

In Another World With My Smartphone

30

Patora Fuyuhara

illustration • Eiji Usatsuka



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**“LET OUR
INFILTRATION
OF THE ARK
BEGIN!”**

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**“WE MAKE
RAMEN!
A NEW
RAMEN!”**

Lu declared,
raising a ladle
toward the sky.
Her eyes were
burning with
the flames of
passion.

From Interlude: Brunhild's Ramen Alley

Character Profiles



Elze Silhoueska

One of Touya's wives. The elder of the twin sisters saved by Touya some time ago. A ferocious melee fighter, she makes use of gauntlets in combat. Her personality is fairly to-the-point and blunt. She can make use of Null fortification magic, specifically the spell **[Boost]**. She loves spicy foods.



Yumina Urnea Belfast

One of Touya's wives. Princess of the Belfast Kingdom. She was twelve years old in her initial appearance, and her eyes are heterochromatic. The right is blue, while the left is green. She has mystic eyes that can discern the true character of an individual. She has three magical aptitudes: Earth, Wind, and Darkness. She's also extremely proficient with a bow and arrow. She fell in love with Touya at first sight.



Mochizuki Touya

A highschooler who was accidentally murdered by God. He's a no-hassle kind of guy who likes to go with the flow. He's not very good at reading the atmosphere, and typically makes rash decisions that bite him in the ass. His mana pool is limitless, he can flawlessly make use of every magical element, and he can cast any Null spell that he wants. He's currently the Grand Duke of Brunhild.



Sushie Urnea Ortlinde

One of Touya's wives. She was ten years old in her initial appearance. Her nickname is Sue. The niece of Belfast's king, and Yumina's cousin. Touya saved her from being attacked on the road. She has an innocently adventurous spirit.



Lucia Leah Regulus

One of Touya's wives. The Third Princess of the Regulus Empire, she's Yumina's age. She fell in love with Touya when he saved her during a coup. She likes to fight with twin blades, and she's on good terms with Yumina.



Kokonoe Yae

One of Touya's wives. A samurai girl from the far eastern land of Eashen, a country much like Japan. She tends to repeat herself and speak formally, she does. Yae is quite a glutton, eating more than most normal people would dare touch. She's a hard worker, but can sometimes slack off. Her family runs a dojo back in Eashen, and they take great pride in their craft. It's not obvious at first, but her boobs are pretty big.



Linze Silhoueska

One of Touya's wives. The younger of the twin sisters saved by Touya some time ago. She wields magic, specifically from the schools of Light, Water, and Fire. She finds talking to people difficult due to her own shy nature, but she is known to be surprisingly bold at times. Rumors say she might be the kind of girl who enjoys male on male romance... She loves sweet foods.



Paula

A stuffed toy bear animated by years upon years of the **[Program]** spell. She's the result of two-hundred years of programmed commands, making her seem like a fully aware living being. Paula... Paula's the worst!



Sakura

A mysterious girl Touya rescued in Eashen. She had lost her memories, but has now finally gotten them back. Her true identity is Farnese Forneus, daughter of the Xenoahs Overlord. Currently living a peaceful life in Brunhild, and she has joined the ranks of Touya's wives.



Leen

One of Touya's wives. Former Clan Matriarch of the Fairies, she now serves as Brunhild's Court Magician. She claims to be six-hundred-and-twelve years old, but looks tremendously young. She can wield every magical element except Darkness, meaning her magical proficiency is that of a genius. Leen is a bit of a light-hearted bully.



Hildegard Minas Lestia

One of Touya's wives. First Princess of the Knight Kingdom Lestia. Her swordplay talents earned her a reputation as a 'Knight Princess'. Touya saved her life when she was attacked by a group of Phrase, and she's loved him ever since. She's a good friend of Yae, and she stammers a bit when flustered.



Luli

The fourth of Touya's summoned Heavenly Beasts. She is the Azure Monarch, the ruler of dragons. She often clashes with Kohaku due to her condescending personality.



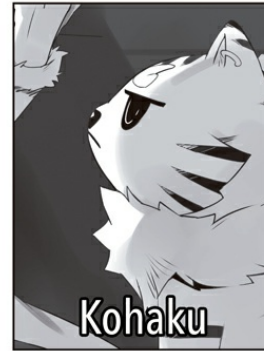
Kougyoku

The third of Touya's summoned Heavenly Beasts. She is the Flame Monarch, ruler of feathered things. Though her appearance is flashy and extravagant, she's actually quite cool and collected.



Sango and Kokuyou

The second of Touya's summoned Heavenly Beasts. They are the Black Monarch, two in one. The rulers of scaled beasts. They can freely manipulate water. Sango is a tortoise, and Kokuyou is a snake. Sango is a female, and Kokuyou is a male (but he's very much a female at heart).



Kohaku

The first of Touya's summoned Heavenly Beasts. She's the White Monarch, the ruler of beasts, the guardian of the west and a beautiful White Tiger. She can create devastating shockwaves, and also change size at will.



Goddess of Space-time

A high-ranking goddess who controls time. She is usually found preventing or repairing any distortions in the time-line. She claims to be Touya's grandmother when she visits the surface, and is well-loved by the children.



God Almighty

The god who accidentally murdered Touya and sent him to another world. He currently leaves the curating of the world to his victim. A pleasant old man who claims to be Touya's grandfather when he visits the surface. Surprisingly quite playful.



Mochizuki Moroha

The God of Swords. Claims to be Touya's older sister. She trains the and advises the knights of Brunhild. She's gallant and brave, but also a bit of an airhead at times.



Mochizuki Karen

The God of Love. Claims to be Touya's older sister. She stays in Brunhild because she says she needs to catch a servile god, but doesn't really do all that much in the way of hunting him. She's a total pain in the butt.



Fredmonica

Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Hangar, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Monica for short. Her Airframe Serial Number is #28. She's a funny little hard worker who has a bit of a casual streak. She's a good friend of Rosetta, and is the Gynoid with the most knowledge of the Frame Gears.



Bell Flora

Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Alchemy Lab, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Flora for short and wears a nurse outfit. Her Airframe Serial Number is #21. A nurse with dangerously big boobs and even more dangerous medicines.



High Rosetta

Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Workshop, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Rosetta for short. Her Airframe Serial Number is #27. For whatever reason, she's the most reliable of the bunch.



Francesca

Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Hanging Garden, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Cesca for short. Her Airframe Serial Number is #23. She likes to tell very inappropriate jokes.



Lileleparshe

Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Storehouse, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Parshe for short and wears a shrine maiden outfit. Her Airframe Serial Number is #26. She's tremendously clumsy, even if she's just trying to help. The amount of stuff she ruins is troublingly high.



Irisfam

Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Library, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Fam for short and wears a school uniform. Her Airframe Serial Number is #24. She's a total book fanatic and hates being interrupted when she's reading.



Pamela Noel

Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Tower, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Noel for short and wears a jersey. Her Airframe Serial Number is #25. She sleeps all the time, and eats laying down. Her tremendous laziness means she doesn't do all that much.



Preliora

Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Rampart, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Liora for short and wears a blazer. Her Airframe Serial Number is #20. She's the oldest of the Babylon Gynoids, and would attend to the...personal night-time needs of Doctor Babylon herself. She has no experience with men.



Kuon

Touya and Yumina's child, as well as the only son of the Brunhild royal family. Though always a gentleman, he appears to have inherited his father's stubbornness. He skilfully utilizes various Mystic Eyes in battle, and enjoys creating dioramas as a hobby.



Doctor Elluka

One of the five great gollamancers of the Reverse World. Filled with curiosity, she appears to get along with Doctor Babylon, as the two are often found conducting experiments together.



Doctor Regina Babylon

An ancient genius from a lost civilization, reborn into an artificial body that resembles a small girl. She is the "Babylon" that created the many artifacts and forgotten technologies scattered around the world today. Her Airframe serial number is #29. She remained in stasis for five-thousand years before finally being awakened.



Atlantica

Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Research Lab, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Tica for short. Her Airframe serial number is #22. Of the Babylon Numbers, she is the one who best embodies Doctor Babylon's inappropriately perverse side. She is in charge of maintenance for the Numbers alongside Doctor Babylon.



Arcia

Touya and Lucia's child, and the fifth daughter. Good at cooking, she loves feeding her father her creations. She often finds herself at odds with her mother, but they're close underneath their competitive spirit.



Yakumo

Touya and Yae's child, and the oldest daughter. She is a reliable older sister who frequently looks after her younger siblings. As she can use **[Gate]**, she went on a pilgrimage to hone her skills upon arriving in the past, since she knew she could teleport back to Brunhild at any time.



Linne

Touya and Linze's child, and the seventh daughter. Similar to Elna, she takes after Elze more than her mother. After first arriving in this timeline, she got up to all sorts of mischief, including taking part in a tournament. Gauntlets are her weapon of choice.



Elna

Touya and Elze's child, and the sixth daughter. Rather than taking after her mother, her temperament is more akin to Linze's, and she primarily uses magic in battle. Due to their mothers being twins, she is close with Linne.



Yoshino

Touya and Sakura's child, and the fourth daughter. She approaches life with a carefree attitude and shows talent in all manner of performing arts, especially music. She likes singing, but has mastered various instruments that she prefers performing with more.



Quun

Touya and Leen's child, and the third daughter. Keenly curious about magitech, she will take any opportunity to carry out fieldwork to investigate ancient technology. She is currently in the process of refining a Golem partner named Parla who looks just like Paula.



Freigard

Touya and Hilde's child, and the second daughter. She takes things at her own pace, but has a strong sense of justice and believes strongly in chivalry. As she fights using various weapons she keeps in **[Storage]**, she enjoys finding new ones for her arsenal.



Stephania

Touya and Sue's child, and the eighth and youngest daughter. She's good at getting people to spoil her. Her age leads to her being a little reckless. Often combines a tackle with **[Prison]** for her signature Stephrocket that Touya is usually on the receiving end of.



Allistella

Ende and Melle's daughter, known as Allis for short. She has a bit of a mischievous personality and loves Kuon dearly. As Kuon's betrothed, she is working hard to learn to become a better wife.



Melle

The previous Sovereign Phrase. After finally reuniting with Ende, she has settled down with him in Brunhild. She has learned to enjoy food during her stay, and has become a bit of a gourmet.



Ende

A man born to a race that travels worlds. He used to be on a search for the Sovereign Phrase. He married Melle after they finally reunited, and now lives happily together with her in Brunhild. The god of combat took notice of him, and before he knew it, Ende had become his ward.

The Story So Far!

Mochizuki Touya, wielding a smartphone customized by God himself, continues to live his life in a newly formed double-world! The war against the Wicked God, which threatened the existence of two innocent worlds, has finally come to an end. Touya has emerged victorious, but at what cost? Now he's saddled with divine duties! Awakened to godliness! Our hapless young lad is to be caretaker of the newly-created world. Fortunately, things seem to be at peace. But could this only be a surface observation? The seeds of discord are sown out of sight, and chaos could very well burst from the dark... How will Touya fare in his new station? Only time will tell.

The Worlds of In Another World With My Smartphone World Map

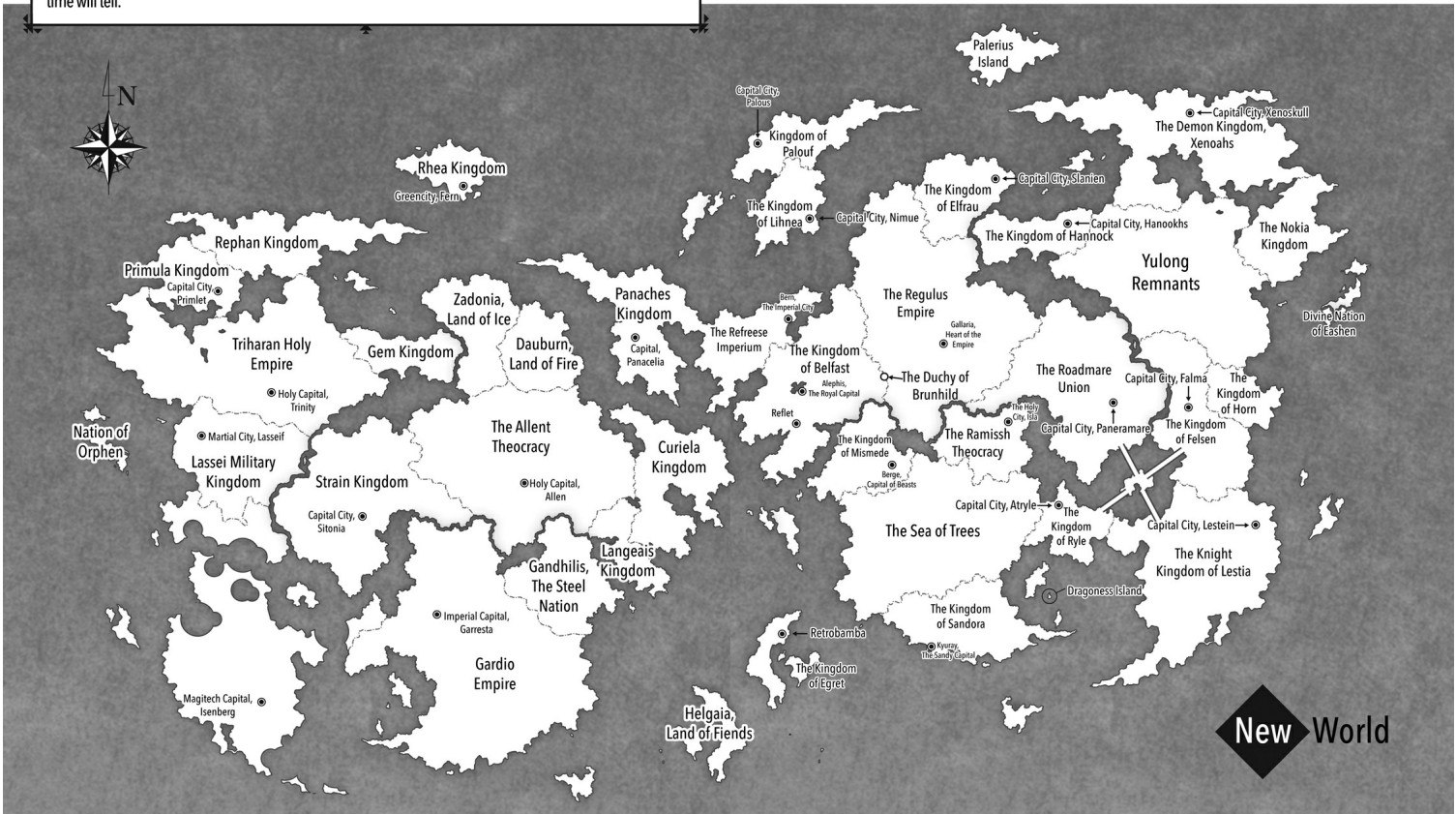


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Chapter I: A Spectacled Rhapsody

“Is it complete?” asked Scarlet, the wicked devout with the plague mask.

“Affirmative. This is the Cherubim.”

The one to respond was the golden crown. They were currently standing in the hangar of the Ark, and a new gold machine part that looked like a bulky school bag was attached to Gould’s back.

“Awaken.”

The school bag reacted to the mechanical voice, beginning to change shape. Small plates immediately extended out to the sides, granting the Gollem two wings on each side. Floating in the air, this new form—the Cherubim—could serve as an aerial unit as well.

“It’s hard to believe that this used to be that Slime,” Scarlet remarked.

“It was fortuitous that we were able to acquire the Gluttony Slime.”

As Doctor Babylon had surmised, Gould had taken the Gluttony Slime the wicked devout had acquired at the auction in Felsen, turned it into orichalcum, and used it to craft additional gear that could handle a variety of functions. Something that would usually require hundreds and thousands of Slimes could be managed with just a single Gluttony Slime. “Fortuitous” was a fitting adjective.

“Have you also completed your task?” Gould inquired.

“Yes. This is Balor, a new weapon created from the G-Cube and Q-Crystal of the Gigantes in Isengard.”

The man in the plague mask looked up to where a Gollem—smaller than the Gigantes, but still gigantic—quietly sat. It looked almost like a titan encased in golden armor. On its chest and head were eerie red lenses emitting light.

“It has a feature that allows it to take command of Soldats, which means it can have full control of several hundred Kyklops with ease. Additionally, its

armor has been enhanced with sealing magic using wicked water. Even Brunhild's Golems should struggle to make a dent."

Upon hearing the words "wicked water," Gould's mind went to the core floating in the purple liquid inside one of the labs in the Ark. It was the name of the water that had been contaminated by that core. Filled with a bit of divinity and a powerful curse, the water could be used to acquire various blessings from the wicked god.

Gould was thankful he had discovered that core. With it now in his possession, perhaps his fantasies could become a reality.

There was only one issue left.

"If I could just find a way to gouge out space-time..."

"Hm? Did you say something?"

"No..."

Gould chose to hide his thoughts from Scarlet. He and the wicked devout were not allies—their goals were different. At the moment, they were simply using each other for mutual benefit. They were cooperating right now, but Gould already planned to dispose of them the moment they got in the way of his plan. Until that day came, he would assist them and would ask them for assistance in return.

A dark, dull light resided in Gould's red camera eye.



"Something's strange about this after all..." the goddess of space-time muttered to herself as she mended a dimensional distortion and returned it to its regular state.

Ordinarily, it was forbidden for gods to do anything on the mortal plane that would greatly influence their world. It was for that reason that Mochizuki Tokie refrained from using her divinity and instead called upon the power of the fairies of time and regular space-time magic to fix such anomalies, but she couldn't deny that something about these distortions was beginning to seem odd.

At first, Tokie had thought that the timequake had been the cause for the frequent distortions, but she suddenly realized that there was, in fact, some degree of directivity to where they occurred. One's immediate thought would be that the wicked devout were interfering with time and space in some manner, but the divinity that lingered seemed too strong for that to be the case.

By definition, wicked gods were sacred treasures or divinity-infused objects that had taken in the negative emotions of people over the years and gained their own ego, so a wicked god's divinity usually wasn't anything noteworthy. However, since the wicked god of this world had absorbed a servile god—or to be more precise, the servile god himself had been corrupted—he held much more divinity than an average wicked god.

Still, even taking that into account, his divinity was only at the level of an apprentice god. He shouldn't have been able to make dimensional distortions on such a wide and frequent scale. That conclusion led Tokie to consider that perhaps a *different* god's power was being utilized.

“Does that mean one of the gods who have descended to the surface world has been assisting the wicked devout...? No, definitely not. God Almighty has his eye set on this place as a sanctuary for the divine. If a god plotted with the enemy, they would be at risk of having their divine status revoked or, even worse, being completely eliminated...”

Tokie's face suddenly whipped up as she came to a realization.

“No, it couldn't be... I better go check this and see.”

In order to dispel the doubts that had begun forming in her mind, Tokie used **[Spatial Translocation]** to jump back to the Divine Realm.



I took out a leather bag from **[Storage]** and dumped it out on a table in Parent. Ende, who was sitting across from me, looked at both me and the bag in confusion.

“What's all this?” he asked.

“Quos fragments. Remember how I mentioned defeating a bunch when we

found Leylle?”

“I do remember that, but...why are you giving them to me?”

Technically, I was giving them to Leylle, not Ende. According to Doctor Babylon’s analysis, these Quos fragments were almost no different from real gemstones in both structure and characteristics, and that meant they could be sold off as such, so long as we let the buyer know they were fake—the last thing we needed was to become con artists.

Usually, any materials dropped from magic beasts—if you could call them that—belonged to the adventurer who killed them, but Leylle was the one who created these Quos. As I was discussing it with Kuon, he’d mentioned that she should have at least half of the rights to them, so I decided to simply give them back.

“You can put it toward your family’s finances.”

“Do you really think this is gonna make us much...? Not gonna look a gift horse in the mouth, though,” Ende remarked after taking a look at the contents of the bag and then storing it away with his magic.

“Don’t worry. I’ve got a hundred more bags waiting for you.”

“You serious?!”

I hovered my **[Storage]** above the entrance to Ende’s own and directly dropped the bags inside it. This alone would make them a fortune. Though, given the fact that Ende was a gold-rank adventurer, he could make this by himself easy.

“It’s not as strong a material as phrasium, but you can use them like spellstones, so you might make more money if you market them that way instead of as gemstones.”

“Wait. Do you mean that Leylle can make all the gemstones and spellstones she wants?”

He wasn’t wrong, but those artificial Phrase were born from Leylle; would she really want to mercilessly destroy them just to make a profit?

“...Yeah, no way. I heard she’s already gotten attached to the Phrase that Allis

tamed, so I doubt she could bring herself to destroy a life that she herself created. Besides, I don't think Leylle can even make any Phrase right now."

"You 'heard'? Don't tell me she's still avoiding you?" I asked, surprised.

Inside Leylle's mind was the consciousness of the current Sovereign Phrase and Melle's younger brother, Halle. It wasn't exactly Halle himself, but more like a transcribed personality. Said transcribed personality held an unnaturally strong hatred for Ende as the man who stole his sister. Whenever Leylle caught sight of Ende, Halle's personality would forcefully take over.

What was odd was that I had heard that after a lot of intervention from Melle and Allis, Halle no longer immediately attacked the man.

"He doesn't suddenly attack me anymore, but he still gives me the dirtiest glares, like he's gonna stab me the second I take my eyes off him... Plus, Leylle's always with Allis nowadays, so I don't even get the chance to speak with Allis face-to-face anymore. The calls and emails I get from her are the only thing keeping me sane..." Ende spoke wistfully as he stared out the window with a distant gaze. Honestly, he kind of sounded like a single dad the way he was acting right now.

"It'll suck if this keeps up all the way until Allis goes back to the future. You've got to reconcile with..." I began saying, but Ende's eyes suddenly widened.

Why are you looking at me like a pigeon that got hit with a slingshot?!

"Go back to the future? Allis?"

"What? Uh, well, yeah, of course."

What's he on about? Isn't that why we're working so hard right now?

Apparently, that had completely escaped his mind. Actually, what would Leylle do when the kids returned? Would she go back to the future with Allis or would she remain in our time? If she stayed with us, would that make her the big sister instead? Though, given the fact that Leylle didn't seem to exist in their future, it would make more sense for her to go with them.

As I calmly pondered that question to myself, Ende's eyes only got progressively wilder.

“Allis is gonna leave! No... What should I do?! Right, right, if I just interfere with Touya’s plans...! I’ll make it so they *can’t* go back to the futu— Ow!”

In the middle of Ende’s crazy ramblings, a karate chop landed right on the back of his head, hard enough that even I could hear it.

“What are you going on about, you loon?”

I looked up and was greeted by an annoyed-looking Ney, who was standing behind him.

“We knew from the start that Allis would have to return to the future eventually. Lady Melle in the future will remain sad if we don’t return her. Is that what you want?”

“N-No, of course not, but...”

He’d likely been saying those words in his panic, though I was sure he’d end up incredibly depressed when Allis did end up going back home. I doubted I would be much different, though. Allis was around the same age as Kuon, so it would take at least six or seven years before she would be born. In our case, we had older kids, so we wouldn’t have to wait anywhere near as long to see them.

“Hey, at least she shouldn’t be going back for a little while longer, right?” I said in an attempt to console him.

“Don’t tell me someone like you is struggling against those, uhhh...wicker trouts, are you?” Ney remarked.

I frowned and replied, “You mean ‘wicked devout.’ We’re not struggling exactly, but we can’t quite figure out their goal, so we’re being a little cautious in terms of where to begin our assault.”

Assuming their goal *was* to revive the wicked god, the question then became how. I thought it was possible they’d try to bring the wicked god to our time from the past when he was still alive, but Grandma Tokie said that was impossible.

The fact that wicked vessels remained in the world meant that some semblance of the wicked god’s power had to have remained. Maybe he split himself up before he fought us, and those fragments were doing his work now.

Given how much of a sore loser he was despite acting so high-and-mighty, it wasn't out of the question, especially since it looked as if they were attacking countries all over the world to harvest negative emotions from them. They could maybe try to use those to revive the wicked god, but...something still didn't sit right with me. It just didn't feel that simple.

Even the wicked devout didn't seem like they were unified under the goal of reviving the wicked god. The purple spear wielder looked as if he had nothing but fighting on the brain, and that guy with the meat cleaver was doing nothing but following orders. Even the crazy old goat-skull guy looked like he was just enjoying his messed-up experiments, as if he couldn't care less about the wicked god.

Despite that, they were all definitely receiving the blessings of the wicked god.

What I was most curious about had to be the golden crown on their side. Something about him didn't fit in with the rest, like he was entirely unrelated to the wicked god.

Thinking about it wasn't getting me anywhere, though. We just had to keep at it so our children could go home to the future with smiles on their faces.

"Either way, we'll make sure to tell you when that time comes. She's not going to suddenly vanish on you, okay?"

"Indeed. Allis has also matured greatly through her etiquette classes. The future Lady Melle will no doubt be overjoyed when she returns."

True enough. What parent wouldn't be happy seeing that their child had grown up while they were away?

The same could be said for future you too, man, so chin up.

Feeling sorry for Ende, who still looked so upset, I decided to speak up.

"Why not make sure that Allis has plenty of stories to tell once she goes back? That's what we've been doing with our kids."

"R-Right, good idea! I should make more fun memories with her so that she can talk about how much she enjoyed her time here!"

“Though you do have the fact that Leylle is always around Allis to think about...”

“Graaaaaaaaaaaaaah!” Ende roared, then slumped over the table with a pained expression.

Crap, I didn't mean to go that far.

“Say, uh...today's lessons are piano, right? Why don't we go see how she's getting on? See how much she's improved, y'know?”

“Okay!”

Ende shot up from the table again, his face now one of extreme desperation.

Dude, calm down...

It was like he'd gone through a complete personality shift since Allis arrived. I'd heard that people often seem to change after having kids—did that mean I'd changed too? I didn't feel as if I had, but it was true that before I knew it, I'd started thinking of nothing but them. I wouldn't shy away from doing anything if it meant making them happy, and I had to assume that Ende was the same.

Leylle tended to remain at home with the Phrase girls on the days that Allis had piano lessons, so he should be able to go see Allis today without incident.

“Let's go! Right now! C'mon! Touya, teleport us to the castle!”

“Okay, okay! Let go of me first!”

Ende had started yanking on my arm, desperate to get to the castle even one second faster.

No, seriously, calm down! Save your excitement for when we're actually there!

“What do you want to do, Ney?” I asked.

“Hmm, well, the only reason I'm here is because I was going to buy some cake, but...it'd be a pain if Endymion started causing a ruckus, so I'll join you.”

“Why not buy a cake for Allis before we go?”

“Perfect idea! Excuse me! We'd like a whole shortcake to go!”

Ende didn't hesitate to tell a waitress his order the moment I suggested it.

How many times have I gotta tell you to calm down...?

Once we'd received Allis's beloved shortcake, I teleported us to the castle's music room. I made sure to teleport us to one of the corners so we didn't frighten anyone, and then we moved to sit ourselves down in front of the piano where Allis was doing her best to play the piece, even if it was a little stilted.

It turned out the etiquette lessons involved a music performance class. Apparently, a noble lady must be able to play at least one instrument. They weren't looking for them to be at a professional level; just being able to play some basics was good enough.

Case in point, Yumina, Sue, and Lu could all play their own instruments to some degree. Sakura could sing, but she wasn't so good at using actual instruments. Hilde was a noble as well—in fact, she was royalty—but Lestia didn't place much importance on the musical arts, so she gave up on it fairly quickly.

Usually, the instruments they would learn would be ones like the lute, the flute, or the harp, but they decided Allis might as well learn the piano while she was here, since we were the only ones that could make them. It was originally a fake piano that I had made with **[Program]**, but then I gained the assistance of Sousuke and the dwarves to make a real one. Court musicians from around the world still order them from us to this day; no doubt piano music unique to this world would be composed in due time.

The sound of Allis's piano echoed through the room. Yumina, Sousuke, and Yoshino were giving her guidance. Yumina was there to teach the correct posture for a noble, while Sousuke and Yoshino were purely there to teach her musically. Right now, she was playing a children's song I had taught them—the one about meeting a bear in the forest.

I'd heard from my piano teacher when I was young that the Japanese lyrics for this were completely different from the original. The Japanese version was much more playful; as a story, it had the weird progression of meeting a bear in the forest, being told to run by said bear, yet the bear chasing after you anyway and then giving you something you dropped.

On the other hand, the original lyrics said that after you met with the bear, it

went, “Why don’t you run? I see you ain’t got any gun.” And then you ran, and the bear chased after you, and you managed to survive by climbing up a tree.

To begin with, I had no idea why the bear was the one to tell you to run. My teacher said there were various theories that said originally, it was a little birdie that told you the forest was dangerous so you should run, but that just left me thinking that the Japanese version was too different. Stop beating around the bush and tell the story straight!

The moment Allis managed to play the song to completion, we all gave a round of applause. Allis turned around in surprise.

“Dad? Mom and Your Grace as well. How long have you been standing there?”

“Not for very long,” I told her. “You’ve gotten real good at that.”

“You think? Hehe.”

The girl got all embarrassed after I complimented her.

“Of course she has! My daughter’s a genius, after all!” Ende proudly proclaimed.

“Indeed. I would expect nothing less from our daughter. This is only natural!”

These doting parents, I swear...

“How about taking a break?” I suggested. “Ende bought a cake just for you.”

“Really?! Thanks, dad!”

I could see Ende trying to secretly strike a victory pose. Was that really all it took to make him happy? Just how bad was the communication in his household? It felt like Ende was way more enthusiastic now that Leylle wasn’t present. I didn’t really want to dunk on his happiness, though.

We asked Lapis for some cutlery and tea and settled ourselves down at a table in the corner of the music room before tasting the cake.

Yup, delicious.

I’d been using my brain so much today that something sweet served as the perfect battery.



“The hell’s that...?”

In the fishing village of Mariu located in southern Gardio, a man out on a small fishing boat spotted something strange in the far sky over the ocean, his hands pulling in the fishing net coming to a stop. At first, he thought it was a bird, but it seemed far too big for that, and it was sparkling too. In fact, it almost looked as if it had four wings—was it because it was hard to see clearly with the sun at its back? Was it two birds overlapping?

When the man squinted to try to see it better, the glimmering bird let off a bright arrow of light that fired right into the village near the shore, resulting in a massive explosion. The aftershock of the blast created large waves in the sea, throwing the fisherman from his boat.

The sudden explosion had sent the residents of the fishing village into a panic. Watching emotionlessly from above with his camera eye, Gould, with the Cherubim attached, moved to the next step.

“Photon Laser.”

Several balls of light appeared around Gould as he flew with his four wings, before they fired laser beams all at once, piercing through the people running around frantically, ending life after life.

“Stable operation confirmed. No issues detected. Proceeding to the next test: **Gluttonic Feather.**”

Several gold feathers fired out from two of the mechanical wings. They flew freely through the air at high speeds, attacking villagers both alive and dead.

“Gwah!”

A man’s voice rose in pain as one of those feathers stabbed right into his back. Suddenly, it expanded just like a Slime and consumed the man whole. The gold Slime enveloped the struggling man and progressively became smaller and smaller as its body undulated.

Once the Slime had finished consuming the man, it returned to its feather shape, before leaping back up into the air and settling back into one of Gould’s

wings.

Though Gould had been able to refine the Gluttony Slime enough to make the Cherubim, he had been unable to remove the Artificer's distinct voracious appetite. Not that it was something he ever intended to get rid of—if he did, it would be unable to act as the substitute for the price of a crown skill. Unfortunately, because of that, it became hungry right away, constantly needing sustenance to restore its energy; it wasn't the most efficient gear.

That was why Gould was now out resupplying its energy reserves while doubling it up as a test run of the Cherubim. If he simply wanted to appease the Gluttony Slime's appetite, the animals in the forest or fish in the nearby sea would've worked perfectly fine. But for the purposes of what Gould was using it for, humans and their myriad emotions were much more suitable for the Slime's food.

The various negative emotions like fear and despair that were being absorbed would also serve the wicked devout's goals well. Gould wasn't particularly invested in the group's goal, but he found no reason to refuse more manpower.

After feeding the negative emotions into the main body, the feathers shot back out into the village once more. The villagers disappeared one after another, like a field of crops being harvested for the season.

“Test complete. No issues detected. Returning to base.”

Once all of the villagers had been harvested, Gould shot off into the southern sky, content with the results.

Though the fisherman returned to his village with his life still intact, all that awaited him were the houses destroyed by the explosion and the paths empty of all those that he once knew.



“So you're saying that there is a different Golem that is the same type as the one standing there?”

“Yes, it appears that two golden crowns exist at once. And one of those is on the side of the wicked devout,” I answered the question posed by the emperor of Gardio at the world summit.

What set all of this off was a major incident that occurred in a small fishing village in Gardio. According to the sole survivor, a fisherman of the village, a small gold-winged Golem suddenly appeared above the village and began completely erasing those who lived there. He had witnessed it all after being flung from his boat and left floating along in the waves. What he reported sounded just like our Gold, and so we ended up holding an international conference to explain.

“All crowns discovered to this point have been unique. We have found no sign of replicas or twin units. Do you have any evidence to the contrary?”

“I don’t know if I can call it evidence, but...” I trailed off as I projected footage taken from one of Val Albus’s unmanned drones of the wicked devout’s gold crown into the air. Next to him was the man with the plague mask, so that should serve as proof that it wasn’t on our side.

This doesn’t prove it’s not our Gold, though...

“We can’t tell the difference between the Golem in the footage and the one standing here with this alone...” Mismede’s Beastking was moving his gaze between the gold crown in the footage and Gold who had been summoned together with me. I was right to think it wouldn’t be enough.

“If they’re the same type, then that means they must be the same unit, no?”

“But that isn’t really evidence.”

“Looking closely, their eyes appear to be a different color...”

“Really?”

Representatives from the other countries began raising their doubts as well. If I couldn’t supply footage of the two present at once, there was no way to prove that they were different.

“Where were you at the time Mariu was attacked, Gold?” I asked.

“At that time, I was planting flowers with my master in the courtyard.”

And that meant that he had an alibi.

“But you can use teleportation magic, can you not?”

“Right, this also isn’t proof.”

The emperor of Refreese and the king of Belfast were smirking at me as they refuted my argument.

Oh, you assholes! You totally know what you’re doing!

The only choices left to me were to somehow bring both gold crowns to them or to capture footage of them both present at once.

If you wanted to get someone to believe you were a twin, the only choice you had to prove that to them was to either show them your twin directly or show a picture with both of you in it. Or you could also just show your family registry, I supposed.

But even if I was able to prove that another gold crown really did exist, how could I prove that it wasn’t our Gold that attacked Mariu?

“Cease with your tomfoolery, both of you. I can’t say it’s very nice of you.”

“Ha ha ha, sorry, sorry. We don’t often get the chance to see Touya cornered, so we got a little carried away.”

“Indeed. Naturally, we don’t actually suspect you.”

The two apologized easily when the pope of Ramissh scolded them with a sigh.

“Well, I doubt you would do such a thing either,” the emperor of Gardio made clear. I was thankful; building up trust really was important for moments like this.

“I did think you were being framed. Doing such a thing would bring no merit to Brunhild, after all.”

“There is nothing to be gained by annihilating a small village. If you wanted to kidnap someone, you would be craftier about it. You’re good at it, after all.”

I was glad they trusted me, but I really wanted to object to the idea that I was good at kidnappings.

I won’t deny that I am, though!

“Now that we’ve established the Gollem that attacked Mariu was on the side

of the wicked devout, what was their objective?”

“Is it not a plot to cast curses on them to turn them into their own soldiers, as they’ve been thus far?”

“What a loathsome bunch! Sneaking around and attacking in our blind spots!”

Most of the countries of this world had fallen victim to the wicked devout’s attacks in some manner. The only one completely free from any such incidents had been Brunhild, which was devoid of a neighboring ocean. Maybe Gandhilis as well, given it had such a rocky coastline and there were very few villages and towns within its borders.

Though they did have part of the Gigantes they’d discovered underground stolen from them, so I guess you could consider them a victim... That was my fault for underestimating the enemy, though.

“Are preparations to take down the wicked devout complete yet?” the mikado of Eashen, Shirahime, asked.

“Almost. If we give them the chance to escape, we’ll be back to square one, so we’re being extra careful to make sure we take them down in one fell swoop.”

“Very good. Haste makes waste, after all. When you strike, you must be fully prepared so you can beat them into submission.”

And that was exactly what we planned to do. We needed to completely eradicate the wicked god’s remains if we wanted to send our children back to the future safely. At least I’d somewhat managed to clear their suspicions surrounding Gold. Not entirely, but enough that he was deemed acquitted for now.

I really needed to make sure Gold was present in the face-off against their gold crown so I could prove for absolute certain that there was an identical unit. I was glad they trusted *me*, but that didn’t mean they trusted Gold.

After the conference, we had our usual small banquet in the name of furthering friendships, and then we were back to business as usual. I couldn’t help but let out a sigh at the documents piled on top of my office desk. When I glanced out the window, I saw Sue, Steph, and the now-released Gold happily

watering the flowers in the garden.

So lucky... I wanna play with the kids too...

This was the duty of a king, though. I couldn't skimp out on the work. If I worked hard enough, I could maybe put aside some time to play with them in the evening.

Hours into my desperate fight with my papers, when the end was finally in sight, I received a phone call.

From God Almighty? This is unusual.

"Hello?"

"Touya, is that you? Do you think you could come pay me a visit once you get a moment? There's something I wish to discuss with you."

As in, go to the Divine Realm? Did something happen?

Given that I was nearing the end of my work, I decided it wouldn't be a big deal to take a short break, and so I teleported to the Divine Realm with **[Gate]**. Now in that familiar small tatami space surrounded by the familiar sea of clouds, not just God Almighty, but also Grandma Tokie was sitting around that familiar low table.

"You were called here too, Grandma Tokie?"

"Not quite. In fact, I was the one who told him he should call you here. Do have a seat."

I did as she said and sat myself down on one of the zabuton cushions. The fact that she called me here instead of coming to me directly must have meant that she wanted God Almighty to be present for our discussion.

"You are correct, dear. This is something that violates the rules of our realm, so it isn't something I can freely talk about with my own judgment."

I see, I see. Wait, don't just read my mind like that!

In other words, some incident had happened that was related to the gods. But why would that result in a lowly god like me getting involved?

"So, uh, what happened, exactly?"

“Y-Yes, well, you see, we...may have made a little mistake that will result in causing you trouble once again. I truly am sorry.”

Grandma Tokie was suddenly apologizing to *me* now? Was there something new I had to deal with now? My hands were already plenty full dealing with the wicked devout.

“What is this all about? Stop beating around the bush and just tell me.”

“Mngh... I suppose I should. You see...a fallen god has descended to your world. I have no words to express how sorry I am to have not realized until now. I cannot defend myself against any accusations of negligence.”

A fallen god? Not a wicked one? What's the difference?

“Wicked gods are simply false gods born from the accumulation of negative emotions of the surface realm within sacred treasures or objects imbued with divinity. Though it should, of course, be noted that the specific wicked god that you defeated had fused with a servile god,” God Almighty explained.

Grandma Tokie continued the explanation, guilt clear on her face.

“Fallen gods, on the other hand, are very much gods who have fallen to depravity. They are gods who have had their divine status abolished and are now exiled from the Divine Realm. Under normal circumstances, they would be eternally imprisoned in the frozen hell of Cocytus, which I monitor.”

Cocytus? Is that like a divine prison for gods or something?

“This fallen god in particular gave one last desperate struggle right as we were about to seal him away. The god of destruction should have completely eliminated him then, but...”

The god of destruction can just eliminate a god like that?! Please never let me face him!

“What we failed to notice was that just before he could be completely annihilated, he split off a small part of himself. That is what managed to escape. That fragment is now...”

“Now in this world?”

God Almighty nodded.

“A freshly materialized fragment has no will of its own. It was most likely mindlessly searching for sources of divinity. A fallen god cannot enter the Divine Realm, so it was instead attracted to your world, which is currently the next greatest source of divinity.”

There *were* over a dozen gods on the surface right now. Unfortunately, the barrier to this world was still broken. A small little fragment like that could easily slip through the cracks.

“Only a small fraction of the god’s power escaped, but divine power is still divine power. We cannot allow it to run free. What is worse, it appears it has been absorbed by the wicked devout.”

“HUH?!”

“I started to feel as if the dimensional distortions weren’t quite as random as we first thought, and so I returned to the Divine Realm to look into it, and it turned out that the divinity of the fallen god that the god of destruction should have completely disposed of remained. Most likely... No, it is almost certain now that the wicked devout have been using that fragment of the fallen god to interfere with space-time.”

Just our luck. Of course such an annoying group managed to pick up such an annoying item. All of this was only going to get worse, wasn’t it?

“Still, this fallen god was only a lesser god, and this is only a fragment of that. It may be even weaker than a servile god as it is.”

Did that mean we didn’t need to be so doom and gloom? It calling through monsters from other time periods was still a bit annoying, though.

“However, this god’s specific power is a little tricky. He ruled over the concept of ‘erosion.’ He was skilled at worming his way inside of anything and everything and eating away at it. There are few limits on what he can interfere with—physical objects, living beings, and even one’s mind.”

“Erosion... A god of erosion, huh?”

“Originally, to be precise. As his divine status was removed from him, all that is left is his power wandering free. That said, if one were to absorb that power, they too could gain some of the properties of the god of erosion...and that is

not a power that should be allowed to exist on the surface.”

“So what you’re trying to say is that I need to deal with that?”

“We’re truly sorry,” God Almighty apologized, guiltily bowing his head.

From the perspective of the gods, it shouldn’t be a big deal to destroy our world with the fallen god in it and be done with the whole issue. That way was simpler, and they didn’t need to be held back by unnecessary worries. Were they being polite about it because I was the caretaker of this world? Or was this some kind of newbie training? Like if I couldn’t deal with a problem like this, I had no right to be a caretaker of a world?

You know, maybe that tracks. This must be a divine tribulation!

“No need to overthink it,” Grandma Tokie reassured me. “We simply think it would be a waste if the sanctuary we had built up was to suddenly go poof. Though there *were* those who supported the idea of simply having the god of destruction clean up for us, since it would be too much of a pain to deal with ourselves...”

And again with reading my thoughts. Maybe it wasn’t a trial, then.

Still, even the gods found it a pain, huh? The wicked devout were still wards of a god—or at least, an imitation of one—so the fragment might have been attracted to that. If the wicked devout hadn’t been around, it might have come to Brunhild instead.

“Is there any chance that I’ve fallen victim to the erosion?”

“Not a chance. You’re my ward; the erosion would bounce right off of your divinity. Your wives are protected by that divinity, and your children, who have your blood, would be the same. The regular humans around you would absolutely have felt the effects, though.”

“What sort of effects?”

“The body of the one who is possessed is eaten away at, and then the minds of those around them are also eroded. It’s a very gradual degradation. Eventually, they become unable to think, their bodies mutate, and they end up mindlessly relying on their instincts. Their eventual end is as a moving corpse.

Once their body deteriorates entirely, the fragment will simply find a new host and repeat the process all over again.”

It was like a zombie movie... Maybe it was a good thing it never came to us.

Hang on, does all this not sound familiar?

“Are you telling me that those mutated Fishmen who had received the apparent curse of the wicked god were really...?”

“They were likely affected by not just the wicked god, but also the fallen god, yes. If I were to make a guess, the fallen god’s power is being kept under control through the wicked god’s power. To make an Earth comparison, it’s like a car’s engine and its steering wheel.”

And that was why the wicked vessels the devout held seemed to be so rich in divinity, despite it being leftovers from a dead wannabe god. A lot suddenly made sense. Assuming they had the fallen god of erosion on their side, would our sacred treasure even be effective? Sure, they were fallen, but that didn’t change the fact that they were still originally a god. Would things really work out?

“You don’t need to worry about that. It’s not a god, it’s a *fragment* of one. It doesn’t have the power to withstand the divinity of a ward of God Almighty. As he said, the real dangerous part is the power of erosion itself. You, your wives, and your children will be fine, but everyone else will be affected in some way.”

And since we...or, well, the girls and I couldn’t take the wicked devout down because of the restrictions set on gods, we had no choice but to rely on our children.

Absolutely nothing about this sounded different from our original issue. Where was the catch?

“The power of erosion does not limit itself to living creatures,” God Almighty said. “Take your metal giants, for instance. I’m sure they would be affected too.”

“You mean our Frame Gears?”

Ugh, seriously?

At least we hadn't intended for our final confrontation with them to require our Frame Gears. Unless they gigantified in some way, which wasn't out of the question because Graphite turned into some big spider thing...

"What would happen if a Frame Gear were eroded?" I asked.

"I can't say for certain, but I assume it would stop functioning and begin to fall apart. In the worst case, it would be taken over by the other side."

In other words, if they managed to erode a Frame Gear's chain of command, it could lead to it attacking an ally even if we ordered it to attack the enemy. All of this was an effect of divine power, so none of the scientists would be able to do anything about it. According to God Almighty, we should be fine if we coat the Frame Gears with divinity, but the only one who could do that right now was me. Apparently, if one did happen to get taken over, I could also cleanse it with my own divinity, but...

"That's such a pain..."

"Indeed. Well, um, I suppose we're at fault here... I apologize."

"It isn't your fault. This is what happens when that naughty god of destruction refuses to do his job properly. The next time I see him, I'll slap his scruffy face to kingdom come!" Grandma Tokie ended up mad at the god of destruction for God Almighty's sake. It was true that we wouldn't be in this mess if the god of destruction had just eliminated that fallen god properly.

I really did hope they wouldn't take over the Frame Gears, though. Even if Reginleif was fine, if everyone else's ended up taken over, we'd be in trouble. If the Ortlinde Overlord started going out of control, we'd have a hard time trying to stop it.

"Erosion cannot so easily begin its assault without coming into contact with the object or person in question, so it wouldn't happen so easily. Still, there is no denying it is a possibility. When it comes time to face whoever is taken over by the fallen god, you'd be best avoiding them."

Just don't touch them and we were fine, huh? Right, the only ones who turned into Fishmen that one time were those who were bitten directly. Glad it wasn't airborne, at least. In that case, I doubt I'd have to worry much.

“Um, the fallen fragment doesn’t have its own will, right?”

“Correct.”

“If a Golem—an autonomous mechanical puppet—were to be taken over by the fragment, what would happen?”

“Hm? An autonomous mechanical puppet? It would likely just become something that held the power of erosion.”

No way.

Golems were creations that operated based on the fundamental operations written into their Q-Crystals. Even if it looked like they had their own will, that was purely their programmed conditioned responses. They were simply robots that abided by their master’s orders, never acting on emotion as humans did.

What instantly came to mind was a demo screen of an action game. Even though no one was controlling it, the playable character was running and jumping and killing enemies. It was simply doing as it was programmed to.

But then, what would happen if someone picked up the controller and pressed start? The playable character was no longer a robot—it was the player holding the controller.

What if the gold crown had been eroded by the fallen god? Would it then become a gold crown with the power of erosion? Not a fallen god that had taken over a gold crown?

To begin with, Golems couldn’t even act independently without a master, so I had thought that one of the wicked devout had filled that role. Maybe that was my biggest mistake.

“This has become such a mess...”

I wasn’t sure how many times I had sighed those words now, and God Almighty apologized once again. I wasn’t blaming him or anything. I was just thinking about how there were so many more unpredictable factors than before that we’d have to look back over our plan. If anything, this was all because of the god of destruction’s oversight. I’d make sure Grandma Tokie beat him up for me as well.



“A fallen god, huh? And just when you thought things couldn’t get any messier.”

Gathered under a gazebo in the courtyard, I told the other gods what God Almighty had explained to me, and they all frowned and groaned to themselves.

It was a really crazy sight when I thought about it. Seven gods—the goddess of love, the goddess of swords, the god of agriculture, the goddess of hunting, the god of music, the goddess of alcohol, and the god of combat—had all gathered. Grandma Tokie was absent from this meeting.

Technically, I was a god too, but I really didn’t feel like one—or at least, I didn’t feel like I could walk up to someone and proudly declare that I was a god. Would I start to feel like it in one or two thousand years like God Almighty had said?

“Is it that bad?”

“Kinda, yeah. This isn’t like the case with the servile god; this used to be an actual god’s power. Let your guard down and you’ll get your feet swept out from right under you,” Karina responded with a begrudging smile. Not that I was ever intending to let my guard down in the first place, of course.

“Most of us lesser gods rule over some concept, y’know,” Karen began to explain with a sigh. “For example, I rule over love, Moroha over swordsmanship, Karina over hunting. Because we specialize in those areas, those characteristics are inevitably reflected in our divinity, y’know.”

“The fallen god’s old realm was erosion,” Karina picked back up. “As the name suggests, they had the power to invade and eat away at things. It crawls in and slowly eats away at its surroundings, eventually leading the whole area to decay. It’s a pain, honestly.”

It sounded a little like a cancerous cell. Identify it too late, and there was no way to deal with it. It was all about early detection, early treatment.

“Oooh, so the erosion god shplit himself up and ran awaaaay, hic! What a wittle bad boy he ish. Oh, but I guesh he doesn’t have a mind anymore...” Suika began laughing away to herself, speech slightly slurred.



Hey, you drunk goddess. Where'd you bring that wine bottle from, eh? You didn't go steal it from the kitchen's wine cellar again, did you? You know I'm the one Crea will shout at later?

From how she was speaking, was Suika personally acquainted with the erosion god?

"Did you two know each other?" I asked.

"Hm? Jusht a little. He was soooooooooo annoying, hic!"

Certainly didn't sound like the nicest guy in the world, though given he'd become a fallen god, that wasn't much of a surprise.

"What kind of crime did he even commit that got him stripped of his rank?"

"Same as the servile god. He tried ta interfere with the surface realm. It was fer a different world than this one, though," Uncle Kousuke explained between sips of green tea. By that, he meant using divinity to greatly affect the surface, right?

"The world ended up so messed up that the god of destruction had no choice but ta completely wipe it. Many species were goin' extinct at an unnatural rate, and when we looked into it, it turned out to be the work of the god of erosion. Turned out he had descended to the surface by himself," he continued.

"Ahhh, that's bad. He was never getting away with that, riiight?" Suika chuckled away.

I doubt it was very funny to the people whose world got destroyed.

Still, did that mean if they hadn't looked into it, the god of destruction would've exterminated the world and essentially covered up evidence of the god of erosion's involvement without their knowing?

"Naturally, there was no room to argue for extenuating circumstances, so the guy had his divine status revoked, and he was branded a fallen god. The moment it was decided he would be sent to Cocytus, he went berserk and tried to escape. The god of destruction was present and got rid of him with one strike. Well, I guess he didn't entirely get rid of him, but you get the idea," Moroha explained.

It was crazy to think that the god of destruction could eliminate any one of us so easily...

“That *is* his job. He has the power to destroy any god other than God Almighty. If he really wanted to, he could get rid of all of us in one fell swoop. Though he’d need a justified reason to do so, of course.”

That meant any one of us could be killed if a reason existed. He seemed to be quite extreme from what I’d heard—he wasn’t destroying worlds as he felt like it, was he?

Oh, wait...

“Uh, so, I was actually asked to become the next god of destruction...”

“HUH?!”

Every god present couldn’t hide their surprise. I was pretty sure I heard Sousuke’s voice as well. He was able to speak this whole time?

“Touya as the next god of destruction... Maybe that’d work.”

“Mmm, as his big sister, I say no. I don’t want a violent little brother.”

“I think he’s got the talent for it, though.”

“True. He doesn’t generally like using his abilities, but when he does, he doesn’t hold back.”

“Nyah hah hah, Touya being the destruction god would be shooooooooo fun, hic!”

“A destructive power is still one’s own power. We’ll need to make sure ya get in the trainin’ so you can control it, lad.”

Hang on, I’m not actually going to take the job. And Sousuke, quit playing such violent music.

“This aside, make sure you watch out for the fallen god’s power. As the name implies, by the time you start to notice it, it can already be too late, and that would be the worst.”

“I’ll try my best to not let that happen...”

“Even though the kids are going to have to be the ones to deal the killing blow

on the fallen and wicked gods, you guys can still support them so long as you don't use your divinity, y'know?"

With or without Karen's urging, I fully intended to do just that. In that case, though, couldn't Moroha and Uncle Takeru help out as well?

"If we dare fight with the wicked devout, they won't stand a chance whether we use our divinity or not. If we aren't careful, the fight will be over in a single shot—and that will undoubtedly be considered as us violating the rules."

"Sorry, man. Adults shouldn't get involved in a child's fight. We don't mind helping take out the rabble, however."

Ugh, why are the broken characters so useless?!

I had to admit that I doubted the other gods would approve of them beating up the wicked devout first before having us deal the finishing blow. Someone would definitely find some reason or another to put in a complaint.

Nothing was ever easy with these guys, huh? But in all fairness, we were very much in a situation where we were having a blind eye turned to gods getting involved with an issue that should be solved by the surface humans so long as no one used their divinity.

"Plus, this is your job as this world's caretaker. We can help a little, but if you leave all the work to us, you'll come across as an incompetent god. Don't run from trials that will only make you stronger, lad."

"Ngh..."

Uncle Takeru with the blunt, honest truth... I forgot that this counted as my work as a god.

Isn't this a bit much for a new employee's— I mean, new god's first task?

Not that complaining was going to get me out of it, of course.



"All right, let's leave it here for today."

"Yes, sir..." I whined, spreading out on the ground of the training area after getting thorough training from Uncle Takeru and Moroha.

“Ow... **[Refresh]**...”

Upon casting the spell, the fatigue left my body, and the pain gradually lessened. When it came to training, muscle tissue grew thicker and stronger through its repeated breakdown and recovery, but if you healed it with magic, you didn't receive those benefits. My training right now was more to help me acquire skills, so it wasn't a big deal if I didn't acquire muscle in the process. Plus, I could deal with that using strengthening magic anyway.

But now that I'd achieved divine status, would my body even grow anymore? I remembered the kids saying I looked a little different in the future, so maybe it would. If I recalled correctly, a human body hit its peak growth between twenty and twenty-five years of age, but I wasn't human anymore, so did my body even follow that rule?

“Why is a Sovereign doing such things?”

“Hm?”

I heard a familiar voice speak to me in an unfamiliar tone, and I lifted my head to look around for the source. Standing at the edge of the training field was Leylle.

No... This isn't Leylle. Judging from how they spoke and that poker face of theirs, it has to be Halle.

“Dunno if it's the answer you want, but I'm just doing it to get stronger.”

“But you're the Sovereign, are you not? What strength is required of you? Should you have a notably skilled general under your command, there should be no need for that.”

“There's some things I can't leave to other people.”

I levered my upper body up and looked toward Leylle—no, Halle. She...no, *he* was looking at me as if he didn't like my answer.

“Were the Sovereign all-powerful, the people under their rule would be content. However, when that Sovereign must one day inevitably leave their position, there will be none who can sufficiently take their place. And as a result, the world will fall into endless strife and turmoil. Should the Sovereign

not ensure they leave things in the capable hands of the competent?”

“Are you referring to what happened with Melle?” I asked. I saw Halle hesitate. Spot on, then.

Sure, that was one way of dealing with it. I was frequently told by Kousaka to stop taking care of everything myself.

“...My sister was a brilliant Sovereign. Nothing ever went wrong when the citizens followed her command. It is for that reason that they sought the same thing from me. However, the moment they realized I could not fulfill what they wished of me, they all began doing as they pleased. Phrasia fell into constant strife and turmoil. I was unable to become her replacement,” Halle said, his voice fading into a self-deprecating mutter.



This must have been what Kousaka warned me of—that if the one at the top was too talented, the organization as a whole could very easily crumble. If an autocratic president continued to heavy-handedly run a business, you ended up with nothing but useless bootlickers filling your ranks, leading to the gradual decline of your company's growth in capability, making it impossible for employees to nurture a sense of autonomy and responsibility.

The Odas quickly fell to ruin after the Honnoji Incident for similar reasons. Oda Nobunaga was an outstanding leader who no one could replace. The moment he was dead, his clan fell apart. However, it likely didn't help that his successor, Nobutada, lost his life in the same battle.

“Do you hate Melle for forcing the role onto you?”

“My sister? I...don't know. I certainly hate Endymion, at least.”

Oh no, Ende, looks like you're still not out of the woods yet.

“When my sister first disappeared, it felt as if I had been abandoned. First came sadness, then anger. Most of that was directed at Endymion, but...honestly, I felt the weight of the title of Sovereign. Upon being given that role, I was once more made painfully aware of the greatness of my sister, and was made even more painfully aware of my own powerlessness.”

You did often hear stories of successors who had to go to extreme lengths in order to finally be respected at the same level as their great predecessors. Having taken up the crown after Melle, Halle'd had no choice but to fight the pressure of the unreasonable expectations being placed on him by his subjects.

“Upon becoming Sovereign, I finally understood what my sister must have been feeling. You have the motivation to work hard for those who need you, but you can't help but wonder why you need to work yourself to the bone for those who only care about your power. To them, anyone would suffice as Sovereign, so long as they had sufficient power. Perhaps that was the reason my sister and Endymion resolved to cross worlds.”

“I do think it would be difficult to want to dedicate your life to people who weren't even truly looking at you...”

I sure wouldn't be able to find the motivation to be grand duke if the people

of my country were entirely indifferent toward me and even those close to me in the castle never truly cared about me. I'd definitely abdicate the throne, go to another country, and enjoy my life there instead.

Some people might accuse me of being irresponsible as someone with power and authority, but what was the issue with me living my own life? I wasn't self-sacrificing enough to live purely for other people. Those who were had to be what we called saints.

Thankfully, both here and around the world, I'd made proper bonds with many people. That was why I had come to love this world. I had people that I wanted to protect, so I was able to work hard. Halle likely didn't have anyone like that in his life. I'd heard that, for better or for worse, the Phrase were very much a meritocracy. No doubt a ton of people saw that Halle was inferior to Melle, and that was what led to the chaos in Phrasia.

"My sister... She smiles now. Not just her, but Ney and Lycee as well. She has a daughter named Allis, and she looks like she's living her life so much more than when she was Phrasia's Sovereign. I can't help but think that...she looks really, truly happy. When I think about how Endymion was the one that granted her that happiness, I feel this bubbling rage, but...I also think this is for the best."

Halle really did love Melle. He had all the right to be mad at her for dumping the title of Sovereign onto him, yet he was glad about her happiness.

"I said I understood my sister's feelings, right? This body belongs to Leylle, and I am little more than the remnants of the Sovereign Halle, but I want to tell him to abandon the title of Sovereign just as his sister did. He should abandon the title of the one who exists to be used like a puppet. However, I know that it is likely my core is already shattered back on Phrasia, and I have been reduced to nothing but a corpse."

Was the real Halle back on Phrasia still alive? Though he was created by Yula, given that he was able to give birth to a new power in the form of the Quos, I highly doubted he was an incompetent Sovereign.

"Mngh, it feels like Leylle's about to wake up. Sovereign of this kingdom, I express my thanks for accompanying me for this talk."

“I’m not the Sovereign, I’m Touya. Touya Mochizuki. Learn the name already.”

“I see. In that case, may we meet again, Touya.”

Halle flashed a smile at me before his eyes slowly closed. Next thing I knew, Leylle’s eyes snapped open and she started blinking furiously.

“Ahuh? Wha—? Where is this?”

“You’re at the castle’s third training field.”

“Oh, Grand Duke!”

Leylle was naturally surprised upon suddenly finding herself standing somewhere she didn’t remember walking to. Honestly, Leylle and I hadn’t really talked all that much since she’d come here. Apparently, whenever Halle was in control of her body, Leylle only had vague memories as if she had been in a dream, even though Halle seemed to perfectly remember whatever Leylle saw.

“Huh? I was lost, and then I...”

“There you are! Leylle, haven’t I told you not to wander too far away?!”

Dashing at full speed toward us from the other side of the field was Allis. Kuon was also power walking behind her. She was like Leylle’s guardian—she really had become like her older sister.

“Sorry, Allis...”

“So long as you’re safe, it’s all right. I was just scared ’cause I turned around and suddenly you weren’t there.”

It turned out Allis had come with Leylle to visit Kuon, but then Leylle suddenly disappeared. Or rather, Halle’s personality had taken over and come to find me. Allis seemed to remember something as she turned to look at me.

“Your Grace, is there any chance you could make a smartphone for Leylle?”

“Oh, wait, did I not give her one?”

If Leylle had had a phone, Allis would’ve been able to just call her. I’d sealed Leylle’s echo with **[Prison]**, so Allis couldn’t sense where she was that way anymore.

I took out an unregistered phone from **[Storage]** and handed it over to the

girl.

I was going to exchange contact details with her while we were here, but Allis stopped me; she said that the one who should be first in Leylle's phone contacts was her older sister.

Okay, okay, off you go.

Kuon came over as I was smiling fondly at them.

Wait, why is he wearing glasses?

"Father, there's a guest here to see you."

"A guest?"

"I came to find you because your phone's turned off. They're currently waiting in the reception room."

Right, I'd turned my phone off during training. But I was pretty sure I didn't have any plans to meet anyone today. Who the hell was it?

"They called themselves Glassie, and they're quite forceful... They're who I got these glasses from. As a sign of goodwill, apparently."

"Oh."

I instantly knew who it was the second Kuon explained the situation to me. There was only one person I knew who was like that. But what reason would he have to come here? I wasn't sure, but I might as well meet him for now. If I wasn't quick about it, everyone in the castle would be forced to wear glasses.



"Oh, Master Touya. I believe your wedding was the last time we met."

"Um, yeah, it's nice to see you again..."

When I entered the reception room, the god of glasses was waiting for me with under-rim glasses on. Whether out of habit or him consciously doing it for the effect, he pushed them up with a finger, the lens letting off a mysterious glint.

He looked like an ordinary young man in his twenties with long black hair, but his glasses had this sheen to them that made them unnaturally stand out. Those

glasses must have been his main body.

“I’ve already made a round trip of the neighboring countries to inform them of the wonder of glasses. Henceforth, I would like to concentrate my efforts on popularizing them around the world. As such, I have come to you for assistance.”

“What? What kind of assistance do you even want from me?” I asked, confused. As if he’d been waiting for me to ask that very question, the god of glasses’s...glasses gleamed once more.

“Of course, I wish to use you as a walking advertisement! If I were to place glasses on you, the most popular man in the world, then surely people all over will begin wearing glasses too!”

“Are you kidding me?”

To think that what had awaited me was a pushy glasses salesman.



“To begin with, glasses are used to assist with abnormalities in vision such as nearsightedness, farsightedness, and astigmatism, and to shield the eyes from strong light. As such, glasses come in all manner of styles, and no two glasses are the same. Actually, scratch that; there are nonprescription glasses—glasses purely for show—that can be mass-produced and are therefore the same. However, if everyone were to wear glasses with the same frames, it would lead to the complete erasure of individuality. Everyone has his or her own pair of glasses that fits them perfectly—no one in this world looks bad in all glasses. Simply by wearing them, one can look intelligent, increase how sincere they look, and even increase sexual appeal. They are practically a sacred treasure for one’s face. That is precisely why I cannot help but pity those who do not wear them. People are unaware. They are unaware of just how much they are missing out on their own charm born from the gap between when they are wearing glasses and when they are not! ‘I thought they were some violent delinquent, but they were actually kind!’ ‘He’s so cool, but he has the sweetest smile!’ ‘She’s usually so flamboyant, but now she looks so homely!’ You can create these exact character gaps with a single pair of glasses! Glasses are a part of one’s face, a tool that adds vibrancy to your whole look! Even those who

barely make an impression at all can show off their personal appeal with a simple pair of glasses. In a way, it's just like a girl's makeup. In other words, not wearing glasses is like leaving one's face naked. That, in and of itself, can be a way of showing off one's natural beauty, but that does not mean we should neglect the effort to look beautiful. Whether man or woman, we are all attracted to that which is beautiful. And if that is the case, then *everyone* should wear glasses! They should embrace their own beauty and look at that which is beautiful with their beautiful, clear glasses! Glasses can even give the impression that one is pure, tidy, and innocent. A woman has nothing to lose by wearing them, don't you agree? In this world, glasses are still a luxury item, yet to spread to the common people. And so, I will simply spread them around the world myself! I will make no use of my divine powers. I will spread them around the world as a fellow human being! As an evangelist of glasses, I travel the world and inform everyone of their wonder! That is why I have come all this way to ask for your assistance, Master Touya."

"I-I see..."

Could you be a bigger yapper?!

Glassie, the god of glasses, had gotten so engrossed in his speech that his divinity was leaking out. The maids in the room had to leave because it was affecting them!

Honestly, it was strange that his divinity was leaking out like this and yet none of the other gods came to check what was happening. They'd definitely realized the god of glasses was here, right? They knew and that was exactly why they didn't come, right?

Damn you, don't shove your annoyances off onto my plate!

"Are you listening?"

"Oh, uh, sorry... W-Well, I pretty much get what you're trying to say. Glasses are still seen as a luxury item in this world, so only a handful of nobles actually wear them. Back on Earth, there were plenty of people who didn't wear glasses and instead wore contact lenses, but—"

"*Contact lenses?*" the god of glasses practically spat out, narrowing his eyes, his face contorting as he looked at me. There was a dark and gloomy light

within those sharp eyes.

Oh no, I said something I shouldn't have, didn't I?

“You’re not one of *those*, are you? A foolish supporter of those foolish lenses you insert into your eyes, I mean. Are you telling me that you think inserting a foreign object into an organ as sensitive as your eye will end well? This world has healing magic, but even that is not all-powerful. You may be able to heal a wound to the eye, but you cannot cure the growth of bacteria. Make one wrong move and you can even blind yourself, yet you claim that such *horrors* are on the same level as glasses? Abandoning one’s captivating glasses and replacing them with contacts is like going to fight an enemy buck naked with not a single piece of armor on your body! If you have bad eyesight, then wear glasses! Even if you don’t have bad eyesight, wear glasses! They are a companion that will accompany you for life! Contacts are the heretic’s path! Glasses are the most supreme existence in this world, the ultimate item with infinite possibilities!”

“Wow, amazing...”

I couldn’t think of anything else to say to the glasses god monologuing with rabid eyes.

Gimme a break, seriously...

The god let out a breath and said, “My apologies. I became a touch enraged.”

“Only a touch?”

“I had a flashback to a fight I had with the god of contacts a thousand years ago, so I couldn’t help it...”

A god of contact lenses actually existed? Would contacts even have existed a thousand years ago?

“You’re thinking purely in Earth terms. There are other worlds with thriving civilizations that developed contact lenses well before Earth, you know? No matter the world, however, glasses were always made first! That said...there are civilizations that ended up so advanced that sight correction operations became possible, so both glasses and contact lenses decreased in usage...”

The god of glasses slumped over in sadness. Apparently, when humanity

progressed far enough, everyone stopped having bad eyesight and glasses became a fashion item. Even that eventually started to go out of fashion, and everyone stopped wearing them. It was true that no one really wore monocles back on Earth anymore. No matter the world, some things trend while others fall into disuse.

“There are worlds where the races that live there do not need glasses or contacts either. Worlds like this with this level of civilization are the ones best suited to spreading the gospel of glasses. Oh, returning to why I came here, this is why I would like your assistance in doing so.”

“Mmm...”

Honestly...I couldn't give two flips! It didn't matter to me whatsoever if glasses became popular or if they died out. Actually, wait, no, the latter might be a problem; there would be people out there with bad sight that would suffer from that, especially the common folk. There would most definitely be many commoners who would benefit greatly from glasses being sold at an affordable price. In that sense, I didn't think it was such a bad idea.

But if that was the case, we'd need to start by spreading the technology of lens grinding more widely. I was pretty sure we could easily share it between countries by holding a technological conference with the alliance. We did have an expert right in front of us, after all. We could start by spreading it among the nobles and upper classes, and then finally make cheap, affordable glasses that could go to the commoners.

For nonprescription glasses, people didn't need to know how to grind lenses, and we could probably get it trending among people without bad eyesight as a fashion accessory...

“But, eh...I doubt me wearing glasses is going to magically get them trending.”

“Really? But I thought using famous people as a walking advertisement worked.”

“Famous? Well...I guess I am famous to some people. But if you're wanting glasses to start trending as a fashion item, you should get a girl as a model.”

Putting glasses on someone like me with the most normal face ever wouldn't

have much of an impact. If anything, it would just power up my plainness. In that case, why not get a beautiful lady to increase how captivating it looked?

“Hm. Then may I ask your wives for assistance?”

“Huh?”

“I saw your wives at the wedding ceremony, and they’re all beautiful women. Were they to model my glasses, their beauty would be even further emphasized. They would make for the perfect advertisements. How does that sound?”

“Using the girls as walking ads? Hmm...”

I was sure they’d look good in glasses, at least. I’d even seen Linze wearing them once before, back when she was using my translation glasses. They really did suit her.

“Let’s bring it up with them for now,” I said. “But if they say no, you better not force them.”

“But of course. Thank you.”

To be honest, I’d like to see them all wearing glasses too. Maybe not as an ad, but they might like wearing them as a part of their outfits. Anyway, we could only ask and see.



“So? What do you want us to do?” Elze asked, tilting her head.

“You know that there’s that joint wedding party in Allent for Dauburn and Zadonia happening soon? Apparently, he wants you guys to attend the party wearing glasses so you can help advertise them.”

The young kings Hakim of Dauburn and Frost of Zadonia were betrothed to princesses Ariattie and Leticia of Allent, respectively. They’d already had their marriage ceremonies in their home countries, but they made the decision to hold a wedding party at their wives’ home country as well.

Naturally, we had been invited. Or more accurately, if I wasn’t there, there was no way to get each country’s representatives gathered in one place. The only one who could use teleportation magic besides me was the pumpkin-pants

prince of Panaches.

That led to the plan of having the girls wear glasses at the party in order to try to market them to foreign countries.

“Glasses? I have no problem with my sight, I do not,” Yae stated, clearly perplexed as to why she was being told to wear them. It wasn’t too surprising—I hadn’t seen many people wearing glasses in Eashen, so it was purely viewed as a tool for correcting one’s sight over there.

“Glasses are not only worn by the visually impaired, my dear. They can draw out one’s beauty as well. You look as if a pair of oval lenses would suit you.”

Glassie leaped right in to clear up Yae’s confusion, instantly pulling out a pair of glasses with oval lenses. It looked like an average pair of glasses you’d find on Earth, with thin metallic frames.

Though she looked unsure, Yae slipped the glasses onto her face.

“H-How do I look...?”

Hng! To have Yae timidly asking me how she looks with glasses on! So cute!

The god of glasses seemed to have caught my reaction, as he let out a laugh.

“Powerful, aren’t they?”

“Ugh... I have no choice but to agree!”

Yae usually had an athletic feel about her, but the moment she put on those glasses, she suddenly had an intelligent vibe. I felt like I was looking at a studious literature student all of a sudden.

So this is gap moe!

“T-Touya-dono? Is it strange, is it?”

“No, definitely not! It really suits you! You look so cute! You have a totally different vibe from before, but that’s not a bad thing!”

“D-Do you think so, do you? Hehe...”

An embarrassed Yae in glasses looked so cute!

Man, these really are powerful... My heart’s beating a mile a minute because

of how different she looks.

“D-Does it change you that much? Maybe I should try some on,” Elze muttered, beginning to be tempted.

“Hmm, it seems like you’re usually quite lively. How about some Wellington frames? I think this should give you a different image.”

Elze took the glasses the god recommended to her and slipped them on.

“H-How do I look?” she asked, trying to gauge our reactions as she gazed at us with her black, slightly rounded square-frame glasses.

Wow! She looks a little like a class president!

The usual rowdy Elze had calmed down, giving way to a diligent student. She had the image of a nagging but kind and put-together girl.

“You’re freakin’ adorbs, class prez!”

“C-Class...prez? Is that your way of saying it suits me?”

“Of course! A completely different side of you is getting to shine!”

“Really...? Well, I guess it doesn’t feel bad.”

Crap, even wearing glasses, my wives are adorable. All it took were some glasses to bring out a whole new side of them. Is this the magic of glasses?!

The god of glasses slapped me on the shoulder from behind, face smug as he gave me a thumbs-up. Why did his attitude piss me off so much? I kind of wanted to smash his glasses.

“This looks fun. I want to try some on too!”

“Me too! I wanna wear the same ones as mommy!”

Sue and Steph ended up curious themselves. Wearing the same glasses as your kid sounded cute.

Maybe I should wear the same ones as them...

“I want to wear the same ones as you too, mom!”

“Wait, I’ve got to wear them too?”

Seeing Sue and Steph go for matching pairs of glasses, Linne forcefully shoved

some toward Linze. The rest of the mother-daughter duos wanted to do the same, so Glassie was taking out glasses one after another and passing them around as if he had been waiting for this very moment.

Before long, almost everyone in the room was wearing a pair, turning the room into one densely populated by people with glasses.

Hang on, if everyone wears glasses, won't this become the new normal? There's nothing exciting about that.

The way someone wearing glasses let them stand out was being erased by the glasses themselves.

"You really don't get it, do you? It is the exact same situation as when everyone's faces are bare. In fact, by having everyone wear their own unique pair of glasses, their individual charm points are further brought out, and a new sense of individuality is born. Is this not how humans should truly be? Glasses really are a part of one's body!"

I had no idea what he was trying to say. I was almost convinced by his spectacle doctrine, but too much of anything was definitely a bad idea. They were literally just glasses. Regardless, it was rare that I got the opportunity to see the girls with glasses on, so I made sure to at least take a picture.

"...There's something cast on these, isn't there? These aren't normal glasses," Leen remarked, picking up a pair of Boston frames—glasses characterized by their inverted triangular shape. Had she seen something with the special sight granted to her by her fairy lineage?

"Oh my. Good eye, as I expected. I certainly have many pairs with magic cast on them. The one you hold right now, my dear fairy, is enhanced with Magnification."

"Magnification?"

"If you slide your finger along the temple of the glasses, you can magnify your vision."

Leen did as Glassie told her, and then her eyes widened.

"What a convenient tool. You can basically use it like a telescope, yes?"

She was sliding her finger along the side while gazing out the window. She must've been playing about with the magnification.

"Mother, let me try them on too!"

Naturally, her artifact-loving daughter couldn't keep quiet with this in front of her. Quun was practically jumping at Leen to get the chance to try them on. Leen had a wry smile on her face as she handed the glasses to her daughter, who immediately put them on and was excitedly sliding her finger along the temple as she looked out the window herself.

"You're not spreading enhanced glasses everywhere, are you?" I asked.

"Of course I'm not. I want to spread *glasses*, not magic items."

I was relieved to hear his answer. If glasses like this were spread without regulations in place, there was a chance they could be used to commit crimes.

"I have plenty of other types of enhanced glasses. This is Appraisal, this is Heat Sensor, and this is Beam," Glassie continued, placing three more glasses on top of the table.

Okay, Appraisal and Heat Sensor are easy enough to understand, but what the hell is Beam?!

"As the name implies, these let out a light beam. You could burn away something as trivial as an Orc in a flash with them. The downside is that the beam is so bright that it damages one's eyes..."

"Maybe put away the dangerous ones, okay?!"

A glasses beam?! It sounded cool, but it definitely came across more like a gimmick than anything practical. The other two at least *seemed* sensible...

I put on the Heat Sensor glasses, ran my finger along the temple, and suddenly I could see heat sources glowing red, just like thermography. I felt like I'd become the Predator like this. It seemed it was possible to switch between the modes, at least. When you tapped the frames, a visual would appear indicating the swap.

But when would you even use glasses like these? When you were out hunting at night? Then again, I could see intelligence knights making use of these.

Perhaps I'd take them.

But what about the Appraisal glasses? I repeated what I'd done with the Heat Sensor glasses, putting them on and running a finger along the frames. Some kind of crosshair appeared in my vision, moving wherever I looked, almost like a mouse cursor.

When I lined it up with a painting on the wall, it beeped and an explanation appeared like a text bubble in a comic.

"Painting: oil painting."

Well, yeah, I can see that.

I turned my gaze toward the door this time.

"Door: wood."

And I can see that too!

Could these glasses only appraise things by their outside appearance?!

"It explains whatever it sees based on the wearer's own knowledge," Glassie explained. "As such, it cannot know what its wearer does not know."

"Doesn't that defeat the purpose of an appraisal...?"

If all that came out was information that you already knew, you wouldn't need to appraise it to know what the item was. When I looked at that painting on the wall, my knowledge amounted to "that's a picture" and "that's an oil painting," so that was the information the glasses showed me. If I'd known who the painter was, or what year it was painted in, the glasses probably would've gone, "Painting: oil painting drawn in XXXX by the artist known as YYYY," instead, but if I had that info already, I'd have no reason to appraise it.

Was there any point in an enhancement like this? Maybe as something to pull forth any memories you'd forgotten, like if you met someone who seemed familiar but you just couldn't remember their name. Use the Appraisal glasses and you'd know who they were right away.

You know, maybe these are useful after all.

When it came to all the royalty and nobles I had to meet on a regular basis, I

was quite often faced with the situation of not quite remembering who they were.

I tested it out by hovering the crosshair over the spectacled Yumina.

“Yumina Brunhild-Mochizuki: Female. Divine ward. One of the Grand Duke of Brunhild, Touya Mochizuki’s wives. Maiden name: Yumina Ernea Belfast. Has an affinity for Wind, Earth, and Dark magic. Possesses the Mystic Eye of Intuition and the Mystic Eye of Foresight. Eldest daughter of the king of Belfast, Tristwyn Ernes Belfast, and his queen, Yuel Ernea Belfast. Her younger brother is the first prince of Belfast, Yamato Ernes Belfast, and...”

Okay, okay, stop already!

All the information I knew about Yumina came tumbling out. It really did just display the information you knew. Honestly, I couldn’t decide if I actually thought it was useful or not.

“You don’t appear to view them that favorably, do you? Then what about these?” Glassie asked as he handed me a pair of yellow plastic frame glasses. These didn’t have another weird enhancement, did they?

As suspicious as I was, I tried them on. They...seemed to be a normal pair of glasses. Was there a switch on the frames like with the Heat Sensor ones? I slid my fingers along the temple while I looked at my surroundings, but there didn’t seem to be anything—

HANG ON!

When I turned to look at Lu, her clothes looked...slightly see-through? Huh?! I slid my fingers further along the frames, and suddenly, her clothes disappeared entirely, leaving only her underwear.



“Those are glasses enhanced with Transparent. You can look through obstructions with ease—”

“Hmph!”

“AAAAHHHH!”

I snapped the glasses in half.

“Wh-Wh-What are you doing?! To destroy a pair of glasses is a blasphemous act even for a god!” the god of glasses wailed with tear-filled eyes. He really didn’t understand that I’d just saved his ass.

“Touya? What are you doing?”

“I think I heard something about them being enhanced with Transparent...”

Crap!

Behind me were Yumina and Linze, looking at me with frigid glares. I felt as though I could see their menacing auras radiating from them. Even the god of glasses could only gasp in fright when he saw their eyes, sweat beginning to pour down his face.

“N-No, you misheard! Not Transparent but, uhhh, Talent! Seems like the glasses couldn’t withstand my innate talent and broke! I thought Elze would like to try them on, but guess that isn’t happening now! What a shame! You don’t have any more of these, right?”

“R-Right. I generally only keep one of each type of enhanced glasses. I...have no more.”

“...I see.”

“...Is that so?”

The heavy pressure exuding from Yumina and Linze disappeared all at once. They seemed convinced for now, luckily. When the two returned to the kids, both me and Glassie let out the breaths we’d been unconsciously holding.

“That was close...” I breathed out. “If the girls had learned these glasses existed, you’d have been a goner...”

“You have some frightening wives, Master Touya... W-Well, let’s be thankful

that it never turned into anything worse, shall we?”

“Don’t act like you’re innocent here. You’d have been the one getting hung out to dry, you know?”

“Me?!”

I mean, yeah, I wasn’t the one who made the glasses. If I’d acted overjoyed upon learning of their existence, though, it would’ve been a very different story... I was pretty sure the goddesses would’ve gotten involved as well. Glassie would’ve had no escape. I doubted the girls would wear the glasses to the party after something like that either. He should be thanking me, seriously.

“Don’t make glasses like these again, okay?” I warned him.

“I-I understand...”

Sweat still pouring down his pale face, the god of glasses nodded his head. Whether human or divine, women were not to be made enemies of. That was the truth of the world.



The sales pitch for using the girls as walking advertisements for glasses at the wedding party was a surprising success. It turned out that even on the Western Continent, where technology was much more advanced, glasses were still seen as simple tools for sight correction. It appeared no country viewed glasses as a fashion accessory.

The grand duchesses of Brunhild, known across the world for having introduced new sweets, meals, fun toys, and useful gadgets to the world, were now all wearing glasses despite their sight being more than fine.

That meant this was the first time that glasses were perceived as a fashion item. In which case, there was no reason the royal family and nobility *wouldn’t* jump on it, especially the women. What was more, for the people who did wear glasses for their sight, it gave them the idea of having more than one pair that they could wear depending on their mood.

I chose that moment to lay out a selection of glasses on a table, and that immediately caused a glasses boom.

I first gifted a pair of glasses to each of the princesses of Allent, given this party was for them. The contrast with the usual appearances of their wives struck the two young kings of Dauburn and Zadonia right in the heart—I knew exactly how they felt.

After that, everyone tried to look for a pair of glasses that they liked, excitement spreading among the wives and young ladies in attendance. I decided to leave that part of it to the girls, while I recommended bifocal glasses to the elderly that were present. The lens of bifocal glasses contained near, far, and intermediate lenses combined in one. By shifting your sight up and down, you could see both further away and closer.

The emperor of Regulus was having difficulty focusing his vision in his old age and was thankful for the pair of glasses he was given. He'd had the issue for a while, but it had apparently been growing much worse recently.

Wait...it isn't because I gave him a smartphone, right? There is a way to magnify the text...

Originally, I didn't care all that much about whether or not glasses started trending—it had nothing to do with me. Or so I thought. But with this realization, I was starting to feel as if I were partly to blame. You couldn't heal worsening eyesight with **[Recovery]**, after all... Not unless it was the aftereffect of a disease like with Sue's mother, anyway.

It wasn't exactly intended as a way to make up for what I'd done, but I gave the rulers of the Western Continent instruction manuals from Glassie detailing how to grind lenses. The techniques had already been developing over this side of the world, but each factory generally kept its processes secret, so to have me so casually hand over the instructions surprised all of them. In return, I asked that they introduce me to any lens craftsmen who would be willing to move to Brunhild—if we didn't become proficient at creating glasses without divine assistance, it would never spread to the common people.

“So wait, where'd the god of glasses go?”

“He went to Allent. The nobles over there have already started wearing glasses more, so he wants to spread the gospel of glasses over there for now, he said.”

I explained everything that had happened to Karen and Suika when they very conveniently appeared after the god of glasses was already gone.

“Anyway, where did you two get off to, forcing the god of glasses on me like that?”

“He’s so long-winded, y’know... It’s such a pain. He always tries to recommend these weird glasses whenever he sees us too,” Karen complained as she pulled out a pink pair of heart-shaped sunglasses from her pocket dimension. I’d seen sunglasses like those in manga, but apparently they existed in real life too. Honestly, it kind of fit the goddess of love perfectly.

“Hey, they don’t look so bad. I think they’d suit you, actually! Pfft—”

I couldn’t hold back the laughter when Karen slipped the glasses on. She looked so shady! The goddess immediately slammed her fist into my solar plexus as I tried to hold the laughs back.

“Guh?!”

“You’re laughing way too hard, y’know.”

Ugh... At least it stopped my laughing.

“Karen’s are fine, but he left me with these...”

This time it was Suika slipping a pair of glasses on. They had thick eyebrows, a red nose, and a little mustache; it was a pair of nose glasses.

“AHA HA HA HA! THIS IS AMAZING!”

I couldn’t help but start rolling on the floor in laughter. It was the perfect pair of glasses for a drunkard like her!

“Gwuh?!”

“You’re laughing way too hard.”

Ugh... Don’t punch me in the same place!

“Well, I’m relieved he’s gone. If he’d ended up settling down here, Brunhild would’ve become known as the kingdom of glasses, y’know.”

“The thought of that’s gonna give me nightmares tonight...”

I supported the idea of ensuring that all citizens had access to glasses, but not the idea that everyone should wear them. Even the girls took off the glasses once they returned from the party, though they said they'd wear them for a change of pace here and there.

Elze and Yae said they'd wear Appraisal glasses in future, since they were pretty bad at remembering names and faces. That definitely was one of the ways they could find use.

We'd handed out glasses to the children, but they didn't care about them so much that they'd go so far as using them as a fashion item. The only kids that still wore them sometimes were Quun and Yoshino. They were the two that really cared about their fashion. Yoshino had also been using some glasses with a scope function to help aim with her harpbow. Those were the kind of enhanced glasses I was thankful for.

"By the way, about the Spatial Translocation usage you asked about the other day..."

I felt myself lean forward expectantly at the topic Karen suddenly brought up. Thinking it would be nice to let the kids visit Earth once everything was over, I'd asked her about using Translocation to teleport everyone there. It was already possible for me to do it myself, but there were all kinds of minor restrictions like not being allowed to go in my current form or not being able to use most of my powers while over there—if I used my powers as I pleased while on Earth, then I'd be as bad as the god of erosion.

"The brief answer is yes, there's no problem for you to do that. But with your abilities, you may end up missing the mark a little, y'know."

"Missing the mark?"

"Spatial Translocation is a divine skill that allows its user to cross worlds, but it also lets you cross time, y'know. Not as freely as the space-time goddess...as Grandma Tokie, but it's possible. It isn't such a big deal if you're only moving around this world, but if you're going to a different world entirely like Earth, you have to make sure you focus enough as you make the jump, or you could end up going off course on the time axis, y'know. You could end up in some time like the Edo Period by accident."

Ending up in a completely different time would definitely be bad... Maybe I'd be better off putting in a request to God Almighty like I did for our honeymoon trip. I'd rather make it there with my own strength, but I didn't want to risk our lives just to do it. Or well, maybe Grandma Tokie could give me some special training.

"And about using Spatial Translocation to infiltrate the wicked devout's ship..."

This was the important one. If this one didn't work and we couldn't solve the problem of the wicked devout, then we couldn't even go to Earth in the first place. I'd asked Karen if using Spatial Translocation to cross the barrier and enter the Ark was considered breaking the divine rules. I wouldn't be directly influencing the surface realm with my abilities, so I'd think it would just barely count. I needed to get a clear answer, though, or we couldn't start formulating a final battle plan.

"They've said it's fine for you to use it so long as you don't have Spatial Translocation affect the wicked devout themselves directly, or use it as a form of surprise attack for either yourself or your wards."

In other words, it was fine so long as I didn't use it to directly teleport the wicked devout or use it to teleport us to launch a surprise attack.

Basically, any attacks using divinity were forbidden. It was most likely meant in the sense that divine powers shouldn't be used in a fight on the surface realm, and that apparently seemed to include using Translocation to suddenly appear behind the wicked devout and deal the killing blow. The ability wasn't being used on them directly, but it was still viewed as a battle tactic using divinity.

However, if we only used it to infiltrate the Ark, they were willing to turn a blind eye.

"You've got it right, y'know. But you really shouldn't use your divinity to take down the wicked devout, okay? I'm being serious. Even God Almighty won't be able to vouch for you if you do that. Worst case, you could be sealed away for thousands of years, y'know?"

Yeah, no thanks. I'd rather not be sealed up for that long. All I had to do was

avoid using divinity during the fight, right? Then again, maybe I shouldn't be fighting on the front lines to begin with...

Okay, I'll take up a support role this time, then.

"But will you reeeeeaaaaally be okay? There are times when you get really mad..."

"Right? You're usually so goofily happy, but the moment anything happens to the girls, you enter search and destroy mode, so I'm worried, y'know?"

"Hey, who are you calling goofy?!"

Karen and Suika were right, though. The moment anything happened to my wives or kids, I was pretty sure I'd beat the offender to a pulp. Except I wasn't allowed to do that this time, unfortunately.

"This is why gods don't tend to go to the surface themselves, but instead grant a sacred treasure to a hero, y'know. If you let your anger get the better of you, you could end up destroying a whole world. There are plenty of examples of people inciting a god's wrath that's resulted in some pretty bad outcomes, like a whole continent being sunk under the ocean, or a city burned to a crisp in one quick moment, y'know."

Pretty bad was an understatement... I really didn't think I would ever go that far, though.

"Reallyyyy? Your kids are the ones using the sacred treasure, right? If they end up in trouble, you seem like you'd go out there and go *boom* the enemies!"

She isn't wrong...

"A parent shouldn't get involved in their children's fights, y'know? I'm not saying you shouldn't help, but at least believe in them. Overprotectiveness can stunt a child's growth, after all."

Karen likely wasn't talking about just my own children this time, but everyone in this world. She was probably trying to say that I shouldn't help with absolutely everything that went wrong, but...that wasn't always something so easy to do.



Chapter II: Infiltration of the Ark

Our plan of attack was as follows: first, we would infiltrate the Ark using Spatial Translocation, hopefully getting us as close to the wicked devout as possible. The Divinity Neutralization effect of the sacred treasure was to remain inactive during the start, otherwise, I wouldn't be able to teleport us in; once we were in the Ark, it would be turned on in order to seal the wicked devout's abilities.

Our first target, the one that we *absolutely* had to defeat, was the guy with the diver helmet, Indigo. If we didn't put a stop to his teleportation, they'd get away again, and another failure would only give them the chance to develop a counter to our attack. We had to view this as our only chance.

Yakumo was the first to step forward to offer to take down Indigo.

"I have crossed blades with him once before, so I believe it would make me the most suitable."

"Hey, that's not fair!" Linne complained. However, considering the fact that Yakumo could use **[Gate]** to get in a surprise attack and was greatly skilled in battle, it seemed fine to leave it to her. What posed a slight problem was that if Yakumo was to serve as our main fighter, the sacred treasure would have to take its katana form. The range of its neutralization was much reduced as a katana, reaching about five meters at most. It would be a disaster if they managed to teleport away before Yakumo could approach.

"I intended to use **[Gate]** to immediately close the gap between us," she said.

"Hmm... That would work for the start of the fight, but what would you do if he managed to get some distance between you after that? He could just teleport away then."

It would take a considerable amount of skill to maintain a distance of no more than five meters from your opponent. Even a wrestling ring had a bit over six meters of distance between its corners.

“I know, I know!” Steph excitedly called out. “I’ll use **[Prison]** so he can’t escape!”

If Indigo was confined with Yakumo within a **[Prison]**, he wouldn’t be able to use his divinity, which would prevent him from taking down the magic enclosure and making his escape. But that then meant that Yakumo would be forced to fight within a confined space. Would that not be tough as a katana wielder? It felt like the enemy with their hatchet would be the one with the advantage in that scenario.

Was finishing them off with one strike the best option we had? But then we were faced with the question of if Yakumo could successfully carry out the **[Gate]** plan of attack and take him down in one fell swoop... If she failed, Indigo would undoubtedly make his escape. In which case, though the **[Prison]** tactic required more skill, the probability of success seemed higher.

“Excuse me.”

As I sat there running through the options in my head, Kuon tentatively raised his hand.

“Is there any reason we *need* to begin the attack with the sacred treasure in its katana form? Why not have it morph into a form with a large range of neutralization like the harpbow, and then Yakumo can fight with her regular phrasium katana? Of course, we’d still need to make sure we use the sacred treasure to deal the finishing blow, but that can come later.”

“Oh.”

Kuon’s words immediately opened my eyes.

Of course! Who said the kids could only hold their own form of the sacred treasure?

Because I’d made each form of the sacred treasure to suit each of the kids, it had completely slipped my mind that it didn’t mean the different forms were exclusive to each child. It was something I’d considered at the time of creation, so I wasn’t sure why I’d forgotten that fact.

Yoshino’s harpbow boasted a neutralization radius of fifty meters, but the effect weakened the further from the weapon the target got, so it would be

best if we activated it while not too far from Indigo. Well, either way, even if the effect was weak, it would still be able to at least prevent the guy from teleporting, and the closer Yakumo got to him, the more certain it was that it would work, so I didn't think we had to worry too much.

"The problem is that we don't know the numbers of their forces nor if we'd be able to pinpoint Indigo's exact location," Leen pointed out.

"True..."

As she said, it would be best if we could target Indigo while he was alone. From the intelligence we had, the wicked devout still had the man with the plague mask, the woman with the iron mask, and the gold crown. Plus, there was always the possibility that there were more members we didn't know about too.

I could use a divinity-enhanced **[Search]**, but I had my limits, so I couldn't use it over that wide of an area. At the very least, the Ark was small enough that I could do a decent job, though. If I used it the second we made it into the Ark, I should be able to find where Indigo was.

*If that's the case, then the plan basically goes like this: we infiltrate the Ark with Spatial Translocation, I find Indigo's location with **[Search]**, I use Spatial Translocation again to teleport to Indigo, we activate Divinity Neutralization, Yakumo launches her attack.*

"What shall we do if there are other wicked devout around Indigo at the time?" Yae asked.

"The only choice we really have is to hold them back until Indigo is dealt with. With that in mind, maybe we'd be best going the **[Prison]** route so Yakumo can't be interrupted."

We did have the issue that we weren't allowed to take down the wicked devout ourselves, so we'd be more likely to leave that to the kids, and while Yakumo held the sacred treasure to take down Indigo, we'd be unable to land the killing blow on any other wicked devout present. If it was just about buying time for Yakumo to finish him off, however, it likely wouldn't be too bad. Once we'd prevented any chance of them escaping with a teleport, we could move on to taking them down one by one.

“I still don’t feel great about getting the kids involved...” Elze muttered as she gave Elna a pat on the head. When she did, Elna shook her head.

“If mommy and daddy are fighting, then I’ll fight too. That has to be why we were called here, so leave it to us. We’ll definitely be fine if we all fight together.”

“Oh, you’re such a good girl, Elna! I’m so proud to have you as my daughter!”

Elna was squeezed tight by a tearful Elze. The young girl had a point—if our children hadn’t traveled here from the future, who knew how much trouble we’d be in now? Our future selves surely knew that these events would happen.

Would I be able to send out my children with full faith in their success when it inevitably became my turn to have them go? It felt like I’d end up stopping them out of worry, even if I already knew the outcome.

Since our children came from the future, the logical assumption was that we successfully dealt with the wicked devout, but...given that divine powers were involved in this conflict, the future could easily distort. You would often see movies of a protagonist who time traveled to the past, and because they changed those events, their existence as a resident of the future became unstable and they ended up in danger of being erased from the world. That wasn’t what was going to happen here, right?

The time spirits would help mend any time paradoxes we caused, but even they couldn’t fix something caused by the divine. If we ended up branching off too far from the future of this timeline, would the children be unable to return to their time? If that did happen, I was sure Grandma Tokie would find some way to get us out of the mess, but...

Whatever lay in wait, we absolutely could not fail. It was important that we remained cautious.

Just as I had resolved myself, my phone started ringing—it was from Doc Babylon.

“Touya, just got word in from Albus. There’s been a response from the probes we set up around the sea of Lassei. A large number of Kyklops, including an unidentified unit, along with Rock Titans and Fishmen are heading straight for

Lassei itself.”

Again with the underhanded tactics! No, wait...is this our chance?

One of the wicked devout surely had to be leading that army. That meant that right now, there was one less wicked devout on the Ark, right? Worst-case scenario, Indigo was the one leading them, but the chances of that seemed pretty low.

There was quite the distance between where the Ark was stationed and Lassei, so Indigo most likely teleported them—and that meant he had used quite the amount of divinity. There was no way he would get involved directly with the attack on Lassei in that condition. There was a very good chance that an exhausted Indigo had remained in the Ark.

What should we do...? Since we’ve got that fallen god to think about as well, I was thinking that we should take our time and be cautious, but now...

“Let us go to the Ark, father. We cannot simply stand by as a black cat runs in front of us.”

Having noticed my hesitation, Kuon gave me the push I needed. When I looked up at everyone else, they were all giving me small nods.

Having to be encouraged by my own child really was pathetic...but hey, at least it felt nice.

“All right... In that case, let our infiltration of the Ark begin!”



The first step in the infiltration of the Ark was to split into two groups: the group that would take down the army attacking Lassei and the group that would infiltrate the Ark directly.

“Those infiltrating the Ark will need the sacred treasure, and that means we can’t take down whatever wicked devout is leading that army heading for Lassei. In which case, our objective will be to simply repel them,” Leen murmured as she watched the lights steadily moving toward Lassei on the world map.

If we were able to deal with the wicked devout in the Ark fast enough, we

would be able to head straight to Lassei afterward, but it seemed unlikely that things would go so smoothly... We had to face the guy with the diver helmet, the guy with the plague mask, the woman with the iron mask, and their gold crown. Removing even one of them, we'd at minimum have to fight two members of the wicked devout and a crown. Plus, we couldn't even be sure if there were other wicked devout we hadn't met yet.

The team that would be infiltrating the Ark would inevitably have to include the children as our main force, and that was the issue... We would definitely be bringing Yakumo as the key player in our plan, but I'd rather bring the kids who were good at fighting to help support her, like Frei and Kuon.

Linne...I was a little more uncertain about, so I decided she would be good for the Lassei team. Linze's Helmwege was good at aerial combat, so it would be good to deploy. Assuming we were to send Grimmerde and Rossweise, Leen's and Sakura's Frame Gears, to lead the defensive front, it would be good to have Lu's Waltraute there to support them.

Sue's Ortlinde Overlord boasted high defense, so I could place it there as well. Honestly, I'd feel much safer with Steph being there, anyway. Using **[Prison]** to encase Yakumo and Indigo was something I could do myself.

Before I could go any further with that train of thought, though, Leen stepped in.

"No, even if you assign Sue to the Lassei team, I still think you should bring Steph...or more specifically, Gold to the Ark with you. If there really is another gold crown with the wicked devout, Gold may be able to find some kind of counter to it, and we might be able to solve the riddle of why there are two of them."

"Mother! I'd really like to join the Ark team!"

"Absolutely not."

Quun fell to her knees in despair when her mother refused her request to swap positions with a merciless smile on her face.

This girl never loses sight of what interests her, does she?

In the end, the Ark infiltration team became me, Yae, Yakumo, Hilde, Frei,

Kuon, Steph—well, Gold. Excluding Steph, it was a team of combat experts.

Yumina and Sue kicked up a bit of a fuss at being separated from their kids, but I somehow managed to persuade them. Yumina’s Brunhilde and Sue’s Ortlinde were both suited to defensive battles, so there was no way we wouldn’t deploy them.

This time we would also be deploying the Nereids, units suited to marine battle. They would try to slow the army before they reached land to limit the possible damage to Lassei. We’d yet to install a Nereid program into the Frame Units, so the only ones who could pilot them were Brunhild’s knights. Lassei’s knight order would focus on defending the coast.

Lassei’s armies were known to dive headfirst into battle, so I was a little worried. We would be at an advantage against the Fishmen if we waited for them to step onto land first, but I could already imagine the Lassei knights charging right into the ocean... Their combat Gollems weren’t even suited to battling in water or even on sand. I prayed they wouldn’t act so recklessly that there would be needless sacrifice.

“Yumina, I’ll leave command of the defensive front to you. I’m counting on you.”

“Leave it to me. I’ll make sure that not a single one gets in!”

“Godspeed, mother.”

“Kuon! You better not do anything reckless, okay? Mom’s so worried about you! Touya, please, *please* make sure he stays safe!” Yumina exclaimed, exerting a strong pressure on me with her gaze, as she was clinging tight onto Kuon.

Could she not worry about me a little more as well?

With me feeling that little bit lonelier, we set off on our mission.



On the monitor of the Val Albus, the whale-shaped Over Gear stationed under the sea, the Ark was pictured stationed in the depths. Thanks to the probes we’d deployed inside it once before, we had a good idea of the rough structure

of the vessel.

It was possible for us to infiltrate the Ark right away, but if we suddenly appeared right in the middle of the wicked devout, all of our work would be for naught.

First, we had to find a room where we could infiltrate without being spotted.

As the Ark's name implied, it was a somewhat box-shaped ship. The bow of the ship was a little longer than the rear, where there were large engines on either side. When you looked at the whole thing, it looked a little like a big tissue box. I could see it looking like a spaceship as well.

It seemed possible to teleport into the warehouse they used to store any ores they excavated that the probe had found last time. From there, I could try to find where the wicked devout were located—specifically Indigo—and then we'd make our move and take him down.

If we were unlucky and it turned out Indigo wasn't in the Ark, well, we'd have no choice but to retreat. Should we decide to try to defeat the devout that were present regardless, there was always the chance that Indigo could return in the middle of the battle, or someone in the ship would contact Indigo, and then they'd have every chance to escape again. If that happened, their security would only tighten; they'd never let their guard down again.

The most favorable outcome would be for Indigo to be working solo, all alone in a room somewhere. All we'd need to do in that situation was teleport to his room, neutralize his divinity, halt his movements with **[Prison]**, and take him down in one swift strike.

Wait...I really sound like an assassin right now, don't I? Though, given what we're doing, maybe that's pretty accurate...

The worst-case scenario would be if all of them were together in one place. Technically, we could quietly observe until they split up, but if the wicked devout that had been dispatched to Lassei returned during that time, we'd be done for. Even if it turned out they were all gathered, we'd have no choice but to brace ourselves and charge in.

"Father, it appears the battle in Lassei has begun. The Nereids and Kyklops are

currently engaging,” Kuon reported, intently watching the monitor with the map of Lassei. If they’d started, it was time for us to start our own mission.

“Albus, be ready to attack at any time.”

“Affirmative.”

If we failed in our mission, the plan was to have Val Albus attack the Ark to give us a chance to escape. Hopefully, it wouldn’t come to that, though.

“Time to get this mission started. Spatial Translocation!”

The area around us distorted for a moment, and then suddenly we were teleported to a different location entirely. We’d successfully crossed the divinity barrier the wicked devout had set up and infiltrated the Ark.

The warehouse I’d teleported us to looked a little like a spacious gymnasium with the only light being the dim glow from the manastones. Boxes of ore were being loaded onto a conveyor belt and dropping down into a hole at the end.

They must have been transporting the ore they excavated from the seafloor somewhere for smelting. No one was around; the only sound filling the room was the whirring from the machinery.

“I do believe we can consider this a successful infiltration, I do.”

“You said you could detect the positions of the wicked devout from here, right?”

“Yep. **[Search]**.”

At Yae and Hilde’s insistence, I activated a divine **[Search]**. Divinity spread out like a small ripple on the water’s surface, gradually widening and increasing its range. I managed to detect the locations of the wicked devout and the not-Gold gold crown, and came to the unfortunate realization that our worst-case scenario had occurred: they were all gathered in the same area. What was worse, there was one more devout than I had been expecting.

I could detect Indigo, the woman with the iron mask, the gold crown, and then the unfamiliar devout. In other words, we’d have to take them all on at once...

I told everyone what I had discovered.

“I think we can view this as a good thing, at least—the one who can teleport remained in the Ark, after all,” Hilde said.

“Indeed. The only problem now is that we need to decide who will take on the remaining enemies, we do. We know Yakumo will be facing that Indigo fellow, but...”

Hilde and Yae both dropped into thought, most likely trying to decide who would be best to match up with who. Even if we put **[Prison]** up, there was no guarantee that the other devout wouldn’t try to interfere with Yakumo and Indigo’s battle.

Since Yakumo had experience with the iron mask woman, I asked for her opinion on what we should expect.

“The woman with the iron mask uses a mace to deliver attacks that act like gravity magic. I think that may be her wicked vessel’s ability, so I doubt she’ll be too dangerous while Divinity Neutralization is active.”

Well, at least she didn’t sound impossible to deal with. The duos of Yae and Kuon and Hilde and Frei could deal with the other wicked devout, while I would take on the gold crown together with Steph and Gold. That felt like a good balance, right?

It didn’t help that I had no idea what would happen when the two gold crowns met. It was probably natural to assume that since they were the same unit, they’d have some kind of synchronization function. With Steph on my side, it would account for the possibility that Gold may end up losing control and turning against us.

I felt bad for Steph, but if things turned out that way, I fully intended to forcefully put a stop to Gold’s functions using **[Cracking]**. According to Doc Babylon, Gold should have something that acted as his black box. If that was a device to have him synchronize with the other gold crown, then...

It would be best that I be the one pit against him just so I could respond to whatever happened.

“Mother, we should take on that iron mask lady with the mace,” Frei said while pulling a large shield out of **[Storage]**.

Hilde nodded at her daughter's suggestion. "Good idea. I think that would be smart."

Yae and Kuon would likely struggle with the mace's gravity magic, so that was a good move. Even though the neutralization would be in effect, if they ended up too far away from Yakumo—the locus of the effect—the gravity magic would still work.

"Yakumo, do you have the sacred treasure ready?"

"Yes, father. I'm ready at any time."

Yakumo had tied the transformed sacred treasure harpbow to her back with a tasuki sash. She had attached it to herself in a way where she could utilize the neutralization without using it as an actual weapon. It would have to be used to destroy Indigo's wicked vessel, but until then, the divinity of the other two wicked devout needed to be sealed. If we could hurt the devout to some extent, or take away their weapons from them, we'd have this battle in the bag.

"Not being able to fight with divinity sucks, though, I've gotta admit..."

"I agree, I do... Surely just one slash would be okay..."

"What would you do if that one slash ended up nearly killing the wicked devout, Yae? That would mean that you had pretty much killed them," Hilde cautioned her.

"I-I do not think they are so weak..."

Neither did I. In fact, we were clueless about their HP, so it was hard to consider holding back with them. It was like that thing you'd see in games a lot where you had to weaken the monster before you could catch it. Some characters could kill the monster you wanted to catch in one shot, so you'd keep them on the backlines. That was essentially the situation we were in now.

"You can worry about things like that because you've actually awoken to your divine trait... I still struggle to use divinity. What's so different between the two of us? It isn't a difference in Touya's love for us, is it?"

"Everyone wonders if that's the difference, but it's not, okay?! It's just natural personal differences!"

Yae awakened to her divine trait in the last battle we had with the wicked devout; she'd acquired the ability Dimensional Cleave. They always trained together, so it frustrated Hilde that Yae had awoken to hers so much sooner.

I needed everyone to wake up to their traits quickly, or I couldn't guarantee there wouldn't be some domestic strife... The only ones that were left were Sue and Hilde.

"Mom, your divine trait is— Mmmph?!"

Before Frei could finish what she was saying, Yakumo came up from behind and put a hand over her mouth.

"Frei, isn't Grandmother Tokie always telling us we should be careful how much we say?"

"Oh yeah..."

"Yae, your daughter is too diligent!" Hilde cried, frustrated at Yakumo having prevented Frei from spoiling them about the future. Yakumo looked a little lost at the unreasonable complaint.

"To think Hilde-dono would be the one to call someone else diligent..."

"Um, do we really have the time for this?" Kuon spoke up, bringing everyone back to attention.

Right, we need to stop messing around.

When I looked at Steph and Gold, I noticed that they were both clapping their hands and singing while they waited. They weren't nervous whatsoever.

I cleared my throat and returned to pointing out the lights on the map; there were two solid red dots, one flashing red dot, and one yellow dot all gathered in one area. "The wicked devout are in this pretty big room right here. The red dots are the wicked devout, the yellow one is the gold crown, and the one that's flashing is Indigo, our main target."

The room itself looked about the size of an office room. I wasn't sure if it was a break room, their tactical command room, or some sort of lab, but whatever the case, it was more than big enough for us to fight in.

"I'll teleport us all to this area here, a little bit away from where they're

standing. I'd prefer if we were able to get the jump on them, but that would be going against the rules. It's okay if they detect us. Yakumo, you charge right at Indigo. The rest of us will engage our own targets while providing support."

"It looks like there are two ways in and out of the room. What will we do if they escape?" Kuon asked, looking at the map.

Good question. Honestly, right now, it was probably fine if the other wicked devout escaped so long as we took down Indigo. The only problem with that was if they got far away from Yakumo, they'd be able to use their own wicked vessels again. We knew that the iron mask lady's mace manipulated gravity, but the other was a complete unknown. If it turned out they had teleportation similar to Indigo, we'd be done for. All our hard work would've been for nothing.

You know what, maybe we shouldn't let them get away.

"I'll seal the exits with Earth magic," I said. "At the very least, I doubt they'll try to damage the ship. We're underwater, after all."

If the Ark did end up flooding, we'd be fine so long as we used **[Prison]**. We'd be able to breathe, and worse came to worst, I could summon Sango and Kokuyou.

"All right, let's get this party started. Spatial Translocation!"

We appeared inside the large room instantaneously. It turned out it was something akin to an observation deck, with a glass front and ceiling. Oddly enough, even though we should've been on the seabed, it wasn't pitch-black outside—we could clearly see what was outside. I wasn't sure if it was some magic artifact, or if the glass itself was actually a monitor displaying what was outside, or what.

There was a console along the wall in front of which Indigo stood, still wearing his diver helmet.

On a sofa a short distance away from him, the woman with the iron mask sat with a glass in hand, and a woman with a gaudy green feathered mask was right next to her. That had to have been the unknown wicked devout. The gold crown of the wicked devout was by the complete opposite wall away from Indigo.

“HUH?!”

The first one who noticed we were suddenly in their midst was the iron mask woman. She dropped her glass, shattering it on the floor, which alerted the others to our presence. We had already started making our move by the time they'd thought to act. Like an arrow fired from a bow, Yakumo shot straight toward Indigo.

“Shit. Deep Blue!”

A blue liquid gurgled under his feet, but the most it did was spread out a small touch.

“What?!”

“It's useless.”

Yakumo pulled her phrasium katana from its sheath and slashed at the wicked devout. Though he'd been caught off guard, Indigo pulled out his metallic blue hatchet and blocked Yakumo's strike moments before it slashed skin.

“**[Prison].**”

The moment she'd made contact, I erected a **[Prison]** with a five-meter radius with Yakumo as the center, preventing Indigo's potential escape.

“**Come forth, Iron! Barrier of the Dark Metal: [Iron Wall]!**”

I immediately followed that up by blocking both exits with walls of iron. Now our enemies were ripe for the picking.

Indigo attempted to break the barrier surrounding him with his hatchet, but with his divinity sealed, it was futile.

“Like I said, it's useless. Father's **[Prison]** is unbreakable.”

“You're the brat I saw in Orphen!”

“This time, I won't let you get away.”

When Yakumo slashed her blade down, Indigo deflected it with his hatchet. Put so thoroughly on the defensive, the other wicked devout rushed in to assist, but that was where we stepped in, preventing them from getting anywhere near the **[Prison]**.

“Your opponent is us, miss!”

“Get outta the way, kid!”

The woman unhesitatingly swung her metallic orange mace down toward Frei, but it was more than easily blocked by the shield that the small girl held.



“I can’t crush it?! What’s going on?!”

“The cause is unknown, but it appears the wicked vessels have been sealed. Not entirely, but... Hm?!”

The gold crown calmly analyzed what was happening as the iron mask woman panicked, but the moment his red camera eye noticed Gold standing behind me, he came to a stop.

“There’s more than one Gould?!” the feather mask woman exclaimed in surprise. With such a reaction, it appeared they hadn’t known about our Gold. The wicked devout’s crown appeared to go by “Gould” instead... Had he simply not told them of the existence of another gold crown, or...?

Gould was staring at Gold, Gold also frozen where he stood.

“Is this the same unit as myself...? No. I can confirm differences,” Gold remarked. Those differences must have been the two small swords and the cape-like part on his back. Gold had those, but the one on the wicked devout’s side didn’t. Gould’s eyes were red, while Gold’s were blue. Besides those differences, the two were practically the same unit.

“A second Seraphic?! What is the meaning of this?!” Gould exclaimed with the exact same voice as Gold.

A Seraphic? Was he referring to Gold? It was in that moment that I realized I was detecting both panic and surprise, two very human emotions, in Gould, something that should’ve been impossible for a Gollem.



“Impossible! This should be the only Seraphic! Why? Why does another one exist?!” Gould’s mechanical voice trembled as he looked at Gold.

Based on his reaction, it seemed he hadn’t known about Gold. Had he lost his memories in the way Gold had? No, that would make no sense—if he’d lost his memories, he wouldn’t have said those words.

“I don’t know what’s got you so rattled, but I need you to stay still for now. **[Prison]!**”

I cast the confining magic as I’d done on Indigo. Now there was no escape.

“Hm?!”

Gould took one of its tiny fists and tried to break the barrier.

It's useless. This barrier isn't so flimsy that a pathetic little punch like that will damage it.

“Veraenderung.”

“Huh?”

After Gould muttered some short word, the armor of its right hand began to warp like melted candy. The soft gold plating enveloped his right hand and then morphed into a conical shape, almost like an ice pick.

“Lanze.”

Gould turned and tried to stick his gold ice pick into the **[Prison]**. The sound of metal striking rang out, and then suddenly, my **[Prison]** cracked.

“No way!”

As surprised as I was, Gould paid me no mind as he thrust his ice-pick arm back into the barrier again. This time, my **[Prison]** shattered into pieces.

You're kidding! Is there wicked divinity in that thing's body?!

We were the furthest away from the sacred treasure, but the distance was about ten meters at most. Even if its power wasn't completely neutralized, he shouldn't have been able to destroy my **[Prison]**! He'd have to have the same amount of divinity as a mutant to do that!

We knew for a fact that our Gold contained no divinity—the research team examined him and found nothing.

That means Gould's been modified in some way, huh?!

Now free of the prison, Gould charged toward me with his ice pick.

“Envelop, O Wind! Gentle Embrace: [Air Sphere]!”

“Mmm?”

Gould's right hand lost its momentum about fifty centimeters away from me, coming to a stop against the air cushion I had created. The next moment, his

small body was sent catapulting into the opposite wall. My **[Air Sphere]** broke at the same moment.

That was close!

If he'd been charging any more fiercely, I'd have been turned into a shish kebab.

“Veraenderung: Axt.”

Gould stood back up, turning his ice pick into an axe.

Ugh, he's got more forms!

I took out my Brunhild and changed it into Blade Mode, using it to block the golden axe he swung down toward me. The strike was so heavy that I couldn't help but wonder where such strength was hiding in such a small body.

“[Power Rise]!”

I increased the power of my muscles and pushed the axe away from me. Gould was once more flung toward the wall, but this time he kicked his feet into it and spun around in the air as he landed lightly on the ground like a cat. His red camera eye fixed in on me, and then it turned to Gold behind me.

“Tell me. Are you the master of the Seraphic?”

“No. Gold's master is someone else.”

It wouldn't be good for him to learn that Steph was his master, so I tried to avoid the topic.

“Gold... Seraphic Gold? High Master, Code 1876239. Unlock: emergency shutdown, Seraphic Gold.”

Suddenly, what came out of Gould was a smooth male voice. Not a mechanical one, but one much closer to a human's. Was it some recorded audio?

Before I could stop and wonder what was happening, the same voice spoke to us.

“High Master, Code 1876239. Unlock: emergency shutdown, Seraphic Gold... No reaction. Probability of initialization process activation having occurred:

ninety-eight percent.”

Initialization process? As in, the initialization process that Steph had accidentally activated in Gold? Did that mean he was saying some sort of command code toward him?

God, this could've turned out much worse if Steph hadn't wiped his data.

“I'd appreciate it if you didn't do anything too crazy here. If you make Gold's master cry, then I won't let you get away with it,” I threatened.

“I do not care.”

Suddenly, a loud bang, as if a metal ball had collided with something, rang through the room. When I turned around, the inside of the **[Iron Wall]** I had put up was all warped. Another similar sound rang out and the wall further warped, caving in toward us. Was someone trying to enter the room?!

Don't tell me there's one more wicked devout!

No, there was no way. I'd searched the whole Ark, so there shouldn't have been any more of them around. That said, there was a chance **[Search]** didn't pick them up because they looked nothing like the wicked devout!

I stayed on high alert as the metallic wall I had created came flying inward. What flew in was a golden bird with four wings. A mechanical one, at that. Was it a bird Golem?!

“Come, Cherubim.”

The gold bird Golem twirled in a drill movement as it maneuvered through the room toward Gould. It then circled behind Gould, tilted its head against his back, and its feet then folded into its body as it attached to the enemy crown.

Is this what the research team was talking about?! The Gluttony Slime that was turned into orichalcum and used to craft gear for the gold crown?!

With his four wings spread out, Gould floated into the air. Due to the glass ceiling, he could only go about two meters, however.

“Gluttony Feather.”

Four golden feathers, one from each wing, shot out toward me like missiles. I

was about to strike them down with Brunhild, but suddenly, I was hit by a sense of unease that made me change my weapon to Gun Mode at the last minute and shoot them down with phrasium rounds instead. The moment my bullets hit the feathers, they began to morph and wrapped around the bullets.

No, rather than “wrapped around,” it was more like they ate the bullets whole. If I’d tried to strike them down with Blade Mode, Brunhild might’ve been consumed by the feathers...

Good thing I realized something was off.

The slimy gold substance plopped to the ground, wriggled about for a moment, and then took shape as feathers again and returned to Gould’s wings.

They’d definitely eaten the bullets—there was nothing left where they had been.

“Is that something you made with a Gluttony Slime that you turned into orichalcum?” I asked the Gollem directly. He looked slightly surprised at my question—what a humanlike crown. Even Gold struggled to express that much.

Was this the difference between a Gollem that had been initialized and one that hadn’t? Well, assuming that they were both the same kind of unit, of course. If that was the case, just how many experience points were in those parts that were wiped? Whatever Gold had lost, Gould still had. There was the chance he could fight like a human with sneak attacks, feints, and rear assaults.

We’ve definitely gotta be careful here...

“You are dangerous. You will interfere with our plans. I will now eliminate you. **Gluttony Feather.**”

It seemed he’d decided to stop holding back, since this time several feathers detached from two of the wings and homed in on me again.

Hmph, now that I know what it is, I can deal with it easily!

“[Gate].”

I deployed a gate in front of me, teleporting every last feather he threw my way. I’d sent them to the uninhabited wastelands of Isengard. Gates couldn’t be opened through a barrier, but if it was somewhere that was visible, or if you

yourself were inside the barrier, it was perfectly possible to open one.

“What a shame, you’ve run out of so much of your ammo. Why not fire the rest?” I taunted. Most of the feathers were now missing from those two wings. I’d thought to myself that he wouldn’t be able to fly if he used the rest of them, but when I paid closer attention, I noticed that he wasn’t even flapping the wings to stay afloat to begin with, so it probably wouldn’t make much of a difference.

Just then, the wings on Gould’s back began shining a dark gold.

“Reverse.”

“What?”

Suddenly, the **[Gate]** that I’d closed opened back up, and the feathers shot back through and returned to Gould’s wings. I felt like I was watching a movie in reverse.

“No... Is that your crown skill?!”

Crown skills were the abilities inherent to the crown Gollems, a power that required their master to pay a price. Doc Babylon had said that a gold crown made of a Slime that’d been turned into orichalcum could take the price of a crown skill like a mana tank. If what was on his back was what we suspected, then it must have been taking the price for him.

But Gold said that the gold crown didn’t have a crown skill. What was going on? Did his memory of it disappear together with the initialization process?

Well, whatever the reason, Gould could clearly use a crown skill, and it was the exact same type of time manipulation as the black crown, Noir. I was pretty sure he couldn’t use it at will, however. If he could, he’d have used it plenty of times before now. It was also worth noting that I wasn’t personally affected by the reversal of time.

Either he could only use it on himself, or there was a limit to its range. Or...he didn’t want to pay too big of a price. As if to confirm my theory, several of the golden feathers lost their sheen and fell to the ground before crumbling into dust. Was that the price of the crown skill?

In other words, each one of those feathers was a substitute that paid for the use of the crown skill. Without those, the only thing left he could use to pay the price with was his own body. No wonder he had to be careful about how he used it.

“Still, time manipulation is a scary beast...”

I could use all kinds of space-time magic; **[Gate]**, **[Storage]**, and **[Accel]** all came under that. If I asked the time spirits nicely, they might be willing to fiddle with time a bit for me as well, though I was pretty sure the range would be limited to the area around me. That said, it went without saying that the only one who had the power to affect the whole world was the goddess of space-time herself, Grandma Tokie.

It was likely Gould could only affect time related to his own body, or any area that he had control over. There was no way he’d be able to stop or slow down my time, right? Even without thinking about the range he could control, I knew he couldn’t use it so freely when he had to consider the price as well. The only reason he’d used it here was because he’d weighed the possibility of losing a large number of feathers against losing a few and decided it would be much better to rewind time.

Still, if we inflicted a fatal blow on him and he just turned back time, it would be as if we never did a thing to him. Though, if we were stubborn enough about it, he’d eventually run out of feathers to use...

“This one’s gonna be a hassle to take down.”

I tightly gripped Brunhild and glared at the small gold Golem floating in the air.



“You little...! Hurry up and get smooshed already!”

A metallic orange mace swung mercilessly toward the small girl.

“**[Power Rise]!**”

Frei took the round shield she had pulled from her **[Storage]** and blocked the mace. The shield had a star drawn in the center of the double circle, almost as if

it were the shield of a certain American superhero. The small girl was able to control it at will, blocking, repelling, and deflecting all attacks that came her way, no matter the angle.

Thanks to Yakumo's sacred treasure, the gravity effect of the woman's wicked vessel was weak enough that Frei could handle it. Though even in its weakened state, any regular person taking the attack would no doubt have their arm completely shattered. Watching her daughter take such heavy hits, Hilde couldn't help but feel frustrated; the mace-wielding woman had presented several large openings so far, so if Hilde wanted to strike, she very well could have.

However, that would then mean that a divine ward had taken down a member of the wicked devout. Due to that issue, her role here was purely as Frei's support—unless her daughter was on the verge of danger, she was to stay put. Even Frei had been very clear about that.

"I've not awakened to my divine trait like Yae has, so I think it would be perfectly fine for me to fight..."

Though when she saw Frei look so happy despite the circumstances, she also realized that she might be disappointing her if she interfered.

Hilde glanced at the other pair that was fighting a distance away. Under Yae's watchful eye, a boy even smaller than Frei was holding a silver shortsword. A ring-shaped object was shot at the boy—Kuon—from his opponent.

The ring was a shimmering dark green chakram flying straight for Kuon like an arrow. Kuon took Silver and deflected it with a horizontal slice without showing even a hint of panic. The deflected chakram flew off in a random direction, but then it stopped midair and shot back toward its wielder. The woman wearing the gaudy feather mask caught it with two of her fingers and gave a bewitching smile.

"Not half bad, little boy. It's not every day I find someone who can deflect Viridian."

"I feel honored to receive your praise. I have been putting in quite the amount of training."

“Quite the amount, you say? Are you aware that being too modest can end up being annoying instead?”

Peacock, the wicked devout now fighting Kuon, spun the chakram with her two fingers and then threw it up into the air.

The chakram split into several more chakrams that began swirling around her.

“How about this, then?”

Peacock took the ten chakrams orbiting her and fired them all toward Kuon at once.



Ten simultaneous attacks—no matter how you looked at it, there was no way to avoid them all. It seemed as if a magic barrier would be able to deal with them, but in reality, Peacock's chakrams would slice through even that. The wicked devout pictured the boy collapsing in her mind's eye, blood gushing from his body, but then what she saw instead was something unbelievable.

At some point, Kuon's right eye had turned an orange-gold. Kuon swayed his body to the side...and a chakram narrowly passed by his right shoulder.

He lifted his left hand a little...and a chakram passed through the gap between arm and flank.

He raised the sword in his right hand and swung to the side...and a chakram was deflected. He bent forward slightly...and a chakram passed right over his head.

"What?!"

Kuon dodged the rest of the chakrams with similar small but controlled movements, and Peacock could only look on in disbelief.

"I failed to dodge two of them, I suppose," Kuon muttered in disappointment.

"Now hang on, kiddo, you just dodged *eight* of those things! That's pretty impressive, if ya ask me!" Silver said.

As Kuon had said, he had technically deflected two of them with Silver, not outright dodged them. Even with his Mystic Eye of Precognition, there were things he simply couldn't evade.

Since there were only two he knew he would be unable to avoid, he simply deflected them with Silver, but had it been any more, he would've likely used either his Mystic Eye of Compression or Immobilization.

"What a creepy little boy!"

"I apologize for disturbing you."

Peacock split her chakram into ten and threw them at Kuon again, to which Kuon repeated what he had done, dodging all except two that he deflected with Silver.

At a glance, Kuon was the one at an advantage, but using his Mystic Eyes repeatedly would tire him out. Any time he tried to get closer to Peacock, she would simply fire her chakrams again, so he was left completely unable to launch a counterattack. He might have had a chance if he combined the usage of different Mystic Eyes, but Kuon's goal here wasn't to take the wicked devout down, it was to buy time while Yakumo dealt with Indigo, so he decided it was best for him not to risk anything.

Yae was also thinking similarly, keeping a close eye to ensure Peacock wouldn't interfere with the fight with Indigo.

Kuon glanced at his older sister within the **[Prison]**, continuing to deal with the chakrams being thrown at him all the while.



Indigo tried to slash into the semitransparent barrier that surrounded him with his wicked vessel, Deep Blue, while dodging the crystalline katana being swung his way. Metal bouncing off the barrier was the only sound that could be heard; not a single crack was being made in it.

“What is going on here? There's a barrier that Deep Blue can't break...? No, has Deep Blue lost its power?”

Indigo continued to dash around the confined space as the drawn sword chased its target. Yakumo firmly pushed the harpbow back into her sash when it began to fall out. The impatience at being unable to find the opportunity for a finishing blow almost made her turn the sacred treasure into its katana form to strike the man down regardless, but she knew if she did that, the wicked devout outside of the **[Prison]** would no longer be in range of the Divinity Neutralization.

The only time you should do that is when you know for certain you can take him down, Yakumo told herself. Don't get impatient. Watch your opponent's movements and slowly but surely stop them.

“**[Gate].**”

“Hm?!”

Indigo bent his body back to avoid the tip of the sword that suddenly

appeared from the distortion in space behind him.

“Spatial magic?! A little unfair that you can still use your magic while we can’t use our weapons, don’t you think?”

“If it means I can protect what is important to me, I feel no shame in being called a cheat or a coward.”

Yakumo knew her parents would tell her that if petty pride or a sense of justice endangered those you loved, you should just throw them away. Were it a fight concerning yourself as an individual, then of course, one should fight fair and square with their pride on the line. However, in a fight to protect someone or something else, trying to see something like that through was just a means of self-satisfaction. It was important to not get one’s priorities wrong.

What Yakumo wanted to protect was her family, the people of her country, and the people in the world working hard to live each day to its fullest. If it was to protect them, she would use anything at her disposal, even if it was deemed unfair. She felt no hesitation in doing that.

“Complaining about cheating and being a coward is but the drivel of the loser, you say? Very good. I agree.”

“Wha—?!”

Indigo took out something akin to a spray can from a pouch hanging from his waist. He then pulled out the pin and threw it on the ground where it suddenly released a plume of vivid purple smoke that filled the inside of the barrier and cut off Yakumo’s sight.

“What a crafty move...! Kokonoe Secret Style: Hurricane Storm Flower!”

Yakumo swung her magic-enhanced blade sideways with a battle cry, causing a small whirlwind to billow forth from the sword’s tip, soon transforming into a large tornado that sucked in the purple smoke.

The **[Prison]** that Touya had erected could freely specify what was allowed in and out of its walls. Naturally, blocking the air would cause those inside to suffocate, so it was permitted to pass through.

With the purple smoke now driven outside of the barrier, Yakumo could see

clearly again.

“What?!”

And yet, it was Yakumo who sounded shocked. As she readied her sword, she suddenly realized that Indigo, the wicked devout wearing the diver suit, had vanished without a trace.

“He’s gone?!”

Yakumo was dazed by the man’s disappearance. Everyone had worked so hard to drive him into a corner, yet right at the very end, she had let him escape.

*The plan has failed. Everything was all for naught because of me. What should I do? Should I ask father to release his **[Prison]** and have him conduct a **[Search]**?*

“Yakumo! Calm down!”

Amid Yakumo’s panic, her mother’s voice reached her ears. She flinched, and then turned toward Yae, seeing her mother’s strong gaze aimed right at her.

*Right. First, I need to calm down. These are exactly the times when I must keep a clear mind. Take a deep breath...and then think. Father’s **[Prison]** can’t be broken with anything but a divinity-enhanced attack, and right now, their divinity is sealed by the sacred treasure. That means his teleportation magic should be sealed. But then, how did he disappear?*

“He...disappeared?”

Yakumo’s eyes widened in realization. She heightened her senses, feeling even the slightest distortions of the air from the edges to the corners of the barrier.

“There!”

Yakumo threw two kunai from her pocket. One bounced off the **[Prison]**, but the other deflected off thin air. At that moment, Indigo’s figure reappeared.

“You’re sharp. It appears I should’ve attacked you directly rather than waiting for this barrier to be dispelled.”

Indigo's legs were still invisible from under his knees. Whenever he moved, Yakumo could see a slight border surrounding his legs against the background. Apparently, his diver suit was enchanted with some kind of illusion magic.

"I'm glad I got those upgrades from Scarlet."

His body once more dissolved into the background. Yakumo immediately sank back, taking position at a corner of the **[Prison]** to eliminate the risk of being attacked from the rear.

Suddenly, Indigo appeared in front of her, swinging down his metallic blue hatchet. By the time she'd blocked, deflected, and moved to counter, Indigo was already invisible again. In a situation like this, where she was the cornered one, she couldn't afford to let her guard down for even a second. She concentrated all her senses on her surroundings so that she was prepared for an attack no matter where it came from.

Yakumo felt a slight disturbance in the air, and then suddenly a harpoon was flying toward her out of nowhere.

"Ngh!"

Though she'd managed to quickly swat it away with her sword, Indigo took that opportunity to appear and do a follow-up attack. Still in the middle of her swing, Yakumo was unable to bring her blade back to block the blow. She rolled to the side instead, just narrowly missing the strike. And as she was rolling, she used her arms and legs to push herself away from Indigo.

A few hairs that had been slashed off scattered around her, a cold sweat running down her cheeks. That had been incredibly close. If she had dodged the harpoon instead of deflecting it, she would've been able to counter Indigo. A minor error of judgment could completely change one's fate in this battle. She had to be careful.

"That was very close. I won't miss next time."

There was suddenly something akin to an ejection device fitted to the armored part on Indigo's left wrist. A harpoon was once more set in place as Indigo's figure disappeared once more. Yakumo sharpened her senses and concentrated her spirit. Her opponent's body had not actually disappeared—he

had simply become invisible. The enemy she had to cut down was definitely there.

Time passed ever so slowly. The moment the situation changed was immediate.

A harpoon was shot out from thin air diagonally to Yakumo's right, and at the same time, Indigo attacked with his hatchet from the diagonal left. The ejection device on Indigo's wrist was missing. Yakumo had seen through his tactic of placing the ejection device on the opposite side of where he intended to attack to have it fire automatically so he could carry out a pincer attack. If she deflected the harpoon, she'd be slashed by the hatchet. If she guarded against the hatchet, she'd be pierced by the harpoon. Thus, the only appropriate course of action was...

“[Gate]!”

“Guh?!”

Indigo recoiled from the sudden stab from behind. When he turned his gaze down, he saw that the sharp harpoon was sticking through his stomach.

“How did you...?!”

The harpoon that should've hit his enemy had pierced right through him instead...and from the back of all places.

Yakumo had used **[Gate]** to both avoid the harpoon and attack Indigo at the same time. The harpoon had been teleported from in front of Yakumo to behind Indigo, piercing through him with the exact same momentum. Dark gold particles gushed out like blood from the wound, but it did nothing to deter Indigo from swinging down his hatchet on the small girl.

That was the moment Indigo realized Yakumo's weapon was no longer the phrasium katana she had been using before. It was a katana with a platinum sheen that was radiating divine energy.

“Kokonoe Secret Style: Lightning Flash!”

The sacred sword was swung horizontally, cutting Indigo's wicked vessel into two. The shattered pieces of the weapon clattered to the ground, losing their

blue shine and melting into a sludge that emitted black smoke.

“Heh heh... So this is it for me, is it...? Everything’s down to you now, Scarlet... Glory to the wicked god of destruction who will end this world filled with falsehood and deception!”

With those last words, Indigo crumbled to the ground, a pile of sand spreading out from the dismantled diver suit.

Having confirmed his death, Yakumo fell to one knee.

That was close...

If that harpoon had been even a second slower in piercing Indigo, he might have dodged her blade. Somehow, though, she had won. With this, there was no need for them to fear the wicked devout teleporting away.

“We somehow managed...I think.”

Outside the **[Prison]**, her mother was giving her a small nod, a smile on her face.



“Enemies approaching!”

To the south of Lassei, an army of Kyklops was about to climb onto land from the coast near Isengard. Linze, who had been patrolling the coast with Helmwege, changed direction and flew toward the allied positions the moment she spotted them.

“It isn’t just the Kyklops! There’s a colossal unit I’ve never seen before among them!”

“I can see it from here too. It really is quite big, even larger than the Overlord... More than two times bigger, actually.”

The first to respond to Linze’s report was Leen, who spoke from inside her Grimgerde. The unknown unit was smaller than the Gigantes, the ancient weapon they had once fought, but it still seemed close to one hundred meters tall, and it was headed in their direction. Like the rest of the Kyklops, it only had one eye, but there was also something on its chest that resembled one too—most likely it wasn’t just a design, but some sort of weapon.

“Mother, it being big doesn’t mean it’s better. Each frame has its own appropriate size. There’s no point if it’s so big that it slows down its movements or puts strain on the joints and engine,” Quun commented from behind her. Leen could tell without even turning around that her daughter had a smug look on her face.

“I can’t say how much strain is on its joints, but it does seem to be walking fine.”

“Of course it is. If it couldn’t do that, there’s no way they’d send it out for battle. Either they’re using some kind of seal magic that lightens its weight or they’ve strengthened its durability. With something of that size, though, even its weight becomes a weapon, so I don’t think they’d try to lighten it... Actually, wait, if they could freely make adjustments to its weight with **[Gravity]** depending on the situation, then...”

Leen left Quun to mutter away to herself as another transmission came from the Helmwig.

“The Kyklops in the rear have fired divine venom into the air!”

A sound akin to fireworks exploded in the sky, and suddenly there was gold powder being scattered above them. The girls had made sure to get changed into their battle suits already, so they didn’t suddenly feel unwell, but the problem was the effect it had on their Frame Gears...

“Heh heh heh... Don’t think the same trick will work twice. War is a back and forth battle of arms development. Know that those who fail to prepare countermeasures will become the losers!”

Quun operated the console at the back of Grimgerde and confirmed the frame’s output. After a moment, the result was displayed on the monitor.

“Output decreased by eighteen percent! Take that! We managed to get it under a twenty percent decrease! That is a victory for the research squad!”

Quun let out a shrill laugh of joy. Leen let out a small sigh at her daughter’s bizarre behavior. To have managed to bring it down to such a percentage after what was previously a forty percent decrease was definitely something to be happy about, but she did wish Quun would calm down a bit.

Letting out another sigh, Leen opened up the channels to the rest of the Valkyries.

“Is it all right if I start how we always do, with a little Full Burst from Grimgerde?”

“Yes, please. It would do wonders if you could thin them out a bit,” Yumina responded.

“Indeed. We will take over while Grimgerde is on cooldown,” Sue reassured her.

Grimgerde was a heavy ordnance unit, so the strength of its Full Burst was at the top with the Overlord, but it required a several-minute cooldown period in which it was left vulnerable following usage of the weapon. As such, Grimgerde’s role in battle was to begin it with Full Burst, enter cooldown, and then once it was back up, support everyone else from the rear.

This time too, Grimgerde was standing right in front of the incoming enemies, all weapons deployed.

“Eat this. Full Burst!”

A storm of phrasium bullets flew into the Kyklops in front of them. Usually, they would’ve been hit by the bullets and their numbers would greatly decrease.

“Huh?”

And yet, several Kyklops lined up in a row, acting as a shield for the Kyklops behind them as they took all of the rounds.

Naturally, those Kyklops that stood in front were full of holes in seconds. But even once their functions had stopped, they remained in place, ensuring none of the remaining bullets made it through to those behind them. Or perhaps it was more correct to say that the Kyklops that were both beside and behind were supporting them to make sure that they didn’t fall; they were quite literally using the Kyklops at the front as a shield, allowing them to withstand the Full Burst.

Thus, the Grimgerde only managed to defeat a dozen or so Kyklops with their

initial assault. That was less than a third of what it usually managed to clear.

A puff of white smoke containing traces of the glistening ether liquid released from Grimgerde as it came to a stop. Overlord and the Chevaliers immediately stepped in front to protect the vulnerable frame.

“I’m shocked. Who knew they could manage to team up like that?”

“Could it be that even though they look the same, what’s inside is different?”

Elze and Linne—who’d swapped with Elna—observed from inside the Gerhilde.

The battle between the Nereids and the Kyklops in the sea had already begun. Sometimes, columns of water would shoot up into the air due to the torpedoes released by the Nereids.

“No, more than what’s inside...it’s like the chain of command is different. Before, their commander used to give them simple orders like ‘Advance’ or ‘Fight,’ but now that commander is gone, and there’s a new commander who’s able to give them more precise commands like ‘Advance while protecting the others’ and ‘Start attacking from whatever looks weakest,’” Quun responded from within the immobile Grimgerde. “They may be using a command system that’s even better than the Soldats. If so, should we expect them to move differently than before? Because of their new commander, they’ll be able to fight in a more skilled and logical manner, just like a real army... They could control multiple Gollems as if they’re their own limbs and—”

“Basically, this won’t be as easy as it has been in the past,” Leen swiftly said in conclusion, cutting off her daughter’s long-winded rambling.

“Put simply, yes, that is correct...” Quun relented with a pout.

“We’ve identified a unique red Kyklops that’s different from the colossal one. I believe that to be the wicked devout,” Linze notified all the Valkyries. Upon hearing that, Yumina looked through Brunhilde’s rifle scope and caught sight of it within the rear lines that were just emerging from the sea. Its metallic red body reflected the light of the sun. Compared to the other Kyklops, it was much slimmer, more like a Frame Gear in stature. That said, it still had a single camera eye just like the others, and it held a rapier the same color as its body.

She'd seen that rapier before. It was the same as the rapier wielded by the wicked devout who had intervened in their infiltration of the Gandhilis ruins and ran away with the Ark. It was the one who wore a black coat, black-shaded goggles, and a plague doctor mask.

If he was the one leading this army, then...

"Shall I try and snipe him?" Yumina asked, hovering the crosshair right over the red Kyklops's head. It was quite far, but not so far that she couldn't hit him. In fact, he might not even have his guard up at this distance.

She began to pull the trigger...and then stopped. Just as she was about to fire, her divine trait, her Mystic Eye of Foresight, activated and showed her the red Kyklops dodging her shot. There were times when the ability activated without her even trying. It tended to happen in situations like this, where it was impossible to do something even if she tried, or at times when she was in extreme danger.

Yumina had begun to suspect that her body instinctively activated it in order to avoid any truly disadvantageous situations. Had she fired here, the enemy would have dodged and most likely grown much more cautious. Her body had tried to prevent her from making their situation worse.

She moved the camera from Brunhilde's rifle scope.

"Sakura, support magic, please. Engaging enemies now!"

"Okay..."

Two symphonic horns were equipped on the shoulders of Rossweise, looking like cannons, while several magic speakers were deployed from the frame.

"Yoshino."

"Let's do this!"

Following the lively rhythm of the drums, Yoshino's guitar joined in. The girls in the Valkyries chuckled as they recognized the song. Written in the 1960s, the song was later used as the theme song for a megahit American romcom. The girls greatly liked the song after watching the movie themselves—had they chosen the song knowing that?

Soon after, Sakura's singing began. The lyrics, which praised a pretty woman, stimulated the ether liquid inside the Frame Gears, increasing their output.

"Soldiers of Lassei! Advance!" the Grand Potentate of Lassei commanded his men from inside a loaned Knight Baron of his own. Upon his order, the Frame Gears began an earth-rumbling assault on the army of Kyklops.

Most of the Brunhild knights were deployed in the Nereids for this battle, so the majority of the Frame Gears on land were being piloted by Lassei knights. Lassei had always been a country that prided itself on its military prowess, and they viewed Frame Gears as just another weapon, so they had put in much training with the Frame Units.

Once they had grown accustomed to operating them, they were able to move them as if they were an extension of their bodies, their combat skills within them improving so much that even the Brunhild knights struggled against them. Such a trained knight order would have no trouble against the Kyklops.

"I got the first kill!"

The second prince of the Military Kingdom of Lassei, Zambelt Gal Lassei, a man who had once challenged the god of combat and had his nose completely shattered, had indeed pierced a Kyklops with his Knight Baron's spear. However, despite being stabbed right in the stomach with Zambelt's spear, the Kyklops's movement never stopped, and it immediately went to swing its mace down.

"Die already!"

Zambelt let go of the spear and instead punched the Kyklops right beside where he had stabbed it. The Kyklops's armor warped as it lost its balance and fell.

"Punching gets the job done so much faster!"

Gripped in both hands of Zambelt's Knight Baron were some simple weapons made from phrasium. They were knuckle dusters, a weapon fitted to four of a hand's fingers to increase the power of one's punches. It seemed the people of Lassei loved fighting barehanded and had asked for weapons similar to Elze's Gerhilde.

Those knuckle dusters were what Touya had decided on as the perfect choice. Knuckle dusters were a simple weapon—you just gripped them and then punched. In order to strengthen them even further, they had four sharp rivets, turning them into truly deadly weapons.

After having taken down the Kyklops, Zambelt was so happy he was caught off guard by another Kyklops swinging down its mace from beside him.

“Shit!”

Zambelt moved to sacrifice his arm to block it, but before he was hit, there was a loud crack and the Kyklops who had been moving to attack him suddenly went flying.

“Why are you getting all distracted? Pay attention to your surroundings!”

“Boss!” Zambelt cried out in joy at seeing the familiar red Valkyrie. The one who had sent the Kyklops flying was Elze in her Gerhilde.

After being thoroughly beaten to a pulp by Takeru, Zambelt began calling both Ende and Elze “Boss” as a show of extreme respect, since they were both Takeru’s students and all, but neither especially liked being referred to in such a manner. When they told him to stop, though, he wouldn’t, and in the end, the two simply gave up.

“Don’t just stand there, get moving! You need to be aware of what your allies are trying to do!”

“Y-Yes, ma’am!”

At Elze’s scolding, Zambelt readied his fists again. Gerhilde’s camera eye looked up at the gigantic Kyklops in the rear.

“We need to do something about that big ol’ hunk of junk.”

“Mama Elze, I want to fight too!” Linne cried out in boredom.

“Afterward, ’kay?” Elze called back to the girl as she punched through the Kyklops.

Right now, Elna was riding in the Helmwig with Linze while Linne was riding in the Gerhilde with Elze. At some point, they’d decided that was how they’d pair up while in the Frame Gears. Elze thought it a good judgment, given if

something happened to her, she wasn't sure if Elna would be able to handle Gerhilde well in her place. Linne's style of fighting was much closer to Elze's, while Elna's situational awareness was more like Linze's.

Elze was very fond of her daughter Elna, but Linne was just as precious a daughter to her.

"All righty, time to get moving."

Elze rang her fists together before firing them at the Kyklops charging toward her.



"Crusher!" Elze roared as she held out Gerhilde's arm, shooting a phrasium spike that gouged into the chest of the Kyklops in front of her. Its chest was pierced by the sheer destructive power of the shot as it fell to the ground.

Another Kyklops swung its mace from behind, but Elze easily dodged it with a duck before countering by spinning Gerhilde's right leg backward like a sickle and sweeping it across its legs. Lu was watching Elze from directly behind in wonder as the girl showed off how easily she was able to carry out a rear kick in her Frame Gear.

"She's very...excited, isn't she?" Lu muttered as she watched how lively Elze was despite beating up enemies on the battlefield.

"It's Mother Elze. Of course she is," Arcia fired back, confused that it even surprised her mother by this point.

In fact, Lu was gracefully dodging enemy attacks in Waltraute even as they had that conversation. Thanks to the booster unit installed on the back, the Waltraute had the swiftest maneuverability of the Valkyries. Talking purely in terms of speed, that crown would go to Helmwig in its aerial form, but on land, Waltraute was far faster.

Using that speed to swiftly approach the Kyklops, she raised the two blades of the Waltraute and slashed both down at once.

"I'll turn them all into mincerobot!"

Having been slashed from the shoulders to the waist, the Kyklops split into

three and fell apart on the ground. Lu immediately dashed up to another Kyklops and cut it down with a cross slash, splitting its torso in half. Leaving the enemy to fall to pieces, she sped up toward her next target—when suddenly, all of them were shot through with holes.

Helmwige soared past Waltraute at low altitude before changing back into its regular Frame Gear form. The double rifle in its right hand blew fire, and the surrounding Kyklops exploded one after another through the infinite loading allowed by the teleportation magic and the mana-infused shell bombardment.

After defeating the most immediate Kyklops, Helmwige morphed back into its aerial form and took the opportunity to slash through two more Kyklops with its blade wings as it soared back into the sky.

“She’s...really quite ruthless, isn’t she?”

“It’s Mother Linze. Of course she is.”

Once more, Arcia was confused that her mother was even surprised by this point.

For all the kids, the scariest mother to anger was most definitely Linze. Not because she would scream and shout, but because she would thoroughly scold them with a perfect smile on her face. She showed no mercy. She would tell them in great detail why she was mad at them. What did they do wrong, and what should they avoid? Why did they do that? Did they not think this would happen? Why had they not reflected after their previous scolding? Did they realize how much trouble they’d caused everyone around them?

Even if they earnestly apologized, she would question if they really understood what the problem was, if they’d truly reflected, and if they could prove what they would do to make sure the same thing didn’t happen again. It never ended.

Linze very rarely got mad, but after the kids invited her wrath once, they firmly swore they would never make that mistake again. Arcia had been scolded by her once before herself, and she’d greatly reflected after that moment—she didn’t want to have to go through that again.

“Mother, one from the right.”

“Got it.”

At Arcia’s call, Lu turned the Waltraute right while swinging her left sword around, slashing it right into the Kyklops’s side.

“What?”

Lu’s eyes widened in surprise. The Kyklops had firmly gripped the sword she had just embedded into it. Actually, no, it was *because* the Kyklops had gripped it that the sword hadn’t slashed all the way through.

Having never had that happen before, Lu’s response was delayed. Aiming right for that moment, another Kyklops charged to stab Waltraute with its spear.

“Ngh!”

Lu let go of the sword and dodged the spear, but a mace-wielding Kyklops was ready and waiting for her near her landing spot.

I can’t dodge this!

Just as Lu went to use Waltraute’s left hand as a shield, the mace Kyklops’s head suddenly exploded.

“Are you all right, Lu?”

“Yumina! Nice timing!”

Yumina’s cover fire allowed Lu to collect herself. Turning on the Waltraute’s boosters to full, she stabbed her other sword right into the spear Kyklops’s chest before immediately reversing and setting her sights on the Kyklops she had failed to completely slice in two. She then slammed her sword into its opposite side and finished off what she had started.

“Whew... That was close.”

Lu breathed out a sigh of relief after narrowly escaping danger. If Yumina hadn’t been around to provide cover fire, she might have lost an arm.

“Please be careful. Unlike the Kyklops we’ve fought before, these ones can coordinate with each other, and they’re not afraid to sacrifice themselves to do it. Make sure you aren’t caught by them. The moment you are, they’ll hold you

there while their allies blow you both up.”

“Understood.”

As Yumina said, all the attacks from the enemy would be coordinated, just as the one there had been, and those coordinated attacks would be incredibly reckless. She had to be careful.

Lu picked up the other sword from where it had dropped and pumped herself up again.



“Cooldown complete. I’m going to reboot it now,” Leen said as she stood Grimgerde up after it had finished cooling down from its overheat state following Full Burst. She then immediately hovered toward the approaching Kyklops and shot at them with the Gatling gun on her right arm.

Usually, Grimgerde couldn’t attack at will while any allies were around, as they’d very likely get caught in the cross fire, but if the enemy was big enough, that stopped mattering. Leen dashed across the battlefield toward the giant Kyklops with the eye in its chest, firing her Gatling gun at its upper body as she did.

The giant Kyklops took the rain of bullets without even flinching.

“It’s so tough! It doesn’t seem to be *completely* ineffective, but...”

From what she could see from the distance monitor, she’d managed to shave off a bit of the outer plating, but not enough to make a real difference.

“They appear to have used quite efficient strengthening magic. I think you could break through if you focused fire on a single spot,” Quun suggested.

“And how long do you think that’s going to take me, hm?” Leen retorted. It wouldn’t be impossible, but it would take far too long. In which case...

Just as Leen went to enact her plan of attack, the giant Kyklops’s chest began to morph. The parts of the chest clattered as they moved and the central eyeball rotated and extended like a camera lens. Suddenly, the lens started sparking and a ball of light started gathering in front of the eye, getting bigger and bigger along with the sparks.

Quun gasped behind her.

“Mother Yumina! Tell everyone to pull back! Get them away from the line of sight of the colossal Kyklops!” she yelled.

“Everyone, fall back! Get away from the front of the giant Kyklops! Quickly!” Yumina immediately called out.

The Frame Gears that reacted fast enough stopped their battles with the Kyklops and scattered all at once, and in the next moment, there was a deafening roar as a massive laser shot right out from the giant Kyklops. That beam of light pierced the ground and continued all the way to the mountain range in the distance.

“Was that...an Upper Construct’s particle beam laser?” Leen wondered aloud, thinking back to her battles with the Phrase. To be precise, the Upper Constructs’ attack wasn’t a particle laser beam, but Touya had taken to calling it that so at some point, it became the default name.

“Cesca, damage report!” Yumina frantically yelled.

“There were fourteen units who failed to escape in time and were destroyed by the Kyklops. However, their pilots were successfully evacuated to the base through the emergency teleport. They are all safe,” Cesca reported from where she was observing the fight in the sky. Leen sighed in relief.

It seemed the automatic ejection was triggered the moment it sensed an abnormality in the frame. It had to have been cut incredibly close. Most likely, upon the pilot themselves realizing they would be unable to dodge in time, the thought support system installed in the Frame Gear made an independent decision and forcefully teleported its pilot.

The part that had extended from the gigantic Kyklops’s chest returned to its original position. Apparently, it couldn’t use that laser repeatedly. Leen couldn’t help but observe how even that was similar to an Upper Construct. Perhaps the part most reminiscent of the Phrase was the way friendly fire was normal, the way they had no sense of camaraderie—no, even before that, it was the mercilessness that they had because they weren’t living beings to begin with.

“Anyway, whatever’s going on, we need to take down that big hunk of

metal... Linze! Could you land for a moment?"

"Hm? Oh, yes!"

Responding to Leen's request, Linze flew back down to the ground and changed the Helmwig into its Frame Gear form.

"Cesca, transfer the Brionac, please."

"Understood. Transferring Brionac."

A gigantic cannon appeared in front of them. An anchor was shot out from its body, stabilizing it on the ground. The weapon, which was three times bigger than a Frame Gear, was aimed right at the colossal Kyklops. Leen's Grimgerde and Linze's Helmwig supported the cannon on either side.

Meanwhile, Quun's excitement peaked.

"Th-This is the massive magic artillery, the Brionac! The ultimate weapon for use against Upper Constructs that requires incredibly precise control of magic and uses special drill bullets! I never imagined I'd get to lay my eyes on it in this time! I'm gonna cry! I'm so happy I came here!"



“Thank you for your explanation,” Leen calmly responded. Linze could only let out an awkward laugh as a reply.

It seemed Quun knew of the Brionac, but hadn’t ever seen it in person before; it must have become unnecessary in the future. Leen and Linze boasted the greatest mana capacity among the grand duchesses, but even they could only fire off one shot of the Brionac. Such a weapon was deemed far too unwieldy. In this time, however, it still had its uses.

“Charge at fifty percent...sixty... It’s charging faster than before, huh?” Linze remarked.

Despite it being a casual observation, Rosetta spotted the opportunity to give an explanation and cut in, saying, “I thought something like this might happen, ma’am! And so, I made improvement after improvement to it! Magic science is rapidly evolving! It will never stop!”

Brionac originally took much longer to charge, but the improvements allowed it to charge to full much faster.

“Ready to fire!”

“Let’s do this, then! Fire!”

“Waaait! Mother, let me fire— Ah!”

A gigantic drill fired from the cannon with a loud roar. Just as it was about to strike the Kyklops’s chest, it dodged to the side. Though it managed to avoid a direct hit, its movements were so slow that the drill still managed to hit its left shoulder.

The shrill screeching of the drill gouging into the metal plating could be heard by them all as it penetrated through the limb, the now-detached left arm falling to the ground with a massive thud.

“Ugh, we missed!”

“Only being able to fire one shot is definitely a weakness of the Brionac...”

Leen and Linze recovered their completely expended mana with their marriage rings enhanced with **[Transfer]**. But even with their strength recovered, the Brionac itself was completely destroyed. There were cracks all

over the barrel—no way could it fire another shot.

The gigantic Kyklops's chest began to morph again; it was going to return fire with its particle beam.

"This is bad. We have to move!"

"Not a problem, ma'am! I thought this might happen!"

Rosetta's voice once more entered Leen's ears. Right at that moment, another Brionac was teleported to where they were.

"I made a second one! Now that Grimgerde and Helmwig have been improved, you can fire another shot!"

"You're the best, Rosetta! An engineer should always have a spare! Oooh, I've got goose bumps! I hope I can be like you one day!"

Ignoring Quun getting worked up in the back, the Grimgerde and Helmwig immediately connected to the new Brionac and began charging it with mana.

"Will we make it in time?!"

"We'll be fine, mother. Look," Quun reassured her, pointing at the giant Kyklops on the monitor. Since the left shoulder had been blown off, the left side of its chest was all distorted. The gun barrel was getting caught on it while trying to extend.

The Kyklops tried to pull off the part that it was getting caught on with its remaining arm. The distorted part deformed further until it was practically ripped off. The barrel from the center of the chest began extending again...but it was already too late.

"Fully charged!"

"Fire!"

The drill bullet shot out of the Brionac, sending cracks up the cannon. The Grimgerde and the Helmwig came to a stop, only their bare minimum systems still functioning, and they fell to their knees. Rosetta said they could fire a second shot, but she never said the frames would be able to withstand it. Even they couldn't withstand two consecutive shots of the Brionac.

The all-or-nothing shot that had cost them two strong Frame Gears hit the Kyklops's extended barrel. The drill ate through the Kyklops's frame, spinning at high speed into its insides. The **[Spiral]** enhancement on the drill went wild, pulverizing the Kyklops's G-Cube—its heart.

With a hole now punched through its chest, the giant Kyklops unceremoniously fell to the ground with a massive rumble. It seemed the fortification and lightness magic had worn off because the impact and its own weight caused it to fall apart in seconds.

“We somehow managed it.”

“I wanted to shoot it...”

Leen sighed and shook her head at her daughter's complaint.



Elze confirmed that the giant Kyklops had been defeated and grinned.

“Mama Elze, in front!”

“Oops.”

Elze turned her gaze forward at Linne's insistence.

A metallic red frame was thrusting its rapier at great speed. Any normal pilot would've ended up as Swiss cheese, but Elze's extraordinary kinetic vision allowed her to see each of the sword's strikes and deflect them with Gerhilde's phrasium knuckle guards.

“Hmph!”

Spotting an opening, Elze attempted a roundhouse kick, but the red Kyklops jumped backward to barely avoid the blows.

“To think you could even take down Balor...! Dammit, I had planned to at least take down some of the duchesses with it...”

“You should be glad. If that had happened, you would most definitely have seen hell. You'd be begging and crying to be killed.”

Elze sounded like she was making a lighthearted remark, but if any of them had died, that was definitely what would have happened. Their husband pulled

no punches when it came to that sort of thing. With his powers, he could likely revive them with resurrection magic, but even if they did come back, he'd never forgive the one who killed them in the first place. He'd break their minds as completely as he could and show them absolute hell. Even if the other party was a wicked devout, someone who was already a dead person, he would inflict enough pain and terror that their soul would be weathered away.

Elze would not deny this. After all, she'd do the exact same thing if her own family were killed, and she had no intention of forgiving the idiot who was trying to do just that right in front of her.

“[Boost]!”

A residue of red magic overflowed from Gerhilde's multilayered armor. Clad in light, Elze kicked the ground with explosive power. Having approached the enemy in an instant, Gerhilde's shining fist swung wide.

“How are you so fast?!”

“Need you to go bye-bye for now.”

The phrasium knuckle guards smashed right into the Kyklops. A crack appeared in its frame. Naturally, this wasn't the end.

“Intoooooooo...!”

“Crusher!”

Elze and Linne shouted in unison, launching Gerhilde's pile bunkers. With a dull thud, the spikes shot right through the Kyklops's stomach and its back. The frame bounced and slammed to the ground.

“Since we don't have the sacred treasure, we can't tackle the wicked devout directly. I'll just have to hope this is enough to make him run away...”

“If he does come back, I'll beat him up!”

Elze flashed a wry smile at Linne's simplemindedness. As a divine ward, Elze was forbidden from killing the wicked devout, but it was okay for her to protect herself. Well, maybe not *okay* per se. It was a strange gray area. It came down to whether or not it was considered an act of self-defense, an unavoidable attack to protect oneself. Elze thought she'd be able to give the excuse that the

other side attacked first, but whether that would fly was a whole different question...

Anyway, the fact that no gods had come flying on over had to mean that it was overlooked. There would be no problems if Linne took the wicked devout down, but unfortunately, the sacred treasure was with Touya's team, who were still in the middle of carrying out their plan. Even if they could give the devout a good beating, they couldn't truly eliminate them.

"Ah!" Linne's sudden exclamation had Elze looking back at the monitor. There, the metallic red frame was shown rising up like a ghost, stomach completely gouged out. Elze clicked her tongue.

I should've gone for its chest. That's probably where its G-Cube was.

Suddenly, she realized that the enemy's rapier was beginning to flicker with a dim red light. That creepy flashing grew faster and faster until it finally sent an unavoidable explosion of flame right for the Gerhilde.

"Stardust Shell!"

Before the Gerhilde could be engulfed by the flames, small shining star-shaped shields lined up in a regulated formation to create a large shield in front of them. Blocked by those celestial shields, the flames died out before reaching them.

"Whew, that was a close call."

"Thank you, Sue!"

Behind Gerhilde stood Sue's Ortlinde Overlord. Had the Stardust Shell come even a second later, Gerhilde would've been burned to a crisp.

"Tch! If Balor's out of commission, then it'll be impossible to do anything more..."

The metallic red Kyklops slowly edged backward while the surrounding Kyklops moved forward. It seemed he'd chosen to retreat.

They would rather not let him go, but even though they'd defeated the big Kyklops, they didn't have the trump card to take the wicked devout down.

Guess we need to back off, Elze reluctantly relented. But then suddenly, the

space above them started to warp.

A hole opened up and something gold came flying out.

“Is that...Gold?! Wait, no!”

Elze focused her monitor on the gold Gollem that had appeared. It looked exactly like Gold, but the small gold Gollem had metal bird wings on its back and was glaring at them with its red camera eyes.

“Gould...?”

A confused voice came from the metallic red frame. Gould ignored that voice and instead sent countless gold feathers out onto the battlefield.



Going back to moments before...

Inside the **[Prison]**, Yakumo had defeated the wicked devout in the diver suit with the sacred treasure. With that, we could say that we’d achieved our minimum objective. Once we’d finished clearing up the other wicked devout, we could celebrate.

The problem was this gold crown, Gould. He was staring over in Yakumo’s direction despite me being poised ready to take him on.

What is he doing?

It didn’t seem like he was frozen in shock at the defeat of a member of the wicked devout or anything.

“Veraenderung.”

Suddenly, Gould’s right hand changed into that ice pick again.

Crap! Is he gonna—?!

“Lanze.”

Gould flew toward the barrier and stabbed the ice pick right into it. Cracks formed in the **[Prison]** before it completely shattered.

“Huh?!”

“Yakumo!”

The moment the **[Prison]** broke, Yakumo leaped away from where Gould was about to strike.

“Veraenderung: Schwert.”

The spear-like ice pick morphed into a sword, and Gould immediately slashed at Yakumo with it as she ran. Yakumo used the sacred treasure to block it.

The two blades collided...and Gould’s sword ate halfway into the sacred treasure.

“Devour: Gluttony.”

“What?!”

Gould’s sword wrapped around Yakumo’s as if it were alive and slowly, the sacred treasure lost its platinum sheen.

What’s going on? Is the sacred treasure losing its divinity? Can Gluttony Slimes consume even that?! Wait, no...

“Hm?”

Suddenly, the gold tentacles wrapped around the sacred katana cracked and dissolved into sand. Gould jumped backward.

“The erosion was blocked...? But this is...?! What an incredible amount of energy! With this...!”

“Did he just say erosion?”

Is it like we thought?!

The crumbled plating of his hand reverted back to normal. Gould’s eyes were filled with delight as he opened and shut his fist.

“Who are you? Are you...the god of erosion?” I asked, noticing how Gould’s behavior had clearly changed. Had a fragment of the god of erosion that had escaped from the Divine Realm taken over this gold crown and was now in control of its Q-Crystal?

“I am both the gold crown and the one who rules the crowns. My previous name was Chrom Ranchesse, the High Master of the crowns.”

“What?!”

This was Chrom Ranchesse?! The genius Golem engineer that created the crowns?! What was going on here?!

“With this, our wish shall be granted. I will draw out the full power of the gold crown.”

Gould—Chrom Ranchesse—stretched out his small gold hand in front of him.

“Spatial Distortion.”

The space in front of Gould began to twist. With his hand at the center, the surrounding space distorted like a whirlpool and left a large gaping hole.

Wait, no!

Gould jumped into that hole and the space immediately returned to normal. By that time, the gold crown was no longer present.

Was that not...the blue crown, Distortion Blau's crown skill, Spatial Distortion?

Assuming that the time manipulation abilities present in his wings came from the black crown, Chronos Noir's, then did that mean this gold crown could use crown skills after all? And those of various types? What was going on here?!

“Grah!”

Out of nowhere, there was a loud bang behind me, and when I turned to face the source, I saw that the woman with the iron mask who had been fighting Frei had slammed her metallic orange mace into the front monitor, damaging it. Was that the power of her wicked vessel? Wait, the Divinity Neutralization wasn't in effect... Was it because the sacred treasure had its divinity stolen from it?! The weapon no longer had any energy to use its trait!

The footage from the cracked monitor disappeared, and water gushed from the cracks into the bridge like a laser beam due to the water pressure.

“What did you just do?!”

“Didn't think I'd ever have to press this!”

The woman with the iron mask smashed through the glass cover on the console and slammed the button underneath down as hard as she could with her mace. The next moment, a bright red light began flashing in the submarine

and a security alarm began blaring.

Oh, don't tell me...

"Activating self-destruct sequence. Warning: in one minute, the Ark's magic reactor will be raised to a critical level and the ship will self-destruct. Countdown commencing: 59, 58..."

"A self-destruct device?! Dammit, you mean it's the same as Chrom Ranchesse's lab back in Xenoahs?!"

Why were scientists so desperate to shove self-destruct systems into their creations?!

"Father! We must escape!"

"[Gate]!"

Yakumo reverted the sacred treasure to its original form while I opened a **[Gate]** to Val Albus. Yae went through first to confirm it was safe, and then the kids jumped in after her. After that came Hilde, and then finally me and Gold. Gold was still standing staring at the space that Gould had disappeared from, but when I called out to him, he obediently came through the **[Gate]** with me.

Just as I went to jump through myself, I caught sight of the two wicked devout making their escape through the corridor that the gold bird Gollem had created. They probably had an evacuation ship somewhere, or maybe some leftover Kyklops.

With another bang, a huge section of the monitor broke off, releasing even more water.

Shit! It won't last much longer!

I dashed through the **[Gate]** into the bridge of the Val Albus.

"Albus, evacuate this area immediately! Full speed!"

"Understood."

The white whale ship changed direction and dashed through the ocean depths at a speed it had never gone before. There was a brief flash, then a massive shock wave came from immediately behind us. The monitors attached

to the probes that had been watching the Ark went dark the moment the explosion traveled through the water; they must have been destroyed in the blast.

We sent another probe toward the site of the explosion.

“I can confirm the destruction of the Ark,” Val Albus reported. “Several pieces of wreckage can be detected. Do you wish to retrieve them?”

“Hmm...”

The most important parts were probably completely pulverized, but maybe we could find something useful from the pieces that were left.

Guess there's no harm in taking them...

“Father! Look!” Frei shouted. I turned toward where she was pointing. It was a different monitor that was displaying the fight over in Lassei. Pictured was the gold crown, Gould—or, no, Chrom Ranchesse? Well, whichever name was correct, Gould was on the battlefield. Did he teleport there using Spatial Distortion?

He really could use crown skills, and without paying any price whatsoever. I suppose you could count part of the Gluttony Slime being the price paid, but compared to the other crowns, it was much more efficient. What was worse, he'd not just absorbed a fragment of the god of erosion, but even stolen my divinity from the sacred treasure. Even an idiot could tell how bad this situation was getting.

“Father, look at that!”

“What is he doing? Wait, is he...eating the Kyklops?”

Gould had sent out the feathers from its gold wings, and they all turned into Slime as they consumed the Kyklops around them—whether they were broken or still moving. I could understand attacking the Frame Gears, but why their own allied forces? Was it to gain the divinity of the wicked god? Was he trying to absorb not just my divinity, but that of a different god as well? What could he be trying to do that would make that necessary?

“Touya-dono, it is pointless for us to just sit here, it is. Let us go to the

battlefield!”

“Y-Yeah, good idea. **[Teleport]!**”

I teleported everyone to the Lassei coast upon Yae’s insistence. By the time we arrived, the Gluttony Slime feathers were already being recovered by Gould. The only Kyklops left behind was the metallic red one—was that the one with the wicked devout as the pilot?

“Gould? What are you doing?”

“The plan has proceeded to the final phase. I require your help, Scarlet... No, Maestro.”

“Hm?! Heh... Heh heh. Very well, Chrom Ranchesse. I will become your arms and legs as I promised. In exchange...”

“I know.”

“Good.”

Gould held out his right hand and distorted the space again with his crown skill, disappearing into the tear in space together with the metallic red frame. All that was left were the Fishmen and Gollem soldiers. There was a lot we had to think about, but first, we needed to clean up the mess in front of us.

I took out my smartphone and connected to Yumina.

“Begin the cleanup operation. Make sure the Nereids don’t let any of them escape underwater.”

“Understood. Um... Is Kuon safe?”

I silently turned the phone over to Kuon.

“I’m safe, mother.”

“Oh, good...”

She’s such a worrywart, I thought, but I really wasn’t much different myself.

Still, what did it mean that Chrom Ranchesse was Gould? I thought the god of erosion had taken it over... Could even a god—no, a *former* god’s fragment not keep its consciousness once its main body disappeared? It was as if the only thing Gould had inherited was the erosion ability, which was a perfect match for

the Gluttony Slime. The ability to erode anything and the ability to absorb anything...

Almost anything, at least. It seemed the sacred treasure couldn't be completely consumed, but it did steal the divinity that served as its power source. It was the same as when the old witch-king sucked out all of our mana.

Doc Babylon had once said that my boundless mana was a godsend for a researcher, since it meant they didn't have to pay too much attention to how much mana they were expending while experimenting. The speed at which Brunhild and the Frame Gears were developed was thanks to both my mana capacity and divine power. Having that used against us by the enemy was a bit of a sore spot, especially because they'd stolen the divinity from the sacred treasure, something that was made by condensing loads and loads of divinity into a weapon.

I wasn't sure how much divinity had been absorbed from the sacred treasure exactly, but it was more than enough for use on the surface.

"I really messed up... It was a complete oversight to think the sacred treasure would be safe from erosion just because it had my divinity infused in it... I prepared absolutely no countermeasures for the Gluttony Slime..."

That thing absorbed not just physical objects, but energy as well. The Gluttony Slime was originally created as an Artificer that could deal with dangerous objects during the ancient magic civilization, so of course it was made to be able to absorb residual mana. It was born into an era where magic and artifacts were as common as electrical appliances on Earth, after all.

Well, because of that, the country that developed the Gluttony Slime ended up being destroyed, so it was no laughing matter.

"There's no point dwelling on what has already happened. For now, we should focus on cleaning up what's in front of us."

Oof... A six-year-old consoling me feels real bad...

What Kuon said was right, though. Rather than thinking of what I could have done, I needed to think about what I was going to do from now on.

"Oh, right, Silver. What do you think about the gold crown? Is it really Chrom

Ranchesse?” I asked. The silver crown was the only one here who knew Chrom personally.

“Honestly...I couldn’t tell ya, buddy. The thing spoke just like him, but it’s not enough to say for sure, y’know? And like, what does it even mean if that thing *is* Chrom? Ya tellin’ me Chrom’s ghost decided to haunt a robot?”

“Hmm... Do you think his brain could’ve replaced the Q-Crystal?”

“Ew.”

Silver clearly didn’t like the thought of it, but we did have an example of that with the witch-king. It wasn’t impossible. Hell, even Doc Babylon had done something very similar.

I glanced at Gold, who was standing nearby. Gould hadn’t known that Gold existed. Now assuming Gould was Chrom Ranchesse, that would mean Chrom was not the one who created Gold. But then, who made him? It would have to be someone who was as much of a genius to make a completely identical unit.

Were Gold and Gould completely different units, then? Gould had Chrom Ranchesse’s brain implanted inside it, while Gold was the Golem that had a Q-Crystal installed.

I seriously have no goddamn clue where to go with this.

“If ya ask me, rather than Chrom takin’ over the thing, it feels way more likely that he copied his personality into it.”

“Hang on... Copied his personality? Did he have technology like that?”

“Well...the guy managed to create somethin’ like me. My personality is molded based on my wielder an’ all. Isn’t it super likely he could transfer his personality?”

Now that he mentioned it, Golems usually had some semblance of a personality formed from all the memories they’d built up over the years, and crowns were no exception to that. But according to Kuon, Silver’s original personality had been that of a murderer. It was through their contract that Silver had turned into more of an obedient minion—and that meant Chrom Ranchesse had managed to plant a moldable personality into a Golem. With

that in mind, him implanting his own personality into the gold crown wasn't out of the question.

"So...that's what this is all about."

Research was being carried out into a technology that would make it possible to digitize oneself using all sorts of information like their thought processes and thinking patterns and create a replica of the person—digital cloning, I think it was called. That technology would allow us to know the thoughts of even dead people. In a way, it was research into immortality.

If something similar had been input into Gould, then it wouldn't be so incorrect to view him as Chrom Ranchesse himself, would it? Well, the man himself was dead, so maybe it was more accurate to say it was the *ghost* of him.

"I just remembered... When Steph accidentally erased a massive portion of unknown data from Gold, could that have been Chrom Ranchesse's personality data?" Kuon asked.

"Wait, it could be!"

If that was the case, then the theory that Gold and Gould were the exact same Gollem actually started to hold water.

But did that mean if Steph hadn't mistakenly reset Gold's data, we could've had two gold crowns with Chrom Ranchesse's personality running around? Was my daughter secretly a genius? She totally prevented a disaster before it could happen!

"Hey, kiddo, uh...your papa sometimes acts a little loopy, huh?"

"This is normal. Don't worry, you'll get used to it."

I didn't like the conversation going on in front of me one bit, but whatever. More importantly, why did Chrom Ranchesse implant his personality in the gold crown to begin with? Did he want to acquire pseudo-immortality or something?

No, that didn't seem right. According to Albus, when the white and black crowns went berserk, Chrom ended up losing his memories as a price of the white crown's crown skill. Did he do this to keep a record of his memories? Perhaps he tried to create a copy of himself in order to fight against losing both

his memories and his sense of self...

Losing one's memories was akin to losing oneself. It resulted in the collapse of one's identity, the disappearance of the foundations of who you were. Could there be anything more frightening? If I had to lose my memories of all the time spent in this world, could I really bear it?

It was in that moment that I truly began to understand Chrom Ranchesse's state of mind.



Chapter III: Moving Ambitions

“It’s not impossible, I suppose,” Doc Babylon said as she smoked a new aroma pipe in Babylon’s laboratory. “Taking one’s personality and inserting it into a Gollem’s Q-Crystal isn’t hard in and of itself. The problem is whether or not you can handle it mentally.”

“Your original body is dead, and you now have to live in a mechanical construct. It’s a question of if you could retain your identity with that knowledge,” the Professor added.

“You end up living life as a fake. I think it would be much tougher if you were aware of that fact. The normal outcome would be that you would simply break, personally,” Doctor Elluka also chimed in.



Transferring your memories to a Gollem meant that you yourself still had those memories of that process, so you'd know exactly why you existed, but I wasn't sure if it was something you could so easily separate in your mind. No matter how much you tried to argue against it, a fake was a fake. You were now an artificial existence, a puppet with copied memories implanted inside of you. Was that something a regular person could withstand?

"However, according to Albus, the original Chrom Ranchesse gradually lost his memories due to the price paid for the activation of the white crown's crown skill, correct? In which case, being the only owner of his complete memories, Gould would be the closest to the man himself, no?"

I understood what the Professor was getting at, but it also felt like a little bit of a stretch. Gould and the Chrom Ranchesse that lived five thousand years ago were ultimately two different existences. Gould just happened to have his memories.

"He truly is the ghost of Chrom Ranchesse."

"That's a very fitting phrase."

It was indeed. A different body that still retained your memories of when you were alive? That sounded similar enough to a ghost to me.

"So does Gold not have Chrom Ranchesse's memories whatsoever?"

"None. That large volume of data that Steph deleted had to have been his memories."

In other words, it was as Kuon had suggested. Steph really had prevented a calamity.

"So are Gold and Gould the same type of Gollem?"

"Not quite. It would be more accurate to say that they're duplicates, I guess?" Doc Babylon responded, putting two images up on the monitor. "On the right is Gold and on the left is Gould from footage Gold captured in the Ark."

Honestly, beyond the cape and eye colors, they really did look exactly the same.

"Then if we enlarge this..." she mumbled as she zoomed in on their necks—

but nothing looked different to me. “Notice anything?”

“Uh...not really? They look the same to me...”

The outline of the plating, the coloring, the exact marks, all of it made them seem like the same type of unit.

“Wait...even the marks are the same?”

“You’ve got it. We’ve thoroughly examined each of them, and they have the exact same marks in more than one place. Even if they were from the same batch, they shouldn’t be this similar unless they were marks made deliberately. That’s why they’re more akin to duplicates.”

In other words, they were originally one unit, but then they made a duplicate using something like what we have in the workshop.

“Think about it for a second. At that time, the Phrase invaded, Chrom’s black and white crowns went haywire, and time and space got all messed up. The world’s barrier was restored, and the Phrase were chased into the dimensional gap, correct?”

I nodded while listening to the scientist’s explanation. But wait, why was she explaining this now?

“What if the gold crown was shot through time at the same time as the Phrase? Don’t forget that Steph originally saw Gold falling through a hole in space-time. And then, perhaps the black crown led to another gold crown being brought through from a different timeline.”

“Oh! Through Noir’s Parallel Shift?”

The black crown, Chronos Noir, had the ability to control time and also to interfere with parallel worlds. He could call forth all sorts of things from all sorts of different worlds and times.

If that power had taken effect...did that mean the exact same gold crown was simply pulled from a different timeline? No wonder they had identical marks. Even if they were from different timelines, they were still the same existence. The fact that they had the same marks had to mean they weren’t taken from too far apart in time, though it was hard to tell if it was from the past or future.

In other words, the small marks on Gould and Gold's plating were caused when they were shot through time.

"But if they were wrapped up in the black and white crowns going haywire, would that not mean that Chrom's memories *weren't* implanted into them?"

"We were working under the assumption that Chrom only implanted his memories after he'd begun losing them as a means to preserve them, but isn't it possible that he'd actually done it before that? Maybe as a backup in case he had to use the white crown's crown skill."

"I understand. You mean that he may have intended to use the memories within the gold crown as a substitute."

"It's a pretty crafty way of doing it, but not impossible."

The Professor and Elluka agreed with Doc Babylon's hypothesis.

Meanwhile, I'm starting to get lost.

"Here, let's set up a timeline."

"Big thanks."

Was I just stupid?

Doctor Babylon began laying out an estimated timeline of Chrom Ranchesse's movements.

Five thousand years ago, Chrom created the crown series of Gollems in the Reverse World. The red, blue, white, black, green, and purple crowns were made.

Chrom traveled from the Reverse World to the Upright World with the black and white crowns. Paying the price of the black crown's crown skill, he de-aged from an old man to a young boy. He then traveled to the United Kingdom of Pillaisula.

Chrom learned magic, had a family, and then the Phrase invaded. He began researching how to return to his original world without paying the price; this led to the creation of the silver and gold crowns. He then transferred his memories into the gold crown to try to use them as a substitute for the crown's crown

skill(?).

The Dominant Phrase, Gila, attacked Chrom's village. He lost his wife and daughter in the attack. The black and white crowns went haywire.

The barrier to the world was restored. The Phrase disappeared from the world. The murder of his family was reset. Two gold crowns ended up existing in this timeline due to the black crown. Each of them was shot forward five thousand years into the future.

Chrom began to lose his memory as a result of the white crown's price. His contracts with the black and white crowns were reset.

Four thousand years following these events, the black and white crowns were activated by Arthur Ernes Belfast. A fierce war broke out between this world and the Phrase who managed to slip in through a gap in space-time. As a result, the black crown was thrown back into the Reverse World and the white crown entered another slumber under Lake Palette.

A thousand years later, the black crown was discovered by Doctor Elluka. The white crown was pulled up out of Lake Palette.

Steph discovered Gold. She initialized Chrom's memory, deleting it from Gold. Gould activated still with Chrom's memories intact. He began putting his plan into motion.

"I think that about sums it up."

It did make much more sense when it was all lined up like this, but it did kind of make it feel like Chrom Ranchesse was the cause of everything... Well, if he hadn't existed five thousand years ago, the world would've already been destroyed by the Phrase, so in a way, he was the world's savior. Still, I was pretty sure the man himself didn't save the world because he particularly wanted to. It didn't help that the wicked devout and a fallen god had gotten involved and made everything worse.

"That's your wheelhouse, isn't it? Having gods as our opponent is a little much even for us."

"You're absolutely correct..."

Right, I'm the one who has to do something about this...

"So then, what did Chrom Ranchesse ultimately want to do?"

"Who knows? He was a prodigy who wasn't content learning from only his own world, so he traveled to a different one entirely to study magic. Maybe he was just after the knowledge of the world?"

"Like trying to make the ultimate Golem?"

"The ultimate Golem, huh...?"

I couldn't explain why, but that felt a little off to me.

In Chrom Ranchesse's...Gould's eyes, I felt as if I could see some deep, dark fire of passion. A ruthlessness that didn't care about what victims he created. If any ordinary person heard me say that, they'd probably wonder what the hell I was going on about. It was a Golem, but... Just jumping off of the previous conversation, it wasn't a case of him knowing that he was a manufactured fake and feeling so much despair that he was taking the world along with him, right...?

Plus, he had the power of the fallen god inside of him as well. It might not just be Chrom Ranchesse's memories affecting him, but the memories and emotions tied to the god of erosion as well. If that was the case, you definitely couldn't call that Chrom anymore; it was a weird new combined *something*.

"Still...I never would've thought that idiot Maestro would go so far as to become a wicked devout..."

"No wonder we thought the Kyklops felt similar to his work. Everything suddenly makes so much more sense."

That plague-mask wicked devout...Scarlet. Gould called him Maestro. That was the name of one of the five great gollemancers, an absolute genius Golem engineer. Doctor Elluka—also known as the Restoration Queen—the wandering Professor, the Seekers who were an organization of Golem engineers, and the late witch-king were deemed the five great gollemancers known throughout the world.

"The Maestro was quite the unreasonable man. Since he was always looking

down on others to some degree, he barely interacted with people. We just barely managed to be deemed worth talking to for him even at our level,” the Professor explained.

What? Didn't that mean he wouldn't talk to most people?

What did he do when he needed to go shopping? No, wait, he could just use his Gollems...

“I hated him because of how rude he was,” Doctor Elluka said. “He was the kind of person to scoff at any work you showed him. He probably sold his soul to the wicked god just to get the gold crown.”

“I didn't dislike him as much as you, but I did think he felt a bit unstable.”

“To be fair, you even managed to get along with the witch-king, Professor... You really need to find better friends, you know?” Doc Babylon remarked.

“Hoh hoh hoh! I never thought the day would come when I'd have both of you saying that to me.”

This Maestro might have been a genius, but from what I was hearing, he wasn't the nicest guy to be around. Honestly, I thought magitech engineers all tended to be the same way in some form or another, especially looking at the three in front of me...

Perhaps some things are better left unsaid.

“Maybe they all escaped to Maestro's laboratory.”

“Where's that?” I asked.

“The Triharan Holy Empire, in a forest at the foot of Mount Paparika. It's filled with monsters, and isn't really a place that's very habitable for humans,” the Professor said.

“Why would he make his lab there?”

“Because he hates people. He once said that he's much calmer in places where people don't gather.”

Damn, he was thorough. What happened to make him so averse to human contact? Was he betrayed by someone he greatly trusted? Whatever the case,

we had to make that our next destination.

“I know he hates humans, but that didn’t mean he had to stop being one...”
Doc Babylon muttered.

“Can one really not return to being human after becoming a wicked devout?”

“Definitely not. The wicked devout are, by all rights, already dead. Their existence is simply held together by the power of their wicked vessel. The moment that’s destroyed, both their body and soul are destroyed with it.”

They were basically all Undead... It was impossible to turn them back.

“Well, I pretty much quit being human myself, so I can’t really say anything. Changing topics, we’ve confirmed that any important devices or recorded information in the Ark were destroyed in the blast. All we managed to retrieve was the remains of the ship itself and some Kyklops frames. That, and...”

An image appeared on the monitor showing two Kyklops traveling through the sea holding what looked like a torpedo in one hand each. One was metallic orange, the other metallic green... Those were definitely the wicked devout with the iron and feather masks. So they got away after all.

“This was the last bit of footage sent by one of the probes that we had stationed around the Ark. Naturally, it was caught in the blast as well.”

“What way were they headed?”

“Toward Isengard, but I couldn’t tell you if that was their destination or not.”

Isengard was as chaotic a place as ever, which made it the perfect location for people with a bad history to hide. Did they maybe have bases outside of the Maestro’s lab? I doubted they just lived a nomadic life until they got their hands on the Ark.

Just in case, I tried using **[Search]**, but I couldn’t find the wicked devout, Gould, or even the Kyklops with it. Why were they always so good at hiding? If I had the power to spread my divinity over the whole world, I could find them easily, but unfortunately, I wasn’t quite there yet.

Speaking of divinity...

I left the repairs of the Frame Gears to the scientists and opened a **[Gate]** to

Mismede so I could ask Kraft, the god of crafting, about the sacred treasure.

As per usual, he was leisurely carving wood. Though I wouldn't call the speed at which he finished them leisurely.

I handed Kraft the sacred treasure, and he closely examined it.

"I see now. It's had its divinity stolen from it, has it? Now that I look at it, the core has certainly been greatly depleted of your power," he said with a wry smile. "The weapon itself seems fine. If the only problem is that it's lost its divinity, then just recharge it with more."

Hearing those words filled me with relief. If it turned out I had to make it from scratch again...I don't know what I would've done with myself.

"Still, can't say it's very good that something with the god of erosion's power managed to steal your divinity. He can use the power of erosion however much he likes now, and if he can do that, we might have another wicked god on our hands."

"Yup..."

The previous wicked god was created from a servile god, though he ended up being consumed and fused with his own creation. Unlike the servile god, however, the god of erosion was a full-fledged god, even if there was a little "ex-" in front of that. Use a power like that and it would definitely be possible to make another wicked god.

"A wicked god can't be made that easily, though. Even if you did manage it, you'd need massive amounts of negative energy to let it grow. You know, like deep grudges, hatred, grief, agony... Stuff like that. That's why people who worship wicked gods go around spreading calamity. That was the case before too, no?"

Was Gould actually trying to revive the wicked god? No, perhaps he wanted to make a whole new wicked god altogether... If that was the reason he was spreading chaos over the lands again, then we absolutely could not ignore him.

We'll definitely beat him to a pulp.

"The reason we weren't allowed to touch the wicked devout was because

they were wards of the wicked god, but what about a Gollem that happened to acquire the power of a fallen god? There's no problem with us destroying that, right?"

"Wicked gods are born on the surface, that's why it is the surface humans that must do something about it. Of course, it's a little much to ask them to take it all on themselves, so we gods are allowed to support them. However, a fallen god is an escapee from the Divine Realm. As such, the responsibility lies on us. Even when the servile god escaped to the surface, the goddess of love came down to take him back, didn't she? It's the same idea."

Right, it had slipped my mind, but that was the whole reason Karen came down here to begin with. Nowadays, though, she only really came to have fun...

Anyway, basically, that meant that we gods could take erosion-god-related enemies down.

"In our minds, wicked gods we leave, fallen gods we annihilate. We'd have settled the matter with the servile god ourselves as well if it hadn't fused with the wicked god."

Huh? Did that mean if a new wicked god was born and fused with Gould, we'd be in massive trouble? We wouldn't be able to lay a finger on him if that happened... But if it was okay for the divine to attack the fallen god, then maybe we could have Moroha or Uncle Takeru take it down before that happened?

"It is possible, but...are you sure you want to take that option? You're basically saying that you can't handle the problems in the world that you oversee. Is that not a bit pitiful for a ward of someone like God Almighty? I can already see those handful of gods who disapprove of you growing more disgruntled."

"Ah..."

People bad-mouthing someone who only got in because of their connections with the CEO and doing nothing of value was pretty natural...

That was close. Sure, it would make things easier, but I can't rely on another god to solve my problems.

I had no choice but to rely on the kids to deal with the wicked devout, but I had to be the one to figure out how to deal with the fallen god.

“Do remember that this fallen god is but a fragment. As a ward of someone of such high status, I find it very unlikely that you would lose. You just have to be careful to not get everyone in the surroundings too wrapped up in the battle.”

He was right. Sure, it’d be great if we took down Gould, but managing it by destroying half the world first could only be called a pyrrhic victory. Even if I could win, what was important was how I won. I had to make sure to avoid as many casualties as possible. There were already tens of thousands of victims of the conflict, so I had to keep it from getting any worse.

At the very least, now that the Ark was destroyed, it shouldn’t be so easy for them to launch surprise attacks. I’d like to think they’d lost their ability to mass-produce the Kyklops as well, but it was a little naive to think the Ark was the only factory they had...

Were they making more of them at the Maestro’s lab?

We’d better find it as soon as possible.



The building was in the middle of the forest at the foot of Mount Paparika, near the border with Rephan in the northern part of Triharan. It was a tower that appeared to be around thirty meters tall, roughly the height of Ortlinde Overlord. It was shaped like a rectangular box until around the second or third floor, and then a tall tower curved upward from the left-hand side. In a way, it resembled a lighthouse.

“This is the Maestro’s lab? What a lonely building.”

“Indeed. It doesn’t appear to have changed much since the last time I visited.”

“What boring taste. He should add more spice!”

Doctor Elluka, the Professor, and Doc Babylon all threw in their opinions after I brought them here. I agreed about the bad taste, at least—it felt like some abandoned old ruin. There was even ivy running all over the walls. Still, the Professor said it hadn’t changed much since the last time he’d been here. Did

that mean it always looked like this? Did the Maestro just never clean the place?

“He’s never cared about his living conditions,” he elaborated. “Nothing was more important to him than his research and development. All he cared about was the facilities he had access to inside.”

It seemed that was why he ended up with this abandoned tower. Honestly, the foundation seemed stable, so it would definitely serve as a functional place to live.

“What’s the plan? Gonna break in?” Doc Babylon asked, but I didn’t actually have an answer ready. If this really was the enemy base, they should’ve realized we were here by now, yet there hadn’t been a peep. Being aware that there was the possibility they were waiting inside to ambush us, I used **[Search]** to check for the presence of any of them, but got no results.

Guess I’ll take this opportunity to act out one of those detective dramas.

I took out Brunhild and slowly sidled toward the wooden door with my back against the wall, and then I kicked it at full force, my foot going right through it.

“Whoa, it’s all rotten!”

I really just broke the door itself. The only thing left hanging there was my leg through the hole. That door wasn’t even acting as a door any longer.

Ow, ow, ow, the wood’s sharp...

As I hopped backward in pain, the part I kicked split in two and the door fell inward.

“That door looked about ready to break the last time I came here too. I suppose he never fixed it,” the Professor said, as the only person here who had ever visited this place before.

“Tell me that before I kick the door, please...” I groaned.

We peeked past the destroyed door and saw a place so desolate that it looked completely abandoned. Actually, upon further inspection, there was at least some furniture like tables and chairs around, but beyond that, it was basically empty.

The Professor led us through the dusty, empty space to the area that should've been the Maestro's lab, but there was nothing there either.

"It seems he took everything with him."

"Aw, does that mean we came out here for nothing?" Doc Babylon asked, disappointed.

It wasn't completely devoid of things, but it surprisingly lacked much. The place probably would've been left to rot without anyone knowing it ever existed if we hadn't shown up.

We made sure to check the tower too, but he'd taken absolutely everything from there. The top floor seemed to be the Maestro's bedroom, but all that was left was a simple desk and chair, as well as three empty bookshelves.

"Not gonna lie, when I hear the title 'great gollemancer,' this is not the kind of room I expect," I commented.

"He was very picky with his work, you see. You could try to tempt him with all the money in the world, but he still wouldn't do anything he had no interest in. On the other hand, if he thought the work would be informative for him, he would even do it for free. He ultimately ended up chasing away most of his potential clients, though, given his thorny personality..."

One of those picky craftsmen, huh?

Maybe a little too picky, if you asked me. Then again, it was because of how picky he was that he managed to get his hands on the gold crown, so he was probably happy in his own way, even though achieving that goal meant giving up his humanity...

"Hm?"

Doc Babylon was looking at the bookcases from all different angles, pressing her hand against different parts of it.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"Does it not look like there's a bit of a scrape mark here?"

"Let's see..."

She was pointing at the rock wall beside the bookcase. Right enough, it looked as though something had been dragged across it.

Wait, are these marks from the bookcase being moved?

“Did you not think it a little strange that we had to climb up some really steep stairs just to make it up here?”

“What’s strange about it?”

This tower was four floors, and we’d climbed up stairs that were practically vertical to get up here to the top. The only thing I thought was strange was that it felt like a Golem engineer should be smart enough to build an elevator.

“Did you not notice? Pay attention to the size of this room, then think about the size of the tower. The room itself is rather small. What do you think that means?”

“Huh? Uh...the walls are really thick?”

“Good answer. But two meters thick seems a bit much for a simple wall, no? It’s not like the place is a fortress.”

Now that she mentioned it...compared to how the tower looked from the outside, this room did feel a little too small.

“Aha, now I see. What you want to say is that this room has empty space surrounding it, don’t you?”

“A space between the inner and outer walls? Could it be...?”

The Professor and Doctor Elluka seemed to have realized something.

Wait, don’t leave me in the dark. What are you guys talking about?

“This has to be it. If I just press along here...”

The small scientist pressed the side of the bookcase, and there was suddenly a little *thunk!* Then, the bookcase itself started to slide to the side. What appeared on the other side was a flight of stairs that was heading downward. It was a spiral staircase going around the sides of the tower; this had to be what was hiding between the inner and outer walls.

“We going?” Doc Babylon asked. Everyone nodded. We had no idea what was

down there, but turning back wasn't a choice anymore.

Using **[Light Orb]** to see where we were going, we descended the staircase. I was pretty sure we were already under the first floor by this point. Just what was hiding in the basement?

What awaited us at the bottom was a large room like a warehouse. Stored inside were about thirty or so dusty Gollems—stocky headless humanoid Gollems that were simply left there. They mostly looked adult-sized, though there were some smaller ones mixed in.

“They must be the Gollems that assisted the Maestro,” the Professor observed. “They’re older models, so he probably abandoned them here once he was done with them.”

“I absolutely despise the side of him that is so willing to just abandon things the moment he thinks he’s done with them.”

Though the Professor was calm, Doctor Elluka was clearly furious. I couldn't blame her. The only reason you'd be able to so easily abandon creations that had spent so long looking after and helping you would be if you truly saw Gollems as nothing but tools. As an inventor who viewed her Gollems as her partners, Doctor Elluka couldn't see his actions as anything but deeply cruel.

We did a thorough investigation of the place, but found nothing of use. We were definitely looking at a scene from after the Maestro had already grabbed everything he needed. He likely never intended to return here. I could sense the man's conviction because of how empty the place was.

“Turns out this was all just a wild-goose chase, huh?”

Left with that dismal conclusion, we turned and left the Maestro's laboratory. A tower to which its master would never return was a lonelier sight than I would've thought.



“Hyah!”

Moroha smoothly dodged Yakumo's powerful strike before then dashing right up to the girl in an instant.

“Watch your toes, kid.”

“Whoa!”

Yakumo’s legs were swept out from under her. Though she lost her balance, she managed to recover and roll to the side, gaining distance from Moroha. Moroha never continued into a follow-up attack, however.

“Kokonoe Secret Style: Bee Stinger!”

Yakumo leaped up and unleashed a piercing thrust. Moroha calmly dodged back.

“**[Gate]!**”

“Hm.”

The tip of Yakumo’s blade moved into a tiny **[Gate]** and disappeared before reappearing in the space behind Moroha. Everyone watching thought it would be impossible for the goddess to dodge.

“Not so fast.”

“Huh?”

As if going to scratch an itch with a backscratcher, Moroha took her sword and maneuvered it around her back, stopping Yakumo’s blade with the flat of her sword. And she managed all that without even turning around once.

Does this woman have eyes on the back of her head?!

Having deflected the tip of Yakumo’s blade, Moroha leaped forward and thrust the tip of her sword at the young girl’s neck.

“You’re still thinkin’ too simple, kid. If your opponent can predict where you’re sending your attacks with those little gates of yours, it’s nothing better than a parlor trick. Even aiming for the feet would give you a better chance of success.”

“Ngh... I concede...”

Once Yakumo raised her hands in surrender, Moroha lowered her sword.

Apparently, Yakumo had asked Moroha for more strict training because of feeling her own inadequacy during the raid on the Ark. From where I was

standing, she had put up a good fight, but to her, there must have been something that left her feeling humiliated. I didn't see any problem with it, so I granted her my permission, but I hadn't expected them to go at it all morning.

"Yakumo, I feel like you should take a break."

"Yeah! It's not fair that you get to hog all the training time! It's my turn!" Frei yelled from beside me, clearly desperate to get out on the field. I guess she was at her limit after having to hold in all her energy for so long.

"I feel so close to figuring this out. Please, just one more round!" Yakumo pleaded.

"That's what you said last time!" Frei angrily shouted back.

If I don't force them to stop, this is gonna turn nasty.

"[Gate]."

"Ah!"

Frei and Yakumo fell through the gates at their feet as they reappeared back where the other had been standing.

Take a look at my all-powerful swap-no-jutsu...! Just kidding.

"But, father, I can still...!"

"I dunno what's got you so worked up, but right now, you're so exhausted that you can barely move right."

"Y-You could just cast **[Refresh]** on me and..."

"Absolutely not. Just rest."

I immediately rejected her request, and Yakumo sat herself down in defeat.

The girl was right, I could have cast **[Refresh]** on her and she'd have gotten her stamina back right away, but something like that could have adverse effects on one's growth. If you had two runners training every day, one casting **[Refresh]** on themselves every time, while the other let their body recover naturally, the latter would acquire the most natural stamina. Using that magic prevented one's muscles from developing.

It was one thing to do it to an adult who had already finished their growth

period, but using it too much on a child could stunt their growth, and I was certain Yakumo wouldn't want that either.

"Here I go!"

Having been left to wait for so long, Frei's first strike toward Moroha was explosive. They were both wielding spears, Frei's being the sacred treasure. The long reach of the spear put a swordsman at a clear disadvantage, but such knowledge didn't work against the goddess. She was humming away to herself as she deflected Frei's barrage of attacks with the spear in one of her hands.

"How much training do I have to put in to reach such a level...?" Yakumo wondered.

"Uh, an impossible amount," I immediately shot back. Reaching the same level as Moroha? No human could attain that. "That woman is insane on more than one level. At least have Yae as your goal."

"I doubt I could even win against mother either..."

As much as it was my fault for becoming a god, Yae *had* halfway stopped being human herself. Then again, Yakumo was a demigod—maybe it wasn't out of the question? As her father, though, I didn't really want her to become my strongest child... Marriage proposals would practically disappear.

Wait...maybe this is a good thing.

"Well, just watch yourself, okay? It was thanks to you that our mission in the Ark succeeded, so don't take it too hard."

"But the sacred treasure had its divinity stolen..."

So *that* was what she was hung up on. There was nothing she could have done in that situation. In fact, I was the one more at fault here—I was so distracted by the idea of the fallen god that I'd completely forgotten to create a counter for the Gluttony Slime. I'd already refilled the sacred treasure with divinity and made some adjustments so it wouldn't ever get its power absorbed from it again, so Yakumo really didn't need to blame herself.

This girl was the kind of person who beat herself up over the tiniest of mistakes; she was exactly like Yae in that respect. Both were usually very

straightforward, but they tended to be too strict on themselves and overthink things. They were always so stubborn when they got something in their heads, but they could afford to be a bit more carefree sometimes. Well, so long as they weren't as airheaded as Steph was, at least.

Now, what would I do if Yae was in a slump like this?

"Oh, right. Food."

"What?"

There was nothing better to help clear one's head than something tasty. The moment I thought of that, I sent a message to both Lu and Arcia.

"And so, you decided to have a curry party?" Yumina muttered in slight disbelief as she looked out over the large carts lined up with all different sizes of curry around the courtyard. That wasn't a mistake, by the way—what was being served wasn't the Mismede cully, but actual curry from Earth. Though to the residents of this world, it just seemed like we'd arranged cully into something better.

The aggressive smell was permeating not just the courtyard, but all throughout the castle. It might be a bit tough on everyone having such a strong, mouthwatering smell hanging in the air right before lunch. I was pretty sure I heard a very loud tummy rumble from somewhere.

"They really made a lot, didn't they?"

"To the surprise of no one, Lu and Arcia had both gone crazy with it... Through trial and error, they continued their search for the ultimate curry..."

The curries on the menu ranged from the usual pork, chicken, and beef curries to the all-familiar seafood, katsu, and veggie curries, and then stranger ones like curry udon and curry ramen. I could also spy some keema, green, and soup curries off to the side. There really were all kinds present.

In fact, it didn't stop there—Lu and Arcia had their own original curries on display as well. It was absolute chaos. There was a bright red curry among them all, but...

I value my life, thanks...

The moment it became time for lunch, everyone, from the castle's knights to the maids, impatiently made their way to the courtyard. Usually, they'd all eat in a separate mess area, but today, they all flowed to where we were waiting.

Hang on, don't some of these people usually bring their own lunch boxes? Is this the true power of curry?

Next to Yae, who was wolfing down some katsu curry, was Yakumo doing the exact same thing. Had she managed to cheer up a bit? My grandpa always said that eating food helped your mood by making your worries feel a little lighter.



I should try some too.

“Oh, father! Try this black curry I made! I simmered the ingredients for days and also added a secret spice!”

“No, you should have my golden curry! It’s made with a mix of golden spices I concocted myself!”

“Um...”

I’d just gone to grab some chicken curry, but Arcia and Lu slid in and held out a plate each toward me.

So, um... Do I have to eat these? Well, just one or two bites shouldn’t kill me...

What? I had to eat it all?

“Which was more delicious?!”

Here we go again...

Somehow, I’d finished both plates and now the two were hounding me for an opinion. They were both delicious! So delicious that I couldn’t decide which was better!

To be honest, I wasn’t so culinary-minded that I could determine the small differences. If I had to pick, Arcia’s was easier to eat, but that could also have been because I had Lu’s curry second, so I might have just been full. If I’d eaten Lu’s first, I’d probably have felt the opposite. Though, the idea of it being easy to eat had nothing to do with whether it tasted nice or not.

“Umm, I’d say this is a draw...”

“Then I’ll decide it with this pineapple curry!”

“I’ll decide it with this dry-curry-stuffed squid!”

They each whipped out another plate of curry.

Hang on, I don’t have to eat more, do I?

Perhaps I made a mistake asking them to prepare this curry party when all I wanted to do was cheer up Yakumo.

I should’ve asked Crea...

If there was no real conclusion to this, then I'd be stuck eating curry forever, but if I chose one or the other, things would definitely get messy.

In the end, I ate so much curry that I felt ill and fell right asleep. The result of the match? I was unconscious, so I have no clue.



Since the day of the great calamity that befell Isengard—no, the world—their country had ceased contact with Lassei to the north and Gardio to the east, both in a political and geographical sense. The cursed thorns that rained down from the heavens and wedged themselves into the earth destroyed the rocks, rotted the soil, and drastically changed Isengard's surrounding topography.

The land leading to Lassei and Gardio sank to the bottom of the sea, turning Isengard into a small isolated continent. To the north, close to the Lassei borders, there was a lake connected in the shape of a large and small circle, like a little snowman. The two cursed thorns that had fallen there gouged out the earth and water from a nearby river flowed into the lake, creating a much bigger one.

The huge lake, which was about half the size of Eashen, had been nicknamed Lake Calamity. Though the lake was formed by river water flowing into it, it had now become an eerie bright red. However, unlike the red tides caused by abnormal plankton growth, this water was the sharp color of blood.

Perhaps because the curse had seeped into it, no live fish were anywhere to be found. The surrounding areas had become a wasteland, a lake of death where not a single person or plant could be seen.

In the middle of that lake, hovering about ten meters above the water's surface, was Gould with his gold wings. He was holding some small seeds that he sprinkled down into the lake.

“Wachstum,” Gould muttered as he held his hand over the lake's surface. Several branches sprung out of the water, growing in the blink of an eye. The branches and roots of the trees grew at an abnormal rate, forming a complex web of shapes.

When the trees finally halted their growth, what was left standing there was a

stronghold made of a forest standing in the middle of the red lake.

“So this is the green crown’s crown skill, Vegetative Dominion...”

The man who had spoken those words with a sigh was the plague-mask man, hovering behind Gould with a jetpack. When Gould descended into the plant fortress, the Maestro—no, Scarlet—did the same.

“Put up a barrier immediately. We need to buy time until Porta is ready.”

“All right, leave that to me,” Scarlet said as he pulled out his metallic red rapier and stabbed it into one of the roots. “Summon them, Crimson.”

Several red magic circles appeared in front of him, from which Four-Armed Golems and Fishmen came crawling out. Following them came a bunch of machinery and magic tools that the summoned beings carried and began assembling.

In no time at all, tall lightning rods were set up on all sides of the tree fortress. Once they were activated, a barrier formed around them.

“Losing the Ark was less than ideal, but thankfully, many of our materials were salvageable from the seafloor. Let us build another factory right away so we can return to our production of the Kyklops.”

Scarlet designated a part of the fortress and began building a mountain of materials. The Four-Armed Golems once more began to build.

“Schnell.”

Gould sent down one of his gold feathers, and when it lodged into the construction site, the Golems and Fishmen in a large range around it began moving at a much faster pace. This was the power of the black crown; the penalty was big, so he couldn’t use it too often, but he had no intention of holding back if it would help him move closer to his goal.

“Just wait...I’ll definitely fix this twisted world...”

Deep within Gould’s—Chrom Ranchesse’s—camera eyes were the flames of a terrifying obsession.



“The hell’s that?!” Tangerine exclaimed from the cockpit of her orange Kyklops. Peacock, who was standing beside her in her own green Kyklops, was likely thinking the exact same thing. After the two of them had managed to escape from the Ark with their lives, Peacock had used her wicked vessel’s ability to search in order to find where Gould and Scarlet had gone.

Since they were both wards of the wicked god, they were able to pass through the barrier the two of them had erected.

It was in the north of Isengard that the wicked devout were able to meet up once more.

“What exactly is this place? Did you take over a town of the elvenfolk or something?”

“This is our new base that was created by Gould’s crown skills,” Scarlet answered without turning around. “Our living quarters are on top of the large tree to the south. If you wish to rest, head there.”

He was most interested in the Kyklops the two had arrived in. More specifically, he was interested in the three-meter-long cubic pitch-black container they had brought along with them.

“It was fortunate you were able to retrieve this from the Ark. I was afraid I’d have to build it again from scratch.”

“I *was* the one who blew the Ark up. If I didn’t make sure to grab at least this much, I knew you’d nag later.”

“That was unavoidable. It is a much better outcome than the Ark falling into enemy hands. The sacrifices may have been big, but as a result, we have acquired a power much greater than the Ark.”

“Oh yeah?” Tangerine skeptically asked, raising her eyebrow. Scarlet turned his gaze to the southern edge of the fortress where a large monolith with a red crystal embedded inside of it stood. Etched into the monolith was ancient magic writing. It was a device designed by Gould and built by Scarlet. A red light was being emitted from the large crystal like a laser, slowly forming a magic circle on the shore of the lake where the fortress was built.

Once it was complete, strange creatures began to crawl out of it. Though they

looked human, their bodies could hardly be described as being made of flesh and blood. Like the Cydevils that Gould and Scarlet had created, they were bodies fused with machines, a metal mask sitting on their heads.

Those masks took all kinds of shapes, from dogs to cats to birds to even crocodiles. Each of them carried their own metal weapons like spears or swords or staffs. Mechanical Beastmen was likely the most accurate way to describe them.

“Are these summoned beasts?”

“Rather than beings from the spirit world, they are Undead summoned from the underworld through Gould’s black crown ability. He chose servants who suit our goals and called them through.”

“Are they corpses?”

“Ones fused with machinery, yes. They’re very similar to Golems, practically Cydevils, really. They aren’t alive, you see.”

The masked mechanical monsters orderly lined up along the shore, and then not a single one of them moved a muscle, showing absolutely no sense of having their own impulses.

They really are just Undead, Tangerine thought.

“Man, if Graphite were still alive, he’d be all over them,” she remarked.

“Perhaps.”

Scarlet’s response was clipped. He felt it somewhat silly to even use those words. The wicked devout already had their souls absorbed by their wicked vessels, so they weren’t much different from the corpses standing over there. The only difference was that they still had their own sense of self.

Still, although it was the only difference, it was a big one. Scarlet had something he wished to obtain even if it meant turning his body into nothing more than an Undead. Even his own life was irrelevant if it meant he could acquire it. And so, he made a deal with the devil. A devil known as Gould.

“Those mechanical soldiers of yours definitely look like a force to be reckoned with, but they’d be no match for Brunhild’s giant soldiers, you know?” Peacock

bluntly stated.

“I will figure something out. We’re currently developing a frame different from the Kyklops,” Scarlet replied before guiding the two of them to a building that looked like a hangar. They were both left stunned by the bizarre new mech. Its body was slimmer than that of the Kyklops, with a short torso but long limbs, arms bent into a Z-shape at the elbows, and knees bent in the opposite direction of a human’s. Its hands and feet ended with sharp claws, making it look much more like a beast than a man.

“I’ve named it Baphomet. It can move much more freely than the Kyklops, and can easily exchange what equipment it has. This makes it possible to create all manner of mechs from just the one base.”

Tangerine looked up at the Baphomet’s head after hearing Scarlet’s explanation.

Oh, so the curved horns are meant to be a goat’s.

Naming it after Baphomet, a goat-headed demon, was very appropriate.

In truth, Scarlet had thought up the ability to change equipment after observing the Waltraute, but he was too prideful to admit that fact.

“I had been pondering how to plant combat knowledge into them, but thanks to what you both brought back, that issue has been resolved.”

A Four-Armed Gollem opened the container the two wicked devout had salvaged. Inside it was a transparent case that contained a large round crystal that looked like a massive human brain. It was a Q-Crystal, which was pretty much a Gollem’s brain. That large Q-Crystal stored all of the memories inside the Kyklops’s Q-Crystals—a mother Q-Crystal, you could say. All of the combat data from the Kyklops was backed up inside of it.

Using that, the Baphomets could inherit the data from the Kyklops, as if transferring experience points, allowing them to battle at top condition.

“Where *is* Gould?”

“Over there,” Scarlet said as he looked over at the central part of the tree fortress where there was a pyramid-like structure that resembled an altar.

“A...ring?”

On top of the pyramid altar was a gold metal ring covered in intricate designs that was about five meters in diameter. It was fixed to a base and was glowing like a sunrise over a mountain. Standing in front of it was Gould, glowing a similar golden light. He held out his small hand to the ring, and part of it began to slide around in a circle. The many inner and outer rings moved one after the other as if a puzzle was being solved. They turned in different directions like the dial of a safe until they all came to a stop. The ring was letting out a low hum, but besides that, nothing else had changed.

However, Tangerine noticed a small light in the middle of it for just a moment.

“What does this thing even do?”

“...Who knows.”

Tangerine frowned at Scarlet’s clipped response. She’d already realized that both he and Gould were hiding something. She wasn’t about to criticize them for that—they were never companions that trusted each other, after all. Honestly, they could do what they wanted so long as it didn’t cause her any problems, but she couldn’t help feeling a little annoyed.

“I’m just gonna assume it’s some experiment. Well, whatever, do what you like. We’re gonna go rest.”

Tangerine went off to the living quarters with Peacock. Meanwhile, Gould was busy trying to figure out what the problem was following the experiment.

“My method is not the problem... Then is it a difference in the output? Are there not enough souls to fuel it? In that case...”

The little mechanical puppet with the memories of a genius Golem engineer was steadily advancing toward his goals.



“There’s been a Behemoth sighting in the Sea of Trees?”

“Yes. And a very big one, bigger than even an Upper Construct. We can also confirm that it has powerful regenerative abilities.”

My eyes widened at Relisha’s report. A Behemoth even bigger than an Upper

Construct? How was something like that missed for so long?

“Its name is the Tree Dragon, Yggdrasil. It’s a Dragon recorded in so few records that no one knows if it even exists. Or, it *was*, at least.”

“It was previously extinct, then?”

“Yes, and has now supercharged to become a much more troublesome foe.”

In other words, it was another magic beast that had been called through a distortion caused by the wicked devout.

Do they bring anything of value?

As Grandma Tokie’s servants, the time spirits would close up the tear, but we’d have to handle the beast that popped out. I asked Luli if she could do anything given it was a Dragon and all, but Yggdrasil was categorized as a Fiendrake, so it wasn’t under her purview.

“Useless lizard,” Kohaku muttered. Luli refused to take that sitting down and immediately lashed out at her. I let them fight among themselves, but I’d much rather they took it outside.

“The tribes of the Sea of Trees have sent an emergency request for aid,” Kousaka continued, holding out a letter sent through the Gate Mirror. As he said, it was a request from Pam, the chieftain of the tribes, asking for reinforcements.

I’d tried to give them smartphones before, but they didn’t take them, saying they found it too complicated to use. Getting them to at least accept a Gate Mirror was the best I could do. That said, the tribes didn’t make use of written text much, so all the letter contained was a simple “ENEMY HERE. SEND HELP.” It felt kind of like one of those old telegrams from long ago.

The Sea of Trees wasn’t part of the alliance, but they did have a treaty with Brunhild, so we couldn’t ignore them, which meant we definitely needed to provide aid. We were still suffering casualties after the battle at Lassei, however, so we were limited in how much support we could send.

For some reason, when I went up to Babylon to confirm how repairs were going and to explain the situation, Quun turned to me with sparkling eyes.

I've got a really bad feeling about this...

"What wonderful timing! I just finished the most perfect weapon!"

"Weapon? For the Frame Gears?"

Previous experience immediately told me that it was going to be some completely bonkers weapon. I couldn't refuse her, though, so I at least tagged along with her to the hangar to see what she'd made.

"Take a look! Feast your eyes on the vibrating rotary blade, the Chainblade!"

"You mean a chain saw?"

Attached to a massive sword blade were a bunch of small phrasium blades. That big engine on the handle was probably what rotated it. Like I said, it was literally just a big chain saw.

And yet another unexpected gimmick is added to the collection...

"The little fine blades mean this weapon doesn't specialize in cutting, but in shaving down! It'll crush the wound so thoroughly that it won't be able to regenerate easily! I guarantee you that it'll turn even the wicked god into mincemeat! Calling it a killer of the divine would be no exaggeration!"

Hey, did you forget that your papa's a god too? And you're half god? What a frightening creation...

Still, she was probably right that it would work wonders against that Tree Dragon, especially since it looked like it could slice through thick bark easily. Apparently, Yggdrasil was a Dragon made entirely of trees, which was why it took so long for the tribes to notice it, despite it being a Behemoth.

Quite literally missing the Behemoth for the trees, huh?

First we had that stampede in the desert, now we've got this Tree Dragon in the Sea of Trees... Did these dimensional gaps never transport from a different place than where they opened? If the creature was pulled from the desert in the past, it would only appear in the desert in the present. If the creature was pulled from the Sea of Trees in the past, it would only appear in the Sea of Trees in the present. Maybe Yggdrasil had lived in the Sea of Trees before being transported here.

Since it was a Dragon made of trees, I'd considered just burning it, but that risked damaging the Sea of Trees as a whole, and live trees were resistant to fire anyway. There was so much water inside of one that heat didn't travel very easily. Even if you managed to burn its surface, you often failed to burn the insides. And since Yggdrasil was a living creature, wouldn't its water content be even higher than a regular tree? At worst, we could end up burning down the Sea of Trees and Yggdrasil would come out perfectly fine.

"Take it from me, this weapon is actually really good. The biggest bottleneck is the need to prepare a source of mana separately to use the thing, but you can account for that with replaceable mana cartridges. It won't immediately slice through things, but in the grand scheme of things, it's more likely to be able to cut than bounce off. It's a fun little trinket."

Doc Babylon's rare unadulterated praise had Quun puffing her chest out in pride. She was exuding the aura of someone who wanted to be praised, so I gave her a good pat on the head. Admittedly, I was a little worried about how easily she was appeased by a good compliment...

"How many do you have?"

"I have three prototypes and one finished one. Oh, and one that's made for the Ortlinde Overlord."

She'd even made one for the Overlord? This Dragon was about to get torn to pieces, the poor thing.

"If you give us an hour, we could duplicate ten more with the workshop."

It only took an hour to make ten of something like this? That meant they made one every six minutes...

What is this, cup chain saw?

I wasn't about to deny that it was a real lifesaver, though. Apparently, they were able to do it that fast because the structure wasn't that complicated. Did that mean chain saws were really simple to make too?

Yggdrasil wasn't acting up right now, and it wasn't heading toward any of the villages either, so we did have a few hours of leeway.

“All right, get started on producing them, then. We’ll head out an hour from now.”

“Roger that.”

Leaving the engineers to work their magic, I went to notify the knights to prepare to head out. We’d be the only ones on the field this time, since the tribes of the Sea of Trees weren’t part of the alliance. We’d purely be acting as Brunhild, which was good friends with the Rauli Tribe, home to the current Treelord.

This would also be the first time the knights would get to sortie on Val Albus. It would be faster to just teleport there using **[Gate]**, but I’d never been to the areas near where Yggdrasil currently was, and it also served as good training for occasions where I wasn’t around to teleport people. Now that the Ark was destroyed, there was no need to hide the existence of the Val Albus anymore, so we’d use it as a transport vessel going forward.

Naturally, it had a camouflage feature, so we didn’t need to worry about causing a commotion when people caught sight of it. The fact that it could even avoid leaving a shadow was incredible. They said something about a “refractive index,” but hell if I knew what that meant.

Anyway, it’d be nice to let the knights enjoy their first flight through the air. Or at least, that was what I’d have liked to say, but I was actually going to be using **[Gate]** to get us and the Val Albus relatively near to the Great Wishing Tree first. From there, it wouldn’t take us even half an hour to reach our destination.

Got the wives and kids notified, so it’s time for me to get ready.



Thanks to Quun’s Chainblade, we managed to take down Yggdrasil without much of a fuss. In the end, the Overlord sawed its head right off. Like Doc Babylon said, it really did seem like something we could get some good use out of... Sure, it couldn’t slice right through something all at once, but in exchange, if you were persistent enough, it was guaranteed to make it through. Wouldn’t that account for the enemies’ weapons too?

If I had to list any negatives, it was that wires and any other threadlike materials could very easily get tangled in it. Yggdrasil's body had a lot of little vines that were getting all caught up in it. Then again, when it got *too* wrapped up in the Chainblade, the thing ended up cutting right through them all anyway, so it never stopped rotating. Though, if something like phrasium rope or wire was to get caught up in it, it'd probably be too tough to immediately slash through it and therefore jam the thing. I did make sure to tell the wielders that, of course.

Anyway, we'd learned that we could, in fact, make use of it, so we'd mass-produce more and give it to those who wanted one. The body of the Kyklops were made of a special alloy that used orichalcum—it could be cut with phrasium, so we'd almost definitely find some use for the Chainblade.

The wicked vessels unfortunately would be impossible, however. They might be able to chip them in some way, but they'd immediately repair themselves. Was there really no choice but to use a sacred treasure to take down another sacred treasure? Not that wicked vessels were sacred treasures per se, of course.

On a related topic, we'd discovered a slight mishap with the sacred treasure. We tested using the sacred treasure with a Frame Gear in the fight with Yggdrasil. Thanks to the Optimization trait it had, it adjusted its size depending on its wielder. Linne had been a little uncertain about it, but she'd been able to equip the gauntlets to the Gerhilde just fine. This wasn't a problem.

The real problem was Quun's Grimgerde.

The shape of her sacred treasure was a gun, but the Grimgerde's right hand had the Gatling gun equipped, so she had no way to hold it. Her left hand had been designed as finger Vulcans, so although it had five fingers, it couldn't do very precise movements, which meant it couldn't grip things very well.

Thankfully, the Gatling gun was detachable, so it was possible to simply remove it and have her equip the sacred treasure that way, but at the same time, the Gatling gun was the Grimgerde's main weapon. The thought of removing it seemed to make Quun really upset...

"I need to find a way to equip the sacred treasure without removing my

weapons!”

Thus, she managed to find a way to have the Gatling gun slide up to the Grimgerde’s elbow to allow her to hold the sacred treasure. I didn’t think it was all that necessary, but according to Quun, it was important to account for all scenarios. It was a case of, “I thought this might happen!” I would be lying if I said I understood her...



“Got some rare materials, so I thought I’d bring ’em over to you.”

“Oh, now these are certainly something...”

I took the materials that dropped from Yggdrasil to Kraft over in Mismede as a little gift. I was the only one in the present time that had these materials. I was pretty sure Kraft would be overjoyed at getting his hands on such rare wood. Such godly materials should go to a god of crafting, naturally.

“This wood is tough but without any peculiarities or dead knots, and it’s light to boot. You’ve brought me something interesting, indeed.”

Kraft used a broad-bladed knife to swiftly cut a piece of lumber to an appropriate length, then took another fairly large knife to shape it before alternating between a chisel and file to create a wooden sword in a flash. And when I say in a flash, I mean it. It took him about a minute.

He’s insane... That’s even faster than I can make one with [Modeling].

The god went straight back to his wood-chopping station, stood up a stump of wood, and cut it right in two with the sword.

Hang on, someone other than Moroha can cut wood with a wooden sword?!

“Hm, might have sharpened it too much. I was considering making something for your kids, but if I don’t blunt the blade, it’ll be way too dangerous.”

Was he aware that my kids were already using real swords on a regular basis?

After making adjustments, Kraft handed me the wooden sword. I was surprised by how light it was. Not that I thought it would be heavy, but now that I was holding it myself, I could feel how much lighter it was compared to a regular one. It was like the difference between a wooden and a plastic bat. I

personally found that if a sword was too light, it would end up being harder to use, but kids like Frei could probably use it no problem...

“How are things going with the sacred treasure? Managing to use it all right?”

“Yeah, good enough. Though it’s my kids using it, not me...”

It was pretty ironic that I couldn’t wield the sacred treasure that I had personally created. Though to be fair, it wasn’t even accurate to say I *couldn’t* wield it, it was that I *shouldn’t* wield it. If a ward of God Almighty like myself were to use the sacred treasure, I would no doubt end up influencing the world to a very noticeable degree.

Sacred treasures like Sousuke’s instruments or my smartphones were fine, but it became a lot riskier with a weapon. That said, using the harpbow as a harp would probably fly. Not that I could play the harp to begin with.

“Once we take down the wicked devout and the remnants of the fallen god, I’ll be sealing it away in **[Storage]**.”

“Smart decision. If you try to store it in the Divine Realm’s treasury, you’ll never be able to find it when you need it most, which is unfortunate when there’s no guarantee you’ll never need to use it again.”

Gods came in all shapes and sizes, and some could be particularly troublesome, just like the servile and fallen gods that had escaped to this world. What Kraft was trying to say was that there was always the chance I’d need to get involved in related conflicts in the future.

A battle between gods is no laughing matter...

“Many gods love battle, after all. From gods of martial arts to gods of war... In the past, I would’ve referred to the god of combat like this, but in his case, he puts more emphasis on training others, so he’s less of an issue. He seems to mainly look forward to the growth of his students nowadays.”

Apparently, Uncle Takeru used to have nothing in his sights but pursuing the pinnacle of combat. It took hundreds of millions of years before he started calming down and became who he is today. Even gods were young once.

It wouldn’t feel right to only bring a souvenir back for Frei, so I had Kraft make

another wooden sword for Yakumo, and then little wooden animals for the rest of the kids. Naturally, I made sure to pay him for his services. It was a little expensive, but it was cheap when you consider it was made by a god...kind of.

Anyway, I said my thanks to Kraft and returned home with all the freshly crafted creations. While I was walking down the corridors of the castle, I bumped into Hilde, so I asked if she could hand the wooden sword over to Frei—but she refused.

“Didn’t you say it’s a present? You should give it to her yourself.”

That was very true. Frei and Yakumo both happened to be at the training grounds when I went with Hilde, so I handed the wooden swords over to them right then and there.

“Wow, it’s so light! It’s so easy to swing!”

“Thank you very much, father.”

The two happily accepted the gifts and went straight to giving them a swing—weapons really were one of those things you couldn’t help but want to try out the second you got your hands on them. The girls went straight into a mock match. I was glad they looked so happy. Just this once, I would ignore the incredibly violent sounds of their swords, ones that wooden ones really shouldn’t be able to make...

Apparently, everyone else was in the living room. When I headed over, the rest of the kids, except for Steph, Linne, and Yoshino, were having tea and lazing around together with Leen, Linze, and Yumina. I showed the wooden animals I’d had Kraft make and let the children pick whichever ones they liked. Quun went for the bear, Arcia the dog, Elna the small bird, and Kuon abstained.

“I can wait until the other girls come back.”

“What a gentleman! You’re such a wonderful older brother, Kuon!” Yumina exclaimed, then madly pat Kuon. Resigned to his fate, Kuon simply stood there with a distant smile on his face.

“Hang in there, Kuon...” I muttered.

“Mother Yumina in the future isn’t *this* aggressive with him...” Quun

awkwardly said and smiled, having overheard.

Well, Yumina had achieved her lifelong dream (?) of giving birth to a successor, so her enthusiasm made sense, but even she would calm down after six years.

“We’re home!”

Suddenly, Steph, Linne, and Yoshino all appeared in the living room at once. Gold was with them too. Yoshino must have teleported them here. I’d already warned them so many times to be careful where they teleported because they could give people a fright, yet...

“Daddy, here, for you! We found it in the left forest! It’s a present!”

Just as I was about to scold Yoshino, Steph shoved a small wooden box into my face as if to discourage me from doing so. A present? Left forest must have meant the western forest. Guess that was where they’d been out to play.

Brunhild wasn’t particularly home to many strong monsters, but there were wild dogs and wolves in the area, so I’d much rather they didn’t go out on their own like that... Not that my kids were weak enough they would be taken down by some stray animals, of course.

We did have the incident with Kuon and Allis running into the Marchosias, though, so it could be a little worrying. Maybe I was overthinking it, but I did want them to be more alert. That aside...

“What is this?”

“Open it, open it!”

Not even showing a little bit of doubt toward the excited Steph, I opened the lid of the box.

“EEEYAH!”

My hand slipped the moment I saw what was inside. The box fell onto the carpet, and what was inside came wriggling out and began crawling all over the floor.

“AAAAAAHHHHHHH!”

“Oh my.”

Linze and Yumina screamed in unison, while Leen sat there, looking mildly amused.

They were bugs—three caterpillars, to be precise. They were quite big, at least ten centimeters long. Those caterpillars were letting off a rainbow light as they wriggled about at my feet.

“Wh-Wh-What are these?”

“Aren’t they super pretty? I caught them!” Steph exclaimed.

Pretty...? Well, the color sure is something! But ignore the color and it’s just a caterpillar!

“Were you always scared of bugs, darling?”

“I’m not scared, it just gave me a fright!”

I didn’t dislike bugs, really. I just didn’t particularly *like* them either. I could touch beetles and cicadas fine, but I was a bit more grossed out by larval bugs.

...Sorry, that was a lie. I *really* didn’t like them.

I was relatively okay with bugs that had a hard shell, but these kinds of caterpillar-like bugs were too much for me. It was weird when you considered I could even squish a cockroach with a slipper perfectly fine.

“See?” Linne said as she turned to Steph with a sigh. “Even if the colors are pretty, everyone hates the bugs, Steph.”

“Really? But they’re so pretty... Daddy, do you hate them?”

“I don’t hate them, I’m just a bit bad with them...”

I was waffling with my words trying hard to not hurt Steph’s feelings after she’d been kind enough to bring them back as a gift. Meanwhile, Leen was crouched down on the floor, picking up the caterpillars and returning them to the box.

How the hell can you grab them with your bare hands?

Then again, she was a fairy who used to live in a forest, so bugs were probably an everyday thing to her.

“Yup, there’s no doubt about it. These are rainbow silkworms.”



“Silkworms?”

As in, they weren’t caterpillars? Then again, silkworms were basically a kind of caterpillar, so it didn’t change much.

“Rainbow silkworms produced beautiful silk threads with a dazzling rainbow luster. It was said that the silk spun from them was greatly favored by the upper classes.”

“Wow... Wait, what’s with the past tense?”

“The elders of my village told us they’d gone extinct around two thousand years ago.”

They’re an extinct species? Oh no...

“They must have come to this time through the dimensional gap with that extinct creature Kuon and the others fought that one time. Hehe, what an unexpected find. You did well, Steph.”

“Yay, I did something good!”

A wide smile burst out on Steph’s face as Leen gave her a gentle pat on the head.

Apparently, rainbow silkworms were bred exclusively by one country two thousand years ago, but they’d all gone extinct because of some experiment. They used to live out in the wild, but after being captured and bred by humans, their vitality gradually weakened. If memory served, even our silkworms had been so domesticated that they couldn’t live out in the wild anymore.

“These were a wild, undomesticated species of silkworm. If we could improve their way of life, the fabric made from their silk would undoubtedly become a mainstay of Brunhild. I didn’t think the wicked devout could be anything but a nuisance, but no, it turns out they can be useful too.”

Leen had a wide grin on her face. I wouldn’t be against turning it into one of our main industries, but that would mean we’d have to look after them, right?

“Don’t worry your little head, darling. I won’t tell you to look after them. Let’s see... How about we start by asking Flora to improve their quality a little? We have to breed them first. Then...” Leen railed off, seeming very on board with

the idea of making a business out of the rainbow silkworms' threads.

As one could tell from her attire, she was quite the fashionable girl. Linze was the one best at embroidery, but Leen would frequently give her own thoughts on designs. There was no way she could give up the chance to have the best quality fabric possible.

Maybe it would be smart to get Zanak involved as a fashion designer... Then again, he'd recently gotten really busy with orders from across the continent for his well-received bridal service that he'd just started up, so would he even have the time to help? He was a merchant in his own right, so I doubted he'd pass up a chance like this if he could find the time, but still...

"Huh... Brunhild is actually famous for its sericulture industry in the future, but I never imagined Steph would be the cause of it," Kuon muttered to himself with a slight sigh.

I see. So this turns into a big success, huh?

"Still, it's amazing that they managed to survive. A normal bug would've been eaten by the birds by now."

"Despite their appearance, rainbow silkworms are a type of monster. They have natural magic applied to them in the form of cognition disruption, so birds and other beasts can't find them so easily."

"Huh? They aren't regular bugs? Wait, they aren't dangerous, are they?"

"From what I've heard, they don't even have any form of venom, so I doubt they're very dangerous. All it is is magic that makes them harder to detect, after all," Leen explained. It only made the fact Steph spotted them way more impressive.

"Do you really think a simple bug's cognition disruption could get past our children?"

"Yeah, good point..."

Our kids had really sharp instincts. Even vague hunches like "I think it's this way" or "It's probably this" often struck true. Was this something they came with as demigods? Why did I not have the same level of instinct? Was it

because I wasn't born divine?

"Anyway, let's return to the western forest tomorrow. There might be more rainbow silkworms. We might even be able to find some cocoons."

Leen was getting excited again. It was rare to see her like this over something other than magic. It was the same way that Quun got hyped over magic items. Like mother, like daughter.

"Hey! What are those cute little animals you all have?!"

"Souvenirs from father. There's one for you too, Steph. Which would you like?"

Steph had caught sight of the wooden animals with her sharp eyes and immediately latched onto them. I subtly did a quick search on my phone for more rainbow silkworms while they did that and found that there were a good dozen of them left.

Dimensional holes would absorb everything in their surroundings and spit them out in the future. For all we knew, the leaves and branches around them were from trees that were now extinct. Not that I would be able to tell, since I wasn't exactly a botanist.

When I showed Leen the results, a very wide smile formed on her face. She was nowhere near as bad as Doc Babylon, but Leen was quite the mad scientist herself... That must have been who Quun inherited it from...



The moment we entered the western forest the next day, we immediately found a dozen silkworms and several rainbow cocoons hanging from tree branches. The cocoons were far larger than I imagined they'd be—was it because they could spit out a lot of thread?

Anyway, I used **[Search]** to gather every last one of them, and when we gave them to Flora in the alchemy tower, it only took a few hours for her to spin all the thread out of the cocoons, and another few hours for Rosetta in the workshop to turn it into silk. It was a great help, but why did it feel like I wasn't being told something?

The silk made from the rainbow silkworms was softer than regular silk, and it had a beautiful glossy sheen, giving it that very luxurious feel. On top of that, it changed color when you ran mana through it; the color that came out depended on the strength of the mana. It didn't take much mana to activate the effect, so even regular citizens would be able to make use of it.

Would the price of the silk be achievable for the common citizen, though? From the way I was watching Zanac break down into tears right in front of me, the answer was probably no.

"This is...! The legendary rainbow silkworm silk, arcobaleno...! I never imagined the day would come when I would lay my very own eyes on it...! Thank the heavens I chose to join hands with you, Grand Duke...! Thank you so much, thank you so much...!"

Suddenly, he was bowing reverently in front of me. Was it *that* legendary? This arcobaleno silk was only mentioned in a few ancient texts, and although it was known to have existed at some point in the distant past, the fabric itself no longer existed in the world. It had practically become an unknown by this point.

And that made sense—those silkworms were supposed to be extinct, after all. To those in the fashion industry, it was a legendary fabric.

Zanac had been shocked by the moon silkworm fabric that had been kept in Babylon, but his reaction this time was well beyond even that. At least the silk from the moon silkworms was known to still exist, even if it was rare, but the arcobaleno silk was barely found in texts anymore.

"Surely there's a piece of that silk that's had preservation magic cast on it *somewhere?*"

"Arcobaleno silk has natural magic deflection, so it's impossible to cast any kind of magic on it. No silk would last two thousand years, no matter how carefully you stored it," Leen explained, having joined me at Fashion King Zanac.

No wonder it's been lost to history.

"Wow, it really does change based on the type of mana you run through it!"

Zanac picked up the arcobaleno silk and let out a cry of joy upon watching its color change as he ran his mana through it. Though the silk deflected magic, it

didn't deflect pure mana, so even Zanac could immediately change the color.

"It's beautiful, is it not? Clothes made with this silk can have their color changed based on one's mood or the occasion. Even without running mana through it, it's already so beautiful. Noble ladies will absolutely be unable to resist it."

"Yes, indeed! This will sell just by virtue of being such a luxury silk! Do you intend to turn this into a state business?"

"We want to eventually, but for now, we don't have enough silkworms. We'll prepare the silk, so we'd like to ask you to design dresses to sell in your shop."

"Thank you so much! I will put my heart and soul into its creation!"

Leen and Zanac began their own negotiations, which immediately left me out of the loop. My only involvement with fashion was when Leen would sometimes ask if there was a dress with some image that she had in mind, and then I would look up with my smartphone any dress designs that fit that condition and send them to her.

Bored, I turned my gaze out the window, and suddenly, a translucent girl clad in a jade glow burst through the window, yelling all the while.

"Terrible news, terrible news! Oh, Celestial Spirit King, I have absolutely terrible news!"

It was Aerial, the Wind Pillar Spirit contracted with Linze. She was still in her spiritual body, which allowed her to pass right through the window, so Leen and I could see her, but Zanac and the other staff in the shop couldn't. They wouldn't be able to hear her either.

"Is something the matter?"

"No, nothing."

"Sorry, I'm gonna pop off to the bathroom."

I stood up and headed for the bathroom, Aerial obediently followed behind, perhaps realizing what I was doing. When I closed the door, I sighed and whispered back to her.

"And? What's the terrible news? Linze told me you'd gone back to the Spirit

Realm for a bit.”

“Yeah, I’d been back talking with everyone in the Spirit Realm, but that’s when the Puretree felt a sudden disturbance. There’s this ominous maelstrom up north.”

“An ominous maelstrom?”

The Puretree was something me and Uncle Kousuke had created in order to cleanse Isengard of the divine venom. It was a sacred tree where spirits lived, and though young, it would apparently one day turn into a spirit itself.

Was Aerial saying *that* Puretree felt a disturbance? The Puretree sat in a forest around the middle of Isengard. Further to the north, the closest country was Lassei, though they were still separated by an ocean.

“Wait, did something happen in Lassei?”

We *did* just have a battle with the wicked devout there—had there been some negative aftereffects?

“No. It’s on the same continent, so further south from there. The spirits said it’s too suffocating to go any further, that it’s like the cleansing power of the Puretree is being absorbed, like some abyss...”

The Puretree’s power was being absorbed and the spirits were too scared to go any closer... The answer came to me right away: the fairies were scared of the power of the wicked devout—no, the former god of erosion’s power.

This pretty much confirmed that the wicked devout were currently based in Isengard. If not all of them, at least Gould.

Like an abyss, huh?

“He who fights monsters might take care, lest he thereby become a monster. And if you gaze long into an abyss, the abyss gazes also into you.”

That was a Nietzsche quote, right? I’d become a divine monster long ago, so it was a little late for me. I intended for my mind to remain human, however.

With a wry smile on my face, I returned to Leen.

Interlude: Brunhild's Ramen Alley

“A delivery service using Gate Mirrors?”

“Yes. I am of the opinion that such a business would be groundbreaking, given we have access to a magic tool that lets us send letters anywhere in the world.”

Kousaka had placed two long and narrow-framed mirrors on the table; they were the Gate Mirrors infused with my magic. It was a magic item that allowed you to place an object inside one mirror and have it appear through the other paired mirror. Right now, it was primarily being used to send correspondences between countries, but what was being suggested was that we find a way to make it available for public use.

I didn't hate the idea. To this day, a lot of nobles still used horse-drawn carriages to send letters, but they could send them much faster if we gave them access to the Gate Mirrors.

The problem was that there were a lot of caveats with handling letters addressed to commoners. First was that most people didn't have a precise address. Getting it to a village was well and good—you just had to put “Blah-blah of XYZ Village” and it would deliver fine. The moment it was addressed to someone in a big city, however, it was nearly impossible to get your letter delivered with just that.

There were tons of people with the same name, and if you wanted to differentiate them, you had to specify not just that they were in the city, but details like the names of their parents.

Even then, telling your deliveryman to search for someone in a big city was a bit of an unreasonable ask. If they were a noble, something could be figured out—they probably had a big estate somewhere, after all. But what about adventurers? Adventurers were a nomadic sort who stayed in inns and other lodgings, changing where they stayed as they needed.

Not only did that already limit who could have letters sent to them, but there

was also the issue of literacy rates. There weren't very many commoners who knew how to write, since they didn't have the opportunity to learn. There were even countries where royal proclamations required an official reader.

Incidentally, as a bit of a brag, Brunhild's literacy rate was practically one hundred percent. Sakura's mother, Fiana, was the headmistress of our local school, and even adults were allowed to learn there for free. Olba's Strand Company, which sold things like picture books, had also served as a big influence.

In any case, the more widespread low literacy rates across the continent meant that very few commoners sent letters. There was always the chance that people who wanted to learn how to write may start appearing, though, and a functioning delivery service may serve as a good motivator for just that.

I didn't mind turning it into a business, but I doubted we could do a lot by ourselves. We simply didn't have enough hands.

Honestly, it seemed like it would be easier to just sell the Gate Mirrors themselves at a luxury price. The problem with that was that the moment I wasn't there to make them, they'd go out of business, and some noble somewhere would make a delivery service with whatever ones were left.

Felt like a waste to throw away the chance of such a profit, though.

The adventurer's guild had something called a Tracebook that let them send messages between other guilds. Like Gate Mirrors, it required a partnered item. When you wrote on your own Tracebook, those letters would appear on the other Tracebook.

On the topic of the adventurer's guild, adventurers had guild cards, so it at least guaranteed you could deliver a letter to a registered adventurer eventually. You just had to send it through to the branch where the card was most recently used.

In that case, should we combine the guild with a post office?

If we got adventurers to help out with deliveries, that would also save on labor costs. We couldn't afford to let them handle official correspondence, but I didn't think personal letters would be such a big deal. Even now, it was

perfectly normal for people to entrust their letters to merchants or travelers.

There were stories of people who entrusted their letters to people they didn't know and they ended up taking their money and not delivering the letter. The adventurer's guild taking on letters would help alleviate that issue.

"Guess I'll go consult with Relisha first."

"That would be advisable."

Whatever we decided to do, it was almost certain we couldn't handle it ourselves. The adventurer's guild had branches all over the world, so they would be perfect as a partner for the company.

I quickly teleported to the guild.



"So you want to use Gate Mirrors to allow regular citizens to be able to reliably deliver letters, huh?"

Relisha went silent as she fell into thought for a moment. Was there something that bothered her about the idea?

"How do you intend to profit from this as a country?"

"By only *loaning* the mirrors to the guild. We'd probably ask for you to pay an annual rental fee."

"I see. This is under the assumption that we'd get profits from the delivery service, right? Well, assuming we can iron that all out later..."

When Relisha dropped a letter into the Gate Mirror on the table, it popped out of the one next to it. She then smoothly snatched it out of the air.

"We already get commissioned to deliver letters at the guild, though they're generally only domestic deliveries."

All the client had to do was entrust their letter to the guild, and the guild would then pass it on to adventurers who would be traveling to the destination or a nearby town. Essentially, the letter would go from guild to guild until it reached its recipient, but apparently, that cost a lot of money and time.

The more stops along the way there were, the more adventurers they needed

to get involved, increasing the commission fee. In the worst case, where no adventurers were heading to that area, the letter would simply remain at the guild until someone going in that direction showed up. If the recipient lived in a village with no guild, the adventurer would be expected to deliver it to the village itself directly.

If the guilds began making use of Gate Mirrors, it would become possible for the letter to be sent to the closest guild and for them to only rely on adventurers from there. It would still be tough if the recipient was in a location with no guild, but for cases where the recipient was in the same location as the guild, the delivery would be local, so it was both safe and would let an adventurer get some nice pocket money, perfect for adventurers just starting out who needed to make money to get their starting gear.

“Oh, you’ve caught onto a good point,” Relisha remarked. “I’m sure new adventurers would love simple jobs like these. We’d have to make sure we had countermeasures in place for any potential trouble, though.”

Right, there was still the possibility that letters never made it to their destination or got lost somewhere along the way. We couldn’t just act innocent in those scenarios.

“We’ll also need to select ideal locations to put the Gate Mirrors. We obviously can’t put one in every town and village in the world.”

Even just assuming one hundred towns, you’d have to make a separate ninety-nine paired Gate Mirrors for every town, and that would almost bring us well into needing ten thousand mirrors.

“Something we could do is have all of the letters be delivered to the capital’s branch, and they would then distribute them to the individual towns.”

That was a good idea. That way, only the capital cities would need several Gate Mirrors made, making that process much simpler. It did mean I’d have to make enough Gate Mirrors that the capital would connect to every town, though.

“In any case, allow me to bring up this matter to the council first. I can’t make the decision myself. There may even be countries who outright refuse it.”

“I do think countries in the alliance would be open to the idea, but I know the guild still hasn’t quite managed to expand into the Western Continent yet, so there’s nothing we can do about that.”

I’d heard that over there, those rich enough used bird Golems to deliver letters, but Golems themselves were expensive, so it was probably limited to nobles. The common citizens did have horse messengers and regular mailmen, but they didn’t seem to make much use of them, both due to their lacking literacy rates and also because of how expensive it no doubt was.

It would be nice if we could make it easier for people to send letters to faraway friends or family. It’d be great if we could help increase literacy rates as well, but maybe that was aiming a little too high.

In any case, I left the rest to Relisha and headed back to the castle. Something seemed to be going on in the courtyard. Peeking out from the second-floor window, I noticed a stall that hadn’t been there before I went to the guild. On a red flag was “Ramen” written in white.

“The hell’s going on down there?”

I made my way down and, perhaps unsurprisingly, who else was manning the stand other than Lu and Arcia. Next to them were Quun, Parla, Uncle Kousuke, and Karina setting up another.

“Oh, you’re back, Touya,” Karina cheerfully greeted me.

“Uhhh, would someone mind explaining what’s going on here?”

“Long story short, I ended up hunting a bunch of boars. Thought I’d ask Lu if she could do something with them.”

“It just so happened that I also had the same idea with some fresh veggies from my fields. When I asked if she could whip somethin’ up with ‘em, the lass suggested that...”

“We make ramen! A new ramen!” Lu declared, raising a ladle toward the sky. Her eyes were burning with the flames of passion.

They were just obsessed with curry the other day, and now we’re rushing straight to ramen?

“Haven’t you made ramen a ton before?”

They’d made regular ramen, bizarre ramen, and even chilled ramen. Why were we back here?

“It’s because of this,” Quun answered, handing over a thin magazine.

“Ramen Kingdom?”

Flipping through the pages, it seemed to be introducing a bunch of famous ramen places. It was literally a ramen magazine. Was this something Lu had bought while we were on our honeymoon on Earth?

“For some reason, it was among the books that mother bought. She handed it over to Mother Lu and, well, this is the result,” Quun elaborated as she continued setting up the neighboring stall. It was among the books that *Leen* had bought?

Back on Earth, Linze and Leen both bought books like crazy, no matter what language they were in. It was easy for me to pull them out of **[Storage]** in bulk, since all I had to specify was “books we bought from Earth.” That also meant that I had no idea what they actually bought, though. One of them must have bought it by accident.

“I was positive that ramen was simply made with soy sauce, miso, and salt, but to think there was a whole other world of flavor out there!” Lu exclaimed, shaking her head forlornly, showing her great regret. Technically, I was the one that taught her that, and I hadn’t eaten anything other than your average ramen, so I hadn’t been able to teach her anything else...

There were already all kinds of ramen from tonkotsu, to niboshi, to chicken paitan—was it that easy to find a new flavor?

“I’m aware. Both cooking and the arts all begin with imitation, you see. It is through making all manner of ramen that I gain experience points. Plus, there is ramen that can’t be made on Earth that we can make here in this world!”

Hearing Lu say that only reminded me of the meat ramein made from troll flank we’d had in Heilong... Sure, you could make ramen here that you couldn’t on Earth because of the different meat available, but that didn’t mean it would taste good.

“I was thinking it would be nice to let the residents of the castle town have some if we make anything exceptional.”

“Explains why you have these stands, I guess.”

“For now, let’s start with this! Ryukotsu ramen where the broth is made with the marrow of crushed Dragon bones instead of pork bones!” Lu said as she pulled out a bowl of ramen and slammed it down on the counter.

Ryukotsu ramen! This is what I wanted to try!

“I thought the broth would be cloudy like tonkotsu ramen, but it actually looks clear...”

It even looked like shio ramen at a glance... Actually, there was barely any visible oil on the surface, so that wasn’t a good comparison. It just looked like hot water.

Doesn’t it look nicer than you’d think? It’s like someone took ramen, bamboo shoots, chashu pork, green onions, seaweed, and eggs and neatly layered them all in hot water.

“Tonkotsu ramen’s broth is a cloudy white because the collagen in the bone marrow becomes gelatin when it’s heated, which then encases the fat and mixes with the broth. However, since the collagen from Dragons doesn’t have that property, if you strain it carefully enough, you get this clear soup.”

“You know a lot about this.”

“It was all written in this magazine!” Lu stated as she proudly held out *Ramen Kingdom*.

Oh, so she’s just parroting the magazine’s words. It must have a lot of info about ramen in there.

“Give it a try!” Lu insisted.

“S-Sure...”

It wasn’t like I was succumbing to Lu’s persistence, but I reached for the ryukotsu ramen anyway. I really had wanted to try it, after all.

It smelled...like normal ramen, honestly.

First, the soup broth...

I used the spoon to take a scoop of the clear soup and put it in my mouth.

“...”

“Touya?”

Whoa! My focus got completely shot 'cause of how delicious that was! It's amazing! The broth has so much umami condensed in it.

Just one more scoop... No, this is bad, I can't stop.

I'd end up drinking all the soup before even getting to the ramen at this rate.

Eat the noodles, Touya. Eat the noodles.

I slurped them up, unable to resist letting out a satisfied breath.

“It's delicious. The soup so perfectly coats the noodles... I can't get enough...”

Now for a bit of the chashu. Wait! This isn't chashu pork? Is it chashu Dragon?!

Actually, maybe using chashu was inaccurate, since it wasn't pork, but either way, it was absolutely delicious, and it suited this ramen perfectly, which...felt like stating the obvious. Of course Dragon meat would taste perfect with broth made from Dragon bones.

And then it occurred to me: this had to be expensive as hell to make, right? Probably no less than one million yen a bowl... It was so delicious that I couldn't stop eating it, though. I kept mindlessly slurping away, and before I knew it, I'd finished it.

“That was insane...”

“I'm glad you liked it. It costs so much that it definitely is not something to be served to the common people. If you convert it, it costs around one hundred silver coins.”

Oof! That's ten times what I expected! Ten million yen per bowl of ramen...!

I shouldn't be surprised. Dragon bones were a valuable material used to forge both weapons and armor. Naturally, they came with a ridiculous price tag. Crushing them was tantamount to grinding their value down to dust.

The only part the soup needed was the marrow, so you might have still been able to do something with the crushed bones, but it was undeniable that even then, the price would be so high that commoners wouldn't stand a chance of trying it.

"And so, here's a ryukotsu ramen using Wyvern as a substitute!"

This time it was Arcia who slammed a bowl of ramen down on the counter. Unlike the ramen I'd just had, this soup was a little thicker, but it only had as much color as shio ramen, and not as white as tonkotsu.

"Because Wyvern meat has more off-flavors, I used curly noodles instead. These don't absorb much of the soup the way straight noodles do, so it should prevent it from tasting too strange."

"They don't absorb them as well?"

I'd always thought curly noodles would grab the soup easier.

"If you considered just the single noodle, then maybe, but when you lift multiple at once, it picks up less than straight noodles. This is due to the capillary force of the liquid entering the small gaps between noodles. Curly noodles have too much separation between them, so their absorption power is much less!"

"Y-You know a lot about this..."

"It was written in this magazine!"

And so, Arcia proudly presented *Ramen Kingdom* to me with the exact same expression as Lu. They really were related.

"Now, father, please give it a try."

"Sure..."

Arcia had such a bright smile on her face, but a second bowl of ramen would be tough. I could probably manage, but...

For now, I'd at least try the soup broth. It really did look like shio ramen.

"Oh...!"

Just one spoonful had a variety of flavors exploding in my mouth. The Dragon

soup had a more refined taste, a more defined flavor, but this Wyvern broth wasn't losing to it. It had a very lively flavor. I could see it starting to taste a little too strong if I had too much, though.

Next, I slurped the noodles.

I see. I do mind the flavor of the soup a lot less with the curly noodles. Or at least, I think I do.

The chashu was... It wasn't Dragon meat.

"It's wild boar."

Wild boars were magic beasts that looked a lot like boars, as the name implied. They weren't very dangerous—green-rank adventurers could take them down easily. It wasn't the cheapest meat out there, but this amount likely wasn't that expensive.

Oh, is this how they used the boar meat that Karina had an excess of?

I looked beside me and saw Karina and Uncle Kousuke enjoying their own bowls of ramen. Karina's was chashu ramen with the meat arranged like a lid, while Uncle Kousuke was having tanmen stacked with vegetables. They looked delicious too...

"Wyverns may be cheaper than Dragons, but they're still pretty expensive, no?"

They were a red-rank monster. One alone could destroy a whole small village.

"Right. We managed to cut down on overall costs, but it would still go for about a hundred gold coins per bowl."

Even cheaper, it cost a million yen?! This would be just as impossible to serve to the common people...

"And that's why we have this Swift Drake ramen instead!"

Lu once more proudly slammed a bowl of ramen down onto the counter.

You're kidding me, a third kind? I haven't even finished the Wyvern ramen... Swift Drakes are those creatures that look like Ornithomimus dinosaurs that people raise as a form of transport in the Sea of Trees, right?

“Despite their names, Swiftdrakes are not considered true Dragons—they’re even further branched off than Wyverns. Their bones contain a lot of mana, though, so very unique flavors are concentrated in them. Swiftdrakes are already raised as livestock that can be ridden in the Sea of Trees, so we can get them at a cheap price, making it a perfect substitute for ryukotsu ramen.”

I knew what she was trying to say, but in that case, she should’ve given me this to try first. I was already pretty full. But being watched with eyes twinkling with confidence, I couldn’t refuse her.

“Hm? What are these stands?”

“Lu-dono? Have you made something new again?”

The moment I heard those voices from behind me, I could tell that my saviors had arrived. I turned around, and there Yae, Yakumo, Hilde, and Frei were, wiping sweat off their brows with towels over their shoulders—did they just come back from training?

“Lu and Arcia are trying to make a new ramen flavor. They want to popularize it like this if they find a good one. Do you guys want to try some?”

“Ramen, you say? It is one of my favorite foods, it is!”

“Same here! I love ramen!”

Yae and Frei, our resident big eaters, easily took the bait. I not-so-subtly shoved the bowl of Swiftdrake ramen to Frei when she sat beside me.

“It looks delicious!”

Frei picked up the chopsticks without hesitation and dug in, slurping up the noodles with gusto.

“And it is! I’ve never had this kind of ramen before, but it’s amazing!”

With a massive smile on her face, Frei continued chowing down. The same was placed in front of Yae, who sat beside her, and she also began to eat.

“Hm?! This is indeed different from any ramen I have had before, this is! The broth is especially delicious!”

Yae continued eating with the same vigor as Frei. They seemed to like it, but

these two would say anything was delicious... It wasn't that they had no sense of taste, but their standards for what was bad were pretty much on the ground. They would never say it was bad unless it was *really* disgusting, and they weren't very picky eaters either.

Hilde and Yakumo, who had sat themselves down at the stall next to ours, were also happily eating away. This ramen seemed fine, in that case. Not that I could vouch for it myself.

When I glanced at Yakumo, it looked like she was enjoying her meal, but her head was also tilted slightly.

"What's up, Yakumo? Something wrong?"

"Oh, no, it's nothing big. I was just thinking that the broth tastes so nice that the flavor of the noodles is almost too subtle."

Yakumo's honest critique left Lu and Arcia in shock.

"The noodles don't have the strength to take the flavor of the Swift Drake broth!"

"The balance with the noodles...! I was so focused on the taste of the soup that I neglected something so basic!"

I gave the Wyvern ramen another taste. The soup *was* delicious, but right enough, the noodles felt like they were losing to the taste of the soup. In this case, it barely mattered what noodles you used. I understood Yakumo's criticism.

"This isn't good! The broth should be the noodles' partner! If the partner pushes them aside and steps right to the front, the whole meal falls apart!"

"Mother! How about we use some flour from Horn? I've heard there's a special kind that is only produced in one region! It's a mysterious flour that can make dough without even needing to rest."

We were left sitting there, ignored, as the mother and daughter began discussing possible improvements to their noodles. It wasn't as if the ramen tasted bad, though. If you could eat this in Japan, people would pay for it. Maybe not a million yen, but...

Oh, wait.

“If you want flour from Horn, I got some as a gift from the Prime Minister during one of the world summits. I think he said it was a rare variety used only by the royal family or something.”

“What?! You never told me anything about this!”

“Really? I thought I gave you it.”

“You did not!”

I didn’t? Maybe I thought I could hand it to her later and forgot. Was it still in my **[Storage]**? I glanced up and was immediately greeted by Lu and Arcia staring at me, eyes begging for me to hurry up and take it out. Actually, forget staring, they were practically *glaring* at me.

“U-Um, okay, let’s see, flour, flour...”

I took out sacks of flour one after another, though none of them were the one I wanted.

I have so much flour! Why do I have so much? I really need to sort through this at some point.

“That’s it!”

“It has the seal of approval from the Royal Court! This has to be it!”

The mother and daughter were getting excited over one of the bags I took out. I guess that was it.

“We can definitely make the perfect noodles for a Dragon broth with this! Arcia, let’s go make some dough!”

“Yes, mother!”

The two of them took the flour, called out the personal kitchen I’d given Arcia as a present, and began making the noodles right then and there. The flour was mixed and kneaded into dough, and then they used a large bamboo stick to stretch it out.

Wow, they’re serious about this.

“This is amazing dough! With this...!”

“I’ll make the soup!”

They were totally off in their own world as they made the noodles.

You know I can’t handle a third bowl, right?

I couldn’t eat ryukotsu ramen, Wyvern ramen, and Swiftdrake ramen all at once. At least if we had to wait for the dough to rise, I’d have a chance of being able to eat it! Not that I really badly wanted to or anything!

“Nothing else for it!”

I whipped my phone out of my pocket and sent a message to everyone in the castle: *We’re having a ramen fair in the courtyard.*

Just as the two were finishing their noodles, the staff, who were free for their lunch break, had already started lining up in front of the stalls. I left my seat, together with my leftover ramen, and moved to a couch and table I’d taken out of **[Storage]**. I set up similar seating areas for everyone else as well.

“We’re done making the noodles...! Whoa!”

Lu’s eyes opened wide as she saw the line in front of her stall. Arcia was looking over at me with wide eyes. I continued slurping away at my ramen, feigning innocence.

“Why is there suddenly a queue? Is it time for lunch already?”

“M-Mother, let’s just get some ramen made, quickly! We can have this serve as a pre-opening!”

“R-Right! Arcia, I’ll handle boiling the noodles! You get the soup!”

The mother-daughter chef duo immediately began getting to work. Crea popped out from the castle’s kitchen in order to lend them a hand.

At this rate, the cafeteria’s gonna be deserted.

I couldn’t help but feel bad for all the kitchen staff who would’ve prepared meals for everyone. There was a fridge equipped with **[Storage]** in the kitchen, though, so at the very least, they could store it there for the next day so it wouldn’t go to waste.

“This is amazing! It isn’t soba, but I could work with this!”

“I can see myself getting addicted to this...”

When I heard a loud shout from behind me, I turned around and saw two of Takeda’s Four Heavenly Kings, Yamagata and Naito, slurping down their own ryukotsu ramen. Opposite them were Baba and Kousaka.

So even they’ve fallen for it...

The knights had come here for lunch as well, including Lain, Nikola, and Norue. Over there was Tsubaki and her three kunoichi girls, Homura, Shizuku, and Nagi. Laim and Renne were here too. I guess it was perfectly timed with their lunch break. Lapis and Cecil weren’t here, but it seemed they were going to swap with Renne afterward.

Everyone seemed to be enjoying their food. There were even those asking for seconds.

“It was a huge success! But it’s so much of a success that it’s becoming a huge failure instead!”

“Mother, we’re going to run out of noodles! We have to start making more!”

The portable kitchen was becoming a battlefield at this point. Lu kneaded the dough, while Arcia prepared the broth and Crea boiled the noodles. The other kitchen staff, who had arrived to help, were cutting any toppings and putting the bowls together.

Maybe I called too many people to this thing...

We were starting to run out of free seats, so I pulled some more out of **[Storage]**. Our courtyard was starting to look like a ramen alley.

At least it being this well received among the castle staff meant revealing it to the castle town was a good idea. If we could get it popular in state-run restaurants and inns like Silver Moon, people would start to imitate it. That meant those people had the potential to come up with their own ramen. New types of ramen unique to this world could be born.

Wait, but I guess Lu and Arcia have already managed that.

I prayed that more ramen beyond just this ryukotsu ramen would be born as I slurped down what I had left.



Afterword

Thank you for reading volume 30 of *In Another World with My Smartphone*. I hope you enjoyed it.

We've finally made it to the thirties. It felt like it took a lifetime to reach volume 10, but all of a sudden, we've made it this far. Touya's adventures are coming to an end soon, so I doubt we'll make it to the forties, but I hope you'll accompany me to the very end... I might release some bonus content after we're done, though. Like a spin-off or something, maybe.

This volume has a special edition in Japan that comes with a drama CD—and that marks the fourth drama CD for the series! The one who kindly wrote the script was Yui Fukuo, the voice of Linze in the anime.

The third drama CD came out in Japan with volume 26. The idea of a fourth drama CD had been brought up a while ago, but I failed to find the time to work on the script, so one of the staff suggested that we ask Miss Fukuo for assistance, as she'd recently begun working as a scriptwriter for anime.

Miss Fukuo has long worked with the world of *Smartphone* and is very knowledgeable on its story and characters, so I had no worries about asking her to take up the mantle. She wrote up the script far faster than I would ever have managed, and there were basically no edits I needed to make.

Thank you very much for the wonderful script, Miss Fukuo. I hope you all enjoy this new story as well.

I was able to peek into the recording session for the drama CD online like I did with the anime, but for some reason, my audio wasn't being picked up, so all we could do was wave at each other and I was unable to respond. It was rather humiliating... I'm not sure if it was a problem with my microphone or a problem with the system or what. I even made sure it wasn't muted...

I'd like to greet them properly if there's a next time.

I'm quite the introvert, so I've never been to an actual recording session in

person, so much so that the staff and voice actors might not even know I really exist... I haven't been to any company parties either, so I think only four people have ever seen me in person when I joined them for the first meeting about the anime, my two editors included. I'm like a UMA.

On to my final words of appreciation.

First to my illustrator, Eiji Usatsuka. Thank you for drawing both a special edition cover and the original cover. I'm looking forward to seeing the next volume's as well.

Tomofumi Ogasawara, thank you very much for drawing the new illustration for Reginleif even when you're so busy.

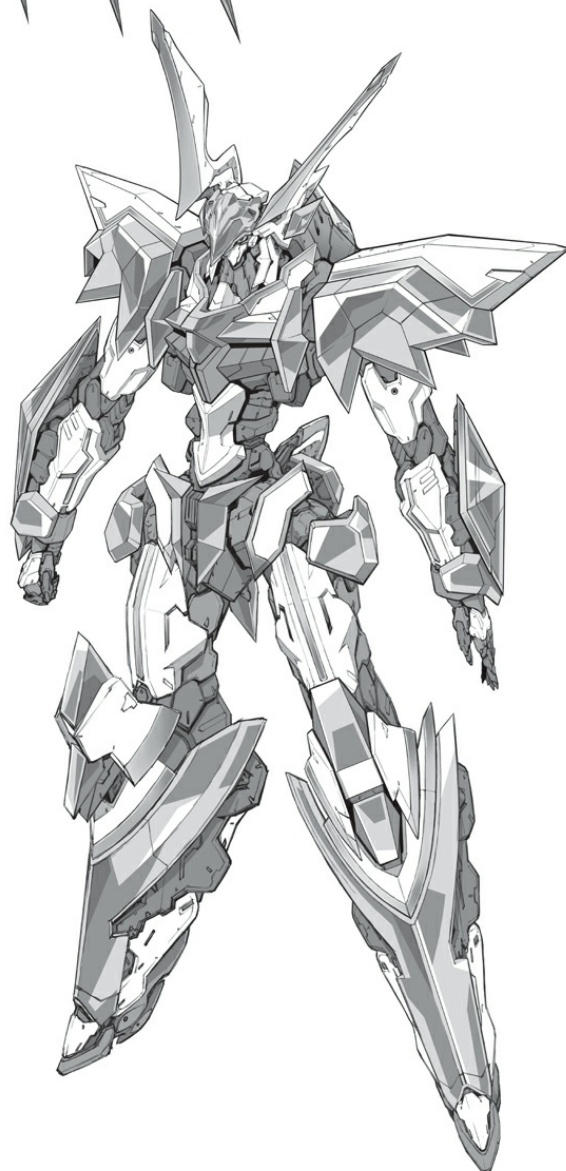
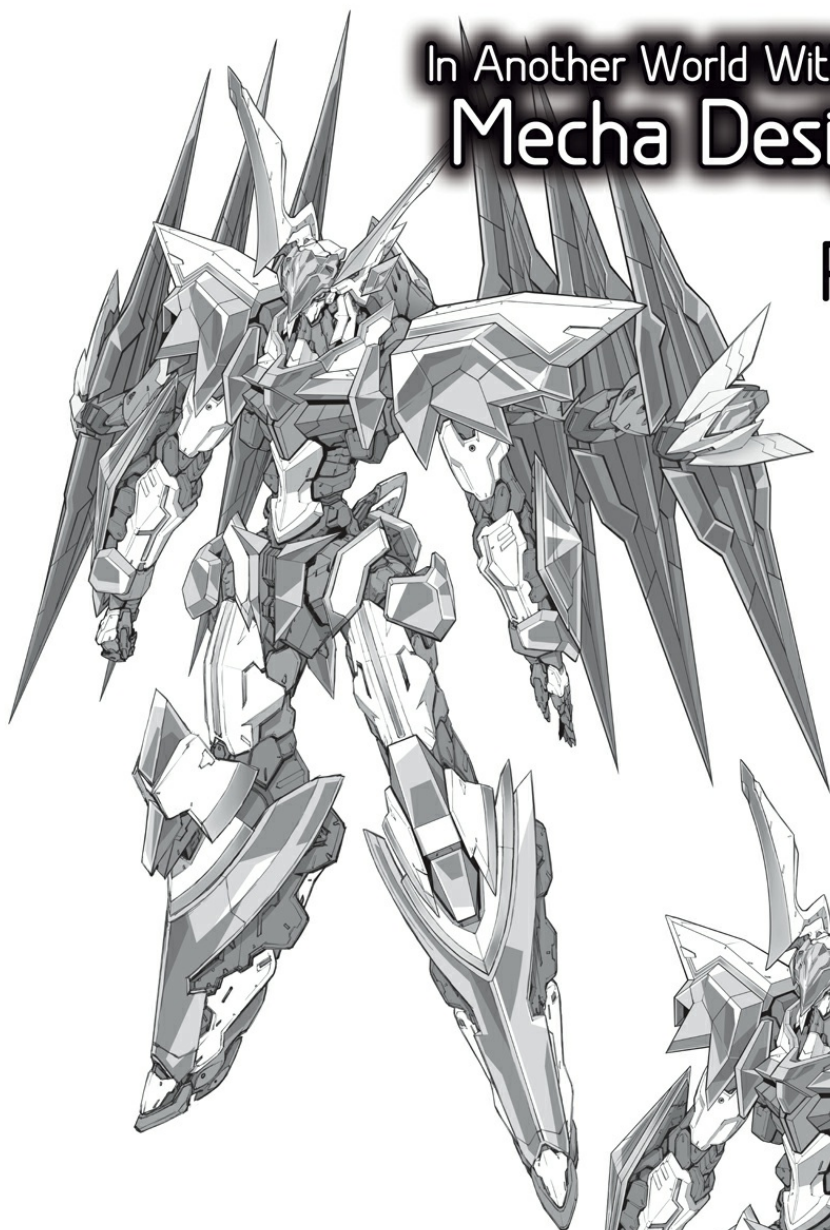
My editor, K, the editorial department of Hobby Japan, and everyone else involved with the publication of this volume, thank you for all your help as usual.

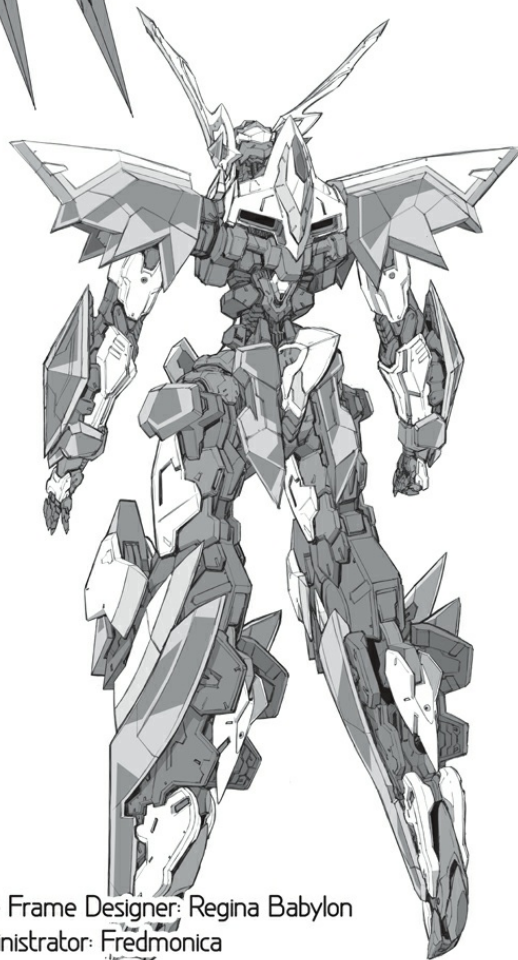
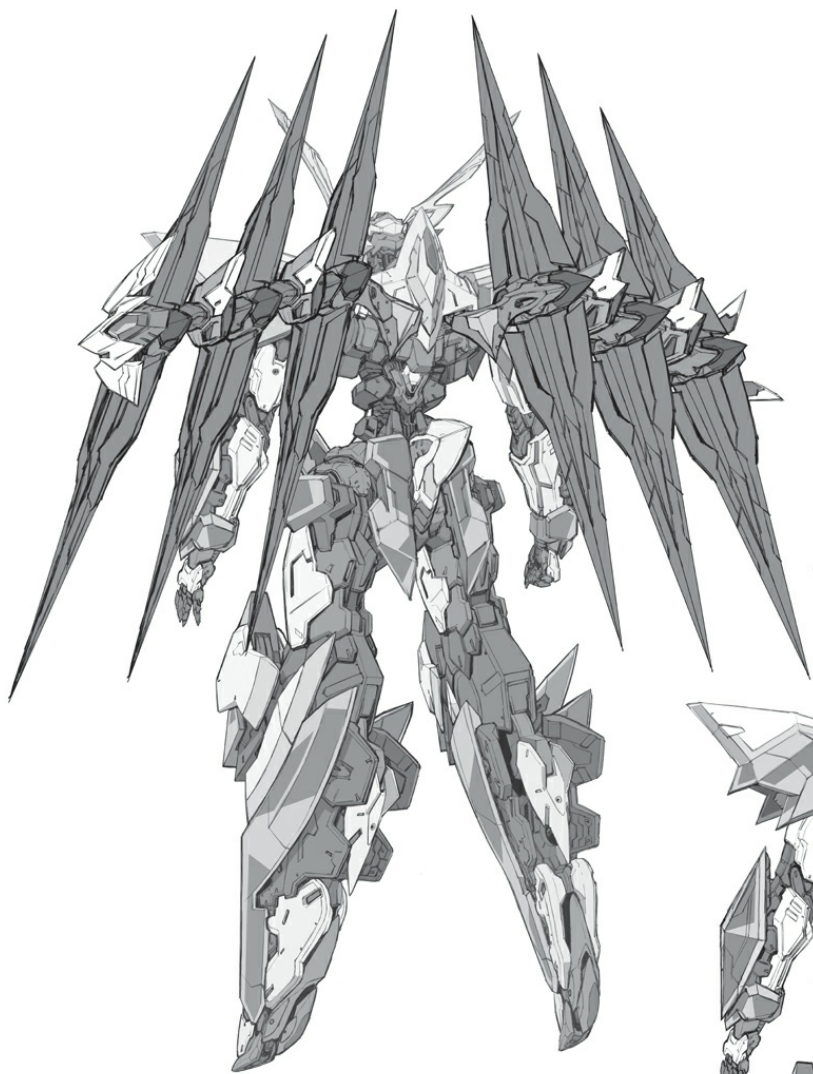
And to all my readers of both the web novel and the light novels, I feel nothing but the greatest appreciation.

Patora Fuyuhara

In Another World With My Smartphone
Mecha Design Specs

Reginleif





Developer: Regina Babylon
 Maintainer: High Rosetta
 Affiliation: Duchy of Brunhild
 Height: 17.6m Weight: 7.0t
 Maximum Capacity: 1 Person
 Armaments: Trasparente x12

Bone Frame Designer: Regina Babylon
 Administrator: Fredmonica
 Compatible Pilot: Touya Mochizuki
 Primary Color: White

A versatile Frame Gear built using the nine Valkyrie Gears as a base. As it was designed with Touya being the sole pilot in mind, it is near impossible for anyone else to pilot it. It can fly through the air without changing form by amplifying the pilot's mana. Its main weapons are the crystal plates on its back, known as the Trasparente, which can freely morph. Its Fragarach drone system allows it to attack the enemy from all angles.

In Another World With My Smartphone

30

Patora Fuyuhara
illustration • Eiji Usatsuka



Bonus Short Story

Frame Gear Plastic Kits

“Well, I made it to order like you asked, but I have no idea why you’d want it incomplete.”

“Because that’s the whole point.”

I carefully opened the box I had received from Doc Babylon. A number of frames known as runners with small parts made from a special resin connected along them were stacked inside it. It also came with assembly instructions and decal sheets. The picture on the box depicted a Knight Baron wielding a sword against a backdrop of the castle.

It was a plastic model kit. I’d suggested to Olba that he sell some at the Strand Company, and then I had Doc Babylon create a prototype to show what I meant.

Unlike the kits on Earth, they didn’t come with glue. With the advanced technology we had access to in Babylon, it was very easy to make a snap kit that didn’t require any adhesive. Even kids could easily put together a model like this.

Unfortunately, you would then need paints and special tools to make it as realistic as possible. Dive too far down the rabbit hole and it would become an incredibly expensive hobby.

“You want me to build this?”

“Yeah, just to make sure you can put it together.”

I took the Knight Baron model kit and gave it to Kuon. I wanted to confirm that it was child-friendly, but thirty minutes later, I realized this was a mistake. Kuon didn’t just put together the Frame Gear at the speed of light, he’d done it so perfectly that you’d never think it was a child who built it.

Did he even look at the instructions?!

“Well, you see, I made a lot of these back in my original time, so...”

Oh, I’m so stupid! Of course Kuon’s built them in the future!

This might have been a failure of a test case, but the model looked so good that I could hand it to Olba later to have him display as a sample.

I asked Allis to try to put one together, too, to see if a normal kid could make one, and she finished it fine. Admittedly, it was a little debatable if we could consider Allis *normal*, but she was close enough.

Compared to Kuon’s, Allis’s was unsurprisingly more roughly put together. You could see where the parts had been snapped off the runners and where the parts connected.

Actually, how did Kuon get rid of those?

“Father, do you have one of Mother’s Grimgerde?”

“Hm? The only one we have finished is the Knight Baron. I’ve asked them to work on a Chevalier model next.”

“Oh...”

I was immediately kicking myself because of how disappointed Quun sounded. I should’ve made models for the Valkyries before the general-use units.

“How about I ask if they can make Grimgerde next?”

“Dad, make the Helmwig next!”

And in comes Linne’s request.

A convertible unit sounded hard to make, though.

“Nooooooo! Make Mommy’s Overlord first!”

Steph’s request for Sue’s Ortlinde Overlord swooped in right after. Fusion mechs sounded even tougher to make. Then again, Doc Babylon would be making them, so that wasn’t my problem. The only issue would be that the Overlord would most definitely be really big for a plastic model, which would hike up the price to a level that children would struggle to afford.

Maybe we could release them in different scales.

Small sizes should be a reasonable price for the kids. A small Overlord would still be on the more expensive side, but we could make a version without the fusion form so there'd be a cheaper version. We could even consider releasing an Over Gear series alongside the Frame Gear series. Norn's Leo Noir, Nia's Tiger Rouge, the pumpkin-pants prince's Deer Blau, and then as an especially luxury item, the Val Albus.

Famous Gollems would fetch a fair price too, I would think. We could make a whole crown series. Oh, and Ether Vehicles as well.

Possible lineups kept running through my mind as the girls kept shouting their requests at me.



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In Another World With My Smartphone: Volume 30

by Patora Fuyuhara

Translated by okaykei Edited by DxS

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