A KONOSUBA: GOD'S BLESSING ON THIS WONDERFUL WORLD! SPIN-OFF!
BONUS STORY
KONOSUBA: AN EXPLOSION ON THIS WONDERFUL WORLD!
2
Deadbeat Busters
Natsume Akatsuki
ILLUSTRATION BY
Kurone Mishima

BONUS STORY
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Illustrations / Kurone Mishima
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Yunyun
Cecily
Iris
Megumin
"Come on, let's go on an adventure!"
"I will follow you to the end of the world!"
"Megumin, just don't do anything crazy, okay? Hey! Are you even
"I'm surrounded by beautiful young women... Lady Aqua, I'm so happy!"

SERVICE!!!!!!!!

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Deadbeat Busters

NATSUME AKATSUKI

ILLUSTRATION BY
KURONE MISHIMA

YEN ON
NEW YORK

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Konosuba: An Explosion on This Wonderful World! Bonus Story, Vol. 2

NATSUME AKATSUKI

Translation by Alex Wetnight

Cover art by Kurone Mishima

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KONO SUBARASHII SEKAI NI SHUKUFUKU WO! SPIN OFF ZOKU • KONO SUBARASHII SEKAI NI BAKUEN WO! Vol. 2

WAGAMAMA BUSTERS

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Prologue

“Let’s go on an adventure; let’s go on an adventure; let’s go on an adventure! Come on! Let’s go already!”

“No, no, no! It’s raining outside! Why can’t you be more like Aqua? She’s been in a great mood ever since it started raining.”

While Megumin had been very reasonable and mature lately, she was throwing a fit today, unusually enough.

“That’s because rainy days are auspicious days for Axis followers. Besides, isn’t Aqua always in a good mood?”

Aqua, who had been glued to the window and happily humming to herself all morning, griped:

“Excuse me? Could you please not talk about me like I’m some overly excited child with no worries all year round? I could put Axel in the middle of a lake if I wanted to, you know. So you’d better cut it out unless you want me to turn this city into a sanctuary for my followers… Now that I think about it, that actually wouldn’t be such a bad idea. I could even start taking naps at the bottom of the lake during the summer when it gets too hot.”

“I swear I will fill the lake with frog eggs if you ever do that.”

Darkness, who was knitting on the couch, suddenly chimed in.

“I understand how gloomy things have been after all the rain we’ve been getting lately, but relaxing at home isn’t so bad every once in a while. Megumin, I’ll join your daily routine later, so let’s just enjoy this time we have until the rainy season ends.”

She then picked up Chomusuke, who had been eyeing the ball of yarn on the table, and set her in her lap with a smile.

“Really, Darkness? How dare you speak ill of the rain in my presence. More importantly, what have you been knitting anyway? If you’re trying to make a rag, I can make you one in two seconds. Gimme that.”

“This isn’t a rag. It’s a scarf and— Ah!”

Aqua swiped the knitting needles and yarn out of Darkness's hands before she could even finish her sentence.

"*Sniffle…* Watching the fruits of my labor become a rag is heartbreaking, but what hurts the most is admitting that Aqua's even quicker at knitting than I am…"

The mysterious item, which Darkness had been knitting for days, was becoming a rag in record time, causing her eyes to well up with tears. Out of nowhere, Megumin slammed her hands against the table.

"Listen, Kazuma! We are adventurers! Hardened career adventurers like us don't lock themselves inside because of some stupid rain!"

"I take offense to that. How about I make it rain all year round over Crimson Magic Village? Then we'll see how 'stupid' it is."

"The Crimson Magic Clan can use magic that controls the weather, too. You can't scare me with idle threats!"

Megumin snapped back at Aqua's teasing remark.

"Oh, come on. What has gotten into you today? Can we at least wait until the rainy season is over? I'll go on as many adventures as you want after that."

"…Do you promise? The rainy season's going to be over in a few days, you know."

Megumin sent me a dubious gaze.

"When the rainy season is over, then maybe…next year…"

"There is still plenty of time to go on adventures *this* year! Here, I'll give you a coupon you can use at the pub if you come with me!"

Fed up, Megumin pulled a ticket out of her thin purse and waved it at me. I wanted to tell her that she was the only one who'd bend over backward for a stupid coupon.

"Hey, Megumin? Do you want to watch this weird mushroom growing on the window frame with me? It started sprouting at the beginning of the rainy season, and sometimes it glows, too."

“Hold up. That’s not just an ordinary mushroom! What do you mean, ‘sometimes it glows’?”

Curious, I tried to take a peek at the mushroom Aqua was staring at until Megumin suddenly ripped it off the frame.

“Let me see! Oh, hey! Let’s have this with dinner tonight!”

“Hey?! Megumin, what the hell?! We were just starting to have a connection! Every time I sprayed it with the spray bottle, it would dance!”

Yeah…that was definitely not a mushroom.

“If you guys aren’t going to go on an adventure with me, I’ll just leave on my own! Would you be okay with that? What will you do if it ends up being the coolest adventure ever?!”

“Go ahead. Knock yourself out. Have the biggest, most amazing adventure of your life.”

After I replied without a care in the world, Megumin’s eyebrows slowly rose.

“You’re free to head outside and play as much as you want, but make sure to be back by dinner, okay?”

“Make sure to bring me a souvenir if you go anywhere.”

“I cannot believe you guys! Fine! But you’ll be sorry that you didn’t come!”

And that was the beginning of our short-tempered wizard’s adventure.

Chapter
1
Rain in the Capital!

1

“…And that is why I am looking for new party members.”

“Um… Everyone here is serious about being an adventurer, so maybe you’d be better off asking your friends if you just want to goof around or play adventurer.”

I was at Axel’s Adventurers Guild. I had just started my adventure and already hit a wall.

“What do you mean, ‘play adventurer’?! I told you I’m being serious! You know how powerful I am! I admit it was hard to find people to join me when I first started, but I am a high-level Arch-wizard now with a track record to prove it, and now *I* am offering to help novice adventurers on their quests.”

“I believe Mr. Satou’s party is the best team to bring out your full potential, but…I’ll see what I can do. Don’t get your hopes up, though, okay?”

The receptionist then began walking away.

“If possible, I’d appreciate it if they were high-level or advanced-class adventurers like me, too.”

“This is a town for rookie adventurers! I said don’t get your hopes up!”

After ignoring my request, the receptionist pinned an ad on the bulletin board for me, then returned to her spot behind the counter.

Three hours later…

“Excuse me. Sorry for bothering you, but not a single person has invited me to join them on their quest yet.”

“I’m not surprised…”

I started to pester the receptionist again after growing irritated that nobody had come to me with any offers.

“Everyone must be intimidated, since I am the most powerful spell-caster in

the world, huh? I will simply have to go talk to the adventurers myself. Anyone you recommend?"

"Oh, um… Hmm… I recommend Ashea, that person over there who quickly looked away after hearing our conversation; Andy, the gentleman over there who is looking at me with his fingers clasped together as if he is begging me to be quiet; and…"

The receptionist paused. Curious, I restlessly followed her gaze until I noticed the next successor to the Crimson Magic Clan leadership glancing in our direction.

"…Anyone but her, please."

"Why?!"

Yunyun rushed over, large tears bubbling in the corners of her eyes.

"What's the point in having two Arch-wizards in the same party?! …Anyway, I am surprised you still haven't formed another party after getting back from Crimson Magic Village. What's going on?"

I asked with a sigh.

Yunyun had returned home to undergo the trial to become the next village chief and had just gotten back to town the other day. The first day she was here, everyone at Axel's Adventurers Guild had been fawning on her, surprisingly enough. I told her nobody would turn her down if she asked them to join her party, yet here we were…

"A-about that… I tried to invite a few people to join my party, but the timing just wasn't right…"

…The timing?

"You know how some people are. I'm talking about the ones who arrive at the Guild early in the morning for a quest. They come prepared with a full party, right? So I can't just squeeze myself into their group and ruin their plans for the day… And once they get back from the quest, they're exhausted, so I don't want to bother them…"

"You're always so considerate about the weirdest things! All you have to do is

tell them to let you join their party! They would immediately welcome you without even giving it a second thought! …Why don't you just go look at the ads on the bulletin board and join someone looking to form a party?"

Spell-casters and healers were in relatively high demand, since there weren't as many of them. I highly doubted there wasn't at least one ad looking for someone like her.

"I checked out all the ads on the bulletin board, but everyone seems to be looking for a spell-caster, and as you know, I am an Arch-wizard…"

"Who cares? An Arch-wizard is nothing more than a high-level spell-caster, right? Ugh… You just like being a pain in my butt, don't you?!"

I placed my hands on Yunyun from behind as she awkwardly squirmed, then pushed her forward for all the Guild members to see.

"Does anyone need an Arch-wizard? This high-level Crimson Magic Clan member is looking for a party to join. She can use intermediate magic, advanced magic, and can even teleport!"

The crowd grew excited.

"Seriously?! Yunyun's looking for a party?!"

"O-our party is a relatively high level compared with others in town, so I think we'd be a good match for you!"

"Not so fast! Your party already has a spell-caster! We want someone who can use magic, too!"

"We're an all-girl party, so I think you'd fit right in, Yunyun!"

There were so many people shouting that it was hard to make out every word and hear who was saying what.

"And as a bonus, I, the master of explosion magic, shall join you on your quest as well! Now come! Gather here, all those who wish for us to join you!"

My surprise brought the entire Guild to a deep silence.

Heh.

Now all I had to do was pick the best offer…

“Hey, what do you think we should do? I’d love to have Yunyun in our party, but the extra baggage is a bit…”

“Mm… I’d kill for a decent magic-user from the Crimson Magic Clan! But the price I’d have to pay for such a luxury is a little too…”

“The dead weight is just too much. There’s no telling what she’s gonna do next. You know how hard Kazuma has it.”

……

“Y-you were right, Megumin… Hee-hee… Wh-what should I do? There seems to be a lot of talk, but I’m sure there’s at least one group that’d t— Megumin?! What are you chanting?!”

“See? I told ya so! The extra baggage has already lost her mind!”

“Does anyone here know Bind?! She’s at a high level, so it’s going to take more than just brute force to hold her down!”

“Hurry up and grab her! Get her out of here!”

“Adventurers, may I have your attention, please?! We have an urgent quest: Somebody please stop Megumin! Anybody! You will be awarded three thousand eris!”

After being thrown out of the Guild, I took shelter from the rain under the buildings’ eaves in the shopping district while stuffing my cheeks full of grilled skewers I’d bought at a food stall.

“You’re welcome for the extra three thousand eris, by the way. Here. You should probably finish your skewer before it gets cold, Yunyun.”

“‘Here’?! You’re not even going to apologize?! Why do you always mess things up for me?! I would have passed the trial to become the next village chief the first time if you hadn’t kept casting Explosion! …No, you don’t get to pout! Stop that!”

Yunyun, blinded by rage, began squeezing my cheeks together with both hands while I still had a skewer in my mouth.

“Sss’aaaph! I ha’e was’ing food! You’re going ’o make it shoo’ ou’ of my mouff!”

I managed to peel her hands off me and swallow before stepping away from her. She looked back at me, tears in her eyes.

“Things were going really well for me, too! I can’t go back there now! I’d be way too embarrassed to talk to anyone! Megumin, how are you going to fix this for me?! I want friends I can go on adventures with, too, you know!”

“You already have someone and from the same clan, to boot: me—the friend responsible for putting that eris in your pocket. Seriously, I do not understand how you are still complaining.”

“Shut up, Miss Three-Thousand-Eris— Ow, ow, ow! Quit it!”

I suddenly realized something while putting Yunyun in a headlock for the rude nickname she had given me: I was too well-known in this town. But what if I traveled to a place where nobody knew our bad reputation?

“Now that I think about it, Megumin, why did you suddenly start looking for a new party to join? What happened to Kazuma? …Huh? D-did something happen? Megumin?”

After coming to this revelation, I placed a hand on my curious friend’s shoulder and…

2

“…So that’s the plan. Understand?”

“Oh, I understand…just how stupid you are!”

Yunyun, eyes crimson with agitation, lashed out at me the moment I finished explaining things.

“Hey! I thought we were friends, and I thought girls stuck together and consoled each other! *Yeah, I know how you feel! I can’t believe that jerk Kazuma would do such a thing. Come on—let’s go get something to eat. My treat!* You know, stuff like that!”

“Real friends aren’t so shallow! Besides, I sympathize more with Kazuma than you! Because, like…”

Yunyun exaggeratedly gestured broadly at everything around her.

“Because we’re inside a castle!”

She yelled, on the verge of tears.

“Did the warm tea help you calm down yet? Oh, excuse me. Another cup, please.”

We were inside the royal castle far away from Axel. After Yunyun teleported us to the capital, we were shown into the parlor like celebrities, being VIPs and all.

“Yes, I’m feeling a lot more relaxed now. Um…I’m sorry for yelling. I apologize for all of this. She tricked me into bringing us here. Please spare my life.”

“What are you talking about?! They’re not going to kill us just for stepping foot inside the castle!”

Yunyun gulped down the tea the elderly butler had poured for her all at once, then stared at me with a piercing gaze filled with suspicion. It appeared she was having some trust issues after she had nonchalantly brought us here at the request of her trusted friend, me.

“Don’t worry so much. We only came here to invite one of my lowly grunts on our adventure.”

“One of your ‘lowly grunts’? Megumin…I’ve got a really bad feeling about this…”

The elderly butler poured me another cup of tea, ignoring the fact that Yunyun’s face had turned deathly pale.

“Please have another cup of tea, Lady Megumin. Are you finished with dessert?”

“I will take the rest with me. Could you put them in containers for me, please? They should make good souvenirs for my friends back home.”

“Have you no shame?! *A-ahem*. Sorry for yelling again…”

All of a sudden, there was a knock at the door while Yunyun was embarrassingly hunched over. And on the other side of the gently opened door

was none other than…

“I knew it…”

Yunyun’s expression was clouded with despair as tears welled in her eyes.

“Boss, Yunyun, allow me to welcome both of you to the castle! Also, please allow me to properly introduce myself to you, Yunyun. You may remember me as Illis, the thief, or the granddaughter of the capital’s Chirimendonya. But that was just a cover for my true identity. My real name is Iris. Iris Stylish-Sword Belzerg!”

Iris said, grinning broadly from ear to ear with Claire and Lain at each side.

“…So we’re here to ask if you would like to go on an adventure with us, and —”

“Of course!”

Iris was so excited that she couldn’t even wait for me to finish my sentence.

“I will not allow you to do something so foolish, Lady Iris!”

“Yes, Lady Iris, you mustn’t do something so rash! And, Miss Megumin, please stop inviting her on your silly quests!”

They each tried to stop her, but Iris suddenly steeled her face and…

“Claire… I understand that you are only saying that because of your loyalty to me and because you care about me.”

“L-Lady Iris…?”

Iris gently wrapped her hands around Claire, who was taken aback by just how serious she was.

“However, I am the princess of Belzerg. I am the first princess of a nation known for martial arts! Claire, I want you to believe in the one you serve. I know you two have worked hard protecting me over the years, but I am the Dragonslayer now. It is my turn to protect you, Claire. As the princess of Belzerg, I shall protect this country from all that is evil!”

“Lady Iriiiiiis!!”

Claire, ugly crying with tears streaming down her cheeks, latched on to Iris’s

hips.

“Th-this is the happiest I have ever felt in my life, Lady Iris! …Very well. I, Claire, will say no more! I will trust you and pray for your safe return!”

Claire then buried her face in Iris’s chest, wailing as the tears continued to fall.

Although her dress was now damp and she wore a slightly troubled expression, Iris softly clenched her fists.

“Yesss.”

“No, Lady Iris! Not ‘yesss’! And, Claire, you mustn’t let her fool you like that! What part of her speech convinced you that she needed to go on an adventure?!”

“Ah! O-oh yeah… Now that you mention it…! Lady Iris, there is no imminent threat to our nation right now, so there is absolutely no reason for you to go out and defeat any monsters yourself!”

Claire insisted, straining her voice and standing back up after Lain brought her back to her senses. Iris looked at her two loyal retainers with a sorrowful gaze.

“Claire, Lain… Can I ask you a favor?”

“Anything for you, Lady Iris.”

“Do not listen to her, Claire! Lady Iris, where did you learn to be so cunning? Please stop this! You are going to give me a heart attack!”

Seriously, though, where did she learn to be so cunning? Relentlessly attacking someone’s weak point was dirty and something only a NEET would do… Even though they weren’t related by blood, I suddenly found myself thinking about how similar they had actually become.

Unlike her counterpart, Claire, Lain was still showing no signs of yielding. That is, until Iris puffed out her cheeks in a pout and used her secret weapon.

“I’m not sure I like either of you anymore.”

“What are you saying, Lady Iris?! Ah! Claire stopped breathing! Please do not say such a thing, Lady Iris! I beg of you: Take it back!”

Lain was close to a breakdown while holding up Claire, who had suddenly

passed out.

Iris sighed.

“Fine. You win. If that wasn’t enough to persuade you, then I’m simply going to have to come up with something else to convince you two.”

“Lady Iris, are you claiming you were trying to persuade us to let you go by saying that?! I, Lain, will not allow it no matter what you do! I have already had my pay cut enough because of you running away!”

Lain got into a stance, waiting for Iris’s next move, as if it could come any second.

“I would like for you two to join me at the training grounds. Come.”

“…What?”

Lain, still bracing herself, curiously tilted her head to the side for a few moments, until her face suddenly went pale.

“I am going to prove to both of you that no monster would stand a chance against me if—”

“Enjoy your trip, Lady Iris.”

Lain was reverently bowing before Iris could even finish her sentence.

3

“Make sure to smooth things over with your guards later, okay? Because if you don’t, they won’t even let us through the gate next time. Anyway, I see that you’ve gotten a lot more aggressive.”

“I’ll make sure to get them souvenirs before returning. There are many things in the outside world that could benefit me. Today, for example, will surely prove to be a lesson in social studies.”

After leaving the castle, we decided to take Iris, in her high spirits, to the Adventurers Guild.

“Anyway, there are a lot of fearsome monsters around the capital. I get that you are strong, but you cannot let your guard down, okay? You count on us if

you ever find yourself in a pinch. After all, you have two very well-known Crimson Magic Clan members at your side now."

"Thanks! I can only use a limited range of attack spells, so I am looking forward to seeing all the spells you can perform!"

"O-oh, I don't really like crafty spells, so I am probably only going to end up showing you one. You'll need to ask Yunyun if you want to see a wider variety."

That was when it suddenly hit me: One of us here had been oddly quiet this whole time.

"What's wrong, Yunyun? You are being awfully quiet today."

The moment I spoke up, Yunyun promptly kneeled down on the ground and lowered her head before Iris.

"I understand this doesn't excuse my actions, but I didn't know! Please forgive me! This was all Megumin's fault for the most part!"

"Where did that come from?! I have had enough of your false accusations!"

Flustered by Yunyun's endless bowing, Iris replied:

"P-please stop that, Yunyun! You don't need t—"

"I knew you were someone important, but I had no idea you were the princess! The Crimson Magic Clan had nothing to do with this! If anyone deserves the blame, it's Megumin…and partially me as well. So if anyone has to be punished, it should mainly be Megumin! And if that's not enough, I'll take whatever punishment is left over! So please…! Spare the people of my village…!"

"What is wrong with you?! Why are you making me out to be a villain?!"

She appeared to be apologizing for her ill-mannered behavior due to not knowing her place. Iris, recognizing what was going on, shook her head with blushing cheeks.

"Please lift your head. I don't care about social status, so it'd make me really happy if you could simply treat me as you would anyone else."

"Illi— *Ahem!* Lady Iris…"

“You don’t need to call me Lady, either. Just treat me like a friend as you always have.”

Yunyun timidly raised her head to see Iris smiling down at her.

“Since when are you so humble? It’s hard to believe you’re the same person who reprimanded Kazuma for not speaking to her with the utmost respect.”

“P-please forget that ever happened! It still bothers me just thinking about it!”

As Iris covered her blushing cheeks, Yunyun stood back up and brushed off her knees. Her eyes were glittering red but for a different reason than Iris.

“Thanks, Iris, for letting someone like me be your friend. From today on, I am going to focus everything I have on learning the advanced spell Shapeshift. That way, I can become your body double and pay you back with my life if you ever get caught up in some nation-shaking conspiracy or something.”

“Why does everything you say always have to be so serious?!”

The capital’s Adventurers Guild.

The quality of the local adventurers there was clearly far beyond what Axel’s guild had to offer. It seemed like everyone was wearing high-end equipment. Their powerful auras were evident as they stared at us from the moment we stepped inside.

“Behold, Iris. Now, this is a real Adventurers Guild. It’s only a matter of time before someone tries to start trouble with us, since we’re merely three young women. So it’s very important that you knock out the first punk who messes with us. That’s how you send the message that we’re not to be trifled with! Then everyone will know we mean business, and they will give us the best quests.”

“Oh, this is the *‘tropey ritual’* Kazuma told me about! Nobody bothered me when I was in Axel because my guards were with me, but it appears I will be able to finish the ritual this time!”

Every adventurer in the Guild averted their gaze amid our whispers.

“Megumin? Did you do something to the adventurers here, too?”

“Hey! Stop saying things that make me sound like a bad person!”

I followed their gazes, only to discover that they were all actually staring at Iris.

“It’s clear she is the reason they’re acting funny. After all, she is the only one here who’s obviously a pure-blooded noble, with her blond hair and blue eyes.”

Iris reflexively jumped as if she’d gotten a chill.

“They’re glancing at you, too…,” Yunyun said with a reproachful gaze.

I had no idea why they’d be looking at me, though…

“Boss, you made a spectacular showing in front of countless adventurers last time you were in the capital. Do you think that could be why they’re looking at you?”

“Oh yeah!”

“I knew it! You did do something to them!”

Wait. Hold up. While I had made a spectacular showing last time I was here, it still didn’t make sense for them to be this afraid of me.

“I wouldn’t be talking if I were you, Yunyun. Have you forgotten our rampage together at the fortress on the front line near the capital? After Kazuma used his skill to approach the Demon King’s army and I cast Explosion, we used your Teleport to escape and—”

“Oh, that…? But I only played a supporting role! There’s no way that’d make them afraid of me!”

She was right. It was bizarre that they’d be avoiding us like this simply because we’d played a huge role in defeating the Demon King’s army. It looked like I was simply going to need to grab some random adventurer to ask what was going on.

Just then…

“Ha-ha! As assertive as always, I see! They’re afraid of you for a different reason, though.”

A massive man with a cross-shaped scar on his nose, who seemed to have

been casually drinking since noon, suddenly greeted us from the table to our side. Sitting on his right was a beautiful woman, who had a penetrative gaze and probably a strong will to go with it. On his other side was a man with an ax hanging over his shoulder, who was smiling at Yunyun and me.

“Don’t get fresh with me, you creep. You don’t know me. Go bother someone else with your cheap pickup lines.”

“““…?!”””

All three adventurers were taken aback for some reason. That was when, all of a sudden, Yunyun’s expression lit up.

“Rex! Sophie! Terry!”

Ohhh. It appeared these three were Yunyun’s acquaintances.

“Since when do you have friends who’re adventurers, Yunyun? Color me surprised. Well, I’m sure you have a lot of catching up to do, so Iris and I will head out to give you guys some alone time.”

“What the…?! How can you be so cold?!” shouted the man called Rex with a flustered tone.

“…? Oh. Are you the guy who fell and cried after being hit by my Explosion’s shock wave during the battle against the Demon King’s army? Sorry about that. But we were in the middle of war, so is it really my fault?”

“No! I have no idea who you’re talking about! We used to be adventurers in Axel! Remember when you first came to the city looking for people to join your party? We fought a demon together! And then we invited you to join our group and come with us to the capital!”

Did something like that really happen? Yunyun elbowed me in the side as a question mark appeared over my head.

“Seriously? Did you forget? Remember when that demon Host appeared in Axel, and some adventurers fought with us? And we captured the Beginner’s Bane together—”

…Oh yeah!

“Oh, now I remember! Rex is the guy who said I was all talk and kept insulting

me! Running into you here must be fate's way of telling me it's time for revenge. Let's do this! Bring it on!"

"Why would I fight you?! I apologized about that after we defeated the demon, right? More importantly, how are you forgetting what happened after that?!"

I finally remembered what had happened for the most part. Yes… It was before I'd formed a party with Kazuma and the others. I vaguely recalled these adventurers apparently being on par with the hero of the magic sword's party in terms of skill.

"If it isn't Rex, the guy who begged me to join his party. Long time no see. Are you famous yet?"

"I wasn't *that* obsessed with becoming famous! B-but actually, we are somewhat well-known now. Not as famous as you, though."

…Oh?

"You've heard of my exploits? Well, they did write about me in the newspaper, after all! So what do they say about me around these parts?"

"That actually has to do with why everyone's so afraid of you. I heard that you and some young man named Kazuma were going around calling people punks and starting fights just because you didn't like how they looked."

Oh…! Now that he mentioned it…!

"Oh yeah! Iris was there, too! Those three punks had it coming! Phew. Now I get why everyone's looking at us like this."

"So it *is* your fault!"

Iris and Kazuma once had their bodies swapped due to a divine relic, and Iris, inside Kazuma's body, started a fight with some ill-bred punks.

"Oh. So that was where the boss's bad reputation came from. It appears I am partially responsible as well. Surely, there must be something I can do?"

Rex spit out his booze when he saw Iris's troubled expression.

"L-Lady Iris…?"

Ah yes. This was the imperial capital, after all. I swiftly waved Iris over.

“Iris, I am pretty sure there isn’t a single person in this city who doesn’t know your face. In other words, they are probably just as afraid of you as they are of me…”

While watching me whisper into Iris’s ear, Yunyun suddenly muttered:

“The reason I can’t form a party isn’t because of the people I hang out with… right?”

We headed to the Guild’s reception desk after saying good-bye to Rex’s party, who had started acting weird after realizing Iris was with us.

“W-w-w-w-w-welcome! What brings you to our humble guild today?!” screeched the young man in a nervous, hoarse voice.

“We are looking for a quest that screams adventure. One with a powerful enemy and a good reward but also somewhere you could walk to from here.”

“O-our Guild does not have any quests like that…”

A sweat droplet slid down his cheek as he frowned at my request.

“You’re asking too much from him! Excuse me? Are there any quests nearby we could try? We’ll do anything. And…”

Yunyun, having butted in, glanced at Iris to her side a few times.

“Something extremely safe. A quest where we didn’t have to get dirty would be ideal…”

“This is an Adventurers Guild, so there aren’t any safe quests…”

The receptionist continued showing reluctance until Iris leaned over the counter with glittering eyes.

“Then tell me where the Demon King’s generals are! Allow me to put an end to them!”

“Please don’t! My head would roll if I sent you somewhere so dangerous, regardless of if there was a general or not! The fact that you could probably even defeat them is in itself a problem as well, Lady Iris!”

It appeared the receptionist had realized Iris was not like the other

adventurers. Someone as irregular as Iris probably could defeat the Demon King's generals, so I could see why Kazuma kept saying we should just let her defeat the Demon King.

"You have my deepest apologies, but our guild does not have any quests fit for you, Lady—"

But right as the receptionist was reverently lowering his head and apologizing…

"Why?! I thought this was an Adventurers Guild, and I am trying to make a request!"

"For the last time, we cannot accept jobs based on uncertain data! I've never even heard of a King Toad!"

When I looked over, a middle-aged man wearing glasses, who appeared to be a client, was arguing with the woman behind the receptionist counter.

"The King Toad is real! The only reason there are few eyewitness accounts is because every party that finds it is completely annihilated! According to my research, all signs point to this extraordinarily gigantic frog appearing during the rainy season. Defeating it will benefit this country as well!"

It seemed the Guild had denied the man's request, but their conversation piqued my interest…especially the part about a King Toad. I simply couldn't ignore it after all I had been through with frogs. I walked over to the man, who was still rambling about it.

"Hey. I'm a member of the Crimson Magic Clan, and I just happened to be walking by. Do you think you could tell me a little more about the job?"

4

"My name is Burton, and I research all forms of life for a living."

I decided to first hear what he had to say at a table in the corner of the Guild. The wildlife biologist, who introduced himself as Burton, was apparently well-known at the capital for being a little off his rocker.

"I see. So…you study monsters and investigate their weaknesses? That's not

weird at all. If anything, it's probably something the kingdom should be looking into and funding."

He shot me a quizzical gaze after I told him how I felt about his research.

"Hmm? No, I don't research monsters' weaknesses. I look for the answers to questions all people have: Why do cabbages fly? Why are saury the only fish that are raised on farmland when there are so many other fish in the sea?"

"Nobody cares about stuff like that. It is just common sense. Things you pick up on as a child."

"…?! I-I'm actually kind of curious…"

Yunyun showed interest, probably since she had no common sense and was off her rocker as well. Iris appeared to feel the same way, too.

"Why *do* cabbages fly?"

"No clue. Perhaps it's pure motivation or courage or some kind of magic? Maybe they just feel like flying? More importantly…"

Iris glared at Burton with tears in her eyes thanks to his ridiculous reply, despite being the one who had brought it up.

"Are you familiar with the creatures known as Snow Sprites? They say killing them makes spring come more quickly. And defeating the monster I am searching for, the King Toad, could end the rainy season quicker as well."

Iris's curiosity seemed to have overcome her disappointment.

"Burton, I would like to know exactly what evidence you are basing that on," said Iris, brimming with curiosity.

Burton fussily knitted his brow.

"If you have a question, you will refer to me as Professor."

"P-Professor, how do you know defeating the King Toad will hasten the end of the rainy season?"

"I don't. But every rainy season, I hear it croaking day and night, so I figured it's probably some sort of rainmaking ritual. S-stop! What do you think you're doing?! I am a customer!" complained Burton as Iris pulled his glasses down his

nose. But Yunyun, who had been listening in silence all this time, curiously tilted her head to the side.

“So you want us to defeat the King Toad to prove that your hypothesis is correct? Is that it?”

“Nah, I don’t care about the hypothesis. I just hate the rain. It’s always damp and humid this season. All I want is for you to make it stop raining.”

“There is someone in Crimson Magic Village who can control the weather, so maybe you should go ask them instead?”

Burton firmly pushed his glasses back up his nose in response to my suggestion.

“Do you realize how long it would take me to get there from here? There was actually a reason I came all the way to the Guild to ask for help. I need it to be sunny tomorrow no matter what.”

Despite how unreasonable he had been with her already, Iris still couldn’t help but ask why.

“Is there some grand reason why it has to be sunny tomorrow? We might undertake this quest depending on the circumstance…”

“There’s this broad Barbera at the pub I’ve been trying to get with for forever now, and she said she might as well go out with me tomorrow if it’s sunny… Hey?! What is wrong with this kid?!”

Burton kicked off his chair and leaped back in an attempt to save his glasses from Iris snapping them in two. It appeared this middle-aged man was the only person in the Guild who hadn’t realized that Iris was the princess.

“Our neighborhood Arch-priest of the Axis Church hung some sort of paper doll outside the window at home to ward off the rain, so it will most likely be sunny tomorrow. She’s probably already bored of the rainy season, since her decorative mushroom is gone now.”

“What kind of ridiculous superstition is that? Doesn’t sound plausible at all.”

Aqua wasn’t right about much, but she was always good at predicting the weather for some reason.

“Nothing *you’ve* said so far has sounded plausible, either!”

Burton firmly pushed up his glasses as Iris berated him.

“What is wrong with this girl?! Ugh! I hate kids! Pesky brats always ask me for proof and reasons for my hypotheses!”

“What is wrong with *you*?! I have had enough already! Please tell me exactly why you think defeating the King Toads is going to make it stop raining!”

“Just a hunch. It’s my gut feeling after being a biologist for so many years.”

How reliable. Yunyun turned to me and said:

“Hey, Megumin… I’ve got a bad feeling about this. There’s something wrong with this guy. Maybe we should look for another, safer quest.”

“I get it, but what are you going to do about that?”

I pointed to my side.

“Very well! We accept this quest! Now, let us go defeat this King Toad! And if it is sunny tomorrow, I will admit you were right!”

“I don’t care if some brat thinks I’m right.”

“What is your problem?! Ugh!”

Despite being enraged, perhaps for being treated poorly for the first time in her life, Iris accepted the quest without even asking us first.

5

Yunyun’s gut instinct turned out to be right.

“Look, Scholar Megumin! This plant-type monster Alraune first captures its prey with its vines like this, then plants its seed in them before releasing them! This is the evolution and intelligence of a plant-type monster that is permanently stuck in one place!”

“Ahhh! Burtooooooon! It’s seeding you! It’s planting seeds on your back!”

We were in a forest slightly away from the capital where a monster that resembled a young woman growing out of a flower bud was attacking Burton.

“Wait, Yunyun! Alraunes are not that dangerous. They even laugh while seeding their prey to help calm their nerves.”

“Mwa-ha-ha-ha-ha! Mwa-ha-ha-ha-ha!”

“What’s calming about that?! That’s the scariest laugh I’ve ever heard!”

Burton cheerfully explained the ecology of the monster while still trapped in its vines.

“The seeds they plant in you won’t hurt you. In fact, they apparently pump their prey full of a highly nutritional tree sap, which gives them a jolt of energy and euphoria. The seeds do not stay in the prey’s body but are expelled with their waste. They probably do this so their prey carries their seed as far away as possible, which is further proof they are not a threat at all! So please, sheathe your weapon! Mwa-ha-ha-ha! Mwa-ha-ha-ha!”

“It’s injecting you with something, Burton!”

“What should we do, boss? If we don’t act fast, Burton could…!”

Yunyun stood with her dagger, as if she was going to cut the vines, while Iris helplessly awaited orders.

“Let’s just leave Burton alone. I mean, he looks to me like he’s happy.”

“A parasite is putting its seed in our client! I can’t just leave him like this! Burton, come on! I’m going to cut the vines!”

After being saved, Burton, red in the face and staggering, rambled in a deranged manner:

“Incidentally, the monster known as the Leisure Girl is said to have derived from Alraunes. The reason these plant-type monsters look like young girls is probably to make people lower their guards and prevent the plants from being attacked! Mwa-ha-ha-ha-ha! All hail the Alraunes! All hail the Alraunes!”

“He’s a goner. Let’s just wish him the best and leave him here.”

“Stop saying stuff like that and help me carry him, Megumin!”

We had just walked into the forest, and already we had run into trouble. I was starting to get a bad feeling about this just like Yunyun…

My gut was right. Burton started acting even more bizarrely.

“Yes, Scholar Iris! Just like that!”

“Iris, don’t listen to him! Feel free to kill it if you have to!”

Iris was facing a Beginner’s Bane right in front of us, and it seemed to be very good at determining its opponent’s strength. It was frozen like a terrified frog being glared at by a snake.

“B-but, Yunyun, I am starting to feel bad for it, seeing how scared it is…”

“Scholar Iris, just a little more! Just a little longer, and I’ll be able to finish drawing the Beginner’s Bane!”

“Burton! Do you know who Iris is?! Megumin, we have to do something!” pleaded Yunyun as she protected Burton.

“Beginner’s Banes are really cool, huh? I guess you could say I’m a fan. Hey, Burton. Did you know there are Beginner’s Banes that are herbivores and like wolfberries?”

“Fascinating! I would love to have a discussion on Beginner’s Banes later if—”

“*Light of Saberrrrrr*!”

As if she had had enough, Yunyun scared the creature off with magic.

We ran into one new monster after another as we plowed ahead.

“Scholar Iris, I was wrong about you. I first thought you were nothing more than a spoiled brat who did not know hardship, but you’re tough. How do you feel about working for me from now on? You could even be my live-in personal assistant if you’re lucky,” Burton suggested like an idiot while being protected by a literal child.

“Thank you very much for the offer! I will make sure to keep that in mind if I ever find myself homeless,” said the princess, an even bigger idiot, as she easily slaughtered a massive tree monster—an Elder Treant—with a very expensive-looking sword. The country would be in ruins before Iris would ever be homeless.

“*Psst.* Megumin. What if we killed this guy and made it look like an accident? I

bet we might be able to get away with it if we told Claire what he just said. I think it's important we protect our friends from bad people like him."

"Could you not say that with a straight face? You're scaring me… Besides, I'm sure he'd get the death penalty if we just told Claire what he said."

Contrary to our whispers, Burton and Iris sounded like they were having the time of their lives in front of the treant's body.

"Is that so?! Perfect. Allow me to teach you biology, then, as a possible future candidate for my assistant position! Elder Treants' branches make great firewood. Drinking tea boiled in a pot over it can make you feel like you're on top of the world, so I recommend taking a few branches for yourself."

"That's so interesting! I should bring back a few for Claire and Lain."

Yunyun promptly dashed forward and punched Burton in the face.

After a long journey, we eventually arrived at the swamp in the depths of the forest.

"Scholar Yunyun, my dear, please use your ice magic on that Scarosaurus!"

"I-ice magic?! Okay! This is the first time you've ever given any decent advice, but I'll give it a try! *Freeze Gust*!"

A white frost covered the Scarosaurus's bull-size reptilian body, and…

"That didn't slow it down at all! Burton!"

The monster let out an ear-piercing roar, as if it had grown even stronger.

"That's because the Scarosaurus is immune to ice magic! But that doesn't matter! Look! Its scales are turning a brilliant azure! Why? Because it's absorbing your magic and turning it into its own! Look how beautiful and vivid its colors are!"

"Wow, Burton! It really is a beautiful blue!"

"Burton?! How stupid are you?! Please stop making things worse than they already are! And, Iris, stop encouraging him!"

Burton pushed up his glasses before lashing out at Yunyun for insulting him.

"How dare you call me stupid! I am a wildlife biologist! Listen, if you kill this

monster after changing its scales to blue, they will remain blue. They go for double on the market like this."

"Professor Burton, do you know about any other materials we could sell like this? If you want, I wouldn't mind calling you Daddy for the rest of this quest if you tell me."

"Megumin?! What is wrong with you?! You don't need the money anymore!"

Yunyun shouted while getting ready to cast another spell. All of a sudden, Iris, who was guarding Burton, started to look around.

"Everyone, wait. The monsters and animals are completely silent. Something's coming."

It *was* really quiet, now that she mentioned it. Iris, who wasn't even fazed by the Scarosaurus, wore a serious expression for the first time today. Not even a second went by before the Scarosaurus standing before us suddenly let out a whimper and vanished. Everything around us transformed in the blink of an eye. *It* had awakened.

"That's it! That's the monster!"

What we thought was simply part of the scenery was a body covered in moss. It was clearly a creature that had evolved to blend into its surroundings. The copious amount of moss covering its body was simply due to the fact that it had lived in this swamp for ages.

"You didn't tell me it was this big! I thought it was going to be like a high-level Giant Toad, but that's a high-bounty target!"

The colossal frog, which this self-proclaimed biologist (aka nutjob) had decided to call the King Toad for some reason, was…

"I'll take the front! You cast magic from the rear!"

It was essentially as big as our mansion. The King Toad looked down at Iris with the Scarosaurus's tail poking out of the corner of its mouth.

"I can't believe it's this big! As a biologist, I would love to be swallowed by it, but I'd prefer not to die! I have no choice but to dispel the thought. Unless…!"

"We are in trouble right now, if you haven't noticed, so I would prefer it if you

would stop acting like the Crusader in my party! Iris, make sure you do not get stepped on! Yunyun, I am counting on your ice magic! Frogs should be weak to the cold!”

I shoved the restless madman out of the way while giving orders.

“Hey, are you sure it’s weak to ice magic?! I mean, Burton just tricked me a few minutes ago!”

“Heh. Wouldn’t you like to know? That Scarosaurus also lived in this swamp, but it was strong to ice magic. Do you think the King Toad could possibly be strong to ice magic, too? If you want a hint, you’d better start calling me Professor Burton and—”

“Professor Burton, allow me to teach you about the Crimson Magic Clan’s biology. We are very short-tempered as a whole, and we are also extremely aggressive and relentless.”

“King Toads are weak to ice! It should slow it down, so all you need to do is use lightning magic afterward to defeat it!”

Yunyun began casting a spell while Burton was giving in to my threat…

“*Exterion*!”

…until Iris suddenly swung her sword as if to counter the King Toad’s swiftly extending tongue. The slash roared as it severed the beast’s tongue, but…!

“The King Toad has amazing regeneration capabilities! It can recover from a small injury such as that in a matter of seconds! You can read all about it in the issue of *Professor Burton’s Biology for Dopes* from two years ago, so be sure to pick up a copy if—”

“Stop selling! Iris, um…! Do you have any stronger moves you can use?! You know, like the one you used to defeat that dragon! I think now is probably a good time to unleash your true powers!”

Iris frowned at my suggestion with a troubled gaze.

“I’m sorry. I wish I could, but I cannot use that move without the Belzerg family heirloom, the holy sword…”

“Why don’t you have it on you, today of all days?! You should carry it with

you at all times!”

“B-because the sword’s grip smells bad! It has been passed down in my family for generations!”

“Megumin! Iris! This is no time to be arguing!”

I turned my gaze back to the frog, only to realize that its severed tongue was beginning to regenerate!

“Yunyun, we need to get out of here! Cast Teleport! That thing is just too big! We can come back some other time!”

“O-o-okay!”

“*Exterion*! *Exterion*!”

Iris relentlessly attacked, keeping the frog back while buying Yunyun some time as she prepared to cast Teleport. Invisible strikes soared through the air, slicing into the frog’s body, but it was as if the frog didn’t feel pain. Perhaps it was simply tough due to its immense size? The King Toad did not even attempt to move until it stuck out its regenerated tongue.

“W-wait! What do you mean, ‘come back some other time’?! Are you saying you’re not going to defeat it today?!”

What was wrong with him?!

“This is no time to be complaining about that! We either get out of here, or we’re going to be that thing’s dinner!”

“But what about my date with Barbera?!”

“Which is more important: your life or a date with some woman from the pub?! Come on—I am sure she says the same thing to all the other customers anyway!”

I didn’t care about some middle-aged man being taken for a fool right now. What I was worried about was something happening to Iris. While I doubted the frog could defeat her, I was positive I would get the death penalty if I brought the princess back covered in slime. I anxiously waited for Yunyun to finish casting the spell. There was no way I was going to die because of something so ridiculous.

“Oh… Well, I appreciate you all helping me as much as you did, especially since the Guild wouldn’t even take the job. Besides, I had no idea the King Toad would be this big. Defeating it wouldn’t be easy, huh…?”

Iris seemed to be concerned that Burton was depressed, contrary to his usual arrogant self.

Since the ill-mannered professor was dispirited for a change, Iris concernedly asked:

“Is she really that important to you, Burton?”

Iris glanced at him with her sword still in stance for battle.

“Yes, I’ve been trying to get her to go out with me for ages. She was my childhood friend, she took over her family’s debt-ridden pub, and she works incredibly hard every day of the year. She goes out with all the other customers and lets them pamper her with money and gifts, yet she has been stubbornly turning me down for years for some reason.”

…He’s hopeless.

“But I know why she keeps turning down my advances. She probably only sees me as a little brother, since we grew up together. That’s why she said she’d go out with me if it’s sunny tomorrow, because she knows the rain never stops during the rainy season. But even if there’s a small glimmer of hope we could go out tomorrow, I…”

There was no way I could *not* help after hearing all that.

“It looks like she’s ready to cast Teleport. Yunyun, wait until I give you my signal. Iris, stand next to me and guard me while I cast a spell.”

“Wait! If you use Explosion on that frog…!”

Yes, there was a reason why I was hesitant to use Explosion on such big game.

“You don’t need to worry about me, boss. Claire will cover for you if I end up getting frog juice all over me,” said Iris with a smile, as if she knew what I was worried about.

“Very well. Let our first adventure together go out with a bang—and covered in frog juice! Now that I think about it, I was covered in frog slime during my

first adventure with Kazuma and Aqua, too! Anyway, let's blow this thing up, go home, and take a bath!"

"I'm fine with taking a bath together, but please don't compare our bodies and get mad at me again, okay? …Ouch! Stop throwing rocks at me and cast the spell!" shouted Yunyun while still ready to cast Teleport at any time.

"Can you really defeat it?" muttered Burton in a daze, so I decided to let my spell do the talking. While I began casting Explosion, the King Toad extended its tongue to attack Iris a few times, but it soon learned that sticking its tongue out would result in a severed appendage, so it lowered its stance as if to charge its next attack.

A wry smirk curled Burton's lips as I finished chanting my spell…

"Since you taught us a lot about monsters today, allow us to return the favor by telling you how women think. The reason Barbera was only turning down your advances was because…"

Before I could even finish my sentence, the King Toad leaped into the air, as if it was trying to crush me with its massive weight.

"*Explooosion*!!"

6

"I'm back."

"Oh, hey."

Kazuma welcomed me home from the couch he was lying on. Sitting next to him was Aqua, who was tenderizing his back with her fists while wailing.

"You're late today. Where were you? You didn't do anything weird like Aqua, right?"

"Apologize! Tell the Megumin doll you're sorry!"

What the…?

"Hold on. I cannot simply pretend like I didn't hear that. And why do you need to apologize to it?"

"Megumin, wait till you hear what this gross, moist NEET did! He took my paper Megumin doll, and he gave it to Chomusuke to play with! Now it's ruined…!"

"Don't call me 'moist.' You make it sound like mushrooms are about to grow on me. *Sigh…* She made a doll that looked like you to ward off the rain, but I don't want it to be sunny tomorrow, you know?"

Unbelievable!

"I thought you said this morning that you'd go on an adventure with me once it stops raining!"

“Oh, right. My bad. But didn’t you just get back from an adventure? You smell surprisingly good, though. Did you take a bath before coming home or something?”

Darkness, sitting on the couch, appeared to be knitting dolls of everyone to ward off the rain for Aqua.

I glared at Aqua and Darkness out of the corner of my eye and said,

“I just went on the best adventure ever, Kazuma. You would be so jealous if you knew how fun it was. I took a bath before I got back to…hide the evidence, I guess you could say.”

My ambiguous reply seemed to pique his interest.

“Oh, really? Well, it’s not like I can go outside, since it’s raining anyway, so let’s hear it. Yo, Aqua. I’m sorry about what I did, so do you think you can forgive me? I’ll go grab the booze I’ve been saving, so let’s have a few drinks while Megumin tells us about her adventure.”

“You mean the bottle of liquor you were hiding in your chest’s drawer? Yeah, that’s gone. I randomly found it yesterday and figured I’d enjoy myself!”

……

I watched in disdain as they began to grapple until, all of a sudden, Darkness apparently pricked her finger with a needle. She stared at the wound as if she was disappointed it wasn’t bleeding.

“I would love to hear about your adventure as well, Megumin. I noticed you’ve been doing your daily routine at the lake in Axel lately, but did you decide to go farther out today?”

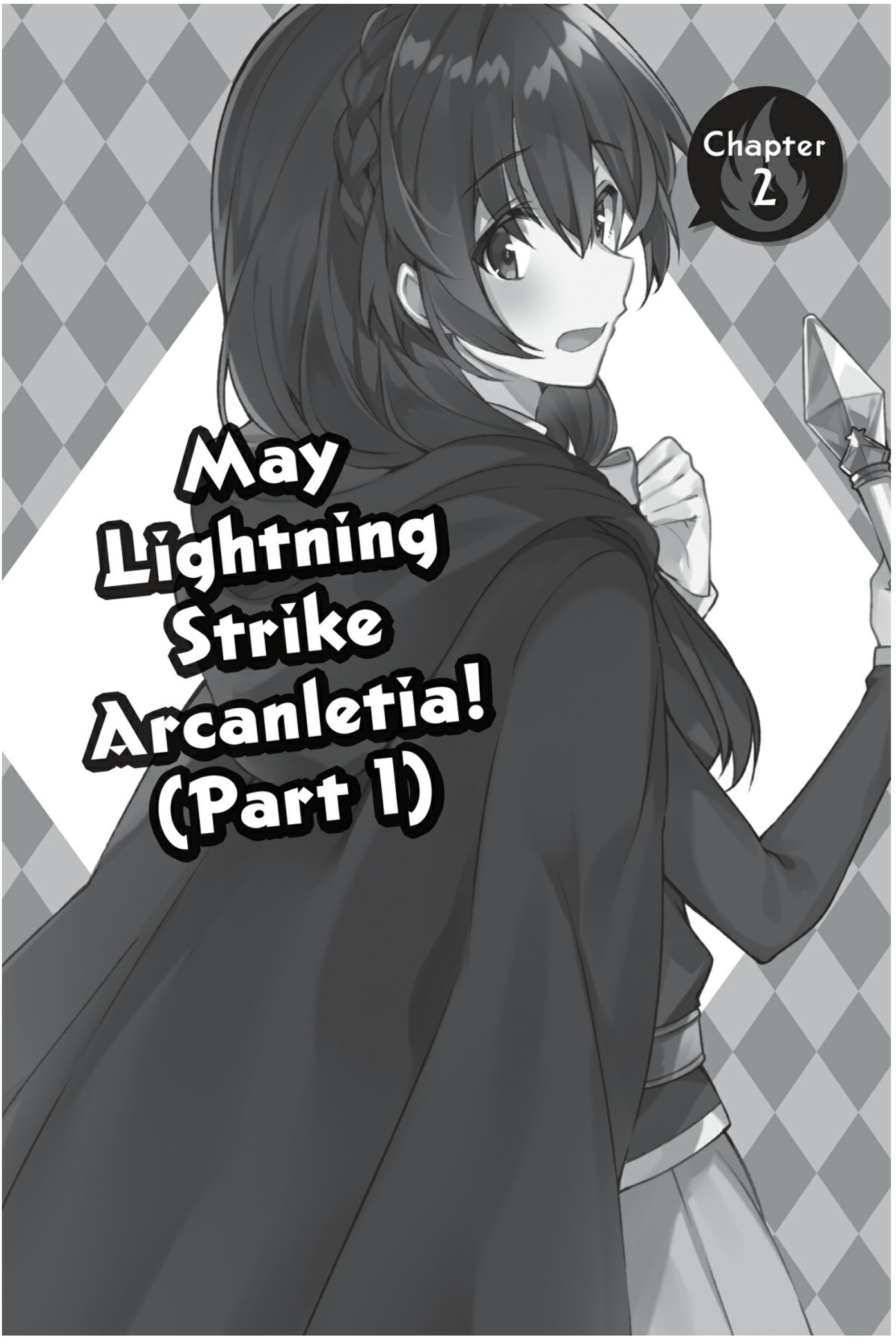
Darkness sweetly smiled at me as if she was enjoying the relaxing rainy day.

“I did, but it’s a long story, so I’ll tell you about it during dinner. It’s a story of how we defeated monster after monster before eventually helping a man get the woman of his dreams. Before we talk about that, however, I need to ask Aqua for a favor.”

I smiled at Aqua and Kazuma, who suddenly stopped fighting.

“Do you think you could make Aqua, Kazuma, and Darkness dolls, too, to ward

off the rain? Because I need it to be sunny outside tomorrow just in case.”


Chapter
2
May
Lightning
Strike
Arcanletia!
(Part 1)

1

I looked down from the balcony of the most magnificent mansion in all of Axel and saw a beautiful blond woman talking to herself as she relaxed on the bench.

“It must be hard being a commoner, always working day in, day out.”

“Yes, madam!” a young blond maid replied.

The blond noblewoman opened her newspaper.

“…Hee-hee. Well, well. The man, who used to struggle defeating a single goblin, has now made the front page. He’s grown.”

“Yes, madam!”

The beautiful woman scanned through the article, then threw the newspaper on the table and grabbed her glass. She brought the expensive-looking wine to her nose and indulged in its aroma while her maid fanned her until she listlessly tilted her glass to the side.

“Cough! Hack! Cough!”

“Are you okay, madam?!”

The beautiful blond woman began to wildly cough, as if she had choked on the wine due to not being much of a drinker.

More importantly…

“Is this some kind of game?”

“Oh my! If it isn’t Megumin! Here, put on this maid outfit. You’d look so cute in it!”

The woman laughing with a glass of wine in hand was Priestess Cecily of the Axis Church. And the maid…

“Good morning, boss! Madam Cecily said she wanted to play Snobby Rich Girl and asked me to be the maid.”

Iris was still fanning Cecily while wearing her maid uniform. It reminded me of when my NEET housemates were pretending to be celebrities… Was everyone I associated with like this?

“Cecily, you do realize that your head will literally roll if someone from the castle sees you like this, right?”

“Authority doesn’t mean much to the Axis Church. But, Iris, let’s just make this our little secret, okay?”

“Yes, madam!”

Iris seemed to enjoy being the one who served rather than waited on for a change.

“Seriously, though. What are you doing? Cecily, you’re the head of the Axis Church in Axel, right? Do you really have so much free time that you can sit around and play games like this?”

“How can you say such a thing, Megumin? Of course I have things to do. I’m simply putting them off and playing with a pretty little girl.”

“That’s even worse!”

It had been surprisingly sunny recently, despite the rainy season not being over yet.

I’d be thrilled if it was because of our adventure the other day, but I had to wonder if Burton was able to go on that date he was talking about. Because it’d make all that hard work worth it if he did.

“By the way, boss, forgive me for asking, but what brings you here today? Are you going on another adventure?”

“Yeah, I was thinking about it. I didn’t want to let a perfectly sunny day go to waste, so I figured I would take on a quest with Yunyun, but…she wasn’t at the Guild, surprisingly enough, so I was wondering if she was here. More importantly, what are *you* doing here, Iris? While I know the teleporter can send you to different towns, that still doesn’t explain how you got out of the castle.”

Iris was hanging out here as if it was no big deal, but I couldn’t help

wondering how she had snuck out of the castle unnoticed.

“I used a secret passage for emergencies that only the royal family knows about and is—”

“Okay. I get it. I don’t want to hear any more. I’d prefer to have my head remain on my shoulders.”

After Iris stopped herself in a fluster, Cecily curiously tilted her head.

“I’m really curious about this castle and royalty you speak of, but there’s one word that piqued my interest even more. You’re going on an adventure, you say?”

“Yes. Do you want to come?”

I was an Arch-wizard while Iris was well-balanced across the board, so we’d have a decent party if a priest like Cecily joined us, but…

“So, um…Megumin? Sweetie? Could I ask you for a favor?”

“I’ll consider at least listening to what you have to say if you stop squirming like that.”

2

“Are there any good quests? Maybe something that needs one guard in the front and one in the rear?”

“…Yes. There are, but…”

“Megumin, please don’t abandon meeeeee! I beg of youuuuuu!”

Iris and I went to the Adventurers Guild to see if there were any good quests.

“What do you think about this, Iris? All we have to do for this quest is exterminate some Adamanmoise snails, which have been rapidly breeding in the client’s field. While the average person’s attacks would bounce right off these snails, our attack power is high enough for it to not be a problem. As long as our attacks connect, we can slow down the monsters’ movement. Plus, they don’t fight back, so it should be an easy battle.”

“I—I see. But, boss…”

“Ahhhhhhhhh! Megumin! Have you already forgotten when I kind of helped you when you challenged that demon?!”

Oh, hey. Now this was a quest I couldn’t ignore.

“Excuse me. I would like to accept this quest to slay the Bloody Squirrel. It once peed on me, so I’ve got a bone to pick with it.”

“V-very well. The quest is yours.”

“You’re a monster! A monsterrrrrrrr!”

“Shut up already! People are staring!”

My patience had been exhausted after Cecily continued to cling to my waist and cry nonstop, so I reluctantly decided to listen to what she had to say one more time. Her request itself wasn’t really a big deal, but there was one glaring problem that stood out.

“I want you to come to Arcanletia with me and blow up the mysterious slime.”

“…I would have instantly taken you up on your offer if it wasn’t Arcanletia.”

The problem was the location.

“Boss, what kind of place is Arcanletia?”

“A breeding ground for pervs and creeps.”

“How dare you say that, Megumin!”

Cecily slammed her hands on the table in response to my blunt explanation.

“Then you tell Iris what kind of place it is.”

“Fine. It would be my pleasure teaching this innocent, naive young girl many new things.”

Why did she always have to act like this?

“Arcanletia is home to the Axis Church, which worships the goddess Aqua. Long ago, it was a town of water and hot springs, but now it is a holy land blessed by the goddess and flowing with holy water!”

“So the hot springs shoot out holy water? That’s amazing! I bet everyone who

lives there is an angel with a heart of gold!”

Cecily averted her gaze as Iris stared at her with sparkles in her eyes.

“Go on, Cecily. Iris is waiting.”

“I—I know. Holy water is not only extremely effective against undead, but you can infuse weapons with it to improve quality and even mix it into your food to give your immune system a boost. It’s a miraculous liquid with many different uses! And if you look down—”

“Something that amazing just comes out of the ground for free?! That must be really beneficial for the townspeople! The generosity of priests knows no bounds. I am sure there are plenty of bad people who would just love to monetize it.”

Cecily closed her mouth without even finishing her sentence. She then shot me a look that seemed to scream, *Help me!*

“…It’s probably better if you just see it for yourself. Come on—let’s go check out Arcanletia.”

“Sure thing, boss! I can’t wait!”

“Ow, ow, ow! My stomach…! It hurts! It must be all that gelatinous slime I ate yesterday! It’s getting its revenge on me! I’m sorry, you two! I don’t think I’ll be able to go with you today!”

Cecily clutched her stomach and rolled on the ground with the worst acting I had ever seen.

“Wait here. I’m going to head back to the castle and bring you an Arch-priest who can help.”

“No…! Anything but that! Noooooooooo!”

3

The next morning.

“Please don’t do anything crazy, Cecily. We’re in a store.”

“What kind of person do you think I am, Megumin? I’m a priestess, you

know!”

I met up with Iris and Cecily early that morning and decided to take them to Wiz’s shop to prepare for our trip to Arcanletia.

Iris’s eyes lit up when she looked at the shop, as if this was a novel experience for her. Now that I thought about it, I’d heard that Aqua also made a scene the first time she came here with Kazuma.

“Still, I want you to promise me you won’t do anything, Cecily. The person we are about to meet is not like any other shopkeeper you have ever met. No matter how hard you try, you cannot beat her, and I do not want to deal with that right now, okay?”

“Oh, Megumin. What kind of people do you think we are at the Axis Church? We can get along with anybody as long as they’re not a demon, an undead, or a heretic.”

That was the problem. We were going to meet an undead and a demon.

Iris, who had been listening to our exchange, curiously asked:

“Boss, what kind of store is this?”

“A hangout for nutjobs.”

“For ‘nutjobs,’ eh? That’s funny, coming from a joke race and a joke mage.”

Before I had even realized it, Vanir was already standing behind me.

“Bwa-ha-ha-ha-ha! Welcome, joke mage and my petite former master… H-hey! What do you think you’re doing?! Take your hands off my mask!”

Vanir desperately held on to his mask as Cecily tried to pry it off his face. It appeared members of the Axis Church were able to instantly recognize demons and undead just like Aqua. In other words, Cecily realized what Vanir was the moment she laid eyes on him. She wasn’t a model adult, but despite her flaws, she was still an Axis priestess. She wasn’t blind.

“I bet you’re so hot! I can smell the handsome coming from under your mask! It’s a pleasure to meet you, Masked Man! My name’s Cecily!”

“I am Vanir. Nice to meet you and farewell! *Hmph!* I want nothing to do with

you! This is why I don't like the Axis Church…!"

She still wasn't a model adult, but she was definitely blind. Vanir ripped Cecily's hands off his mask, then straightened his back and faced Iris, whose expression lit up the moment their eyes met. He gave the reverent bow of a noble.

"It has been a while, granddaughter of Chirimendonya. It appears you have grown even stronger since we last met. Even *I* am having trouble seeing your future."

An amused smirk curled Vanir's lips.

"Hey, there's no reason to hate all members of the Axis Church! Now can you take that mask off and show me your face? Just for a second? Just the tip! I won't touch it! I just want to see it!"

"Hachibee! Hachibee!"

"I'm sorry for interrupting, but is Wiz around? I need to ask her for a favor."

"Ugh! What a noisy bunch! Will you brats shut up already!"

Iris wouldn't leave Vanir alone that morning.

"Hachibee, do you work here? Ha-ha-ha! It's been so long since I've seen you, Hachibee! Hachibee!"

It seemed they were acquaintances. Iris was full of smiles as she clung to the tall demon's waist.

"It has been a while. I am glad you are doing well, child of the Chirimendonya clan. Now, what brings you here?"

"We were thinking about going to Arcanletia, so we were hoping Wiz wouldn't mind teleporting us. She went there not too long ago, right? So I was wondering if she registered it as a destination to teleport to."

We didn't come here to play. I was worried that bringing the princess on a journey, which would take days by carriage, would cause a scene. Plus, I didn't really have any money, either…

"The owner is currently in the back resting after being scorched due to

various circumstances that I mustn't get into now. She should recover after sufficient rest, so please find a place to relax until then."

It sounded like Wiz had done something stupid again. That was when I realized that Cecily had been surprisingly quiet for too long. When I looked over, I saw that she was squirming in place with her palms on her cheeks.

"He called me a brat, but how should I feel? I'm usually treated like an old woman, yet I feel so young again. It's as if someone as experienced as me is but a naive child compared with Sir Vanir…"

It sounded like Cecily giddily took the insult as a compliment. Anyone would seem like a child to a demon who had been living for who knows how long. I wouldn't ruin the moment for her, though.

All of a sudden…

"Oh! Welcome back, Vanir! …Oh my. Customers this early in the morning?"

The door to the shop opened, revealing someone wearing a penguin suit while holding a broom and dustpan. It looked like they had just been cleaning the shop to open for the day. Iris immediately leaped into the adorable-looking demon and former nobleman's arms.

"Zeeleschilt! Zeeleschilt!"

"If it isn't the princess! What are you doing here?"

I guess it shouldn't have been a surprise that a duke and the princess would know each other.

"Zeeleschilt, here I'm just your run-of-the-mill Chirimendonya girl! So please call me Illis!"

"I—I have no idea what a 'run-of-the-mill Chirimendonya girl' is, but, Your Majesty, I am bound by the rules given to my race. There is no way I could call you by your first name."

"Call me Illis, Zeeleschilt!"

Iris wouldn't back down, though, seemingly in love with her Chirimendonya alias. I vaguely remembered that demons could only call people they approved of by their first name.

“N-no, Your Majesty, I—”

“Illis! Now that I think about it, I remember hearing that you didn’t call people by their first name if you didn’t think they were strong or had talent. Hee-hee. I’m not the same little girl you used to play with. Here, let me show you what I’m made o—”

“Lady Illis, you have grown to be such a strong, beautiful woman! I, Zeeleschilt, am so proud of you!”

The suited demon took a step back as Iris began gleefully unsheathing her sword. He must be on his last life—mentally, since the townspeople messed with him from time to time.

“I had no idea you and Zeeleschilt were acquaintances as well. At any rate, please come inside. We are friends, are we not? Allow me to sell you our wonderful products at a special price!”

“Wow! Thank you so much, Hachibee! This store sells magic items, right? I can’t wait to see what you have!”

Vanir smirked as if he was thrilled to catch himself the perfect customer, and Iris naively followed him inside without even a shred of doubt. It was clear that this gullible girl still needed someone around to keep an eye on her.

4

“First, allow me to show you this! A certain boy with a harem came up with the idea: the mysterious spring worm! At first glance, it appears to be nothing more than an ordinary spring! However, when you gently drop it down the stairs, it gracefully crawls along each and every step like an inchworm…”

“Wow! That’s amazing! I’ll take it! How much?!”

“What would you even use it for?! Don’t waste your money on junk! Your wallet is filled with the taxes paid by your countrymen!”

Iris had been inside the shop for only a few seconds, and she was already about to be taken advantage of.

“Then how about this?! These mysterious sandals squeak with every step!

This equipment is said to have come from another world. Simply walking in these will strike fear in the heart of your opponent. They must have once belonged to a seasoned warrior long a—”

“Say no more! I’ll take them!”

“If you walk next to me in those squeaky shoes, I will tear them off you and burn them myself!”

Everything seemed to be so novel to Iris that she’d probably buy a used eraser if offered.

“Hey, there’s a young, beautiful man inside that suit, isn’t there? You can’t hide from me. After all, an adult would be too tall to fit inside!”

“S-stop it! This suit is essentially a magic item, so— Ah! Quit it! Stop it, I say! Stop trying to look inside my suit!”

Cecily, on the other hand, seemed to be enjoying herself as she cornered the man in the penguin costume.

“I will not stop! It’s your fault for wearing something so charming! I mean, what kind of shop is this?! First, there’s a mysterious gentleman wearing a mask and now someone wearing a fancy penguin suit? It’s only natural women are going to want to tease a cutie like you!”

“I told you I’m not a young man… Vanir! There’s something wrong with this girl! Please…! Help me!”

They weren’t making a scene to the point of interrupting our conversation, so I decided to ignore them.

“They say that these gloves were regularly used by the legendary Crimson Magic Clan member Hemoglobin. Rumor has it that wearing these gloves will awaken the powers of a hero—”

“The powers of a hero…!”

“You could buy shady items like that for next to nothing in Crimson Magic Village.”

“Stop getting in the way, joke mage! I’m trying to make a sale! Young Chirimendonya, I have just the item for you! This magic item is known as the

bamboo-copter. You simply spin this between your hands, and it flies on its—”

“I already have one of those, and it’s not a magic item! You can buy them anywhere! Hachibee, you’re just trying to tease me like Kazuma, aren’t you?!”

Just then, the door to the shop flew open as a familiar face stepped inside.

“Vanir, I did it! Look! I got the Adamanmoise shells y— M-Megumin?!”

Yunyun’s expression was overcome with surprise as she carried tons of shells in her backpack.

“What in the world have you been up to all morning?”

“Huh?! V-Vanir asked me to bring him some Adamanmoise shells to make magic items with, so I’ve been searching for them since yesterday.”

Apparently, she hadn’t been collecting shells all morning. She had been out looking for them throughout the night.

“Good work, my dear friend. You can put the shells over there. Allow me to make you some delicious tea as a token of my appreciation.”

Despite being clearly exhausted, Yunyun joyfully smiled from ear to ear as if she were thrilled to have helped her friend.

“Are you only calling her your friend because you’re trying to make her work for free?”

“How could you say such a thing? Do you charge your friends when asked a favor? Exchanging money is tactless between real friends. Isn’t that right, my dear friend?”

“H-ha-ha… Yeah, you can’t buy friendship, after all.”

Seeing my pathetic rival giddy over a little cup of tea made my head hurt.

“‘You can’t buy friendship’? Did you forget about how you used to treat your classmates to lunch and donate your lunch to me?”

“I—I didn’t donate anything to you! You stole from me!”

All of a sudden, Yunyun casually surveyed the shop while relaxing with a cup of tea.

“Wait. Why are you even here, Megumin? And with Iris and Cecily, to boot…”

“We’re about to go on an adventure in a faraway town.”

Immediately, Yunyun carefully placed her teacup on the table with both hands, then stretched in an exaggerated manner.

“O-oh, you don’t say? What kind of adventure are we talking about?”

“A quest to slay the mysterious slime th—”

“A slime?! Those things with squishy bodies that your average swordsman can’t even cut through? Those monsters that have a resistance to most magic? And a mysterious one, at that?! Oh my! That sounds rough! Are you sure you’re going to be okay?!”

Yunyun asked as if she had a strong interest in our quest.

“…It’s not that big a deal. After all, I have Iris, who is definitely not your average swordsman, and a spell-caster—me—who can use the strongest spell of them all. A sluggish slime won’t stand a chance against us.”

“Y-you’re being way too overconfident! You’re going to get hurt if you let your guard down like that! Besides, your party is—”

“Iris will take the front while I take the rear with the priestess Cecily. But yes… It would be better if we had at least one more person in the front.”

“R-right?! Incidentally, I happen to be a high-level Arch-wizard from the Crimson Magic Clan, so not only am I fairly strong, but I can fight on the front line as well, hence the dagger.”

……

“Yeah, I wish you could join us, but you worked all night on another quest, so I think you should rest tod—”

“I was actually about to go on a jog because I didn’t get nearly enough exercise hunting those Adamanmoise! …By the way, Adamanmoise are also strong against physical and magical attacks, but I handled them with ease.”

I soon found myself aggravated by Yunyun’s persistence.

“Why do you have to make things complicated?! If you want to come, just say

so! To tell the truth, you are the first person I tried to invite, but I couldn't find you because you were out all night playing with snails or whatever! More importantly, you probably used a ton of mana last night, so are you sure you're in any shape to even come?!"

"I'm perfectly fine! Don't worry about my mana, either! I'll grab a ton of manatite before we go! Vanir, sell me all the mid-level rocks you've got!"

"Pleasure doing business with you!"

"I know I just asked you if you were going to be okay, but you really don't need to buy that many! I'm pretty sure this is going to be an easy job!"

Just then…

"Have you wrapped everything up yet? I'm ready to go."

I was wondering why things seemed so quiet. Cecily must have been working hard, trying to take a peek inside that suit. She audaciously smirked while holding the limp penguin who was still trying to resist…until out of nowhere, a relaxed voice called out to us from the back.

"Oh? What a pleasure to wake up to so many customers! P-please give me a second! I'll go make some tea and—"

"Please don't worry about the tea. More importantly, I can almost see right through you!"

Cecily's eyes opened wide in shock as Wiz staggered into the room with a fading body.

"Wh-what in the…?"

Even someone as dense as Cecily would notice something odd about Wiz fading. Her body trembled, and she couldn't take her eyes off Wiz.

"Cecily, calm down. Please do not cause a scene. She may look like that, but she is actually a really ki—"

"*Tsk!* Megumin! Now I know what you meant when you told me I wouldn't be able to beat her no matter how hard I tried! Look at those breasts! And that face! She looks so delicate, like she would shatter and disappear if you touched her!"

She was literally disappearing, but that wasn't what this was about.

"It would probably be best if I did the mature thing and backed down… While we haven't known each other for long, we did have a physical connection, Vanir. I do have one last favor to ask of you, though…"

"I feel as if I am being insulted, but I will agree to listen if you promise to leave without causing any more trouble."

Cecily traced a heart over Vanir's chest with her finger.

"Could you take off that mask and show me your face?"

"Sigh…"

Vanir heaved a deep sigh, then beckoned Cecily with his index finger, luring her to the back of the shop. She immediately and gleefully followed him, disappearing into the back room.

"Oh my gosh! No way! I usually prefer boys and girls on the younger side, but I'm having second thoughts now! Ah! Wait! Don't stop! Just let me stare at you for a little longer!"

……

Cecily eventually returned, grinning broadly with evident satisfaction by Vanir's side.

Everyone immediately broke their silence and simultaneously said:

"""""I want to se—"""""

"No."

5

"Cecily, I have got to know! What did Hachibee look like when he took off his mask?!"

"A handsome and refined gentleman was hiding behind that mask! …Cecily, stop! Get ahold of yourself! You love them on the younger side, don't you?! Yes, you are going to find yourself a good-looking, rich husband and hire so many spritely young maids! You mustn't be led astray by that man's devilishly

handsome face!”

Cecily squirmed while holding her head as if she were fighting the voices inside it.

“Anyway…”

After finally calming down, Cecily looked at us with a huge grin on her face.

“Welcome to the holy-water capital, Arcanletia!”

We were sent straight to Arcanletia so Vanir could get us out of his hair.

“Heh…heh-heh-heh… I knew I should have trusted my gut… I had a bad feeling about this. I just wanted to go on an adventure with everyone, but…I guess this beats daydreaming all day by myself… I never thought I’d come back to Arcanletia, but I guess it could be fun, since I didn’t come by myself…”

“Megumin, it’s breaking my heart to see her like this…”

“I didn’t tell her we were coming to Arcanletia, after all. You can blame the smile vanishing from her face on the Axis cult and Cecily.”

Yunyun had been smiling through tears ever since we were sent here. Iris, on the other hand, was eagerly looking at each and every sight with stars in her eyes, since this was the first time she had ever been here.

“Oh gosh! Her beautiful crying face…! The tear-streaked face of a cute little girl… Megumin, isn’t it wonderful?”

“You seriously never learn, do you?! More importantly, when are you going to tell me why you care so much about a slime in a city all the way out here?”

Cecily had asked us to slay a slime for her, but she was the branch manager in Axel now, so normally, any monster that appeared in Arcanletia wouldn’t be her problem.

“Hey, Megumin. We’ve known each other for a while now, right? And we’re pretty close, yeah? So…can you promise me you won’t get mad?”

“The only thing I can promise is that I *will* get mad if you do not tell me the truth.”

Cecily froze.

“…You’re from the Crimson Magic Clan, which means you’re smart, right? So let me give you a little hint first.”

“I am not in the mood for games, Cecily. Just tell me why we are here.”

She raised her index finger, ignoring me, and replied,

“Nobody knows where slimes come from. They’re mysterious creatures. Nevertheless, this city is home to the Axis Church’s head church, and despite the holy water and the fact that this is a sacred land, a mysterious monster appeared. This is serious.”

“I understand this is serious, but I want to know what it has to do with you.”

Cecily clasped her hands before her chest as if she was praying.

“I’m just thinking aloud here, but…”

Why did I have a bad feeling about this?

“Think back to that day in the Axel church when that gelatinous slime escaped from the refrigerator and devoured all the vegetables in the fields. Yes, my improved versions of the slimes came back to life even after being turned into powder.”

“Yeah, I remember that. What does that have to do with this, though?”

Are these two events connected? was what I was about to ask when it suddenly hit me.

“Cecily.”

“No. I promise.”

I hadn’t even asked my question yet.

“Remember that stupid incident where gelatinous slime came out of the hot springs in town instead of hot water?”

“Yes, the Demon King’s army was trying to sabotage Arcanletia. That was a very tragic event, wasn’t it? Never in my wildest dreams did I think someone would steal the gelatinous slime I had been saving.”

……

“I am starting to get the feeling that that incident and this one were both your faul—”

“That’s enough! This is pure speculation! I mean, it’s probably just a coincidence! Besides, I know for a fact that the Demon King’s army was behind stealing my gelatinous slime last time, so that was all their fault! But this time, I did forget about the slimes I had been saving to eat later, so they might have come back to life, escaped, and evolved into the mysterious slime. It could just be a coincidence as well. The only thing I do know is that…!”

Cecily gently smiled before continuing:

“The sudden appearance of the mysterious slime has been nothing but trouble for the people of Arcanletia. Is it so wrong to want to help?”

“I am going to go home if you do not start telling me the truth.”

She fell silent for a few moments, then said:

“Fine! I want to dispose of the evidence before anyone finds out that I had something to do with this! Ah?! Ah! Megumin, wait…! Please don’t abandon meeeeeeeee!”

6

I heard a voice coming from the other side of the door.

“I’m gonna go confess my sins at the church of the Eris sect! I’ll ask if getting turned on by Goddess Eris’s portrait is a sin! Who’s coming with me?”

“Right behind you!”

“Oh, count me in!”

The ridiculous conversation made me hesitate over even opening the door.

“Go! Confess your sins! I bet that Eris priestess will turn bright red and come yelling at me again, but little does she know, I love it! Now go! Confess!”

The familiar voice belonged to an Arch-priest and the highest-ranking person here: Zesta. He was a middle-aged man and the current leader of the Axis Church.

“It won’t be long before that beautiful Eris priestess will come screaming. I should take off my robe, sprawl out by the church’s entrance, and lie in wait to ambush her. Somebody, bring me a magic camera! I need to get a picture of her tearing up when she steps on my naked body! Seeing such a beautiful priestess crying and running away would be a treat! I’ll call the piece *An Eris Priestess Stepping on a Naked Axis Follower* and pass out copies around town to cause even more damage!”

“Wonderful! What a marvelous idea, Father Zesta! Do you think I could be the one who lies down at the entrance tomorrow?”

“Hey, that’s not fair! I want a beautiful priestess to step on me, too!”

I reluctantly opened the door while listening to their depraved conversation.

“…?! It’s a beautiful woman! No! Two beautiful women have descended upon our church!”

“Hey! You’re scaring them! Stand back, you brutes! We, the female devotees, shall welcome them!”

“Hey?! That’s not fair! I want to breathe in their glorious scents, too, you know!”

It was like a painting of a scene from hell. This…was the Axis Church’s headquarters located in Arcanletia. Yunyun and I were surrounded by Axis followers the moment we stepped foot in the church. The men seemed to be hesitant, but the women were all over us, showing no reserve, probably since we were the same sex. Yunyun was frozen solid as they hugged her and rubbed her head. She couldn’t have been any more useless, so I tried to push the Axis followers away myself until…

“Meg—honeyyy! I love youuuuuu!”

“What are you doing joining them, Cecily?! You should be helping me! And don’t call me ‘honey’!”

I pointed outside the church with my chin as she tried to take advantage of the confused state of affairs.

“*Sigh.* I’m glad I went inside first. Listen, there’s a girl about to come in, and

you cannot harass her like this. No touching or any sexual comments *at all*. Because if word gets out that you did, the head of the leader of the Axis Church will roll. Literally."

"What?! Father Zesta could be executed?! …Eh."

"Things would probably be a lot more peaceful in Arcanletia without him anyway."

"If Father Zesta was out of the picture, then perhaps I could be the leader!"

"I may be old, but I've still got years left before I retire! If you want to become the next leader, you come over here and fight me like a man!"

They were hopeless.

"Hey, Megumin? You should probably remember that saying something like that is going to have the opposite effect here."

"I would prefer not to remember anything you people do here. Anyway, can you get rid of Zesta for me? I am afraid of what he might do if he sees Iris…"

All of a sudden, the door to the church slowly opened, followed by Iris peeking her head inside. Zesta looked at her, then froze as if he was deep in thought until…

"I-is everything okay, boss?! Someone just passed out…!"

There was panic in Iris's voice as she rushed over to Zesta, who had suddenly collapsed.

"Another high-quality, beautiful girl! Have I used up a lifetime's worth of good luck today?! Or perhaps I have already died and gone to heaven?!"

"A beautiful blond little girl?! Ahhh! I can't fight it anymore! Hey, cutie! Come here and give Mama a hug! I've got candyyyyyy."

Iris was surrounded in the blink of an eye, as if my warning was all for nothing.

"Wh-what is wrong with you people?! This old man needs a healer! He hasn't moved since he fell!" Iris exclaimed as she kneeled by Zesta's body. "Sir, are you okay?! Can you hear me?!"

She shook his body.

“…Iris, step away from that man. He’s only pretending to be hurt so you’ll—”

The other Axis followers suddenly began collapsing one by one before I could even finish my sentence.

“A-are you okay?! Boss, everyone suddenly passed out! It must be some sort of illness or curse!”

“They just want you to touch them to make sure they’re all right. Let’s start stepping on them if they refuse to get up.”

Zesta suddenly rolled over and lay on his back, followed by the other Axis followers. It was as if they wanted us to step on them.

“Megumin, I don’t think anybody’s going to move, since they probably consider that a reward. Father Zesta, please get up. You are making these beautiful young girls uncomfortable. Besides, the lovable branch manager of Axel, I—Cecily—have returned.”

“Ptooey.”

Still lying on the ground, Zesta skillfully spit out of the side of his mouth.

“…Cecily, no offense, but being stepped on by you simply doesn’t do it for me. So do you think you could take your massive foot off me so I can get up now?”

Zesta slowly sat up while Cecily was stomping on him.

“Megumin, Yunyun, long time no see. Welcome, stray sheep, to our church. How may I help you all today? Wish to be baptized? Or is it a confession? If it’s to be my weekend mistress, then come on.”

“Father Zesta, could you please shut up already? We came here to slay the slimes.”

Zesta’s eyebrow twitched.

“Oh? You came all the way here for that? I really appreciate the thought, but why would you do such a thing for us?”

“Because we love this city! It’s home to the Axis Church’s headquarters, after all! I, Cecily, am one of the most devoted followers of Goddess Aqua and one of

the most beautiful in the Axis Church as well!”

Cecily cheerfully claimed.

“I don’t know if I’d say you’re one of the most beautiful, but I like your spirit! Very well. I will come with you on your quest so I can see for myself just how much you’ve grown since you moved to Axel!”

“Huh?!”

And that was how Zesta ended up tagging along.

7

“I am trusting Iris with you, okay? Make sure the Axis followers’ warped personalities do not rub off on her.”

“Why are you asking me to take on such an important mission? I don’t mind, though. Plus, getting to go on an adventure with Iris is nice, too, but…”

The slimes that had come out of the old hot springs had apparently multiplied, and they were now using the pipes connecting the hot springs to travel around the city and cause trouble.

“You can count on me, boss! I’m going to fight for the people of the city and for peace for the Axis Church!”

I asked Iris and Yunyun to head into town to slay the slimes. I, on the other hand, would be looking into who or what was behind this incident, since I could only use my spell once a day. Plus…

“Let go of me, Cecily! Those pure, innocent angels are leaving! Ahhh! I only said I was going to tag along because I thought I could be with them!”

“I will not allow you to bother those angels, Father Zesta! Touching and flirting with those girls is a special privilege given only to the branch manager of Axel!”

I was in charge of supervising these two. *Great.* While I was doing it to protect Iris, I honestly wasn’t that confident that I’d be able to handle two Axis followers.

“Eh. If it comes down to it, I will just use Explosion and claim I was trying to kill a slime…”

“Megumin?! I heard that! If I see that staff of yours pointing in my direction, I swear I will traumatize you before you can even cast a spell!”

“Megumin, please keep in mind that Father Zesta always gets first place at the Speed Stripping Contest, so please don’t even think about pointing that staff at us.”

I had to deal with the two most annoying people, and I was honestly not looking forward to it.

“I was really fired up for the job when I first heard we had to slay some slimes, but we already know who caused this mess, so…”

“Oh, Megumin. Whatever could you be talking about? I don’t think we should jump to conclusions simply because these are gelatinous slimes that are causing trouble around town!”

It was obvious after getting the details. All eyewitness testimonies pointed to the slimes being gelatinous slimes. That alone already made it pretty clear whose fault this was.

“But this is exactly like what happened in Axel when—”

“I don’t want to hear any more about it, Megumin!”

The slimes were stealing food just like Cecily’s gelatinous slimes had last time.

“It sounds to me like you have figured out who was behind this incident?”

“She did it.”

“Wait! Not so fast! There isn’t enough proof yet that it was me!”

I pressed my staff into Cecily’s stubborn cheek and rubbed it in a circular motion.

“Then does that mean you already found the gelatinous slime you hid here in town? What was that? No? Thought so! Which means this is all your fault! How can you still deny that it was you?!”

“Because I safely stored it away! They can’t resurrect if you don’t give them

water! Trust me! Please…!”

Zesta suddenly chimed in.

“A while back, the Demon King’s army poured gelatinous slime into the city’s hot-springs source, but for a while, everyone thought it was me. It was a terrible time in my life. But now you’re making me wonder if that was really all y—”

“It was the Demon King’s army!”

Cecily firmly declared. I was now honestly starting to wonder if they really were the ones behind that incident…

“Anyway, let’s get to the bottom of this case while Yunyun and Iris are taking care of the stray slimes! My priestess gut is telling me that there’s an evil aura coming from somewhere in town.”

“Your gut has never been right, though.”

“Megumin? Are you going through your rebellious phase? Why are you being so mean to me today?”

“Recently, I have sensed an evil as well,” Zesta suddenly mentioned with an unusually serious expression.

“I am pretty sure that’s you, Zesta.”

“Megumin, shh! Let him believe!”

Out of nowhere, Zesta took off without even acknowledging my insult.

“Cecily, follow me! The sinister aura is coming from this way!”

“Okay, Father Zesta! Let’s put an end to this evil!” shouted Cecily as she took off right behind him.

“I have a really bad feeling about this…,” I mumbled to myself as I watched them run off. I then reflected on my actions after realizing that this was how Kazuma probably felt most of the time, too.

8

They were hopeless. Utterly hopeless.

“The ominous aura is coming from over there.”

“Impressive, Father Zesta. I, too, sense an ominous aura coming from that direction.”

“I am seriously going to start getting angry if you two keep this up.”

Of course, they ended up heading over to the Eris church. Of course.

“Okay, Cecily. Are you listening? While I act as a decoy and lure the evil out, you will hide behind the door. Once you hear the signal, I want you to leap out and apprehend the Eris follower.”

“Roger, Father Zesta. You can count on me.”

“Are you out of your mind?! Are you seriously going to go through with this?! Hey! Wait…!”

They took a step forward, ignoring my pleas. People passing by began to wonder what was happening and started to form a crowd.

Zesta then shouted:

“Pardon me! Is the flat-chested Eris priestess present?! I have thought about your proposal that we date, and I have come to give you my answer!”

*“**Excuse me?!**”* screamed someone from within the church, accompanied by thunderous footsteps.

“I don’t even know where to begin! Did no one teach you the difference between right and wro— Ahhhhhh?!”

“See you in hell, heretic!!”

“What the—?! Cecily?!”

Cecily, hidden within the shadows, grabbed the priestess the moment she rushed out of the church. The priestess then tripped over her own leg and fell forward, dragging Cecily down with her. I didn’t even get a second to stop her

before she landed on the priestess's back.

"Marvelous work, Cecily. I was starting to think you were the one behind the previous gelatinous slime incident, but now we can pretend like it never even happened."

"Yesss!"

Zesta approached the priestess, who had been caught off guard, with a triumphant smirk.

"We've got you now, foolish priestess of Eris! I am a man who loves breasts both big and small, regardless of race, but I would never date a woman like you!"

"Heh! Eat that, heretic!"

"What the…?! First you insult me, then you tackle me, and now you're turning me down?! What is going on?!"

The priestess had never been more confused as she was now, with Cecily holding her down. Zesta grabbed the priestess by the chin and lifted her head up as he peeked into her eyes.

"While followers of Eris are wicked beings, I cannot help but admire your beauty. Very well. Out of respect for your passion, I will allow you to have me for the night."

"You've always been crazy, but you are acting especially strange today! Ah?! People of Arcanletia, please do not believe his lies! I never told him that—"

You loved him?

But Zesta brought his face up to hers before she could finish her sentence.

"Do not underestimate me! I know you only berate and lecture me every day because you're playing hard to get! You're just trying to catch my attention! But my answer is still no! I won't go out with you, but I'm fine if you just want to fool around!"

"Oh, that's sweet."

"No, that's disgusting! And I'm not playing hard to get! I berate and lecture

you every day because you're always causing trouble at my church. Seriously, could you Axis followers please just leave us alone?"

I felt bad for the followers of Eris who lived here, because it sounded like this was a daily occurrence.

"Oh, stop playing games with me. I can't believe these lips of yours would say such a thing! *Hmph!* I'm just going to have to seal them shut with my own!"

"You've got this, Father Zesta!"

"Goddess Eris, grant me strength…!"

After increasing her physical capabilities with magic, the priestess immediately threw Cecily off her, then sank her fist into Zesta's cheek. I sighed at the unsightly battle between clerics and took a peek into the church's still-open door when…

"…? Stop. I think I just saw a small black creature…"

I noticed something swiftly running away toward the back of the church, so I turned around to alert the others when…

"Today is the last straw! I have had enough of you! Allow me to personally send you back to Lady Aqua!"

"It's about time you showed your true colors, you Eris-loving heretic! Lady Aqua told me that Eris has a violent streak in her, and it looks like she was right, judging by how you conduct yourself!"

"Reeeeee!"

Right when I was considering going home and forgetting about them, Cecily curiously tilted her head to the side.

"Is everything okay, Megumin? Did this ferocious follower of Eris scare you? Don't worry. I'll protect you."

"Who are you calling 'ferocious'?! …Oh, I don't think we've met. You seem somewhat decent for an Axis follower, though… Wait. Are you from the Crimson Magic Clan? I see…"

"Hey! If you have a problem with the Crimson Magic Clan, then let's hear it! …

More importantly, does this church have a pet? I just saw something run toward the back of the building."

I decided to get straight to the point and ask about what I saw.

"I'm the only one working here, and I don't have any pets. I hardly even have enough food to feed myself thanks to the Axis Church's ever-growing presence…"

"Please don't look so sad. I would be more than happy to donate any loose change I have later! …But I really did see something black run toward the back of the church."

It was small, black, and shiny. It wasn't any great king of terror. If I had to guess, it seemed more like a swift little slime…

"You were always a smart Axis follower, Megumin. You're trying to scare her, since she sleeps alone at the church, right?"

"**Meg**a-good idea, **Meg**umin."

"No. I would never do something so pathet— Ah! Hold on! I really did see something! Something black! So please stop looking at me like I'm some evil mastermind!"

Chapter
3
May Lightning Strike Arcanletia! (Part 2)

1

“*Sigh.* Now everyone thinks I’m a weirdo thanks to you two.”

We started aimlessly wandering the city after retiring from the Eris church.

“Oh, you’re blaming us? That’s rich. Word on the street is you’re quite the problem child back in Axel. In other words, perhaps people have always thought you were an odd one, Megumin.”

“Megumin’s famous.”

“H-hold on. I mean, I am well-known, but…”

Not even in my wildest dreams did I ever expect to be called a “problem child” by an Axis follower. I was somewhat shocked, to be honest.

Zesta slowly added:

“Megumin, wizard and honorary consultant of the Axis Church, I am gravely disappointed to have to tell you this, but the Eris Church most likely had nothing to do with this. Nevertheless, I do still feel an ominous aura coming from someone somewhere in town.”

“Wait. ‘Honorary’ what?”

Zesta deeply knitted his brow while ignoring the question mark over my head.

“I have felt this threatening aura once before. It was when that female demon with that outrageous body attacked the city and General Hans of the Demon King’s army tried to sabotage our nation…”

“My friend Kazuma told me that religious people like to call things divine punishment or a miracle after it has already happened, so I shouldn’t trust them.”

“How can you say such a thing, Megumin? Bring that boy with you next time you come to see me, because it sounds like I need to give him a lecture on just how great Goddess Aqua is.”

Just then…

“Eeeeeek! Somebody, help!”

…there was a woeful scream coming from the inn facing the main road.

“What’s wrong?!”

The moment I sprinted inside, I found someone, who appeared to be a worker here, listlessly sitting on her knees.

“The snacks I had been saving for a special occasion were stolen…! Some squishy, transparent creature took them, jumped into the water pipe, and ran away!”

It was obviously a slime, based on the witness’s testimony. Zesta and Cecily exchanged glances and nodded.

“This must have been…”

“…the work of an Eris follow—”

“The Eris sect had nothing to do with this! Now get out of here! You’re in my way!”

After brushing them off, I smiled at the inn employee to help her calm down.

“Are you okay? You should be thankful that your snacks were the only thing this inn lost.”

But the despair did not fade from her expression as she covered her face and shook her head.

“It’s over! My life is over! Nobody’s going to come stay at the inn once word gets out that it has a slime problem!”

“I understand your concern, but it was just a gelatinous slime. Nobody’s going to be afraid to come here because of that.”

It wasn’t in gelatinous slimes’ nature to hurt people. Nevertheless, she shook her head.

“But there still might be customers who are allergic to slimes. Oh gosh. It’s over. My life is ruined… I should have never taken over the inn. I should have accepted that job as a chicken sexer… But there is one way I could save the

inn…”

She spread open her fingers that were covering her face, peeking at me through them as if she wanted me to ask her what that was. To be honest, I was more interested in hearing about that chicken sexer job, though.

“I bet I’d get more repeat customers if a beautiful, young magical girl, who just happened to be passing by, helped me out at the inn from time to time. Then she c— Ah! H-hey, wait! Please just listen to what I have to say!”

I almost forgot that this town was full of Axis followers. After escaping from the inn, I decided to complain to two followers I knew all too well when…

“Megumin, I heard a scream coming from that way!”

“Stop goofing around and let’s go, Megumin! It is our duty as Axis followers to protect the city of Arcanletia!”

“I am not an Axis follower! Stop pulling me! Fine! I’ll go with you!”

And just like that, the excited duo ended up dragging me to our next location.

“So you’re saying someone stole the underwear you hung out to dry?”

“Yes… They were my favorite pair of panties and bra, to boot…”

The next victim was a young woman with an hourglass figure. Apparently, the underpants she left out to dry on the balcony had suddenly disappeared.

“By the way, what color were your panties if you don’t mind me asking? Also, what size bra do you wear?”

“Go away, Zesta! I can handle this without you!”

I thought telling him to leave would wipe that serious expression right off his face, but…

“Megumin, this is no time to play your silly games! This young woman is a victim, and she needs our help!”

“Huh?! S-sorry. I thought you were…”

He seemed to be genuinely concerned about her as he scolded me with his unchanging serious expression. He was surprisingly dedicated to helping the townspeople as their leader.

“Now, I am going to need to check other panties in your collection for future reference. In addition, if you could give me a freshly worn pair to lure out the criminal—”

“I feel like an idiot for apologizing in the first place!”

I grabbed Zesta by the shoulders and began violently shaking him until Cecily, who was inspecting the scene as well, spoke up.

“Father Zesta, look!”

Cecily pointed at a bag and a letter lying next to the woman’s laundry. Zesta and Cecily nodded firmly at each other, then slowly began scanning through the letter…

“‘This money should pay for a new pair, but please let me know if it’s not enough. Priest Krein of the Axis Church…’ What in the world does that mean? It makes no sense.”

“This is turning out to be a very mysterious case. This is one bad slime we’re after.”

“I’m going to the police… Hey! Let go of me, you two!”

2

We wandered around town a little more after that, slaying a few slimes along the way until we decided to take a break on a bench at the park.

“I had no idea slimes could cause this much damage,” muttered Cecily with a grave expression.

“It appears we were underestimating the severity of it all. What to do now…?” asked Zesta with a similarly grave expression.

I asserted:

“Eighty percent of all the problems in this town were caused by Axis followers, though.”

Cecily smiled gently.

“There are times when people would actually be happier not knowing the

truth. Surely, you've blamed someone else for something you've done before, right?"

"Don't lump me in with your kind. I have never—"

I suddenly remembered when I blew up part of Crimson Magic Village and blamed it on that female demon.

"…Anyway, that guy who stole the underwear ended up giving them back, and he seemed to have regretted his actions, since he was crying, so I guess I could turn a blind eye."

"The reason he was crying was because he had to give back the underwear. We Axis followers don't feel guilt."

"Stop making stupid jokes like that. I was trying to agree with you."

Right as Cecily and I started arguing…

"The wyvern…! The wyvern was slain!" A voice rang out from the vicinity of the city entrance. Wyverns, while not as strong as pure-blooded dragons, were massive creatures that ruled the skies. They were powerful monsters that killed their prey with their poisonous tails. I'd heard this area had a lot of powerful monsters compared with Axel, but I'd wasn't expecting something this big.

"Those two girls were the ones who slayed the wyvern! That spell-caster from the Crimson Magic Clan and that blond-haired loli!"

When we headed over to the town's entrance, the massive body of a wyvern lay on the ground with spectators already crowding around it. In the center of the crowd, however…

"Okay. What happened? You were supposed to be slaying stray slimes around town, so what were you doing outside of town killing a wyvern?"

"I-it's not our fault there were no slimes in town. A Thief, who was an Axis follower, was showing us around when all of a sudden, he said his gut told him there was a giant monster right outside of town, so…"

There were no slimes? Not even one? It didn't make any sense. We had already slayed numerous slimes, and we weren't even looking for them… *Wait.*

"Iris, what level are you right now?"

I whispered to Iris, who seemed flustered by the crowd around her.

“Me? Lately, I’ve been eating a lot of ingredients packed with experience points to prepare for the battle against the Demon King’s army, so I’m probably about to reach Level 60. Why?”

I pretended like I didn’t hear anything. But, well, now I could see why they didn’t run into any slimes around town. Weak monsters instinctively know not to approach when they sense a powerful aura…which meant that these two weren’t going to be able to slay any slimes.

“Anyway, what were you doing while we were hunting big game?”

“We were slaying gelatinous slimes, which was supposed to be your job, plus cleaning up Axis followers’ messes—you know, stuff like that.”

Why did I, someone who had defeated countless generals in the Demon King’s army, have to waste my time slaying gelatinous slimes like some chump?

“Oh really? So the slimes weren’t hiding from you, Megumin, huh? Hee-hee. It sounds like they were afraid of us, but not afr—”

“Hmph!!”

“Eeeeeeeeek!”

I tightly squeezed Yunyun’s chest to teach her some manners.

“The slimes weren’t afraid of you! They were afraid of Iris! You and I are basically on the same level! What, think you’re special because you went out and killed a wyvern?! I wanted to slay a powerful monster, too, you know!”

“Okay, okay! I’m sorry, so can you let go of my boobs already?!”

Yunyun screamed as I squeezed her oversize breasts until they changed shape in the palms of my hands.

“Megumin, Megumin!! Am I hearing things, or did a beautiful young girl just yell the word *boobs*?!”

“You weren’t hearing things. Yunyun did, in fact, scream that.”

“Stop! I’m sorry! I really am! So please don’t excite Zesta any more than you already have!”

Feeling satisfied with myself, I decided to think about our next move. We needed to slay Cecily's gelatinous slimes, but the way we were going about it now was grossly inefficient.

"Cecily, you're familiar enough with slimes to be able to improve them, right? Do you know if there's any way to get all the stray slimes to gather at a single spot in town?"

"Hmm… Well, while I have nothing to do with what happened here, I do know a thing or two about slimes, and slimes…love beautiful young women."

Beautiful young women…

"Um… Do slimes have taste buds? Also, do gelatinous slimes eat meat? I vaguely remember them stealing vegetables once before…"

"Megumin, are you listening to me? I said slimes love beautiful young women. They gravitate toward them the moment they catch sight of one because they instinctively want to cover them in slime."

Cecily was beyond hope.

"I'm impressed, Cecily. I, Zesta, know exactly what you're trying to say. In other words, you think we should toss beautiful little girls like Megumin into a bathtub with plumbing. Then, when the slimes instinctively slide their way through the tubes to slime her, we strike."

"Precisely, Father Zesta. Fortunately, we have a stone sauna and bath back at the Axis headquarters that Megumin created last time with Explosion. While it is now used for collecting holy water, we can have Megumin and the others take a luxurious bath in the holy water to lure out the slimes."

These were the expressions of two people who were dead serious, and yet I still had to wonder if they were mentally all there.

"Very well. I, the highest-level Arch-priest in the Axis Church, vow to protect you all with my life."

"No, Father Zesta. Slimes love beautiful young girls. The bath must be a paradise filled with cuties laughing and playing to draw out the slimes. A smelly old man would only scare them off, so allow me to be the one who watches

over and protects them.”

“Pardon me, Cecily. I thought you said slimes were only attracted to beautiful young girls, so using your logic, wouldn’t you being there scare the slimes off, too? Come on—think of how many beautiful girls will be there. One middle-aged man and an average-looking woman shouldn’t make any difference.”

Their expressions were absolutely serious, despite how ridiculous the conversation was. They exchanged glances and nodded.

“So, Megumin…”

“We’ve come to a decision.”

“I don’t mind doing it, since I was the one who asked and I am sick of listening to you two, but both of you have to wait outside.”

3

We were at the Axis headquarters. Inside was a stone sauna and open-air bath with an overhead view of Arcanletia. I’d made it a while back with Explosion to thank Cecily. The bath and view itself were honestly amazing, but…

“Ahhhhhhhhh!”

“Wait! I’ll pay however much you want!”

“Iris! If you move out of the way, I will baptize you so you can become one of us! I will even give you my job as the leader of the Axis Church if you want!”

“I may be older than you guys, but I’m still a girl at heart! Come on! Let me in! Let me iiiiiin!”

I could hear the screams of countless Axis followers coming from the other side of the bathroom door. Iris, however, was standing guard in front of the changing room. Ideally, she would be even farther away from the bath area, since the gelatinous slimes were afraid of her, but we didn’t have anyone else to protect us from the Axis followers.

“People of Arcanletia, voyeurism is a crime.”

“Ahhh! Iris, please don’t look at me with such innocent eyes while talking

sense into me! The darkness in my innocent heart is letting out a bitter cry!”

Iris was apparently lecturing Cecily, who was throwing a fit, on the difference between right and wrong.

“Hey, Megumin. Is this really necessary? I mean, the water feels nice, but I’m a little uneasy, given the location…”

“It’s not like we have any other options. I do not even think we are going to catch any slimes like this. But, well, we came all the way to Arcanletia, so while there are not any more hot springs, we can at least enjoy a luxurious bath in holy water.”

Yunyun and I sighed in relief while soaking in the rock bath. For some reason, Arcanletia’s source was pumping out high-quality holy water, so when the city had been in trouble of going under, they started bottling and selling it, which made them tons of money and put their economy in a small bubble.

“I would have brought Chomusuke with me if I knew we would be doing this. She has been obsessed with baths lately.”

“You know, I’ve always wondered if she was really a cat, and I’m starting to have my doubts.”

The sliding door to the bathroom slowly opened while we were chatting. Cecily, with a towel wrapped around herself, leaned her upper body to the side and peeked into the room as if she wanted to say something.

“…I started crying, so Iris caved and told me I could come inside as long as it was okay with you two.”

I didn’t know how to feel about a full-grown woman crying and begging a little girl even younger than me to let her in.

“I’m fine with it as long as you promise not to do anything weird…”

“Yesss!”

Cecily swiftly dumped a bucket of warm water over her body before rushing into the bath with a smile. She sank into the water until it was up to her shoulders, then suddenly tilted her curious head.

“Hmm? I feel like the holy water was a lot more potent last time I was here…”

“Sounds like the Axis Church is finally being punished for everything they have done to this town.”

“How can you say that, Megumin? This is strange, though. It feels like there’s something in the water that shouldn’t be there…”

Usually, I’d just ignore her, but Axis followers had surprisingly good instincts.

“The holy water here comes from where the original source was, right? Maybe some weird creature decided to settle there.”

“I don’t know… Normally, it would take an obscene amount of deadly poison to contaminate holy water…”

Yunyun, who was mirthfully enjoying the warm water, suddenly muttered:

“Hey, Cecily? Do you think the gelatinous slimes you were keeping could have mutated?”

Cecily twitched.

“O-oh, Yunyun. Come on. Gelatinous slimes are harmless creatures. They don’t even eat meat. They are extremely clean and delicious, to boot. There’s no way my lovely gelatinous slimes would ever mutate into something poisonous…”

Cecily was smiling while trying to explain how Yunyun was wrong, but there was something about how her eyes were wandering that worried me.

“How about we go to the source and see for ourselves? Just in case.”

“Noooooo!”

Iris wore an apologetic gaze as Zesta cheerfully grinned by her side.

“Please be careful, everyone. Again, I am really sorry I couldn’t be of any help…”

They saw us off behind the Axis headquarters as we departed for the source of the hot spring. The slimes would run away if we brought Iris with us, so she had to stay here. Zesta, on the other hand, volunteered to stay with her himself rather than come with us and had been grinning from ear to ear ever since Iris called him Uncle Zesta.

“You be careful, too, Iris. If any Axis followers get within even ten feet of you, you have my permission to slay them.”

“But, Megumin, there’s already one right next to me.”

And yet, Zesta didn’t even attempt to move away from her.

“Zesta, I know this goes without saying, but Iris is royalty. You may be the leader here, but your head will roll if you try anything funny. This isn’t a joke, okay? Please.”

“Humans are deeply sinful creatures. Telling them not to do something only makes them want to do it even more.”

I should probably tie him up.

4

We made our way to the base of the mountains that towered over the town. At the top of the rugged mountain path was the original source for the hot-springs water, where we found…

“Yep. Those are definitely gelatinous slimes.”

“Noooooooooo!”

Dozens of familiar gelatinous slimes were already jiggling around where the hot-springs water used to be, but it didn’t stop there. In the middle of the crowd of slimes was a small black slime that was latching on to something and digesting it in front of the old hot-springs water source.

“Ah! Hold on! Megumin, look. They’re giving it food! See?! That mysterious slime, which I have never seen in my life, is forcing my babies to steal food for it! In other words, I’m innocent!”

“Are you sure? Because judging by how things have gone so far, nobody would be surprised if you had something to do with that black slime as well.”

Cecily twitched. Suddenly, the black creature receiving food from the gelatinous slimes looked our way.

“…?!”

The black creature gasped as if it were surprised, then struck a very humanlike pose.

“Miss Knows-Everything-About-Slimes, is that really a slime? It looks rather intelligent for a low-level monster.”

“But of course. That is my child, after all. I improved the slimes, so it’s no surprise they gained intelligence as a result!”

Cecily talked a big game for someone who had just said she had never seen that slime in her life. All of a sudden, Yunyun, who was the most respectable adventurer of the party, tightened her expression.

“Wait! That venomous black color… Is that…?!”

The blood of the Crimson Magic Clan suddenly awakened in Yunyun as she stared at the gelatinous slime variant.

“Did you realize it, too, Yunyun? Yes, that’s the legendary creature spoken of in the tales of our village!”

“What are you talking about?! No it’s not! But that *is* an extremely dangerous slime.”

I was trying to be nice and play along with Yunyun’s fantasy, and she got mad at *me*? All of a sudden, the black creature squirmed in Yunyun’s direction.

“Oh? You know who I am, young lady?”

“““It talked?!”””

We shouted in surprise at the creature’s sudden remark.

“Cecily, did you seriously make a gelatinous slime that could talk?! Wait! Does this mean that even slimes can have brains?!”

“I don’t know about the brain part, but right now, I’m more focused on figuring out where that voice is coming from! How terrifying…my genius can be at times. I can’t believe the gelatinous slime I created evolved into this!”

“Guys, that is not what you should be worried about!”

Yunyun tightened her guard, contrary to our excitement.

“That monster can speak our language, despite not even being humanoid.

Only extremely high-level monsters can do that. Who are you?!”

Yunyun drew the wand that hung above her waist and pointed it at the monster.

“Who am I, you ask? I honestly do not know the answer to that myself. However…”

“Yunyun, that’s one of my children! I must have created it without even realizing it! I shall call this gelatinous slime subspecies…Cappy! From now on, his name will be Cappy!”

Cecily cut off the creature right when it sounded like he was going to say something serious. Nevertheless, Cappy appeared to ponder for a moment before replying.

“No. While I only have a few faint memories of my past, I don’t think my name was Cappy. And I am not a ‘gelatinous slime,’ which is a ridiculous name for a species, I might add, eith—”

“You’re such a good boy, Cappy! You’re so clever! Now come on. Let’s go home! …Megumin, there are collectors who would kill to get their hands on a talking slime. Oh my gosh. I’m going to be rich. First thing I’ll do is take you out on a date.”

It appeared she had already made up her mind on selling Cappy to a collector. She even invited me on a date. It better be an expensive restaurant.

“Will you shut up and let me talk already?! I am not Cappy! My name was Lance or Vince or something like that!” lectured Cappy as his tiny, dumpling-size body jiggled with rage.

“But the name Cappy is so much cuter! Megumin, what should I do? Cappy’s already going through his rebellious stage!”

“I do not really know what’s going on, but it is nothing to get upset over, Mr. Cappy. It is a cool name, after all.”

“I don’t care what some member of the Crimson Magic Clan thinks about names! …Crimson Magic Clan? Yes…! The Crimson Magic Clan!”

Cappy, all fired up, seemed to come to some sort of realization.

“Cecily! Megumin! Stand back! Do not let that slime touch you! I know that monster! It’s so poisonous that simply touching it could kill you in the blink of an eye! Plus, it’s strong against both physical and magical attacks!”

Yunyun was getting worked up, perhaps due to her Crimson Magic Clan blood… It wasn’t just Yunyun who was feeling that way, though.

“Why do I know the Crimson Magic Clan? How do I know they all have ridiculous names? Who am I…?”

Cappy continuously questioned himself, as if he was trying to confirm his own existence.

“Yunyun, how are you going to fix this? Cappy was just born, and he’s already being influenced by the Crimson Magic Clan.”

“I actually think that would be pretty cool. But, Yunyun, you need to work on his backstory. Let’s give him a more terrifying ability. Like he can grow really big, or shoot lasers, or turn into a human, or something.”

“This is no time to be joking, you two! This slime is seriously dangerous!”

As Yunyun’s eyes glowed crimson, Cappy began to shiver, as if he was on the verge of remembering something else.

“I’m dangerous…? Yes… The old me was strong. I used to be able to kill my foes simply by touching them, just like that girl said. People used to fear me and stay far away from me.”

“Megumin, things are starting to elevate between them. Do you think we should do something before Cappy embarrasses himself? He’s talking like an edgy teenager.”

“Shh. This is starting to get good. Let’s watch just a little bit longer, okay? It sounds like they are gravitating toward origin stories that involved them being rivals in the past.”

I decided to keenly watch over Yunyun and Cappy from afar as they faced each other.

“Why am I here, though? Why was I making these slimes gather food for me? Why…?! It’s on the tip of my tongue, but…!”

“I don’t know what’s going on with you, but you can’t stay here! You’re too dangerous! I’ll let you go, though, if you promise not to hurt anyone and go back to the forest!”

They were really doing a good job of maintaining the serious atmosphere, and I was genuinely feeling left out. Cappy froze for a brief moment when Yunyun gave him an ultimatum.

“I can’t do that. There must have been a reason I came to this place—a source of hot water. All I know is that it’s my mission to tarnish this land. Besides…”

His acting was phenomenal, despite being a lowly slime.

“You’ll let *me* go?! There’s no way I can let you go after learning you’re from the Crimson Magic Clan! I hate those people, and I hate Axis followers!” sharply

declared Cappy. It must have taken a lot of guts for a harmless gelatinous slime.

“Cappy hates the Crimson Magic Clan? I didn’t raise him to be a bigot. Megumin, do you think it’s my fault he turned out this way?”

“He said he hates Axis followers, too. You shouldn’t have neglected your children.”

But all of a sudden…

“Oh yeah… I just remembered why I hate the Crimson Magic Clan and Axis followers! I…I remembered everything!”

Cappy began trembling as if to convey that this was the climax of the show.

“I am a dead poison slime and a general of the Demon King’s army! My name is—”

“I am Megumin! Axel’s number one wizard and a member of the Crimson Magic Clan!”

“All the excitement got you fired up, too, huh, Megumin? But you shouldn’t interrupt people and steal the show during their big scene.”

I got so excited that I accidentally cut Cappy off in the middle of his monologue.

“I’m sorry. The Crimson Magic blood in my veins bubbled with excitement… Please, Cappy. Go on.”

“I am sick of you two interrupting me! If you’re not going to shut up, then get out of here! …Wait. I remember you!”

Cappy suddenly shifted his focus to me, perhaps due to how many times I had interrupted him.

“Cecily, do you think I should play along? It might sound cheap or cliché, but what if Cappy and I were rivals in a past life?”

“I don’t know. I’d feel bad for Yunyun, since she’s his current rival, you know? How about Cappy being your long-lost father?”

“I would feel bad for my real father back home… Do you have any good ideas, Cappy?”

“That’s enough!! Do you seriously not remember me?! My body may have gotten smaller, but our battle was legendary!” claimed Cappy as his body shook.

“He’s talking about some fierce battle we had, so it looks like he’s fine with the rivals-in-a-past-life backstory.”

“Awww… I liked the long-lost father idea better… After learning that she was the daughter of a slime, Megumin falls into despair and embraces the dark side. But at the very end, I, a saint, use the power of prayer to heal the evil out of her, and we live happily ever after.”

There was something somewhat attractive about embracing the dark side, but the ending was a definite “no thank you” from me.

“”What do you think?””

“Y-you…! Both of you…! You’re going to pay!”

Almost immediately after Cecily and I asked Cappy what he thought…

“*Inferno*!”

Yunyun’s echoing voice was followed by a scorching hellfire, swallowing every jiggling gelatinous slime in sight along with Cappy’s small body.

“Cappyyyyyy!” cried Cecily, tears in her eyes.

“I-I’m sorry, Cecily… But that slime was…”

Yunyun apologetically curled over, but it was too late. We had already given the slime a name and spoken with him, and thus had grown attached to him. I was rubbing Cecily’s back to console her as she wailed and cried when…

“*Sniffle…! Hic…!* I was going to be rich… I could have sold Cappy for so much money… I was going to take Megumin on a date with that money… All my beautiful gelatinous slimes are gone…”

“Cappy put his heart into his role and would turn in his grave if he heard you say that. Besides, think about all the places those slimes had been. They were filthy. You’re lucky you didn’t eat any of them.”

The roaring flames burning the ground were slowly dissipating when all of a

sudden, I heard a crack. The scorching flames had turned the ground into glass.

“Impressive as always, Crimson Magic Clan. However, I am a general of the Demon King’s army. I am Han—”

“He’s alive! He’s alive, Cecily! Cappy’s still alive!”

“Yes!!”

Cecily and I joined hands and celebrated Cappy’s survival.

“What are you two celebrating for?! Please…! This is serious!”

“Stop interrupting me before I finish introducing myself! Ugh! Whatever. I’ll just start with you, since you were the first to attack! After that, I’m going to tear the pip-squeak over there apart for blowing me into pieces last time!”

“Pip-squeak”? Was he talking about me? I never thought I’d see the day where a gelatinous slime tried to pick a fight with me.

“You survived Inferno?! It looks like you’re not just any ordinary deadly poison slime! How about this? *Lightning Strike*!”

A bolt of lightning immediately struck Cappy right after Yunyun’s chant. Cappy’s tiny body twitched, but he managed to endure the shock as smoke rose from his body.

“Your spells are powerful for your age, but unfortunately for you, you’re outclassed! A high-level spell or two isn’t enough to defeat me!” declared Cappy before immediately torpedoing for Yunyun like a thrown ball. However, right before he hit her, Yunyun launched her body to the side and rolled out of the way.

“Megumin, Megumin! This fight between Yunyun and my Cappy is getting tense!”

“She really puts herself out there for others. Even though he’s a slime, she must be really happy to have someone to play with, since she hasn’t had a friend in years.”

“Do I look happy?! Do you not see me desperately trying to dodge him?!”

A tiny slime like Cappy would hardly do any damage even if he ran into you,

yet Yunyun was working really hard not to break character while pretending simply touching him would kill her. As Cappy threw himself at Yunyun once more, she swung her wand and hit him as hard as she could.

“Would you look at him fly? Yunyun seems like she’s having so much fun.”

“She really does. You must be thrilled to have finally made a friend, huh, Yunyun?”

“Stop joking around and help me already!!”

Yunyun continuously smacked him with her wand, tears in her eyes and breathing heavily, but Cappy just kept bouncing back. More importantly…

“Cecily, is it just me, or does Cappy seem a little…strong? Yunyun is going to be the next leader of the Crimson Magic Clan, so it is a little strange that someone who claims to be my rival cannot defeat a little slime in one hit.”

“I left the slime powder hidden in the Axis headquarters for a long time, so it probably received Goddess Aqua’s blessing or something.”

Made sense.

“Does that make Cappy an Axis follower, then? That’d explain why he doesn’t know when to take a hint and give up.”

“Hey! Don’t you dare call me something so disgraceful! And it’s about time you remembered who I am!”

Cappy shifted his attention to us as if he was not about to let us get away with calling him an Axis follower. But all of a sudden…

“*Cursed Crystal Prison*!”

“Hnnng?!” gurgled Cappy, his voice filled with surprise, as Yunyun trapped him inside a cell made of ice.

…It was strange. There was something about seeing a slime being frozen in ice.

“You let your guard down, and I can’t afford to lose this battle when the Crimson Magic Clan’s reputation is on the line!”

“Ha-ha! I thought you were just a little brat, but I find myself impressed yet

again! Tell me your name, girl! Then we fight to the death!”

I’m a woman who never looks back, but there was something familiar about Cappy’s voice…

Eh. Whatever.

“My name is Yunyun, the powerful Arch-wizard! I am the greatest wizard of the Crimson Magic Clan and its next leader! …I used to not like giving my name before battle, but…it’s surprisingly not that bad.”

“Ha-ha! Not bad at all if I do say so myself! So…you’re the next leader in line, huh? No wonder you’re so strong! Very well. Allow me to express my gratitude by telling you what I’ve been doing since I came back to life. I’ll tell you just how I survived after being blown to bits! It all started when…”

As a member of the Crimson Magic Clan, I wasn’t going to back down from a fight, especially when the opponent trying to pick a fight with me was a gelatinous slime. I pointed my wand at Cappy and…

“*Explooosion*!”

“What is wrong with youuuuuuuuu?!”

5

We returned to the Axis headquarters to inform them that we had exterminated Cappy.

“…And so Cecily’s gelatinous slime just mysteriously evolved and—”

“Megumin, wait! I’ve thought about it, and I’m positive Cappy wasn’t one of mine. It wouldn’t make any sense! I mean, he talked! And he was rebellious!”

“Megumin! I am not letting this slide! Not today! How do you always manage to misread the situation?! Because of you, my battle with Cappy was…!”

I ignored their complaints and focused my attention on Iris, who had stayed behind.

“Did anyone mess with you while we were gone? You don’t need to cry yourself to sleep tonight. I know a real cold-blooded prosecutor in Axel who can

help us out legally if needed.”

“You don’t need to worry about a thing, boss. All Uncle Zesta asked me to do was to blow up a balloon for him, since his lungs apparently aren’t what they used to be. Nothing else happened, really…”

Zesta instantly dashed off, holding a balloon like it was his most cherished possession. Yunyun promptly chased after him for me, since I was unable to move after expending my mana. She eventually backed him into a corner, and his expression turned grim, as if it were the end of the world. He then resolutely brought the lip of the balloon toward his face and…

“*Light of Saber*!”

“*Sacred Dispel*!”

Yunyun shot a blade of light at the balloon, but Zesta stuck out his hand, causing the light to vanish.

“Zesta, please don’t try to block the spell like that! This magic can cut through anything, depending on how much power the caster puts into it! I could have cut off your arm!”

“And you just used a dangerous spell like that on me?! You have no right to complain! The breath of a beautiful young girl is sealed within this divine treasure, and it shall be enshrined here until the end of time. Now begone, heretic!”

“How can you call me a heretic after all I’ve done for you today?! I will not be treated like this! Hand over that balloon!”

Yunyun unsheathed her dagger in a rage, as if she was going to pop the balloon.

“*Sigh…* Your temper is even shorter than mine, Yunyun. Come on. Why be mad? You got to kill a wyvern with Iris, but all I got to do was destroy some slime subspecies,” I said while exhaustedly sinking into my chair. Cecily smiled at me.

“Megumin, Megumin. I’m going to give you a reward for working so hard today and defeating that slime.”

“N-no thank you. I’m fine. We’re friends, aren’t we? So I don’t need a thing!”

I was spent due to using all my mana, so I could hardly move…which meant I wouldn’t be able to fight back if Cecily did anything to me. She smirked as her right hand approached me…

“*Blessing*!”

She cast a blessing spell on me.

“Um… Is this my reward?”

“Of course. May great things come to you, Megumin! …Oh? Were you expecting something a little more…intimate? Oh, Megumin! I love you sooooooooo much!”

“Ack! Get off me! I’m already feeling like a bag of rocks because I’m out of mana!”

Cecily latched on to me, rubbing her cheek all over my face.

“I had so much fun on our adventure today, Megumin!”

She then flashed a brilliant smile, grinning from ear to ear.

It wasn’t really much of an adventure, but…I’d be lying if I said I didn’t have fun traveling to a faraway town with everyone.

“Boss, I had a lot of fun on our adventure today, too! Let’s do this again sometime!”

Taken aback by Iris’s innocent grin, I put on a smile and nodded.

“I will not let you off the hook with some feel-good back patting! Nobody is going anywhere until you reflect on your actions and change your ways!”

Yunyun, making no attempt to mask her rage, was mercilessly chasing Zesta after popping the balloon. Watching him pick up the scraps of shredded rubber with tears in his eyes was heartbreaking. She had apparently cut the lip off the balloon just in case, too. Zesta was muttering something about tasting a young girl’s lips and other unspeakable things, so it was good that we shut him down before things got out of hand.

“I am sorry about robbing you of your fight, but Cappy was the one who

started it. You cannot blame me for finishing what he started. Besides, Yunyun, it is your fault for being so slow anyway."

"How was I being slow? You're supposed to listen to the enemy make one last speech before defeating them!"

It appeared that the blood of the Crimson Magic Clan had slightly awakened in Yunyun, but she still had a long way to go.

"Kazuma said that people who talk about themselves in the middle of battle are chumps. He also said when last bosses say something like *Your doom is certain*, they're basically dead men walking, so he'd unleash a surprise attack on them if they started monologuing."

"More people need to get mad at Kazuma so he'll learn."

Just then, Zesta, whose eyes were as red as a Crimson Magic Clan member's due to all his crying, approached us.

"Regardless of what that heretic right there did, I still appreciate your help today, Megumin. Allow me to express my gratitude as the leader of the Axis Church."

"It's fine. Besides, I had a good time."

Plus, it was not like I was a stranger around these parts. While the Axis followers were a little— No, while the Axis followers were extremely perverted, they were not bad people for the most part… Or at least I'd like to think that… maybe…

I was slowly feeling less confident about it the more I thought about it.

Zesta turned to me as if he was just making small talk and asked:

"By the way, Megumin, how has that Arch-priestess in your party been? Is she doing well?"

"You mean Aqua? She has been doing so well that she sleeps half the day and enjoys every minute of it."

And she cried a good bit every time she got too carried away, but I decided to keep that to myself to protect her honor.

“Oh, is that so? I’m glad.”

Zesta’s expression warmed with relief, like a grandfather hearing how his dear granddaughter was doing.

“May you and your party be blessed with continued health and happiness.”

He smiled gently at me.

6

That night.

“I’m back.”

“Ahhhhhh! How many times do you have to win before you’re happy?! I know you’re cheating! You can’t fool these clear eyes!”

I was welcomed by Aqua’s crying the moment I opened the door to the mansion.

“Oh, welcome back. You stayed out late today, huh? Where’d you go?” asked Kazuma, removing a wooden block from a wobbling tower while also pushing Aqua away as she cried and tried to cling to him.

“I went to Arcanletia and had a little adventure.”

Aqua froze when she heard the name of the town.

“Megumin, did you not think to invite me before going somewhere so fun? Arcanletia is the capital of water. And do you know what I’m the goddess of? Exactly. Here, have a seat. You and this cheater Kazuma need someone to set them straight.”

“But you were prohibited from entering Arcanletia. Remember?”

I said to Aqua as she was patting the spot next to her on the couch as if to entice me to sit. Darkness, who was playing with Chomusuke on the rug and letting her nibble on her fingers, also chimed in.

“I would have gone with you, too, if I knew you were going to Arcanletia. To tell the truth, I kind of like those crazy cultists.”

I was having trouble coming up with even a single reason to like them.

“Excuse me, Darkness, but could you please not call my people ‘crazy cultists’? You know what Cecily said? She said the nobles in this country were weirder than both Axis followers and the Crimson Magic Clan combined.”

“Wh-what?! Aqua, next time you see Cecily, you bring her to me! I am going to prove to her that nobles are not weird!”

Darkness suddenly stood up, as if she felt insulted as a noblewoman herself.

“Oh yeah… Now that I think about it, why was I playing with Kazuma, who’s good at games like this, instead of Darkness, who’s terrible? Hey, Darkness? Want to play Tumbling Wooden Tower with me? Loser has to take out the trash for the winner when it’s the winner’s day to do trash.”

“Oh? You think you can win because I’m clumsy, huh? Unfortunately for you, these games take more brainpower than dexterity. Very well. I’ll play your game!”

Darkness promptly took a seat before the wooden-block tower.

“You’re on, Darkness. I may lose to a cheater like Kazuma, but there’s no way I’m losing to you. I have a foolproof strategy, after all.”

“Great. Then let’s see this strategy of yours… If I lose, you’re not going to ask me to do anything outrageous like Kazuma does, right?”

“Darkness, I am about to make stacking wooden blocks into an art form. Are you sure you don’t just want to give up while you can?”

“I’ll never give up.”

I looked away from them as they played their game, dragged my mostly mana-depleted body over to Kazuma’s side, and sat.

“You look really tired today. But I can probably guess why, since you went to Arcanletia.”

“Oh? Are you implying you want to hear about my tales of heroism?”

“Eh. I’m not *that* curious,” Kazuma replied flat-out while picking Chomusuke up off the rug.

“Hey, Aqua? Why are you only going for the hard ones?”

“I don’t even know why, but the entertainer side of me is telling me I need to go for the hardest blocks to pull out… Ah!”

“I hope you enjoy taking out the trash.”

Their noisy exchange piqued my interest, but I was busy telling Kazuma about my adventure…

“I went to Arcanletia to exterminate a horde of gelatinous slimes today, but there was one that was surprisingly tough…”

…in high hopes that the next day would be the day he joined me on my adventure.

“Rematch! I demand a rematch! This isn’t what it looks like, Darkness! There’s a female ghost living in this mansion, and she’s pushing the blocks out of the tower from the inside…!”

Chapter
4
A Ray of Light in the Forest!

1

That day.

“What is wrong with you?! Just give up already!”

It was almost noon, yet Kazuma still hadn’t even made an attempt to climb out of bed, so I smacked his blanket until he peeked his head out and mumbled,

“There’s a famous saying in my country: ‘When you give up, that’s when the game is over.’ Those words mean a lot to me, and I don’t plan on ever giving up.”

“It’s a good saying, but I think you’re using it wrong! You are going on an adventure with me today, and that’s final!”

Kazuma slipped his head back under the covers. I tried pulling them off him, but he wasn’t giving up. Unfortunately for Kazuma, however, I was far more powerful than he was, and it was only a matter of time until—

“*Create Water*!”

“……”

—he stuck his hand out from under the covers and soaked me with a water spell. I stood frozen in disbelief as water dripped down my body, when suddenly, Kazuma poked his head out again from under the covers.

“Woe unto those who disturb my slumber. Begone, cretin, lest you be defiled by the wrath of Create Earth.”

“I am not going to back down simply because you are using fancy words! Besides, do you think I am going to let that slide?! I am going to dry off my body on your bed!”

“S-stop! You’re going to get my bed wet! Okay! I’m sorry! They’re going to think I wet the bed, so please…!”

I wildly rolled around the bed until Kazuma sat up in a fluster.

“Seriously, though, you’ve been going on adventures every day lately. Frog slaying, slime slaying… Right?” asked Kazuma, stretching after crawling out of bed.

“I don’t want to fight weak monsters like that, though. I want to go after something big. You know, Yunyun and Iris killed a wyvern back in Arcanletia, but me? All I got to fight was Cappy.”

“The hell is a Cappy?”

When we went downstairs, we ran into Darkness, dressed like a wealthy noble, getting ready to go somewhere.

“Wh-what happened to you, Megumin? You’re soaking wet.”

“This guy sprayed me with Create Water.”

She began nervously fidgeting when she heard about the water.

“Oh…? And why did he do that?”

“I climbed on top of Kazuma in bed to wake him up when, all of a sudden, he got really excited and made me wet. But that wasn’t enough for him. He told me to get out of his room or he was going to defile me, and—”

“I’m sorry, okay?! But do you think you could have phrased that a little better?! Darkness is fidgeting!”

Which reminded me…

“Get changed, Darkness. We have an adventure to go on.”

“O-oh, I can’t. I have work today. There are some documents that need to be signed and…,” Darkness reluctantly replied with a stack of documents in hand.

“Do you know how hard it was to get Kazuma out of bed?! Why do you have to do paperwork?! What is your job?!”

“I am a noblewoman! H-hey! Give those documents back! You’re smearing the ink…!”

Her eyes welled with tears as my wet hands caused the ink to bleed all over the page.

“Sorry, but I can’t go on an adventure with you today, either! Cecily said she

brought back some amazing booze for me from Arcanletia, so we're going to have a party at the Axis church," stated Aqua, who was preparing to go out as well.

"You too, Aqua?! You're going to go drink in the middle of the day?! What is your job?!"

"I'm a goddess."

I hated to admit it, but this party had absolutely no self-discipline. All of a sudden, there was a knock at the front door. Kazuma immediately looked over and saw a familiar woman peeking inside.

"Oh! It's the receptionist. *Sigh.* It looks like my help is needed."

It was the receptionist from the Guild. Kazuma gave her a smirk as if he was trying to act cool, but…

"Oh! No, um…! I did come to discuss work, but it isn't for you. It's for Megumin…"

"…"

I flicked back my cloak, showing no concern for Kazuma, who had fallen silent.

"Oh? A job that requires my assistance? The client made the right choice. Very well. Take me to this person who needs my help!"

"Um… I don't know why you're wet, but you should probably change before we go."

2

I left Kazuma behind, since he was sulking that he wasn't the one she'd come for, and went to the Adventurers Guild alone.

"Your client is Mr. Burton, and the quest's location is the capital."

"I'm going home."

I tried leaving the moment I heard the client's name, but the receptionist grabbed me by the cloak and stopped me.

“Wh-where are you going, Megumin?! Please don’t leave! This client has donated a lot of money to the Adventurers Guild headquarters in the capital…”

“That does not have anything to do with me. I have accepted one of his quests before, but he was a monster-loving weirdo. He is way too much for me to handle alone, so you are going to need to ask someone else.”

I tried leaving once more, but the receptionist wouldn’t let go of my cloak.

“Are you sure, Megumin?! This is a job from the much-talked-about Professor Burton himself! The man who wrote the famous *Professor Burton’s Biology for Dopes*!”

“I said I don’t care! Since when did he get famous anyway? He was treated like an outcast back when I accepted his quest.”

He was basically a nobody in the eyes of the Guild when I last saw him.

“After proving the existence of the King Toad, he instantly became famous, and he is now a known expert in the field of biology.”

“Wait. What?”

That was a monster’s name I couldn’t just ignore.

“The King Toad. Nobody knew of its biology or habitat. It was nothing more than an urban legend until Professor Burton was able to submit its carcass and…”

I took out my Adventurer’s Card and checked the slayed-monsters column.

“Here. Take a look at this. See where it says King Toad? Well, I was wondering if it had a bounty on its head.”

“…?! M-Megumin? Why does your card say—? U-um… It is an extremely rare monster, but its existence has just been proven only recently, so unfortunately, there is no reward…”

“Oh…”

I couldn’t believe a monster of that magnitude didn’t have a bounty on its head. It was just as surprising that Burton had become an authority in the field of biology…

“What the…?! What’s this named monster under King Toad? Deadly Poison Slime Cappy…”

Hold up. If Burton was an authority on monster research in his field, then maybe that meant he was rich now, too? And he wouldn’t have been able to do it without our help, right? Plus, the pay was really low for a monster that big.

…All right!

“Megumin, this Cappy here—”

“I’ll take the job!”

After picking up the written request, I bid farewell to the receptionist, who looked like she wanted to say something, and began my search for a certain someone within the Guild. Who was I looking for? Of course, it was my good friend who was strong, reliable, and could use Teleport.

“I’m Beat. This is Clarice. I’m a warrior, and she’s a priestess!”

“Sorry to bother you. We’re new in town. Anyway, you’re a wizard, right? You didn’t look like you already had a party, and we’d make a really well-balanced team, so we were wondering if you wanted to join us.”

I easily found my friend Yunyun after only a few seconds of searching the Guild. But it looked like something was wrong. Two people around my age were talking to her as she looked to her sides with a stupefied expression. She then pointed a trembling finger at herself.

“U-um… Are you talking to me?”

“Of course. Who else would we be talking to?”

“Ha-ha-ha. Are you nervous? Don’t worry. This is going to be our first quest, too!”

It looked like some fledging adventurers new to Axel were trying to pick her up.

“U-ummm… I’m Yunyun! I-i-i-it’s nice to meet you!”

Tears welled in her eyes while she bowed, as if being invited to join their party made her the happiest person in the world.

“You don’t have to be so nervous. I’ve slayed countless monsters back home in my village. I don’t mean to brag, but I’m actually already Level 4.”

“Yunyun’s a really cute name! I’m Level 2, but I’m wearing chain mail, so I should be fine if we’re slaying frogs!”

Yunyun blushed, having her name complimented by Clarice.

“L-leave it to me! I’ll use the Crimson Magic Clan’s power-leveling ability Raise and have both your levels in the double digits by tomorrow!”

“Ha-ha! We’re counting on you! Hold on… I feel like I’ve heard of the Crimson Magic Clan from somewhere before…”

“Me too… By the way, Yunyun, what level are you? Can you already use intermediate magic?”

Yunyun froze for a moment after being asked her level, then promptly put on a smile and tried to play it off.

“My level is— Well, I mean—I think I can handle intermediate magic!”

“Come on—don’t sell yourself short. She can actually use advanced magic like Teleport, too. Plus, this Arch-wizard is already over Level 40,” I chimed in from behind, causing Yunyun to instantly freeze.

“Y-y-you’re over Level 40?!”

“And an Arch-wizard?!” shouted the rookie adventurers in surprise.

I continued:

“And she isn’t just any Arch-wizard. She’s a magic-user of the Crimson Magic Clan—a race born with an extremely high aptitude for magic. You rookie adventurers are probably better off forming a party with someone around your level.”

“I’m so sorry we bothered you!”

“P-p-p-please forgive us! We’re new here, so we didn’t know!”

“Ah?! W-wait…!”

The two rookie adventurers took my advice and ran off in a panic. I gently placed a hand on Yunyun’s shoulder as she reached out and tried to stop them,

then shook my head.

“Let them go. I’m sure they’ll find someone more fitting for their party. All we veteran adventurers can do is gently watch over them.”

Yunyun thereupon grabbed me by the lapels with both hands.

“Ahhhhhh!”

“Wh-what are you doing?! Yunyun, wait! Calm down! Y-you’re choking me…!”

3

We headed to the capital after calming down my bloodthirsty friend.

“*Sigh…* You have a short temper, Yunyun. You know that? Anyway, you are going to be the next leader of the Crimson Magic Clan, so please stop trying to form parties with new adventurers. Everyone back home would be shocked if they heard.”

I decided to explain to Yunyun why we came to the capital as she bawled her eyes out.

“Besides, you don’t need any more party members. You have me, and we’re about to go on an adventure. Burton needs our help. But first, we should ask Iris to come with us.”

“‘Burton’? You mean that weird scholar? And are you sure we should be taking Iris with us? Today might be the day Burton gets executed for lèse-majesté.”

I understood where she was coming from, but the written request I got in Axel stated that we wanted the same party members as last time.

Yunyun looked up at the castle towering over us and anxiously muttered:

“Plus, I’m starting to worry that maybe we shouldn’t show up to the castle uninvited anymore…”

“Excuse me, sir!”

“Were you not listening to what I just said?!”

The guard's face twisted in disgust, as if he already recognized us.

"We came to invite Iris to hang out. Could you please tell her that her friend Megumin is here?"

"We cannot have you inviting our nation's princess to 'hang out' whenever you please."

"See? Even the guards don't want us here! Let's go home! I can do whatever Burton wants by myself!" Yunyun argued vehemently and in a fluster.

"We do not even know what kind of quest it is, though, and we are both spell-casters. We need someone strong to take the front line, and there is nobody better than Iris who can do that."

"You plan on making Princess Iris guard you?! There's no way I'm going to tell her you're here now!"

"See?!"

Witnessing Yunyun on the verge of tears gave me a wonderful idea.

"Then how about we do this? Iris can stay, but you need to come with us. Surely, a castle guard would be able to handle the front line."

"I am in the middle of work."

"I'm sorry! Don't mind her! She's just an idiot! I'll take her home!"

My rude friend grabbed me by the arm and tried to pull me away, but…

"Listen, we are Iris's friends, and we are about to go on a quest without physical attackers to take the front line to protect us—two little girls. Surely, it would break Iris's heart if something happened to us."

"Uh…"

"I'm sorry! I'm so sorry! Please don't listen to her!"

As Yunyun profusely apologized to the obviously troubled guard, a middle-aged gentleman suddenly emerged from the station at the side of the castle gate.

"Then allow me to go with you. My shift is almost over, after all."

“What?! Captain, are you serious?!”

The middle-aged man called Captain did look strong.

“I used to be an adventurer, too, so I am confident I will not hold you back. I am off tomorrow, and you are Princess Iris’s friends as well, which is all the more reason to help. Allow me to take the front,” said the captain proudly with a confident smirk.

“Yunyun, we just found ourselves a powerhouse. I think he’d be a good replacement for Iris.”

“Are you sure we should be bringing castle guards with us, though? …But I guess it’d probably be better than putting Iris into any potential danger.”

A bell suddenly began to chime in the background, as if to alert the workers that the next shift was starting.

“Perfect. My shift just ended. From now on, I will be your vanguard whenever you need help, so do you think you could please stop inviting Iris?”

“Very well. Now that I think about it, this is perfect. I do not get as much time to shine if Iris goes all out on the enemy anyway, so I probably should have stopped inviting her a while ago.”

The captain and I shared a merry smile, but Yunyun was subtly pointing at the castle gate as if she was trying to get our attention.

“…”

Standing behind the opened gate was Iris, with tears in her eyes, pouting.

4

“I can’t believe you! Seriously?! I never knew you could be so coldhearted, boss!”

“Can you really blame me? It is not my fault you’re a princess.”

Even after we started heading over to the Adventurers Guild in the capital, Iris was still pouting and in a bad mood. Yunyun, who was standing by her side, wore an expression of painful reluctance.

“Regardless, that man did seem strong. Should we have brought him with us?”

“Yeah, especially since he volunteered and everything.”

The captain offered to come with us as Iris’s guard, but…

“I can handle being the vanguard by myself! I’ll show you just how useful I can be!”

“I am not going to get a chance to do anything if you take this too seriously! I am the boss, so don’t get carried away!”

We childishly argued back and forth until we reached the Guild, only to find Burton standing before the door as if he was tired of waiting for us.

“At last! You’re here! I’m so glad you came!” cried Burton, pushing his glasses up on his nose.

Iris smiled back and replied:

“It is so wonderful to see you again, Burton! I heard the book you wrote has been flying off the shelves ever since you were recognized for your discovery of the King Toad! Congratulations!”

However, Burton quietly stared at us as if he couldn’t even hear Iris. Yunyun curiously tilted her head to the side.

“Burton? Is everything okay? You didn’t forget Iris, right? Show some manners.”

But he still didn’t reply, so I muttered,

“Long time no see, Professor Burton.”

“Oh, Megumin, my dear! What a pleasure to see you again! I have officially received my doctorate now, and it’s thanks to you all! Thank you so much!”

It looked like he was planning on ignoring anyone who didn’t refer to him as “Professor.” Some things never changed—his aggravating personality, for instance.

“U-um… Professor Burton, it is wonderful to see you again. I heard your *Biology for Dopes* book was a bestseller. Congratulations.”

“Oh, thank you very much for your kind words! Would you like my autograph, too, perhaps?”

“N-no thank you…”

Burton cackled with evident satisfaction, still clearly oblivious to the fact that Iris was the princess.

“Hey, Megumin, maybe we should *do something* about him during the quest before things get out of hand?”

“You sometimes go a little overboard. Plus, this old man’s apparently famous now, so let’s just leave him alone.”

Burton’s expression was suddenly overcome with an air of seriousness in the midst of our whispers.

“Anyway, there is a reason why I, the authority on biology and bestselling author, called you all here today. It was sunny out the day after you defeated the King Toad on your previous quest. However…”

I almost forgot that the whole reason we’d defeated the King Toad was to end the rainy season so that Burton could take Barbera from the pub out on a date the next day. It sounded absolutely ridiculous to us at first, but she was apparently his childhood friend, and his story about her really made you root for him. And yet…

“What happened with Barbera? Did she leave you after your ego trip?”

“What are you talking about? Things are going very well between us thanks to you all. She even invited me on a date the other day. She was so cute, begging me to buy her this and that.”

Burton’s lips curled upward in rapt admiration.

“Oh. I guess making the leap from wannabe professor to bestseller really helped y—”

“Megumin, shh! Some things shouldn’t be said, even if they are true!”

Iris cast Yunyun a skeptical gaze as she covered my mouth, then took a step forward with a smile as if to change the subject.

“So, Professor Burton, why did you ask to meet with us today?”

“Oh yeah! So I bought Barbera everything she asked for, but when I took her to the jewelry store and bought an engagement ring on the spur of the moment, she wouldn’t accept it. It was the most expensive thing at the store, and yet…”

…I see.

“So basically, she took those other presents without remorse, but the engagement ring made her uncomfortable, and she wanted nothing to do with it.”

“Megumin?! Would it kill you to have some tact?!”

Burton bitterly smirked.

“So that’s how she felt, huh? Actually, the reason why I requested to meet you all today was because I needed some relationship advice. Last time, you guys taught me a little about how women think and feel, and things went well thanks to your advice. But it looks like my ego ruined it…”

“I see. We actually came all the way here because we thought we could squeeze some more reward money out of you, since you’re famous thanks to us defeating the King Toad.”

“Stop chiming in with your rude comments!”

Just as Yunyun thrust me aside for butting in too much…

“I know how Barbera feels!”

Iris suddenly shouted with her fists clenched and stars in her eyes. She showed Burton her cheap ring, ill-fitting for a princess, and said:

“Do you see this? While this ring is far from valuable in a monetary sense, it is the treasure I value most out of every piece of jewelry I own. Surely, Barbera must want something that feels special to her as well. It has to be thoughtful. That’s why…!”

I was pretty sure she’d gotten that ring from Kazuma. I gradually felt myself annoyed at her showing off the ring until Burton suddenly let out a sigh.

“A kid like you doesn’t understand love…”

“I am trying to help you! Ugh! Jerk!”

Burton seemed somewhat cheerful, despite the fact that Iris was smacking him.

“But while a child, you are still a girl. Hmm… I see… Something thoughtful…,” muttered the middle-aged man before pondering for a few moments.

“Megumin, I have a new job for you all! There is something I want you to get for me!” continued Burton as Iris shook him.

“Apologize…! Apologize for treating me like a child!”

5

Different people value different things. I felt that frequenting a popular store until you got your hands on something that was usually impossible to get unless reserved way in advance was more than thoughtful enough. People good with their hands could even make it themselves. If someone worked their butt off and bought a ring that cost them three months’ salary, then the recipient would be overjoyed, regardless of the price. So the most thoughtful present a biologist could get would be…

“Burton, Burton, Burton!!”

“Call me Professor, Yunyun! Those are Magic Eaters! Their population has decreased immensely, so it’s uncommon to see one anymore, but they are extremely rare sprites that eat mana!”

We were being chased by luminous, floating creatures throughout the forest next to the capital.

“Burton, magic isn’t working on them! Do they not have any weaknesses?!”

“I told you to call me Professor, Yunyun! Magic Eaters absorb most magic attacks. There are only two ways to realistically defeat them: use Light of Saber, which turns the caster’s power itself into an attack, or use Explosion, which can inflict damage on anything and everything!”

After hearing that, Yunyun immediately swung her right hand into the air and chanted a spell.

“*Light of Saber*!!”

A blinding flash of light swallowed the area, splitting one of the luminous bodies in half. However…

“Burton, it merged back together!”

“I told you to call me— Ah, forget it! You need to hit each spirit a hundred times with Light of Saber! Surely, that will be enough to—”

“I don’t have enough mana to do that! Is there any other way to defeat them?! We’re going to have to get Megumin to use Explosion again if there isn’t!”

Usually, I would have loved to save the day, but I felt like it’d be a waste using Explosion on some flashing ball of light when the forest was filled with countless powerful monsters.

“You should be able to hurt it if you use a weapon infused with mana! But it would have to be an extremely powerful weapon to defeat a Magic Eater, or…”

Before Burton even finished his sentence, one of the Magic Eaters’ light dispersed, and it disappeared. When I looked to my side, I noticed Iris in the middle of attacking another Magic Eater with a glowing sword. It looked like she managed to bring her country’s national treasure, Calibur, with her this time. The out-of-breath professor suddenly stopped running, as if he was relieved.

“Good work, Iris. I’ll make sure to give you my autograph once we’re back in town.”

“N-no thank you. I’m more interested in knowing how such powerful monsters ended up decreasing in population.”

Iris brought up a fine point while slaying another Magic Eater.

“That is a very good question, Iris! It’s because Magic Eaters are attracted to high-level monsters with powerful magic, driving them to go on suicide missions. There’s even a famous story about countless spheres of light gathering before the Demon King’s castle.”

Powerful magic…

“So these Magic Eaters are attracted to anything powerful in the area?”

“That’s right, Megumin. In other words, it was one of us who attracted them!”

Burton stared hard at Iris as she slayed the final monster.

She looked away and muttered,

“That’s the Crimson Magic Clan for you. Boss and Yunyun have extremely powerful magic.”

“Oh, come on. I’m not that amazing.”

“I don’t think it was Megumin and me who attracted the monsters…”

After sheathing her sword, Iris showed Burton the expensive necklace she was wearing.

“I-it wasn’t me. I made sure to bring a powerful magic item with me this time that suppresses my mana, since it made all those gelatinous slimes avoid me last time!”

“Magic Eaters are attracted to powerful magic items as well.”

After hearing that, Iris nonchalantly hid not only the necklace behind her back but her holy sword, a divine relic even more powerful than a magic item, as well.

“So, Professor Burton, are we any closer to finding that Crystal Liger?”

The reason why we were this deep in the forest was because we were searching for the Crystal Liger, said to already be extinct, because that was the “something special” Burton wanted to give to Barbera. It was a monster covered in crystal-like gems, which were extremely rare and which meant you could hardly find them being sold as raw materials anywhere. They were sought after by many adventurers due to the fact that slaying one would not only make you famous but extremely rich. Nevertheless, that led to them being overhunted, which was why they were said to be extinct. However…

“I am positive there is one in this forest. I can just tell, since I am an authority on biology, after all. The Crystal Liger is cautious and clever, so the average

adventurer would never be able to even find their tracks. But me? Well…”

I would usually think someone like this was talking out of their rear end, but he had found the King Toad. He must have had some sort of supporting evidence to make him this confident. We were already deep into the forest, but Burton still hadn’t taken his eyes off the ground.

“Oh?”

After a sudden halt, he picked up a stick with a serious expression and began digging until he found a black lump. It had been covered by the leafy shade of the trees and completely hidden under the dirt. Burton carefully examined the black ball of matter. It wasn’t long before Iris squatted by his side and began observing it, as if it had tickled her curiosity as well.

“What is it?”

“Ha-ha. Did it pique your curiosity? Give it a little poke with your sword.”

Iris thrusted it with the tip of her sword as suggested, causing it to crumble.

“I-it smells awful! What is this, Professor Burton?!”

“Monster excrement… H-hey! Don’t point your sword at me!”

Burton examined the crumbled feces while paying no attention to Iris, who was cleaning off the holy sword with tears in her eyes.

“This is it! I found a hard fragment mixed in the feces! This is the Crystal Liger’s excrement! You did it, Iris! I was able to find a trace of the Crystal Liger thanks to poking around its feces!”

“I feel like you could phrase that better…,” whined Iris, who had stabbed monster dung with a national treasure.

“I’m glad you found the Crystal Liger’s poop and all, but how are we going to catch it? We’d be able to use the poop to find it if we had an Archer with a tracking skill, but…”

“Hey, Megumin? Do you think you could stop saying that?”

Burton smugly smirked at me.

“Cautious monsters are very particular about where they relieve themselves. Finding its feces here means that its turf is nearby.”

He then looked around until he eventually found something and picked it up.

“I found it! This is part of the Crystal Liger’s skin! It must have rubbed its body against this tree to shed old skin! It looks like it tried to smash it into small pieces and bury it, but you can’t fool these eyes!”

It was a tiny, gemlike fragment, so small that it was closer to a fine powder than a rock.

“All that’s left is to find the monster itself, then, huh? Ligers seem to be extremely quick, but I should be able to take care of it if I blow up the area with Explosion.”

But the excited professor shook his head with a serious look on his face.

“That won’t be necessary. Crystal Ligers are even rarer than Magic Eaters, so when we find it, all we need to do is take the tip of its tail. Ligers’ tails can regenerate almost immediately, and the tail alone has enough precious stones to make a massive ring!”

“So you’re a conservationist now, too, huh? The tip of its tail… That means…”

Everyone’s gazes shifted toward the princess holding her sword.

“Crystal Ligers love shiny gems. In addition, they tend to love more expensive gems as well. Just like their cautious habits, they can’t fight their nature. Unfortunately, I was only able to get my hands on some cheap ones, but…”

Burton began scattering gems in an open area slightly away from where we’d found the monster dung.

“Dragons are said to love shiny things as well. There are various guesses as to why: There is mana hidden inside gold and gems, shiny objects simply have the power to confuse and control living creatures, etcetera, but—Megumin… Megumin! Will you stop picking up the gems I’m scattering?!”

Those words brought me back to my senses. I had been absentmindedly picking up the gems.

“Interesting. It appears gems really do have the power to control living creatures. Even a member of the Crimson Magic Clan with a resistance to magic such as I couldn’t help myself…”

“You’re just obsessed with money.”

I ignored Yunyun’s retort while sprinkling the gems back on the ground until all of a sudden, I felt a powerful gaze on me. I instantly looked over and saw a cat-type monster almost twice the size of a Beginner’s Bane glittering in the sun. It was staring at the necklace hanging around Iris’s neck, something a commoner could never afford.

“Hey, Iris, can I ask you something? The gems on that magic necklace of yours look really expensive, so I was wondering exactly how much they were worth.”

“…I was told this necklace is a national treasure…”

The Crystal Liger suddenly sprinted straight for Iris!

6

“Yunyun, slow it down! I don’t even want to think about the mess we’re going to be in if that thing attacks Iris and steals a national treasure!”

“Iris, run! *Bottomless Swamp*!”

Yunyun immediately grasped the gravity of the situation and cast a swamp spell while on the verge of tears, but the Crystal Liger simply leaped over the bottomless pit without showing any signs of panicking. It hopped from tree to tree, approaching its target. It wasn’t even acknowledging our existence. Saliva dripping from its chin, the liger continued to run toward Iris at full speed as she stood in front of Burton with her sword drawn.

“Liger-type monsters such as Beginner’s Banes are all good at climbing trees! Yunyun, it is clear that you didn’t read my bestselling book, so you lose a point as an adventurer!”

“I wouldn’t even have to worry about slowing it down if you hadn’t ordered

us not to kill it! Does it not have any weaknesses?!” shouted Yunyun with a dagger in her right hand and a wand in her left.

Burton fled to my side, smugly smirked, and said:

“Allow me to take care of its weakness! Liger-type monsters can’t reach behind them with their forelegs, so if you were to pet their head, you gently would approach them from behind and—”

“Megumin, get ready to cast Explosion!”

“I think Beginner’s Bane–type monsters are cool, so I kind of like them, but I guess we don’t have much of a choice.”

“Wait! Stop, I say!”

I gave up on the idea of cutting off its tail and got into stance to cast Explosion, but Burton grabbed my wand and wouldn’t let go. Iris saw him beg me to stop and promptly dropped her sword on the ground.

“Yunyun! I am going to grab it with my bare hands, so I want you to cast Light of Saber and cut off the tip of its tail! Can you do that?!”

“You’re going to what?! Iris, forget that. It’s a rare monster! Kill it!”

“Yunyun, wait! As a biologist, I cannot just stand here and allow you all to kill it!”

Burton, refusing to give up, shook his head while clinging to Yunyun.

I placed a hand on his shoulder and said:

“Burton, I respect your resolution as a biologist, but is it worth risking Iris’s life to protect that liger? Would Barbera really accept a gift that you could only get your hands on because you put someone else in danger?”

My expression was the epitome of seriousness.

“Grrr! Grrrrrr!”

The liger grew more cautious and stopped after noticing Iris throw her sword down. While the necklace was suppressing her mana, its wild instincts must have warned it. Liger-type monsters were impressively smart.

“Megumin?! What are you doing?! I don’t care how poor you are. I told you

to stop eating stuff you find on the ground, didn't I?! You picked up some weird mushroom and ate it, didn't you?!"

I was trying to have a serious conversation, but Yunyun wouldn't stop screaming.

"Will you shut up?! You're ruining our chances of persuading him! If something were to happen to Iris or that national treasure, *we're* going to be the ones who are beheaded! What you need to be doing is paying him lip service so we can kill that thing!"

"At least whisper if you are going to talk about me like that! But… Hmm… Yes… Barbera wouldn't be happy if she knew I put a child in danger to get her that gem…"

"Burton, you were hiding behind me for almost the entire time?! I am going to get mad if you keep treating me like a child," stated Iris as she and the liger stared each other down.

Until out of nowhere…

"Scholar Iris, leave the rest to me. Here, let me borrow that necklace."

Burton took a step forward with a strong will burning in his eyes, causing Yunyun to panic and begin casting a spell. It was the familiar chant of one of her strongest spells: Light of Saber.

"Burton, that necklace is a national treasure, so I don't recommend trying to steal it and run away."

"Megumin, this is serious, so could you please not bother me right now?! Listen, everybody. I will act as a decoy, and when the liger pounces at me, I want you to cut off the tip of its tail. I am the biologist Burton. I will not allow myself to fear a monster!"

""Professor Burton!""

Although Yunyun's and Iris's voices were filled with admiration, Burton was trembling at the knees.

"Don't push yourself too hard. You just got your hands on a nice royalty deal and are considered an authority in your field. You're a professor now, so how

about you forget Barbera and go after someone younger instead? You'd be able to find someone in no time with your fame and money."

"What do you have against me, Megumin?! Why are you constantly taking jabs at me?!" shouted Burton as Iris handed him the necklace. Just then…

"The liger is acting strange, as if something is scaring it…"

The liger, which had been growling at Iris, suddenly froze. It was as if a house cat had run into an all-powerful being.

"Ahhh! The necklace was suppressing my mana, so that's probably why it's —!"

The liger jumped at the sound of Iris's voice.

"Oh yeah. You brought that magic item with you so weak monsters wouldn't run away. I guess once you took it off…"

"D-don't be scared. It's okay. See? I'm unarmed!"

Iris smiled with her arms spread out, as if to show she didn't have a weapon, but her efforts bore no fruit, for the liger slowly stepped back…

"Then how about this?!"

Burton suddenly squealed while stripping off his clothes.

"Yunyun, a new rare monster has appeared. We should slay it first before it corrupts Iris."

"Okay. I was always worried he might do something to Iris, but I never expected he'd try anything here."

Yunyun and I braced ourselves for battle, but the new monster immediately began to protest, sputtering each word.

"I am not joking around! This is serious! Listen, liger-type monsters take submissive positions before those stronger than they are! They get on the ground and roll over to expose their stomach and throat! If we do this, we can convince it that we're weak so it won't run away!"

"The liger seems to be more afraid of you than it is of Iris."

The liger retreated even farther back as the professor beckoned it in only his

underwear.

“Did it see through my bluff?! Is my overpowering aura of absolute authority causing it to cower away?”

“I’m pretty sure any monster would be cautious of a rare specimen like you, Burton.”

Just then…

“*Light of Saber*!!”

“…?!”

Yunyun finished casting her spell and swung her sword of light at the liger’s tail, but the cautious liger already had its guard up and managed to dodge the attack, albeit barely.

“Iris, now!”

“Okay! I’ve got this!”

I kicked the holy sword on the ground up into the air, sending it right over to Iris, who swiftly caught it.

7

We were on our way back from the depths of the forest. It was already getting close to evening by the time the entrance came into sight.

“It has gotten late. I really hope the castle hasn’t started panicking and searching for Iris.”

Iris slightly twitched when I expressed my concern.

“Yeah. But that’s not all we should be worried about, right?”

Yunyun’s comment seemed to make Iris’s trembling even worse.

“Am I making enough off royalties to pay for that necklace?”

“I-I’m so sorry, everyone! I promise none of you will get into any trouble!”

Iris apologized in a fluster after hearing Burton’s mutterings.

“Don’t blame yourself, Iris. We all saw how the liger looked at you. Besides, you’re still just a kid. Not me, though. I wouldn’t even hesitate to blow up a loving, snuggling couple of Duxion if I had to.”

“You could do with some empathy.”

After catching the holy sword, Iris had started swinging it to slay the beast, but…

“It was careless of me to forget that Crystal Ligers are just high-level Beginner’s Banes. Acting friendly and sweet to trick its opponent into lowering their guard and stealing the necklace was way too clever.”

Liger-type monsters are known for being smart, so when it noticed Iris was hesitant to attack, it rolled on its back and started acting playful. Then, right when we let our guards down, it swiped the necklace with its mouth and took off.

“It was my fault for ever wanting the gems of a Crystal Liger. Allow me to apologize to your parents, Scholar Iris. I will pay them back for the necklace. Don’t worry. They won’t get mad at you if the authority on biology and bestselling author apologizes on your behalf!”

Surely, the castle royalty would get mad at this middle-aged man, though, who obviously still hadn’t realized who Iris was. Yunyun smirked bitterly.

“We can’t have our client apologizing. Besides, it isn’t uncommon for adventurers to lose their equipment during a quest.”

“Y-yes, I agree. Besides, I was the one who decided to take that expensive necklace with me. None of this was your fault! Yes, that’s what I will tell Father while massaging his shoulders…”

Iris—who had grown especially calculating as of late, as if someone was rubbing off on her—quietly trailed off while muttering to herself.

“We can worry about the necklace later. What are we going to do about Burton’s engagement ring?”

““Er…””

Iris and Yunyun quietly groaned. However…

“Oh. Don’t worry about that. Look!”

Burton produced an extremely tiny crystal. It was one of the crystals he’d picked up while we were tracking the Crystal Liger.

“I remembered what Scholar Iris said. A thoughtful present is far better than an expensive one. While small, this crystal is something I got on my own. There is nothing more thoughtful than that…right? …N-no good?”

He started off cheerful, but his words gradually lost confidence when he saw the stunned looks on our faces. I faced our anxious client…

“I don’t think it’s a bad idea at all. It looks like you’re finally starting to understand women,” I said with a smile.

“All right, then. Let’s get that gem made into a ring. Burton, I’m sure she’ll be ecstatic! After all, she’s going to be getting a ring made with a crystal from a monster that was said to be extinct.”

Burton was mirthfully nodding in agreement with Yunyun until all of a sudden, his face turned white as a ghost.

“O-oh no! Once word gets out that I found the Crystal Liger, people are going to start hunting it again!”

…Oops.

“Don’t worry about that beast. That scoundrel stole Iris’s necklace. There is no reason to feel sorry for it.”

“N-no! I cannot allow it! The biologist inside me won’t allow it!”

But…

“I vaguely remember you not caring if the fabled King Toad went extinct during our last quest.”

“Do not even think about comparing my dear ligers to lowly frogs.”

This man… I swear…

“Anyway, good luck with Barbera. Is everyone else ready to head home? We should take Iris back to the castle before it gets too late.”

“Yes, I still have to tell my parents about the necklace…”

“Wait! Not so fast! You have treated me so well, and I trust you all very much, so please…! Share the knowledge of the Crimson Magic Clan with me! There has to be a way I can turn this gem into a ring and still keep the Crystal Liger from being hunted!”

I thought about what I could do to help as a member of the Crimson Magic Clan, despite being annoyed that Burton was clinging to me.

“There is one thing you can do. You can slay the Crystal Liger yourself. That way, there wouldn’t be a monster to hunt anymore.”

“Stop playing around.”

Burton wore a troubled expression as he looked down at the glittering gem.

I faced him and said:

“Fortunately, no strong monsters showed up today, so I still have plenty of mana.”

“…? What are you talking about, Megumin?”

Burton curiously furrowed his brow, but Yunyun pulled a face as if she instantly knew what I meant.

“D-do not even think about it! We’re right next to the capital! If you’re going to do it, then go deep into the forest first!”

After hearing that, Iris apparently caught on to what we were talking about as well.

“Go for it, boss! I, the princess of Belzerg, will be witness to your slaying of the Crystal Liger!”

“Hmm?!”

Burton let out a hysterical shriek.

Yunyun wryly smirked at Iris and replied:

“Iris, adventurers don’t need witnesses. The monsters we slay are recorded on our Adventurer’s Card, so…”

“It’s okay!”

“It is?! No, Iris! Don’t say it’s okay!”

Iris sent Yunyun a carefree smile. She really had been acting like a certain somebody back at the mansion.

“It seems we’re all on the same page. Now, Burton, look how hard both a princess and the greatest spell-caster of the Crimson Magic Clan are working for you. I will hunt you down myself if you mess up the proposal now.”

“Uh…”

Burton absentmindedly muttered to himself as his eyes were locked on Iris and had been ever since he’d let out that bizarre shriek. He was sweating profusely, which probably meant he had just realized who Iris really was. Burton’s lower lip was nervously quivering, the color in Yunyun’s face was long gone, and Iris…seemed to be somewhat excited.

Showering in their gazes, I raised my wand into the air and declared,

“I want each one of you to remember what I am about to say. With the help of the biologist Burton, we discovered a Crystal Liger, which was thought to have been extinct, in a forest near the capital. Hearing it was rare, I was unable to contain my desire to blow it up using my fabled Explosion spoken of in tales even in the city of Axel. The pitiful endangered species was wiped off the face of this planet, along with Iris’s necklace!”

After my speech, I loudly chanted the spell, then…

“*Explooosion*!!!”

…I unleashed the powerful spell in the middle of the capital’s forest.

In a small pub located in an obscure corner of the capital…

…Burton was handing a ring to a beautiful woman who appeared to be the owner. We watched from afar, unable to hear their conversation, but…

“Burton and Barbera look so happy.”

“They really do! We don’t even need to ask him how it went!”

Yunyun and Iris were right. The results spoke for themselves.

So…

“It’s clear they love each other but never got to communicate that until now. Look how happy they are. So how about we leave on a good note?”

“You will not be leaving! We told you explosion magic was prohibited within and around the imperial capital! And now you’re telling me there was a Crystal Liger? Those things went extinct a long time ago!”

The female officer, who oversaw the capital, was arresting me. She was an elite, as one would expect from someone working here, so she wasn’t going to be fooled that easily.

“Burton has proof that there was a Crystal Liger! It’s small, but it’s a real crystal!”

“I do *not* care! The fact that you cast Explosion near the capital is the problem!”

To make matters worse, I couldn’t move due to depleting all my mana, and she had tied me up, so there was nothing I could do when she tightly pinched my cheeks with both hands.

“Q-quit it! You’re picking on a little girl who can’t even move, and you call yourself an officer?!”

“Mind your tongue! Ugh! I’d lock you up and throw away the key if Iris wasn’t with you!”

After looking at Iris, who was smiling while watching over Burton, the frustrated officer began untying my rope.

“You got lucky this time. That girl’s basically my underling. You would have been nothing more than rust on her Calibur if you had ended up arresting me.”

“Princess Iris would never do something so absurd. Listen, you will be prohibited from entering this city if I ever catch you using explosion magic around here again,” threatened the officer.

“We do not yield to any authority. Our pride as members of the Crimson Magic Clan doesn’t allow that.”

“Acting like you’re tough doesn’t change a thing! Don’t use explosion magic around the capital ever again!”

“Okay, we’re here. I’m going to put you down. You should have recovered at least enough mana to walk on your own, right?”

It was already completely dark out by the time Yunyun carried me back to the mansion.

“I’m glad everything went well for Burton.”

“We didn’t end on a good note, though. Why am I the only one who had to get yelled at?”

Claire had scolded us when we took Iris back to the castle. After that, Lain had scolded us as well. Then…

“Everyone at the castle was mad at you.”

Yes. From maids to butlers, guards to random old guys—countless different people had scolded me while expressing concern as well. The princess did get home late, so I suppose it made sense, but…

“But why do I have to be yelled at for something that Iris did on her own? I didn’t even invite her. Plus, we only lost one national treasure. Big deal.”

“We should probably be grateful that they only got mad at us after what happened,” commented Yunyun.

I didn’t know how to describe it. All the adventures I had gone on lately were fun, but they weren’t exactly what I was after. I didn’t want to hold back. I wanted to…

“Besides, you’re our party’s leader, right? It’s your job to take responsibility when something happens.”

Yunyun was teasing me for a change, which was rare for her.

“There is absolutely nothing good about being the party’s leader. All it is is hard work.”

“I—I wouldn’t mind being the party leader if you really don’t like it that much… I mean, I am a candidate for the next village chief, so I need to start practicing being a leader…”

I was annoyed watching Yunyun fidget with hope in her eyes.

“Anyway, how will we invite Iris on adventures now? Monsters are going to start avoiding us everywhere we go without that necklace to suppress her mana.”

“Iris seemed kind of sad to say good-bye at the castle as well. I wish there was something we could do, but… Anyway, about me being the leader…”

Iris kept telling everyone that I had defeated the Crystal Liger, so that wasn’t a problem. But the national treasure—the necklace—was still gone. We could invite her on an adventure if we were fighting something extremely powerful that wouldn’t run away even after sensing her strong mana, but…

“We wouldn’t be able to get that necklace back ourselves.”

Iris, Yunyun, and I were far too specialized for battle, so we couldn’t do much else. We would need someone who could search, track, and give sound orders. Most importantly, we needed…

“Is it just me, or is this party way too disorganized?”

“Says the biggest troublemaker in the party. Don’t act like this has nothing to do with you.”

It was clear as day that even the most powerful and smartest party leader in the world wouldn’t be able to make it work when the only other party members were an overprotected princess and a lonely girl with no friends.

“Why are you looking at me and sighing? Can you not see you’re part of the problem?”

It finally hit me over these past few adventures without Kazuma. I preferred destroying to giving orders.

“…Kazuma must have it rough.”

She could say that again. Darkness not only had a weird fetish, but none of her attacks ever connected. Aqua had the worst luck and was great at messing things up. You couldn’t take your eyes off her for a second without her doing something she shouldn’t. Kazuma probably always had something to worry about, since he had two troublemakers in his group. I guess I was just going to

have to carry their dead weight and back him up.

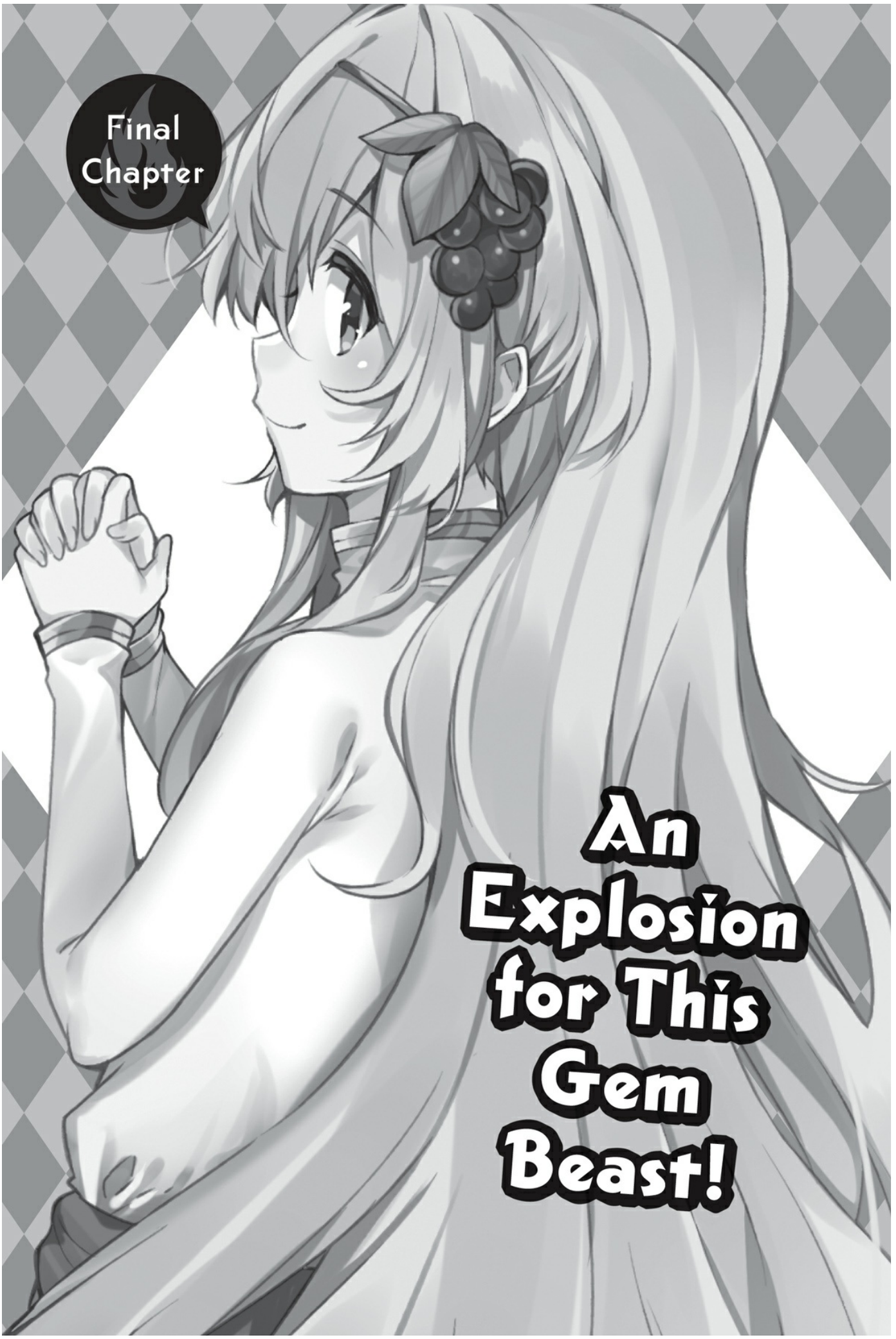
“Anyway, it has gotten late. I’m going to ask Kazuma for help tomorrow morning, but first, I have to tell everyone about what happened today. I’m sure he’ll help us. If you ignore his faults, he’s actually a nice guy deep down inside.”

“…Kazuma *really* has it rough. It doesn’t help that the biggest troublemakers always believe they’re the most useful.”

I had no idea what Yunyun was babbling about as she looked at the mansion with a sympathetic hue in her eyes, but…

“I’m home.”

…I opened the door to the mansion to tell everyone about my adventure today.


Final
Chapter
An
Explosion
for This
Gem
Beast!

1

I thought that things had been peaceful as of late, but it was nothing more than my imagination. I was suddenly approached with a problem first thing this morning.

“Wait. Could you repeat that for me?”

I asked Megumin, who was sitting on her heels on the rug in the mansion’s hall. I was sitting on the sofa while leaning forward with Darkness by my side, frozen with her mouth agape.

“Megumin, you went to slay a Crystal Liger? You know how I feel about money. Why didn’t you bring me with you? Now that I think about it, you didn’t tell me you went to hang out in Arcanletia until after the fact, either.”

“Shh. You’ve talked enough for today. This is a way bigger problem than that.”

For some reason or another, Aqua was sitting right next to Megumin, leaning toward her. I cleared my throat.

“So? What happened again?”

“I went on an adventure the other day, but…well, a monster known as the Crystal Liger ended up stealing a necklace, which is a national treasure, so I was wondering if you could come with me to steal it back?”

I wrapped my hands around my head and collapsed to the ground.

“This! This is why I didn’t want to go on an adventure! Why do you always cause trouble wherever you go?! I thought you had more sense than that by now! Even Aqua of all people hasn’t been causing any trouble lately!”

I thought the old Megumin was gone! I thought the mad dog inside her had finally calmed down, and yet…!

“Actually, Kazuma, yesterday Aqua was—”

“Hey, Darkness? Why do you have to go running your mouth the moment things start going well for me? I was planning on telling him myself after we

took care of Megumin's mess. People stop caring when you bring up small mistakes after big ones."

"Ahhhhhhhhhhh!"

I instinctively screamed after learning that there were still more problems I had to worry about. Megumin, who had been sitting with downcast eyes, suddenly lifted her head back up with a bashful smile.

"I went on an adventure the other day, but…"

"Why are you repeating your story as if nothing happened?! And what's with the smile?! Do you really think that'll work on me?! I am not going with you! Not this time! It's time for you to get a taste of what it's like to be me, cleaning up after all your messes! Do any of you oxygen thieves know how hard it is to be a leader?!"

Megumin's smile peeled off her face as her teeth audibly clenched together.

"I am asking you nicely! Unbelievable! I learned firsthand lately just how hard it is to be the leader! Yes, Kazuma! I understand how difficult things are for you! Wow! You're sooo amazing! You're great! Good job! Happy now?! You're going to end up coming with me eventually, so stop wasting our time!"

Y-you little…!

"Don't get short with me, loli! Just for that, I'm going to use Drain Touch on you every day until you don't even have a drop of mana left! You won't be able to use explosion magic until I decide to forgive you!"

"Wh-what is wrong with you? I do not find threats like that funny. There are some things that should never be said, human, and you just crossed a line."

Megumin swiftly stood up with a tense smile and slowly retreated with fear in her eyes like I had never seen before. I took out some wire for Bind and began spinning it in a threatening manner.

"My name is Kazuma Satou. I'm a man of my word, and I don't break promises. I'm the guy who faces absurdity and punishes anyone from the Crimson Magic Clan who gets too carried away. Life has been comfy lately. Too comfy—which is why you and Aqua have started to make light of me. It's time I

show you all just how serious I can be.”

Large drops of sweat dripped down Megumin’s cheeks until all of a sudden, she smiled as if a switch had been flipped.

“We all just need to calm down, Kazuma. I apologize for getting mad, so do you think you could put away that wire? The Kazuma I fell in love with would never do something so horrible. Whether we were being selfish or causing you trouble, the Kazuma I remember may have complained, but he would always come to our rescue in the end. Hee-hee… You must be in a bad mood, since I’ve been going on adventures without you lately. Fine. You win. Today, I will stay home all day with you, and we can relax.”

“*Bind*.”

Megumin rolled around the rug, unable to break free.

“Kazuma! I get it! I’m sorry! I apologize for losing my temper and for trying to weasel my way out of this! A-all right, you win! Could you please not get any closer?! Let’s make a deal! Come on, Kazuma!”

“Consider this a warning, Aqua! I’m going to drain Megumin’s mana until she can’t use explosion magic anymore! You can kiss that weird-looking rock and expensive booze in your room good-bye if you cross me! Got it?!”

“K-Kazuma! I didn’t disrespect you, so there’s no need to retaliate, right? But I mean, I guess I have been taking your kindness for granted a little too much lately. I’ll handle the small problem I caused yesterday myself, okay? So you don’t have to punish me.”

I reached out to touch Megumin, paying no attention to Aqua as she slipped behind Darkness with fear painted on her face.

“Kazumaaaaaaaaa! Please wait I’m sorry please forgive me! It isn’t what you think! I was just a little moody because you haven’t been paying attention to me at all lately, so I had to go on an adventure with Yunyun, but I really just wanted to go on an adventure with you guys, so please forgive me because I regret my actions, and I’ll do anything to make it up to you!”

Right as my hand was about to touch the back of Megumin’s neck…

“‘Anything,’ you say?”

I froze in place and was immediately showered with their distant gazes.

“No—I mean… I don’t mind. It’s not like this is anything new, but I have mixed feelings seeing you always give in to your desires like this…,” Megumin said before letting out a sigh.

“What? No. I’m not asking you to do anything lewd, and don’t think I’m a sucker you can easily please just by showing some skin.”

“What happened to Kazuma? Do you think somebody put a curse on him?”

“He doesn’t look cursed to my clear, holy eyes.”

I ignored the other two as they whispered and faced Megumin, who was still in shock.

“I, Kazuma Satou, will now be sealing your explosion magic. From this day forth, whenever you want to use magic…you will need my, your *master’s*, permission.”

“‘M-master’?! That has a nice ring to it! But don’t think I’m going to do whatever you want me to just because you’re using cool words like *seal* and *master*!”

I used Drain Touch on the hollering spell-caster, draining just enough mana that she wouldn’t be able to use explosion magic anymore.

“*Tsk…!* The evil NEET feared my power, so he locked it away with a formidable seal…! Mark my words. All will be swallowed in the flames of the underworld once the seal is broken.”

“And that’s why I sealed your explosion magic. Because you say stuff like that. Now come on! Let’s go! I’ll help you this time, since you promised to do anything I say!”

“See, Darkness? It’s so easy to manipulate Kazuma.”

“Shh! Keep your voice down… Hey, Kazuma. Can I ask you something?”

Darkness, who had just been whispering with Aqua, wore a somewhat hopeful expression.

“I understand that you’ll be dealing with Megumin and Aqua, but what are you going to do to me if I cause trouble?”

“I’ll make you wear a frilly dress, invite every adventurer in town, and have a photo shoot—”

“I didn’t do anything, okay?! I was just asking.”

2

I looked over at Megumin once we left the mansion.

“So do you have any idea where this Crystal Liger might be?”

“I have an idea, but first, we need to go to the capital. By the way, ligers apparently love expensive gems.”

Expensive gems…

“Hey, Darkness?”

“No.”

Darkness immediately replied before I even said anything.

“This is your time to shine, though. Your family is well-off. Surely, you have a gem or two you can spare.”

“I have a feeling if I lend them to you, I’m not getting them back, so no thank you! Each of my family’s gems has historical value!”

Aqua took off sprinting the moment she heard that, almost immediately followed by Megumin. They must have been heading to the Dustiness residence.

“Where do you think you’re—? Hold on! Kazuma, why do you have a pendant with my family crest on it?! What are you planning to do with that?!”

I watched them run off while flauntingly spinning a pendant Darkness had let me borrow a while ago that I never gave back.

“Hey! Return that! You don’t need it anymore!”

“It’s actually come in handy quite a bit. Lately, I’ve been enjoying wearing it

around my neck while flaunting it in front of people who look like nobles.”

Some had stared at me with envious gazes while others had randomly treated me to a meal, but Darkness stole it back from me before I could even tell her.

“I can’t believe you! You’re— Wait. No. I don’t have time to scold you right now. I need to catch up with the others first!”

“Forget about them, milady. Let’s just go have a cup of tea and wait for their return.”

“Quit it. We can do that some other time. If I don’t hurry, they’ll…! …I see. You are trying to prevent me from catching up with them. Very well. I’ll simply have to defeat you first before going after them.”

Oh?

“What’s the matter, milady? You seem far more aggressive than usual. Don’t tell me you think you can defeat me?”

Despite never beating me before, Darkness wasted no time getting into a stance for battle with an audacious smirk.

“You shouldn’t underestimate me, Kazuma. The only move you have that I need to watch out for right now is Bind. Neither Drain Touch nor Freeze can stop me!”

Darkness said while lowering her stance even more, as if to prepare herself for Bind.

“Wow. The once naive noblewoman has grown quite a bit, huh? The old you would have tried rushing at me without even thinking, only to end up trapped with Bind. After that, people would have started to crowd around, hurling insults at you until the humiliation—”

“That won’t work on me anymore, Kazuma,” replied Darkness, voice dripping with confidence.

“You’re trying to use my masochism against me to get me to surrender, right? The old me would have been tricked, but countless disappointments have taught me not to get my hopes up! You always tell me you’re going to do something amazing—something utterly humiliating—and yet you never do! No

longer will I be fooled by your honeyed words!”

Honeyed words?

“Well, if you really want me to, I guess I could humiliate you, but you always get cold feet when I do. You’re all talk. You just wanna appear quirky.”

“‘A-all talk’?! I just want to ‘appear quirky’?! You’re just trying to provoke me so I’ll play your game. But I’m not going to fall for your sweet talk any—!”

All of a sudden, glittering lights started to approach us from the opposite direction. It was Aqua and Megumin carrying gems.

“Good job, Kazuma! We borrowed a lot of expensive gems!”

“We told Darkness’s father that she was begging to borrow them, so he loaned us the family heirlooms.”

“Man, took you long enough… Huh?! What’s wrong, Darkness? My role here is done, so we can just say you won.”

Darkness had gotten so into it that she had forgotten I was only trying to slow her down.

“No. I lost…,” she muttered before looking away with a slight pout.

We were now thoroughly prepared to finally head over to the capital when…

“You’ve got to be kidding me. Why am I the only one still prohibited from using it?!”

“I don’t make the rules! I only enforce them. And I was told by the boss to get rid of you if you tried to use the teleporter to the imperial capital.”

We had stopped by the teleporter so they could send us to the capital, but I was apparently still prohibited from entering. I edged in on the woman working there until her lips curled in a troubled manner, but…

“Hold on. I understand this man is prohibited from entering the capital, but this is an exception. I vow in the name of the Dustiness family that I will not allow him to…to cause…”

“Hey?! Finish your vow already! Why do you look so uncertain all of a sudden?!”

After we arrived at the capital thanks to Darkness's political influence, Megumin randomly started staring at us as if she wanted to say something.

"Yes, Megumin? Anything you want to say?"

"Oh… I was just thinking about how we used political power to get something done…and how everyone's actions were influencing *her*…"

Who was she talking about?

As Megumin spoke, Aqua suddenly began tugging at Darkness's clothes.

"Hey, Darkness. Could I also have a pendant with your family crest on it like Kazuma has?"

"N-no. Besides, Kazuma doesn't have one anymore. I took it back."

Aqua curiously tilted her head to the side.

"Kazuma didn't just have one of your family's necklaces. I saw him walk into an expensive-looking restaurant the other day using a pendant with some other nobleman's family crest on it. I want political power to abuse, too."

"What is the meaning of this, Kazuma?! Where did you get someone else's crest?! I thought you were only borrowing mine?!"

"This woman named Claire gave me hers a while back. It's really useful. I can waltz right into shops meant for nobles in just a tracksuit and still not get thrown out."

Darkness glared at me as if to say, *What is wrong with this guy?* So I turned around and began following after Megumin, who was leading the way. We eventually arrived at the capital's Adventurers Guild. Whether it was the size of the building or the quality of the adventurers, this Guild was in a different league than the one back in Axel. When I walked through the entrance, praying that no tough-looking adventurers would mess with me, Megumin was already approaching the receptionist as if it was second nature. She then took a seat in front of the counter as if she owned the place, and…

"I have arrived for the quest. Could you get him for me?"

"I will call for him right away, Madam Megumin."

What the…? Why did their exchange make it sound like Megumin was some sort of seasoned adventurer?

“Yo, Megumin! Since when did you become a regular here? By the way, all the other adventurers are staring at you, you know?”

“*Sigh…* A troublesome bunch, aren’t they? I did well in a few big quests lately, and they’re already worshipping me,” replied Megumin while maintaining a cool, relaxed expression.

“*Psst.* Aqua, how did you let it get this bad? I don’t know what she did, but Megumin seems to think she’s cool now for some reason.”

“Don’t blame me, Kazuma. You’re her babysitter, aren’t you?”

Megumin’s ears turned red, as if she had heard our whispers. Darkness, however, smiled gently at her.

“You just wanted to show off, right, Megumin? I get it. Everyone your age wants to stand out.”

“N-no, I really am a regular here! Um… Oh, if it isn’t Max!”

Blushing, Megumin looked around until she found a man with a scar on his nose who was in the middle of day drinking.

“My name isn’t Max. It’s Rex…”

The burly man corrected her as if his feelings were slightly hurt. Sitting next to him were a strong-willed-looking woman and a man with an ax hanging over his shoulder. They both flashed friendly smiles at Megumin.

“K-Kazuma, look! Megumin is talking with experienced adventurers like they’re friends!”

“Kazuma, this is bizarre. Megumin’s starting to look like a seasoned adventurer, too.”

“Relax, you two. They’re shills. She must have paid them before we got here to pretend to know her.”

“I have had enough of you guys! Why would I go to such lengths to make it look like I’m a regular here?! Those three actually once asked me to join their

group a long time ago!”

Megumin’s enraged words gave me the relief I had been hoping for.

“Your first mistake was overselling your story. Nobody would ever ask you to join their party.”

“I, for one, am relieved.”

“Y-you shouldn’t lie, Megumin. Lying always leads to more trouble.”

After hearing our comments, Megumin immediately grabbed this Rex fellow and dragged him over to us.

“Come on—tell my friends what happened!”

“Huh?! O-oh, uh… Yes, we did ask Megumin to join our party a while ago. She’s a member of the Crimson Magic Clan, and she can even use explosion magic, so we asked her if she wanted to work with us in the capital.”

He didn’t seem to be lying, but…

“Hey, do they sell any magic items here you can brainwash people with?”

“I’m sure she just threatened them.”

“No. She probably is holding somebody hostage.”

“Okay, that’s it. Kazuma, Aqua, Darkness. Let’s take this outside.”

While we were teasing Megumin, the receptionist suddenly returned with someone.

“I apologize for keeping you waiting. I have brought with me Professor Burton.”

It was a middle-aged man with glasses.

“Nice to see you again so soon, Scholar Megumin! Those three must be your friends, huh? I am Burton. I am an authority in the field of biology and a bestselling author. I’m guessing you’ll be wanting my autograph.”

3

According to Scholar Megumin, the national treasure had been stolen during

a quest this middle-aged man gave her. Normally, adventurers were personally liable for any equipment they lost during a quest, but…

“I owe you, Scholar Megumin, for helping me with more than just work, so I thought I could help you track down the Crystal Liger.”

“Wow, Scholar Megumin. Is this really happening? What in the world did you do while we were at home?”

“I appreciate it, Scholar Megumin. Thanks to you, I got some random old man’s autograph.”

After that, we headed straight to the depths of the capital’s nearby forest with some guy named Burton who felt indebted to Megumin.

“S-so how much longer until we reach our destination, Scholar Meg— Ouch! Hey?! Why am I the only one who can’t say it?!”

Megumin attacked Darkness when she couldn’t handle being called Scholar Megumin any longer.

“I believe we found the Crystal Liger around here last time, but being related to Beginner’s Banes means it’s really smart, so it has probably already traveled to a new location.”

Megumin’s eyes roamed around the forest while she kept Darkness in a full nelson.

“I believe you’re right, which means it’s time for me to take the lead,” stated Burton as he took a black ball of matter out of the backpack he was carrying.

“Oh? Does Glasses here have a plan?”

“Call me Professor Burton, child.”

“Okay, Professor Burton!”

This was the first time I had ever met the guy, but I could already tell there was something off about him. Somehow immediately convincing Aqua to play his game was more than enough proof for me.

“What do you think this is, Scholar Aqua?”

“My holy, crystal-clear eyes tell me that it’s poop.”

Aqua poked at the dung, which Burton had placed on the ground, with a twig.

“I see you are very observant, Scholar Aqua. Yes, this is the poop of the Crystal Liger that I am about to use to lure it out!”

“It’s not just my eyes that are sharp. I can easily guess why you brought that poop with you as well. You’re going to make Kazuma smell it to track the monster, right?”

“What do I look like, a dog?”

Burton wrapped the dung in a handkerchief, then raised it high into the air.

“Ligers are extremely cautious beasts that do not leave a trail. When I found this poop last time I was here, it was covered in dirt. So, Scholar Aqua, if you were the liger and left your excrement around here, what would you do?”

“I’d be so embarrassed someone might see it that I’d come back to get it.”

“While the reasoning might be different, that’s essentially what’s going to happen. The monster will return to dispose of the poop to cover its tracks.”

There was something worrying about them repeatedly shouting *poop* back and forth.

“Hey, Megumin. Is this guy okay? Is he really an authority on biology? You didn’t just randomly find him in the bushes or anything one day, right?”

“I am just as worried about him as you are, but he knows what he’s talking about when it comes to monsters.”

As Aqua and Burton were surprisingly hitting it off, he continued:

“Our goal is not to slay the liger but to retrieve the necklace. If it shows up, we simply need to draw its attention using other expensive jewelry. Then, after letting it steal said gems, we follow it back to its den.”

Burton then pushed his glasses up the bridge of his nose.

“It really came back…”

An hour had gone by since we left the dung out. My monster-detecting skill suddenly alerted me that the liger was nearby during the middle of Burton’s monster sermon. When I cautiously used Second Sight and looked in the

direction of the enemy, I saw a giant creature covered in gems watching from afar. However, it wasn't staring at its excrement. It was staring at Megumin…

I looked around, keeping an eye out for any funny business, then whispered to Burton and Darkness, who were nearby.

"*Psst.* The liger's here. Do not react, though. Just pretend like you haven't noticed it yet."

"In other words, it is biologically correct to think female-bodied monsters are sexy! Why do female knights prefer wearing bikini armor, which is less efficient when it comes to defense? Because by making their enemies aroused, they increase their chances of survival! An enemy sees its opponent in a full suit of plate armor where the gender is unknown versus a knight wearing bikini armor and making their female figure no secret. The lustful enemy would surely want to make the bikini knight its prisoner rather than kill her!"

"Wearing bikini armor is a long-established tradition among knights! How dare you try to rationalize it with such lewd reasoning! Monsters with body types mimicking those of human women appear that way because they want to lure in men and eat them! Knights in bikini armor dress the way they do to raise soldier morale and tend to the royalty at night!"

Burton and Darkness were getting into a heated argument while completely ignoring my whispers. What the hell were they talking about?

"I knew it! That's exactly what I was saying! It doesn't function as armor, yet it tries to call itself armor! Besides, if bikini armor's so great, why aren't you wearing it?!"

"Yeah!"

Darkness's face slowly turned a bright red.

"Because…! Because I am the shield of my party, which means I have to prioritize defense over sex appeal…"

"Whoever said they wanted defense over sex appeal?!"

Megumin suddenly tugged my shirt from the side, bringing me back to my senses.

“Kazuma, the liger showed up, right? Is this really the time to be arguing over something so ridiculous?”

“It isn’t ridiculous. It’s extremely important.”

I accidentally got caught up in the debate after hearing something I just couldn’t let slide.

“All right, Darkness. Come over here.”

“Wh-wh-what do you plan on doing with me?! As a noblewoman, I cannot allow myself to wear bikini ar—”

“Enough about the armor! Just get over here! I mean, it’s an important topic of discussion, but we can deal with that later! Right now, I want you to come over here and take out your gem!”

The instant Darkness heard the word *gem*, she understood exactly what was going on. She faced me and asked,

“Where’s the liger?”

“Right behind you. It’s watching to see what we’re going to do, so don’t turn around no matter what. Listen, when you take out your gem, you need to act natural so it doesn’t realize it’s a trap.”

Darkness’s gaze alone showed that she was ready.

“Phew… Talking to you makes me exhausted. I think I’m going to stare at my gem like I do every day to relax.”

Who did that? Would it have killed her to use her brain a little more?

Megumin turned red, struggling to hold in her laughter, and added:

“I was unaware you had such a daily routine, Darkness. We’re similar, you and me. You look at rocks every day while I enjoy an explosion a day.”

“Y-yeah, we’re not that different, huh!”

Darkness, smelling of desperation, took out the gem and began to quietly stare at it.

“I had no idea you had such a unique hobby, Darkness. I can’t wait to tell everyone once we’re back in town.”

“Yeah, we need to talk later, Aqua.”

Right as Darkness made an attempt to get Aqua to keep quiet…

“Ack! It’s fast! Darkness, behind you! Watch out!”

“Huh?! Ah!”

Despite being extremely far away only seconds ago, the liger swiftly approached Darkness before promptly snatching the gem right out of her hand. After a closer look, I noticed it was wearing what was clearly an expensive necklace around its neck. I couldn’t help but feel admiration for a monster wearing jewelry, but after the liger briefly glanced in our direction…

“It’s getting away! After it!”

“Perfect. All according to plan.”

Everything was going well so far, so we began chasing after the liger just as planned.

“Hey, Kazuma? That liger’s a little faster than I thought it’d be. I doubt I’ll ever be able to catch up to it with these Duxion-like legs of mine.”

“Those are some tasty-looking legs you’ve got there. Too bad they aren’t longer.”

“D-don’t worry. I’m sure Kazuma knew this was going to happen and has a plan. Right, Kazuma?”

I firmly nodded back at the somewhat anxious Crusader.

“Well, the plan’s been thrown off a little, so we should probably start brainstorming.”

“Kazuma…! That gem is a family heirloom!”

On the verge of tears, Darkness took off in the direction of the liger.

4

We decided to take a short break after losing track of the beast.

“We’ve completely lost it, but don’t worry. There’s still hope.”

“Really?! You’re not just saying that, right?! My father would be so mad at me if I lost our family heirloom!”

Everyone except Burton, who was huffing and puffing, looked like they still had some fight in them.

“Afraid of your papa scolding you? Oh, Darkness. You’re a real daddy’s girl, huh?”

“She doesn’t want to disappoint her dad? How cute.”

“Mm…! Kazuma, hurry up and tell us your plan! What should I do?!”

Darkness, her cheeks bright red, began to panic and rush me as if Megumin’s teasing was getting to her.

“Relax. The hope I was talking about is Burton. Since he’s a biologist, he should be able to deduce where the liger’s den is from the tracks it left.”

“Oh…!”

Darkness turned her hopeful gaze at Burton, who firmly nodded back.

“Yes, I should have no problem finding its den…is what I wish I could say, but that would be impossible.”

“Well, there’s your answer.”

“What are we going to do?! My family heirloom…!”

Darkness grabbed me by the shoulders and started to violently shake me.

“Fine… I was hoping it wouldn’t come to this, but…”

I was half-sure something bad was going to happen, but I decided to activate my enemy-detecting skill, Sense Foe, and…

“Kazuma! Kazuma!”

“What is wrong with you?! How stupid can you be, getting tangled like that?! Darkness, when I cut the vines, I want you to pull Aqua out of there!”

After restarting our search relying only on Sense Foe, we headed over toward the closest enemy in range, where…

“This monster appears to be closely related to mimics! Rejoice, Scholar Aqua,

for I have discovered a new monster today thanks to you! Therefore, I will give you the honor of naming it!”

“Hold on, Burton. I want to name it.”

“Stop chatting and save me! Kazuma, you’re at least halfway decent with a sword, right?! Plus, I haven’t really seen you ever use that sword of yours much, so now’d be a good time!”

Right when I mentioned that I was detecting an enemy nearby, Aqua picked a piece of fruit off the tree, which immediately wrapped her in its vines…and brought us to where we were now.

“Don’t worry! Trust me! I’m going to close my eyes when I swing, so my Luck should offset my poor swordsmanship!”

“Ahhhhhh!”

I swung Chunchunmaru, easily cutting the vines wrapped around Aqua.

“*Tsk!* Usually, I’d beg to be tied up next, but finding that liger is more important right now! Aqua, are you okay? Kazuma, let’s start heading over to the next location you detect!”

Darkness, who was really motivated for a change, pulled the tearful goddess back to safety.

“I want to go home already…”

“Y-you’re just going to have to deal with it for now, Aqua. Oh, and don’t touch anything growing in random places, either.”

While Darkness was trying to calm Aqua down, Megumin suddenly remarked,

“How about we call this monster Aqualiana? The name came to me when I saw how beautiful the vines were while wrapping around Aqua.”

“Aqualiana, a monster that mimics trees… I’ll submit an application once we get back into town.”

“I will cause it to rain over the capital for an eternity if you register it under that name.”

While Aqua threatened Burton after being saved, I used Sense Foe to find our

next destination.

“Okay, I’ve picked up another enemy!”

While heading over to the destination I’d detected…

“Ahhhhhh!”

“There is nothing to be afraid of, Scholar Aqua! That’s just how Tentacle Beetles show their affection!”

A massive stag beetle suddenly appeared and immediately grabbed Aqua with its mandibles.

“Sense Foe isn’t reacting to it, so I guess that means it’s not hostile.”

“Those are just love bites, similar to a kitten’s.”

I decided to watch, since it was apparently just expressing its affection, but…

“Hey! Let go of Aqua this instant! We’ve got a liger to chase! If you want to squeeze someone that badly, squeeze me!”

“Darkness, wait. I feel like I’m about to make a connection with it.”

Darkness was impatiently trying to pull Aqua free, but Aqua seemed to be actually enjoying it right now. After the goddess and beetle truly began to understand each other…

“I’m always getting sugar water at Wiz’s shop, so maybe that’s why it likes me so much?”

“I’ve had enough of this! Kazuma, let’s go!”

After bidding farewell to the stag beetle, we continued treading ahead until my enemy-detecting skill alerted me that there was something hiding in the trees.

“It’s here…,” Megumin softly muttered as her eyes glowed crimson. Lying on a small branch were a few gems, and sprawled out next to those gems as if to protect them was…

“It doesn’t appear to be exercising much caution at all. What is going on?” uttered Burton, squinting. He had a point, though. This liger could see us, yet it wasn’t even growling at us. Nevertheless, it was showing up when I used Sense

Foe, so it was clear it didn't want to be our friends. Aqua, on the other hand, took one look at the gems, and her eyes opened wide, sparkling with delight.

"That necklace is the only one we need to get back, right? So let's split the rest of the gems fifty-fifty."

"Hold on, Aqua. You better not be forgetting my family heirloom."

And yet, the liger still didn't seem worried about us in the least.

"He's just lying there even after seeing us. It has to be a trap."

Monsters in the liger family were smart, after all. It made sense now. It was probably waiting for us to lower our guards!

"No. It simply doesn't see us as a threat," adamantly claimed Burton.

"What? Did you forget how it was afraid of us last time? Plus, it immediately took off running after stealing Darkness's pendant."

"It was afraid of Scholar Iris last time. It's highly possible that it only ran away this time because it didn't think you all were worth its time."

Megumin began chanting a spell.

"Wait, Megumin. The national treasure and my pendant are still there!"

"Yeah, Megumin. I will not allow you to destroy all that treasure! What good is gem dust to me?!"

They grabbed Megumin in a fluster, but that wasn't even necessary…because Megumin's magic was currently sealed.

"Relax. That thing isn't underestimating us. It's cautiously watching us. I, a lover of cats, can tell these things, and I am sure that monster doesn't want any trouble, either."

There was no reason to kill it. Our only goal was to get the necklace and pendant back. Ligers were smart. In other words, they most likely understood our language.

The necklace-wearing liger started nibbling on and licking Darkness's pendant atop the tree branch, as if it had really taken a liking to it.

I put on a gentle smile to show it I meant no harm, then said:

“Don’t worry. I’m not going to hurt you. Here, I can trade you something better for those gems. Do you want jerky? How about some fruit? In return, I only ask th—”

The liger suddenly leaped right at me as I was trying to casually approach it. After I managed to dodge its claws by the skin of my teeth, it continued to growl at me with the heirloom in its mouth.

“Did you see that?! It tried to attack me! And I was being friendly! …Ah! It just yawned!”

“It is definitely looking down on you, Kazuma! It doesn’t see you as a threat!”

While we began exercising caution, Darkness, on the other hand, suddenly shot forward.

“Hand over the pendant! I promise not to kill you, since you’re an endangered species, but if you resist…!”

Darkness raised her sword into the air as if to scare it, but the liger casually leaped back, throwing off her timing. It then swung one of its paws, knocking Darkness on her rear before jumping on top of her.

“Ahhhhhh! *Tsk…!* What do you think you’re doing, foul beast…?! G-get off me…!”

“Don’t act tough if you’re just going to let it easily overpower you like that. And stop enjoying it! Hey, Megumin! I’m going to break your magic’s seal!”

Megumin shuddered.

“…?! The time has finally arrived… It appears Kazuma has come to terms with it as well…”

She was acting like this was a big deal, but all I was doing was return her mana with Drain Touch.

“I, Kazuma Satou, have freed you from your shackles! Megumin of the Crimson Magic Clan, I now grant you permission to use explosion magic!”

“Fine. But this is the only time I am calling you Master and following your orders. It is time for my powers, which have been sealed away for too long, to be unleashed upon this world!”

“Wow. Those two look like they’re having fun. I want to play, too.”

The beast that would lead this world to its end, Megumin, had been released into the wild. She immediately began chanting a spell when…

“Hey, Kazuma? The liger looks really surprised. I think it’s afraid of Megumin now that her seal has been broken,” commented Aqua. When I looked over at the liger, its eyes were opened wide in bewilderment, staring at Megumin. Telling humans apart was apparently difficult for monsters, so they would use mana to differentiate. Megumin’s chanting caused her mana to overflow, so the liger probably just realized that she was the same person who had driven it into a corner the other day.

“Darkness, grab the necklace hanging around its neck! Then Megumin can vaporize it with Explosion!”

I shouted out orders to Darkness, who was being held down by the liger, so we could fulfill the mission first and foremost.

“I—I can’t move. It’s holding both my arms down, preventing me from moving so it can—”

“Stop making it seem like you’re enjoying this! Are you really even trying to escape?!”

I sprinted to Darkness’s aid.

“W-wait! Scholar Megumin, you understand that’s an endangered species, right?!”

“Worrying about that is how it got away last time! I am not letting it escape this time, though!”

Ignoring their argument, I shouted out:

“Aqua, could you distract it for a moment?! If you can buy us even one second, that’d be great!”

“Okay! I’ve got this!”

Aqua’s unusually confident reply convinced me that this wouldn’t work.

“I’m going to use Steal on it, since I should have a high chance of stealing the

necklace back! Megumin, once I get the national treasure, I want you to blow that thing to bits!”

Burton’s face was overcome with shock the moment he heard those words. He screamed:

“Wait! If you do that, Scholar Darkness is going to be…!”

“Thrilled!”

As I rushed over to Darkness, the liger shifted its gaze toward me.

“Wait, Kazuma! That would definitely save the national treasure, but the Dustiness heirloom would be—”

“Forget about the heirloom! If your dad gets mad, I’ll give him my family heirloom to make up for it!”

I yelled back at Darkness while unsheathing my oddly named cherished sword, which had just become my family heirloom.

“Aqua! Now!”

“Like a flower reflected in a mirror—like the moon reflected on the water’s surface… Feast your eyes on the ultimate party trick…!”

The liger immediately leaped back, although showing no interest in Aqua’s party trick.

“*Steal*!”

Even though it jumped out of the way, it was still surprisingly in range of my attack. Inside my closed hand was a necklace that was extremely valuable in more ways than one. In addition, there was a small opening now that the liger had jumped slightly away from Darkness, which meant Megumin would be able to cast Explosion without hurting any of us.

“Megumin, now!”

Right as I gave the order to attack…

“Wait! Scholar Megumin, remember how the Crystal Liger is an endangered species!”

Megumin glanced at Burton before looking straight back into the liger’s eyes.

“Crystal Ligers are normally very docile creatures! They’re herbivores that love wolfberry fruit! Could you at least consider simply scaring it away instead?!”

Burton was desperately shouting, but Megumin was normally someone who boasted that she’d kill a loving Duxion couple if it’d give her enough experience points. The spell-caster’s seal had been broken. There was no way she’d stop now.

“*Explooosion*!!!”

The liger couldn’t even move a muscle. It only stared at Megumin as if it could sense the powerful mana from the spell being cast.

“Ahhhhhhhhh! The treasure…! The treasuuuuuure…!”

Aqua’s screams echoed about. The spell had gone right past the liger’s side and hit the den behind it, destroying it, along with countless gems inside!

Epilogue

Aqua relentlessly chewed me out while I leaned into Kazuma's back as he carried me to the capital.

"Unbelievable, Megumin. Unbelievable. The only thing that makes you useful is your explosion magic, and you missed. You're not Megumin without your explosion magic. You're just Min."

"There is a lot to unpack here, but the first thing I want to know is why Megu is in charge of explosions. It should be Megumi at the very least."

"That makes it sound like your explosion magic is more important than you as a person, Megumin. Are you sure you're fine with that?"

The liger had remained frozen after its den was destroyed and stared at us to see what we would do. After that, Burton, overly excited, suddenly tried to reason with the liger, but it simply put the heirloom in its mouth down on the ground and left for some reason.

"That Crystal Liger was extremely unique, wasn't it? It was as if it could understand what we were saying!" Burton mirthfully exclaimed, thrilled I hadn't killed the liger. It really had looked like it understood what we were saying. Burton had told it things like it would eventually be hunted again, since we were near the capital, and how we wouldn't hurt it as long as it gave us back the family heirloom in its mouth, but the entire time, the liger simply stared quietly at me.

"I feel like I've seen that liger somewhere before. But we have a deep affinity with Beginner's Banes, so maybe that's why I felt some sort of connection with another liger-type monster…," Kazuma mentioned curiously while tilting his head to the side and carrying me on his back.

"You have way too many acquaintances, Kazuma. First demons, then undead, and now you've finally extended to wild beasts as well, huh?"

"I'm pretty sure Darkness is the only one interested in wild beasts."

Darkness held on dearly to her family heirloom and gave it a hug.

“I-I’m just happy I got my family heirloom back. Everything else that happened during this adventure is just a bonus. Now that I think about it, I probably came out on top today.”

“That’s because all you had to do was let a beast pin you down on the ground. You were at least more useful than Aqua, though.”

Even feeling exhausted from having my mana depleted was nice after finishing an adventure with everyone.

“Not so fast. Did you forget about the party trick I did to save the day? Darkness couldn’t take her eyes off me.”

“I told you to distract the liger, not Darkness.”

“But, Kazuma, that trick was amazing. You have to show it to me again once we get home, Aqua.”

I felt myself growing sleepy, perhaps due to the mana depletion.

“Scholars of nature, I would just like to express my gratitude for your help. I learned today that the Crystal Liger, a creature shrouded in mystery, may actually understand our tongue. That alone is a huge win in my book!”

Not only Darkness but also Burton seemed to be elated.

“Hey, Professor Burton. I didn’t get the gems I was hoping for, so could I have your autograph when we get back to the capital? In return, I’ll listen to whatever you want to talk about.”

“Very well, my dear! I’ll give you however many autographs you’d like! So you want to know more about my work and me, huh? Well, first of all, most liger-type monsters’ feces are black because of the color of their hair under their crystal body!”

Burton began giving a lecture on monster feces as if he was the happiest man in the world.

“*Psst.* Aqua. I thought you already got an autograph?”

“He’s apparently famous, so a few more wouldn’t hurt, right? What are you going to do if they sell for a high price?”

“Absolutely nothing.”

Listening to their exchange, I pondered why I had purposely missed the liger with my spell.

Oh, right. Wolfberries.

When Burton mentioned Crystal Ligers liked wolfberries, I’d suddenly remembered when I befriended an herbivorous Beginner’s Bane a long time ago. It wasn’t easy, but I’d managed to save it from a nobleman in Axel. I wondered if that crimson-eyed Beginner’s Bane was still doing well. There was something about the Crystal Liger today that reminded me of it. Perhaps it was because they both liked wolfberry fruit and were of the liger family?

“By the way, when are we going to return this necklace to Iris? I’m a little worried having you guys go alone, so I’m coming with you.”

“You’re not even allowed in the capital. Just let me bring the necklace back to her.”

“Hey! You’re just trying to take all the credit for yourself, aren’t you?! I’m coming with you no matter what! And she’s going to be like, *Wow, Kazuma! You’re so amazing*.”

“I—I worry about you sometimes.”

I reflected on what had happened today while listening to their noisy conversation. Aqua cried, Darkness got turned on, Kazuma got mad—it felt like home. I had a lot of fun going on adventures with Yunyun and Iris, but it seemed that I was better suited to a trash party like them. Besides, they’d be helpless without me.

“Anyway, this party would be nothing without me. Whatever our reward is, I should get most of it.”

“All you did was a single party trick. If we’re playing that game, then I’m the most useful one in the party. You guys should be more grateful to me, the leader.”

“I—I don’t really do anything special, but I can confidently say that I help hold this party together, and it’s a thankless job if I do say so myself.”

Yunyun did argue that the biggest problem-causers always think they're the most useful. But, well, regardless of that, adventurers should go on adventures is what I say. There are always so many surprises and exciting things that can happen, like today. And there are things that we remember fondly, like…

"Kazuma, Kazuma…"

"What? *Tsk.* I don't mind giving you a piggyback ride, but could you not drool on me?"

Unbelievable.

"I am not drooling on you. I just wanted to say…let's all go on another adventure tomorrow, too…"

"Not happening. Besides, is that really what you should be thinking about right now? Have you already forgotten what I'm going to do to you when we get back home? You said you'd do anything I wanted. Oh, and since it seems like you haven't realized this yourself, I'm going to fill you in: Around thirty percent of all piggyback rides I give you, you fall asleep and drool on me."

I was trying to thank him, yet he somehow effortlessly destroyed the mood.

"Now that I think about it, that liger wouldn't take its eyes off you, Megumin. It was observing you like there was something unique about you…"

Kazuma was basically mumbling to himself, never to know my true feelings. But, well, I guess I shouldn't complain. After all, he did go on an adventure with me today for the first time in forever. Tomorrow, I'd go return the necklace, then after that…

"Hey, Darkness. Do you think Kazuma's in a good mood right now? Maybe this would be the right time to tell him what I did yesterday?"

"Hold on, Aqua. Not yet. The best time would be right after he gives the necklace back to Iris and she showers him with praise."

"Are you guys talking about me? Hold up. Now that I think about it, Aqua, you still haven't told me what you did yesterday!"

Then after that…

"There's another tale I just remembered about the Crystal Liger. It's a very

strange hypothesis not supported by most researchers, but some believe that Crystal Ligers are rare breeds of Beginner's Banes that eat wolfberries and crystalize their bitter components."

"Okay, old man. I think I've heard enough about ligers for today."

While gently rocking on Kazuma's back, I imagined going on another adventure tomorrow while surrendering my consciousness to the comforting land of dreams.

Afterword

Thank you for purchasing *Konosuba: An Explosion on This Wonderful World! Bonus Story*, Vol. 2. First, I would like to apologize. The Crystal Liger that shows up in this volume is an evolved Beginner's Bane that appears in a short story included as a preorder bonus for an older volume in certain stores. I would like to apologize to everyone who wasn't able to pick up on that because they didn't get a chance to read the short story. Referencing characters from preorder bonus stories isn't something one should normally do, but I really liked the story, so I couldn't help myself, and for that, I want to apologize.

Allow me to roughly explain the short story to those who haven't read it. Megumin finds herself captivated by an herbivorous Beginner's Bane that is being held prisoner by a nobleman. She passes by its cage day after day, slowly growing attached to it until she decides she has to help it escape.

The Beginner's Bane can't speak human language, but it's at least smarter than Aqua, so it probably decides to live the rest of its days peacefully in the depths of the forest.

Now for some advertising. The title of the movie has been decided: *Legend of Crimson*. The word *Crimson* should be telling enough what clan the movie focuses on. In addition, *Konosuba TRPG* will be released on March 20. There are even replays done by various authors included in the game, so please check it out if you're interested.

Movies, concerts, TRPGs—*Konosuba* is becoming a transmedia franchise in a way. They have apparently begun development on the crossover anime *Isekai Quartet*—which includes characters from *Overlord*, *The Saga of Tanya the Evil*, *Re:ZERO -Starting Life in Another World-*, and *Konosuba: God's Blessing on this Wonderful World!*—so please look forward to it!

Also, the manga I've been working on, *Kemono Michi*, is getting an anime

adaptation as well! Yes! I know I have brought this series up before, but it's about a masked wrestler who gets summoned to a parallel world. Please give it a read if you haven't yet and are interested.

Anyway, this series has blown up really fast, so I still haven't been able to completely grasp exactly everything that's going on, but I hope you continue to watch over Kazuma and his friends on their journey. I don't know whether they'll ever be able to go on a proper adventure like Megumin's hoping for, though…

Now I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who helped this volume see the light of day. First, I would like to thank Kurone Mishima for the wonderful illustrations in this volume as well. Next, I would like to thank my head editor (I), the designer, proofreader, the staff in sales, and everyone who came together to make this happen. I apologize for all the trouble I caused, and I thank you for everything you have done for me.

And last but not least, I would like to deeply thank you all—the readers!

Natsume Akatsuki

AFTERWORD

Iris is so cute, showing affection to a demon!

Kurone Mishima, 2019

WATCH THE ANIME ON crunchyroll

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