

I SAVED TOO MANY AND CAUSED THE APOCALYPSE

LITTLE



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*Iris placed a hand
against my thigh and
leaned in towards me.*

**"You
don't
have...
anyone
you like
right
now...
right?"**



ANGEL OF LOVE
AND PASSION
RACHELLE

HERO
KIRI

DIRECTOR
FROM SPACE
**ZETA
ZENONIA**

"Damn!
At this
rate,
the
people
of the
town
will
be...!"

"All
right!
There's
no way
the
company
will go
bankrupt
with
this!"

**"GALACTIC
STAAARBVVUUUUURST!"**

*When we shouted the
name of our move, a
sparkling vortex of
starlight shot forth
from our hands.*





A high school freshman. She is the girl-next-door childhood friend, and heir to the Omniscient Magic.

SATSUKI OTOMO



A high school freshman. Thanks to the Namidare bloodline, he keeps getting involved with girls that are in trouble.

REKKA NAMIDARE



A sorcerer from another world. She lives at Rekka's place and helps out with the house-work.

HARISSA HOPE



A high school freshman. A space princess who's presently studying to be a bride on Earth.

IRIS FINERITAS GYPHERCALL



A high school freshman. She works at her family's restaurant, Nozomiya, and practices her cooking every day.

TSUMIKI NOZOMUNO



A demi-material being sent from the future in order to get Rekka together with a girl.

R

A high school freshman. Also a centuries-old vampire. She has strong opinions about maids.



ROSALIND C. BATHORY

Leviathan, the Strongest Beast. After losing most of her power, she's now living in human society.



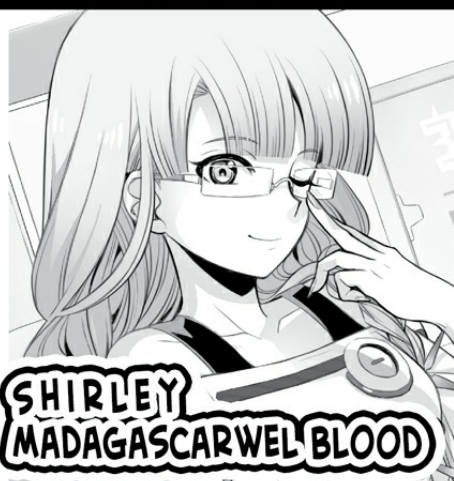
LEA



ZAIA GARDENDOS CORONA

A former hero and Demon King of another world. She left her domain to a regent and is currently staying at Rosalind's mansion.

A research scientist. Sent to Earth with Fam and Rain to keep an eye on them.



SHIRLEY MADAGASCARWEL BLOOD

Angel of love and passion. On the verge of starvation, she comes to Rekka for a taste of the carnage he brings.



RACHELLE

NEW!

A greater wind spirit. Working with her little sister to help promote the alliance between spirits and sorcerers.



LYUN SYLPHEED



KORI HAYASHIBARA

Middle school student and hero. Despite being spent from her long battle with evil, she fights dauntlessly.

A director from space who's in dire straits. Currently working on a new project in hopes of saving her company.



ZETA ZENONIA

NEW!

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Prologue 1-1: Rachelle

Love was grand. That was what Rachelle, angel of love and passion, thought every day.

Love was grand. People were able to overcome all sorts of difficulties in the name of love.

Love was grand. Even the most harmless person could become a valiant warrior in the name of love.

And, most importantly...

Passionate love can fill my stomach...

Grrrowl...

"...Hmph!"

Rachelle elbowed her growling stomach in an attempt to shut it up.

Grrrowl...

But it didn't comply.

"I'm hungry..." she whined, finally giving up.

The concept of hunger was different for angels than it was for humans. Angels couldn't eat human food to satiate their appetites. Instead, they absorbed an invisible power called spiritual energy to sustain themselves. The exact type of spiritual energy an angel absorbed depended on the individual. As the angel of love and passion, Rachelle found her nourishment in the energy produced by humans who were passionately in love.

"I'm so low on energy, but I still have to do my duty... It's tough being a low-ranking angel... Argh! If only I had the energy levels of an archangel, I'd have so much more power!"

Grrrowl...

Rachelle's vehement complaining used up even more of her already-

dwindling stamina, and her stomach added a complaint of its own.

“Harrumph!”

Dizzy with hunger, Rachelle’s wings faltered for a moment, nearly causing her to fall.

“Whoops...”

It was a close call, but she managed to regain her balance and stay steady. She continued to fly onward, now looking up at the sky as she pressed a hand to her rumbling tummy. Maybe she had reached her limit.

The reason for her hunger was, of course, her lack of angelic nourishment—spiritual energy. When angels failed to absorb their particular flavor of spiritual energy, they would cease to exist. In other words, Rachelle was on the brink of starving to death.

“I... I have... to hurry... and get there...”

The place Rachelle was trying to reach in spite of her dizzying hunger pains was an enormous source of love energy. The area Rachelle was in charge of was so far away from it that she’d only belatedly realized how powerful a source of love energy it really was. It was the most potent thing she’d ever seen. It would be enough not only to fill her ravenous stomach, but even increase her powers of love and passion by tenfold, with change to spare. And in order to reach this holy land of love energy, Rachelle was prepared to cross the ocean—or die trying. The energy source was located in the countryside of a nation that the humans called Japan.

“There... it is...”

Her head spinning, Rachelle finally arrived at the massive outlet of love energy. More specifically, it was a convergence point for said energy: a certain boy. However...

“Hahh...”

Perhaps it was due to the relief of arriving at her destination, or perhaps she had simply pushed herself past her limits. The strength left Rachelle’s body, and she spiraled downwards towards the spiky-haired boy walking below.

Prologue 1-2: Zeta Zenonia

President and general director of Zenonia Channel, the galactic netvision company broadcasting throughout the entire Galactic Federation. That was Zeta Zenonia's title.

As long as their channel passed the galactic netvision review, anyone could broadcast via the Galactic Federation Network. Some people like Zeta created their own shows as a company, while other individuals broadcasted their obscure, niche hobbies as a pastime. With the galactic net, audiences would select the channels they wanted to watch and pay the viewing fees for those choice channels, creating a direct correlation between viewership and income. A channel could only grow as its subscriber base did, naturally making the battle for viewers fierce—and Zeta Zenonia very tired.

People in creative lines of work tended to be tired all year round, but the sagging bags under Zeta's eyes after these last few weeks could rank her in the Federation Book of Galactic Records.

"Heh heh heh, it's done... Wait, 'heh heh heh'? I'm not some evil villain."

Having worked through the night, she was delirious enough to mutter to herself. But it didn't stop her. Zeta lifted up the project proposal she'd sacrificed her beauty sleep for and scanned it with a dangerous glint in her eye.

"Heh heh heh... Aw, crap, I said it again. Whatever, it's done. This time I have created a perfectly planned avant garde project."

Zeta continued to snicker under her breath as she praised herself. If anyone had been watching, she would have indeed looked like a suspicious character up to something nefarious. But since she was alone in her room right now, that wasn't a problem.

Her room was currently littered with empty energy drink cans and various snack trash. Zeta could no longer even recall exactly how long it had been since she'd started working on this. That was how bad it was this time. It wouldn't be

an exaggeration to say her career as a director and the fate of a dozen or so employees were relying on this project, after all.

Zenonia Channel was the netvision company Zeta had established in her teens. Now in its third year, the company was fluctuating between average and above average in terms of scale and viewership. She had originally established the company out of her love for and desire to create anime. Particularly the superhero kind. She had taken out all kinds of loans to buy her channel rights and create her debut work, which was luckily a hit. After getting sponsors, repaying the initial start-up debt, and wrapping up her debut work after a good two-year run, it was time for her next project, which had unfortunately been a flop.

What was she thinking back then? Looking back on it now, she'd probably wanted to challenge herself by making Zenonia Channel's second work a documentary on unexplored regions. If she had stopped to think about it at the time, she would have realized that the viewers who enjoyed her first superhero anime were expecting something similar as a follow-up. And when that didn't happen, of course they were disappointed, and her viewership plummeted accordingly.

Really, it was as simple as that. If she'd stopped to think about it, she would have realized it. But what was done was done.

"All right! There's no way the company will go bankrupt with this!"

What she was working on now was a new project plan to save her failing company. After a quick nap, Zeta would get started on promoting it and gathering funds. Perhaps she should come up with a promotional catchphrase and a good sales pitch...

But first, I need sleep!

And so, she decided to turn in for now. Zeta set her project proposal back down on her desk and kicked a path through the empty cans and bags to her bed. Sleep was one of the few pleasures her occupation could afford, so her bed was one of the latest models in all the galaxy. It guaranteed a sleep so peaceful, not even a meteorite could disturb you. It was even sturdier than your average shelter.

Ahh! But when I wake up, I'll probably start second-guessing my project proposal...

Objectively, she knew that her self-praise earlier was just the result of a writer's high. But for now, all she wanted was some shut-eye. So she put her worries aside and threw herself into bed.

Prologue 1-3: Kiri Hayashibara

Kiri Hayashibara was a hot-blooded girl. A middle schooler overflowing with vitality. She was in the softball club and had energy to spare. She wouldn't consider herself manly, but she had been fighting with boys that picked on girls ever since elementary school. She believed that actions spoke louder than words.

Kiri Hayashibara was a man of justice. Or, more accurately, a woman of justice. She hated evil and unnecessary violence. But there wasn't any particularly profound reason for such hatred; it wasn't like she had a traumatic past or anything. She just couldn't stand things like that. That was all there was to it.

Thanks to her simple and straightforward personality, she believed in immediate judgments, immediate decisions, and immediate responses—which was both a good and bad thing. Basically, it was how she'd ended up in her current situation.

“Yaaaaah!”

Kiri landed on the ground with an exceedingly girly shriek. A small crater had formed at her feet from the impact of her landing, but it wasn't because she was heavy. She had simply fallen from a tremendous height. As for where she fell from...

“GRAAAAAAAH!”

She had been smacked down by the ridiculously large front legs of the kaiju that had just let out an earsplitting roar. Kaiju. Yes, kaiju. The very dictionary definition of one, no less. It was so typical that it could have crawled directly out of a Sunday morning TV show.

It stood on two thick hind legs, had a long tail, and two short arms attached to its torso below a fat neck that held up an atrocious head. The rough hide all over its body was rock-hard. It stood far taller than any building around, so it

went without saying that it simply dwarfed Kiri. Just standing at its feet made her feel like a speck of dust.

“Damn! At this rate, the people of the town will be..!”

As Kiri cursed to no one in particular, a strange creature appeared behind her and called out to her.

“Star Prism! You okay?”

“Yeah! I’m fine... but...”

Kiri a.k.a. Star Prism craned her neck to look up at the kaiju. The longer she looked at it, the more hopeless the situation seemed.

“...”

“You’ve depleted your hero gauge fighting evil too much! You can’t win like this!”

“Yeah, you’re probably right... But I won’t let this year of fighting go to waste!”

It was only a year ago that Kiri had taken up the ridiculous title of hero. It all started when she ran into Starmon on her way home from the softball club. She was startled at first by the strange creature that spoke like a human, but soon warmed up to Starmon’s brash personality. That was all before she’d learned the shocking truth.

Surprise! Earth was on the verge of destruction! And of course it had to be by an evil organization aiming for world domination!

Said evil organization was teeming with villains and spies—far more than the police and military could ever handle. But, Starmon said, if Kiri formed a contract, she’d be able to transform into Star Prism and stop their schemes.

“Okay! I’ll fight!”

Staying true to her usual policy of immediate judgment, immediate decision, and immediate action, she readily agreed to Starmon’s contract.

And so, for the past year, she’d been fighting the evil organization and its underlings. She’d faced all kinds of difficulties and hardships in her fight, but

one week ago, she'd finally made her way to the final boss.

However, just before she was able to deal the finishing blow, he went berserk with rage and summoned a space kaiju to destroy Earth in his stead.

"If I cannot have this world, then no one will!" he'd shouted as he was defeated.

And so Kiri was left with one hell of a souvenir. Accordingly, Kiri and Starmon had come to a remote area of Hokkaido on the first day of the second semester in order to face the kaiju from space. And that brings us up to about a minute ago, when Kiri was smacked into the ground by one of the kaiju's front legs mid-jump. She'd been leaping for its big, stubby head.

"GRAAAAAHH!"

Its thunderous roar reverberated through the air. Each step forward it took shook the ground. Fortunately, there was no risk of innocent bystanders getting hurt in a remote area like this, but there was no telling what kind of damage it would do if it reached the cities. Considering its massive stride, it could reach the closest one in less than an hour.

"So... what should I do?"

This was where Kiri's policy of immediate judgment, immediate decision, and immediate action came in handy. Even if she was no more than a pesky fly to this kaiju, she knew she needed to distract it and keep it from doing greater damage elsewhere. The best-case scenario would be if someone realized what was going on and evacuated the city before anything *could* happen. But it wasn't all good news...

"I don't think I can defeat it after all..."

This was where the downside to Kiri's M.O. tended to catch up with her. It was simply too reckless to challenge such an enormous enemy with no plan. Defeat was only inevitable. And unlike in sports, there were no mulligans. Defeat here would mean the end for Kiri, Earth, humanity... Everything.

I can't even use my special ability in a remote area like this... Starlight Healing can't purge the evil from a kaiju, either...

The kaiju was moving on instinct. Its natural desire was to feed on others as a carnivore; there was no malicious intent behind it, rendering Kiri's purifying power "Starlight Healing" useless.

"Oh, well! There's no point in hesitating now!"

Kiri slapped her cheeks to get herself back in the game. Even if she couldn't win, she still had a job to do as a distraction. Even if no one noticed the kaiju in time to start evacuations, she could at least buy enough time for the boy and girl she'd just met to get away. She had no idea what they were doing in such a remote area of Hokkaido in the first place. The boy had desperately tried to stop her from challenging the kaiju, telling her to run from the danger.

He was wearing weird clothes, too...

Well, Kiri didn't really have any room to talk. Appearances aside... If it meant a nice person like that could live in this world for just a little longer, that was reason enough for Kiri to fight. And so Kiri abandoned all thoughts of escape and threw herself into the futile battle at hand.

Chapter 1: The Angel Who Fell from the Sky

With my hectic summer break behind me, today was the first day of the second semester.

“Why is the end of summer always so depressing?”

“You just don’t want to go back to school. Also, it’s still pretty hot,” Satsuki said with a sigh as she walked along next to me.

While the calendar had just flipped over to the first of September, you’d never know it. The glaringly bright sun was still beating down on us. We’d only left my house a few minutes ago, yet sweat was already running down my neck.

“The whole point of summer vacation is, like, to have a break because it’s too hot to study, right? Shouldn’t they revise the constitution and extend it until the end of September?”

“The constitution doesn’t dictate how long summer vacation is, the Board of Education does.”

How does one go about making a direct appeal to the Board of Education, I wonder? I fanned myself with my hand as I pondered such silly thoughts. Man, global warming sure is brutal.

“Hahh... I hope it cools down soon.”

“Oh, Rekka, you just don’t understand the romance of summer.”

Aaand there goes the peanut gallery. It was R, of course, the girl from the future who was always floating beside me and wearing her military-style uniform.

“Just take a look at Satsuki right next to you. Her blouse is already transparent from sweat.”

“As if I’d look.”

“What won’t you look at?” Satsuki asked.

“Oh, no, it’s nothing. Just talking to myself.”

“Okay...”

We were walking so close together along the deserted road that she must’ve heard me whispering to R. Guess I’d have to cut our conversation short until we got to school. To make sure she got the point, I subtly dragged my thumbnail across my neck.

“Of course, of course. You’re the type who’s all too willing to throw away perfectly good chances at romance a dozen at a time. I guess there’s no way someone like you would understand the romance of summer.”

So even though I couldn’t talk anymore, she had no problem continuing to go on one-sidedly about her disappointment. How unfair.

Several months had passed since she appeared on the day of my high school entrance ceremony. She now had a larger variety of expressions compared to when we first met, but her strange sense of dad-like humor was still completely mystifying. Just what kind of training had she gone through before arriving in this era? I’d like to see her parents...

“Oh?” R suddenly said, pointing off into the distance.

I followed her finger with my eyes to see some familiar faces waiting at the crossroad up ahead.

“Hey, Iris. Rosalind. Good morning.”

“Sup, Rekka?”

“Hmph. Haven’t seen your face since the summer festival, Rekka.”

They both greeted me as they pushed off the fence they were leaning on and approached.

“Were you waiting for us? Maybe not so much Iris, but that’s pretty rare for you, Rosalind.”

I usually walked to school with Satsuki, and Iris would join up with us halfway from time to time. Frequently sleeping in kept her from showing up every day. Rosalind, on the other hand... I’d only ever walked to school with once. And that was a while ago.

“Th-That’s not a problem, is it? Or are you saying it’s unpleasant to have me around?”

“Huh? No, nothing like that.”

“Then it’s fine,” Rosalind said abruptly, refusing to field any further questions.

I didn’t know why she was being so defensive about it, but, more importantly... Why was she giving Iris and Satsuki such a smug look?

“Tch, my advantages are being whittled away...”

Satsuki seemed to be grinding her teeth over something I couldn’t comprehend, either.

“What on Earth...?” I mumbled.

“That should be my line, Rekka. Do you have tofu for brains? There’s got to be a limit to how dense you can be.”

R was on my freaking case again. Not only was what she was saying mean (and... especially hurtful), I couldn’t even defend myself with the girls around since she was invisible to them.

“Hahh... It’s starting to seem more and more like the War of All is an inevitability. Good grief, this is all too much,” R said with a heavy sigh as she exaggeratedly slumped her shoulders.

While it was a horrible way to put it... Hmm...

The War of All was an event in the future that we had discussed several times now. And I certainly didn’t doubt her when we talked about it. Considering that people from the future had sent R all the way here to prevent it, and the way countless stories continued to unfold around me, it was hard to believe it was all made up.

But while I didn’t think it was made up, that didn’t necessarily make it feel like it was real. I just wasn’t quite sure how I could end up as a super sleazy womanizer that would cause the destruction of this world and all those other worlds and outer space and different dimensions and you name it...

“Rekka? What’s wrong?”

“Rekka? Is the heat getting to you?”

“You all right, Rekka?”

I couldn't believe that these girls before me, all worrying for my well-being, would stir up that kind of trouble. Okay, so they did bicker every now and then, but wasn't that normal for friends? I honestly couldn't imagine them fighting over me in such a way that it would start a war that would involve the entire universe and hurt untold numbers of innocent people.

“Ah... No, it's not...”

I tried to come up with a random excuse for spacing out... And that's when it happened. An angel fell from the sky, landing splat on the asphalt in front of me.

“O-Oh...? Wait, huh?”

It was as strange a start to a situation as usual, but good grief... This was a bit much. I mean, you could seriously hear the “splat.”

“Ugh... Hack, ack...”

The girl on the ground had a halo over her head and white wings sprouting from her back. No matter how you cut it, she looked like an angel. And not the cosplay kind. No human would have survived that kind of high-speed collision with the street from that high up. But this angel didn't look completely unscathed, either.

“That is an angel... right?” I asked.

“Probably...?” Satsuki tilted her head, unsure of her answer.

“What's an angel?” asked Iris. As an alien, she was unfamiliar with the concept.

“That's just an idiot,” Rosalind offered bluntly.

Even though she a hundred-percent looked like an angel, everyone was a bit skeptical that that was really what we were looking at. I mean, well... didn't angels come down from the sky in a beam of light and all that? That “splat” just now was more like a comedy sketch.

“...Uuurgh...” The aforementioned angel gave a pained groan.

“This... is a heroine, right?” I discreetly asked R.

“So it seems,” she replied in her usual deadpan way.

Yeah, she was too pitiful to just leave there, so I thought I should at least ask...

“A-Are you okay?”

“Nuuu...”

Figures. She wasn't okay. She certainly didn't look like it, either.

The angel sluggishly raised her disheveled face. As she did, her wings shrunk with a flutter. Apparently they could change size.

“My name... is... Rachelle...”

“Rachelle, is it? I'm Rekka Namidare.”

“You're... Rekka...? I've been... searching... for you...”

“Me?”

“Yes...”

Searching for me? Judging by her reaction, she didn't seem to know anything other than my name. Which left me wondering why she was looking for me in the first place.

“I have... a favor to ask... of you...” Rachelle wheezed between breaths like she was nearly too exhausted to even speak.

“What kind of favor is it?”

With me, Satsuki, Iris, and Rosalind here, we could probably solve most problems. What could Rachelle possibly need?

“S-Show me...”

“Show you?”

“Ca...”

“Ca?”

“Show me a scene of carnage, please!”

“...I beg your pardon?”



This angel really liked to defy expectations, huh? Unable to comprehend her nonsensical request, I fell silent with shock. The girls standing behind me also dropped their jaws in astonishment.

“Hmm...”

R was the only one who seemed to be turning something over. I glanced over at her, but didn't pay her too much mind. There was something far more pressing at hand, so I turned back to the girl.

“So... I think I may have misheard you. It sounded like you asked to see carnage...”

“Yes! That's exactly it!”

“Why are you responding with so much enthusiasm now...? Anyway, why would you want to see something like that?”

“Well, you see...”

Just as Rachelle was about to answer, she was interrupted by her loudly growling stomach.

“Oh, my...”

Her cheeks flushed crimson as she looked down in embarrassment. While I could have chosen to pretend not to hear it and to ignore it, I figured it would actually be more polite to offer her something to eat.

“Are you hungry? Should I get someone to bring you some food?”

I started to turn to the girls standing behind me, but Rachelle stopped me.

“Ah, no... We angels cannot eat the foods of Earth. Thank you for your kind offer, however,” she said.

Hmm... So, angels couldn't eat food.

“Then what *do* you eat?” I asked the obvious follow-up question.

“We angels sustain ourselves by absorbing an invisible power source known as spiritual energy. Different angels absorb different kinds of spiritual energy based on their domains, and we cannot absorb energy from any other angel's domains.”

“Spiritual energy, huh? What exactly is that?”

“It comes from humans, mostly in the form of emotions, passions, and the like.”

“I see. So what kind of angel are you, Rachelle?”

“I am the angel of love and passion.”

Love? What an angelic domain. But just as I came to accept her answer, Rachelle suddenly slumped her shoulders.

“However, recently I’ve been unable to absorb enough energy no matter where I go, resulting in my current sorry state. As you can see, I can’t even fly anymore.” She sniffled as she spoke about her current situation.

In other words, solving her hunger should solve her story. Which led me to another obvious question.

“Shouldn’t you, like... be able to find love everywhere? I can’t imagine it’d be that uncommon...”

I’d heard about the birthrate declining in Japan, but it wasn’t like romance was completely dead. I didn’t know the first thing about absorbing energy, but was there really so little love in the world that an angel would be starving for it?

“It’s true that half-assed romance is available everywhere, like some cheap, watered-down wine.”

“Um...”

Did this angel just call romance half-assed? How... unangelic.

“I’m not sure if I understand, but... Are you saying that half-assed romance doesn’t cut it?”

“No, it doesn’t.”

Well, that was one mystery solved?

“Like I said before... I am an angel of love and *passion*,” Rachelle said, heavily emphasizing the passion part. “Which means...”

“Which means?”

“Which means I need a romance that boils hotter than magma, clings stickier than syrup! A love so aggressive and exciting that it burns your entire body with a single touch—otherwise I can’t absorb the love energy!”

Rachelle got worked up and pumped her fist into the air...

“Owww...”

And immediately seemed to regret it. She doubled over with a pathetic groan and lost all her momentum. Anyway...

“A clingy, sticky romance?”

While I wanted to question what was specifically involved in that kind of love, I already had somewhat of an inkling.

“Show me a scene of carnage, please!”

That’s what she’d originally asked for.

“I see... If it’s a scene of carnage that Rachelle needs in order to collect love energy, then she certainly came to the right place with you, Rekka.”

“The hell?” I unthinkingly retorted to R out loud. “But even if you ask someone for carnage... it’s kind of...”

I turned back to Satsuki and the others for their opinions.

“Yeah, to be asked that out of the blue... And aren’t most scenes of carnage born from jealousy, not love? Envy is one of the seven deadly sins, right?” said Satsuki.

“Carnage? That makes no sense. You can’t just ask someone for that,” added Iris.

“That’s right. We’re not entertainers,” agreed Rosalind.

Each of the three girls all seemed to have some resistance against Rachelle’s request. Well, of course they would—or so I thought, when...

“But I guess I don’t mind flirting with Rekka,” Iris said, suddenly hugging my arm.

“What?!” both Satsuki and Rosalind nearly howled.

Of course, I was panicking, too.

“I-Iris?! What are you doing?!”

“If you and I get suuuper lovey-dovey with each other, that’ll create this love energy stuff she needs, right?”

“N-No, I’m pretty sure Rachelle just asked for carnage...”

“Whatever. I’m sure we can make enough love energy if we just flirt enough for several couples, right?”

Huh? Wait, really? In other words, Iris was suggesting that if we generated enough love energy, it would be dense enough to equal a scene of carnage? What? Would that really work? I was pretty sure the passion produced by acting as a dumb couple was different from anything involving carnage, but...

“W-Well, Rachelle? Can love energy be generated by a single person—or rather, a single couple? No way, right?”

I was hoping she’d say no. My arm ensnared by Iris was pressing up against something... perky... and soft... I was internally screaming.

“Let me think... Angelic domains are pretty strict in that regard, so if it isn’t a scene of carnage, it won’t...” Rachelle trailed off in the middle of her sentence like she’d just come to some kind of realization. “Hmm, yes, yes... That just might do it. While it’s true that passion is more easily produced when numerous girls are warring against each other, the same effect could be produced by one girl flirting with Rekka with the force of several girls. As long as there’s enough flirting and clinginess, that is.”

“Wha?!”

Hang on there! That’s about as sharp left of a turn as you can take! Back up!

“So if someone could emulate a passionate romantic comedy with Rekka right now, it would be a great help... Ah, and I don’t mind who does the flirting.”

For some reason, it felt like Rachelle was emphasizing certain things as she addressed the girls. Contrary to her bright, sunny smile, I felt like I had been dumped in ice as a cold sweat flowed down my back.

“Oh, she’s good...”

Meanwhile, R was her typical self. And... as for Satsuki, Iris, and Rosalind...

“...”

“...”

“...”

Whoa! They were glaring at each other with terrifying looks. Why?!

“I have a proposal,” Satsuki said as she raised her hand.

“What?”

“What is it?”

Iris and Rosalind kept their eyes locked on each other even as they answered.

“Let’s find a peaceful way to settle this. You both know about my magic, right? There’s no way for anyone to sneak a head start... Even if someone snatched Rekka away, they wouldn’t be left alone for very long.”

“Hmm... While you have a point, you could easily use that advantage for yourself.”

“I’m the one suggesting we solve this peacefully. I promise not to do anything funny, so you two better not pull anything funny, either. How about it?”

“Well... It certainly is difficult to flirt while on the run...”

“Right? So...”

“But I’m going to get that head start anyway!”

No sooner than those words left her mouth, Iris grabbed my arm tighter and took off in a dead sprint.

“Aah!”

“Hold it right there, girl!”

I could hear Satsuki’s yelp of surprise and Rosalind’s angry howl from behind us.

“W-Wait a minute! I won’t be able to absorb the energy if you aren’t near me!”

And Rachelle's frantic screaming, too.

"Oh, my, how bold of Iris."

R, of course, was her usual self.

"H-Hey, Iris, what are you doing?!"

"We're saving someone, aren't we? That Rachelle girl said I just needed to flirt with you, Rekka."

"You kinda left her in the dust, though..."

"Don't sweat the details! Just go on a date with me today!"

There was no stopping Iris when she set her mind to something.

"Where do you want to go? It's hot, so maybe the pool... But we did that already, so an amusement park might be nice instead!"

"You two...!"

Iris suddenly pitched forward and ducked. Rosalind sailed over our heads in a flying kick, landing with a screech on the ground several meters away.

"I told you to wait!"

"Oops, sorry! I couldn't hear you at all!" Iris replied with a catty smile, like she was deliberately working up the already enraged Rosalind.

"Rekka! Iris! I've finally caught you!"

"Wow! What a magnificent kick! Aah, yes, such passion!"

Satsuki flew over to us with her magic, followed by Rachelle in the rear, who was trying to cling to her... Whoa, Rachelle's expression was nuts. Her eyes were rolling all over the place. Satsuki, however, looked just about as furious as Rosalind.

"Rekka! Why did you run off with Iris?!"

"Huh?! This is my fault?!"

I plead innocent.

"I should be the one to flirt with Rekka!" cried Rosalind.

“Why?! I was the one who said it first!” shouted Iris.

“Both of you, stop being so selfish! I want to flirt with Rekka, too!” railed Satsuki.

Basically, the three of them were bickering with me smack dab in the middle. This... This had really gotten out of hand somehow. Resolving this would be more trouble than Rachelle’s actual story, in a way. Speaking of... I was sweating bullets, but Rachelle was looking more and more excited.

“That’s great, everyone! Keep at it! More!” she practically cheered.

“You’re actually a fallen angel, aren’t you?!” I shouted.

There was no angel that would be glad to see a fight like this!

“How rude! Can you not see these pure white wings?!”

“That could be white out!”

“Unfortunately, I’m a pure angel, through and through!”

Having my retort retorted only irritated me even more. I was about to say something else, when...

“Why are you flirting with her?!”

Three angry girls yelled at me so loudly that I instinctively shrank back a bit. Ugh, they weren’t even going to let me complain...

But then they fell oddly silent. The silence was punctuated by rather rough breathing... It was almost like I had been thrown into a cage of wild tigers.

“Hrah!”

Rosalind moved first. She distracted Iris with a feint to the side before diving to grab me.

“Not a chance!”

“Heeeeey!”

Iris swung me around like a fan to evade Rosalind’s grasp, leaving her snatching at thin air.

“Curse you!”

Rosalind regained her balance and prepared to leap at us once again, but then...

“Heavenly wind, ancient wind, return what rightfully belongs back to dust.”

Suddenly, a tremendous gust of wind blasted the three of us to the ground.

“Satsuki?! Why are you joining them?!”

“There are some things I refuse to give up!”

“Still, wasn’t that kind of dangerous just now...?”

“I made sure it was only enough to knock you over!”

“Y-You don’t say...”

I could hardly argue when she shouted at me like that.

“Now this way, Rekka!”

Satsuki extended her hand to help me up from where I had landed on my butt.

“Erm...”

Everyone had been acting so weirdly that I honestly hesitated for a moment... but I ultimately figured Satsuki should be okay and took her hand.

“Hah! You’ve done it now, Satsuki!”

But Rosalind was the next one up, and she had an ominous glint in her eyes. As a vampire, she had the special ability to charm people just by looking at them.

“Now, return Rekka to me.”

Her scarlet red eyes should have completely enthralled Satsuki completely, but...

“Uuuuuurgh!”

Satsuki conjured all of her remarkable willpower and refused to let go of my hand. She had fallen victim to Rosalind’s charm once before, and it seemed like she wasn’t going to let it happen again. I had to wonder what was motivating her like this.

“Mrgh! Stop resisting!”

The gleam of crimson light in Rosalind’s eyes grew stronger.

“Ugh...!”

Satsuki groaned in pain as she slowly uncurled her fingers from around my hand, one by one... And eventually, she let me go.

“Thanks!” cut in Iris.

“Aaah!” both Satsuki and Iris screamed.

While they were dueling it out, Iris had come in from the side and snatched me right out from under their noses.

“Sorry about this, Rekka!”

“Huh? Um, what? Wait... Uwaaaah!”

Iris tucked me under her arm and jumped upward, leaping from roof to roof as she fled the scene.

“Hey, don’t go overboard!”

“I’ll be fine! I once carried you and Tetra at the same time, remember? This much is a piece of cake.”

“I meant don’t go overboard on *me*!”

Her jumping through the air like that was genuinely terrifying.

“What are we even running for? Satsuki brought it up earlier, but you can’t run from the Magic of Omniscience, you know?”

With the Great Omniscient Magic, Satsuki could access any and all knowledge that had ever existed. Tracking us in real time would be a cinch for her. There was no escape.

“Don’t worry! I have a good idea.”

“A good idea?”

“All we have to do is go somewhere she can’t get to even if she knows about it,” Iris said, taking out a familiar-looking compact mirror from her uniform pocket.

“Is that... the device to summon your spaceship?”

“Yup!

With a wink, Iris pressed a button on it. Instantly, her summoned spaceship was overhead. Initiate abduction procedures as usual, I guess.

“Wait, by ‘good idea,’ you meant going into space?!”

“Satsuki and Rosalind can’t follow us there, right?”

“No, I guess not... But where are we headed?” I asked as we began floating up into the air.

“Hmm... let’s see...” Iris paused to think for a moment before clapping her hands together in delight. “I know! Let’s go somewhere with an amusement park.”

“Do they have those in space?”

“Duh! Ever heard of Ciel, the planet of leisure and recreation? Let’s go there together!” she exclaimed as she swam over and clung to me tightly.

I could hear angry shouting from below... but I decided to ignore it for now and leave that problem for later.

Chapter 2: Ciel, the Planet of Leisure and Recreation

The planet of leisure and recreation, Ciel, was roughly two and a half hours away from Earth with Iris's spaceship warp. We arrived at a planet twinkling with neon lights so bright that they could be seen from space.

"Ciel is an artificial planet created for leisure and recreation. It's famous throughout the Galactic Federation."

"Artificial... You mean it's man-made?"

"Yup. It started off as a small colony, but the large-scale casinos they opened became a big hit. It took off from there, growing in size until it met the Galactic Federation's requirements to be named a planet."

Earth had different definitions for planets, moons, and such, so I guess the Galactic Federation had a similar system. Maybe they couldn't call it a planet until it hit some kind of benchmark.

"Wait, if 'leisure and recreation' means things like casinos... I'm still a minor, you know?"

"Oh, don't worry. We're heading for the all-ages theme park. Only adults are allowed inside the Midnight Area with the casinos and stuff."

"Huh..."

Apparently, after Ciel's initial start as a big casino hotspot, they rebranded themselves as a bigger vacation destination with a wide range of activities for all ages. It seemed I was worried about nothing.

"But if you reeeally want, then I guess I can prepare myself for a night at the more adult part of the park..."

"Nope! Let's go to the regular one! Right now! Boy, am I looking forward to the roller-coasters and Ferris wheel!"

I averted my eyes from Iris's fading blush and saddened gaze, raising my voice with exaggerated enthusiasm. I even started to stretch my limbs to show how

eager I was to get to it.

“Rekka, you look really dumb right now.”

I wasn't even discouraged by the scornful words of the girl from the future.

In the middle of all this, Iris's spaceship began its descent towards Ciel.



“Whoaaa...”

When we landed, I let out a dumb noise as I looked up at the sky in awe.

“Kyaaaaaaaaah!”

There was a giant roller-coaster weaving through the air. No, ‘giant’ didn't even begin to describe it. The track for it spiraled freely overhead and looked almost like a spider's nest from a distance. It was made of a transparent material that cast almost no shadow at all, making the coaster practically look like it was flying. It was truly a sight to behold.

There were other spires that stretched up into the sky and a triple Ferris wheel, as well as fireworks and colored smoke from all kinds of performances. The skies of Ciel were constantly bustling. It might have been an artificial planet, but all the groomed vegetation made it look nice and kept the air feeling clean. It seemed like a lot of thought had gone into designing this place.

“It sure lives up to its name as a planet of leisure and recreation...”

“Right?”

Iris grinned happily to see me so impressed. Then she took my hand.

“So let's get going immediately!”

“H-Hang on a second! I know it's kinda late to say it now, but... you know we have school today, right?”

“Who cares about the opening ceremony? There aren't any classes afterward.”

“Well, true, but...”

“Or is it because...” At my grumbling, Iris's eyes suddenly welled up with

tears. “You... don’t like being with me?”

“Huh?”

The tears glistened in her eyes, threatening to spill over at any second.

“No. I mean, it’s not like that...”

“Really? Then we’re gonna spend the whole day together!”

“Wait, wha...?”

“Yay! It’s a d-a-t-e!”

Her eyes were dry in an instant, making *my* eyes spin at how quickly she did a complete one-eighty.

“I wonder if this gullible part of you also contributed to the War of All...” R said with a sigh as Iris dragged me into the theme park by the hand.



After getting our day passes to the park, Iris and I began touring the attractions. Honestly, I was already used to missing school because of my bloodline, and I had never been a really serious student like Satsuki, so I got over the skipping class thing pretty quickly. As long as I was here, I figured I might as well enjoy myself. But...

“The problem now is...”

“Huh? What’s wrong, Rekka?”

Iris tilted her head in confusion at my muttering. The problem... was that she was too close.

“Iris, why are we linking arms?”

“Because we have to act lovey-dovey all day today! We have to flirt, and we have to do it right!” Iris replied gleefully, wrapping her arm tighter around mine.

There shouldn’t be a need to act like a couple here, what with Rachelle being on a different planet and all... No, the real problem was the way her chest was squishing up against me every time she squeezed my arm.

“Come on, let’s ride that first!”

“S-Sure... Wait, what is that?”

“A free fall ride. Earth has these, too, no?”

Sure. Plenty of amusement parks had thrill rides that would basically just take you up high and drop you. The only thing that worried me was just how tall this one was... You couldn't see the top of the tower from the bottom.

“This free fall ride is supposed to be an entire minute drop all the way from the atmosphere to the ground! Amazing, right?!”

“Hang on, hang on, hang on! That's amazing all right, but how is that even possible?!”

“It's fine! Don't worry! The air in the atmosphere is cold, but the seats are heated and stuff.”

“The cold isn't what I'm worried about; I can handle that much! I wanna know if it's safe or not!”

“They have all the proper safety measures in place, and there haven't been any accidents yet.”

“Yet?!?”

That made it sound like they were just waiting for one to happen!

“Let's go!”

“W-Wait!”

In the end... I didn't die.

“...”

“Rekka? You okay?”

Iris was worriedly watching over me as I slumped onto a bench like a wet noodle. I had jumped off the back of Behemoth and even off a building before... And this was worse than all of it. Who knew free-falling faster than the natural pull of gravity was so freaking scary? Why was I having all these near-death experiences outside of fights with Demon Kings and legendary monsters, anyway? Whatever. Now that I had actually survived with all my limbs intact, I could say with a lot more confidence that safety measures in space were top-

notch.

“I guess you’re not really the thrill ride type... Sorry, Rekka.”

“It’s not exactly a type thing... Wh-Whatever, I’ve rested enough. Let’s go. Where to next?”

Iris looked like she felt really bad about the whole thing, so I got to my still-wobbly feet and feigned optimism.

“Are you really okay?”

“I’m totally fine, I tell you.”

“Okay. If you say so. Then let’s hit the next ride!”

Despite what she said, Iris must have decided to go easy on me. The next ride she picked was a pleasure cruise.

“Hm? There seem to be several lines for this ride. Are you sure we should be in this one?”

“There are several different tours you can take around Ciel. We’re in line for tour A.”

“Just how big is this theme park if it has multiple tours?”

“The theme park takes up over a third of the planet, so... If you added it all up, it’s probably about the size of an ocean.”

That was indeed impressive. Theme parks in space were apparently just on a totally different scale.

The next ship arrived as we were talking, and we walked across the ramp to board the pleasure cruise.

“Ooh, that breeze feels great!”

I stepped out on the deck to get some air and caught a nice, cool breeze instantly. It ruffled my clothes and hair without being harsh. The ship itself was incredibly stable, too. It made for a smooth ride where it hardly felt like we were on the water at all.

“Look, Rekka! There’s a flower garden on the opposite shore!”

“Huh, where...? Oh, you’re right!”

The shore across from us was overflowing with blooming flowers. Of course, none of them were from Earth. They all came in a wide variety of shapes and colors, but there was nothing I recognized.

“Oh, look at that one! It’s shaped like a penguirabbit!” Iris shouted as she pointed to a section of the garden.

There seemed to be a designated area with flowers modeled after all kinds of animals. Unfortunately, I couldn’t tell which one Iris was saying looked like a penguirabbit.

“Where is it?”

“That one over there! See? Doesn’t it look like that stuffed animal I have on my spaceship?”

Iris pulled me closer by the arm as she excitedly tried to point it out to me. And... there was that squishing sensation again. It was wonderful... I mean, wonderfully distracting. I couldn’t concentrate on the penguirabbit flower at all.

“Rekka? What’s wrong?” she asked inquisitively when she realized I’d frozen stiff.

“N-N-Nothing!”

Iris was always way too defenseless about things like these. She was probably the one who made my heart pound the hardest when I was with her.

“Oh, that’s right! Rekka, are you hungry?”

“Come to think of it, yeah, I think I am.”

I’d had some juice aboard her ship on the way over, but the last thing I’d really eaten was breakfast. It’d been a good solid three hours since we’d taken off from Earth, so it was creeping up on lunchtime, and I was starting to get a little peckish.

“There’s a food court on this ship, too. Let’s check it out.”

“Sure, let’s go... But you’ll be paying for me again, Iris.”

There was no way a mere Earthling like me had their hands on any space

currency usable in the Greater Galactic Federation. I was always relying on Iris at times like these, just like when we went to Berano before.

“There’s no need to worry about that. I’m the one who brought you here, after all.”

“Let me pay you back when we get back to Earth.”

“Really? Then can we go on a date when we go back?”

“Huh? Oh, um, sure.”

Pulled by the arm, I followed Iris down the stairs towards the food court. It was lined with fancy-looking eateries, quite unlike the food courts you’d expect to find in shopping malls and big department stores that usually only had fast food.

“What would you like, Rekka?”

“Hmm... I don’t really know anything about space cuisine. I’ll go with whatever you want, Iris.”

“Okay! Then... I want to go there!” she exclaimed, pointing to a nearby place.

We entered and took a seat at a table by the window.

“May I take your order?” asked the waiter.

“A polypole pasta for me. What about you, Rekka?”

“Um... I’ll have this crossworm meat sandwich.”

“What?”

“...What?”

“Oh, no, pardon me, sir. It’s just the first time I’ve had anyone order that. I’ll have your food out in just a moment.”

“U-Um...”

The waiter left our table in a flurry, seemingly embarrassed.

“So... what did I just order?”

The waiter’s reaction made me extremely curious. But as promised, not long after, our food was brought out to us. The meat on my sandwich looked

perfectly normal to me, but... what kind of meat was it, exactly? If they served it here, it had to be edible... Maybe I was just better off not knowing.

“Hmm... Tastes pretty normal to me. It’s nice.”

“That’s good.”

“How’s yours?”

“Mine’s good, too. Want to try?” Iris asked, twirling some of her pasta around her fork. “Say ‘ah!’”

My heart skipped a beat when she said that with such a bright smile. I guess... I had no choice but to go along.

“A-Ah...”

“Here!”

Something with a texture similar to octopus entered my mouth alongside the pasta, but I was far too embarrassed to be focusing on the taste. My face was probably as red as an octopus right now...

“Rekka, look out the window.”

“Hm?”

Iris directed my attention to the window, where I could see a huge waterfall up ahead.

“Wow, it’s like Niagara Falls... Not that I’ve ever seen the real thing before.”

This whole planet was supposed to be man-made, right? Space really was incredible.

“Do we go under that?”

“Nope. We climb it.”

“...Huh?”

“It’s like those animals on Earth... What are they called again? Carp? We’re going to climb the waterfall like they do.”

“No way! This is a ship!”

I take it all back. Space was just plain out of this world.

“Wait a minute, wouldn’t the ship just tip vertically if it climbed the waterfall...?”

“There’s a gravitational device at work, so there’s no need to worry.”

“Okay, then what happens when we reach the top?”

“We’ll come back down, of course.”

“How?”

“The top of the waterfall is like a slide, so we’ll slide our way down from there. It feels great from the deck!”

So the pleasure cruise basically turned into a water ride.

“Let’s hurry up and eat so we can get to the deck in time!”

“All right.”

Faced with Iris’s bright smile again, I had no choice but to nod along. She’d seemed especially happy since we arrived on Ciel. And seeing her so happy made me happy, too. At her urging, I stuffed my cheeks with my sandwich as fast as I could.



After that, we went on a handful of other attractions like the aforementioned super roller-coaster that ran on a transparent track, as well as a horse(?) ride with some kind of six-legged creature.

“What do you wanna go on next?”

“Hmm... I think I’m getting a bit tired. Maybe something relaxing for the next one would be nice,” I requested.

“Then let’s ride the Ferris wheel in the Night Area!” Iris replied, still beaming.

“Huh? Isn’t the Night Area where the casinos and stuff are?”

“That’s the Midnight Area. The Night Area is in the north part of the park. It’s under a giant dome so it perpetually appears to be night there. The Ferris wheel inside is illuminated with a bunch of lights, making it a popular date spot for lovers.”

“Hmm, so it’s always night... Wait, lovers?!”

Hearing the L-word out of the blue like that nearly made my heart jump out of my chest.

“Come on, hurry up!”

Iris led the way while humming happily from her fixed position at my right arm, which she had been clinging to all day. I really didn’t want to do anything to ruin her good mood, so I went along with her at her pace and tried to calm my racing heart.



Once we passed through the gate, we were met with the sight of a lovely night sky overhead. The Night Area was aptly named. Whereas the sky outside had been filled with color and fun from the rest of the park, the inside of the dome was plastered with artificial stars like a planetarium. Quiet background music was playing ambiently throughout the dome. Furthermore, everything on the ground was illuminated with beautiful lights that matched the overhead view. It had a totally different feel to it than the rest of the park. It seemed they’d kept this calm, quiet space and the thrill rides outside separated for a reason.

“Wow, lookie here. This sure sets the mood compared to before.”

“...”

“If the Day Area you were in until now was like sweet curry, and the Midnight Area with the casinos is like spicy curry, then I guess this place is kinda like the mild curry in between, huh?”

While I wanted to comment on her use of curry as an example, I thought R pretty much hit the nail on the head. The Night Area was something between the super mature and childishly lighthearted parts of the park.

As proof of that, there were couples just about everywhere I looked. A lot of them were older than us, but there were also some kids who looked to be about our age or younger. Iris and I blended right in, making it hard to pick us out of the crowd at a distance.

“Heehee...”

Even though nothing in particular had happened, Iris giggled shyly and drew closer when our eyes met. We had been running around the Day Area all this time to hit the rides we wanted, but the second we stepped into the Night Area, things seemed to slow down. We both began walking a little slower, taking our time to enjoy the stroll. Really, I was just following Iris’s lead, and it was thanks to her that we were able to blend in just fine. Otherwise, I probably would have felt too awkward and would have just wanted to run away.

Iris and I soon arrived at the massive Ferris wheel that was apparently hugely popular with couples and got in line. When our turn came, we got into the gondola. Thankfully, there were no crazy gimmicks on the Ferris wheel. Other than the fact that the gondola didn’t sway or creak at all, it was hardly any different from a Ferris wheel on Earth.

“Wow! Look, Rekka. It’s so pretty.”

“Yeah, it really is.”

The meticulously planned lights down below illuminated a beautiful picture like a painting. It harmonized with the black sky overhead, making an exquisite display of darkness and light. Yet despite the spectacular scenery before me... I fidgeted nervously in the cramped gondola, acutely aware of how close I was to Iris. For some reason, I had been extremely conscious of her presence all day.

“Earth to Rekka? Aren’t you acting a little *too* nervous?”

“P-Put a sock in it, R...”

“Oh, no, your retort has no power... Ah!” R clapped her hands together in realization. “Come to think of it, isn’t this your first proper date? You were being controlled by Rosalind’s charm when you went out with her, and the date with Hibiki was more of an undercover investigation.”

“Th-This is technically to save Rachelle, you know...”

“That’s funny, considering you left her in the dust. I seem to recall you pointing that out to Iris, too.”

I hated to admit it, but R was right. This was the first time I was out with no

other purpose than just being on a date. Was that why my heart was beating so fast...?

“Hey, Rekka...”

“Y-Yeah...?”

My heart nearly stopped when I heard Iris say my name, but I tried to reply as calmly as possible.

“Do you... have anyone you like?”

“Excuse me?!”

I couldn't contain myself that time, and started violently enough that I banged my head against the gondola window.

“Ow, ow...”

“You okay? Is there a bump?”

“No, I'm fine, but... Why the sudden question?”

“Huh?! Oh... I was, um, just wondering?”

She didn't sound too convinced of her own answer, and she sat there fanning herself with her hand nervously.

“W-Well? How about it? Is there anyone you like?” she asked again, looking at me with expectant eyes.

Uh... How was I supposed to answer that?

“I am also extremely interested in the answer to this question.”

Great, now R was staring at me, too. What was I supposed to say when I suddenly got put on the spot about who I liked...?

“I don't think so... Not yet.”

“No? Even though you have so many girls around you?” Iris questioned me further with a half-relieved, half-disappointed expression.

“Well, there are actually a lot of misunderstandings surrounding that topic, but... It's not a decision I can make lightly...”

“You worded your own pathetic traits very nicely there.”

Why don't you take a hike outside the gondola, R?

"I see..."

Iris fell silent at my answer, looking slightly downcast. She stayed like that until we reached the peak of the Ferris wheel, where I finally spoke up out of worry.

"...Iris?"

When I called her name, she flinched a little in surprise and looked up at me. Her expression was serious, like she'd just made some kind of resolution... Or so I was thinking as she got up from her seat across from me and moved to the free seat right next to me. Our shoulders were close enough to touch. I could feel her body heat like this, and it all made my heart beat faster.

"Rekka..."

"Y-Yeah...?"

Iris tilted her head faintly, peering up at me from a slightly lower angle.

"You don't have... anyone you like right now... right?"

"That's right..."

"Then... it's okay, right...?"

What is? Just as I was about to ask, Iris placed a hand against my thigh and leaned in towards me. Her cheeks were so red that they looked like they'd be hot to the touch, but in comparison... I really thought my chest was about to burst.

"It's okay, right?"

"Wh-What's... okay...?"

"You still haven't decided who you like yet, right?"

"Y-Yeah."

"Then... I'll be the one to take your f-f-first...!"

Iris stumbled over her words as she spoke, and just as she was about to finish her sentence...

Clunk!

The gondola, which had hardly budged up until now thanks to its superior space engineering, suddenly shook violently.

“Kyah!”

“Wah!”

Iris clung to me in surprise, making me yell for a different reason. But wait, what had just happened?

Clunk, clunk...

The shaking continued, though it was much less severe than before... Hm? It almost sounded like someone was walking on the roof of the gondola. Sure enough, with a creak, the gondola door was then pried open.

“Oh, Rekkaa...”

“R-Rosalind?”

The unexpected appearance of an unexpected player made all my gears grind to a halt. The aura radiating off of Rosalind’s entire body was terrifying. The grim reaper? No, a vampire.

“At last, I’ve found you.”

“H-How did you follow us all the way into space...?”

“We borrowed the spaceship of that scientist girl.”

Shirley, huh? Come to think of it, she did have her own spaceship. Did that mean she was here on Ciel, too?

“Rekka!”

“Rekka! We finally caught up!”

Next appeared Satsuki and Rachelle. They were flying through the air with magic and wings, respectively.

“Now you’ve gone and done it, little girl,” said Rosalind, eyeing Iris.

“Ugh! Why did you all have to interrupt us now?! We had such a good mood going, too!”

“As if we’d let you get away with that, you fool!”

“I won’t let you get a head start!”

“Haaaaaahh... Such good love energy...”

Everyone noisily clambered into the gondola through the open door, and Rachelle looked like she was trembling with excitement. She was totally a fallen angel, wasn’t she? No one should enjoy people fighting that much. Since the angel was apparently going to be useless, I tried to stop the girls myself, but...

“Silence!”

“You stay out of this!”

“Keep quiet, Rekka!”

It apparently wasn’t my place. I was at a genuine loss wondering what I should do, when...

“Urgh, what a pain! Hmph!”

Rosalind hit the upper limit of her anger and transformed into a huge group of bats.

“Wha?! Wai—”

“I can’t see!”

In no time at all, the gondola was filled with darkness and screeching animal sounds. And amidst it all, I suddenly felt like I was floating...

“Huh?”

Just like that, my body was carried away against my will at an alarming speed.

“Huuuuh?!”

I still hadn’t completely gotten my head around what was going on, but it seemed I’d been lifted out of the gondola by a swarm of bats.

“Rosalind?! Are you trying to steal the lead, too...?! Who do you think got us here?!”

“Hey! Give Rekka back!”

I could hear Satsuki and Iris’s angry shouting over the bats screeching and

flapping their wings. What was Rosalind trying to do? Where was she taking me? The bats eventually descended towards the ground, where Rosalind resumed her original form. In place of the bats that had been carrying me, I was now in Rosalind's arms.

"R-Rosalind, please let me down."

"I refuse!"

Easy to say when you're not the one being carried bridal style! Ignoring my earnest request, Rosalind ran through the park carrying me.

"Where are you going?"

"We're going on *our* date next, obviously."

"Huh?"

"Good grief, I can't believe you'd be so entranced by that girl that you'd dare leave me behind. You're always inciting these feelings of jealousy within me...! Argh! Just remembering it pisses me off! I'm not letting you go back to Earth for a while!"

"H-Huuuh?!"

She seemed to work herself up into a rage halfway through that, but had I done anything wrong? I was pretty sure the only thing I'd done today was get dragged left to right by the girls...

"Hold it right there!"

It sounded like Iris had caught up to us.

"Tch! Persistent girl!"

"You're not one to talk!"

She had a point there...

"If you two don't cut it out right now, I'm going to show you what I can do!"

Satsuki had caught up with her flight magic, as well. I could tell she was boiling with rage even from afar.

"Hey, shouldn't you stop this, Rosalind? They seem really mad."

“Ha! What they think is irrelevant. If they interrupt my date with you, I’ll just have to beat them down myself!”

W-Was it just me, or did she sound a little too serious just now? A chilling shiver suddenly ran down my spine.

Just then, something caught Rosalind’s attention from another direction. She clicked her tongue before taking off with a great leap... with me still in her arms. I tried to follow Rosalind’s gaze with my eyes and spotted something the size of a table tennis ball sailing in an arc through the air. It burst upon impact with the ground, releasing crackling bolts of lightning that snaked this way and that.

“Uwah! Why is there lightning on the ground?!”

Lightning was meant to be in the sky, right? No, this part of the park was covered with a dome, so there shouldn’t be lightning here at all.

“What a shame. You evaded it.”

“...Hmph. Shirley, was it?”

Appearing from the shadow of one of the rides was my blue-haired scientist neighbor, Shirley. So, she’d come to Ciel after all.

“W-Wait a minute! That lightning just now was your doing, Shirley?!”



“It’s an electromagnetic binding trap. Small and conveniently portable.”

“That’s not what I’m asking! That’s dangerous!”

“Don’t worry. It’ll only make you a liiittle numb.”

She flashed a cold smile. It was kind of terrifying. But one way or another, it looked like she was joining the fight to try and snatch me from Rosalind, too. Satsuki, Iris, and Rachelle weren’t too far behind.

“Jeez! Why did you all have to get in the way of my date with Rekka?!” Iris stamped her foot in frustration, shattering the pavers in the sidewalk.

“And who exactly said you could run off with him?” Flames of wrath burned deep within Satsuki’s disgusted eyes.

“You lot believe you can best me, a vampire?” Despite being surrounded on three sides, Rosalind provoked them boldly.

“Oh? But I haven’t shown you all my wonderful devices yet.” Right now, Shirley looked as cunning and calculating as she had the day she’d tried to destroy Estashion.

And with that, the girls fell into a silent stalemate as they glared at each other.

“Ah! Aaah, yes!”

Rachelle’s eyes were practically spinning in circles. She was thrilled, but there was cold sweat pouring down my back. Because right now... it sure felt like this might be the most dangerous place in the whole universe. The situation was hopeless enough for such thoughts to pass through my head.

“Well, well, Rekka. What are you gonna do now?”

R’s mocking words felt harsher than usual. Even if I wanted to, was there anything I *could* do?

Rachelle had stopped reeling from her love energy deficiency and had become much more lively, so her story seemed to be resolving itself well... Granted, it was at the cost of my own personal situation worsening by the minute. It seemed my life was only going to get more risky the more heroines I

saved. What was I to do? It certainly didn't help that Rosalind was still carrying me like a princess.

"Argh!"

The first one to break the tension and make a move was Iris, as expected. She used her superior physical abilities to close the distance between her and Rosalind in the blink of an eye and tried to grab me.

"Not so fast!"

"Dwah!"

Rosalind evaded Iris's extended hand by taking a huge leap to the side, putting more distance between them.

"Heavenly wind, ancient wind, return what rightfully belongs back to dust." Just then, Satsuki's wind magic blew through in a violent gust.

"Like I'd fall for the same trick twice!" Rosalind roared, extending her sharp nails instantly and slashing through the wind.

Satsuki sounded surprised at this development, but that wouldn't be the end of it. All of a sudden, something exploded beneath us. I was thrown to the side, rolling along the ground a few times.

"Shirley! Aren't you using toys that are a little too dangerous?!"

"I didn't bring any of the *really* dangerous items. That just now was only a small subterranean landmine with all the proper safety measures in place."

"Just so you know, the moment you said 'landmine,' any and all talk of safety was out the window!"

"It merely aims to disrupt the opponent's sense of balance with a little shock... But I'll be careful next time. Now stand. You're coming with me," Shirley said, reaching her hand out towards me.

She was smiling, but it was just as cold and creepy as ever! I thought she'd mellowed out a fair bit after coming to Earth... It had been a while since I'd seen her merciless side. The aura she was exuding told me she wouldn't take no for an answer, so I went to take her hand, when...

“I won’t let you!”

Satsuki flew in, grabbed my extended hand forcefully, and whisked me away into the sky.

“S-Satsuki! I’m going to fall!”

“You’re flying with magic, so it’s all right!”

“Just put me down!”

“There’s no time for that!”

Satsuki cut the conversation short there, her voice audibly seething with rage. She tried to fly out of the Night Area to get away from the others as quickly as possible.

“You know, having the heroines fight over you like this... It’s almost like a little preview of the War of All.”

Not the best time for bad jokes, R!

“Um, Satsuki, why don’t we just calm down a little? Rachelle needs to be present to gather any love energy, so...”

“What?! Are you saying you want to go on a date with Rachelle, too, Rekka?!”

“Huh? No, no one said anything like that...”

“But you went on a date with Iris, right? Just the two of you!”

“Th-That was because she forced me to...”

“That’s so unfair! You’re showing too much favoritism towards Iris, Rekka!”

Favoritism? Why was Satsuki so worked up about this?

“I... I wanted to...”

Her face bright red, Satsuki was trying to tell me something when my vision suddenly went black.

Skree, skree, skree!

“Whoa! Rosalind’s bats?!”

It didn’t seem like Rosalind had any intention of giving up yet, either.

“Ugh!”

Satsuki started to fly in a zig-zag pattern through the park in an attempt to lose the bats on our tail. Of course, Rosalind wasn't the only one in pursuit. Iris was jumping from attraction to attraction, and the shoes Shirley was wearing allowed her to float above the ground, gliding at a smooth speed as she chased us. As we fled, we entered an area of the park I hadn't seen before.

“Hold it right there! This is a film set! It's off limits to the general public!”

“Huh? Kyah!”

“Wah!”

Satsuki reacted to the word “off-limits” by stopping midair, causing her to lose balance.

“Thanks!”

“Ah!”

Iris took that opportunity to grab me.

“Welcome back, Rekka. You must have been lonely without me, right?”

“I honestly don't feel like I was gone that long...”

Considering how she'd been chasing me the entire time, it didn't feel like we'd actually been separated at all. But no matter. I had to put a stop to this horseplay. I'd start by scolding the instigator, Iris, then apologize to everyone else... Yes, good plan.

“Hey, Iris.”

“Kyah!”

Just as I tried to start talking down Iris, the pole she was standing on snapped in half from a blow by Rosalind's wolf arm. She toppled over, taking me with her... And wow, we were way up in the air.

“When did we get so far up?!”

“While you were lost in thought, Rekka,” R answered nonchalantly.

But this was no joking matter!

“Kuh!”

“Rekka?!”

On the spur of the moment, I grabbed Iris and turned so that I was below her. Based on the glimpse I’d gotten from above, there was some kind of tent below us...

Smash!

“Uwah!”

“Kyah!”

“Ubwaaaaah!”

We crashed through the roof in a tangle of tent parts, but luckily managed to avoid any major injuries. Apparently, the tent had acted as a cushion and had broken our fall.

“Iris, are you all... right?!”

“Ah!”

My first thought was for Iris’s safety, but I quickly came to the realization that there was something soft pressing against my face. Yup. When the shock of the fall finally wore off, it was plain as day. My head was perfectly wedged between her breasts.

“I-I-Iris! S-Sorry! It wasn’t on purpose!”

“Ah... Don’t try to talk there...” Iris protested in a weaker voice than usual, prompting my mouth to snap shut.

And there I remained frozen, unsure of what to do next.

“Aaaaah!”

The other three caught up in no time, each with an unbelievable expression on their face.

“What do you think you’re doing, Rekka?!”

“Aargh! Move it already, Iris!”

Satsuki screamed at me and Rosalind forcefully pulled Iris off of me.

“Good grief, this girl! Just how far will you go before you’ve had enough?!”

“Hmph! All I’m doing is acting true to my feelings. Unlike *some people* who are still stubbornly in denial.”

“Hey! Just who are you referring to?!” Satsuki demanded.

“Well, from my point of view, all three of you tried to get a head start on everyone else... Now, what do we do from here?” asked Shirley.

They say it takes two to tango, but I have no idea what the four of them turned this into. Girls will be girls... I guess?

“Hahh... Good grief.”

“I don’t think you have the right to be saying that, Rekka.”

Shut up. Let me blow off some stress somehow. I’d been jerked around by these girls all day.

“Yes, aaah! That’s it!”

Rachelle circled us, her body writhing... Her movements should have been erotic, but for some reason, they didn’t feel that way at all. Was it because she was that stupid? Honestly, everything I’d been through today was her fault, including falling into this tent. I was pretty stunned I wasn’t any worse for wear on that, actually.

“Uuurghh...”

“Hm?”

Just now... Was that sound coming from below me?

“Aaaaah!”

Not a moment later, a high-pitched scream from an unfamiliar third party pierced all our eardrums. When I turned towards the source, I saw a strangely tired-looking girl—she was short, but she seemed to be older than me—frozen in a pose not unlike Munch’s *The Scream*.

“Whaaat do you think you’re doing to my staff tent?!”

Staff tent? I suddenly had a bad feeling about this. I fearfully peeled back the edge of the collapsed tent I was sitting on to see what was below me... and

spied a rugged, aging man wearing a rather cool outfit. Looking a bit squashed, he was weakly twitching.

Chapter 3: Heroine Audition

We were all apologetically sitting on our knees before the tired-looking girl we'd just met—Zeta.

"All right, you damn brats... What are you going to do about this, huh?!"

Zeta glared down at us while tapping her megaphone against her shoulder. She was so mad, I swear I could see the veins protruding from her forehead. She packed a lot of punch for such a small person. Scary.

The reason for all this, of course, was the fact that we fell on and demolished her tent... and the guy inside.

"U-Um... how's the old man from before doing?"

Despite my fear of Zeta's wrath, I couldn't help asking out of concern.

"Hahh... You can rest easy. At the very least, he's not as bad as you're probably imagining right now."

"Oh, that's g—"

I was just about to sigh in relief, but...

"It still leaves *me* in a terrible position."

She didn't sound any less angry. The tone in her voice alone made me sit bolt upright.

"He was the star of my live-action superhero show. The main character!"

"Live-action superhero show?"

As in, the kind with costumed heroes and big ole monsters fighting each other? She said something about staff earlier... I guess she meant the camera crew and the cast?

"Wait, your star is some grandpa?"

"I'll have you know he's a soldier from a species that specializes in combat. He's easily five times stronger than you, boy."

“You don’t say...”

“That’s why being knocked down by two brats shouldn’t have affected him under normal circumstances, but...”

“But?”

“He threw out his back just now.”

“Ah...”

So, even combat species are just like the rest of us when it comes to fighting old age, huh? Anyway... I had to get my head on straight. This was no laughing matter. Being down a main character was obviously a big deal for a show.



“See, now I’m in a real bind. The filming has to be done today.”

“That sucks... I’m really sorry. I’ll do anything I can to help out.”

“Damn right you will! I’ll have you fill in for the role you vacated!” she snapped back instantly, making me shoot upright once more.

“Wait, you want me to fill in for someone?”

“You heard me! You’ll be the standin for the main character, Galactic Great.”

“What?!”

“You said you’d do anything.”

I did, but this was a little over the top...

“D-Don’t you think me standing in for the star of the show is a bit of a stretch...?”

“I don’t have time to search for a real replacement. Do you really think I *want* to be asking an amateur like you?” Zeta let out a long, deep, pained sigh.

“Listen, the fate of my company is riding on this new series. I can’t just let it fall flat because we hit a speed bump here. The show must go on, you know?”

So apparently I didn’t just take out a main character... I took out a really important one. I could physically feel the guilt weighing on me.

“And... you absolutely have to film today, of all days?”

“That’s right.”

“All right, I’ll do it. I’ll be his standin.”

“Hmph...” Zeta looked me right in the eye and scoffed a little. “You know, you’re pretty decent for a brat. Seems like you’ve got some real gumption. What’s your name?”

“Rekka Namidare.”

“All right, follow me, Rekka. You ladies over there can come, too.”

I meekly trailed after Zeta’s brisk footsteps. She led us over to a tent—one I hadn’t crushed—and gestured for us to follow her inside. She then handed me the rather cool-looking costume the old man had been wearing earlier.

“Change into this.”

“Is this going to fit me?”

“It’s self-sizing.”

While I wasn’t sure what she meant, I decided to give it a try. And once I put it on, the oversized costume shrunk in the blink of an eye, adjusting down to size for me. It wasn’t too tight, either. It was as snug as could be, but still comfortable.

“Wow, so it automatically adjusts to the wearer?”

“It was custom made to do just that.”

“Man... space technology is something,” I said in awe.

But Zeta simply crossed her arms and groaned.

“It doesn’t look right...” she muttered.

She didn’t have to be so blatantly disappointed...

“Well, whatever. Your face’ll be covered during the real thing anyway.”

“It will?”

“Try pressing the button on the back of your neck.”

“Erm... This one?”

I blindly groped around for said button with my hand and gave it a press when I found it. A helmet with a visor like a motorbike helmet extended up from the back and wrapped around my head. Like the rest of the outfit, it automatically adjusted its size to fit me.

“Space technology really is amazing...”

I knocked on the helmet to see what it was made out of, and a sturdy sound echoed inside. How was something like this hidden in the suit in the first place? Despite my head literally being in it, I couldn’t get my head around it.

“Good. With this, your unfortunate features will no longer be a problem.”

“...”

“Now, next is...”

Completely indifferent to hurting my feelings, Zeta moved right along. She turned to Satsuki, Iris, Rosalind, and Shirley.

“One of you ladies will have to take on the role of the main heroine, Galactic Beauty.”

“Huh?” they collectively replied.

They’d been following along with what was happening so far, but now it was their turn to get a taste of what I was going through. Zeta’s declaration had clearly thrown them all for a loop.

“Um, what do you mean?” Satsuki asked, raising her hand hesitantly.

Zeta tapped her megaphone against her shoulder and replied, “This series—which is actually the second season of a series we’ve done before—introduces a totally new element: a male-female hero duo. The female role originally belonged to gramps’s wife. They’re lovebirds through and through, which is great for their dynamic and bad for me. She’s insisting on nursing her husband for the duration of his recovery... Which means, ladies, that the role is now open. If one of you could fill in for her—”

“I will.”

“I’ll do it!”

“Allow me.”

“I’d also be willing.”

All four girls responded at once.

“Huh? O-Oh...”

Zeta was taken aback by them all interrupting her to volunteer. She probably hadn’t imagined they’d be so enthusiastic about it. To be honest, I was bewildered, too. Why were they so eager?

“Oh, my, are all the heroines fighting over the role of the main heroine? This’ll be interesting.”

“Ahhh, yes! Even more love energy!”

R and Rachelle were the only ones watching on in amusement from the

sidelines.



Despite the fact that there were four girls ready and willing to take the part, there was only one role to fill. There had to be some way to determine who would get it.

“I’d like give you ladies a little test,” said Zeta, tapping her megaphone against her shoulder.

The girls all responded with ready enthusiasm. Even from where I was standing a little ways away, I could see the glint in their eyes. They were all dead serious about this.

“I never imagined Satsuki or Rosalind volunteering themselves for a live-action superhero show...”

“You know, Rekka, sometimes I wonder if your brain works like someone trying to play a tile-matching puzzle game with the controller upside down—the falling pieces just pile up into one giant mess.”

It was true that my thoughts kinda stacked up against me sometimes, but that was just plain mean.

“Well, Zeta’s story seems pretty difficult to fix, so you’d better get to practicing your lines.”

“What? Zeta’s a heroine?”

“You didn’t realize? Then why did you accept the role of the main character?”

“Because it was my fault the old man threw out his back, and she said the fate of her company was on the line... Wait, does that mean it’s my fault her story’s headed for a bad end?”

Watching me scratch my head, R sighed.

“Well, there’s no guarantee her company would’ve been saved if gramps had starred in the show, so regardless of what triggered Zeta’s story, all you need to do is focus on resolving it. Get the happy ending, just like you always do,” she said, sounding rather supportive for once.

And she was right. Even if I felt guilty about what'd happened, it didn't change the fact that I needed to move forward and help fix it. That was my job—perhaps more so this time than ever. Yes.

“Heh heh heh... That's love for you...”

As I reaffirmed my resolution, Rachelle was standing there next to me with a creepy smile on her face.

“Rachelle.”

“Yes? What is it, Rekka?”

“You're drooling.”

“Hwah?! P-Pardon me.”

Rachelle blushed as she frantically wiped off her mouth.

“You said you came to me because you were low on love energy, right?”

“Yes, that is correct.”

“You've been kinda lively for a while now. Does that mean your love energy has replenished?”

If so, it would at least mean there was no longer a need to worry about flirting or anything in front of her.

“Sure enough. I'm as full as I have been in a long time!”

“Really? Then...”

“Ah! But you know, I'm actually still quite hungry! I'm only 30—no, 20 percent full! At this rate, I'll collapse again by tomorrow! Really!” she swore while gesturing wildly.

I was pretty sure she'd changed her story more than once there just over the course of a couple of sentences... But whatever. She wasn't my biggest problem right now.

“Then I guess I'll help you for a little longer.”

“Thank you very much! I can't believe you'd even help out a huge pain in the butt like me... You really are a nice person, Rekka!”

At least she was self-aware...

“No, with the amount of love energy that swirls around you... To me, you’re much more than just a nice person! You’re a god! An almighty god!”

“Aren’t you an angel?”

Pretty sure angels are the last people who should be going around declaring new gods like that.

“Oh, I am... But if I could feast on this kind of love energy every single day, I would gladly follow you from this day onward as your humble servant! You, my one and only god!” she proclaimed, flapping her wings and slinking closer to me like a cat.

Today had been a weird day already, but now I’d just heard an angel announce a change of religion in the most cheerful, carefree, and casual way imaginable. From the instant she showed up, she’d been breaking down all my preconceptions of angels, one after another...

“Hey, you perverted angel! What are you doing getting so close to Rekka?!”

Rosalind, who had been listening carefully to Zeta’s explanation, suddenly caught on to Rachelle’s antics and demanded an explanation.

“Oh, yes! Ahh, even stronger love energy is flowing into me... Mm...”

But... Rachelle only seemed to enjoy getting yelled at even more. She was squirming in ecstasy. Was she a masochist or something? Rosalind started to storm over, but Zeta grabbed her by the back of the collar with one hand.

“There’s no time for distractions. We have to get this show on the road. Or are you out of the running already?”

“Grr...! No, I’ll do it!”

“All right, then let’s begin the test.”

Zeta clapped her hands together and looked at all the girls’ faces in turn. Come to think of it, what was this test going to be? I’d missed the explanation while I was talking to Rachelle.

“Now, take out the scripts I gave you earlier. One at a time, I want you to act

out the scene on page three. First... You there with the dark hair.”

“I’m Satsuki.”

“Then you’re up first, Satsuki. Once you’re done, it’ll be the short blondie next to you.”

“For starters, my name is Rosalind! And who are you calling short, little lady?! You’re not that much taller than me!”

Rosalind was roaring at her, but Zeta didn’t even react.

“All right, give it a go,” she said, turning her attention back to Satsuki.

“Okay, um...” Satsuki flipped open her script with a nervous look on her face... and blushed for some reason. “U-Um, do I really have to say this?”

“What? Of course. But it’s the heroine’s intro speech, so maybe try shouting it rather than saying it.”

“B-But...”

“If you’re embarrassed, then you don’t have to do it. Not everyone’s cut out to be an actress, and we’ve got three others waiting in line. Twin tails over there in particular looks raring to go,” Zeta said, pointing at Iris.

“You bet I am! And my name is Iris!”

She did look particularly energetic, standing there fidgeting as she answered excitedly. I guess of all the girls, Iris seemed most like the type who’d be into superhero shows. And Zeta seemed to acknowledge her passion, nodding in approval.

“Wait! I-I’ll do it! Please give me a chance!”

Their conversation made Satsuki’s expression flip in a panic. She looked at her script once more and closed her eyes. She was probably reciting the words she’d just memorized in her head. She then opened her eyes and took a deep breath.

“I... I am Galactic Beauty! You who threaten the peace of the galaxy, I will punish you in the name of the Great Andromeda Galaxy!” Satsuki yelled out the heroine’s introduction with all her might... and immediately turned bright red.

Yeah... Satsuki never really liked standing out, so this kind of flashy performance probably wasn't up her alley.

"One more time."

"I am...!"

Prompted by Zeta, Satsuki repeated the lines a second time. Evidently Zeta was all about business. She had no consideration for how an auditionee was feeling. They were either capable or they weren't, and she watched carefully to determine that. Satsuki also seemed to realize this as she slowly shook off her shyness and began to get into the role more.

"I am Galactic Beauty! You who threaten the peace of the galaxy, I will punish you in the name of the Great Andromeda Galaxy!"



“Okay, next. You’re up, Rosalind.”

“V-Very well... Behold.”

Rosalind also seemed shy—or rather, somewhat reluctant. But nevertheless, she recited the lines in a clear, beautiful voice.

“Now it’s my turn! Here I go!”

I think Iris’s acting was the most energetic and lively, and in that sense, probably the most cut out for the role.

“Being the last one makes me rather nervous. I’m Shirley. Pleased to meet you.”

Shirley’s reading was perfect. Too perfect, honestly, which meant it wasn’t really either bad or good.

“In matters like this, it’s best to pick someone whose personality suits the role.”

“Yup.”

It was rare that I agreed with R, but just as I was thinking that... I realized Rachelle had disappeared from beside me.

“Huh? Where’s Rachelle?”

“She’s over there.”

R pointed over to Zeta, who was standing there with her arms crossed as Rachelle snuck up behind her. Just what was she up to...? Rachelle tapped Zeta on the shoulder and started whispering into her ear when she turned around.

“Hmm. Good idea. Let’s go with that.” Zeta nodded and turned to me. “Hey, you. Come over here for a minute.”

“Yes?”

I walked over to Zeta when she called, and she handed me a script.

“I’m going to check your acting, too. Read your lines and introduce yourself, just like the ladies did.”

“Uh...”

Now that she mentioned it, I hadn't seen any of my lines yet—much less read them.

“Since I don't have anyone but you to fill the role of Galactic Great, I have to make sure your acting is perfect no matter what. Prepare yourself.”

Shuddering at such a Spartan declaration, I opened up my script.

“Huh? This script has nothing but lines for Galactic Great...”

And they almost seemed to be thrown in at random, not having much to do with the lines preceding or following them.

“That's right. That's because that's the script for Galactic Great.”

“Just Galactic Great?”

Looking closely, I could see my script had “Galactic Great” written on the cover while everyone else's said “Galactic Beauty.” Were the scripts divvied up by character? I thought scripts had everyone's lines in them... Maybe things worked differently for live-action superhero shows? Dunno.

“Don't worry about that. You just focus on drilling Galactic Great's lines into your head. Once you've got them down, stand next to the ladies and practice saying your catchphrase as you do your trademark poses together.”

“A-All ri—”

“Oh, and you each have to make up your trademark pose yourselves.”

“Huh?”

What did that mean?

“The filming this time will be a little unorthodox. I need to get a grasp of how well you guys work together and take that into consideration. The winged girl here informed me that you're all reeeally close with each other, right? So I want to see who works in sync with whom the best. Everything would be ruined if the hero and heroine were on different wavelengths,” Zeta snapped her suspenders as she explained.

So this was Rachelle's doing... She'd definitely suggested it to increase my contact with the girls. On top of provoking them. Damn it! Why was this heroine

so annoying?! I'd faced off against Rosalind and Shirley directly in the past, but Rachelle hadn't done anything to actually declare herself my enemy... She was just being a huge pain in the butt!

And it looked like I was the only one who saw through it. All the other girls had serious looks on their faces.

"I don't mind if you improvise a little with your introduction speeches to better suit your characters, so take the next ten minutes to practice your poses and show me what you come up with," Zeta announced.

The next instant, the girls were calling my name from all directions.

"Rekka, practice with me!"

"I shall be the one to practice with Rekka!"

"Hey, no fair! I wanna practice with Rekka!"

"Rekka, would you mind practicing with me?"

Satsuki, Iris, Rosalind, and Shirley all came at me at once, signaling the start of a vicious struggle.

"Wai—stop! Calm down, everyone! Turns! Let's take turns—gyaah!"

"Ahh, yes! It's working perfectly! Deliciously!"

"I won't forget this, Rachelle!"

I'd never wanted to beat up a heroine as much as I did her. Despite what she said, I was sure she had to be a fallen angel.



From there, we had a catchphrase test and pose-off, followed by an action test for battle scenes. Then there were a whole bunch of other miscellaneous technical tests that I didn't understand. But in the end, the one selected to play my partner, Galactic Beauty, was...

"Drumroll, please! The part goes to... Iris!"

"What?!"

"Why?!"

“How?!”

Iris was cheering, but the other three girls demanded answers. Zeta seemed rather fed up as she watched them, megaphone in one hand.

“There was no passion in your acting, Shirley. That wouldn’t work out for the heroine of a superhero show.”

“Oh, my.”

“Satsuki, you’re too clumsy.”

“Ugh...”

“What about me?! My lines and action scenes were both perfect!

“Yeah, you weren’t bad, Rosalind,” Zeta acknowledged.

But then she held up one hand level with her head.

“However, there needs to be a certain dynamic between the hero and heroine when they stand next to each other. You’re too short.”

“Mrrrgh...!”

“What are you grumbling for? You don’t have any boobs, either.”

At her wits’ end, Rosalind let out a wail of agony.

“And so, looking at the overall results, Iris has the least problems for the role of Galactic Beauty.”

“Somehow, that doesn’t really sound like a compliment.”

“Amateurs can zip their lips,” Zeta asserted sternly before whipping around to me. “So, what’s up with you?”

“Take a guess...”

Being dragged around in circles by four competing girls takes quite a toll on a man’s stamina. And mood.

W-Well, at least they were able to decide on who would play the heroine without killing each other. I was grateful for that, though I knew it probably meant I’d have to do something to cheer up Satsuki and the others later. Especially to Rosalind, who seemed to be the most hurt.

“As good as new!”

Rachelle now appeared to be completely recovered, cheerfully flying in circles through the air. R was tailing her to her own amusement, but I no longer had the energy to comment on them.

“All right then, Iris. Put this on,” said Zeta, handing her the costume for Galactic Beauty.

“Okay! Heehee!”

Iris accepted it happily and changed into an outfit a lot like mine. And similarly, it automatically adjusted to fit her.

“Hmm... The boobs are a little bigger than I imagined, but I guess there’s nothing to be done about that.”

Zeta scrutinized Iris in her costume before finally nodding in approval.

“Okay, I’m going to go get everything ready to move to the shooting location.”

Zeta exhaustedly rubbed her eyes, and with that, walked off to make the necessary preparations.

“Heehee. Oh, Rekka...”

“Hm?”

“We match!”

“Y-Yeah...”

Iris seemed really happy about it, but the three girls behind her were...

“Iris came out on top this time,” R said as she floated in circles around my head. “I had big expectations of her big assets from the very beginning.”

Stop saying such nonsense while spinning around me... It’s like there’s an echo.

“Ah, Rekka, thank you, thank you!”

Rachelle suddenly descended towards me from her place in the air. I’d been staring at R, but she must have thought I was looking at her.

“Wasn’t that heated display of love just now simply the greatest? Look at my skin! It’s positively glowing! As soft as a newborn baby, no? I feel like I’ve returned to my days as a young angel in training.”

“...How many years ago was that?”

“Aahh! There’s a hippo flying in the sky!”

I was giving Rachelle a little grief when she suddenly yelled out in a panic and pointed to the sky to try and trick me into... Wait, there really was a hippo! Just as she’d intended, I was stunned into silence. That was when Iris walked over. She was pouting a little because I was talking to Rachelle.

“Flying hippos are normal around here, Rekka. Say... do you want to practice our lines together until Zeta gets back?”

“Huh? Oh, sure.”

We both got out our scripts and began reading our lines together.

“I am Galactic Great, protector of the galaxy! I will burn brighter than the Big Bang!”

“And I am Galactic Beauty! You who threaten the peace of the galaxy, I will crush you like a black hole!”

Iris was in high spirits as usual. I was still a little embarrassed, but thanks to the practice I had with the four girls earlier, I was gradually getting better at saying my lines... though they really were weird. Was the script just a disjointed collection of one-liners? I mean, I know scripts aren’t supposed to be novelesque prose, but I was pretty sure it should give me a basic understanding of the story... and I honestly didn’t understand a thing.

“Huh? Come to think of it...”

“Hm? What’s wrong, Rekka?”

“No, it’s just... Isn’t this script missing a villain?”

“That’s because I have a script for Galactic Beauty and you have the script for Galactic Great.”

“Yeah, but there isn’t a single mention of the bad guy in our lines, and we’re

the main characters...”

Normally in shows like this, the good guys calling out the bad guy was an important part of the plot. But there was absolutely nothing like that in my script for Galactic Great, or in Iris’s for Galactic Beauty.

“Hmm... Now that you mention it, that is strange...”

Since we weren’t the ones who wrote the script, there was no real sense in us trying to puzzle out its meaning—or lack thereof. We’d be much better off just asking the scriptwriter herself. And just as I was thinking about her, Zeta returned.

“Hey, Zeta.”

“Hm?”

“This script doesn’t mention the villain... Who exactly are we going to be fighting?”

Maybe it wasn’t fair to say “fighting” since it would all be acting, but whatever.

“Ah, good timing. About that...”

“Huh? What’s good timing?”

Her unusual and unexpected reply puzzled me.

“I just found a villain for you. We’re about to move there now.”

“What?”

Found a villain? What did that mean? I’d understand if she’d said the villain had arrived on set or something, but... Wasn’t that an awfully strange way to phrase it? It genuinely sounded like she hadn’t decided on the villain until just now.

“Come on! Get your head in the game! We gotta move! How many ships did you guys travel here on?”

“Um, one—no, two ships.”

“Then my spaceship should be able to tow both of yours. Hurry and bring them around. My ship is equipped with high-speed warp, so it’ll take us just shy

of half an hour to arrive at our destination.”

Apparently in a rush, Zeta immediately kicked us out to go retrieve our ships. When we returned, I couldn’t help asking...

“H-Hang on second, Zeta. At least tell us where we’re going.”

“Hah? What’s with all the questions?” Zeta snapped as she fiddled with the control panel of her spaceship. “Let’s see...”

A giant image appeared up on the main screen... of a rather familiar-looking blue planet.

“...Earth?”

“Hm? What, you guys know it? It’s a bit outside of the Greater Galactic Federation.”

“We’re going to Earth?”

“That’s right. I found a bad guy for you guys to fight there.”

“Huh?”

She found a bad guy... on Earth? What? The stuff she was saying was making less and less sense to me. I was starting to feel seriously lost. And while I was puzzling over all this, Zeta completed preparations for her spaceship to enter warp and started the countdown.

“Hey, so, uh... Can we go back to my first question now?”

“Hm?”

“Who exactly are we fighting?”

“Huh? Didn’t I mention that yet?”

It seemed the subject had genuinely slipped her mind. She looked at me and cocked her head to the side before answering...

“It’s a kaiju.”



“What...?”

“GRAAAAAAHH!”

Right before my eyes—or rather, towering far over my head—an enormous kaiju was roaring at us. Cool, right? NO! WHATONEARTHISGOINGON?!

“All right, kids. Now take it down.”

“Not happening!” I yelled back at Zeta’s voice in my ear.

Galactic Great’s helmet came equipped with a transmitter that allowed me to communicate with the spaceship in orbit above us, which was Zeta’s vantage point for filming our battle with the kaiju.

“GRAAAAAAHH!”

The kaiju before me—space kaiju, to be exact—looked like it had come straight out of a live-action superhero show. It was a big, ugly monster with skin that looked as hard as concrete. Apparently, these things were all over space. Of course, the Galactic Federation had army elite task forces to deal with them, but we were a little outside of their neighborhood right now. I mean, I know it’s important that governments abide by things like jurisdiction and territorial borders...

“But can’t we call a kaiju extermination force anyway?!”

“Dumbass. This would be a job for them. You think they’re gonna work for free out of the kindness of their hearts?”

“That’s... But still...”

I looked up at the kaiju that stood in front of me like a skyscraper.

“Soldiers fight for money... Which must mean that those who *do* fight out of the goodness of their hearts are the real heroes, right?”

I could hear the grin in Zeta’s voice even through the transmitter. Fighting for good, not money, was the way of a real hero. That was the very premise of Zeta’s show, “Legend of a Real Hero: Galactic Great.” And I’d give her that much. Having a real hero appear in her show would be great and all, but...

WHUMP!

The huge kaiju took one great step forward that shook the ground, and I suddenly understood why most superheroes in these shows chose to ride in enormous robots. Going up against something like this was completely insane

otherwise.

Fortunately, we were in a remote area of Hokkaido where there was nothing but a single road running along the coastline. There weren't any civilians or buildings around for dozens of kilometers, so at the very least, the big guy wouldn't be able to do any serious damage... That is, so long as we could beat him here and now. Just in case, I had asked Satsuki and Shirley to get in touch with Lea and Corona behind Zeta's back.

"Hey, at least introduce yourselves properly!" Zeta demanded.

The catch was that we had to do more than just defeat the monster here. If the shoot wasn't a success, Zeta's story would come to a bad ending. One of the reasons she had said filming had to be done today was because she'd bought information from a connection of hers within the Federation—a tip that they'd predicted a space kaiju would appear on Earth today. In other words, a perfect antagonist.

The other reasons were largely a matter of the schedule and remaining budget. Apparently it had taken some time to convince space gramps to agree to the lead role, and if production was delayed any further, that alone would bankrupt the company. And, yes, I was the one that had put him out. Or his back, specifically. So I had to pull myself together...

"GRAAAAAHH!"

But this was still terrifying!

I may have fought huge opponents before, but they at least waited their turn in line before jumping on-screen... I mean, aren't you supposed to have to wade through the story before the final boss appears? The last time I was thrown into a sudden dilemma like this was probably with the Demon Overlord of Harissa's home world.

"Don't be nervous, Rekka. You and I make the perfect team!"

"Iris...?"

But even at a time like this, Iris—in her Galactic Beauty costume and everything—was smiling at me.

“I gotta be honest, though... I can’t think of any way for us to win in this situation.”

“It’s fine! It’ll all work out somehow! Zeta said these suits had lots of special built-in features, remember?”

Come to think of it, she may have mentioned that during the briefing on the warp over. I guess I’d been a little distracted.

“Come on, let’s just give it a go! According to the calculations Zeta’s team did on the kaiju’s speed, it’ll only take roughly an hour for it to reach the closest town. It’s not like you to drag your feet after coming this far, Rekka!”

“Yeah, you’re right... I may have been doing just that.”

Iris was always so gung-ho. I could stand to learn a thing or two from her.

For now, all we knew about the kaiju was what we could learn by observation—mostly that it was big and tough. But like Iris said, our suits had plenty of features that we hadn’t even tried out yet. The first step to all this would be figuring out what we were capable of, and then what our enemy was. Nothing would be settled by running away. All we could do for the time being was charge in and learn as much as we could, then find an opening to put that to use!

“Thanks, Iris. That helped.”

“Heehee, you’re welcome.”

“Argh! What are you two doing, cozying up to each other like that?!”

“Ah, yes! More, more! All this splendid love energy! If I get any more of it, I... I’ll... I can’t take it anymore! I won’t be able to hold myself baaack!”

“Hey! Stop fooling around down there and get to work, you two!”

Oof, our dawdling earned us a scolding over the transmitter (though there was some strange... interference... mixed in there).

I felt around the chest area of my suit. I had my cellphone set to vibrate tucked in there. Right now, Satsuki and Shirley should be on their way in Shirley’s ship with Corona and Lea in tow. They were supposed to contact me as soon as they arrived. Truth be told, I’d only asked them to come as a backup

plan. If I ended up needing their help to defeat the kaiju, I'd have to come up with some way to make sure that didn't ruin the shoot, and subsequently Zeta's story.

Of course, the ideal scenario was me and Iris—Galactic Great and Galactic Beauty—taking out the monster on our own. But even if that was impossible, we'd at least have to buy enough time for the others to arrive. So in the end, I had to fight the kaiju in front of me one way or another. All right!

"Iris... No, Galactic Beauty! Let's do this!"

"You got it!"

Iris and I stood side-by-side in the cool poses we'd practiced together.

"I'm—"

Then, just as I was about to make my introduction on the scene as Galactic Great...

"Hold it right there!" an unfamiliar voice screamed, completely cutting me off.

Chapter 4: Star Prism's Appearance, Rachelle's Rampage, and...

"Hold it right there!" the voice called from overhead.

The kaiju had come ashore from the sea, so we'd been lying in wait for it near the coastline. But whoever was yelling at us now was over on the sheer cliffs.

"Who's that?" I muttered.

Suddenly, my visor zoomed in on the top of the cliffs and focused on a lone girl standing there. It was probably some sort of telescopic vision function kicking in automatically. For the record, the inside of my visor was built like a computer screen. I was seeing an image of the clifftop in a separate window from the kaiju right in front of me, meaning I could look away from it without immediately being squashed.

"Hey, this place is dangerous! Get out here right now!"

Of course, I wasn't so much worried about her being up on the cliff as I was about her being near the giant monster. But she ignored my warning...

"I'll be fine! You're the ones in danger!"

And gave us a warning of her own. Just who was this girl?

"Your rampage ends here, evil kaiju! I'll take you down!" she shouted as she pulled out a cutesy compact mirror.

Wait, this setup looks awfully familiar...

"Transform!"

Yeah, that's exactly what I thought she was gonna say. And the instant she did, light filled my vision.

"Hey, what's with this light?! I can't see what's going on down there!"

I could barely hear Zeta's voice through the transmitter. She was probably using cutting-edge space technology for filming equipment, but not even she

could tell what was going on inside the light. There was no point in wasting time wondering what it could be, though. There was really only one possibility. The light eventually faded, and...

“Like the dazzling lights in the sky, Star Prism is here!”

The gallant, cool girl on the cliffs reappeared from the light and announced herself as Star Prism. And wow, what a spectacular sight that was.

“Hey! You’re getting your screen time stolen from you, hero!” Zeta had completely snapped. “Who is she supposed to be anyway?!”

“Um, the local hero... Er, heroine?”

And not some space invader or fraud. She was the real deal—a good guy from Earth.

“So, uh... What should we do now?”

The whole concept of Zeta’s show was to showcase a real hero in action. But we weren’t real heroes; we were just actors. We didn’t hold a candle to the real thing.



“Damn it! Is nothing easy?! Why did this all have to happen on the day of the big shoot?!”

“I know my opinion really isn’t worth a whole lot right now, but I completely agree with you there.”

“Argh, whatever! The show must go on! I’ll find some way to write in an alliance with the local hero who arrives on the scene to help! Just get in there quick! You can fight together, but make sure you guys are the ones to finish this! Otherwise everything really will be ruined!”

At Zeta’s half-panicked, half-whining order to attack, Iris and I reluctantly nodded at each other.

“Okay, Iris... I mean, Galactic Beauty! Let’s go!”

“Okay, Great!”

“Hey, Iris! Don’t just make up nicknames!”

While the situation had taken an unexpected turn, we couldn’t afford to put the shoot on hold to figure out the details. We couldn’t let Star Prism fight by herself, either, because...

“Yaaaaah!”

She was really weak!

Actually, it didn’t really look like her jumping abilities or anything were weak at all... They just weren’t doing anything against the kaiju. It didn’t look good for her.

“GRAAAAAHH!”

The kaiju had paused its advance during Star Prism’s appearance, which it now resumed in full force.

“Waaait!”

Star Prism was recklessly charging right for it, but the kaiju slapped her away like it might a fly. She hit the ground like a rocket, but managed to stick the landing on both legs and didn’t look any worse for wear for it.

“Hey!” I shouted out.

“You! Didn’t I tell you to run just now?!” Star Prism raged at the sight of me and Iris running towards her.

Worrying about the welfare of total strangers over her own... I know she was a real hero and all, but jeez. Talk about typecast.

“We’ll fight with you!”

“What?!”

“I know you’re concerned about us, but we’re concerned about you, too!”

“Just get out of here already! You’re in those weird outfits and everything!”

“Yours isn’t much better, you know!” Neither of us really had much room to talk in that regard. “At any rate, we’re going to fight t—”

Smash!

As we were bickering like fools, the kaiju took another step forward. It had already made it off the beach, bringing its heavy foot down on the road that followed the coastline.

“Stop right theeeeere!” the three of us swiftly yelled, springing into action.

I took the laser gun from my belt and pulled the trigger, Iris threw a flurry of punches at the kaiju’s leg, and Star Prism jumped in and tried to kick its belly. However...

“What?!”

“Huh?!”

“Yaaaaah!”

Neither my laser gun nor Iris’s punches had any effect. They simply bounced off the kaiju’s thick hide. And as for Star Prism, she was once again smacked out of the air.

So... wasn’t that a little weak for a laser gun?! This one looked a little different, but the laser gun I borrowed from Iris last time took down a Demon King with just a few shots! I took a second look at it to discover its output had been fixed to the minimum setting.

“Hey, Zeta! How do I power up this thing?! It’s been set to the lowest

output!”

“Oh, that gun won’t shoot anything more powerful than that. It’d be boring if a hero defeated the bad guy with a gun, right?”

“We’re fighting for our lives here!”

“Dumbass! I am, too! My business is on the line here! Now pull yourself together and fight!”

That might be true, but...! I wanted to give her a piece of my mind, but that wasn’t going to change the power of the laser. I gave up on it and decided to try testing a different feature of my suit.

“Erm... Dual Skill, activate!”

I yelled into the suit’s voice detection system. One full body-shaking moment later, I turned to see an exact copy of myself standing next to me.

“Whoa! I really cloned myself!”

“Whoa! I really cloned myself!”

Even my voice had a clone! Space technology is sick!

“O-Okay!”

“O-Okay!”

One of the suit’s features was that it effectively removed the safety on my body. Normally, if a human went all-out, they’d destroy their body in the process. The brain naturally stops you before it comes to that, but the suit bypassed that limiter by supporting the body so that it wouldn’t be in any danger, even uninhibited. So, backed by first-class space tech, me and Rekka #2 kicked off the ground together with all our might...

“Uuuuuaaaaaargh!”

“Uuuuuaaaaaargh!”

And launched ourselves right at the kaiju! We sailed through the air... and were promptly smacked down by its tail.

“Gweh!”

“Gweh!”

Even our cries of pain were doubled up as we rolled around on the ground pathetically.

“Zeta, what good is this suit even supposed to be?!”

“Well, it *was* designed for gramps. He’s primed for battle as it is, so with his limits removed, he would’ve been able to take that kaiju out like the trash.”

Ugh... Now that I thought about it, even Iris couldn’t do anything to the kaiju in her suit, and she was several times more powerful than any Earthling. There was no way the attacks of a regular guy like me were gonna help.

“At any rate, that suit should handle one ton’s worth of shock impact, so do what you can!”

There was that, I guess. It hadn’t hurt much at all when I was smacked into the ground just now.

“Kyaaaaah!”

“Waaaaah!”

Aaaand there went Iris and Star Prism again! I duplicated myself once more to catch them both as they were smacked out of the air.

“GRAAAAAHH!”

“Aaaaah!”

“Aaaaah!”

Me and Rekka #2 booked it away from the space kaiju while carrying the two girls.

Damn it! I hate to admit it, but I might not be too cut out for this fair-and-square fighting business. I knew running away wasn’t going to do anything, but at this rate, I just couldn’t see any way of winning! To hide from the kaiju, I made a beeline for the tree line. Once behind cover, I set down the girls and dismissed my clone.

“You two all right? Are you hurt?”

“Nope! I’m just fine,” replied Iris.

"I'm fine, but... are you a ninja?" asked Star Prism, peering at me in near disbelief.

"Uh, no," I answered, probably looking a little troubled.

"Then what exactly are you two?"

"Um... We're standin space heroes, I guess?"

Star Prism tilted her head in confusion at my curious reply.

"And who are *you*?" Iris asked, throwing the question right back at her.

"Huh? I'm Star Prism."

"Right, but who is 'Star Prism'?"

"I'm a defender of justice..." Star Prism answered Iris.

"You're pretty weak for a defender of justice."

"H-Hey! That goes for you two, too! You said you were space heroes."

"No, I said we're standins..."

Just as we were starting to go around in circles without actually addressing the real issue at hand, someone interrupted our conversation.

"If you want to know more about Star Prism, then just ask me!"

Or, maybe I should say "something" interrupted us? What the heck was it? It was a small, pink... thing. A creature the size of my hand with beady little eyes. No, seriously, what *is* that?

"My name is Starmon! Nice to meet you! Who are you?"

"Er, uh, I'm Rekka Namidare, and this is Iris."

Even Iris was taken aback at the oddity of Starmon, and she had seen all kinds of creatures throughout the universe. I was surprised, too, but I knew this kind of weirdness came hand-in-hand with the current situation, so I had a fairly good idea what his(?) purpose here was.

"Um, Starmon, you're like... one of those mascot characters, right?"

"Yup! That's right!"

Huh, so defenders of justice really did come with their own mascots... Wait, that didn't matter right now!

"So, Star Prism—"

"Kiri."

"Huh?"

"My real name is Kiri Hayashibara. It's a bit of a mouthful, so you can just call me Kiri. And I'll call you guys Rekka and Iris."

"Okay, Kiri. So, do you have, like, a secret ability?"

"Secret ability?"

"Like one of those signature special powers superheroes use? Something that could defeat a kaiju, ideally?"

She seemed like a real superhero (unlike us), so I figured she probably had some secret weapon that could take down the bad guy for us.

Smaaaaash!

Even as we spoke, the kaiju was heading closer towards human civilization. Defeating it would be impossible as things were right now, which is why I was after something that might tip the scales in our favor. At least, that's what I was hoping for when I asked her, but...

"My special ability as Star Prism is called Starlight Healing, but it won't work against that kaiju."

"Why not?"

"Starlight Healing is an ability that purifies evil hearts. But that kaiju is just acting on instinct. There's nothing inherently evil about its desire to destroy the Earth."

Okay, that's fair... It's not like you could blame wild animals for having to hunt.

"Sure, being able to purify evil is a great skill for a defender of justice, but, but...! Don't you have something more normal? You know, something like an actual attack?!"

“Hmm... I don’t have anything like a special technique, but there might be one thing.”

Starmon bent his body—he didn’t have a neck, but he’d probably be cocking it if he did—and gave something of a troubled explanation.

“Star Prism has a special trait that allows her to convert voices of support into power!”

“Voices of support?”

“Yup! If thousands and thousands of people cheer for her, she’ll surely be able defeat that kaiju!”

Wait, is this the same gimmick in the costumed hero shows they have at amusement parks and stuff where the announcer/narrator tells to the crowd, “Oh, no, kids! Looks like the hero’s in trouble! Everyone cheer for him to show your support!” The way Starmon put it sure made it sound like a heroic ability, but...

“Out here, that’s a bit...”

We were on a remote coast of Hokkaido. It wasn’t exactly like we had an audience.

“Heeey, people of Earth! Everyone, share your power with me!” Star Prism—Kiri—threw both her hands up to the sky and cried.

Of course, nothing of the sort happened.

“No good, huh? Then at least give me energy! Yeah! Yeah! Aaaall right! Let’s go!”

Kiri flailed her arms a bit and yelled to the skies once more before turning to charge at the kaiju.

“No, no, no! Wait! Nothing happened just now!”

“But I have to stop that kaiju, or it’ll wreak havoc!”

That may be true, but you switched gears way too quickly!

I tried to hold Kiri back, but she didn’t hold back in throwing me off of her.

“I know it’s not my place to say this, but you’re being way too reckless!” I

shouted.

“Then what do you want me to do?!”

“I’m saying we need a plan!”

Vrrrrr!

Something was vibrating at my chest—ah, my cell phone! I stuck my hand down the collar of my suit and pulled it out of my breast pocket.

“Satsuki?!”

“Rekka, I’m heading to you now with Lea, Corona, and Tsumiki. Harissa summoned Lyun, too, so we’ll all be there in a few minutes.”

“Got it! Thanks!”

I pumped my fist in the air as I hung up.

“Who was that?” asked Kiri.

“A comrade. Once they arrive, we’ll be able to defeat that kaiju.”

I gave her a quick briefing of what was going on. When she heard it, her expression brightened immediately, and she came right back.

“Really?! That’s amazing!”

“Y-Yeah, that’s why...”

“Hey, hold on! If you borrow any more help from other people, Galactic Great will get no screen time!”

That’s why I had to convince Zeta to go along with it...

“But that’s better than not defeating it at all, right? You can always say Galactic Great did his best in the fight and the team won...”

“You realize this isn’t a war, right? The main character has to be the one to defeat the enemy in a superhero show! Even in war shows, it’s usually the leader of the squad who gets the kill! We have Galactic Great and Galactic Beauty working together this time, but in the end, the final blow has to be by Galactic Great’s hand!”

Crap, really? Now that she mentioned it, that did sorta seem to fit the bill of

just about every superhero show I'd seen as a kid...

"Huh? What's wrong?" Kiri asked since she couldn't hear Zeta yelling at me.

"Nothing, just a little argument with another comrade on our side..."

I gave Kiri the rundown of the situation, which she didn't seem to like one bit.

"What's with that?! So she doesn't care about the people on Earth at all?! Give that here! I want to have a word with her!"

With that, she leaned in to bring her face towards mine. She was trying to get close to the transmitter inside of my helmet.

"Hey! Don't try and get so close with Rekka!"

This time, Iris got mad—apparently upset with how close Kiri was getting—and started to pull me this way and that.

"C-C-Calm down, Iris!"

Satsuki and the others were nearly here, but I wanted to stop the kaiju as soon as possible. In order to do that, we had to attack—or rather, distract—the kaiju one more time, but... For some reason, Starmon seemed to be in a fluster.

"Star Prism! Do you really intend on borrowing Rekka's help?"

"Of course! I can't win alone!"

"B-But if you do that..."

What? What was the little guy so worked up about? Just as I was about to ask...

"Hey!" Zeta shouted over the transmitter, a different tone of urgency in her voice than before.

Then, the next moment...

BOOOOOOOOOM!

An explosive roar rang out like the crack of thunder.

We all braced ourselves as a huge tremor rocked us and the ground below.

"Wh-What just happened?" I murmured in a daze after the shaking stopped.

“That damn kaiju just spewed fire...” I could hear Zeta gulp nervously from the other side of the transmitter.

“Fire? Why would the ground shake because of fire?”

“When I said fire, I more meant the laser kind... It’s basically a plasma beam, and that bastard just blew away half a mountain with it.”

“What?!”

I poked my head out of the grove just a little to check. And sure enough, the top part of one of the smaller mountains visible from here was really gone. That... That can’t be fair. Even in this hi-tech suit, if I took one of those beams...

“Damn it.” Zeta clicked her tongue. “All right, we’re evacuating for now. I’ll pick you up in the spaceship.”

“Huh? But the shooting...”

“I told you to take responsibility, not to get yourself killed.”

The suit would’ve been fine against an opponent with purely physical attacks, but Zeta had probably realized herself that it wouldn’t hold up against a plasma beam. But if we gave up here...

“Your show will...”

“Can it. You did everything you could, so we’re calling it a wrap. Stop overthinking things, brat,” Zeta said bluntly, unable to hide the frustration in her voice.

“No... We haven’t done everything yet.”

“Hah?”

“It’s my fault you’re in this situation. Let me finish this.”

“Listen here—”

“I missed my chance to say so earlier, but this is actually our home planet. We have to defeat that kaiju no matter what.”

Satsuki and the others were due to arrive soon, too. Once they did, we might actually have a way to defeat it.

“...?”

I glanced up to see that the kaiju had stopped moving. Its head was way too far up in the air for me to see it clearly, but it was facing the mountain it had nearly just leveled. When I turned to look...

“Oh, no! There’s a town that way!” Kiri shouted in a panic.

Goosebumps ran across my skin.

Zeta had estimated that it would take an hour for the kaiju to reach the nearest town. But what about its long-range beam attack? What if it had blown away that mountain so it could take a clear shot next time?

“GRAAAAAAHH!”

With an Earth-trembling roar, the kaiju started to gather a bright light in its mouth.

“No!”

We all moved to try and stop it, but it was too late. The kaiju fired its massive plasma beam from its gaping mouth. And then...

Weeeooooom!

“Huh?! Was that Zeta’s spaceship?!”

“A barrier! She used the spaceship’s barrier to deflect the plasma beam!”

According to Iris, space was full of debris and asteroids scattered everywhere, so most ships came equipped with a barrier to protect them while traveling.

“Increase power to the barrier!” I could hear a fired-up Zeta yelling through the transmitter.

“Zeta! Hey, Zeta?!” I tried calling to her.

“It’s no good, director! The barrier can’t hold!”

“Don’t take it head-on! Adjust the angle to deflect it above us!”

All I could hear on the other side was Zeta and a flustered staff member talking. Whatever was going on, they seemed to be way too busy to answer me.

As for the rest of us, all we could do was sit and watch. We were on the edge

of our seats as Zeta's spaceship shifted to change angle and deflect the kaiju's beam up into the air. But unfortunately, the beam wasn't just a short burst. It felt like it was lasting forever...

"The barrier's energy supply has been exhausted!"

"Redirect all batteries to the barrier!"

The barrier could only take so much, and its power was drained almost immediately.

Krrk, krrk... KRRRSH!

It shattered with a ear-piercing sound just as the plasma beam ran out. The last rays of it scorched the surface of Zeta's ship. There was a small explosion here and there, and black smoke began rising from the ship. It seemed that it had taken enough damage to compromise its equilibrium, and it swayed in the air before crashing into the ground.

"Zeta?! Hey, are you all right?!"

"I thought I told you to can it... It was an emergency landing, but we're safe."

I exhaled in relief to hear that.

"But that's about all she wrote for us. I won't be able to block the next beam. You guys'll have to figure something out yourselves. The winged girl is headed your way now."

"Rachelle?"

"She said she had some kind of plan."

For real?

"Oooh, Rekka!"

"Rekka! Are you unharmed?!"

As I was standing there in confusion, the aforementioned Rachelle—accompanied by Rosalind in bat-swarm mode—arrived on the scene.

"Rachelle, I heard you had a plan?"

"I do! I'll need a teeny tiny bit of your help, but if we do things my way, I'll be

able to slaughter that kaiju in a single blow.”

“A single blow?!”

What she was saying was so ridiculous that I was having a hard time believing it. But nevertheless, she seemed perfectly confident.

“Teehee, you may have forgotten, but I’m an angel! We’re pretty powerful beings, you know? I can’t have you thinking I’m just some holy lackey.”

Honest to God, I thought of her as the most annoying person in this story before I thought of anything holy. That being said, we had to do something before the kaiju fired its next beam. I was fresh out of ideas, so I decided to go along with it.

“All right, I’ll do whatever you want me to do.”

“Then leave this to me! Heh heh heh...”

I had no real choice other than to rely on her right now, but I couldn’t escape the feeling she was up to something horrendous.

“Please come this way, Rekka. As for the rest of you... Just sit back and watch an angel in action, okay?”

“Hmph. Just get on with it,” scoffed Rosalind.

“Tch. I wanted to defeat the kaiju with Rekka...” pouted Iris.

Neither one of them seemed too pleased about Rachelle’s interference.

“Hey, hurry it up, Rachelle!”

“Alrighty. Oh, but please remove your helmet first.”

“Huh?”

What did I need to do that for? Whatever. Now wasn’t the time to ask questions. I complied and pressed the button on the back of my neck. The helmet collapsed into the rest of the suit.

“Okay, now that’s done. Let’s make this quick.”

“Sure, sure. First, let’s fly closer to the kaiju, shall we?” she asked as she spread her wings.

She then put her arms around me and held me close as she lifted us up into the air. I must have been heavy, but she had no trouble moving closer to the kaiju. The kaiju had used all of its energy against the spaceship's barrier earlier, so it was currently growling lowly in its throat while showing no signs of its next attack yet. We were so small, it had yet to notice us.

"Okay, so what do we do now that we're up here?"

"Jeez, you're so impatient, Rekka. Just hold your horses. I believe you said it should be soon..."

Apparently there was some timing involved with this plan? Rachelle kept looking up towards the sky like she was waiting for something. Hm? Speaking of things that should be soon...

Vrrrrr!

My phone in my breast pocket vibrated. Just as it did, the kaiju opened its huge mouth once more.

"Hey! The next shot is coming!"

Light and heat began gathering in the kaiju's mouth.

"Ah! It's here!" Rachelle yelled in an excited voice.

I followed her gaze and spied a single spaceship—the one Shirley had taken to fetch Lea and the others!

"Rekka!"

"Sir Rekka!"

"Nammy!"

One by one, everyone got off the ship. But the beam was already...!

"Rekka."

"Huh?"

Rachelle said my name, and I turned to look at her. When I did, she leaned in and...

Smooch!

I felt something soft on my face.

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHH!!” And heard the piercing screams of every single person present echoing in my ears.

“Wh-What are you do—”

“OH, YES! It’s here! It’s here, baby!” Rachelle yelled at the top of her lungs, interrupting my objections.

I wondered what exactly was here... when I saw an extraordinary aura coming from behind her. Wait, was this because of everyone’s jealousy? Did Rachelle absorb all that love energy to power up? Then, as though to confirm my suspicions...

“LOOOOOOOOVE AAAND...”

Rachelle roared at the heavens as rays of light burst from her hands, merging to form a sword larger than even the kaiju.

“PEAAAAAAAAACE!”

And she swung it in a single decisive stroke. The kaiju that had been on the verge of firing its next beam was sliced clean in two down the middle, splitting open as it fell to the ground in pieces. I could only stare in dumbfounded shock as Rachelle carried us both back down to the ground.

“Well, that sure went well! Heeheehee...” Rachelle giggled, blushing.

“Yeah, that part went well... But, uh, could you give me some warning next time?”

“Hmm? Are you talking about the kiss? Don’t be silly! Someone as popular as you must be throwing kisses around on the regular, no?”

“Huh? Uh, actually...”

“Whaaat?! D-Don’t tell me you haven’t yet! Oh, no, whatever shall I do? I just stole Rekka’s first kiss!”

“Wh-What are you saying?! You missed my mouth by just a bit!”

She’s brushed it a bit... but that didn’t count! Not that you would’ve been able to tell unless you were right up in both of our faces...

“Ahahaha! Well, don’t sweat details... Hic!” Rachelle said, slapping my shoulder.

Her face was still flushed, but it wasn’t like she was being bashful or anything... In fact, why *was* she so red? And excited? And... hiccupping? Was she drunk? Huh? Wait, was it just me, or did her wings flash black just now...?

“Rekka. Oh, Rekka.”

“Hm?”

R tapped me on the back, causing me to turn around. There were several dark figures approaching. Demons, maybe? Ah... No, it was the girls. Satsuki, Iris, Harissa, Tsumiki, Lea, Rosalind, Shirley, Corona, and Lyun. All nine of them were glaring, stomping, raging, shaking, and seething... In other words, they were pissed.

“Oh, Rekka...” Satsuki called.

“Y-Yes, ma’am!” I stood at attention.

“I see you and Rachelle have gotten rather friendly while I was gone...”

I couldn’t see her eyes through her bangs. She looked scary.

“Ah, no, that’s... Um, we were just working together to defeat the kaiju.”

“Then all you had to do was wait for me. I would’ve made it in time. That’s why you had me bring Lea and the others here, no?”

“Yeah, but... I didn’t really have the time to stop her...”

“You didn’t even have time to ask what she was doing?” Tsumiki asked, throwing her own question in with Satsuki’s.

She was still in her uniform, so I could guess she’d been abducted from school before being taken to Nozomiya to load up the takeout box in her hands with dark matter for Corona and Lea.



“None of that matters right now...”

The one to interrupt the interrogation was Rosalind. Her eyes were red with rage as she held her right hand out, sharpened nails extended.

“I won’t rest until I’ve exacted my vengeance on that rotten angel.”

I was worried about what exactly that vengeance would entail...

“W-Wait, Rosalind! Despite everything, she did save Earth! Isn’t that enough?”

“What?! Exactly whose side are you on?!” she demanded.

“That’s right!” Iris echoed.

“Sir Rekka, I can’t believe what you’ve been up to while I wasn’t around!” Harissa joined in.

Disgusted outcries came at me from all directions. Rosalind and Iris both seemed to be on the verge of attacking Rachele, while Harissa was on the verge of tears.

“Harissa went through all the trouble of summoning me to help you because you were in a pinch, Nammy! But what is this?! Did you call me from the spirit world just to show me that?!”

Lyun also appeared to be quite enraged. The wind around her was stirring. I had asked Harissa to summon her here in case I needed to use the Spirit Armor, but at this rate, the girls were all going to be using their powers against me rather than helping me!

“S-Shirley...”

I sought help from the comparatively calm Shirley...

“...Hmph.”

But she only answered me with a cold look. I then looked to Lea and Corona, but they didn’t look thrilled, either.

“Uh...”

“I suppose this is what they call being up against a wall, huh?”

No kidding, R. I didn't have a single ally... The only one who might possibly defend me was the cause of this whole mess—Rachelle.

“H-Hey, Rachelle. Come here and explain what happened to everyone.”

“...”

I shook the shoulder of the angel who had her back turned to me, but she had no reaction. What gives? Come to think of it, she's been leaking that aura from the light sword for a while now... And isn't that color a little psychedelic? Wait, are her wings really turning black?

“Rachelle?”

“Heh heh—hic!”

“Uh, Rachelle?”

“Ahyahyahyaah!”

“Wh-What's wrong?!”

She'd definitely flipped some kind of switch.

“Rachelle!”

I forcefully turned Rachelle towards me. When I did, I could see that she'd gone way past red in the face and her eyes were spinning in circles. Those are definitely symptoms of drunkenness, right? But what was she drunk on? My eyes were drawn to the aura of love energy just flowing out of her body. Had she lost it because she'd taken in so much of it? The color of her wings really was changing!

“Hey! Snap out of it, Rachelle!”

“Heh heh heh...”

This wasn't good. Maybe I shouldn't shake her too much? Maybe I should get her some water... but maybe that'd be pointless. A million things went through my head.

“Hold it, Rekka! Just what are you doing with that woman now?! If you get that close to her, she might kiss you again!”

Rosalind—under the wrong impression—came storming our way. Her

jealousy was generating even more love energy... which of course went right into Rachelle.

“Hnnngh!”

Rachelle’s body shook and spasmed before she collapsed on the spot.

“R-Rachelle?”

I worriedly called out to her. I couldn’t see her face with her lying the way she was.

“More...”

But I could hear her muttering something quietly. I leaned in to listen when she suddenly leaped up from the ground like she was spring-loaded.

“GIVE ME MORE LOVE ENERGY!”

Yelling at the top of her lungs, she held a finger up towards the sky, and a pinkish aura began to gather at her fingertip. She then pointed at the nine heroines...

“TIME TO GET FIRED UP!”

And fired the aura at them.

“Wha—?!”

Even my astonished voice was swallowed up by the explosive burst of light.

Chapter 5: The “Mini” Little Apocalypse

“Satsuki?!”

As I shielded my eyes from the blinding light, I called out for my childhood friend.

“Wait, what are you even attacking everyone for?!” I asked Rachelle, shaking her shoulders.

“Heh heh heh...”

It was pointless. Words weren’t getting through to this angel. I had no idea what was going on. How had things even ended up like this? Why did Rachelle have to attack Satsuki and the others? And what in the world was she yelling about?

Eventually, the light faded. The flickering in my eyes was annoying, making me rub at them several times. Several seconds later, my vision finally returned to me.

“Everyone!”

Thankfully, the girls all appeared to be unharmed, although it looked like they were still reeling from the blinding light. They were standing there in a daze. I decided to ignore the cackling Rachelle for now and ran over to them.

“Satsuki! Are you all right? You’re not hurt, are you?”

“No. I’m fine, Rekka.”

Phew. She seemed a little out of it, but she was still the usual Satsuki.

“Hm?” I suddenly noticed a leaf in Satsuki’s hair. “You have a leaf in your hair.”

“Huh?”

Satsuki started feeling around her head with her right hand in a fluster. Bad luck. It was on the left side.

“It’s over here. Let me get it for you,” I said, reaching my hand out... when somebody suddenly grabbed my wrist. “Iris?”

“Why are you only ever nice to Satsuki, Rekka?”

“Weh?” I was so blindsided by her out-of-nowhere question that all I could offer for an answer at first was some weird noise. “I’m not? She just has a leaf in her hair...”

“You called Satsuki’s name first just now! It’s not fair! Why is it always Satsuki?!”

“I-It’s not always. That was just spur-of-the-moment...”

What was going on? She was being awfully fussy... Was this the aftereffect of the competition over me on Ciel?

“We even went on a date together today! So why didn’t you look for *me* first?!”

“Ow, ow, ow!”

Iris was squeezing my wrist with all her strength! It felt like it was going to snap! I tried to find the words to comfort her between my yelps of pain, but this time it was Satsuki that interrupted things by slapping Iris’s hand away.

“Stop that! You’re hurting Rekka!”

“What?! Don’t cut in on my conversation with Rekka!”

“You’re the one who did that! I was talking to Rekka first!”

“H-Hey, calm down you t—”

I was trying to mediate between the bickering girls when I was suddenly yanked by the back of my collar, cutting off my sentence in my throat. Then I felt something extremely soft pressing against the back of my head...

“Rekka...”

“L-Lea?”

She was the one who’d grabbed me from behind. Which meant these two pillowy lumps up against me were...!

I immediately tried to straighten myself out, but she was hugging me so tightly from behind that I couldn't move much at all.

"U-Um, please let go..."

"Did you really go on a date with Iris?" Lea ignored my question to ask one of her own.

The combination of the extreme proximity of her face looking down at mine and the soft sensation behind my head made my heart thump erratically. God, she was so close that I could feel her warm breath... But just as my mind started to race, something tugged on my legs.

"Wuh?!"

And hard. I was pulled all the way down to the ground.

"Rosalind... and Harissa?"

"Sir Rekka, what does she mean by date?! What have you been doing all day anyway?! You told me you'd be home early because of the opening ceremony, so I've been waiting for you this whole time!"

"Rekka! I can't believe you're being deceived by those sacs of fat again! Do you like breasts that much?! Argh! I'll teach you a woman's true value!"

"O-Okay...?"

I lay on the ground as Rosalind and Harissa scolded me from both sides.

"Uh... I-I'm sorry?"

I held my hands up in a gesture of surrender... although I didn't quite understand why I was at fault here, a-and I wasn't being deceived by her chest at all! In the middle of all this, the still-bickering Satsuki and Iris made their way over to us and instigated more trouble.

"Hey! Give Rekka back!" said Iris.

"What do you mean, 'back'? Rekka doesn't belong to you, Iris!" said Satsuki.

"S-Sir Rekka visited the village elder with me! S-So Sir Rekka is m-mine!" said Harissa.

"You're all spouting nonsense!" said Rosalind.

Wh-What was I supposed to do? There wasn't even room for me to say anything...

As they continued to hiss and spit, Lea squeezed past the four of them and grabbed me again, pulling me towards her.

"Rekka, go on a date with me."

"Huh?! Wh-Wh-Wha—"

"You went on one with Iris, right? But that's in the past now. Go on your next one with me."

If it's in the past, wouldn't it be better to forget about it...? Please?

"Lea, get away from him!"

"...Tsumiki?"

Surprisingly, the one who tried to stop Lea was her good friend Tsumiki.

"What, Tsumiki? I'm just inviting Rekka on a date. Don't get in my way."

"I-I'm not getting in the way! I just can't forgive the way that womanizing pervert smiles when he touches your breasts!"

"I'm not smiling! And I didn't touch them!"

Not of my own free will, anyway! Lea was the one who touched me!

"Oh, is that all? I don't mind if Rekka touches me, though."

"Th-Th-That's not right! Here, I'll help! I'll get him away from you!"

"Ow, ow, ow!"

They were trying to tear my arms off! Tsumiki was forcibly trying to pull me away from Lea, who refused to let go. They were each gonna have a piece of me in a second!

"Hmph! Let go, Tsumiki! Rekka's in pain!"

"You let go, Lea!"

"No!"

"Uuugh! I won't feed you anymore when you come to Nozomiya!"

“What?!”



Lea hesitated for the briefest moment, but it was enough for Tsumiki to yank me away from her. She yanked a little too hard, however, and the force of it knocked her off-balance and sent her tumbling backward.

“Wah! Huh? Kyah!”

“Uwah!”

She was holding my arm so tightly that I, of course, went tumbling with her.

“Ouch... Huh?!”

“Hahh!”

I could hear Tsumiki gasp from directly below me. Apparently, I’d landed on her when we fell.

“R-Rekka...”

Lying entangled like we were, our faces were oh-so-close together... We both unthinkingly blushed at each other. Wh-What was this? I’d never seen such a sweet look on Tsumiki’s face before. Despite the predicament we were in, I couldn’t help thinking it was cute, but...

“AAAAAAAHH!”

The other girls were all shrieking.

Satsuki, Iris, Harissa, Lea, and Rosalind were all angrily roaring over the, uh... compromising position I’d ended up in with Tsumiki.

“What are you doing?! Dummy Nammy!”

“Ack!”

Lyun released a magical burst of wind that blew me into the air, but luckily...

“You all right, young man?”

“Y-Yeah... Thanks, Corona.”

Corona, who could fly freely, had apparently taken flight to save me. Thank God someone was still there for me.

Honestly... what was wrong with everyone? At first, I thought it was just one of their usual spats, but I’d never seen Lea and Tsumiki fight before. Lea

especially wasn't the type to raise her voice with her friends. I realize it was a little late for this to be dawning on me just now, but something was definitely wrong here.

"Young man, no... Rekka."

"Hm?"

"Do you like larger breasts?"

"Bwuh?!" I spluttered at Corona's unexpected question.

"If you do, you may do as you please with mine," she offered.

Her cheeks were tinged with red as she pulled me closer... to her and her magnificent chest. Well, we were already pretty close together, so maybe it would be more accurate to say she was squishing me up against her. Damn it! They'd practically been in my face this whole time, and I was doing my best to pretend like they weren't, but now I couldn't *not* notice them! They were right there! And... so soft...

But just as my mind was thrown into lustful disarray...

Clack!

"Hm?"

I heard what sounded like something metallic clamping down, then felt something tighten around my throat and forcefully yank me backward—right towards the ground. Just as I thought I was about to crash into it, my body decelerated, and I came to a gentle stop just inches above the ground. As for who had lassoed me like a cowboy... er, cowgirl...

"Goodness... Everyone wants to run off with you, Rekka."

"Sh-Shirley?"

"But it's all right. I can catch you anytime with this anti-gravity whip," she said with a grin.

So the reason I was floating right now was because of her gravity-defying whip? It was probably designed to negate gravity for the target in order to reduce their struggling. It's pretty hard to run when your feet aren't on the

ground, after all.

“You there, science girl! Unhand Rekka at once,” Rosalind roared.

“Shirley! Let go of Rekka right now!” Iris hollered.

“How about no? Teehee,” Shirley refused with a taunting grin.

“Don’t mess around, you...” Satsuki seethed.

The other girls were also on their way over, each trying to divert the others away. Things were already out of hand, but this was just... No, that’s enough!

“Hang on, everyone! Stop! Just calm down!”

I raised my hands and my voice, trying to restore some semblance of order... But it was like none of them even heard me. Really, what had come over them?

As I was pondering that, the conflict between the girls came to a head, and all hell broke loose. In an instant, they were hurling magic, technology, and bare fists at each other. It was like a war zone.

“Waaaaait!”

My frantic yelling was swallowed up by the thunderous commotion. No one was going to hear me now. Why had they all attacked each other so suddenly? This was going way too far, even for a fight!

“Hold still, damn girl!” shouted Rosalind.

“Don’t you run away! Leave Rekka here!” shouted Iris.

“I refuse!” shouted Shirley in reply.

Why was everyone even fighting to begin with? What had gotten them so worked up? Shirley was still swinging me around with her anti-gravity whip, so I was powerless to do anything other than watch the chaos unfold.

“You late-comers all cling to Rekka way too much!” shouted Satsuki.

“Just because you’re his childhood friend doesn’t give you dibs!” shouted Tsumiki.

“I want to cling to Rekka, too!” shouted Lea.

The fighting was steadily intensifying. They were knocking down trees in the

grove, kicking up dirt, and generating giant clouds of dust and smoke.

“Sir Rekka and me are getting hitched! Y’all ain’t gettin’ in the way!” shouted Harissa.

“No, I will have Rekka!” shouted Corona.

“There’s no way we’d hand him over to a former Demon King!” shouted Lyun.

After that, the shouting just deteriorated into cacophony. All I could make out was my name every now and then. I didn’t have the faintest idea what was happening, other than that it seemed like I was the reason they were fighting... But there was also that light Rachelle had fired at them earlier. That was still on my mind. Everyone had started acting weird after getting hit by that.

So, in order to get to the bottom of things, I’d have to start with interrogating that ridiculous angel... which meant I had to get out of here for now. Maybe if I left, the girls would stop fighting, too. But first I had to do something about this anti-gravity whip...

“That’s right! My suit!”

Zeta had mentioned all kinds of useful features in Galactic Great’s suit when she’d introduced it. One of them might come in handy right about now. If I recalled correctly, the voice activation command was...

“Galactic Blade!”

The next moment, my right arm started to vibrate at a high frequency from my elbow down. It was so strong that it felt like it could snap my bones, but thanks to the suit, I was fully protected.

“Oof!”

I struggled with balance due to the lack of gravity, but I swung the Galactic Blade down on the whip restraining me. It appeared to be made out of some kind of special space material, but the built-in secret weapon of the custom hero suit was made to fight against much tougher things. The Galactic Blade cut through the anti-gravity whip like it was butter.

“Ngh!”

I hit the ground clumsily, rolling a bit before coming to a stop and getting up.

“Ah, no! Don’t run away, Rekka!” Shirley yelled upon realizing I’d escaped.

“Rekka! Over here!” Satsuki called.

“We’re going to go finish our date, Rekka!” Iris clamored.

“Sir Rekka, I’ve made up my mind! Let’s sleep together tonight!” Harissa chimed in.

“Everyone, just calm down! I’ll be back!”

Using the power of the suit, I dashed off at lightning speed. My biggest concern was Iris, who was wearing the same suit I was and had much higher base stats than I did. Thankfully, Satsuki and Harissa blocked her path, allowing me to get away successfully. But it turned out she wasn’t the only one I needed to be worried about.

“Rekka! Where do you think you’re going without me?!”

“You stay here, vampire, or Rekka will run away.”

“Are you saying it’s my fault he’s running?!”

Rosalind and Corona bickered with each other as they chased after me. Lea and Lyun were flying through the air right behind them, too.

“H-Hold it right there!” As the only normal person in the group, Tsumiki had fallen quite far behind, but even panting, she was still running and shouting as best she could.

“Why don’t you just give up and let everyone debauch you?”

“Quiet!”

As I yelled at R for not ever being able to mind her own business, I ran deeper into the woods. The forest appeared to be completely untouched by human hands. The rooty and wild underbrush was difficult terrain to run on. It nearly tripped me up more than once. Eventually, the somewhat flat land began to slope into an increasingly steep hillside.

WHAM! BAM! SLAM!

“Wh-What was that?!”

My feet came to an unwilling stop at the thunderous commotion coming from

behind me.

“Perhaps one of the heroines is smashing trees out of their way? Or maybe they’re trying to obstruct the other heroines,” R postulated.

“Damn it! How did things end up like this?!” I cursed.

“The cause is fairly clear, if you ask me.”

“Right, the light Rachelle fired out...” I recalled what had happened 20 minutes ago rather unpleasantly. “What was that light, anyway? Why did it affect everyone this way?”

“That’s also quite clear, I believe.”

“Huh?”

I turned to R in surprise, who gave a tired sigh in response.

“You’re so hopeless. Consider this a huge favor.”

“O-Okay?”

“If you’re wondering about the light Rachelle released, then start by thinking about what kind of angel she is.”

“What kind of angel? She’s... the angel of love and passion, right?”

“Right,” R said with a nod. “Now, what was she gathering today?”

“...Love energy?”

“Right again.”

“What about it?”

“Next question: how, exactly, did Rachelle want to collect said love energy?”

“Huh?”

Why was R asking me all these questions? She’d said she was doing me a favor... Which had to mean this was leading to some kind of hint, right?

“Let me think...”

This morning, we’d met a starving Rachelle who’d traveled from across the sea in order to get the love energy she so desperately needed. And she’d asked

for...

“...A scene of carnage?”

“Correct.” R nodded unemotionally.

I didn't quite understand how angels gathered energy, but Rachelle was able to do it just by being near a source. Moreover, she was a total weirdo. She seemed to equate carnage with the pinnacle of passionate love. So if she'd had her powers restored...

“Don't tell me that she's now gone on a rampage and is trying to create carnage herself?”

That was the only explanation I could think of. If it was right, then the chaotic contest she'd started over me made sense.

“The carnage the heroines are creating right now is akin to what's going to happen during the War of All. Although this is on a much smaller scale, so I suppose we should call it the 'mini' little apocalypse. Perhaps that's redundant...” R murmured pensively.

As we were talking, the destructive sounds of battle coming from the other side of the forest only grew more intense. At this rate, there wouldn't be anything “mini” about it... Wait a minute!

“That damn angel! This whole thing is all her fault! I knew she was a fallen angel!”

“Well, it does seem as though she absorbed excessive amounts of energy, resulting in her wild rampage.”

Ugh, when she put it that way, it made it sound like she was on a drunken bender... But regardless, at least 80 percent of today's ruckus was explicitly on her!

“Hang on. If that's the case, does that mean the situation will resolve itself if we do something about Rachelle?”

“That's a more than reasonable hypothesis.”

To be honest, I had been agonizing over what to do about the girls going crazy. This was my first little ray of hope.

“That being said, Rachelle has absorbed so much love energy right now that she’s likely insanely powerful. She might even be stronger than the kaiju was.”

“Ah, crap...”

Come to think of it, she *had* single-handedly one-shot the kaiju that had given the rest of us hell. Damn it, just how much trouble was she going to cause?!

“Rekka!”

My heart nearly jumped out of my chest when I heard someone call my name, but when I turned around to see who it was...

“Are you all right, Rekka?”

I spied a worried-looking Kiri.



Kiri led me to a cave in the forest so I could hide.

“Hi there.”

“Hi again, Starmon.”

Her mascot, Starmon, was there waiting for us.

“Starmon found this place,” explained Kiri.

“Yeah?”

Apparently, when Satsuki and the others had started fighting, they’d fled the scene.

“Come to think of it, how come you weren’t affected by Rachelle’s light, Kiri?”

“Even you can’t conquer a heroine you haven’t saved yet,” R answered with a sigh.

Whatever. I was just glad one of the girls was still sane.

“Wait, you’re saying Kiri’s a heroine? Well, I guess that was obvious...”

She was in a desperate situation with the odds stacked against her. She was headed full-speed for a bad ending.

“Anyway, I’m glad you’re safe, Kiri.”

“Yeah...” Kiri nodded, but she didn’t seem very happy.

“...Kiri?”

“Hahh... Hahh...”

She suddenly fell to her knees, gasping for breath like she was in pain.

“H-Hey, are you okay?!”

“Yeah...” she said, but her expression was twisted in agony.

“Star Prism...” Seeing her like this, Starmon called to her with a tearful voice.

“Starmon, what’s wrong with Kiri?! Is she sick or something?!” I asked.

“No, she’s not sick... This is because her hero gauge is depleted.”

“What’s a hero gauge?” I had to ask.

“A hero gauge is the essence of a hero. It increases when fighting and defeating evil in the name of justice. However, if said evil isn’t defeated or the hero does anything to shame their name, the gauge decreases.”

As far as I could tell, Kiri was a spirited girl with a strong sense of justice. I just couldn’t imagine her doing anything that would shame her as a hero.

“Hahh... Hahh...”

“Kiri!”

Unable even to remain on her knees any longer, Kiri fell over. I reached out to catch her in a panic, and was lucky to grab her before her head hit the ground. As I gently laid her down, Starmon continued explaining.

“We’ve actually been fighting an evil organization for the last year, but they figured out Star Prism’s hero gauge and took nasty countermeasures against it.”

“Nasty countermeasures?”

“I’m afraid so.”

According to Starmon, this is how it went. Star Prism’s hero gauge increased when she defeated evil, so the bad guys learned to prevent that by not letting her defeat them. In other words, whenever they were about to lose to Star Prism, they would take themselves out before she could do it.

“At first, they would only self-destruct when their demise was inevitable, but that counted towards Star Prism’s hero gauge anyway... So they eventually mastered the timing and learned to self-destruct early enough that she would get no credit for their defeat. And so they’ve been chipping away at her hero gauge over the past six months.”

Apparently this “hero gauge” thing was like a measure of a hero’s extraordinary nature. It was an inherent measure of their heroism, more or less.

Honestly, hearing this all was a little hard to swallow, but if what Starmon was saying was true, these bad guys were real bad dudes. They’d chosen an effective—not to mention nasty—plan to take out Star Prism. The more they depleted her hero gauge, the less power she had as a hero. And if this had been going on for half a year, that would explain why she was so weak fighting the kaiju.

“But Star Prism persisted, believing that she could defeat the evil organization one day if she continued fulfilling her duties as a hero to sustain herself. She managed to destroy most of the organization while she still had some of her hero gauge remaining, but before she was able to defeat the head of the evil organization, he summoned a huge kaiju from space to annihilate Earth. He said that if he couldn’t have it, no one could.”

“What a jerk.”

So the kaiju that Zeta scouted and Rachelle had finished off was summoned by Kiri’s evil organization, huh? That meant...

“Since Kiri didn’t defeat the kaiju, she *still* hasn’t been able to refill her hero gauge?”

“I’m afraid not...”

“Oh, no...”

Damn it! It was starting to feel like all of this was turning out to be my fault. I was the one who threw out space gramps’s back so he couldn’t play Galactic Great, I got Rachelle to take out the kaiju without hearing Kiri and Starmon’s side of the story first, and I hadn’t even been able to stop Rachelle’s ensuing rampage.

“Argh! I’ve been so useless this time, getting dragged all over the place!”

I was so worked up that I kicked the wall of the cave out of frustration.

“Hngh...”

The noise seemed to disturb Kiri. She groaned as she placed a trembling hand on the wall to support herself and sit up.

“Don’t push yourself, Kiri.”

“But... it must be terrible out there right now.”

It was true that the sounds of destruction in the distance were gradually growing louder. Things had probably gotten pretty ugly. The girls, all brainwashed by Rachelle, were attacking each other as they searched for me.

“At this rate, the town might get caught in the crossfire... They have to be stopped.”

“No, there’s no way...”

There was no way everyone would go that far... is what I wanted to say. But I only knew the girls, not what Rachelle’s brainwashing might make them do after she’d gone off the deep end with love energy. And without knowing that, I couldn’t say for certain how this was going to pan out.

“Star Prism, don’t force yourself!”

“Starmon... I have to. You know me, right?”

“I do! That’s why I’m stopping you! There’s barely anything left in your hero gauge! And if you exhaust it completely... you’ll die!”

“What?!”

No way... She was gonna die?

“What are you saying?! Didn’t you say the hero gauge was just a measure of her heroism?!”

“But like I said, that is the essence of a hero... If a hero isn’t defeating evil, then they have no worth as a hero.”

“What are you saying?! She’s been fighting an evil organization for an entire

year, right? Her hero gauge has only been depleted because her enemies are using underhanded tricks!”

“Yes, but... The rules are the rules. That’s just how the contract works.”

“Contract?! Starmon, you’re the one who got Kiri into this, aren’t you?!”

I flew into a rage and tried to grab Starmon.

“Stop! This isn’t Starmon’s fault...” Kiri got up and gently lowered my raised arms.

“But this is just too unfair!”

“I don’t care about that!” Kiri flatly dismissed my indignation on her behalf. “I was the one who wanted to become Star Prism! Starmon isn’t to blame. If anyone is, it’s the head of the evil organization!”

“That may be true, but...”

“I don’t care what happens to me! Whatever it is, not stepping up to protect everyone would be far worse!”

The Namidare bloodline forced me into the role of main character in all kinds of stories, but Kiri was the real main character this time around. She was a genuine hero. And today was the least heroic I’d ever been... I needed to make a comeback. And fast.

“I’m going,” said Kiri bravely.

“Wait,” I said, stopping her from going. “Just give me one minute. I’ll figure something out in that time.”

“What do you mean?”

“I’ll find a solution for everything.”

I used that minute to organize the threads of the various stories in my head.

Kiri’s story. Star Prism’s special ability. Her power to purify evil.

Zeta’s story. Her show. The story she was trying to tell. The state of her company.

Rachelle’s story. Her rampage. Her maniacal control over everyone right now.

Gathering the pieces, I went through all the possible connections trying to see what would fit where.

“Hey, Starmon. Star Prism can convert people’s support into power, right? Will that still work even when she’s been weakened by a depleted hero gauge?”

“Huh? Y-Yeah. I said she converts support into power, but it’s more like a temporary boost to her hero gauge—the source of her power. Once that support runs out, her gauge will drain accordingly. But in the meantime, it works just as well as the real thing.”

“Okay. Now, if she defeats that insane fallen angel, that should be sufficient to boost her hero gauge, right?”

“Yes, I believe so.”

“In this particular case, ‘defeating’ her is really just bringing her to her senses. Would that still count?”

“Yes. Like I said, Star Prism’s special ability is the power to purify the evil within one’s heart. Turning evil to goodness is just as heroic as vanquishing it.”

“All right.”

So if Kiri could stop Rachelle’s rampage, then I could solve two stories with one solution. The issue would be getting the support to power her up. With the kind of power she’d need, we’d need a *lot* of people cheering for her... But once we had that, Star Prism would be back to normal. No, if we did this right, she’d be way stronger.

“By the way, the back of your neck has been blinking for a while now,” said Starmon.

“Huh?”

“What is this? Some kind of switch?”

He jumped onto my shoulder and pressed the flashing button.

“Wah!”

As Starmon yelped in surprise, Galactic Great’s helmet extended from the suit and covered my head.

“Yo! Can you hear me, brat?!”

As soon as I had the helmet on, my eardrums were rattled by a deafening shout from the internal transmitter.

“Is that you, Zeta?”

“So you’re still breathing after all! Respond to me faster if you’re alive, damn it!”

Had she been trying to connect to me ever since her crash landing before? I must have worried her. I apologized earnestly.

“Jeez... What are you doing now? I haven’t seen any more plasma beams, but the tremors and the ruckus haven’t stopped. What happened to the kaiju?”

“Yeah, about that...”

I was kind of at a loss as to where to start explaining, but Zeta didn’t wait for an answer.

“Well, the program’s already doomed, so there’s no point in worrying about the kaiju anymore. Once I get back, I’ll have to handle the channel termination and bankruptcy forms...” She spoke with a certain amount of calm resolve, but then let out an especially emotional sigh. “Hahh... And there was so much more I wanted to make...”

That quiet mutter finally revealed the true heart of the matter. The real bad ending for Zeta wasn’t her company going under, it was her career as a creative professional being cut short.

The Galactic Federation Netvision Network her channel was a part of made it extremely difficult to rejoin with them once a contract had been terminated for bankruptcy or violations. They wouldn’t even humor a reapplication unless there were extenuating circumstances. The netvision network was an amazing system that allowed a single person to run an entire channel themselves, but the rules had to be all the more strict because of that.

“...”

Just then, something clicked in the back of my brain.

“Wait a minute, Zeta!”

“Hah?”

“Your company... No, your channel is totally yours, right?”

“What about it?”

“That means you can play whatever you want whenever you want, right?!”

“Well... I suppose so, yeah.” Zeta replied to my over-excited barrage of questions in a somewhat confused voice.

“Then, Zeta, I have a proposal for you.”

“What?”

I explained to her the plan I’d just come up with.

“Okay, I’ll bite. This new project of yours does sound interesting. Implementing it would be perfectly feasible. Thankfully, none of the filming equipment was damaged.”

“Really?! Then...”

“But you know what this means, right? You’ll have one shot. And I mean that. Just one take,” Zeta said with a hint of worry in her voice.

I grinned in response.

“It’ll work out somehow. You said it yourself, Zeta. You’ve done everything you can.”

“Heh, that’s right.”

With something of a chuckle—I couldn’t tell if it was genuine or embittered—Zeta agreed to my plan.

“What about you guys, Kiri, Starmon? Do you think you can manage it?”

“Yeah!”

She was still a little wobbly on her feet, but Kiri pumped her fist into the air to show her enthusiasm. I needed to take a page out of her book here and give this my all.

“All right! Let’s go put on the biggest show the galaxy has ever seen!”

Chapter 6: Legend of a Real-Time Hero

“Now...”

I took a deep breath to calm my racing heart.

“Are you nervous?” asked R.

“Well, yeah. I’ll never get used to this.”

The climax of the story... The proverbial fork in the road where things either take a turn for the good or the bad ending. There was just no getting used to it.

“No, no. That’s not what I meant.”

“No?”

“Starting with getting dragged to the theme park earlier, you’ve been completely powerless against the heroines fighting over you, Rekka. You’ve just uselessly been jerked around from one thing to another all day.”

“You sure know how to hit where it hurts...”

It was true I’d been led around by the nose the whole day. It was fair to say I was useless.

“But I’m finally seeing what I need to do, and I have a plan to resolve all these stories. Now I just need to do what has to be done.”

“Yes... Well, that may be correct.”

There seemed to be something else on R’s mind. But whatever it was, she didn’t say it. I didn’t bother to reply, and instead focused on what lay ahead of me.

“Zeta, how are things coming along on your end?” I asked.

“We’re good to go here,” Zeta replied from the other end of the transmitter.

“All right. Well, then, here we go... Make sure you don’t record what I say at the beginning, okay?”

“I know that. I wouldn’t include that tripe even if you asked me to. Galactic Great’s image would be ruined. I’ll let you know when the cameras are rolling, so make sure you’re in character from that point onward.”

“Gotcha.”

I ended the transmission for now, braced myself, and jumped out from between the trees. Zeta sent navigational information to the suit to guide me through the forest around to a cliff that overlooked where the heroines were currently fighting.

“Whoa...”

Everything along the coast had been destroyed for as far as the eye could see. The ground was caved in here and there, the trees had either been mowed or burned down... It was all a testament to how fiercely the girls were fighting.

The only one who had retired from the battle was Tsumiki, who had no special abilities and had long been knocked out. Lea was carrying her unconscious body in her arms to protect her. She wasn’t in Leviathan mode, and when I got a good look at her, I realized Corona wasn’t using her true powers, either. So despite being under Rachelle’s influence, they were all still friends. They were holding back, mostly using their powers to obstruct the other heroines in their search for me. However...

“You never know when they’ll lose all control,” R warned.

Hopefully we could stop things before then. I really hated to see them fighting like this. For the record, Rachelle—the cause of this mess—was hovering in the air overhead, encouraging the chaos.

“Ahahaha! Yes, everyone! More! More amour! More burning passion! That’s right! Ignite the fires of your love!”

Seriously, the only thing that wasn’t already on fire was the mountain. Any more and we’d have a full-blown wildfire on our hands. Gotta remember to extinguish all of this once we’re done...

But that wasn’t the biggest problem on our hands at the moment. I realized that, as Rachelle was yelling, more and more love energy from her crazy aura was raining down on the girls. And the more of it they absorbed, the worse

their fight grew. There was no way we were gonna stop the fire without stopping their battle. And there was no way we were gonna stop their battle without stopping that dumb angel.

“Ah, Rekka!”

Suddenly, Iris noticed me from below the cliff. She called out to me, which alerted the others to my presence. They all looked up at me. Okay, it’s now or never! I cast aside all my shame and yelled in the loudest voice I could muster...

“IRIIIS!”

“Hi, Rekka! What is it?” Iris paused her fight and turned to wave at me cheerfully.

The expression on the other girls’ faces doubled in severity. It’d probably only get worse from here, but there was no turning back now! I had to say it! I pulled myself together and steeled my resolve. Then I shouted at the top of my lungs...

“PLEASE TAKE OFF YOUR CLOTHES!”

No, I didn’t mean it in a weird way! It was purely for the sake of the plan! It wasn’t anything dirty, I swear! But there was no way the others would believe that...

“Oh, my! How bold of you, Rekka!” cooed Iris.

“WHAAAAAAAAT?!” the other girls all screamed, looking like they were out for blood.

Yeah, I was prepared to be treated like a pervert... But I had to stick to the plan! As I was groaning to myself, the transmitter inside of my helmet crackled.

“Hey, the way you worded that just now made it sound like you wanted her to strip naked.”

“Huh?”

Prompted by Zeta’s words, I looked down. And yup... Iris was already in the middle of trying to take off *all* her clothes.

“Wait, wait, wait, Iris! The suit! I just wanted you to take of your suit!”

“Aww, you don’t need to hold back. I might be a little embarrassed, but if it’s

what you want...”

“No, that’s not what I wanted!” I corrected myself in a great panic.

Luckily I was able to convince her to take off just the suit, but...

“REKKA!”

“NAMMY!”

“REKKA!”

Satsuki and the others were beyond livid. Ugh... I was worried that asking Iris to take off her suit would aggravate them as it was, but my poor wording had only managed to make it worse.

“Rekka! Wh-Wh-What are you asking Iris to strip for?!”

Satsuki was the first to come flying. She used her magic to send herself rocketing up to the cliff where I was standing. She swooped in, grabbed my collar, and shook me furiously.

“I-It was a misunderstanding! Um, wow, Satsuki, you’re pretty strong—ow, I said it was a misunderstanding!”

“REKKAAAAA!”

“Huh? Bwuh!”

While I was in the middle of trying to explain myself to Satsuki, Rosalind suddenly came charging in from the side at superhuman speed and kicked me right out of Satsuki’s grasp.

“OUCH! If it weren’t for the suit, you would’ve snapped me in half just now!”

“Silence, you rip!” Rosalind looked crazed with rage, her scarlet red eyes glinting menacingly. “Y-You’d prefer that little girl’s naked body over mine?! And out in the open like this?! You despicable lecher!”

“Like I said, this is all a misunderstanding!”

Damn it, Rachelle’s brainwashing was making everyone so much more aggressive than usual... Er, wait. This was kind of normal, wasn’t it?

“It matters not! I shall put an end to this at once! I didn’t want to use it, but

you've left me with no choice but to entrap you with my charm!"

Uh-oh, that was bad news. If I lost myself to mind control now, everything would be ruined.

"That weird helmet won't save you from my powers!"

I held up an arm to shield my eyes when a ball came flying up from below and struck Rosalind directly in the face, exploding upon impact. A paint-like substance burst out, covering her eyes.

"Wh-What is this?! I can't get it off!"

What the heck was that? It was like a paintball of glue... The next thing I knew, a whip lashed up from the precipice, wrapped around Rosalind's ankle, and dragged her over the edge.

"Waaaaaaaaah!"

"Whew, good grief. No good would have come of her charming you here."

As I suspected, Shirley took Rosalind's place atop of the cliff. It seemed she'd scaled it with the assistance of the floating device she'd used in the theme park earlier. Moreover, she had a medical gun in her hands.

"Sh-Shirley?"

"Don't worry. It's just a tranquilizer."

"Yeah, that's exactly the part that worries me..."

What was she going to do after she sedated me?

"Good night."

Shirley flashed a smile before pulling the trigger...

"Hold it right there!"

But a sudden furious gust of wind blew the tranquilizer dart off course so it missed me entirely.

"Oh, Lyun. Did you get out of the electromagnetic net already?"

"No thanks to you! Stop using sneaky tactics like surprise attacks!"

In contrast to Shirley's mild surprise, Lyun was positively fuming. The wind

around her was whipping as she shouted.

Apparently, Shirley had sprung the aforementioned electromagnetic net on everyone while they were distracted by my appearance. Satsuki had escaped it because she'd flown off immediately with her magic, but it was a rather calculating move on Shirley's part. Well, even if it was electromagnetic, it was still just a net, so it probably wasn't designed to do any harm... It seemed like she'd yet to bring out the "really" dangerous items she'd mentioned earlier in the park.

As someone who'd been caught in the net, however, Lyun was irate and glaring daggers at Shirley. And in the middle of all this, Corona flew up over the cliff's edge, too, making this a four-way—no, a five-way, including me—standoff. That was when Zeta radioed me over the transmitter.

"Yo, Rekka. Things are in place now on Kiri's end, as well. Camera roll in three, two..."

So, it's finally show time...

I straightened my cowardly posture and stood bolt upright as I took a deep breath. The girls had their eyes glued on me.

"I am Galactic Great, protector of the galaxy!"

But they were all watching me with dubious disgust, mind you.

"R-Rekka... are you all right?"

"I am Galactic Great! I do not know this Rekka you speak of!"

That part was important, so I made sure to emphasize it. The girls all looked at me dumbfoundedly, including Satsuki and Shirley, who already knew about Galactic Great. They probably couldn't believe I'd started to act the part for Zeta's show, *Legend of a Real Hero: Galactic Great*, here and now. But while they were all agape, I took the opportunity to call out Rachelle, who was still hovering overhead.

"Evil harpy of envy and madness, Rachelle!" I shouted, pointing a finger at her. "Just because you're unpopular, you've driven madness into the hearts of girls from across the stars to make them fight! All to disenchant the boys of the

galaxy and keep them from having healthy, loving relationships! I've seen through your evil plan, and this is as far as you go!"

"Hahaha... hah? What are you saying, Rekka? I'm the angel of love and passion, not envy and madness!"

"Silence, you fallen... you fake angel!"

Of course, I wasn't doing this for airs or appearances. It was part of my plan to save Zeta and Kiri's stories, as well as the rampaging Rachelle. Which was why I, who had only played the role of background trees in school plays until now, was putting everything I had into the coolest hero performance I could pull off!

"Your wicked deeds may be allowed by the laws of entropy, but I, Galactic Great, will never stand for them!" I threw my bright red scarf over my shoulder and struck a heroic pose. "I will burn brighter than the Big Bang!"

"I don't really follow, but..." Rachelle was still smiling dopily in her intoxicated state, face flushed red. "My power has already surpassed that of an archangel! No one can stand against me now! Gone are the days of being picked on by my superiors and doing grunt work like a secretary!"

What? Is that all she wanted from her extreme power-up? Really? How mundane... I guess that proved Rachelle wasn't actually evil at heart, just overworked and fed up with being benevolent about it. But it still didn't change the fact that she'd been one giant headache for me.

"It may be my role to save damsels in distress, but I still have to punish bad girls like you!"

"Hey, watch your mouth on a live broadcast. Nothing risqué."

"Oh, my bad..." I apologized to Zeta under my breath.

As part of my plan, I'd had Zeta switch up her channel's programming structure so she could air a live show. Which meant that all of this was being streamed directly by viewers. We only had one shot to get it all right. I couldn't fail here!

"I'm grateful for everything you did, Rekka, but I won't let you get in my way!" Rachelle poured more of her maniacal love energy into the heroines. "Now,

come! Your beloved is right there! Fight for him! Show your love!”

So her plan was to send everyone into such a wild rampage that I had my hands full dealing with them...

“REKKAAAAA!”

“Hm? Bwuh!”

I was suddenly tackled from behind and sent face-first into the ground.

“I won’t let you go anymore, Rekka!”

I-Iris?! Since she couldn’t fly, she’d run the long way around to get up the cliff and come at me from behind.

“Hey, idiot! How can a hero get taken down that easily?!”

“D-Don’t say that...”

I replied to the irritated Zeta as quietly as I could so no one else would hear, but she was right. This certainly didn’t look good.

“Ugh, fine! Repeat after me right now, got it?!”

Obedying Zeta’s instructions, I repeated the line she gave me through the transmitter.

“Curse you for using the innocent girls as your puppets! How underhanded of you, Rachele!”

Aha, I see! That would explain why I’d just let Iris knock me over instead of defending myself. It made perfect sense that a hero would avoid hurting innocent civilians. And that was fine with me. I wanted to resolve this conflict between the heroines without hurting anyone if possible. Nice thinking, director!

“Eeheehee! Now, how about we pick up where we left off?”

“What?”

With that, Iris suddenly started unbuttoning her—wait, did she mean picking up with *that*?! What was I supposed to do?!

“Iris! Get away from Rekka!” shouted Corona.

“Don’t you dare do anything strange to Nammy!” shouted Lyun.

They both raged at Iris and her forwardness, blasting her with their dark and wind magic respectively.

“Whoa!”

I pushed Iris aside using the power of the suit and took both magical attacks in her place.

“Gwah!”

“Rekka?!”

“Nammy!”

Corona and Lyun were both shaken to see their attacks hit me.

“Ugh, guh... This suit really is amazing...”

The spells they’d fired were pretty powerful... The intensity of the love energy they were receiving from Rachelle must be making them even stronger than usual.

“What are you doing to Rekka?!” Satsuki screamed.

“That was Iris’s fault!” Lyun screamed back.

They continued to shout at each other.

“If you guys don’t butt out, I’m going to snap, too!”

After being interrupted, Iris had pretty much half-snapped already, flaring up at the other girls. And then...

“Now you’ve done it, little girl!”

“Huh? Kyah!”

Rosalind had finally peeled off the sticky substance she had taken to the face and, after stepping back and waiting for an opening, was launching a surprise attack on Shirley. Crap!

“Rosalind, stop!”

I kicked off the ground with all my strength and ran forward to tackle Rosalind, who was coming at Shirley from the side. With her in my arms, we

rolled along the ground together... right off the cliff!

“Uwaaaaah! Ack!”

How many times has this suit saved my life today...?

“Rosalind, are you okay?”

I’d made sure she landed on me and not the other way around, so I was hoping she was all right, but...

“...”

There was no response. Instead, she curled up in my arms and muttered shyly...

“Rekka... my chest...”

I looked down to try and figure out what she was talking about, and when I did, I realized that I’d accidentally clutched one of her breasts when I grabbed her.

“I’m s-s-sorry!”

“N-No, it’s all right...”

“Oh? I always thought Rosalind was one of the more confident heroines, but it seems like even she has her weaknesses. How cute.”

Now’s not the time for your nonsensical input, R! Mind your own business!

Rrrrrumble!

“What’s that?!”

Suddenly, a huge shadow fell over us. Something was blocking out the sun, and when I fearfully looked up to see what it was...

“You...”

Floating in the sky overhead was a train-sized Leviathan carrying a livid Tsumiki on her forehead. I was wondering where Lea had disappeared to earlier, but it seemed she’d gone off to wake up the unconscious Tsumiki and replenish herself with dark matter.

“I came to punish you for asking Iris to strip out of nowhere, only to find you

groping Rosalind's chest in broad daylight! You disgusting lolicon!" Tsumiki roared.

"You're wrong!"

"Oh, so it doesn't matter whose boobs they are?"

"What are you even saying?!"

Tsumiki seemed to have lost her mind, too... Wait, hold on.

"By the way, when you said punish..."

"I'm going to beat that womanizing, lust-driven head of yours to the ground, of course! Do it, Lea!"

"Okay, but... I just consumed all that dark matter. Will this really be all right?"

"You know how tenacious Rekka is! He'll be fine! Besides, if we don't do anything, he'll just ask another girl to take her clothes off for him!"

"That's unforgivable."

"Exactly! Now squash him!"

"Nooooooooo!"

I started running with Rosalind in my arms and dodging the rain of water bullets coming at me. Which wasn't easy considering how busted up and holey the terrain was.

"Zeta! Are the other preparations not done yet?!" I called to her through the transmitter.

"I posted the commercial to the site and the netvision forums already. There are plenty of hardcore superhero show fans, so hopefully word will spread quickly. We haven't quite hit our target numbers yet, but... Hey, it's not time for you to appear yet!" Zeta hollered in a panic.

Not a moment later...

"Hold it!"

I heard a familiar voice from the clifftop where we just were. The heroines had all followed me down, so it had to be...

“I am Star—No, I am Galactic Beauty! You who threaten the peace of the Earth—er, the galaxy! I will punish you in the name of the Great... uh, the Great... the Great Universe!”

It was Galactic Great’s partner, Galactic Beauty. But the one playing her part was no longer Iris. Zeta had come to collect the costume she’d stripped off and given it to Star Prism a.k.a. Kiri. Like Zeta had said, Kiri wasn’t supposed to appear until later. There were still other preparations to make. But nevertheless, here she was. Considering her personality, she’d probably gotten tired of sitting on the sidelines.

“Wait there, Galactic Great! I’m coming to save you now!” she yelled before jumping courageously off the cliff.

But she was met with a great deal of resistance from the heroines. They each shrieked for her to go away and let their attacks fly.

“Yaaah!”

Their collective attack shot her down immediately. Everything from her cool entrance to the way she was instantly taken out was like a perfect replay of the kaiju incident earlier. We really should have waited until all the preparations were in place!

“Ow, ow, ow...”

“Galactic Beauty! Don’t push yourself!” I called to her.

“No, I’m okay!” she replied in an amazingly cheery voice for someone who’d just been shot down. She then glared up at Rachelle in the sky. “If it’s come to this, then I’ll just have to cut things off at the head! Don’t you move!”

“Aww, I can’t feel any love energy coming from you! Outsiders should keep out!”

“Yaaah!”

Wow, Galactic Beauty got taken out again! And by a single forehead flick this time! Just as we feared, Rachelle was super powered up by all the love energy she’d absorbed. Her rampaging on top of that was just a bonus. What to do...? Starmon had said we needed to be more powerful than Rachelle in order to use

that. But if she'd powered up more than we'd imagined, our plan had better be extra effective if this was going to work out—wait, was Kiri falling this way?!

“Uwah!”

“Guh!”

“Ack!”

Kiri crashed into me and Rosalind, and the three of us went rolling together.

“Y-You all right, Ki—er, Galactic Beauty?”

“I-I'm fwine...”

She didn't appear hurt, but her head was clearly still spinning from falling out of the sky. The dubious slurring gave her away. Now... where was Rosalind? She wasn't in my arms anymore, and I wasn't really sure what had happened. I looked around to see her on all fours with her face half buried in the dirt. There was a nice, long gouge out of the ground behind her, so I guess she ended up getting knocked the furthest by the impact with Kiri and inadvertently used her face for brakes... How tragic.

“Reeeeeekka...”

Yanking her face out of the dirt, Rosalind called my name in a voice so deep it sounded like it had come from the depths of hell. As she did, Satsuki, Iris, Harissa, Tsumiki, Lea, Shirley, Corona, and Lyun appeared behind her. Each and every one of them was glaring my way furiously. I mean, I'd taken hold of Kiri at some point in the tumble to try and protect her, so it did look like I was hugging her, but...

“Stop messing around!” the girls all shouted in unison.

“You guys think this is my fault?! You're gonna blame this on *me*?!”

“W-Wait, why am I being chased, too?! Really, why?!”

I ran as fast as I could, and Kiri was forced to run with me.

“Hey, stop running! Heroes don't just turn and flee from danger!” Zeta scolded.

“Sh-She's right!” Kiri agreed.

“Don’t listen to Zeta, Kiri! We can’t fight back against them!” I argued.

I grabbed Kiri’s shoulder just as she was about to turn back, and I encouraged her to keep running.

“Damn it! Just because your immediate opponents are being controlled doesn’t mean we can let this scene drag on forever. It gets old pretty quick. No, wait, maybe we could use this...”

“What is it? Did you come up with something, Zeta?”

“Hold on. I don’t know how well it will go, but I might be able to use the live broadcast to our advantage.”

“Really?!”

“I said hold on! We’ll see. Just believe in the fans and hang in there.”

“Easier said than done right now!”

Boom!

Corona launched a blast of dark magic that exploded the ground beneath us like popcorn and sent me and Kiri flying.

“Guh!”

I somehow managed to use the suit’s power to land on my feet, but there was a second explosion almost immediately. This one didn’t seem magical, however, so it was probably Shirley’s doing.

“Is it just me, or are your attacks getting more and more violent?!”

“It’s your fault for bringing in new girls one after another, Rekka... Why can’t you keep your eyes on me?!” Satsuki yelled as she prepared a magic attack I’d never seen before.

“Uh, Satsuki, when did you learn that kind of magic?! Didn’t you say you were bad at offensive spells?!”

“I used the Magic of Omniscience to access information on lost magics!”

Spurred on by her rampant passion, Satsuki had started to use her heirloom magic in ways she never had before, making her all the more powerful.

“It looks like I can’t afford to hold back any longer.”

“Not you, too, Shirley!”

Shirley began pulling out some rather menacing-looking devices... probably the “really” dangerous items she’d mentioned earlier.

“Goodness. Thanks to you being an indecisive, lucky pervert, the carnage has gone from girls fighting over you to girls trying to punish you for being so disloyal.”

“Gee, it’s nice to see you’re as calm as ever, R!”

Especially since I was the victim in the scenario she was describing!

“Oh, yes! Yes! Just like that! That was the purest burst of love energy yet! Everyone, keep fanning the flames of your passions! Ahahaha!”

And so the heroines’ pursuit grew even more intense as Rachelle wriggled in elation in the air above, cackling all the while. It left me and Kiri with nowhere to run. We’d been cornered.

“Oh, Rekka...” Iris called, cracking her knuckles on behalf of everyone else.

“W-Wait, let’s all just calm down first...” I desperately pleaded.

“...Hm? What?” said Kiri.

Something seemed to have caught her attention, but I didn’t have the leisure to look and figure out what it was.

“Repent!” shouted Iris.

“Are you going to kill me?!”

My fear of Iris made her clenched fists look several times more intimidating! Not even the cutting-edge space tech in my suit would protect me from her! Just as I seriously braced myself for imminent death, a hand shot in from the side and caught Iris’s fist.

“You...!”

Iris tried to pull her fist back, but couldn’t.

“It’s here...” Kiri muttered from under Galactic Beauty’s helmet. “It’s here, it’s

here, it's here! It's finally heeeere!"

She stood tall and threw her hands in air, cheering loudly before using that momentum to toss Iris to the side.

"Wah! Wai—!"

Iris stuck the landing just fine, but seemed surprised at Kiri's sudden change in attitude. And that went for just about everyone else present. I was the only one who knew just what the "it" Kiri was talking about was.

"If it's here, then... the plan worked?"

"Yup! I can feel the energy of everyone's support now!" said Kiri.

"Yeah, we somehow reached our target numbers," confirmed Zeta through the transmitter.

The key to the plan this time was Kiri's—or rather, Star Prism's—special ability. She could purge the hearts of the heroines that had been brainwashed into aggression by Rachelle's craziness, but she'd need a substantial amount of power to do it. Star Prism gained additional power commensurate with the number of people who were cheering for her, so it was possible to get her enough support to make it happen. The catch working in our favor was that people didn't necessarily need to be cheering for Star Prism, per se.

But there was still an issue of logistics. We were in a remote corner of Japan. It wasn't exactly like there was an audience here, and it was far too dangerous to try and bring one out. That was where Zeta's netvision channel came in.

First, *Legend of a Real Hero: Galactic Great* was switched to a live broadcast at the last minute. Even on Japanese television, emergency broadcasts would interrupt scheduled programming when it was serious enough. And since this was the definition of serious and Zeta owned her own channel, I figured she'd be able to swing that without too much trouble.

Next, the Galactic Beauty costume was retrieved from Iris and given to Kiri. She was currently wearing it over her Star Prism transformation. Luckily the suit adjusted to fit the wearer, so that wasn't a problem.

The last piece of the puzzle was getting Zeta and her staff to spread the word

about the live broadcast. Zeta had said that the concept of this project was to have a real hero fight against real evil. That being the case, I thought that people getting to see it unfold live would give it added credibility and realism, thus giving rise to *Legend of a Real-Time Hero: Galactic Great*. It turned a daring project into a reckless one, but Zeta had said it was better than nothing and given it the green light.

Now, as long as the project became a hit, Zeta's story would be saved. And there was an additional benefit to the skyrocketing viewership...

"Wow, I've never felt power like this before! There are so many people supporting me right now! Rekka, this is amazing! I had no idea there were this many people in the universe!"

"Yeah. Also, call me Galactic Great."

"Okay, Great!"

"Hey! No nicknames!" Zeta snapped immediately.

The other benefit was that all the viewers would be supporting Kiri. *Galactic Great* was a superhero show. Almost everyone watching would be cheering for the good guys, especially since this was real. Sometimes viewers were sympathetic to the villain in fictional works, but with real lives at stake here, everyone would be cheering for evil to be vanquished. They'd be cheering for the hero, Kiri—or Galactic Beauty in this case. And the result was just as expected.



“But how did so much support reach Ki—Galactic Beauty so quickly?” I asked.

“Easy,” Zeta said rather proudly. “I posted a spoiler that her character could power up through viewer support. Well, the audience isn’t just kids, so it’s not like everyone will believe it. But those kinds of skeptics won’t think this is really real anyway. All we had to do was sit back and wait for the real fans to hype things up.”

So she was running this just like one of those hero shows they’d put on in department stores and whatnot... Thinking back on it, I remember cheering for the hero with all my might as a kid. Whenever the hero was in need and heard the rallying cries of their fans, they’d always get back up to face the bad guy.

“Here I go!”

And now, Kiri—powered up by the cheering of people all throughout the universe—valiantly charged into the group of heroines. Her strength and speed were overwhelming, and she knocked the girls unconscious one by one.

“Now it’s your turn!” Kiri shouted as she charged at Lea.

“Hah! Curse you!” Lea cried.

Like the other heroines, Lea had also been caught off guard by Kiri’s sudden burst of power, but she’d pulled herself together in time to defend herself. Not even a powered-up Kiri could take Lea’s Leviathan form so easily, leaving them fairly evenly matched.

“Hey, don’t let Galactic Beauty do all the hard work! No one wants to see Galactic Great just lazing about!” Zeta barked through the transmitter.

“I mean, I see your point, but...”

The fight this time was mostly reliant on Kiri’s power-up. Getting Iris to take off the suit and buying time until the viewership numbers hit our target goal had fallen on me, but now that our plan was fully underway, there wasn’t much left for me to do... Or, really, there wasn’t much I *could* do.

“No, wait...”

Thinking back on it, I’d been able to make even the ferocious Rosalind fall silent earlier by doing *that*. It was a little embarrassing, but I couldn’t let Kiri

take on the burden of fighting all of the heroines by herself. It was too risky and wouldn't look good for the show. If there was something I could do, then I had to give it a try, even if it was embarrassing!

At present, the heroines still resisting were Iris, Rosalind, and Corona, plus Lea with Tsumiki riding on her head. Five girls in total.

"Iris!" I yelled the name of the girl closest to me and charged towards her.

"Huh? Yes, Rekka—?!"

Iris immediately froze after what I did. But of course she would. If anyone did that to me, I'd freeze up, too. After all, I'd thrown both of my arms around her and was hugging her tightly.

"AAAAAAAAAAH!"

A collective angry roar rose up from the other girls around me, but I continued to hold on to Iris with all my might.

"U-Um, umm, Rekka... Oooh..."

Iris blushed bright red. I could practically see the steam coming out of her ears as she collapsed.

"My, my... It looks like you overheated her brain with such a forward, aggressive approach. Very sexy," R commented flatly as she peered at Iris's face.

Honestly, my brain was about to overheat, too...

"Well, I suppose the heroines have all been injected with a heavy dose of Rachelle's mysterious love energy... I imagine your plan was only successful because you've never made a proper move on her before, so I guess you being so obtuse actually worked in your favor this time."

"Shut up, R."

After laying Iris carefully down on the ground, I ran over to Rosalind next and embraced her the same way.

"R-R-R-R-Rekka?!"

Her body was a lot more delicate than Iris's, so I held her gently. The other

girls were still shrieking in protest, but I closed my ears to them and focused on Rosalind. She was actually the one who'd given me the idea for my plan to hug the heroines into submission; she'd been shockingly docile in my arms earlier. So I cast aside my shame and embraced her as tenderly as I could until she fainted.

"Nnn... ngh..."

Eventually, Rosalind's porcelain cheeks turned rose red and she went limp in my arms.

"H-Hey, you! How could you do something so disgraceful?!"

"Tsumiki!"

"Wha?!"

Using the power of the suit, I launched myself up onto Lea's head to get to Tsumiki, who was angrily yelling at me for hugging the other girls. My sudden appearance took her by surprise, and I took her into my arms.

"Wait, y-y-you... H-Hey..."

"Please don't be mad."

"Eep!"

If she did, there'd be another fight—which was why I'd whispered softly into her ear to try and keep her calm. Tsumiki reacted much more than I was expecting, flinching and stiffening up... Was what I said really that surprising? She seemed to lose the strength in her knees and sunk to the ground.

The only girls left now were Corona and Lea, but I'd need to get Lea out of Leviathan form before I could hug her. Somehow or another...

"Rekka..."

"Hm?"

Just as I was thinking that, Lea transformed back into her human self.

"That's unfair. Hug me, too," she said as she walked up to me with slightly flushed cheeks.

"Wait. Me, too," Corona said, doing the same.

Everything was going so smoothly that I had to wonder... But if this was what it took to get them to settle down, I'd gladly embrace both of them.

"I know I said you were useless and getting jerked around by the heroines today, but I take it all back. Well done, Rekka, you harem-hogging bastard."

"Compliment me or insult me—pick one."

Of course the peanut gallery had to comment after things finally quieted down.

"You're kind of amazing, Rekka..." Kiri said in slight awe as she approached.

I didn't know what she was so taken aback over, but whatever.

"Rachelle! Galactic Beauty and I have used our powers to free everyone from your evil grasp! Now it's your turn!"

I mean, all we'd really done was knock them out, but I had to make it sound good for the sake of the show.

"Bwahahaha! You've done it now! At least you turned out to be the man I thought you were! However..." Rachelle flung her hands towards the sky and summoned a mass of love energy between them that was bigger than anything I'd seen yet. "All I have to do is make you two prisoners of my love energy, too! For the sake of my ascension into archangelhood, with benefits including three meals a day and an afternoon nap, I'll have you become my love slaves!"

"I get what you're trying to say, but you're making it sound perverted..."

I shouldn't be surprised she was ultimately after something so silly. No matter how much of a nuisance Rachelle was, she wasn't really evil at heart. She was just drunk on too much love energy and had lost herself to its effects.

"You just wait, Rachelle! You can forget about ascension; I'm going to knock you down a peg! Now, Beauty!"

"Yeah, Great!"

"I said no nicknames!"

Zeta was mad, but we didn't have the time to deal with her. Rachelle was on the verge of flinging that mass of love energy at us. Kiri and I linked hands and

faced the angel in the sky overhead...

“What should the name of our secret weapon be?” Kiri whispered in my ear.

“Its name? Can we just call it whatever you normally do?”

“No way! Right now we’re Galactic Great and Galactic Beauty, you know? We need an appropriate name.”

“That’s right, fool!” chimed in Zeta. “Give me five seconds.”

“Please make it two!”

We didn’t have that much time to spare!

“All right! Shout this—”

Zeta came up with a name for our attack on the spot. And just as she did...

“BUUUUUURNING PASSION!”

Rachelle released her torrent of pink light. Kiri and I wasted no time unleashing an attack of our own.

“GALACTIC STAAARBUIUUUUURST!”

When we shouted the name of our move, a sparkling vortex of starlight shot forth from our hands. It collided with Rachelle’s pink ray midair, and the two lights struggled to push each other back. Sparks were flying everywhere.

“Nnngh!”

“Rrrgh!”

“Aaargh!”

We all grit our teeth and dug in to resist. Except Kiri was doing most of the work on our side... The Galactic Starburst attack we’d just used was really Star Prism’s special ability, Starlight Healing. It was a technique to purify evil, and with it, we were aiming to purge the excess love energy in Rachelle’s heart that had sent her on this rampage in the first place.

“Nnnnngh!”

So, essentially, this was all up to Kiri. I was only holding her hand and playing along for the sake of a good show. It wouldn’t be as cool if Galactic Beauty

finished off the villain by herself. I'd known this was how it was going to go down from the beginning, but damn... Here I was being useless again. Was there really nothing I could do to help?

"Hngh, ugh..." Kiri groaned in pain, and our starlight ray began to weaken.

Had Rachelle become too powerful after absorbing love energy all day? She'd kept the heroines fighting right up until the very end... Maybe the support of people all across the galaxy wasn't enough for us to win this after all.

"Ahahaha! This is the end!"

Rachelle poured more love energy into her beam, intending to finish us off with it. Was this the end? Just as that thought crossed my mind...

Squeeze.

Kiri tightly grasped my hand.

I'm such an idiot... Here she was, doing her best even though she was still groaning in pain. How could I chicken out first? Pull yourself together, Rekka Namidare! Who are you? The man bestowed with the Namidare bloodline, that's who! I'm the one who has to save the heroines!

"Kiri!" I yelled her name loudly enough that she could hear me over all the commotion, and tightly squeezed her hand back. "No matter what happens, I'll save you! No matter what!"

Even if Rachelle overpowered us here, I wouldn't bend to the ridiculous power of her stupid love energy! I'd overcome Rosalind's charm before! And even if Kiri ended up brainwashed by Rachelle, too, or the other heroines woke up and started attacking again, it wouldn't matter! I'd still save them regardless!

I dug deep and screamed internally with all my might. The next moment, there was a flash of something bright. From within Galactic Beauty's suit came the light of a thousand stars. Then, the ray shooting from her hand intensified dramatically.

"Ngh.... UUUAaaaaaaaaah!" Kiri gathered the last of her power and yelled hard enough to lose her voice.

“No way... KYAAAAAAAAAH!”

Kiri’s empowered starlight ray deflected Rachelle’s love energy and surged forward to engulf the angel and put her to sleep before gently lowering her to a soft landing. Just before she reached the ground, the aura of love energy surrounding her scattered. When it did, her wings turned white once more, which I took as a sign she’d be her normal self when she awoke—her normal annoying, dumb angel self. And once she was taken care of, Kiri and I both fell to our knees and panted for breath.

“Hahh... I’m so exhausted...”

“Same...”

“Yeah, I guess I don’t have any room to talk... That was all thanks to you, Kiri.”

“That’s not true.”

“Huh?”

“Because...” Kiri smiled from under the visor of her helmet and pointed to her chest. “You managed to reach me. Just as we were about to be crushed, I felt a large wave of support come from you.”

“I see....”

“Can you two save the subtle flirting for *after* you’ve wrapped up the show properly?”

Zeta’s quietly seething transmission made us both start in a panic.

Epilogue

“Hey, Rekka...”

“...”

“Hey, don’t ignore me.”

“...”

“Hey, hey, hey!”

“...”

This was *my* room in *my* house, so what was a freeloader doing here?

Said freeloader, of course, was none other than the angel who had been flapping in circles around my head for a while now—Rachelle. R, who found this whole situation rather amusing, was floating around in circles after her. But for once, she wasn’t the source of my irritation.

“Why are you here again?”

“Erm, my assigned territory may have been waaay further down south, but when I told the archangel in charge that there were lost lambs wandering between the realms of love and passion here, he graciously relocated me. So in short, I have permission to be here!”

“What about *my* permission, huh?”

After Star Prism’s special ability purged all of the excess love energy from Rachelle’s heart, she was completely back to normal. We’d more than saved her from starving, so her story should have been properly resolved, but she was still following me around for some reason. When I tried to interrogate her about that further, she simply replied...

“It’s true I had too much love energy the other day, but if I stay by your side, I’ll never be wanting for love energy again! Please look after me from now on, my lord and savior.”

And as promised, she'd basically been worshiping me like a god ever since. I'm pretty sure that would be grounds for excommunication in most religions, but I wasn't really sure how things worked for angels...

Well, Rachelle didn't need food since she sustained herself with love energy, and she slept in the clouds at night, so though I called her a freeloader, all she really used was the shower. She didn't put any burden on Harissa, either, so I'd pretty much given up and let her be for now.

But Rachelle aside, I had an extra homework assignment on my hands as punishment for skipping the opening ceremony at school. Satsuki, Iris, and Rosalind had all gotten the same punishment, too. I wonder how they're holding up. Wait, since we were skipping school together, people are probably going to get the wrong idea... Maybe I should come up with a way to deflect that first.

Procrastinating with thoughts like that, I ended up getting nothing done. And in the middle of my doing nothing, I heard the doorbell downstairs.

"Sir Rekka, you have a visitor!" Harissa called.

I got up and Rachelle followed me. We headed down the stairs and into the living room to find...

"Yo."

"Zeta! And Kiri!"

"Wassup? It's been a while."

"What are you two doing here?" I asked as I brought a chair over and sat down across from them.

Rachelle was idly spinning in circles in the corner.

"It's about *Legend of a Real-Time Hero*. Since you were the one who came up with the idea, I decided to give you an update report."

"Oh, I see."

She honestly didn't have to go to all that trouble for my sake, but I got the feeling Zeta was something of a perfectionist and wouldn't be satisfied otherwise, so I let her proceed as she pleased.

“First of all, we’re adopting the Galactic Starburst as canon since it got used in the first episode. And since girlie here is the only one who can use the attack, we’re keeping her on board as Galactic Beauty from now on.”

“Heehee...”

Kiri laughed bashfully, but I was kind of worried.

“Are you really okay with that, Kiri? You’ll be fighting things like that kaiju from now on, you know?”

“Don’t worry. Talk of a live show where you can watch a real hero fight has spread like wildfire. The audience we got that day smashed viewership records from the last decade, and it’s established now that an integral part of the show is that the heroes get their power from viewer support. And with as much support as we’re getting, there’s nothing to fear.”

For the record, when we measured how much Kiri had powered up with all the support she’d gotten (apparently Zeta’s fancy spaceship had the equipment to do that), she far outclassed even the old man who was originally meant to play Galactic Great.

“Either way, I cannot overlook evil, whether it be on Earth or in space. Which is why I’m now cooperating with Zeta.”

“There’s also the issue of the hero gauge.”

“Whoa! You’re here, too, Starmon?”

He had a point, though. If Kiri didn’t fight evil, her hero gauge would gradually deplete. So her having regular opportunities to defeat bad guys was actually win-win for everyone.

“Well, if Kiri’s fine with it, then I certainly won’t object.”

“However, there’s still one big problem...” Zeta murmured right after I agreed.

“What’s that?”

“The role of Galactic Great.” Zeta said, taking off her headband and ruffling her hair.

“But shouldn’t space gramps be all better by now?”

“Yeah, he recovered ages ago. But he has no interest in the role if Galactic Beauty isn’t his wife.”

“Ah...”

Come to think of it, she had mentioned they were a lovey-dovey couple.

“I guess not having a main character is a pretty big problem...”

“You’re telling me. It’s a live show so it’s set to run on an irregular schedule, but even then, if there’s too much dead time between episodes, people will start to lose interest. And if that happens, we’re right back on the road to bankruptcy again.”

Hmm... Saving Zeta’s story was meaningless if she just ended up right back in the same spot. What to do?

“For the time being, my options are to either hold auditions or get gramps to introduce me to a younger member of his species, but...”

“Then why not just do that?”

“Yeah, if only it were that easy. It’s precisely because I can’t do either of those that this is a big problem.”

Just as I was wondering what she was talking about, Kiri suddenly leaned forward eagerly.

“Become a hero with me, Rekka!”

Kiri took my hand in both of hers, her eyes sparkling as she looked up at me.

“...Excuse me?”

I was at such a loss for a reaction that that was the only dumbfounded reply I could manage. Zeta then put her hand on her head and sighed.

“This one here refuses to work with anyone but you.”

“Huh? Wh-Why?”

“Because you have that amazing bloodline that’s helped you save all kinds of girls, right?!”

Kiri leaned in even closer as she asked, and I nodded uncertainly. I'd explained the Namidare bloodline to her after everything that happened, but...

"K-Kiri, you're too close! Please back away from Sir Rekka!" Harissa interjected from the side.

But Kiri paid no attention to her at all.

"This is the first time I've met a boy with the same sense of justice as me! If I'm with you, I'm sure we can save that many more people! So let's become heroes together!"

"...And there you have it. Now own up and accept the role of Galactic Great," added Zeta.

Of course, I panicked.

"No! W-Wait a minute, please!"

"Relax. It's an irregular broadcast, so we can adjust things to fit your schedule. I'll come pick you up in my spaceship on broadcast days, then we'll zap to the location with my high-speed warp, zap the monster and film, then zap our way back, no probs. It won't even take a whole day."

"No, that's not, um..."

"You gonna turn it down? Hmph, and here I thought you were the kind of man who took responsibility for his actions."

"Ugh..."

This was ultimately my fault for throwing out gramps's back in the first place, so held my tongue, but... I had just said that I didn't want a story I'd saved to come to a bad end.

"I'd at least appreciate a gear upgrade so I might actually stand a chance against something like that kaiju."

"Of course. We somehow managed to pull through then, but we can't have Galactic Beauty stealing the spotlight every time. It would ruin Galactic Great's name. I've already ordered a new custom suit with your abilities in mind."

That was a bit of a relief to hear.

“All right, then I accept.”

Actually... even though she said we could work things to fit my schedule, there was no telling when the next kaiju or some bad guy would appear. That part wasn't on a schedule, either, so it was a foregone conclusion at this point that I'd end up missing more school eventually.

“Good answer,” Zeta said with a smirk.

She then stood up, walked over to me, and pressed her lips against my forehead.

“Wha—?! Wh-What are you doing?”

“Getting that kind of reaction from a kid like you kind of hurts... But get over it. It's just a sign of my affection. I guess you could say you've caught my eye.”

“Ooh, she's the nice and composed adult type, isn't she?” R commented as she applauded Zeta.

I touched my hand to where her lips had kissed my forehead and could feel my body temperature rising by the second. I hardly knew what to say.

“Sir Rekka, cheating again...” Harissa watched all this with a disgusted look.

The girls should have all lost their memories of the time they were under Rachelle's influence, but for some reason... Harissa looked a hundred times scarier right now than she had back then.

“Aaah, being by Rekka's side is just the best!” Rachelle sighed as she languidly lounged midair.

“That's right. I also wanted to ask you to make a guest appearance on the show. Would you be willing?” Zeta asked the bored-looking angel.

“Hmm... I'll think about it.”

“Please, anything but that!” I yelled, hoping God in heaven would hear me.

There was no way this would lead to anything but trouble.

—*Fin*—



Afterword

The volume count has finally hit the double digits, and the heroine count has long passed the 20-member mark! Volume ten is a romcom tale of carnage; I hope you enjoyed it!

Wait— isn't the afterword a little short this time?! (Ack!) In that case, allow me to jump straight to the acknowledgments. Firstly, to Nao Watanuki who, despite the usual random assortment of characters (an angel, a director, and a transforming heroine this time), designed everyone so cutely and lovingly— thank you very much. To my editor, Mr. Nanbu, thank you as always for everything. To the comic author Koji Hasegawa; the editing and sales departments at HJ Bunko; and the bookstores who stock their shelves with this series, thank you all. Finally, to my readers, thank you keeping up with the series.

Now, I believe the next time we'll meet will be in the second volume of my Fujimi Fantasia Bunko series, *Ore to Kanojo ga Geboku de Dorei Shuji Keiyaki*. After that will be the next volume of *I Saved Too Many Girls and Caused the Apocalypse*. I'm doing my best to release each series in turn, so please continue to support me along the way.

Congratulations on ten volumes! This is the illustrator, Nao Watanuki.

Here's a rough of Zeta's design. Her trademark is her oversized suspender pants in a hero-ish color scheme, but things may get lost if she tries to use them as pockets... Kiri's mascot, Starmon, got a surprising amount of screentime. He (?) was modelled after haniwas figures, so his eyes were simply black voids at first. After some discussion, however, he was given cute, round ones instead. I think this version's much better.

The black and white two page spread this time is one of my personal favorites. I mixed some past space-related characters into the crowds of aliens, so I hope you have fun looking back and searching for those.

[Bubble] Thanks to everyone, we've managed to reach the tenth afterword! For a low-commitment person, this is quite an accomplishment for me. Thank you and good work to Namekojirushi and the editors. (Sorry I make so many amateur mistakes. Thanks for always saving me.) I'd also like to offer my deepest gratitude to the readers who have supported us. Let's meet again in the next volume!

[Small text above Suzuran in the kaiju costume] There's five people!



祝10巻!! 挿絵担当・和狸ナオです。

デザインラフ案はリータどお送りします。
ヒーローカラーの配色と
だぼだぼの吊りズボンがトレード
マークですが、ポケット代わりにしては、
入れた物を迷子にしていそう...

霧のマスクットのスタモンは意外に出番が多かた
ですね。彼(?)はハニワがモデルのため、初めは
真、黒なだけのうつろな目でした。相談の上、
現在のつづらな瞳に生まれ変わりましたが
やっぱり現在の方が良いですね♡

今回は見開きのモノクロ挿絵が私的に
お気に入りです。色々な宇宙人達のひめくち中、
過去に登場した宇宙関係のキャラクターが
実はこっそり混じっておりますので、思い起こしながら
探して頂けたら嬉しいです。

お陰様で10巻まで抜ける事なくあとがきが
続きました! 継続力の低い人間なのでちょっとした
達成感に包まれています。なめこ印先生、
編集様方、ありがとうございます。お疲れ様でした。

凡ミスが多くてすみません、いつも助かっています。
そしてこの頁を見て下さっている読者様にも
厚く御礼申し上げます。
次巻もまたどうぞ よろしくお願い致します!

和狸ナオ 拜。

いらいまよ!



Bonus Glossary

Characters

Rachelle: Angel of love and passion. She lives off the spiritual energy of humans, and the more passionate, the better. Perhaps to a problematic extent, because ultra-passionate emotions like love-fueled aggression and jealousy are her favorite food. She's been having trouble collecting enough to get by lately, and comes to Rekka for help on the verge of starvation. And fortunately for her, Rekka is surrounded by girls who are already primed to break out into a jealous brawl over him, so she's about to get all the passionate energy she can handle — and then some. This is how she inadvertently becomes the villain of *Legend of a Real-Time Hero: Galactic Great*.

Kiri Hayashibara: A middle school girl who's taken up an extraordinary job as a magical hero. She's decisive and quick to action. She has a strong sense of right and wrong, and she never hesitates to stand up for what's right. Perhaps that's what made her the prime candidate for the job. Nevertheless, her life changed forever when she met Starmon and began fighting for justice as Star Prism.

Star Prism: Kiri's alias as a hero. She uses her powers of purification to defeat her enemies by turning them to the side of good. Or, at least, she did until the evil organization she's been fighting figured out how her powers work. For months now, they've been self-destructing before she can save them, which functionally means she's not doing her job as a hero. That has the unfortunate side effect of depleting her hero gauge, and the consequences are dire. She needs to find a way to get back in business— and fast— because she's growing weaker by the day. Has a special trait that powers her up based on the number of people cheering for her.

Starmon: Star Prism's mascot character. A small, odd, somewhat round creature. Met Kiri on her way home from softball practice one day and revealed to her that Earth was about to be destroyed by an evil organization. He(?) then

offered her a contract that would change both her life, and hopefully the fate of the world.

Zeta Zenonia: President and general director of Zenonia Channel, her own galactic netvision channel. Also, arguably more importantly, the director of its content. Things really took off with her first show, a live-action superhero show, which wrapped about a year ago. Her second show turned out to be a complete flop, however, so now Zeta's creative career is on the line. If she doesn't come up with a new hit soon, both she and her company are going under. It just might take a real hero to save her...

Galactic Great: The main character of Zeta's *Legend of a Real Hero: Galactic Great*, her last-ditch attempt at a smash-hit show to save her company. Originally intended to be played by an alien with superior combat abilities, the part was (forcibly) handed over to Rekka when he caused an accident that put the actor out of commission. Has a special suit that provides him with all sorts of powers, tools, and abilities.

Galactic Beauty: Galactic Great's partner. The role was originally to be played by the wife of Galactic Great's actor, but she bowed out when her husband was injured. The role was then taken up by Iris, and then ultimately Kiri.

Places, Things

Ciel: Planet of leisure and recreation. Roughly a two and a half hour warp from Earth. Actually an artificial planet that started as a small colony with casinos, and their success led it to become the mega entertainment destination it is now. Has a massive amusement park with differently themed areas, incredible rides beyond your wildest Earthling dreams, out-of-this world food, and much, much more.

Zenonia Channel: Zeta's netvision channel. The company was founded three years ago and was a hit right out of the gate with Zeta's first show. Her second show, however, tanked and they're now struggling with viewership numbers to keep the channel alive. Zeta's putting her all into coming up with a smash success to save it.

Legend of a Real Hero: Galactic Great: Zeta's newest show currently in

production, and her master plan to save the company. Eventually becomes *Legend of a Real-Time Hero: Galactic Great*.

Galactic Federation Netvision Network: The collective of independently-run channels that broadcast throughout the galaxy. Think of it as space cable where viewers only pay for the channels they want to watch, making viewership numbers especially important for the success of a channel.

Hero Gauge: The essence and emblem of Kiri/Star Prism's power as a hero. A fluctuating measure of her heroic deeds; it goes up when she fights for good, and diminishes when she doesn't or does something that would tarnish her name as a hero. When depleted completely, she'll die.

Spiritual Energy: The sustenance of angels. The variety they thrive off of depends on the domain of the angel (e.g., Rachelle, the angel of love and passion, needs passionate love energy to survive). Produced by humans and their emotions.

Starlight Healing: Star Prism's signature move. It purifies the hearts of her enemies, purging evil from them and bringing them over to the side of good.

Galactic Starburst: Really just Star Prism's Starlight Healing, used with a little extra showmanship (and Rekka's help) for the sake of *Legend of a Real-Time Hero: Galactic Great*.

Kaiju: Arguably the monster of all monsters, typically of the large, city-destroying variety. The one Rekka and the others have to defend Earth from was transported in from space, and is especially tall. It also has a stout, tough hide that makes it particularly hard to attack. Oh, and it can breathe plasma beams.

Electromagnetic Binding Trap, Anti-Gravity Whip, Electromagnetic Net: Just a few examples of Shirley's inventions. The electromagnetic binding trap and net are devices that use electromagnetic force to restrain a target, while the anti-gravity whip latches on to a target and negates gravity, making it harder for them to run away. It's almost like she's trying to catch something... (Note: None of these are her "really" dangerous devices.)

Penguirabbit: A cute space animal that looks like a penguin-rabbit hybrid. Iris is apparently fond of them, and has a stuffed animal of one in her room on her

spaceship.

Crossworm Meat Sandwich, Polypole Pasta: Just a few examples of the cuisine available on Ciel. The polypole has a chewy texture similar to octopus, while the crossworm is an altogether mysterious creature. Apparently people don't order that sandwich often... Tastes okay, though.



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I Saved Too Many Girls and Caused the Apocalypse: Volume 10

by Namekojirushi

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