Lord.

In reality, she only knew as much as the average person about the Malevolent Lord. Her aim was to become Super Sister, and merely to drag Chris, currently the most popular candidate, down and out of the race.

Due to the influence of her family, an esteemed noble house, Vestris had grown up very spoiled and selfish. She would get angry when things didn't go exactly as she wanted, so she would try to force things to go her way, by any

means necessary.

Indeed, Vestris was not scrupulous about how she achieved her goals. There had been no low she didn't stoop to once she decided to become Super Sister. Even if the person she was asking for help was a demon, or a member of the Church of the Malevolent Lord.

The game doesn't go into great detail about the series of events that led to Vestris working with the Church of the Malevolent Lord, but the scenario writer remarked that there was a problem with Vestris's family itself. Personally, I surmised that this meant that her family was involved with crime. They didn't mention anything beyond that, though, so I could only guess.

Looking at Vestris, Ms. Sakura asserted, "This girl may be rather strong, but she couldn't possibly obtain this stone and modify it for her own uses." Her observation was correct.

This was why Ms. Sakura had decided to leave Vestris to her own devices for even longer.

Rather than capture Vestris immediately, we concluded it would be better to lure out the person she was in league with. As long as we didn't take care of whoever had enabled her, it was possible the same thing could happen again. Furthermore, while it would be great if capturing Vestris was enough to make the organization backing her give up, we couldn't risk the chance that it might spur them to take even stronger measures and harm the students.

So the plan was to gather information while the damage was still negligible.

This went relatively smoothly, too. While we managed to quickly guess the location where the mana was being sent, we didn't know anything about the mastermind behind it all.

That was probably unavoidable. The mastermind wasn't on campus, and the person monitoring things had hidden themselves among the lower ranks while they made their moves.

Of course, I knew most of this information already, but I purposefully kept quiet out of consideration for how things would go in the future.

While Ms. Sakura and the others continued to let Vestris move freely, this

latest incident cropped up.

It must have been a big shock for everyone else. After all, they all figured Vestris would be the one to make something happen at the shrine where all the mana was being sent. Yet it had been Chris.

Still, we all kept our guard up when we approached the shrine. I had made sure to ask Kujou to be as close to the shrine as possible ahead of time, so she immediately rushed in to help.

Unfortunately, Chris dove straight into the teleportation circle inside the shrine without any hesitation. She didn't even stop when Kujou called after her.

We couldn't afford to stand there with our mouths agape. There was a boss on the other end of the circle. I immediately cut through the nearby paper monsters and eliminated them. Then, after defeating the paper butterflies attacking some nearby students, I jumped into the teleportation circle.

"I'm leaving this to you and going on ahead!"

On the other side was a floor encased in rock, with wood frames set up to reinforce the walls and ceiling, like in a coal mine. As I ran through the corridor, I swore under my breath.

Most things had gone exactly as they had in-game, but I hadn't expected Chris to jump in here on her own. Normally, Chris is supposed to challenge the dungeon together with Hana.

When I thought about why things had played out this way, I figured it was because I had become a potential candidate for Super Sister, a role originally meant for Iori.

In the game, Chris tries to set Iori up after he becomes a popular student on campus.

It was inevitable, really. Iori was cute, kind, a very strong fighter, loved sweet things, sort of came off like an adorable little animal, and even though he made you feel like you wanted to protect him, he was strong enough to protect you instead. Who could blame the other students for considering him for Super Sister?

But in the real world, I had ended up as a potential Super Sister candidate for some reason. People had taken to calling me Otohime, and apparently, I even had a fan club called the Otohime Sisterhood. It didn't make any sense.

I was surprised to learn this from Satomi and the others; I guess it was my mistake to have brushed off the implications of becoming a potential Super Sister candidate.

I'd figured it would just mean that I would be targeted instead of Iori. That's all.

But since this never happens in the game, Chris ended up behaving in a way that was contradictory to the game scenario, too.

"We could be in real trouble here."

Nanami reacted to my comment.

"Let us hurry. Or better yet, shall we undo our fusion?"

Originally, I was supposed to defeat the monsters that showed up and head into the dungeon together with super-strong Kujou and Chris, who could strike the boss's weakness. There are some cases where the player's decisions in the game result in Chris not tagging along, but that wasn't really important.

This event *should* be relatively easy because you clear it together with Kujou, who's quite powerful. But it would be practically impossible for Chris to get through it all by herself.

While I could probably defeat the boss on my own if it came down to that, if I wanted to cover all my bases...

"Let's undo the fusion and just accept that the whole school could find out the truth in the worst-case scenario."

...I needed to undo my fusion with Nanami. Saving Chris was our top priority.

Even as we both continued forward at a good clip, we couldn't catch up to Chris. Nanami suggested that she might have stormed through before all the monsters in the dungeon had finished appearing. There was a chance that she could already be on the boss floor.

I had merely mentioned that possibility that I least wanted to consider, but it

appeared that I had hit the mark.

Nevertheless, we had made it in time.

“Nanami, take care of Chris.”

After leaving Chris with Nanami, I immediately closed the distance between me and the origami Bugashira.

I had let myself get caught up in the moment and valiantly told Chris to leave it all to me, but honestly, I was up against a pretty tough opponent. It was certainly weaker than Ms. Sakura, but right now, I was fighting solo. Nanami would have to focus on healing Chris for a little while.

Normally, I would take this thing on with a five-person party of my companions plus Kujou. Compared to that, yeah, it was going to be rough, all right.

Still, I couldn't afford to lose, and I wasn't planning on it, either. I was going to make this monster pay the price for tearing up Chris so much.

“Bring it on! I'm gonna tear you to shreds.”

I had no clue if this soldier made out of paper could even feel anger, but the Bugashira set several pieces of paper afloat in the air. They all began to fold themselves in midair at the same time.

Chris shouted at me when she saw what they were folding into.

“Careful, those boxes explode...!”

I immediately made a wall with my stole and put strength into my legs to protect myself from what were essentially origami “balloons.”

Once the balloons had swelled up far past their limits, they exploded on the spot.

“Those things pack quite a punch, huh?”

I sighed slightly while deflecting the blast with my stole.

That said, their power was nothing compared to the *kusudama* medicine ball explosive from before, or the strength of Satomi in our recent mock battle. The balloon bombs' real value lay in their ease of construction and placement.

The floor of this entire area had been littered with these explosives, and anyone who stepped on them would take damage. This technique shined when used in combination with other attacks. Once you knew how the bombs worked, however, they seemed slightly less scary.

The enemy started folding something else as soon as the balloon bombs exploded. This time it was origami *shuriken*. I remembered making them myself back when I was in elementary school—never thought I’d see the day when someone would use them as a weapon. These paper *shuriken* would gouge my flesh with a direct hit, so I couldn’t afford to let them hit me.

I shouted at the top of my lungs.

“Nanami, this guy’s an Origami Bugashira. All its attacks are long-range, so you gotta watch out over there!”

The origami enemies that appear in *Magical★Explorer* are monsters characterized by bodies made out of paper. There are several different types of origami enemies, with Bugashira and General types eventually culminating in a Shogun type.

Almost all of the origami Bugashira’s attacks were long-range, which was fitting, since *Bugashira* was the term for commanders of archer and musket squads during the Japanese feudal era.

The Bugashira launched its finished *shuriken*. Those extremely sharp edges of theirs would tear apart any halfhearted magic.

I repelled them with my stole and advanced forward while dodging the balloon bombs. Perhaps because my foe was panicked by my forward advance, the amount of paper floating in the air around it had increased slightly.

Just then, a hastily folded crane came flying at me in a straight line. This was probably the fastest attack in the Bugashira’s arsenal.

I admit it was pretty quick, but nothing more. I defended against it, got even closer, and with my hand on my sword— “No dice, huh,” I said, stopping my approach. The crane was a feint; the enemy’s real target was the balloon bombs on the ground. It was trying to lure me in with the crane and its backward retreat.

“This is practically a minefield.”

There were simply too many bombs on the floor. Equally frustrating was the fact that the origami was changing its position to ensure that the explosives were in my way.

In that case, what if I just continued forward anyway?

I purposefully took a step into the minefield. The balloons exploded at the same instant, resonating with each other.

Since I knew the blast wave was coming, I was able to defend myself without issue. Nevertheless, not everyone was pleased with my strategy.

“Master, you are not a simple meathead. There is a better way to approach, wouldn’t you agree?” Nanami said before shooting an arrow ahead of me. It caused an explosion where it landed.

This was her way of telling me to try blowing up the bombs with long-range attacks. I actually had thought about using sigiled magic stones to detonate the balloon bombs, but I’d just given up on the idea.

I figured that since it looked like I could guard through them, why not use brute force to power my way through? Wait, I was being a meathead after all!

That had been a really rash way to go about this.

“Sorry, sorry. Though, it looks like our opponent’s pulling out the big guns,” I said, looking at the Bugashira.

The number of paper pieces floating around it was clearly increasing. This time, it appeared to have saved up several folded pieces to use several different attacks at once.

The Bugashira created something resembling a rapier blade, with paper thinly wrapped in a circle.

It didn’t make only one, either. A countless number of these rods formed around the Bugashira. In another annoying development, it was creating more balloon bombs as well.

“Master, here they come!”

Right as Nanami shouted this, the Bugashira launched the rapiers toward me in a rapid-fire stream, like a machine gun.

Parrying the innumerable blades flying toward me, I realized the danger they posed.

The rapiers were strong enough to stick into the ground, but what proved dangerous was that each one came at a slightly different angle. Perhaps the enemy had been adjusting the direction they were coming from on purpose.

If I messed up the angle of my stole slightly, the rapiers could fly off in the wrong direction and slip past my defenses.

If the rapiers had been the only thing I was dealing with, I would be able to guard myself without issue. However, the Bugashira was already finished making paper butterflies and balloon bombs, and it looked ready to fire them at me. Now, it was folding something out of a large amount of paper...

“I’m gonna have to block that *kusudama* bomb no matter what.”

Even if I had to push myself a bit hard, I decided the best plan was to get away from my current location.

I used my Third Hand to kick off the ground and my Fourth Hand to defend against several rapiers. After this, the rapiers’ angles changed, and several fired off toward me.

And this time, there were also balloon bombs and butterflies coming for me, too.

“I’m not a target in some shoot-’em-up, okay?!”

The Bugashira had something resembling a rapid-fire gun, and bombs, too. I felt like I was fighting against the protagonist’s ship in a scrolling shooter game.

Making full use of my Third and Fourth Hands, as well as my feet, I pondered what to do next.

Would my opponent run out of mana? This boss had never given me any trouble in the game, so I had no idea what its mana pool was like. And its expression was unchanging, so I couldn’t judge by that, either.

“My only choice is to keep going forward.”

I decided to move on ahead, fully aware of the danger. From what I could tell, the opponent wasn't going to run out of ammo anytime soon. If this kept up, I was going to collapse first.

I stored power in my sheath and prepared to use my undrawing slash at any moment. Then I took out a sigiled stone from my item bag and launched it at the balloon bombs.

There were several bombs a short distance away from each other, and they created a chain reaction of explosions. I charged through them, using my stole as a shield.

The rain of rapiers seemed to have weakened a bit. This was probably because the explosions were kicking up dirt and debris in the area around me. The enemy had lost sight of me.

Still, whether because it could feel its attacks getting closer to the mark, or because the dirt was beginning to clear, the boss's aim was growing more precise. However, I had still cut the distance between us down to thirty feet.

It was then that it finally launched its *kusudama* bomb. At such close range, I wouldn't be able to dodge. Even then, the ball's force could knock me out instantly if it scored a direct hit. I might have been able to defend against it with my stole, but if I was sent flying, the Bugashira would be able to open up space between us.

In which case, I had to cut it down.

I released the power stored in my sheath. At a speed almost entirely imperceptible to the naked eye, my blade sliced the *kusudama* in two.

That wasn't all. I purposefully hadn't braced my legs when I drew my sword. In this state, what would happen to me when my powered-up sword shot from its sheath?

My arms were hit with a significant amount of recoil, but I let it pass through my body. Then, as I made a big spin, I utilized this recoil energy to send a punch from my Third Hand into the Bugashira.

A loud slapping sound, as if something was hitting the surface of water, spread through the area. I didn't feel *any* feedback from the attack.

I immediately backed away from the Bugashira.

“Whoa, whoa, c’mon now, one-hit invincibility? This really *is* a damn shoot-’em-up,” I groaned quietly. A shield made of several layers of paper floated in front of the Bugashira. It immediately created yet another paper barrier and brought it around itself.

I suddenly thought back to the Bugashira from the game. The abnormal dodge rate that it possesses against everything besides fire-element magic might have stemmed from this shield. The Bugashira’s body was thin and flimsy, so I figured it could dodge easily, but I never would have guessed that its hardness was because of this shield.

All that being said...

“Even in *Grad*us* you need to collect a bunch of items before you can make a barrier, y’know. This just isn’t fair,” I mumbled.

I wanted to complain that this boss was cheating, but it did have weaknesses. One was being hit by my ultra-high attack power, my unsheathing slash. If I landed a hit with it, I would be able to slice through the shield and my opponent all at once.

However, I wanted to save my unsheathing slash to deal with the *kusudama* bomb if possible. Otherwise, the blast wave would send me flying, and even if I dug my heels in to withstand it, my opponent would back off and open up space.

My opponent’s other weakness was fire magic. Paper burned easily, so surely this enemy must’ve burned easily, too. So I just needed to burn through this shield it had. A sigiled fire stone would be a bit unreliable, but I...

“I apologize for the delay, Master.”

“You sure kept me waiting.”

...had a companion to rely on.

“Nanami has entered the ring. This foe has some rather interesting attacks, but challenging ‘Nanako’ was a mistake,” she said, nocking an arrow. There were already several origami weapons floating in the air around the Bugashira.

“Yeah. We gotta make sure this thing’ll regret making an enemy out of Nanako,” I said before kicking off the ground.

The Bugashira released rapiers and *shuriken* at me to try knocking me away. It appeared to have also fired *shuriken* at Nanami as a feint.

“You sure you can afford to split your focus here?”

The attacks aimed at me were weakening a bit. This was my chance to close the distance.

This time around, it had crafted far more *shuriken* than balloon bombs. Although it had still deployed several bombs, there were far fewer than there had been earlier. Oh, given that they’d disappear in a chain explosion, the Bugashira must have made only the bare minimum instead. Still, the most destructive weapon in its arsenal, the *kusudama* bomb, had already been prepared, and was floating around the Bugashira.

“Master, I shall open up a path for you.”

After Nanami said this, an arrow of hers directly hit the balloon bomb nearby. Then it exploded on the spot.

Now, the only things I needed to be careful of were the projectiles and the *kusudama* bomb.

“I’ll end it with this.”

With its attacks weakened, I closed the distance immediately, which promoted it to finally use its *kusudama* bomb. The Bugashira sent it flying straight at me, but the bomb got caught by several arrows from Nanami’s bow and exploded.

Arrow Rain.

A technique that used magic to produce a downpour of arrows. In addition to dismantling the *kusudama* bomb, Nanami’s attack knocked a bunch of other projectiles out of the air.

I evaded this shower of arrows and advanced forward still. Then, after a few more steps, I was ready to unleash my sword.

At that same moment, the components of another *kusudama* bomb shot out

of the Bugashira. It had hidden pieces of paper it was already in the process of folding inside its own body. This could have explained why there had been so few balloon bombs.

The pieces of paper immediately came together and merged into a *kusudama* bomb.

I went to back away, left with no other choice, when I heard a voice shout from behind me.

“Nanako!”

It was Chris. A blazing spear shot right past me. It collided directly with the *kusudama* floating in midair, making it explode.

“Chris, you’re the best.”

It had happened so fast that the Bugashira couldn’t defend itself. With its body slightly on fire, I closed in. Though an obvious move, the Bugashira turned its shield toward me—even though its barrier had already started to burn.

But I could see it. The line that told me where I needed to slash my sword.

All I needed to do was face it and draw my blade, just like always.



CONFIG

Reborn as a Side Character in a Fantasy Dating Sim With the Bugashira turning to magic particles in the corner of my eye, I headed over to where Chris was.

It seemed like she hadn't fully recovered yet. She looked worn out.

"Thank you."

"Oh no, I'm sorry for being late."

"You're not late at all. I rushed in headlong, so I figured help wasn't even coming. I'm sure no one is going to need me anymore, anyway."

It appeared that she had been damaged not only from her fight with the Bugashira, but also from releasing the seal on the dungeon and making all the monsters appear.

"That's not true."

"I'm not sure about that... Putting that aside, though, am I safe to assume you're Nanako, then...? Or is this Nanako?" she asked, looking to Nanami.

"It is an honor to make your humble acquaintance. I am Nanami. Nanako was a maid of light, born from my angel fusion with Master."

"Don't say stuff that'll only confuse her even more... My name's Kousuke Takioto. I fused with Nanami to turn into a girl using a secret angelic technique. The person you knew as 'Nanako Takioto' was the two of us combined."

Wait, I sort of felt like I was saying mostly the same thing Nanami was? Ah, forget it.

"I see..."

While Chris seemed to accept our answer, I gave her a simple overview of the situation just to be safe.

I explained why we had come to Amaterasu. That Hana and the principal knew I was a man. That Vestris had been working with the Church of the Malevolent Lord. That Vestris had set her up. Along with everything else that had gotten us to this point.

“...Well, we all managed to defeat the origami Bugashira, but this isn’t completely over yet. Let’s keep going.”

Chris cocked her head when I told her this.

“What isn’t over?”

“I just mentioned that the Church of the Malevolent Lord used a really valuable item to undue the seal here, right?”

“Yes, you mentioned that.”

“The reason why they undid the seal is probably up ahead.”

I stared at the teleportation circle located behind where the Bugashira fell.

On the other side of the teleportation circle, a similar floor to before stretched in front of us. The area opened up as we continued forward.

“That’s a boulder...and an altar?” Chris murmured, looking ahead.

The boulder was larger than a person, with a radius of about fifteen feet. A sacred *shimenawa* had been wrapped around it, and it had been plastered with several paper talismans.

In front of the boulder was a wooden altar, inside of which were two vases holding sakaki branches. Between them was an offering plate used for Shinto rituals that held a claw-shaped *magatama* bead emitting a pale-green glow...

So that was the Sakani no Magatama? This thing was way more impressive in real life than in the game.

As we approached the altar, we heard a voice from behind us.

“Stop right there.”

There stood a girl wearing a school uniform. She was wearing a robe with a hood that concealed half of her face, and she held what looked like a black stone in her hand.

“...And who might you be? Why are you here?”

The girl ignored Chris’s words and closed in on the altar.

“...Master,” Nanami said.

I gave the okay to her. Once I did, she sent an arrow at the girl's feet.

"Take one step closer, and my next shot will pierce your foot."

But the girl didn't stop walking. And that wasn't the only thing she did.

"I"

Just then, she conjured a black flame and shot it at Nanami.

I got in front of Nanami to block the fire. *Oh, this magic*, I thought, understanding what it meant. It was the same magic the girl who shows up here in the game used, and it was pretty versatile stuff.

Strangely, her flame didn't give off any heat. In fact, it was downright cold. Nevertheless, it would still apply the burn status effect to anything it hit, a telltale attribute of dark magic.

Watching the girl, Nanami and Chris launched their own attacks from behind me, Nanami with her arrows, and Chris with a fire lance.

However, their moves were blocked by a curtain of darkness that shot up in front of the girl. She presented the black stone in her right hand to us.

Then she took out something the size of a smartphone and activated it. A magic circle materialized, and above it appeared a hologram of sorts.

Chris stared at the hologram and shouted.

"Vestris?!"

The hologram was showing a video of Vestris. She was lying on the ground, wracked with pain. In front of her was a black stone that bore a striking resemblance to the one the robed girl in front of us was holding.

"Are you trying to tell us that you're holding her hostage?"

When I said this, the girl dispelled the projection and moved in front of the altar.

"Master, what should we do?" Nanami asked in a hushed tone.

"We don't need to do anything," I replied.

"But if this concerns the Church of the Malevolent Lord, then will this not

affect Miss Ludie as well? Also, in regard to what is sealed here, too...”

“It’ll be fine, don’t worry. I was taking that all into account when I said we didn’t need to do anything.”

I could understand her concerns. But we didn’t need to intervene here.

“What are we supposed to do...?” Chris murmured. However, she was in no place to act, either, since Vestris had been taken hostage.

The girl took the *magatama*, and suddenly, a thought came to me.

After this, she was going take out an escape item and disappear, but there was something I had wanted to make clear before that.

“Hey. Killing *them* isn’t going to change anything.”

She turned to me, but I couldn’t tell if my statement had affected her or not. Her face was obscured by her hood. After she looked at me for a moment, she used an item to escape from the dungeon.

Chris shouted at her to wait, then ran in front of the altar where the girl had vanished. On the other hand, Nanami didn’t move. Instead, she addressed me quietly, in a voice low enough to ensure Chris wouldn’t overhear.

“Master, that new wife of yours had quite a defiant attitude. Perhaps you have a bit of a humiliating-the-captured-prideful-woman fetish?”

What the hell kind of fetish was that?

“I’m not even sure where to start,” I told her.

“Then, I would say to start with the most important, the humiliation fetish.”

“I’m not into that stuff at all. Hold up, though, why is that girl supposed to be my new wife?”

Better yet: Who the hell was my *other* wife?! And what convinced you she was being defiant? I mean, sure, she was being a little standoffish, but she wasn’t going to utter the classic “*Hnk, just kill me!*” line you seemed to be hoping for. If anything, a maid serving an elven princess in the Hanamura house was more likely... Actually, I’d better stop there.

“Knowing you, Master, I assume you have some insight into all this. So tell

me, who was that just now?”

Her joke about the humiliation fetish aside, Nanami seemed to have noticed. She was always watching how I acted, so she must have realized I knew something about what was going on here.

“That girl is a member of the Church of the Malevolent Lord, just like you suspected, Nanami.”

“That much I gathered. Along with the fact that you’re trying to save her. It was the same with me and Ms. Sakura, and with Miss Ludie and the others as well.”

“Save her, huh...”

In *Magical★Explorer*, there are a few heroines who are extremely hard to lead to their best ending on an initial playthrough. Ms. Sakura and the Saint were the ones I had already encountered.

Ms. Sakura is difficult to save, but the Saint is even more of a challenge on account of her home country and her position.

The girl who’d just disappeared proves about as much of a challenge as the Saint. That’s because she was a member of the Church of the Malevolent Lord. But despite that...

I would absolutely save her. That was why I was working to get stronger.

“So what exactly was that *magatama*, then?”

Nanami asked me this while I was reflecting on everything, so I ended up answering her without a second thought.

“Ah, yeah, that’s the Sakani no Magatama. It’s one of the items you need to revive the Malevolent Lord.”

Nanami’s jaw dropped. How long had it been since I’d gotten to see her like this?

Wait, hold up. Did I just screw up or something?

“Why did you let go of something that dangerous? And how do you even know something like that?” Nanami barraged me with questions, and I could

only reply by admitting that she had a point. Yet again, I realized how terrifying acting without thinking could be. Though, well, that item could be substituted by a human sacrifice, so considering the worst-case scenario, I thought it was better to have it stolen. I'd partially let the girl steal the *magatama* because it could function as insurance. It was mostly out of concern for her own safety, though.

I tried to get Nanami to accept the situation by pointing out that there wasn't anything we could do now that it was stolen, that things were probably going to work out fine, and that I knew everything that was going on. Though honestly, my explanation wouldn't have convinced me.

I doubt Nanami found my answer satisfactory, either. Nevertheless, I guess she trusted me, because she didn't press the issue further. Instead, she made a suggestive comment: "I know how you are, Master."

Nanami and I followed after Chris and began examining the altar when Ludie and the others entered the floor.

They'd dispensed with all the monsters appearing outside the dungeon and had caught up to us.

"Nanako... Ah!"

Iori looked at me and yelped, realizing the situation. Then, he awkwardly walked in front of Chris and apologized.

Hana and Ludie both came after him and apologized for not telling Chris. However, she wasn't angry about it at all. She expressed her gratitude that they'd come to save her and apologized for jumping headlong into the dungeon on her own. She really had a good head on her shoulders.

After this, we talked about the black-robed girl who'd taken the *magatama* and disappeared. I didn't mention that she was with the Church of the Malevolent Lord whatsoever. However, when Ludie and the others thought about why she had come here, her appearance, and the black rock in her hands, they concluded on their own that she was probably involved with the Church.

"Still, what is that *magatama* supposed to be used for...? I don't get it," Chris murmured.

“We’ll look into that later... Most importantly, though, I’m truly glad you’re all right. When the monsters all suddenly stopped appearing, I wondered just what had happened,” Hana said before embracing Chris.

“Sister Kujou, everyone’s watching us.”

Their heartwarming exchange lasted for only a moment. After Chris and Hana separated, Ludie seemed to remember something and spoke to me.

“Oh right, did you apologize for the grand bath mix-up?”

Chris cocked her head, wondering what she meant. Then, with a gasp of recognition, she instantly turned bright red, like a lobster dropped in boiling water.

“Wh-what...”

“L-Ludie.”

Seeing me call her out and Chris’s unrest, Ludie must have realized she had opened up a can of worms, so she slowly masked her presence with a smile. *Get back here.*

Putting that aside, though, Chris was still Chris. I thought it was strange she hadn’t mentioned it at all, but she had just forgotten. Once her face had gotten as red as it could get, she wrapped her arms around herself and stepped backwards.

“M-my feet.”

She remembered. Placing her passionate panties on full display between her moist thighs, revealing her biggest complex to me, and making me crawl on the ground and sniff them.

“Nhn, aaaaaugh.”

She was in a state of pitiable confusion. This wasn’t the usual bullish and confident Chris I knew, but a pure and innocent young maiden.

The mental strain seemed like it was too much for her. She accidentally caught her leg on the altar near her.

“Oh, careful!” Iori shouted.

She managed to stick out a hand and keep herself from falling, but unfortunately, her palm landed on a bad spot—one of the paper talismans on the boulder.

The talisman ripped apart, and a chill ran through my whole body.

Oh, this was bad. This was *really* bad. This would undo the seal on a dungeon.

“Everyone, escape items, now!”

Despite my warning, there was no chance we could ready them or use them so quickly.

With the tearing of the talisman, the area around us completely transformed.

We were hit with rumbling like an earthquake, and the boulder slowly began to move backward. I saw a magic circle appear below it, and I knew it was all over.

My strength giving out and falling to my knees, I could only stare at the circle with my mouth half open. Nanami took one look at me and seemed to grasp that I knew something about this dungeon.

She immediately stood in front of me and told me to wipe away the look on my face.

No, no, no. It was utterly inconceivable to know details about a dungeon that I was visiting for the first time. I wondered what was going through Nanami’s mind right now.

“Sorry, I wanted to keep the damage to the bare minimum. I need you to back me up to do that.”

When I said this, Nanami nodded, telling me to leave it to her.

“What in the world?!”

Though everyone else was unsettled, Nanami had managed to calm me down, and my mind was firing on all cylinders. How were we going to clear this dungeon?

“Oh no, this is bad! We can’t use escape items anymore!”

Iori must have readied his after I had asked. Unfortunately, the die had been

cast. Unless we cleared the rest of this dungeon, we wouldn't be able to use them.

"The way we came is gone, too," Hana said after walking over to where the magic circle that should have been behind us had originally been. Just like in the game. Our path of retreat was cut off.

"Our only choice is to keep on going, then," Chris said, looking at the teleportation circle.

"I'm sorry."

Her complexion shifted from red to blue, and she bowed deeply.

"This isn't something you need to apologize for. I'm the one who's at fault here."

I was responsible for seeing her lewd body in the bath and smelling her feet. That had been a whole new world.

"He's right, you have nothing to apologize for. It's my responsibility."

Hana lifted Chris's face back up.

"But..."

"It'll be fine. Sort of gets your heart racing, doesn't it?"

"Heart racing?"

"Sure, I mean, this is some secret dungeon hidden behind a crazy mechanism. Doesn't that make you excited?"

She stared at Iori with relief, his enthusiasm bringing some salvation to her face.

Sorry, Iori. That pounding heart of yours was a fraud. His blood was going to be pumping, sure, just in the worst way possible. He needed to be prepared for his heart to beat so hard it would explode.

We all stepped inside the teleportation circle.

We emerged into a world resembling a sci-fi near future.

The walls were covered in metal, aluminum, or steel, and the ground too felt

like we were waking over metal.

I looked at the hologram floating in midair and despaired that the situation really had come to this. The hologram featured the ancient language and several different illustrations.

One of the illustrations was of a half-sitting person taking shelter. Another illustration depicted someone walking pigeon-toed.

Near the hologram there was also a vaguely near future–style desk that looked like a work of modern art. Next to it was a cardboard box that couldn't have looked any less out of place if it tried.

“Nanami, can you decipher this?” I asked, and Nanami began reading the ancient language.

“It says here, ‘Welcome to the Stealth Dungeon’... I see.”

I touched what appeared to be an instruction manual that was placed on top of the near-future desk. When I pressed down on the mark, which resembled the settings cog wheel, it displayed some text. Looked like the instructions could be set into a language that we were able to understand. I quickly changed them and checked the dungeon overview.

Yup. This was the same Stealth Dungeon I knew. The unhinged Stealth Dungeon. The Stealth Dungeon said to give birth to a brand-new sexual fetish.

“Kousuke, this isn't what I think it is, is it?”

Ludie had made an inference from Nanami's and my reactions. All I could do was lower my eyes.

“...I see.”

Ludie stared at the ceiling. Picking up on the unusual air among the three of us, Iori, Hana, and Chris all grew restless.

“What sort of dungeon is this?” Hana timidly asked me.

“A stealth dungeon, where we need to get through it without any enemies spotting us.”

I wanted to describe it as like M*tal Gear, but none of them would've

understood me. You know, like the one with Sn*ke in it. They didn't have those games in this world, did they?

"You kinda tend to do the same thing in a normal dungeon, right?"

I nodded at lori's comment. When clearing dungeons, there were many advantages to steering clear of enemies. Sometimes, avoiding their detection would allow you to get a preemptive attack on them.

"The other part is that it looks like we can't defeat any of the enemies. All we can do is knock them unconscious."

"That puts us at a huge disadvantage!" lori said with a frown.

"The thing is, it looks like we don't take any physical damage, either."

"...Then what type of damage *do* we take?"

Hana seemed to grasp that something was off from the way I'd phrased my response.

"Maybe they take our money?" Chris suggested, tilting her head. Little did she know that she could end up paying a heavier price than losing any amount of money.

"Ah hah hah hah... Don't tell me, but is it some kind of *mental* damage, instead?"

As lori replied with a wince, a thought occurred to me: He might have accidentally taken on one of these weird dungeons already.

"That's right. The damage is more psychological. See, well, there's these outfits that are a bit embarrassing, or rather, a bit avant-garde..."

"And that must mean we have to put them on...," Ludie said, before looking up at the sky as if remembering something. She must have been looking back on her memories. I wish I could see that bunny suit again.

"Right, so it sounds like we need to wear these clothes to move forward."

"We just have to wear these outfits?"

Chris, no, it's not that. That wasn't the issue here. If only that was all there was to the clothes.

Hearing this, Nanami opened up the cardboard box. After rummaging through it, she took out one of the pieces of clothing. Ludie picked up on something and went over beside the cardboard box.

The item in Nanami's hands was a tight black bodysuit made with enamel fabric.

"Oh, this isn't nearly as bad as I thought."

Ludie picked up a bright-red bodysuit. It appeared that the crotch area of some were high cut, while others had skirts attached. This red bodysuit was the latter.

It touched me deep down to hear Ludie murmur that they seemed surprisingly easy to move in. Ludie had gone on so many lewd dungeon dives at this point that her barometer for "normal" had been thrown all out of whack.

"Um, does that mean, um, you are familiar with these types of dungeons, Princess Ludivine?" Chris asked Ludie in suspense.

"Hm? Of course. This sort of thing often crops up in dungeons."

"What?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?"

Ludie's nonchalant reply shook Chris to her core. One wouldn't normally encounter such weird dungeons on a typical exploration outing.

The Amaterasu girls were inexperienced. However, Ludie had been forced into wearing weird outfits, or offering up her panties, with relative frequency at this point, hadn't she?

Ludie didn't seem to realize she had just said something outrageous.

She'd been met with so many of these erotic scenarios that nothing fazed her anymore. The truth was, it was normal to never come across these types of dungeons at all.

"But is this really all we need to do?"

Ludie was dubious. Astounding! I needed to start calling her Great Detective Ludie. She hadn't conquered numerous pervy dungeons for nothing.

I mean, considering her experiences up until now, it was impossible for her to

believe that she could get out of here just by putting on a strange outfit.

Two people in our group were terrified by Ludie's remark: Hana and Chris. They were rapidly growing paler and paler.

"It's just as you would expect. The setup here is that the clothes will gradually become see-through the more damage you take. The clothes take the damage for you, essentially."

The developers for this game sure did love themselves some see-through clothes, huh? Their damn brains were probably just as see-through, these sheer *sheer* perverts! And sure, it was super lewd, it was absolutely fantastic—but next time, think about what's it like for the people going through it, dammit!

"Master, that's an awful expression you're wearing right now. Please calm yourself."

Whoops, I guess I'd let my thoughts show on my face—but wait, how exactly had I looked just now? Nanami came up to me and read the explanation on the manual. A look of slight disappointment came to her face.

"Aw, according to what is written here, only those possessing maidenly energy are able to equip these costumes. How unfortunate that you will not be able to wear them, Master."

"I didn't really want to in the first place, actually. Don't get your hopes up like that."

The prestigious Girls' Academy students were already shaking with dread. This meant Iori and I were going to be forced to go on in our female forms from here. *Now then, Iori, you may have gone a bit pale, but you're coming with me, okay?*

"More pressingly...Master, is this part true?" Nanami asked with resignation, pointing to a section of the explanatory text.

"Yup, it's true, all right."

Things are exactly the same in the game, too.

"Th-there's more?" Chris asked.

There sure was. There was, and it was actually the most dangerous part of all.

“There are traps in here just like any other dungeon. They’re, well, how can I put it? They’re sorta, you know, well, *really*, you know? But, how should I say this. It’s a perfectly natural thing for a human body to do.”

“Kousuke, what does that mean? You’re not making any sense here.”

“...It’s really hard for me to say this, but...”

It was hard. Too hard to say out loud. Was there any other way for me to sugarcoat the truth?

“Okay, so, take this as an example. When you to decide to play a game, and create a haunted house, I personally think the most important point of all is to give it a really tense atmosphere.”

“Uh? Yeah, sounds right.”

Iori agreed with my point even as he slightly cocked his head. However, I could see the light rapidly drain from Ludie’s eyes, growing more and more hollow. The terrible hunch she was feeling had probably pushed her to the breaking point.

“Also, humans need to drink water or they’ll die, right? Right. So, see, we drink water, and that water ends up circulating through our whole body. Water’s very precious. That’s why, see, there’s nothing you can really do about it, right? It’s totally natural, I mean you drink water, and it’s gotta happen, right?”

“Kousuke, y’know, I’m not really seeing how everything is supposed to connect here.”

“...Kousuke, you don’t need to try and excuse it. Just come out and say it,” Ludie said emotionlessly. Well crap, this wasn’t working. What was I supposed to do here?

“Anyway, it’s some really bad stuff.”

A question mark floated over Hana’s head. *Tch*, I had to come out and say it, didn’t I?

For some reason, even though I wasn’t really at fault here, the fact a compatriot of mine brought this about, and that I had enjoyed it plenty myself,

might have caused this sense of guilt to crop up inside me. Still, they had to believe me here. The devs hadn't done all this out of malice.

The theme of this section of the game had already existed as a fetish out there to begin with. This dungeon was simply giving it a sense of entertainment value, or in some respects, channeling it into an art form.

Long story short, it was *really* bad.

Right at the moment I thought to myself, *Hey, I could just say something random here, brush it off, and avoid mentioning it for now*, Nanami looked over and reprimanded me.

“Master. Keeping quiet about things is not an option here, and the truth will get out before long. If something should happen, would you be able to take responsibility for it?”

Nope.

Fine, fine, I get it. Nanami, I get what you're saying. Here I go.

“In the Stealth Dungeon, when you step on a trap...instead of taking any damage...” I steeled myself and said the rest. “You get hit with a strong urge to urinate!”

“Huh?”

The air went frigid. Most likely, everyone besides Nanami and myself were unable to fully digest what the words meant and had questions whirling around inside their head.

“Hey, Kousuke? Can you say that again? S-something's wrong here.”

“Nope, no mistake at all. You'll be filled with an intense urge to pee! Forgive me!” I said, before prostrating myself, unable to bear my guilty conscience.

Then, all of them understood in unison—

About their unthinkably hopeless situation, of suddenly getting the urge to pee in a stealth dungeon.

I felt Ludie grab on to my clothes, and she forced me to look up at her.

“You're lying. Tell me it's not true!”

I looked away.

“Aughhh...!”

“Kousuke, you’re kidding, right?”

It felt like a scene from a movie. Sorrow hung in the air, as if the capable leader character that had taken charge up until now had just been killed.

I couldn’t keep this up. I had to boost the mood here somehow. *Oh, I know!*

“B-but hey, you just get an urge to pee, you don’t take any damage. Besides, even if you wet yourself a little bit, you’ll just see a bit of a visual change and feel a sudden warmth down there, that’s all. And I mean, you could always just go into a corner to relieve yourself.”

“Are you stupid? That’s the absolute worst thing possible!” Chris replied in a heartrending shout. She was absolutely right.

“Wetting oneself at this age? I don’t know if anyone could recover from that,” Hana murmured, her face bright red.

“W-wait a sec. Having an urge to pee in a stealth dungeon, is like, super, super, *super* dangerous, isn’t it?”

Right you were, lori. Everyone had realized. In the game, everyone merely started to walk pigeon-toed, slowing their speed down.

The reality was, it was a whole other, nigh unimaginable level.

The loss of concentration, the mental instability, the hindered movement was all the same as in-game. Relieving yourself outside obliterated one’s pride, and if you wet yourself, the smell and the trail of liquid along the ground increased the chances of being discovered—every possible disadvantageous effect would descend on us at once.

On top of that, if an enemy saw you emptying your bladder in the dungeon, or someone else saw you... I didn’t even want to imagine it. Dammit, what a despicable setup here. Those damn fools, how about they try dealing with this crap themselves, huh?!

“I-I can’t try to hold it in while hiding from monsters, it’s impossible!” Chris shouted. Yet she couldn’t consider actually letting it flow, either. Everyone was

too proud and morally upright to let that happen. In the game, however, it's recommended you simply let the characters wet themselves.

In the game version of the dungeon, wetting yourself or relieving yourself within the dungeon returns your speed to normal. There's basically no penalty to peeing inside the dungeon, either. In fact, it allows you to obtain golden shower CG. Additionally, taking enough damage to turn your clothes see-through or wetting yourself doesn't hinder your ability to receive the Golden Lucky Cat bonus item for obtaining a high score. You just needed to get through it all fast enough.

All of the above was why walkthrough sites strongly recommended that you readily get hit with attacks and traps, and reach the goal with your clothes damp and see-through. Actually, wait, I'd written that on the wiki myself. It was basically ignoring the dungeon's entire premise.

Wait, hold on. The Golden Lucky Cat? Oh...right!

If we managed to get a high score here, we could get the Golden Lucky Cat!

The item increased drop rates. It was immeasurably valuable, and among all the items I had collected up until now, it was only one level below getting the girls' panties— nearly on par with the Seeds of Potential.

It would make it easier to obtain super-rare weapons. The effect of the item was so incredible that it more than made up for the pride you lost in the process of obtaining it. It wasn't some worthless piece of trash like an award certificate, it was a lucky cat with real practical applications!

The girls would definitely be happier if they learned they could get an item as useful as that...!

"L-listen, everyone. I have some good news, too. If we can earn a high score, and get through to the end of this dungeon, we can get our hands on the Golden Lucky Cat!"

However, this did not succeed in bringing smiles to their faces.

"What about that is 'good' news? Why would I need a Lucky Cat?!"

Ludie blew her top. Crap, I hadn't gotten the point across properly. Of course,

anyone would hear “Golden Lucky Cat” and mistake the item for a useless tchotchke. I had to tell them it was valuable because of its effect. In which case, if I made sure to explain that, I was positive they’d be all smiles and want it for themselves!

“B-but see, the Golden Lucky Cat—”

“Ludie’s right; golden this or lucky cat that, it doesn’t matter here. The problem is the urine and our personal pride!”

Chris was kinda peeved, too. It was hopeless.

“My apologies!!”

Unable to withstand the angered looks from Ludie and the others, I prostrated myself. I hadn’t realized. This wasn’t the atmosphere of a wake I was feeling. It was the calm before a storm. I had accidentally called down the tempest myself. My only choice was to wait until it passed.

“This dungeon has a bit of a ‘hop, step, meteor shower’ feel to it, wouldn’t you agree?” Nanami said after everyone had calmed down.

“That’s a pretty clever example. I get that the ‘hop’ is the embarrassing outfit, the ‘step’ is said clothing becoming see-through—that’s clear with context—but I didn’t expect to hear an urge to pee described as a meteor shower. Way too out-there.”

Nanami? Ludie? A normal person wouldn’t even be able to understand the erotic cosplay and see-through clothes part, you know. So a better example for it would be “big bang, genesis, catastrophe,” right? So completely insane that the original “hop, step, jump” phrasing had completely disappeared.

See, Chris and Hana are looking at you like unhinged weirdos right now!

While I was watching them, Iori pulled on my clothes.

“Hey, Kousuke, my mind’s a little all over the place, so I tried to get everything in order here... Can I double check with you if I’ve gotten everything right?”

“Yeah, go for it.”

After I replied, he handed me a piece of paper.

- *This is a stealth dungeon. We can't take it on unless we wear a bodysuit.*
- *The game plan is to move ahead while making sure the enemies don't spot us.*
- *Our attacks can't defeat any of the monsters, but we can knock them unconscious.*
- *Conversely, enemy attacks don't physically hurt us, but they do make our clothing turn see-through.*
- *Also, if we get caught in a trap, it'll make us want to go to pee really bad.*

Yeah, he had most of it right. If I were to add on anything else...

- *Clearing the dungeon will return us back to this room. Then a teleportation circle will appear to whisk us back to campus.*
- *Since there are only three outfits (red, black, white), only three people can challenge the dungeon.*

I think that covered it. When I wrote down the rest, lori showed it to everyone else so we would all be on the same page.

"I'll definitely be one of the three. Nanami, let's do this," I said.

"Yes, I believe that is a valid plan as—if you do wet yourself, Master—me, Miss Ludie, and the other Hanamura house members would be delighted."

"Why would that make you happy?"

This is a pretty delicate topic here, so please try to keep the jokes to a minimum.

"With that settled, lori—you'll step up to the plate, right."

"Yeah, I think I should be one of the people going."

The two of us were men. lori's girl form suited him almost perfectly, but he was still a dude. We'd suffer less damage than Ludie and the others. The problem was the final slot. It honestly would have been much better to have all three of them help out, but I couldn't expose Her Highness and such proper ladies to danger...

"I'll go," Chris chimed in. She looked at me with a resolved gleam in her eyes.

"No, I am a bit used to these sorts of places, so I should be the one to go

instead.”

Ludie insisted she would go, not wishing to force such humiliation on Chris or Hana, who had already been traumatized by these dungeons before.

However, Hana didn’t approve of her idea.

“The problems of Amaterasu Girls’ Academy should be resolved by its students. As Amaterasu Girls’ Academy student council president, I should be the one to handle this.”

She was willing to dive right into a craptastic dungeon like this.

“Sister, I’m a student here, too. I’m also the one who brought all this on. I should be the one to go.”

Chris wasn’t backing down, either.

These dungeons would usually involve Yuika losing her temper and cursing me out, Ludie laughing as if mentally defeated, Yukine growing bashful, or Nanami being totally absurd, but in a rare twist of events, everyone was volunteering to go.

If I was being perfectly honest, I would’ve loved to just let them all go right ahead, but if I did that, I’d probably get pelted with condemnation. In the end, they used rock-paper-scissors to decide, and Chris ended up being the final member.

Next, we had to devise our strategy.

“Master, I have just the item for this,” Nanami chimed in. She took out several buzzer-like objects.

“And these are?”

“The popular and highly sought-after buzzers that play voice clips.”

“I wouldn’t call them popular. I’m not sure if I’ve even heard about such a thing.”

“Aren’t these the same buzzers we used during our quiz game?”

Ludie kindly answered my question. Right, we had used those, hadn’t we?

Nanami pressed one.

"I promise, once this battle is over, we're getting married."

"Just go, I'll handle things here!"

"My baby's gonna be born next week. We only just settled on a name."

Why was it my voice for all of them? But that was beside the point.

"What sort of meaningless nonsense did you make?! And all these quotes sound like they're foreshadowing my death!"

If we were in a movie, I'd be on high alert at this point.

Still though, these buzzers did have a certain appeal to them, so I bet she could sell them for around five bucks a pop. I kinda wanted one myself. Put them in capsule machines, and I bet they'd get pretty popular.

"Bring these with you. You can then set them to activate with a one-minute delay, and use them to catch the enemy's attention," Nanami explained. Ludie took one of the buzzers and pressed it.

"I promise, once this battle is over, I'm going to marry you."

"These are a little funny. I might want one for myself, actually."

"The voice lines aside, they do seem good for distracting enemies. I think it'd be a good idea to bring them along."

Iori pressed the play button.

"My baby's gonna be born next week. We only just settled on a name."

They would be useful to bring with us, but I had a sinking feeling that they'd *actually* end up foreshadowing something awful for me. Ah, whatever.

After we had talked for a little longer and settled on our course of action, I fused with Nanami. Then we each made sure to conceal ourselves and get changed.

"All right, ready to go."

Thanks to my good figure as Nanako, I looked extremely sexy. My boobs were so big that they kept me from zipping my bodysuit all the way up, which really showed them off. My outfit was tight around my butt, too, so my cheeks were practically bursting at the seams.

“K-Kousuke. What do you think?”

Iori had fused with Ms. Sakura and finished getting dressed. He had a slight tinge of childishness left to his look. While his body was largely slim and petite, he was curvy in all the right places. This sorta gave him the impression of a young girl trying to wear an outfit she was still a bit too immature for, which made me sorta feel like I had to protect him, but then I sorta remembered, wait, he was a dude, right, and I sorta felt like I was going to make a grave mistake.

“It looks great on you, Iori.”

Well, only enough to compose a few hymns or so, I would say.

“You look amazing, Iori.”

Ludie and Hana both complimented him. After a little while, Chris also came over to join us.

“L-listen. Don’t stare at me so much,” she said.

I averted my gaze from her face. However, in that brief moment, I made sure to etch the sight of her into my brain. It would be impossible not to feel aroused by seeing a prim and proper lady with her harsh, aloof personality dressed in a bright-red bodysuit.

Though actually, her legs were already fidgeting, as if she was holding it in, but that was just out of embarrassment, right? She didn’t need to go, did she?

“Well then, everyone’s finished getting changed, so let’s do this.”

I nodded at Iori’s words. All right, time to head into the Stealth Dungeon.

On the other side of the teleportation circle was an area resembling a warehouse of some kind. There were metal folding chairs and a foldable desk set up, with a single cardboard box placed on top of it.

“Looks like we were able to bring these things along.”

Nanami had prepared for us a bag resembling a small pouch. It was enchanted to have far more storage capacity than its appearance suggested, and she had placed a number of useful items inside, including the buzzers from earlier.

It also appeared that the items from inside my uniform pocket had been transferred to us as well. What had I been carrying again? Maybe my Tsukuyomi Traveler and my cell phone?

I had been able to bring my stole along, too, but if I tried to wrap it around myself, I'd suddenly be unable to move my body at all. The dungeon wasn't going to let me try to cover up any see-through parts of my outfit. It was big, and the red really stood out, so I figured that I'd generally keep it put away and only take it out of the pouch if something came up.



“Is that a cardboard box?”

When Iori checked what was inside, he took out several different items. First were sets of earphones. These appeared to be wireless communication devices. With these we would be able to keep in contact with each other even when we were far apart.

The next item appeared to be a stun gun. According to the explanation provided, it would knock an opponent unconscious, but it consumed maidenly energy. If we used it too much, our bodies would start to feel sluggish, and if we drained too much of our maidenly energy, it'd stop emitting electric shocks.

“We won't collapse if we overuse it. Instead, it'll stop emitting electricity, and we'll start to feel sluggish? Gotta make sure we exercise discretion with it.”

“The best idea would be to save it for emergencies.”

Incidentally, there were also items that would knock an enemy unconscious that didn't consume any maidenly energy. However, some were consumable, and others required you to find ammo for them first. Essentially, they were meant for people who wanted to play the game a certain way.

If the goal was simply to clear the dungeon, getting the Golden Lucky Cat and sexy CG, the recommendation was to let the golden showers flow and the body suits go transparent. In reality, that was absolutely out of the question. Just like with the breast milk incident, it was crossing a line. *Urk*, breast milk...

“Kousuke, are you all right?”

“I'm fine, just an old wound flaring up... Okay, I'm all set and ready. You too, Chris?”

“Yes, I'm prepared for the worst.”

Chris kinda had this grim determination in her eyes, like she was about to charge through a zombie horde. This whole thing was really getting to her.

I opened up the door and we started down the path.

We headed through another warehouse-like environment. Piles of boxes and cargo. Lifts to carry them.

Also, given that our surroundings were a bit dark and dreary, dark-colored clothes probably wouldn't stand out as much. The red Chris wore, on the other hand, was very risky.

We masked our presence and continued to progress through. I was in front, Iori was taking the rear, and Chris was in the center.

When we advanced a bit farther, I discovered an enemy. I immediately signaled for the other two to stop.

"Kousuke here. Enemy spotted. A single onifolk," I reported to the others over the radio.

An onifolk appeared ahead of us. However, it was slightly different from a normal one. Usually they were supposed to carry a katana or club, but this one was wielding a riding crop.

"Chris here. I have visual on the riding crop. Likely to deal a large amount of mental damage."

Both Iori and Chris's faces went pale as they imagined what would happen if they were hit with something like that.

Our bodies would be unharmed, but the combo of the whip and our clothes growing transparent was downright nasty. If any of us got wrestled to the ground and had our asses whipped with those, all our pride and dignity would melt away to nothingness.

"Iori here. Luckily, it seems not to have spotted us. It's coming this way, so let's wait for our chance."

We watched out for the right moment to slip behind the back of the onifolk aimlessly walking in our direction. Then, after we had gotten past without alerting him, we rejoiced.

On the next floor, there were a large number of boxes that could only conceal one person at a time, so we didn't move in a straight line, but put some space between ourselves as we moved. We could still converse through our comms to coordinate.

"Iori here, I've spotted an enemy. A single onifolk."

“Chris here. I’ve got sight of it, too. Not good, it’s blocking off the exit.”

“Kousuke here. There’s a big pillar over by me. I’ll make a noise to draw it over here. I’ll hide behind the pillar to avoid it. We’ll meet up afterwards.”

“Chris here. Roger, be careful.”

Once our call ended, I knocked on a nearby pedestal loaded with cargo.

I waited for the onifolk to draw close. Then, looking for my chance, I hid behind the pillar. Now with the pillar between us, I snuck by the onifolk before meeting up with the other two.

As far as I could tell by looking, my foe hadn’t noticed me.

“You’re going along quite well,” Nanami said to me.

“But we’ve still got a long way to go. If this was a game, we’d still be mid-tutorial.”

Though in the actual game, by the time the tutorial was over, everyone’s clothes were half transparent, and the characters had already wet themselves.

Taking care of the surrounding area, we continued forward. Then, we discovered an *oni* in front of a door.

“Kousuke here. Two this time. Two pygmy *oni*.”

“Chris here. There’s a pillar we can hide behind. Should I make some noise?”

“Iori here. Go for it.”

This time Chris was the one to distract with a sound. When she did, though, only one of them headed to check it out. The other one remained on standby in front of the door.

“Kousuke here. No dice, only one went.”

After a short while, the pygmy *oni* returned saying, “Beaaaans? Just my ima-bean-ation.” C’mon, cut it out with the weird characterization. My urge to quip was unbearable.

“Chris here. Didn’t work. This time, I’ll try using the death-foreshadowing buzzer Nanami gave us.”

“Iori here. Got it, but be careful.”

This time, Chris set up the buzzer and hid behind the pillar. After a few seconds a voice saying, *“Just go, I’ll handle things here!”* came out from the buzzer.

“Damn beany thief!”

The two creatures left their post together. Quite a useful item.

From there we continued ahead. Just then, I heard a warning from Nanami. Thanks to my ring, I had noticed it myself.

“Master, there is a trap.”

“Yeah, I caught it, too.”

After I called out to the other two, I activated the trap to see what it would do.

It shot out a slimy substance resembling green jelly. We needed to be careful, since getting sprayed in this gunk would make us need to pee.

“I certainly don’t want to get covered in that stuff...,” Chris said, looking at the green jelly. A thought came to me, and I took off my ring and handed it over to Chris.

“Use this. I don’t need it anymore.”

“What is this?”

Chris looked at the ring curiously.

“This item can pick up on low-level traps. I’m not going to use it anymore, so feel free to keep it if you’d like.”

“What? I couldn’t accept such a valuable item like this.”

“Knowing Kousuke, I bet he really doesn’t need it. He has Nanami with him, for one. Why not use it?”

I nodded at Iori’s words.

“Besides, you’ve already done a lot for me, Chris, and, um, well, I accidentally saw some stuff, too, so...”

My last statement seemed to trigger her memories, turning her cheeks bright red. She accepted the ring.

Right after we started moving again, we discovered a pygmy *oni* blocking the way forward. But this time, it wouldn't leave its post, no matter what noise we made.

As such, we decided that Iori would use the stun gun here.

"Iori here. I'm going for it."

He rushed out from the shadow of some cargo and brought the stun gun up to the pygmy *oni*.

The creature cried out with a quiet groan and fell down where it stood.

"Iori here. Stun gun worked."

We gathered in front of the unconscious *oni* after hearing this. Then, we searched the monster to check if it possessed any useful items.

"Everything's been smooth so far."

I agreed with Chris's comment.

"Yeah, let's keep this up. Okay, this guy wasn't carrying any items. Except for this whip, I guess?"

I rummaged through its belongings, but there wasn't anything that really jumped out to me.

"The whip, hmm. Think we can use it?"

Hrm, well, Chris certainly could use it in all sorts of different ways. Uh-oh, that was dangerous, I was about to get myself all hot and bothered.

"If it won't get in the way, I suppose I could bring it with us," she said, putting it in our pouch. Now that I thought about it, Chris generally used staves, but she could wield whips as well, couldn't she?

"Hey, you two, there's a treasure chest!" Iori shouted. He gleefully showed the two of us the treasure chest he had found.

A box with golden ornaments. From what I could tell, there didn't seem to be any traps. I had Chris double-check for me, and she didn't notice anything

either.

If my memory served me, there was a really useful item in this chest. That said, it was something anyone would find too outrageous to actually use. Honestly, I wanted to keep on going without opening it and pretend we'd never seen it.

Nevertheless, that didn't change the fact that it was a good item to have.

I resigned myself to opening the treasure chest. The instant I cracked the lid, I immediately shut it again. Yup, my memory had been spot-on.

"What's wrong?"

Iori curiously looked at me.

"Erm, so."

"Well, what was in it?"

Chris came up next to me and emphatically lifted the lid open. Then, seeing what was inside, her eyes glazed over like a dead fish's.

Inside was a single pair of panties. Pure-white panties.

A silence came over us.

Normally, the best course of action would be to move along and pretend we hadn't seen anything. Still, I was reluctant to do that for this particular item. Why? Well, these were pure-white panties, beloved by *oni* everywhere.

Throwing these at the *oni* in the dungeon would make them gather in one spot. Even incite them to start fighting among themselves about who would actually get them.

In short, it was extremely useful for advancing further on from here.

So I wanted them. But could I endure the glare I was going to get from Chris for picking them up? No, I needed to prioritize protecting her, no matter what sort of look she might give me. I had to take them.

"S-so, uh, th-these look pretty useful, I think. They might be able to distract the *oni* here, right? L-let's take them with us."

Crap, my voice tensed up. Thanks to that, my explanation sounded really

suspicious. It must have sounded like the ravings of a hopeless pervert. What was I supposed to do?! Nope, honestly, there was nothing I *could* do!

Shivers ran down my spine from the glares behind me. We continued ahead.

We managed to keep going from there, despite having incurred some damage in the process.

Sometimes we used the stun gun, while at others, we used the foreshadowing buzzers. Occasionally, we were forced into combat. The pure-white panties also did a splendid amount of work. It was unbelievable. Not only the way the *oni* would crowd around them, but the admonishing glare that Chris had when she looked at them. I didn't think I'd ever forget it.

"We've managed to get this far, huh," I murmured. This floor was relatively close to the finish line, but it was also the most perilous, with a lot of monsters and traps.

To start, we decided to all split up and investigate the area to make absolutely sure of what we were up against.

Our maidenly energy was running low, and we only had one of Nanami's buzzers left. We needed to be extra careful.

Then, a call suddenly came through on our comms.

"This is Chris. I'm coming under long-range fire, *hnaah!*"

Hearing her say "long-range" jogged my memory. Right, there was an *oni* that used a slingshot to attack from long range. Since I had always dashed through pee-drenched and transparent clothes, I hadn't even remembered that there was such an enemy.

"Iori here. I've spotted the pygmy *oni* attacking Chris. I'll have to get a bit aggressive, but I'll break through to her."

Then, right as I heard these words—an alarm rang through the surrounding area, and a loudspeaker announced the discovery of intruders.

Crap. The thought only came for a brief moment before the long-range monster apparently found me, too. My clothes were becoming transparent. My most precious areas were still safe, but I was in a lot of danger.

I immediately dashed over to where the other two were, and we returned to the previous floor and the safe zone there.

While we had managed to escape, we had taken heavy damages.

Iori had taken damage while he was busy fighting. A fair amount of his clothing was see-through, to the point that if I really strained my eyes hard enough to pop out of my skull, I might have been able to see his nipples. But Chris was in an even worse state.

“Nhn...haah...ngh!”

Her pale legs stretching out from her enamel miniskirt, which I would have loved to rub my cheeks against and lick all over, were turned inwards. She was slightly trembling as well. Her face was tinged pink, and sweat was beading on her forehead. Worst of all, there was a small amount of green jelly stuck to her body.

“Dammit,” I cursed inwardly while brushing the gunk off of her.

Her clothes were also close to their limits, and they’d probably put her whole body on display if she got hit one more time. And that wasn’t all—although I’d said this dungeon didn’t deal any physical damage, she would still feel a bit of an impact. In other words, there was a chance that another blow could make her relax her muscles!

A dam, once broken, would then let everything flow free.

“This is dangerous.”

When considering Chris’s condition, we needed to hurry. Still, this was a very difficult floor, and it would take a long time to get through if we weren’t going to go fully transparent and bladders-free.

“What’re we supposed to do?”

Hearing my frustration, Chris put a hand on my shoulder.

Her face bright red, she pointed over to a shadowed area. Then, with her head held low, she spoke.

“Thanks Takioto, but I’m fine. It really made me happy to see you and Iori try so hard for my sake.”

She had resolved herself. To let it out in the dungeon. She was prepared to throw away her pride and pee in the wild. She hated holding us back and had resigned herself to popping a squat.

“Chris, what are you saying?! There has to be something, some better way than...”

While thinking, I suddenly remembered.

Actually...I vaguely recalled there being a sort of shortcut on this floor. No, there definitely was. I had forgotten about it because I always just charged right through the place, but there was supposed to be a shortcut.

“Let’s try to look for another route. There were too many enemies back there. This is a dungeon, so there’s got to be one route left over we can get through.”

When I said this, lori raised his voice.

“Oh! Now that you mention it, I found something like that!”

When we went to check it out, it was indeed suspicious. A door that had EMPLOYEES ONLY written over it. There was a small altar of some kind next to it, with a magic circle drawn on top of it.

“Dammit, it’s not opening.”

I rattled the doorknob. It showed no signs of unlocking. However, a voice came from inside.

“Get the key if you want to go through here.”

Hearing this jogged my memory. Of course, there was supposed to be a monster with a key on one of the floors. Dammit. When everyone was on full, goldenly wet display, the shortcut was totally unnecessary, so I had forgotten. Why had I never cleared this dungeon the way it was supposed to be cleared before?! I wanted to slug the version of myself that had gleefully jerked it while imagining the wet, golden glory.

I glanced over at Chris. She looked just as agonized as ever. It was impossible; we weren’t going to make it on time if we went through here normally.

“Is there any other way you’ll let us through?!”

After a short silence, the door responded.

“In that case, offer up an aphrodisiac to this altar.”

An aphrodisiac? What the hell was that about?

“Of course we don’t have anything like that! I mean, an aphrodisiac, of all things?! If there was someone carrying something like that, they’d deserve nothing but contempt!”

Chris had lost it.

She was right, I had only ever heard the word *aphrodisiac* in eroge and on sketchy adult-only websites before! You only ever saw that on those dubious sites that sell things that claim “bigger sizes guaranteed” or “gain four inches overnight”!

“I don’t have anything like that with me, either...”

Iori looked ready to burst into tears. Of course not, normally no one would have something like that.

If such a thing did actually exist, then really the only person who *would* have such an item was Sexy Scientist, that’s it... If she was here with us, then maybe... hm...? Wait.....?

“Master, I have stuffed everything you had inside your pockets inside that pouch.”

Nanami spoke to me. For some reason, her words sounded like a death sentence.

I remembered everything. I had an aphrodisiac, all right. That thing Sexy Scientist had given me as a farewell gift.

“Ah!”

I returned to my senses and immediately covered my mouth. Chris didn’t notice the change in my demeanor and began to slam aphrodisiacs with scorn.

“Seriously, why even ask for an aphrodisiac?! Those things make people want to do lewd things, right? I mean, the only people who’d use that garbage are people who couldn’t normally make a woman fall for them, right? What a pitiful

man! If there was anyone carrying around such a thing, they would earn my truest, deepest contempt. I'd be disgusted on a cellular level!"

"N-now, hold on Chris."

I tried to stop her with a questionable smile. But she couldn't be silenced. It was as if the pee she was holding in was flying out of her mouth instead. She was firing off disparaging words like a machine gun.

"If someone does carry one of those, they're human trash. Essentially just goblins at that point. In fact, they should just abandon human society altogether to go live among their comrades instead. I don't even want to breathe the same air as someone like that. I'm sure their skin must be filthy and their body odor must reek. Honestly, anyone carrying around an aphrodisiac should just do us all a favor and disappear from the world altogether."

She said this before casting her head down. She was probably thinking that she couldn't hold it in anymore, and that wetting herself was her only option.

I could protect myself here. I could claim that I wasn't carrying an aphrodisiac on me. However, when I saw Chris like that, I...

"I really don't have a choice, do I?"

I took the aphrodisiac out from my bag. Then I placed it on top of the magic circle.

I could feel the severe looks I was getting. But I couldn't stop now.

The magic circle immediately disappeared from the altar, and there was a clinking sound. The sound of the door unlocking. I slowly looked behind me, to Chris.

I couldn't read a single emotion on her face.

After getting through the last floor, we only had one left to go.

Given it was the last floor, we would be in for another difficult challenge.

"There's too much security."

Chris let out a voice of despair.

"But we don't have any time left to investigate the area, either," Iori said with

a serious look in his eyes. Chris was nearing her limit. A preliminary investigation of the area was important to get through here safely, but if we did that, she'd probably end up wetting herself.

"Maybe we need to get a bit aggressive here."

"...I'm sorry, this is all my fault."

"You don't need to apologize, Chris."

"Iori's absolutely right. The person who made this dungeon's the real villain here."

I agreed with Iori. Ultimately, we decided to bulldoze our way through.

Our formation this time had Iori in front, Chris in the middle, and me in the rear.

With a "Here I go," Iori hit a nearby pygmy *oni* with the stun gun. Then he immediately concealed himself.

Noticing the downed *oni*, several others gathered to where it had fallen. We seized this opening and advanced. However...

"Ah!"

Iori let out a yelp. A long-range attack.

"Everyone, scatter!" I told the other two through the radio. It would be better to spread out than stay huddled together.

However, because of how hard she was holding back the floodgates, Chris moved with a slight delay. She was being targeted.

"Chris, look out!"

I heard Iori's shout. Although Chris managed to somehow dodge the attack, there was something waiting for her where she was going to land.

"Shoot!"

I broke out into a run. Then I stomped down on the trap Chris was about to trigger and hid her behind me.

Iori had taken down the long-range *oni* for us. But...

“Kousu—”

I put my hand over Chris’s mouth. We couldn’t raise our voices here.

She looked ready to cry. She probably hadn’t realized that there was a trap until after her dodge. Since I shielded her from it, though...

“Chris, you really did a good job holding out against something this awful.”

Although I brushed the slime-like substance off, the intense urge to urinate assailed me.

This was no joke. Could I even pay attention to my surroundings in a state like this? Nope, not happening. No wonder she hadn’t noticed the trap until the very last moment.

“I’m sorry.”

“What’re you talking about? We’re in this together, aren’t we?”

She nodded at my reply.

Now then, neither she nor I had much time left.

“Kousuke here. Let’s go, lori.”

“lori here. Kousuke. Um, just now...”

“Kousuke here. *Pssh*, this is just a flesh wound. C’mon, let’s go.”

“lori here. That’s so like you, Kousuke. Got it. We need to hurry.”

We had lori move independently from Chris and me.

The idea was, if we split into two groups, we could more easily provide backup if something happened. Though, honestly, the biggest reason was just that we wanted to pee so bad we couldn’t afford to waste any time regrouping.

After Chris and I advanced for a few minutes, we found it.

“Is that the exit, do you think?”

“Sure looks like it, but there’s a lot of onifolk around.

I remembered how to beat this section of the dungeon. The item we would need should have been around here somewhere... There it was. That cardboard box over there.

This Stealth Dungeon was supposed to be paying homage to a certain game and had taken several ideas and references from it. This was one of them: *the* cardboard box. For some reason, enemies would mostly ignore you if you were hiding in it. Though, you'd blow your cover if you moved right in front of one.

"Kousuke here. Iori, jump into a cardboard box and stay on standby. I'll try to lure them over somehow."

"Iori here. Wait, a cardboard box? That'd be way too obvious!"

"Kousuke here. It's fine, just go under it. Then, you've got to slowly walk toward the exit. Continue onward. That's the finish line. There's a single toilet stall set up there."

Chris's eyes widened when she heard the word "toilet."

"You get in a cardboard box, too, Chris. I'll draw their attention," I said, showing her the foreshadowing buzzer.

When I saw them both hidden underneath the cardboard boxes, I hid in the shadows and pressed the button. My plan was to then throw the buzzer at the enemy when they got close to distract them, and use that moment to get into a cardboard box before sneaking right on through.

However, something unexpected happened. The instant the voice came out, one of the onifolk rang the alarm bell.

Backup was going to show up from elsewhere any minute, and I could tell that several of them were already headed my way at that moment. There was no way I would be able to shake them all.

"Kousuke here. Sorry, I screwed up."

Nevertheless, I succeeded in drawing them all away. While I naively thought about how to get myself into a cardboard box, a red object suddenly came fluttering up from a cardboard box.

It almost looked like a feather. At first, I hallucinated that it was the red feather of the immortal phoenix—a divine and awe-inspiring sight.

But this wasn't a phoenix's plumage.

It was a pair of panties. Red panties. Red panties had flown into the air.

Panties I had seen before.

I flashed back to the sweaty nether regions of her skirt. The smell, the warmth, the moisture, the feel of her legs. They all surged into my mind like a tsunami.

Those were Chris's panties. Freshly worn and drenched with sweat from holding in her urge to pee.

She was willing to go commando just to try saving me!

Now I would have a chance of escaping from these *oni* perverts.

Actually, wait, this could end up going to hell.

Simply by attempting to help me, she had accidentally shifted the cardboard box she was hiding under. As a result, the one onifolk farthest back was walking not toward the panties but Chris herself.

Then, once it had gotten to where the cardboard box sat, it began to reach its hand out.

Crap, crap, she was going to get found out. Could I really leave her hanging?

I suddenly reflected on the events of the day.

When I really thought about it, the majority of the blame behind why we were in this predicament lay with Chris, didn't it? If she hadn't rushed headlong to conquer the dungeon, things wouldn't have ended up like this.

Chris had undone the seal on the talisman, too. She could have easily just waited outside, but she ended up coming along with us inside this dungeon instead. So really, she had brought all of this on herself. She must have known that.

That was why I...

"Couldn't possibly forsake her, could I?"

Failure happens to everybody. Who cares about a small mistake now and then? If she screwed up somewhere, I just had to be there to support her. It was the obvious thing for friends to do. Besides, I thought Chris was a wonderful girl, and if she ever made a mistake of some kind, I wanted to be

there to help her. Above anything else, though, she had used her panties, her very last line of defense, to save me, even knowing full well she was putting herself in danger.

How could I look at myself in the mirror if I didn't lay my pride on the line here?

I took out my stole and pressed down on the buzzer in my hand as I equipped it.

"Just go, I'll handle things here!"

The line I wanted to hear the most came out from the buzzer. It was a pretty badass line, wasn't it? As I felt these words imbue me with a mysterious power, I slammed my fist full-force into the face of the onifolk near the cardboard box.

"Go Chris, Iori. Get running. Run on, and don't look back until you reach the finish line."

"But, Kousuke... You're almost at your limit, too!"

I heard Chris's woeful cry.

"Just forget about that and run. 'Sides, I'm used to this stuff."

I hadn't lactated for nothing. I was already prepared for the absolute worst. I punched one of the onifolk approaching the red panties with everything I had.

There was no way I would let anyone lay a hand on those panties.

Unfortunately, although the onifolk was blown back a bit, it was totally unscathed.

"Iori here. Okay, Kousuke, we'll go on ahead. But if anything bad happens to you, I'm gonna be mad," Iori said. I watched him move. Despite her concerns, Chris also ran off toward the exit.

Iori put the stun gun up to the onifolk standing in front of the door, the only one who hadn't come my way. Then I sent my final message to them through the radio as they rushed for the door.

"...Don't you dare look back. Over and out."

I took out the earpiece, neatly folded up the red panties on the floor, and

placed them in my item bag. That was much better. Now both the floor and my ears were clean and tidy. My bladder certainly wasn't, though.

"You really never fail to be yourself, Master."

I heard Nanami speak to me while I was preparing for battle and powering up my mana.

"You think so?"

"Indeed, I am truly proud to be your maid."

"Huh. Feels sorta embarrassing to hear that... Hey, Nanami?"

"What is it, Master?"

"You think I'm going to die? Like, socially."

"Tee-hee."

Nanami giggled slightly. Then, she changed the topic without answering my question.

"Oh, that reminds me, Master. Are you aware of the hidden function included in the buzzers you all used for Quiz Nanami Academy?"

"Yeah, you mean that one in two hundred and fifty-six chance to play a moan instead?"

"That is part of it, yes, however there is one other. In truth, when you press the buzzer multiple times...the voice that was playing before you pressed will be interrupted, and it will replay the same voice from the beginning. In other words, it will sound like a moan: 'ah, ah.' Then, once you reach that state, and you strike that one in two hundred and fifty-six chance... I leave the rest for your imagination."

Hold up, hold up, hold up, hold up now. If I remembered correctly, Ludie's buzzer had said "Coming!" hadn't it? So that meant... Okay, that design was freaking *amazing*. Holy crap. She kept all of that in mind when she made those, did she?

"Well, I can't die before I get to hear that, can I?"

"I wish you good luck, Master. I am praying that you will be able to return

home in one piece.”

“Now I gotta get back no matter what.”

I took a step with my pigeon-toed feet. Then, I took another.

There were too many onifolk in front of me to count. I wondered what it was, though. I wasn't scared of anything anymore.

I threw away the buzzer I held in my hand. It smacked against the wall and let out a noise.

“I promise, once this battle is over, I'm going to marry you.”

It signaled the start of the battle.



CONFIG

Reborn as a Side Character in a Fantasy Dating Sim It was both a good thing and a bit of a bad thing that we resolved the case faster than I had thought we would.

The good thing was that I was able to return to Tsukuyomi Magic Academy, where I could access a slew of different dungeons. I was also glad to get my hands on the Golden Lucky Cat. However, my memories of the final battle were a bit hazy, and whenever I tried to recall them, I would get an intense headache.

Unfortunately, I hadn't been able to really enjoy the Amaterasu Dungeon. They let me run through it a bit after solving the case, but I hadn't challenged it nearly enough. In reality, I wanted to head to the farming area on the sixtieth floor, but there was nothing I could do.

However, the worst part of all was that I wouldn't get the chance to see Milena, Satomi, or Chris anymore.

"Do you think I'll ever get to see Milena or Satomi again?" I asked Nanami.

"While I believe it is possible, it will be difficult. Even if you were to see them, they both think of you as a woman."

Maybe I could see Hana like normal, since we were relatives and all. Chris knew who I really was, too, so it should be fine to see her again. Still, it was a bit sad to think I wouldn't be able to see Milena and Satomi again after they had been so nice to me.

Now, if there was one other unfortunate aspect about leaving Amaterasu Girls' Academy behind, it was this one.

"Whew, this water's great. I guess I'm not gonna be able to soak in this hot spring anymore."

The completely empty communal bath felt as if I had reserved a luxury hot springs inn all to myself. I panicked when hot water had stopped coming out from my own room, but since I got permission to bathe in the hot springs here again because of it, I was glad it happened.

"Never fear, Master. I have prepared an airtight bottle to allow you to enjoy

its fresh waters whenever you like."

"Whoa, whoa, no way a bottle's worth is gonna fill up a whole bathtub."

"There should be plenty to drink."

"I'm not drinking any bathwater! I told you this already, why do you want to make me drink it so much?!"

I could admit it was probably rich with minerals and beautiful woman matter, but it wasn't a damn drink!

"It would likely fetch quite a high price."

"Yeah, you're probably right."

Bathwater that the students of Amaterasu Girls' Academy had soaked in, would probably go for ten bucks a pop. Wait, was I taking a dip in a pool of money right now?

"Putting the jokes aside for a moment, how about you go with everyone else together on a hot springs trip at some point, then? I imagine the Hanamuras must have some connections in that regard."

"That might not be a bad idea..."

As I chatted with Nanami, I abruptly heard a knock on the door to the bath.

"Hm?"

Was it just my imagination? My mind suddenly went back to the previous occasion with Chris and Ludie. But this time, I had already made sure to give them the lowdown, that the bath in my room wasn't working, so I would come in here in the middle of the night. Huh?

"Kousuke, is the water temperature to your liking?"

I heard Hana's voice through the door.

"Oh, it's you, Hana. For a second there, I thought it was the incident with Ludie and Chris all over again."

That sure had thrown me for a loop. After all, they'd both come in here buck naked. Oh well, I guess you normally entered the bath naked. At the time I thought my life was over, *hah hah*.

“So, what are you doing here, Hana?”

“I heard that you were taking a bath and thought I would join you. Pardon me for the intrusion.”

Oh, was that all? I mean, she didn’t need to ask me to come in like— “Sure, come on in... Uhhhh?! Excuse me?!”

No, no, no, wait, you can’t come in here!!

“Pardon me.”

“Abuuuuuuuh?!”

Uh, Hana, your front, please cover up your front—er, no, wait. I couldn’t let myself look. My neck wasn’t listening to me at all here. Still, I had to force myself to avert my eyes no matter what.

“Impressive, Miss Kujou. Very big. She has quite a shameless and wonderful figure.”

Nanami, how the hell could you say that right here?

I had to admit, Hana’s body was certainly wonderful. Her chest, seemingly symbolizing femininity itself, and her ass were special. She had a magnanimous, womanly physique. So magnanimous that if, for example, this was hell, being hugged close to her would transform it into heaven.

No, no, none of that was important here. Why had she come in?!

Uh-oh, I could hear her rinsing herself off. Seriously, this couldn’t be happening, right? Was she really getting in the bath?

“Well, um, I would ask you not to look over my way. It’s embarrassing.”

“Y-yup, you got it!”

My voice came out weird. Y’know, pretty sure I’d never heard a reaction like that outside of an anime before.

“Wh-what brought this on?”

“You did so much for me to help solve this case, I wished to thank you properly.”

“Yeah, I get the sentiment, but, uh, still, there’s a time and place for everything, okay?!”

“Oh, this isn’t making you happy, Kousuke?”

“Nope, I’m happy! Very happy, but, also very, very embarrassed!”

Mistakes could easily happen here!

“*Hee-hee*. Okay, I’ll leave the teasing at that for now.”

I breathed a sigh of relief. Right, of course, she just came here to tease me a little bit.

“There we go.”

“?!?!?!?!?”

Her back was touching mine.

She hadn’t gotten up to leave, but for some reason, to come over to where I was instead, sitting down nearby. Then, she pressed her back to mine, as if resting herself on me.

She had already been close to me, and now we were right up against each other. I could feel Hana’s warmth from behind. Her breathing, too. I could even hear her heartbeat—actually no, wait, that was *my* heartbeat.

I was still getting teased here!

“Thank you, Kousuke,” she said to me as I sat flustered.

“U-umm. For solving the incident at the Academy, you mean?”

“That’s right. It was thanks to you that we sorted everything out. But right now, I wanted to thank you for what you did for Chris.”

Chris?

“Wait, I don’t remember doing anything for her.”

My reply was met with a gentle giggle from Hana.

“After that matter was over, you said some things to her, didn’t you? Because of that, Chris has matured so much in the past few days, I scarcely recognize her.”

She was right that after we had finished clearing that dungeon, I said several things to Chris. She'd looked glum, and I wanted to make sure she could get back on her feet.

"That's not it, either. You said what you did in front of everyone to ensure Chris was chosen as Super Sister, didn't you?"

"...Yeah, you got me."

"That's why I'm thanking you. Normally, I should be guiding Chris, yet you ended up doing it for me."

"No, no, she always had the knowledge and skills to begin with. I simply gave her the push she needed. She would have been able to become Super Sister without me telling her anything."

"If you pushed her too hard, she would've bowled right over. Conversely, if your push was too light, or you didn't take extra care, she would have likely stopped completely. There's a part of her that doesn't fully realize that having people give you that push in the first place means you can become Super Sister."

I sort of understood what she was saying. In other words, even if she was popular, she still needed students to openly shout that they were going to vote for her no matter what, or it didn't help her.

On top of that, humans were creatures who were easily swept along in the current. Many people decided on how to act after looking at how others acted.

"I have the feeling that Vestris knew this point very well. However, ordering her underclassmen to do it for her was unacceptable. Resorting to the aid of a demon for such a purpose is equally unacceptable," she said before looking up at the sky.

Vestris was quickly saved by Chris and the others. The girl from the Church of the Malevolent Lord hadn't intended on actually killing her, so she'd merely recovered the necessary item from Vestris and left her behind.

Once Vestris had fully recovered, appropriate measures would be taken against her.

I heard a splash. It was the sound of Hana stretching out her hands. I got a glimpse, a tiny little glimpse, of her noble armpits and side boob.

“It’s almost time for me to resign as Super Sister,” she murmured to herself. Hana’s tenure ended the day after tomorrow. That was the day of the Super Sister vote. As well as the day after Iori, Ludie, and I would leave the academy. In the game, you were able to see the Super Sister vote, but both Iori and I were at our mental breaking point, so we’d decided to return home. My spirit was being ground down at that very moment.

“I feel like I finally have a little less weight on my shoulders. It’s a bit of a strange feeling. At long last, I’m free of this pressure, and yet it’s a little sad, too.”

Super Sister, huh. The position was probably far more difficult than I could imagine. Constantly having to serve as a perfect role model and achieve success while being the focus of attention both inside the school and out.

“...You must have had it very hard for a long time.”

It’d probably be impossible for me. Heck, I’d probably shut myself inside my room somewhere along the way and never come out.

“Though, I suppose I’ll be given the title of former Super Sister, so I can’t completely relax. It should become much easier, though.”

After this, she heaved a sigh.

“If my family would stop suggesting I go to marriage interviews, then everything would be perfect,” she whispered. I could tell she’d said that from the heart.

“Even someone of your stature does marriage interviews?”

“That’s right. I’ll mention this since as a member of the Hanamura family, you’re bound to learn at some point, but the truth is, while my family has quite a history, we’re quite poor nobles.”

Oh, I understood now. That explained why there’d be talk of marriage interviews.

“Still, we can’t abandon our history, either. I also don’t have the courage to

abandon my family. For now, I'm considering going on at least one marriage interview for appearance's sake, and then try convincing my family that it's still too early for me to get married."

Prestigious families had their own things to worry about. I was allowed to live freely right now, but would Marino eventually tell me to start doing marriage interviews, too? Nah, actually, I doubted it.

So, Hana's family, huh. The game never depicts her going on a marriage interview. She isn't even one of the heroines you can romance in the first place. Actually, wait, why couldn't you, anyhow? There were definitely a lot of other people besides me who liked her and everything.

In any case, if Hana did go on a marriage interview, I was envious of the lucky guy.

"Even if you aren't serious about the interview, I'm sure any guy would be overjoyed for the opportunity."

"Do you feel the same way, Kousuke?"

"Yes, if I heard about the possibility of a marriage interview with you, I'd be thrilled. There aren't many other women as fantastic as you are."

An incredible beauty, a perfect figure, immensely tolerant, very kind, with gorgeous poise. That's a bingo.

"You're probably going to get proposed to within the first five seconds."

"Oh my, I almost want to see that happen... *Tee-hee.*"

She giggled to herself a bit, perhaps imagining what being proposed to would be like. Then— "Yes, right. Kousuke?"

"What is it?"

"You saved the academy this time in its moment of crisis, but if I ever fell into a crisis of my own, would you help me?"

I mean, that went without saying.

"Of course I would. Do you need to ask? Say the word, and I'll come right away."

When I said this, she suddenly moved, and I felt a bulge hitting my back. It was pressing hard against me.

“Huh? Um...”

She whispered in my ear as I grew flustered.

“I’ll be sure to hold you to that, *tee-hee-hee*. I hope you’re ready,” she said, standing up.

“All right, it’s about time we rinsed ourselves off. How about I wash your back for you?”

“Uhh?!”

“*Hee-hee*, just kidding. Be careful not to make yourself dizzy.”

Y’know, I sorta felt like she was toying with me.

—*Chris’s Perspective*— Nanako Takioto had already arrived. She was sitting on the bench and looking up at the blue sky.

“Sorry to keep you waiting.”

“Oh Chris. I wasn’t waiting.”

Nanako wiped the spot on the bench next to her with her handkerchief and offered me a seat.

“Thanks. Going home today, then?”

“That’s right. This will be my last lunchtime here. I made sure to really enjoy it. Iori even more so.”

“*Heehee*, Iori did say that she couldn’t go home until she had tasted all the sweet desserts we had to offer, didn’t she?”

She, er, *he* heaved an exasperated sigh.

“Well then, why did you want to meet?” he asked me. Sheesh.

“You’re not very quick on the uptake, are you? I wanted to make some time to talk since you’re leaving.”

“I see,” she murmured.

“Good, I’m glad you get it. All right then, Nanako Takioto... Thank you.”

“Wh-what prompted this all of sudden?”

“Oh come on, you should know the answer to that. Considering all you’ve done for me, I could offer you everything I have to give, and it still wouldn’t be enough, okay? Especially the words you said to me after that incident was over, I remember them perfectly, you know.”

I thought back to the events a few days prior.

First, I made sure to give my thanks to Nanako Takioto in regard to the matter plaguing the Academy.

Then I apologized to her for the mess I caused.

I said that I would decline the student council president role, I’d turn down any talk about becoming Super Sister, and I was even considering leaving the Academy altogether.

But then she said this to me:

“People make mistakes. Isn’t it what they do to follow up on those mistakes that’s important?”

“I still need to take responsibility.”

“Chris, back then, you were under the influence of Vestris’s particularly skilled dark magic, so it was easy for your thoughts to drift in a weird direction.”

He was right that mind magic was Vestris’s forte.

However, while she could manipulate bugs and simple creatures, she definitely didn’t have the power to manipulate people.

I’d chosen to do what I did. I made my choice, and I...

“I tried to set you up, you know.”

It was in that moment, I realized.

That I had actually been the one set up.

“You didn’t set me up at all. From what I saw, you were tricked, and still charged ahead regardless of the danger, for the sake of the other students.”

Right, and he had apparently gone around to a bunch of other people telling

them the same thing.

Telling everyone that I had jumped out ahead and flew toward an enemy that left Nanako cowering in fear, and resolved the whole affair.

The effect of Otohime's testimony was enormous, and since Sister had affirmed it herself, my reputation exploded, unbelievably so.

Now people were saying I would be the next Super Sister.

"If you really insist on making amends, then I hope you'll hold yourself accountable. Not by giving up, but by taking up your new role."

"My new role?"

"Yes, I hope you'll lead the other students as Super Sister. If you think that you've failed, then I hope you'll ensure that everyone who idolizes you and supports you won't walk down the same path you did."

"I'm not really sure if someone like me should become Super Sister."

"Why are you suddenly getting so fainthearted about it? If you decline the honor, there won't be any Super Sister this year. I'd like to follow your example myself, too."

"I wonder about that. I am sure Satomi could easily become Super Sister, too."

"No, I don't think that'd happen. Satomi said it herself. She told me she's not cut out for annoying stuff like that and would rather leave it in your hands."

Satomi was the type to say something like that, true.

She was quite popular thanks to her strength and looks, but she could also be pretty lazy.

Nanako continued.

"Satomi may act prickly in front of you, Chris, but she was secretly very considerate of you. She asked students who adored her about who they were voting for, then told them to put your name down instead. A while later, she admitted to me that she was jealous because she'd only asked girls who were supposed to idolize her, but you were still the more popular choice."

Satomi had said stuff like that to him?

“Milena said she planned to put your name down, you know. That was even before the whole dungeon incident. Everyone’s looking at you for who you are.”

When he put it that way...

“It’s a little embarrassing to hear that. It does make me happy, though.”

“That reminds me, a certain noble spread a rumor that you summoned monsters, didn’t they? Apparently Satomi and Milena were the first to deny it. Actually, it wasn’t just those two. Nobody believed the rumors at all. That goes to show just how much everybody trusts you.”

And that was why he was telling me to live up to their expectations.

“Honestly, you’re quite a smooth talker, aren’t you?”

He really was mature, with a good head on his shoulders. He had strength and smarts, too.

And he was even younger than me... Younger?

“Oh right, so you’re actually younger than me?”

“Yes, sorry for inflating my age a bit.”

“Hmm. Not just your age, either; you even lied about your gender. This definitely needs to be punished. You saw me naked, oh, and you smelled my feet, too.”

I recalled that night in the grand bath.

He had definitely gotten a good look.

While he had been gentlemanly enough to hide his face, he must have gotten several glimpses of my body.

Sheesh, it was downright mortifying. Ah, he must have been remembering it himself; his face had turned beet red.

“You’re thinking back over it, aren’t you. Your face is bright red.”

“Y-yours is just as red, too.”

“B-be quiet.”

“Oh right, I wanted to be sure to tell this to you properly. Chris, your feet didn’t smell at all.”

“R-really?”

“Seriously, you could wear sandals and let them out in the air just fine. They’re very slender and pretty as well.”

He turned his face away, perhaps recalling the night in the bath again.

If he really insisted, then maybe it was okay to expose them more. Though, I was still anxious about leaving them uncovered in front of other people. In that case...

“Fine, I suppose I’ll only take them out in front of you. Just in front of you, okay? When I do, will you check to see if they smell again for me?”

“Sure, I don’t mind. Leave it to me.”

“That’s reassuring to hear...,” I said, looking at the clock. Lunch was almost over. From here I needed to go prepare for the student council elections tomorrow, along with the Super Sister vote.

“What’re you going to do after getting back to Tsukuyomi Magic Academy?”

“Well, there are some absurdly strong people back there. For now, I’m trying to get stronger than them.”

“President Monica, right?”

“Yeah, I’m trying to surpass her if I can. Then, I’m gonna aim to be strongest of all, I think.”

Given that Nanako went to the same school, he must have known how strong President Monica was. She was the strongest among her generation. Normally I’d brush aside what Nanako was saying as totally impossible. However, he seemed like he might actually make it happen.

The student council elections solemnly went forward. Though since there were as many candidates as there were seats, it was just a vote of confidence.

The whole school gathered in the stadium, and after the ballots were counted, all of the candidates were elected to become student council

members. With that, I also rose up from student council vice president to president.

However, the Super Sister votes were different from the student council's.

Everyone wrote down the name of the person they idolized. Since these votes were placed together with the student council vote of confidence, the votes had all been cast already.

They were all counted up together with the new student council and the previous Super Sister.

We unsealed the box in the waiting room. Then, Sister looked at several pieces of paper before sighing slightly.

"We won't even need to count, will we?"

My name was written on the paper. Every single paper we looked at had my name written on it.

There was a selection of papers that were also accompanied by a message.

"Some even wrote down their personal thanks to you."

"Miss Gauss. It was thanks to your help that I was able to raise my test scores. I am very grateful for the after-school review sessions you started up."

"Chris. Stop picking off my dinner sides for yourself. Still, you're the only one who can be a proper Super Sister. So, fine, I guess I'll put your name down."

"Gauss. I was there to witness you put yourself on the line to protect everyone from those monsters. Thank you very much. I had frozen up in fright and was unable to act."

"Miss Gauss. I haven't forgotten when you constantly stayed later after school to teach this slow-witted dummy here about magic. Thank you so very, very much."

Each time I read one of the messages, tears would spill from my eyes. I had heard that everyone was saying they recognized what I had done. But, seeing them convey their feelings like this in a letter made me happy to see that they truly did acknowledge all my hard work.

I wiped away my tears as I spoke.

“How silly of them. All these votes are invalid. Still, I’m so happy...!”

I was truly overjoyed. It didn’t matter if the votes were invalid. As long as everything I had done was recognized and acknowledged.

“True, in an official election, they would be invalid, wouldn’t they... Can you bring me the mic?” Sister said, having the secretary girl bring her the microphone. Sister then took it from her. Then, she looked at us all and spoke.

“However, this is the vote to pick the Super Sister. There are no set rules. All of these are proof that everyone truly and deeply cares for you. I declare them all to be valid votes,” she said, turning the microphone on.

“We have counted the votes, and Christine will be replacing me as Super Sister this year.” I heard a thunderous applause from outside. Listening to it, I felt the tears begin to well up again. At that moment, Sister spoke to me.

“Hey, Chris. I was Super Sister, but why do you think I was able to become one?” she asked me.

“Because you were so charming...”

“True, I’m sure that was part of it. But that alone isn’t enough.”

“Then...”

“You need people who idolize you. People who look up to you enough to speak up about it. No matter what charms you may have, if you don’t convey that to all sorts of people, it’s meaningless.”

Sister continued to speak.

“It’s the same in any sphere. In the music world, in the art world, it isn’t only those with true ability who rise to the top. No matter how much talent you have, or how much effort you put in, if it never comes to light, it’s all useless.”

“Sister...?”

“People have to know about it for it mean anything. It’s the same with movies, books, or videos. No matter how interesting they may be, if there’s no opportunity for everyone to learn that, then there’s nothing beyond that for the

creator. Eventually they'll realize their own limits and give up entirely."

That may have been true.

"In fact, Vestris had a better understanding of that. Though, Vestris wasn't someone who acted for the sake of other students. That's why they chose you, Chris. So I want you to make sure you remember. Remember the people who acted for your sake, as well as Nanako and the others... Everyone, would you mind? There is something I wish to say to Chris in private," Sister said, and the rest of the student council members vacated the room. It was now just the two of us.

Amid the now silent room, Sister took out a single letter.

"This is from Kousuke and the others."

When I touched the letter's magic circle with my hand, it glowed slightly and opened up on its own.

"Congratulations on being voted in as Super Sister. We'll have to call you Sister next time we meet, won't we? We're looking forward to it."

"...*Heehee*, now I wonder what would have happened if I hadn't been chosen?"

"They were absolutely certain you'd be chosen. Just like I was... You'll have to thank them, won't you? *Heehee*."

"I will."

Sister laughed for a short while before she finally wiped away her smile, gazing at me with a serious look.

"I think it's time for you to go out in front of everyone."

I nodded slightly. I had to give my address on being elected student council president and Super Sister.

"Now, one final thing. Listen to me, Chris. The Amaterasu of Amaterasu Girls' Academy refers to the goddess of the sun. All of us as students here are illuminated by the light of the sun."

I nodded. We were told the same thing when we first enrolled at the school.

“The goddess Amaterasu is said to bestow light on all of us. Now that you have become Super Sister, you need to be able give light to others, too. If a student loses their way into darkness, you need to bathe them in sunlight. Show them the way and guide them. Just like you were guided by me and Kousuke.”

“I understand...Sister—”

“No, no, no,” she said in a harsh tone.

“That’s not what I’m called anymore. From now on, you’re the Sister.”

Right. From today forward, I was the Super Sister.

All the hard work I had done up until then flooded into my mind. Greeting students in the morning with Miss Hana, planning events that everyone could enjoy, helping hopeful students with their studies, and magic after school with Miss Hana. There had been tough times along the way, but there had been a great many more moments of joy.

When I would find myself unsure or distressed, Miss Hana, and lately Kousuke, would come to my rescue. Now, I was going to succeed Miss Hana and become everyone’s Sister.

Ah, I wondered what it was. Miss Hana ended up appearing in almost all my memories. It was truly because of her that I had been able to come this far.

I wiped my tears. Then, I lowered my head to the person I owed so much to.

“Miss Hana, thank you so very much for everything you’ve done for me.”

This time, it was my turn. I was in the position to lead someone, to lead everyone.

As she looked at me, a tear trickled out of Miss Hana’s eye.

“Oh no, and here I wanted to end things as cool and composed as possible. Seeing that look on your face makes me want to cry, too.”

Seeing Miss Hana like this made even more tears drip down my face.

Miss Hana wiped my cheeks with her handkerchief.

“Come now, time to tighten up that face. Everyone is waiting to see Sister Chris.”

I nodded. Miss Hana wiped the corners of her own eyes.

It was my first time seeing her tears.

After I separated a bit from Miss Hana, I once again bowed deeply. Then, I moved from the waiting room to the stage in front of all the other students.

When I took the mic, a silence fell over the area. There were so many people here, and they were all looking at me, waiting for me to speak. I took a tiny breath. Then, I turned the microphone on.

First, let me give my gratitude to everyone who voted for me.

It is an extreme honor, thank you.

Now, there are two Sisters who I respect and look up to.

They are both the most wonderful of people.

They possess a beautiful demeanor, elegance, and powerful magic abilities.

However, I do not intend on staying in their shadow forever.

I swear right now that I will strive to be a Super Sister that everyone can aspire to.

Let us improve ourselves together. If you are ever lost, or uneasy, please tell me. I will show you the path forward.

By the way, I am sure everyone is very curious about the two people I mentioned.

Both of them are people you are all familiar with.

One is Sister Kujou.

The other is Nanako Takioto. A Sister who is sure to become the strongest of all one day.





CONFIG

Afterword

Magical★Explorer

Reborn as a Side Character in a Fantasy Dating Sim

—Acknowledgments—

During the publication of this latest volume, I caused a great deal of trouble for many people. My deepest apologies. It is thanks to all of you that this book came together. I truly thank you all.

To Noboru Kannatuki: I am very sorry for causing schedule changes over and over again, despite your busy workload.

Your designs are fabulous, as always. Both Chris and Kujou look absolutely perfect. Given my love for these prim and proper lady characters, they were both a critical hit with me. These designs are what girl's school characters are all about.

Nanako Takioto and Iori also looked wonderful enough to lead one to make some dangerous mistakes. I'm sure I won't be the only one to end up with some weird fantasies about the two of them.

To my editor, Miyakawa: While this is always the case, I am truly indebted to you for everything. As for *how* indebted, I would need to put glue on my hands, forehead, and legs and prostrate myself to even come close to showing you.

Seriously, thank you so very much.

Also, the chibi version of Nanami that Kannatuki drew for this volume is unbelievably adorable, so please make merch of her ASAP. Though, I can't take responsibility if it ends up losing money.

To all of you who bought this book.

It is because of your support that I am able to continue on writing. I am truly grateful, thank you.

—Everything Else—

This happened when I was writing in a library that allowed laptop usage.

There was a schoolgirl in a nearby seat studying intently. There were other students studying, in the seat across from mine, as well as behind me. In a seat near the entrance, there was a white-collar man busily working.

I started to write, telling myself that if everyone else was working so hard, I needed to, too, but there was an extremely difficult problem with this latest light novel, and I wasn't making much headway. I wracked my brain for a solution to tackle this perplexity, thinking, thinking, and thinking some more.

Suddenly, I had a thought.

These students were studying so hard, and this man was thinking up ways to increase profits or customer satisfaction, so then why was I spending so many hours thinking about how a *gender-swapped guy* would *legally* be able to *enter* the *shared bathroom* in an *all-Girls' Academy dormitory*?

First of all, a gender-swapped boy going into an all-Girls' Academy was already a completely absurd scenario, right? To then have them go into a girls' dorm was absolute nonsense, and going inside a communal bath from there was inconceivable.

In other words, it would realistically be impossible, wouldn't it? If I could solve this quandary, that would mean I must have an Einstein-level intellect, wouldn't it? Then, it came to me. A means for a man to legally enter a girls' bathroom.

As such, I am greater than Einstein himself.

Q.E.D.

Yup. I'm pretty sure I'm exhausted right now.

Nanako Takioto after
Vice President Fran
forced her to cosplay, lol

~~神奈~~

(Noboru Kannafuki)



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