



Wataru!!!

The Hot Blooded
Fighting Teen
&

2

**His EPIC ADVENTURES After STOPPING
a TRUCK with His BARE HANDS!!!**

Author
Simotti

Illustrator ★
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Chapter 1: The Sequel that Surpasses the Original!

Wataru Encounters a Dragon!

Without any further ado, welcome back to the story, Dear Readers!

A few hours had passed since Wataru had been called upon by the king himself and tasked with hunting down a dragon!!!! After packing up for their journey, Wataru and Aria swiftly made their way out of the Sky Kingdom's capital! The first destination on their roadtrip was the village where the dragon had last been spotted just a few days ago!!

"Wataru... Are you sure about this? You agreed to slay a dragon like it was nothing." There was a great deal of exasperation in Aria's voice while they walked along the road leading to the aforementioned village!

"You bet I did! I get to fight a *dragon*!?!? My hot blood's pumping faster than ever before!!"

Aria countered with a frown and a pout! "Listen here, Wataru. Just like the King said, the dragon is incredibly more powerful than any Joe Shmoe monster around. It apparently defeated even the Demon Lord Deus once!"

Correct-o-mundo! Rumor had it that the Demon Lord Deus had once challenged the dragon in an attempt to make it join his ranks! The most-assuredly-fearsome battle only ended when the Demon Lord gave up on defeating the dragon and retreated! This anecdote alone was a powerful testament to the might of the dragon's powers!

"Hmph... Bring it on! The stronger the enemy, the more it fires me up!" Wataru declared with a dauntless grin! Not a shade of fear was on his face!

Aria finally relented! "Well, I don't think you'll ever change, Wataru..."

Another hour had passed before the pair arrived at a small village located a few miles east of the Sky Kingdom capital! This was the very place where the dragon had been spotted, just the other day! But... as Wataru gazed over the village before him, he was lost for words!

“Wh-What’s going on!?!?!?!?” he shouted!

The village, horrifically, had burned to the ground!! Every single house in the village had been charred extra-well-done! Great gouges had been torn in the ground! A pall of smoke hung over the village, and the occasional wisp of flame licked up out of the rubble!!! Despite the sky being otherwise cloudless, the ash and smoke blocked out the sun, leaving the village darkened as if it was trapped under a gloomy storm cloud! It was more than a full day since the dragon had attacked the village, but the ferocious scars it had left behind were much too fresh and vivid!

“Wh-What, are we on Fury Road...!?!?” Wataru muttered! O, the terror of the dragon! They had never expected it to burn down an entire village!

“According to the king, the villagers have been evacuated to another city...”

“So there were no casualties, then! Lucky us!!”

“Yes, but this is horrible... We can hardly breathe in this thick smoke,” Aria said with a groan, covering her mouth and nose with her hand!

Wataru tightly clenched his fists and turned his eyes to the ground!

“What’s wrong, Wataru?”

“Rr-Rragh...!”

Plop...! Plop, plop...!

Before he knew it, Wataru was crying super-manly tears! His lips quivered as waterfalls of macho tears rolled down his cheeks!!

“That dragon... That monster’s evil incarnate...! Burning down an entire village...!? What did the poor villagers ever do to it...!?!?” At this very moment, Wataru made an oath to the manly tears rolling down his face! No matter what, at any cost, he would defeat the dragon!! With that conquest, he will restore peace to the lives of these poor people!!! “The dragon couldn’t have gotten far!! We’re going to hunt it down, Aria!!”

“Okay!” Aria energetically agreed!

Wataru looked up and spotted a familiar figure at the edge of the blinding cloud of ash and smoke! He pointed at the figure, unable to hold back a roar of

joy! “Oh!!!!!!!!!!!!!! It’s you!!!!!!!!!!!!!!”

The figure had an attractive face, and silky, long, blue hair! It was wearing an unmistakable suit of spiky, black, full armor! That’s right, Dear Readers, it was Résistance!

“Hm? Is that... Wataru and Aria!?” It was indeed Résistance, who widened her eyes in astonishment as she recognized the pair!

“Long time no see!!” Wataru cried!! “How many years has it been!?!?”

“Just about a day,” she answered! After Wataru defeated the Demon Lord, Résistance had departed from them on a journey of self-improvement and rigorous training... And now, after a mere 24 hours, they were reunited! I, for one, want my tears back!!

“It’s been so long, Résistance!” Aria said with a brimming smile!

“It’s been. One. Day.” Résistance insisted in confusion!

“So glad to see you again, Résistance! Have you gotten taller since we last saw you!?”

“Of course not. It’s only been a day. How much taller do you get in a day?”

“Oh, right! I should give this back!” Completely ignoring her response, Wataru took off the necklace he had been wearing and handed it to Résistance! This necklace depicted a snake wrapped around a cross. Résistance had given it to Wataru when she left, telling him to “hold onto it until we meet again!”

“R-Right...” Résistance awkwardly accepted the necklace! “H-How should I put this...? Isn’t this sort of transaction supposed to take place in a more... dramatic situation?”

“There’s nothing we can do about it! It’s not our fault we met again in a day!”

“You’re right, but... It just feels strange. We parted ways like ‘See you again *someday*,’ and here we are the very next day.”

“Setting that aside, Résistance, what are you doing here?” Aria curiously asked.

Résistance was glad to have a chance to change the subject! “Well, I heard a

dragon has appeared around here... I thought I'd take on a dragon as part of my self-improvement regiment."

"I see!"

"I see, too!"

Wataru and Aria answered, turning to each other!!

"We came here to find the dragon, too!" Wataru said!

"Oh, really?"

"After the king learned of Wataru defeating Deus the Demon Lord, He requested that we hunt down the dragon!" Aria proudly boasted! Of course, it was a great honor to have the king of a nation make a request himself!

Résistance crossed her arms, impressed! "That's quite impressive! A direct request from the king!"

"Yeah!" Wataru said! "But... It looks like we were a little late!"

"Looks like it," Résistance concurred, gazing out at the burnt-down village before adding: "but I actually came across a traveling merchant nearby. According to him, the dragon flew towards a mountain north of here."

"Woah, for real!? Then let's go! You're coming, right!?!?" Wataru demanded!

Résistance's mouth formed a gleaming smirk! "Of course!"

And so, Résistance, who had departed the protagonist's party in the tear-jerker finale of Volume One, had miraculously and conveniently rejoined the party a few pages into Chapter One of Volume Two! We don't waste time with subtlety around here! The familiar trio of Wataru, Aria, and Résistance headed full-speed to the north, towards the mountain where the dragon had apparently flown off to...!!



The party kept powering through a mountainous area when Wataru, who had been leading the marching order, suddenly stopped and shouted! "Hey! Isn't that a dragon!?"

"What!?" Aria responded in disbelief! "You found the dragon already!? We're

barely a few pages into the story!!”

“Yeah! Look, there!!” Wataru pointed to the sky above!

Résistance wore a grave expression as she followed his pointing finger and analyzed the creature in the sky! “Enormous frame, covered in red scales, and those eerily pointed wings... No doubt about it, that’s a dragon.”

The dragon was flying elegantly through the cloudless blue sky! Even though there was a great distance between it and the humans on the ground, Wataru couldn’t help but feel the powerful aura the creature exuded with every bone in his body! He was sure of one thing: the dragon was strong!! Even more, there was one enigma about the creature that pressed down on Wataru’s brain!

“Why’s the dragon wearing a T-shirt!?!?!?” Wataru shouted! Indeed, the dragon was wearing a casual-and-clean, white and blue striped T-shirt!

“Why...? Why shouldn’t a dragon wear clothes?” Résistance responded, puzzled.

“I’m sure the dragon would be embarrassed if it was naked,” agreed Aria.

“Right, that’s how it is! Of course, it was biased of me to think that dragons don’t wear clothes!” Wataru admitted! He set his countenance into the expression of a *Nio* and continued, “All right!!!!!! I’m going!!!!!!”

“G-Going where!? How!? The dragon’s so high up...” Aria was bewildered!

Wataru took a wide stance and squatted low! “Aaaaahhhhhh...!!” He tensed his legs, preparing to unleash every last bit of his strength, before—!! “Jmp!!!!!!”

Lllllleeeeeeeeeaaaaaapppppp!!! Wataru rocketed into the sky, powered by his own two legs!

“Ahh!” Aria cried as an incredible shockwave erupted, leaving a small crater in the ground where Wataru had been standing.

“Th-That’s an incredible jump...” After giving a surprised glance to the hole in the ground, Résistance quickly turned her gaze upwards! Wataru had already landed with ease on the dragon’s back, nine hundred feet in the air! Modern science would tell you that no human could jump nine hundred feet without any mechanical assistance; however, Wataru and his special training regimen

easily destroyed such “normal” preconceptions!! Of course, I’m sure that none of our Dear Readers who have read the masterpiece that is *WATARU!!! The Hot-Blooded Fighting Teen & His Epic Adventures After Stopping a Truck with His Bare Hands!!* Volume One would be surprised in any way just because Wataru jumped nine hundred feet into the air!!!

“Woah...! Dragons are pretty big...!” Wataru said excitedly from his new position on the dragon’s back!! This majestic flying creature was about sixty feet in length from its head to the end of its tail! The scales that covered its entire body were as red as molten lava and probably as hard as diamonds!! The striped shirt that covered its torso was obviously far larger than anything found in any human apparel store! Wataru couldn’t help but wonder if there was such a thing as a fantasy Big & Tall shop that catered to dragons!

“Hey, Dragon!! I’m Wataru Ito!! Fight me right now!!” he shouted as an introduction, even though he wasn’t sure if the dragon would speak his language!

Who are you...?

(Whaaaaaaaaaaaat!?!? It talked straight into my mind!!) Wataru was inwardly awestruck! Incredibly, the dragon had spoken to him on a telepathic hotline!

Hmhmhm... You’re surprised...

(What!? You... can read my mind, too!?)

Of course I can, boy. The dragon’s telepathic voice felt scratchy in Wataru’s mind! That feeling, along with his general tone, gave Wataru the impression of talking with an elderly man! Suddenly, the dragon turned his head around to stare directly at Wataru! Another detail that had escaped Wataru’s notice until now was that the dragon was... wearing glasses! His yellow, reptilian eyes peeked through the lenses of a pair of dragon-sized spectacles!

(G-Glasses...!? Where did you get those!? And the shirt!?)

Details, boy... More importantly, you said you wanted to fight me.

(That’s right!!) Wataru thought, nodding firmly for emphasis!

Hm, interesting. You’ve trained your body well, seeing as you leapt all the way

from down there to up here... But you lack something that you'll need in order to fight me.

(What!?!?!?!?! For real!?!?!?!?!)

How is the voice in your head so loud?

(Details, old man!! What's it to you!?!?)



(So, what do I need!?) Wataru grumbled, crossing his log-thick arms!

Orbs...

(Orbs...!?)

Orbs! Some sort of magical spheres!

My body is protected by a magical barrier that deflects all physical attacks. If you want to break through the barrier, collect six orbs from all over the Wind Continent. The orbs possess a mystical power to negate magic. When you have six of them, their combined power will be able to disable even the barrier that protects me.

What a time-wasting gimmick! You see this kind of thing all the time in fantasy novels!

(So that's how it is! Well, first things first... I'll put that to the test!!) Just as the thought left his mind, Wataru fired a four-hundred-kilometers-per-hour punch into the back of the dragon's shirt! But...!!

No use...

Wataru's fist crashed into an invisible wall a hair's breadth above the dragon's shirt! Wataru threw another punch, and another, but all of them were blocked by the invisible force! That being said, Wataru felt no pain in his fists! It felt like he was striking a steel surface covered with a thick layer of cotton! "I see... My punches aren't doing anything! They're useless!!" It seemed like the dragon really was protected by a magic barrier! (But why!? Why tell me how I can defeat you!?) *It's simple. I want a fair fight against a worthy opponent.*

(Hm... Got it!!) That answer spoke loudly and clearly to Wataru! Anyone who practiced martial arts would have felt the same!

This barrier has been in place around my body since the moment of my birth. It is not a power I wanted, nor is it something I can turn off by my own accord. And because of this little barrier, I am bored out of my mind. It keeps me from fighting powerful foes.

(So, you want to fight me without your barrier!)

Correct. And collecting the six orbs will not be an easy task. My dearest wish is

to fight those who have what it takes to overcome that challenge. I wish for a real life-or-death battle.

Human or dragon, all true MEN long for heart-pounding battles against powerful adversaries! Just like Wataru, this dragon had quite the fighting spirit!!

(I get it now! But I have to ask you a favor, dragon! Don't attack any villages until I get back!!) The dragon, in a rather anthropomorphic gesture, frowned! *Oh? You tell me not to 'devastate'? That takes the fun away.*

(Save that devastation energy for when you face me! That should make for an even better battle!!) After a few moments of silence, the dragon answered! *Hm. Interesting! I've lived quite a long life, but have never met anyone as intriguing as you! Very well. I will keep a low profile for a while.*

(Thanks! And don't go eating any humans, either!)

The dragon smirked, bearing a fang! *Worry not, Wataru. I'm a vegetarian. I've never tasted flesh, even that of a human.*

Wataru returned a smirk of his own! (Heh! Now, we're talking! I'll get those orbs, then! See ya!) Wataru immediately jumped right off the dragon's back for a nine hundred-foot descent!!



"Oh, here he comes..." Aria pointed up at the sky!

"Is he just going to hit the ground?" Résistance asked nervously, brushing her blue hair back from her face!

"It's Wataru. He'll be fine," Aria reassured her, without a shred of concern in her tone!

Ttttthhhhhhhuuuddddddd!!!!

Wataru landed in front of Aria and Résistance with a thunderous crash! His perfectly-built body was unharmed, naturally, but the impact of his landing caused rocks in the vicinity to shatter! One of the shards struck Aria smack in the middle of her forehead!

"Graghghaghalghrrraarghaaagghhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!!" Aria screamed, blood spewing out of the wound!

“Are you okay, Aria!?!?!?!?” Wataru shouted, his face once again as stony and furious as a *Nio*!!

“I-I’m fine, Wataru...! W-Welcome back...!” she answered, even as blood gushed down her face! Her hands lit up with a green glow as she reached up to touch where the rock had struck her! Once she touched the wound with her hands, it rapidly began to heal! That’s right! She was capable of powerful healing magic! So, don’t you worry about her safety! Not for something minor like a shard of rock striking her face!!

“How’d it go?” Résistance asked!

“Long story short, yadda yadda yadda...!!” He began relaying his conversation with the dragon!!

A few minutes later, once Wataru had finished retelling what you and I already know happened, Aria tilted her head in confusion! “Orbs...? What are those? I’ve spent my entire life on this continent and I’ve never heard of them before.”

Résistance smugly crossed her arms! “I’ve heard of orbs.”

“Y-You have, Résistance!?!?”

Résistance nodded, her mouth contorted in a you-know-what-eating grin! “Of course. Who do you think I am? I am the most powerful knight on the continent, who first challenged the Demon Lord to a one-on-one battle before being easily defeated, but then got recruited by the Demon Lord after I swore my loyalty to him, then lost to you after all that.”

“That’s not a résumé to be proud of.” Aria was 1000% correct!

“So!?” Wataru jumped in! “Where are all six of the orbs!?”

“I hate to tell you this, but I only know where one of the orbs is.”

“Oh...!” Wataru scratched his cheek in disappointment! “So, where’s that orb!?”

“I remember that... It was in a village not far from here. I heard that the village elder there has it.”

“All right, let’s go there right now!!”

“Yes!” Aria and Résistance both agreed, wearing smiles suggesting that they had the same idea!

And so, Wataru and his party embarked on the incredibly challenging journey of collecting all six orbs! Will this ordeal be concluded by the end of Volume Two!? There’s only one way to find out, Dear Readers!



The Wind Continent is a unique landmass comprising a variety of landscapes: anything from arid wastelands devoid of vegetation to muggy swamplands where it rained all year. While Japan, Wataru’s homeland, varied in climate and landscape depending on the region, the differences in Japan weren’t as dramatic as they were here. Even though Wataru had already spent several days in this fantasy world, there was still much for him to learn in the Wind Continent alone. (Come to think of it, all I know about is the Wind Continent... It would be great to see the other continents, someday!!) With those thoughts in mind, Wataru and the party were quietly trudging through a forest full of conifers. The warm afternoon sunlight poured through the trees above them. “Ugh... I’m getting a little hungry!” Wataru said, and rubbed his ultimate six-pack of steel.

Aria nodded in agreement. “Me, too. And my feet are starting to ache. How much longer until we get to that village, Résistance?”

“We should arrive soon...” Résistance answered.

After a few minutes, the party finally emerged from the forest and were walking into a field. They spotted a small village before them. “Hey, isn’t that it!?” Wataru asked.

“Yes. The first orb should be in that village,” Résistance confidently declared.

The trio walked right into the village in search of the orb. It was a quaint village, a stereotypical farming settlement in the countryside. There was little traffic, and there was nothing but wooden huts and farmland around them. The streets were not paved with stone like those in the Sky Kingdom, but were bare dirt roads.

“Hmm...” Aria muttered loudly. “Are you sure there’s an orb in this backwater

podunk?”

“Keep your voice down Aria,” Résistance calmly reprimanded her.

“But look, all the houses are falling apart. Those won’t even keep the rain out.”

“Lower your voice, Aria. The villagers can hear you.”

“You won’t catch me dead living in a jerkwater village like this. I don’t think they even sell Payblades here.” Payblades, by the way, were a line of toys that had swept the Sky Kingdom by storm, and were very similar to a certain series of toys in Wataru’s original world. Aria was a particularly hard-core Payblader. “You must be mistaken, Résistance. No way an orb would be in this middle-of-nowhere, backcountry boondock in the sticks.”

“What did the countryside ever do to you?” Résistance asked. As she did, an elderly man stormed out into the road in front of them. “Shut up, already!!! What in the world is your problem, young lady!?!?!?!?” shouted the old man. He was clad in a dirt-stained button-down shirt and brown pants, and was obviously a farmer!

“Um... Excuse me, but you are!?!?” Wataru asked!

“I’m the village elder! What do you want with us, outsider!?!?” the elder answered!

“*You’re* the village elder! We’re actually on a journey to collect orbs in order to hunt a dragon!!”

Wataru’s answer only enraged the old man further! “What!? Orbs!? No! No!! No!!! The village’s orb is an ancient treasure! And you expect me to hand it over to some disrespectful outsiders!?”

Impossible! Thanks to Aria’s loud insults, they had made the worst impression imaginable on the village elder!!

“Please, Mister Village Elder, sir! We really need the orbs to defeat the dragon!”

“What dragon? Oh, the monster that appeared in the next village over? Let the soldiers handle it! At any rate, I’m not giving the orb to anyone, least of all

you! Now scram!”

“We can’t do that!! Please, sir!!” Wataru begged, bending himself in a clean, ninety-degree bow!

“Please, sir!” Aria joined in the begging, generating the exact opposite effect than the one she had hoped for!!

“You were just talking all kinds of crap about our village before I came out here!”

“No, I wasn’t! I love places like this! It’s surrounded by nature!”

“Liar!!”

“I’m not lying! I can totally eat bugs and stuff!”

“We don’t eat bugs! What do you think life in the countryside is like!?”

Wataru saw that this was going nowhere! He did a backflip on the spot, and landed beautifully on all fours in the form of a *dogeza*, the ancient Japanese art of groveling on one’s hands and knees! Wataru’s *dogeza* was immaculate, a 10-out-of-10! If showing submission ever became an official Olympic sport, Wataru’s *dogeza* would undoubtedly snag the gold medal!!

“Please, Mister Village Elder, sir! Please!!”

Faced with the all-too-spectacular *dogeza*, the village elder finally relented! “F-Fine...” He muttered. “I know! If it means that much to you, we shall do battle with our village’s traditional contest! If you beat me, the orb is yours!”

“Contest...!?” Wataru looked up from his groveling with a curious expression!

“Indeed! And that contest is... A hot dog-eating contest!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!”



The trio were shown to the elder’s manor, the biggest house in the entire village! The party waited for a few minutes in a spacious, wooden area before the village elder reappeared! “Thanks for waiting! Everything’s ready!” He clapped his hands, summoning a few household servants! They set up a rectangular table before the party, and placed two gigantic platters on it!

“Wh-What is this...!” Résistance was shaken! And who could have blamed her!? Each platter was stacked high with a mountain of piping-hot hot dogs!!

“I see...” Aria remarked! “Whoever eats the most hot dogs, wins? Is that it?”

“That’s right!” the village elder confirmed! “The time limit is five minutes! That’s all you get!”

“I got it! I’ll be the one eating for our party... But who will be your hot dog eating champion!?” Wataru asked!

“Me, of course! Who else!?”

Much to everyone else’s surprise, the village elder himself would face off against Wataru in the hot dog-eating contest! The man was easily over the age of seventy-five! Could he really participate in the rigorous sport of competitive eating!?

“All right, Wataru! We got this match in the bag!” Aria declared, already assured of their victory!

The village elder, however, wore a dauntless grin! “Hmph! You don’t want to underestimate me! I’ve devoted my entire life to competitive eating! How could I lose to a boy like you!?”

Wataru stared back at him! “Devoted your whole life to competitive eating...!? That can’t be good for you!”

Indeed! Not only can timed competitive eating damage the stomach and intestines, but it also raises one’s blood sugar! While those among our Dear Readers who live more hectic lives may be tempted to scarf their meals as fast as possible... It is absolutely imperative that you should chew your food well and take the time to properly eat your meals!!

Anyway, the time for the contest had arrived! Wataru and the village elder stood before their respective mountains of steaming hot dogs!

“Woah, that’s a lot of steam...!” Wataru couldn’t help but mutter in amazement at the awesome sight!

“Feeling a little weak in the knees, Wataru!?” The village elder taunted!

“Never! In fact, I’m pumped!! Competitive eating isn’t good for your health...

but I won't hold back once the competition starts!" This was all going towards his goal of collecting the orbs so he could ultimately vanquish the dragon! Wataru's fists tightened in determination!

Suddenly, Résistance stepped up from the corner of the room and approached the village elder!

"Hm? What is it?" he asked! "The contest is about to begin. I wish you'd keep your distance."

Résistance handed the village elder a pair of cork earplugs! "Put these in. Trust me."

"Wh-Why should I!? Is this some sort of diabolical trap!?"

"Why would it be a trap? Just put them in."

"A-All right..." he relented! Résistance had practically forced the earplugs into the elder's ears through her persuasive tone! She returned, satisfied, to where she had been standing! "Whatever was that about..." the elder grumbled.

"Now, Wataru, are you ready!?"

"Yeah!!" Wataru answered with an energetic nod!

Seeing the nod, the village elder took a long inhale before shouting, "Now, then... Let us begin!!!!!" At the same moment, the elder began to expertly dismantle the mountain of hot dogs before him, rapidly shoving them into his mouth one after another! (Check that out! My eating speed has only increased with age! That Wataru kid must be in complete shock and awe...!) He glanced to his side, a hot dog in his mouth, to find that Wataru had not even begun eating!!

"Thank you for this meal...!" Wataru said, and slapped his hands together in one powerful motion!

Clalalalalalappppppppp!!!

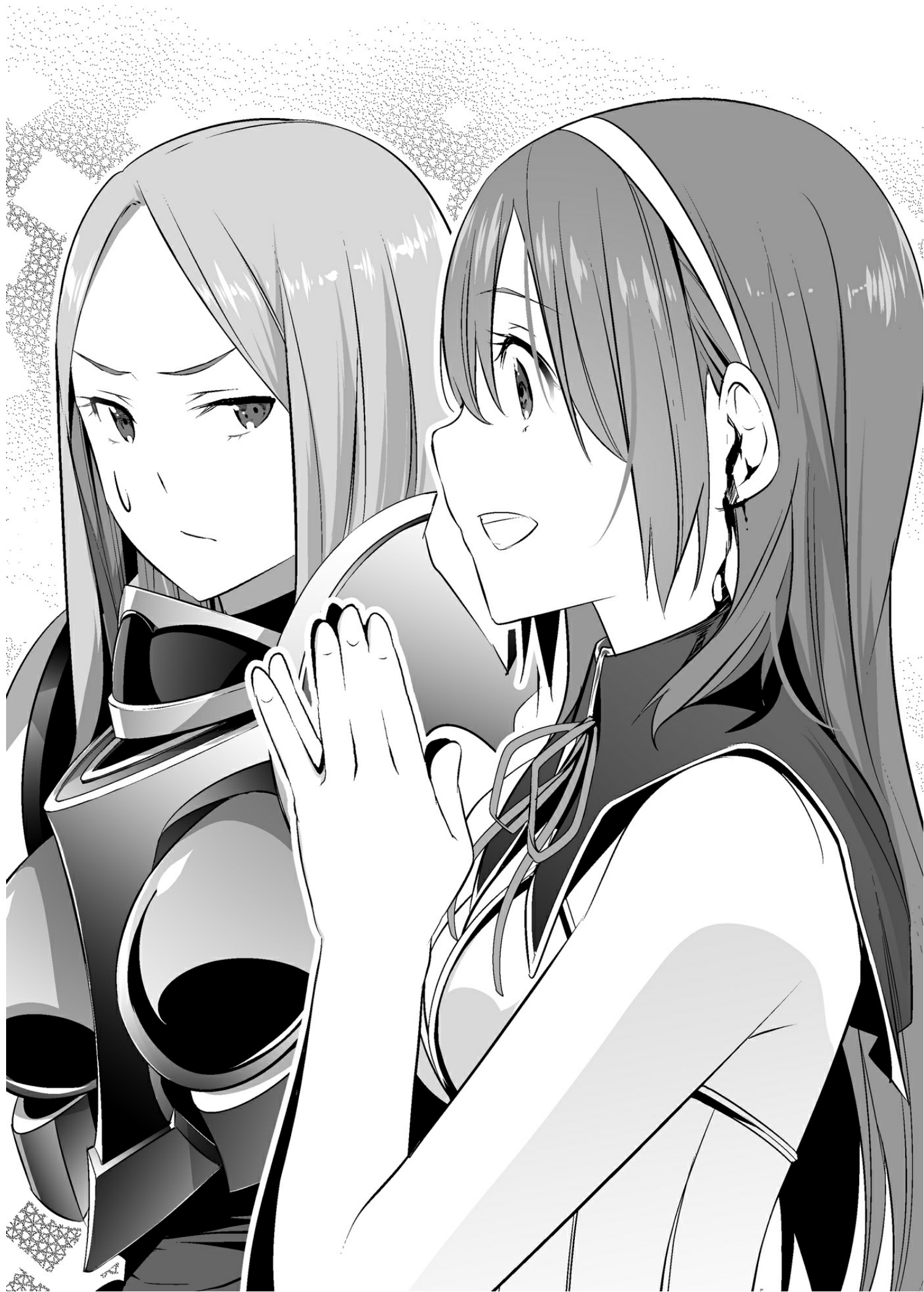
The slamming together of Wataru's hands created a sonic boom that thundered through the room! The cork earplugs in the elder's ears disintegrated in an instant!! (What!?!?!? How could this be!?!?!?) The village elder was completely dumbfounded!! Dust that had once been the cork

earplugs poured out of his ears! (Th-That was a close one...! If that girl hadn't given me those plugs, my eardrums would be busted for sure! And all that was just from one clap off his hands!? Ridiculous!) As his estimation of Wataru's strength rose, the elder couldn't help but smirk at his decision to challenge the boy to an eating contest instead of a physical challenge! (But... What a moron! Who gives a pre-meal prayer during an eating contest!? Victory is mine!) He continued inhaling the hot dogs at breakneck speed! His stomach was practically a black hole! The elder's powerful gobbling technique was unbecoming of a man of his venerable age!

"That old man's amazing...!"

"Yes, he's much more than I expected!"

Both Aria and Résistance were totally engrossed with the village elder's incredible hot dog-eating speed!



But then, tragedy struck!! (No! H-How could I have been so foolish!?) The elder had been so focused on shoving hot dogs into his mouth as quickly as possible, he had burned his tongue on the steaming wieners! His hot dog-consumption speed had been drastically decreased! (Damn...! It's never easy to eat freshly cooked hot dogs this fast... But if they're this hot, *he* has to be struggling, too...!)

The village elder gave Wataru another glance... to find Wataru, his face as impassive as a fearsome statue's, chomping down hot dog after hot dog, completely unbothered by the heat of the meat!!

(Wh-What the—!?!?) The elder was speechless! (H-How!? How can he keep chowing down so fast!? These sausages are still painfully hot! N-No... Is it possible that he...?) The elder suddenly realized the true intention behind Wataru's pre-meal prayer!! (I-I get it! When he clapped his hands, he made a gust of wind that cooled off his hot dogs!)

Allow me to elaborate for those among our Dear Readers who are unable to decipher the old man's internal rambling! What Wataru had done before he started eating was no ordinary handclap, but the Shaolin Tornado Clasp*, a move from ancient Chinese martial arts!!

(*Shaolin Tornado Clasp — An incredible move devised through four thousand years of Chinese history, where the user claps their hands together with more force than any ordinary human can in order to generate a powerful shockwave. It just so happens that the move's form is nearly identical to the movement Japanese people make before beginning a meal. A martial arts master can generate powerful winds and create tornados before them with nothing but a casual clap of the hands. [1])

Of course, no ordinary clap of the hands could generate enough wind to instantly chill an entire platter of food! But it was possible for Wataru, the most powerful, hot-blooded fighting teen who has mastered all martial arts from around the globe!!

(O-Outrageous... That seemingly innocuous gesture was a strategic move to cool down the freshly prepared food!! The idea is preposterous... But it's the only way to explain his superhuman hot dog-eating speed!!) The elder's lead

rapidly diminished until, before he knew it, Wataru had easily overtaken the old man!! (Wataru... Perhaps... Maybe to you... I can trust you with... my dream... to become... the strongest food fighter on the Wind Continent...)

The five-minute countdown allotted to the competition had passed! The servant who had been acting as the judge called an end to the contest! “I will now proceed to the scoring phase!” he declared!

The judge carefully counted how many hot dogs remained on each plate! Wataru, the elder, and even Aria and Résistance in the audience waited for the results with bated breath!! “The results are in! I will announce the winner of this hot dog-eating competition momentarily!” This was it! The result of this hot dog-eating competition would decide our heroes’ fate: would they acquire the orb, or not!? It could go either way!!

“Final results!” The judge declared! “The village elder has eaten... 47 hot dogs! And the challenger has eaten... 1097!!”

Wataru absolutely *wrecked* that competition!!

“You did it, Wataru!” Aria cheered, beaming at our hero!

“...You had to *count* when it was such a blowout?” Résistance acutely pointed out! In truth, the elder’s platter still held most of the hot dogs it had started with, while Wataru’s hot dogs were nearly finished!! Even as the judge was taking his tally of the remaining hot dogs, everyone in the audience was secretly wondering why he was bothering to count!! Even the village elder could see how obviously Wataru had beaten him!!!

At the end of the day, Wataru won the hot dog-eating competition!

“You bested me, Wataru...” The village elder said. He showed true grace and sportsmanship, despite losing by a margin of 1050 hot dogs!

“It was an honor to do battle with you, Mister Elder!!”

“Y-You think so...?” Résistance couldn’t help but mutter out loud. Truth be told, she was more than sure that Wataru would have won even without using his Shaolin Tornado Clasp to cool down his hot dogs!! He had won by 1050!!!! That’s one *thousand* and fifty!!!!

“I’m a man of my word.” The village elder produced a red gem the size of his palm! “Here, Wataru. Take this orb.”

Wataru took a close look at the orb! It shimmered in the light, its refraction vibrant and alluring! It was beautiful enough to make anyone want to stare at it forever!!

“Woah! Thank you!!” Wataru didn’t forget to thank the elder as he took the orb!

“Hey, Wataru!” the elder added! “How would you like to be one of the Wind Continent’s elite food fighters?”

“Never!!!!!!” Wataru immediately rejected the potential sidequest!

“I-I see...” the elder said, smiling gently. “Well, if you change your mind, you can come see me anytime!”!

“All right, I’ll keep that in mind!”

It’s my personal guess that Wataru and his friends would never return to this village! Why, you ask!? Because I have no plans to start writing *WATARU!!! The Hot-Blooded Fighting Teen & His Epic Adventures After Stopping a Truck with His Bare Hands!! From Dry Toast to Thanksgiving Dinner: the Delicious Climb of a Hot-Blooded Fighting Food Fighter!!!* Trust me, I’m the author!!!!

That being said, Wataru’s party had succeeded in obtaining the first orb! Their quest to collect all six orbs had still only just begun!

To be continued in the next chapter: “Chaos! A Novel Challenge for the Orb!”

*Sources:

[1] *Everything You Didn’t Know About the Shaolin Tornado Clasp: The Man Who Clapped Up a Storm* — Isekai Tensei Publishing

Chapter 2: Chaos! A Novel Challenge for the Orb!

A day had passed since the conclusion of the hotdog-eating contest! Wataru and his party had spent the night at an inn and departed the village that morning in search of the second orb!

The trio carried on through the luscious plains for hours! A pleasant breeze brushed their cheeks, and an endless blue sky stretched above them! What a lovely day to wander through a meadow on a leisurely quest in search of a magical orb to defeat a dragon!!

“The village elder said that we could find whoever has the second orb somewhere around here...” Résistance mused. “Is *anyone* living out in the middle of nowhere like this?”

When they had asked the village elder after the contest if he knew where any of the other orbs were, he had told them: “Now that I think about it... There’s a gothic manor to the west of the plains. I’ve heard that the person who lives there is in possession of an orb!”

The three had put their faith in that information and set out! However, no matter how far they traveled, there was nothing around them but the same endless expanse of grass! Even Résistance’s patience seemed to be wearing thin by the experience!!!

“Maybe, but it’s not like we have any other leads to an orb...” Aria admitted.

“You said it! All we can do now is believe the elder’s tip!!” Wataru declared, his face set in the stony, determined expression of a *Nio*!

“Oh... Is that it?” Résistance pointed towards a gothic manor, standing by itself near the horizon.

Aria let out a relieved sigh beside her. “Whoever lives in that manor must be a serious weirdo. Who would live this far out from civilization?” she complained!

“Now that I think about it, the elder said something about a bestselling novelist living in that manor,” Résistance remarked.

“Yes, I remember that, too,” Aria confirmed.

“What!? Really!?!?” Wataru shouted in astonishment!

“Weren’t you there with us, Wataru...?”

“No! I think I was outside working out!! So, what kind of stories does this novelist write!?”

Résistance answered: “His most famous story is called *It’s Me, a Shy Orc Loner with a Heart of Gold (Notice Me, Senpai!) Who Got Reborn In Another World, a.k.a. ‘Isekai,’ Where I Am Getting Into All Sorts of Troubles, Hijinks, and Shenanigans, Oh My!*”

Wataru’s energetic demeanor did a backflip out the window as all color made an emergency evacuation from his face!! “Hey!!!! Why didn’t you tell me that sooner!?!?!?!?” Allow me to explain! Back in Chapter Six of Volume One, “Wataru, Confusion! The One and Only Literary Critique Battle!”, this was the very novel that Wataru had harshly criticized during the aforementioned Literary Critique Battle! For him to meet the author of this story in person would be a disaster in more ways than one!!

“You’re putting too much thought into this, Wataru,” Aria said.

“That’s right, Wataru,” Résistance chimed in. “The author lives in the middle of nowhere. I doubt he even knows that you gave it a harsh review.”

“Yeah,” Aria concurred.

“I-I sure hope so...!!!”

As Aria and Résistance dragged Wataru along, he couldn’t help but carry a shade of anxiety in his heart in trepidation of the encounter to come...!!



“You really thought I’d just hand over my orb when you crapped all over my novel, you crap-for-brains, boneheaded, nimcompooping, single-brain-celled, bag-of-rocks, lose-your-head-if-it-wasn’t-attached-to-you, indescribable moron!!”

Once they entered the manor, Wataru and his party had immediately asked the author of *It’s Me, a Shy Orc Loner with a Heart of Gold (Notice Me, Senpai!)*

Who Got Reborn In Another World, a.k.a. "Isekai," Where I Am Getting Into All Sorts of Troubles, Hijinks, and Shenanigans, Oh My! (Or *Me, Oh My!* for short), Jacob Yamada, for the orb! As it turned out... Jacob Yamada snapped!! Jacob, a green-faced orc, contorted his hog-like face in anger! "Get the hell out of here!!"

"But, please!!" Wataru begged, to no avail!!

"I know that you think my novel 'sucked'!! I'm going to make you regret it!!" Jacob raged on, swinging his stubby arms like a windmill! While one might imagine orcs to be a savage species who wore nothing but rags, Jacob did not fit that mental image! He wore a cleanly pressed dress shirt and slacks, and, of course, lived in a really nice house! The floors of the manse were covered with expensive-looking red carpet, while a glittering chandelier hung from the ceiling of the room they were in! Jacob Yamada wasn't a bestseller for nothing! He seemed pretty well-off!!

"Hey, Wataru, maybe you should apologize," Résistance suggested! Their objective was to acquire the orb, after all! She saw that the best course of action was for Wataru to apologize and get past this impasse! However...!!

"..." Wataru was silent!

"..." And he remained silent!!

"..." Still silent!!!

"...But it did suck!!" Wataru couldn't take that back! When something sucked, it sucked!!

"Y-You bastard!! You're mocking me!?" Jacob's wrath reached new heights!

Aria jumped in, in an attempt to resolve the situation! "Please, Jacob!! We really need that orb!!" She clasped her hands tight and stared at Jacob with pleading, puppy-dog eyes!

Jacob grabbed his chest and stumbled back! "S-So *kawaii*...!!" It seemed Jacob Yamada had a weakness: innocent-looking girls like Aria! "Y-You're cute...! Do you have a boyfriend? If you don't, what do you think of me? I got *stacks* of money, you know!" Jacob stammered through this advance!

Aria's puppy-dog eyes immediately switched to a sharp, offended glare!

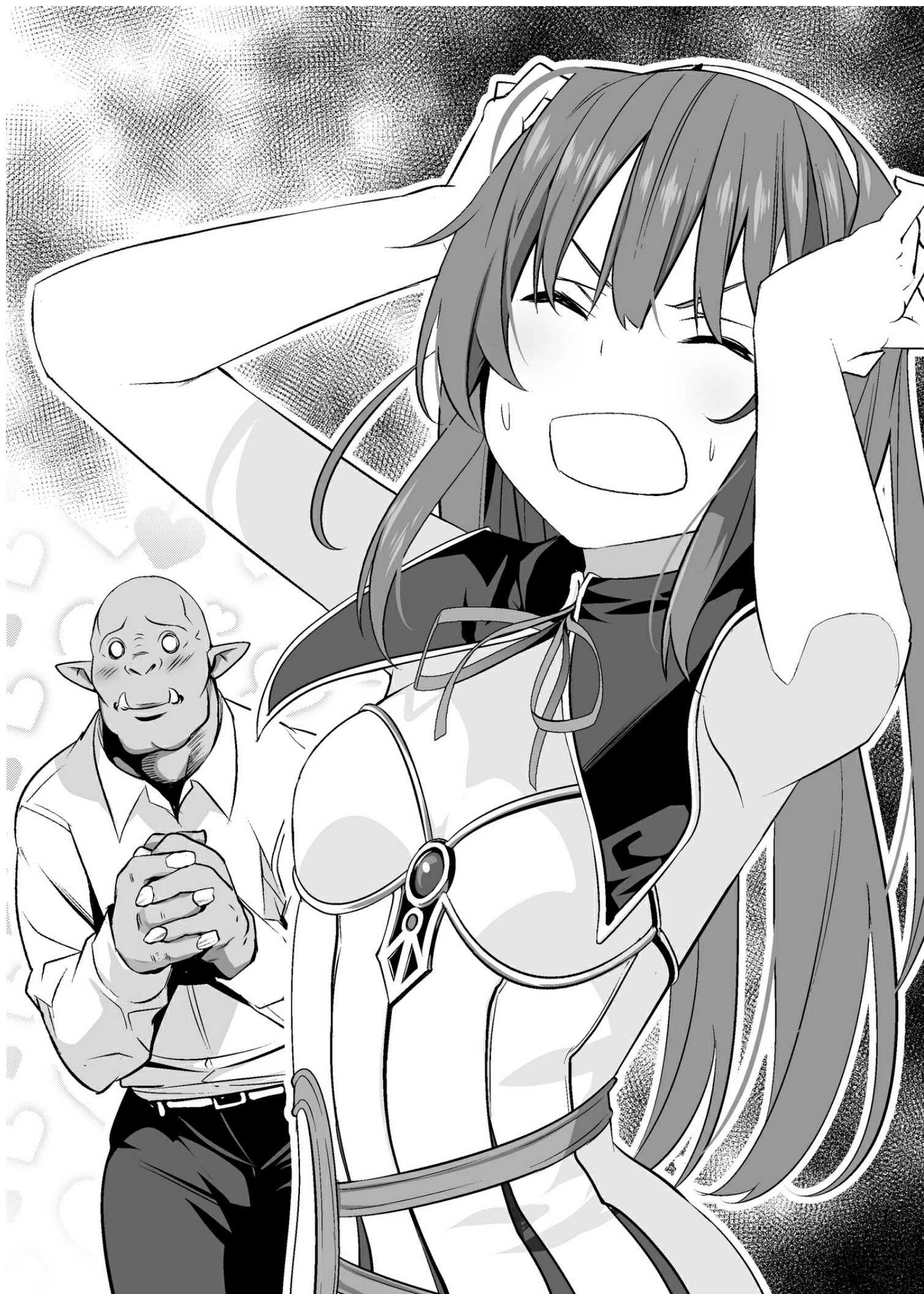
"Are you kidding me!?"

"What?"

"Why...!? Why is this happening to me!? Someone *finally* falls in love with me at first sight, and he's an *orc*!?!?" Aria stomped her feet on the floor! Despite her stereotypical light-novel-heroine appearance, she had never had someone fall in love with her at first sight! "Why couldn't it have been someone good looking!? An *orc*, of all people!? Arrrrgh!!" Aria began throwing a total tantrum!

"Calm down, Aria," Résistance reprimanded her! "You shouldn't say things like that."

"Why shouldn't I, Résistance!? Wouldn't *you* flip out if... if... *that* made moves on you!?"



“‘Th-That’...?” Jacob muttered sulkily, stabbed through the heart by Aria’s unfeeling words!

“I understand how you feel, Aria, but that’s racist. That’s not going to fly well in this day and age.” Résistance was right! Aria’s being upset about Jacob’s advances “because he was an orc” was unmistakable, blatant racism!

“I see what you mean...” Aria relented.

“In a case like this, instead of saying that you’re disgusted because he’s an orc, say that you’re disgusted because he’s a creepy novelist who flaunts his money. That way, it won’t be racism.”

“Thanks!” Aria said!

“That makes it worse!” Jacob complained!

Alas, Jacob’s feelings didn’t matter, as long as things were kept politically correct!

“I-In any case... If you want the orb, you’re going to have to take my deal!”

“What deal!?” Wataru asked with curiosity!

“To be honest, I’ve hit a bit of a writer’s block... So, if you can let me read a good novel that ignites my inspiration, I’ll hand over the orb, a family heirloom of mine!”

“I’ve never written a novel!” Wataru protested!

“Then, just a title and summary will do!” Jacob compromised! “It just has to be an exciting piece with a unique plot! A real mind-shaker! And if you can’t give me something like that...” Jacob pointed at Aria for the demand! “Give me the girl!!”

“What!?” Aria was astounded!

“Sure!!!” Wataru immediately agreed!

“What the hell, Wataru!? Don’t / get a say in this!? I don’t want to be *negotiated* into the clutches of an orc—I mean, of a revolting pervert who flaunts his money!!” Aria protested, politically correctly this time, even while Wataru clutched a fist before him with absolute confidence!

“Don’t worry, Aria! I just have to come up with a good pitch!!”

Where in all of the worlds was his confidence coming from!?!? In any case, the plot-writing challenge for the second orb had begun! Will Wataru and his team pitch a novel that will inspire Jacob!? Keep reading to find out!!



They moved into a room where Wataru could brainstorm his plot ideas! It was a neat little office with a large square table in the center!

“Listen carefully,” Jacob stated! “You have one hour! Write the title and summary of the novel on that piece of parchment on the table! If you come up with something good, I’ll give you the orb. But if you can’t...”

“Aria’s all yours!” Wataru finished Jacob’s sentence!

Jacob nodded with a beaming smile!

“No one even *asked* me if I wanted to be a prize...” Aria muttered wearily!

“Okie dokie, Aria! See you in an hour!” Jacob declared! “Oh, and just ask me if you want anything to eat or drink!” He shot a clumsy wink in Aria’s direction!

“Oh, I want orange juice!!” Wataru cheerfully accepted!

“I’ll take coffee. Black,” Résistance ordered, deadpan.

“Shut the hell up! Neither of you are getting jack crap!!” Jacob snapped at Wataru and Résistance! He turned his back on the trio and left the room, slamming the door behind him!!

“All right... We have an hour! We need to come up with the best hook for a novel there is!!”

Wataru had no experience in writing any fiction, but he would do anything for the orb! Oh, and we can’t forget that Aria’s freedom was on the line!! They had to win at all costs!!!

“But, Wataru... We’re at a serious disadvantage here, aren’t we?”

“What!? Are we!?!?!?”

“Well, yeah. We could write a *masterpiece* and all Jacob Yamada would have to do is pretend like it’s no good.”

That's right, come to think of it!

Résistance smirked confidently. "Don't worry, Aria. If he unfairly judges our idea, I'll go around tearing his novels to shreds on every single review website I can find," she declared!

Some of our Dear Readers may think that there would be no such thing as review websites in a fantasy world... but I implore you to reconsider your stance with a logical mind! That is nothing but your own bigoted preconceptions! Of course, any fantasy world could have review websites!!

"Well, there's no use in thinking about that yet! All we can do is come up with a good plot!!" Wataru declared with the confidence of a bestselling author, despite lacking any experience in the literary world!

"Really, Wataru, where *does* your confidence come from...?" Aria could only lament!

"We're wasting time already. Let's begin," Résistance spoke up. "I actually always loved to write stories. I think they were pretty good, too." Unlike Wataru, it seemed that Résistance had written before! This shone a little bit of hope for the party's victory!

"You've done this before, Résistance!?" Aria asked, perking up. "Okay, I'll do my best, too! I don't want to be anyone's prize yet!!"

The three each sat in a chair and began quietly thinking about their novel ideas, staring down the sheet of parchment. While this makes for an exceptionally unexciting visual, the task before them was more difficult than one might imagine! While all they had to do was write the title and summary of what would become a "good" novel, they had lacked any specific prompt for theme or genre! In other words, there was too much freedom! It wasn't the same case for Résistance, but for Wataru and Aria, who had never created any stories from scratch, this task was all too difficult! They didn't know what to do, what to write first, or even where to start! Before he knew it, Wataru's mind was consumed with the conundrum that all creators face at one point or another: what does it mean for something to be "good?" Not even the author has come anywhere close to solving this one!! So no amount of thinking was going to help Wataru with this!!!

Thirty minutes passed! Then, Aria spoke up! “Done!”

“Finished already?” Résistance asked! “That was pretty quick. What’s the title?”

Aria answered with pride! “It’s a romance called *Amour Mélange*! Great title, right?” She was evidently very confident in her work!

“You know, the accent mark really makes it pretentious.”

“Don’t worry about it.”

“All right! Give me the summary!!” Wataru bellowed!

“Okay!” Aria began reading the outline of her plot straight from the parchment!! “My name’s Mei! Just an ordinary eighteen-year-old you’d find anywhere! ♥ When I attended the annual king’s ball, I accidentally blew up the castle! ♥ But then, the young and good-looking prince totally fell in love with me and my quirky clumsiness! ♥ I was so so so happy, but dating royalty isn’t easy! ♥ Talk about bullying from jealous bitches, and passive-aggressive comments from the future mother-in-law! ♥ Then there’s the dark royal secret, and the no-holds-barred catfight over the legendary sword Excalibur! ♥ A team of mysterious swordsmen stand between me and Excalibur! ♥ But I’m not going to go down without a fight! ♥ I’ll carry it all on my back! ♥ The legendary sword Excalibur will be mine! ♥”

“I’m sorry Aria, but your delivery was really distracting. I have no idea what the story is about,” Résistance said!

“What!?”

“Why do you keep making this ‘♥’ noise after every sentence?”

“Those are hearts! Don’t you think it’s cuter this way?”

“I liked it!! I liked the hearts!!!” Wataru energetically praised Aria’s stylistic choice!

“And what do you mean ‘accidentally blew up the castle’?”

“The protagonist Mei shoots fireworks to make the ball more exciting.”

“Indoors?”

“She accidentally puts in too much gunpowder.”

“Not that using *any* gunpowder was acceptable.”

“I liked it!! I liked the explosion!!!” Wataru complimented Aria again!

Still, Résistance didn’t relent! “Wasn’t this a romance novel? It became all about Excalibur in the end. There was no *amour*, or *mélange*.”

“Right,” Aria concurred! “As far as the plot goes, Mei acquires Excalibur and brutally murders all of the scummy bitches that bullied her.”

“Wouldn’t that make the book a psycho thriller?”

“Hey, Résistance! Stop criticizing her story so much!” Wataru interrupted!

Aira nodded in agreement! “That’s right! After all, isn’t murder an expression of love?”

“That’s the scariest interpretation of all.”

Good ol’ psychopathic Aria! It was doubtful that her extremely eccentric tastes could tug Jacob Yamada’s heartstrings!

Wataru raised his hand! “All right, it’s my turn! I’ve never written a novel before, but I gave it my best! Take a listen!!”

“You seem proud of it, Wataru. What’s the title?” Résistance asked!

“*Super-Explosive Adventure Boy, KAKERU!!*”

“I didn’t expect any less from you, Wataru. The title alone makes me never want to read it.”

Ignoring Résistance’s comment, Wataru stood tall, parchment in hand! “Get ready for this summary: my heart and soul!!!” Wataru began reading the summary out loud, his face set in the boldly defiant expression of a *Nio*! Read on to see how epic of a writer our protagonist is!! “Sup? Name’s Kakeru! (Hot-blooded!) I’m traveling the world, following a treasure map Pops left me! (Hot-blooded!) Day after day of hard-core adventure for the hidden treasure! (Hot-blooded!) New episodes every Sunday morning at 6! (Hot-blooded!) Make sure to tune in! (Hot-blooded!)”

“That’s... a commercial for an anime show,” Résistance pointed out in

confusion. It's getting very tiring to have to repeat myself over this, but fantasy worlds, of course, can have anime and commercials! "It's not even a summary... And is it some sort of trend to put a phrase in brackets after every sentence?"

"It conveys how hot-blooded the protagonist is!" Wataru explained!

"When your summary isn't a summary at all, how is it supposed to convey any sort of appeal?"

"I-I see...!" Wataru quietly sulked at Résistance's point!

"It's okay, Wataru!" Aria jumped in to assuage his hurt feelings! "I thought it was good! I see a bold statement in airing that show at 6 on Sunday mornings when the only people awake are geezers!" But alas, she only rubbed salt in his wounds!

"The time has come... It's my turn..." Résistance declared, and stood with a confident smile! "Listen to my brilliant summary and learn the true meaning of a novel!" Résistance was the only one of them who had experience in writing, after all! It seems like her plot would prove to be their only hope!!

"I'm counting on you, Résistance!!"

"Oh, this sounds good!" Aria chimed in! "So, what's it called?"

"Dark Taboo The Forbidden Abyss"

"Huh?"

Leaving Aria dumbfounded, Résistance began proudly narrating her summary like it was the best thing since sliced bread! "In a sorrowful world of woe, covered in pitch-black darkness, the Infinite Hell *Infinitus Infernum*, Lucifer solitarily walks alone in this desolate world; it is his destiny of solitude, the *Fatum Solus*, as the reincarnated avatar of darkness. One day, his beloved lover Tiara is murdered by a human assassin. Overcome by vengeful vengeance, Lucifer succumbs to the dark power of *Obscura Virtute* and solitarily invades the human world, alone with his lonesome. A mysterious organization by the name of Right Arm of Divinity *Dextrum Brachium Sanctum* awaits him. Will Lucifer defeat them in the Holy War *Sanctus Bellum* and avenge his vengeance for Tiara in revenge? Behold, thou who hast beenth entrancedeth by darkness. This is but a fragment *Fragmentum* of the sorrowful yet beautiful chronicle of a young

man whose soul was darkly chained by the chain of darkness *Vincula Tenebris!*”

“That was the worst thing I’ve ever heard.”

“Résistance! And you had the gall to talk crap about our stories!?!?”

Aria and Wataru snapped at her at the same time!

“Why would you say that? That was a wonderful summary.”

“It doesn’t make any sense!” Aria shouted, her face beet-red!

“Hm.” Résistance held her chin for a moment. “I see. Then I’ll add (Dark Smile *Ridere de Abruptum*) at the end of each sentence, to make it more like yours.”

“That’s not the problem!!” Aria raged!

“What the hell is the Right Arm of Divinity *Dextrum Brachium Sanctum*!?!?”

Résistance met Wataru’s wrath with a smile, as if she was begging to be asked that very question! “Great question. The ‘Right Arm of Divinity *Dextrum Brachium Sanctum*’ is the mysterious organization that serves as the nemesis of Lucifer, the protagonist. It’s composed entirely of humans, but they have all had holy powers bestowed upon them by angels. So, to Lucifer, who has devil blood in him, they are natural enemies. And this is a spoiler, but we discover towards the climax that Lucifer is actually a half-blood himself, the product of an unholy forbidden coupling of an angel and a devil—”

“Not another word!!” Wataru interrupted Résistance’s goth-fic with the expression of a *Nio!*

Résistance frowned, completely dejected! “I’m just getting into the very core of Infinite Hell *~Infinitus Infernum~*, which is the True Taboo *Uiolare et Frangere Morsu—*”

“Taboo this, Taboo that. Give me a break, Résistance. The orb is on the line, not to mention *the rest of my life!*” Aria declared, her eyes bloodshot! The way things were going, not only would they miss out on the orb, but we would lose our dear heroine. Without our heroine, I see no way that I could continue writing this novel! If such a thing were to happen, the remainder of the book will be dedicated, in its entirety, to a glorious postscript! Fear not, Dear Readers!!

doubted that Wataru had even been speaking the same language they were all using! “Huh? What? ‘*Hard-Core Melty Dark...*’ What?”

“Here’s the synopsis!” Completely ignoring him, Aria began reading their synopsis, a chimeric concoction of their stories!! “Yo, my name’s Kakeru! (Hot-blooded!) Just an ordinary sixteen-year-old! ♥ One day, my adventurer father *Pater Adventurous* was murdered by the young prince of darkness! (Dark Smile!) That blasted off my red-hot grand adventure! (Hot-blooded!) We uncover the sketchy secrets of the royalty trapped in darkness, and fight for our lives over the legendary sword Excalibur! ♥ Can we win the Holy War *Sanctus Bellum* and avenge my adventurer father *Pater Adventurous*!? (Dark Smile!?) Behold! This is the tragic yet beautiful chronicle of hot-blooded pure love revenge by a young man who had his soul chained by the Hot-blooded Chain *Calidum-Sanguinem Torque* (Hot-blooded ♥ Smile!)”

[illegible]

Jacob was overcome with confusion! “Huh? What? What’s the story about?”

“Now’s our chance, Wataru!” Résistance called.

“Yeah!”

At Résistance's cue, Wataru leapt towards Jacob and smashed his fist into Jacob's cranium!

“Greaghhhhh!” Jacob was immediately knocked out! Out cold!! He collapsed onto the floor! Allow me to explain! The move Wataru had just deployed was Sky-High Brain-Rattler*!

(*Sky-High Brain-Rattler — The signature move of a renowned karate fighter in the *Edo* period, who worked as an assassin by night. The user leaps powerfully into the air, and slams their fist straight down onto the top of their target's cranium. Anyone who suffers this attack has their brain rattled, immediately giving them a concussion. No amount of training can strengthen one's skull, which is what made this move such a powerful and suitable choice

for assassinations. That same martial artist performed a number of assassinations, using no weapons but his fist and the Sky-High Brain-Rattler technique, and eventually became the government's elite contract-killer. [2])

“Boo-yah! Now *that's* a mind-shaking story!!” Wataru had spectacularly solved their problem with brute force! It was much too blunt to call it clever!

“Now let's steal the orb,” Résistance declared without hesitation! Who are the villains in this book again!?

“Wait a minute, you two!” Aria immediately spoke up! “This is too cruel!!” She reprimanded them for their decidedly unheroic approach!

“I know!” Wataru answered! “But we can't pick and choose our means in order to save the people from the terror that is the dragon!!”

“W-Wataru...!” Aria let out tears of overwhelming amazement! She couldn't help it when faced with Wataru's manliness for resorting to *cold-blooded* tactics in order to save those people!!

Meanwhile, Résistance had rummaged through Jacob's pockets and found the orb in his pants! “Here it is!” The orb shone blue like a sapphire when she held it up! It refracted the light like a calm sea!

“Hey, that looks pretty nice!” Wataru commented!

“I was scared for a moment there... But we made it.”

“Your story was still the worst, Résistance.”

“What did you say?”



And so, Wataru and his team successfully obtained the second orb, with four to go! But they were yet to discover...! The terrifying foe that lay ahead...!!

To be continued in the next chapter: “The Fierce Battle Against the Gorgeous Elphabelle!”

*Sources:

[2] *The Legendary Assassin of Awesomeness ~ Karate Man by Day, Hit Man by Night* — Isekai Tensei Publishing

Chapter 3: The Fierce Battle Against the Gorgeous Elphabelle!

“Man, I’m *psyched* that we’ve made it this far without a hitch!”

“Yes, it’s certainly exciting!”

“Don’t get too comfortable.”

It was a mere two hours after the story showdown from the previous chapter! Wataru and company left the orc’s house behind with the orb and headed to their next destination!! “The next destination,” obviously, being the location of the third orb!

“It was quite nice that Jacob knew where the next orb was, despite all the trouble we had to go through to find out!”

“For sure!!”

According to the information they had wrung out of Jacob Yamada after he’d woken up, north of the prairie lay a wasteland with a big house smack-dab in the middle of it! The owner of that house also held the third orb!

It might interest our Dear Readers to know that questioning Jacob about the location of the third orb had been extraordinarily easy! Résistance had thrust her sword tip against his neck and threatened him! “If you know where the other orbs are, speak up. You try lying to us and we’ll start flame wars on the review sites for *every one of your novels*.” He immediately told her everything he knew!

Interrogating a man in that way did not sit well with Wataru, but it was all to save people from the dragon’s wrath! He had to silence his conscience and do whatever it took!

And so the three of them walked across the prairie! North and north they went, the blades of grass growing sparser and sparser, until the landscape was dominated by dry, cracked earth! It was proof they were drawing closer to the

wasteland!!

“Don’t you all find it a bit odd that the next orb is *also* in a mansion?”
Résistance asked.

“Well, there can’t be too many people rich enough to own expensive jewels like these orbs, right? Obviously, we’re in for a tour of mansions in the Sky Kingdom,” replied Aria.

They continued walking for a few more minutes, and they finally arrived at the edge of the wasteland!

“Oh my, that wouldn’t be our destination, now would it?”

Seemingly the moment they set foot into the wasteland, Aria pointed and shouted in excitement at something ahead of them! There was indeed a brilliantly magnificent structure standing in the middle of the dreary desert!

Jacob’s mansion had been rather impressive, but this *palace* blew it right out of the water! The white brick outer walls made it look a little like a castle, and from what they could see it was about four stories tall!

“What’s a mansion *this awesome* doing out in the middle of a lame wasteland like this?!?!?” Wataru could not help but be astonished by the strange sight! Next to him, Résistance narrowed her eyes in suspicion!

“I can’t fathom why... For now, I suppose we should try checking it out.”

“Right!”

The three of them cautiously approached the mansion! The building’s beauty was even more overwhelming up close! With tiny, decorative flowers carved into the wooden doors at the entrance, it was quite clear that nothing about this house matched the surroundings!

The very instant they stopped in front of the entrance, the doors to the mansion began to open as if the owner had been expecting visitors!!

“Whaaaaaaaaaaaaaat!?” Wataru was instantly prepared to go on the offensive! However, after a moment, a solitary old man came out from behind the door to greet them!

“We have been expecting you.....”

The man was wearing a formal black suit; he was clearly an old butler! His white-and-grey hair was carefully sculpted into place using hair gel, and he practically exuded class and sophistication with every gesture!

“You three are the Wataru Party, correct?” They hadn’t introduced themselves yet, but for some reason the old man knew their names! Wataru, who had faced many treacherous foes, knew at that moment that the man before them was not to be trifled with!!

It’d be pointless to lie about our identities...!

He thrust out his chest and said, “Yeah, that’s us!!”

The old man gave him a dry smile in return!

“A pleasure to meet you. I am the steward of this mansion, Sebastiansteward. So good to make your acquaintance.”

Wha—???

Wataru was confused! Utterly confused!!

“‘Sebastian Steward’.....?”

“Almost, sir. ‘Sebas’ is my given name, while ‘Tiansteward’ is my surname.” That’s the name of a man who was born to be a steward! It’s very easy to remember!!

“Now then, if you will kindly make your way inside. I know what it is you seek. Let us speak of it in the house.” Sebas turned his back on them and headed deeper into the mansion!

“What do we do, Wataru...? That guy’s clearly pretty shady, but...”

“I agree with Aria. Might be a trap or something hidden in there.”

On either side of Wataru, both Aria and Résistance expressed their reluctance to journey inside! But Wataru was not fazed in the slightest, and he walked right through the doorway!! “I can handle anything he tries to do to me!!”

Just what we’d expect from a manly, hot-blooded Japanese boy like Wataru Ito! Diving into enemy territory unarmed, despite the threat of treachery!

Is Wataru perhaps a thoughtless fool!?

No! Absolutely not!

When one has a body like his, with muscles that have been trained to the extreme limits of human condition, why, walking into danger empty-handed like this is an everyday affair! A situation like this sparks no fear in Wataru! In fact, mentally he's as relaxed as he would be at home drinking a warm chocolate protein shake while doing squats for good measure!!

"All right, you two, we're heading in!"

"Good grief, guess we have no choice but to follow him..."

"It certainly does seem that way..."

And so the three of them followed Sebas into the mansion!!

For all the good little boys and girls reading this out there: you should never follow a stranger anywhere!!



Wataru, Aria, and Résistance quietly followed behind Sebas. Just as they had imagined, the interior of the mansion was spacious, the epitome of luxury. It was clear to see that everything was of the finest quality, from the carpets in the hallway, to the chandelier hanging from the ceiling, to the paintings on the walls. Simply put, this place was certainly a step up from Jacob's mansion.

"I—I feel a bit nervous..." Wataru and Résistance heard Aria whisper quietly from behind them.

"Yeah. It's crazy that sweet digs like this are in a wasteland. Who in the world owns this place...?" Résistance furrowed her brow in suspicion as she watched Sebas's back.

After a short while, they finally arrived inside a great hall at the center of the mansion.

"Now, inside here, if you would."

"Whoa! This place is huge!!"

Wataru did as Sebas asked and found himself overwhelmed by the vastness of the hall. Oddly enough, there wasn't a stick of furniture in the room; there

wasn't a single table, chair, or anything else. The room was completely bare.

The only object of note was the chandelier hanging from the ceiling, which lit up every part of the room with a sparkling glitter. After walking them to the center of the room, Sebas suddenly turned to the three and said, "Sir Wataru. I am fully aware that you have come here in search of an orb."

"Ah, you know already! Sweet! Hand it over!" Wataru's face wore the stony determination of a *Nio* as he expressed his demand, making it intimidatingly clear that there was not the slightest room for compromise. However, Sebas remained unfazed and merely shook his head.

"The orb is a treasured heirloom passed down from generation to generation among the members of the House of Evil... I cannot give it to you so easily."

"The House of Evil...???" Wataru tilted his head to one side, confused at the unfamiliar phrase. Résistance, on the other hand, opened her mouth in surprise.

"Th-The *House of Evil*...!?"

"Do you know what he's talking about, Résistance!?"

"Yeah!" Résistance nodded firmly in response to Aria's question. "The House of Evil is well-known within the Wind Continent's underworld as a guild of assassins."

"A-Assassins...!?"

Of course, this is just what we'd expect from Résistance. As one of the former Four Masters serving under the Demon Lord, she knew a great deal about the underworld.

"All members of the House of Evil receive special training from a very young age. They are all, obviously, professional killers. Expensive, but I hear they'll perfectly execute any mission they've been paid for..."

She began to peer out into the furthest reaches of the vast hall as she continued. "It makes sense that this mansion would be way out here, then. An assassin's guild would want to have their home base in a remote place like this wasteland."

Sebas beamed in approval. “The lady seems quite familiar with us. With that explained, please allow me to proceed directly to the main topic of discussion.”

“The main topic of discussion...?”

“Should you wish to obtain the orb... you must defeat the heiress of the House of Evil, Lady Elphabelle.”

Wataru sneered and clenched his fists in fearless anticipation!! “So, a one-on-one! Of course!! I finally get to go all out!!”

Wataru’s frustration with this quest for the six orbs had been building as he faced ridiculous challenges like a hotdog eating contest and a novel-plot judging! But now, he at last had the chance to meet an opponent face-to-face in battle!

“Am I to understand by this reaction that you accept this arrangement?”

“I accept!!” Wataru roared, slamming himself to the ground and cranking out ten pushups per second in preparation! To him, this was the best warm-up exercise imaginable!

“Careful, Wataru. Like I said before, everyone in this House of Evil is a monster.”

“Just how I like it!!!!” Wataru shouted, jumping back to his feet at the speed of light! “—Yo! Where’s this Elphabelle person!?!?”

“...She has been in this room since the moment you arrived,” Sebas said with a crafty smile!

“Are you for real!?”

At that very instant, a little girl jumped down from the massive chandelier that hung above them! At 160 centimeters, she was on the small side compared to Wataru! Her bright orange hair was styled in a short bob! But perhaps the most eye-catching thing about her at the moment was the two-meter-long axe she had on her back!

“Allow me to make introductions. Above you is the heiress of the House of Evil, Lady Elphabelle of House Evil.”

As she fell through the air, the little girl—Elphabelle—grabbed the axe off her

back! She heaved it downwards, slamming it right at Wataru at the very moment she landed!



But Wataru had suspected what was about to happen and leapt away with his astonishingly quick reflexes!

BOOOOOM!!!!

The girl's axe cut through the air and smashed straight into the floor, creating a deep gouge in the marble!

"Aria, Résistance! Stand back!"

"Okay!"

"Got it!"

The two of them backed away from Wataru and Elphabelle, whose eyes were locked on one another's! Everyone's nerves were on a hair trigger! After a long moment, Elphabelle burst out into laughter!

"Ohoho! That was an impressive dodge! Hear me, and know that I am Elphabelle of House Evil! Who is my opponent?"

"My name is Wataru Ito!!!"

"Wataru... Ito...? What a weird name!"

"That's funny, coming from you!!!" Wataru was entirely correct!! Who in their right mind would name a child "*Elphabelle*"!?

Nevertheless...!

Wataru maintained his fighting stance, watching the girl before him carefully!

She'd look just like any other ordinary girl, if she wasn't holding that axe...!

Elphabelle was as lovely and adorable as any princess you might find anywhere in the world! She was even wearing a frilly pink dress, though it had been modified for battle into a miniskirt that displayed her remarkably thin legs! Still, what demanded attention more than anything else was the massive axe in her hands! Being held in the hands of a small girl only served to make her weapon look even larger!

"So you want the orb, huh? Then you're in for a battle with me! If you can defeat me, I'll hand it right over!"

“Wow... Thanks for keeping it simple!”

Elphabelle gave Wataru an appraising look, as if Wataru was something she was considering bidding on at an auction, then laughed innocently! I mean, creepily! I mean, it was creepy how innocent she sounded!

“Wataru... You’re pretty *dense* now, aren’t you!”

“Yeah! It’s because I work out every day and my muscles are tight!”

“Is it true that you defeated the Demon Lord Deus?”

Wataru reacted to this question with visible confusion!

“Hm, you’re pretty well informed...!”

“Well, *duh*! I’ve got the whole House of Evil network at my fingertips!” she boasted with a dangerous gleam in her eyes! “I know just about everything goin’ down on this continent! Don’t get all carried away now that you’ve killed one lousy idiot. I was planning on assassinatin’ him eventually.”

“Whoa...!!”

The murderous malice surging out of every part of Elphabelle’s body made even our battle-hardened Wataru groan in admiration!

“The rules are simple! We fight until one of us gives up!! And no funny business, all right? No ball-crushing, no going for the eyes, no poison, that kind of thing.”

“Sure, I got it!”

“But weapons are allowed. Do you want to borrow anything? I’ve got all kinds of weapons I can loan you for the fight.”

Wataru grinned confidently as he raised his clenched fists. “My bare hands will be enough for the likes of you!!” he shouted.

Of course, our Dear Readers will know that this isn’t overconfidence! Wataru isn’t taking on a handicap in the slightest in this contest! After all, Wataru had trained so much that his bare hands were sharper and more powerful than any weapon! They were truly lethal!

“Oh, yeah...? Huh. I knew fightin’ you’d be interestin’.”

“I’m ready whenever you are! Come at me!!”

Before the last words were even all the way out of Wataru’s mouth, Elphabelle screamed “Okay!” and dashed right for him!

“!?”

Wataru was taken aback by her breathtaking speed! Without breaking a sweat, she casually swung her axe at him, but he dodged by the skin of his teeth!

“Not bad, huh!”

“You’re not so bad yourself!!”

And so the true battle for the third orb began!

“I’m just gonna make this clear, but I don’t fight women! Calm down and gimme the orb!!”

Wataru was a manly, hot-blooded boy from Japan! There wasn’t a single situation in which he would want to knowingly raise his fists against a woman!

“Nothin’ doin’! Daddy’s gonna get mad at me if I hand over my heirlooms!” As she said this, her axe was slicing through the air towards Wataru at eight hundred kilometers per hour! Wataru dodged by falling to all fours! No... It wasn’t a fall! Wataru was expertly performing a *dogeza* bow, and desperately began to plead with her to reconsider!

“Please! I’m begging you! Without the orb I can’t stop the dragon!”

“You think I give two rat craps about the dragon!? It’s actually better if it’s rampaging around and making everyone feel scared! More work for us assassins!”

Elphabelle slammed her axe down at Wataru, who was still on the floor in *dogeza*! But his *dogeza* was—an illusion!

“How you like *that*! My true power, the Illusory *Dogeza*... the ‘Faux-Geza’!” Wataru began running circles around her at the speed of sound! He had just come up with this move and the name for it on the spot, so we can forgive him for the terrible pun!

“It’s *lame* is what it is!”

Elphabelle whirled around, swinging her axe in a deadly circle!

“Ngh!” Wataru panicked and leapt backwards to dodge the blade! Elphabelle was every bit the heiress of a family of assassins! She left absolutely no openings in her defenses!

I get it now... I can't let my guard down or go easy on her at all, even if she is a girl, otherwise I'm the one who's gonna be killed!!

Wataru let out a roar and charged towards Elphabelle, punching at her with the full power of his being! And yet, with all his mighty might and skillful skill... she easily dodged!

She's fast...!

Wataru continued his assault! Left hook, right uppercut, kick to the face!! Still, Elphabelle perfectly predicted every move he made, and just barely avoided every blow he attempted!

“Nice, Wataru! I think I like you!” Elphabelle laughed at him like she hadn’t a care in the world!

From a far distance away, Aria clasped her hands together in prayer as she watched the ferocious battle!

“Do you think Wataru’s going to be okay...?”

Résistance stood next to her with her arms folded as she watched the fight, looking considerably impressed!

“Illusory *Dogeza*... the ‘Faux-Geza’... Ha, that’s pretty good.”

“Pardon?”

“Oh, nothing...” Résistance turned away from Aria before the younger woman could see her embarrassment!

Back in the center of the room, Wataru and Elphabelle continued to hammer at each other!!

“Take this take this take this TAKE THIS!”

Elphabelle wielded the axe with terrifying speed! Just where was a little girl

like her hiding her muscles!? But despite her speed, Wataru was not about to lose!

“Gahahahahahahahahahaha!!!!”

The two traded explosive blows, all the while stepping around each other like a lady and a gentleman waltzing at a ball! They closed in on one another with incredible speed, getting right up next to their opponent! Wataru punched with every ounce of hot-blooded energy he had!

“You can’t touch me!” Elphabelle spat, literally *spat*, the words at Wataru as she avoided yet another punch!

She slammed her axe down at Wataru as she dropped low to the ground!
“Get rekt!!!!”

“Never!!!!”

Wataru thrust against the floor with all his might and jumped to his left!

“Urgh!”

Elphabelle had anticipated this and was ready with her axe to defend against his next attack!

“For honor!!!”

Wataru’s high kick sliced through the air, but Elphabelle was able to interrupt him mid-kick! She swung her axe sideways and parried his attack!

“Parrying” is a sophisticated battle technique in which one moves their weapon in a direction perpendicular to that of their opponent’s attack, thereby deflecting the attack instead of having to block its full power!!

What the—!? This little girl... parried my kick!?

Wataru was two meters tall, whereas Elphabelle was a mere 1.6 meters! Wataru clearly should have been able to overpower her, but Elphabelle managed to use what strength she had while having even more skillful skill than Wataru!!

“Brk!!!”

Wataru kicked again, but again she intercepted his attack and deflected it

away from her!

“You’re better than I thought!!”

Every one of Wataru’s attacks carried with it the threat of instant death! Even so, Elphabelle parried and deflected all of them with ease! Even though that may be technically possible for her to do, it must still have taken great courage! And yet Elphabelle looked as though she was barely finished warming up!

“Heeheehee... Now it’s gettin’ interestin’!”

Elphabelle laughed again, flashing a cheerful smile like a child getting away with an adorable little prank! Her child’s smile was so cute that Wataru almost forgot he was in a fight to the death!



At that moment, while Aria and the other two were watching the battle from the sidelines at the side of the room!

“...May I offer you something to drink, my ladies?”

“Oh, yes, please. We’re a little tired from traveling.”

“Is that so? Shall I go make us some tea?”

“Oh, would you? Thank you so much, Mr. Sebas!”

“We appreciate the offer, Mr. Tiansteward.”

“But of course. Being a good host is all part of being a steward. I have cookies as well, if you’d like.”

“Yes, please!”

“Aria, you’re so eager, aren’t you...? It may be better to not just accept *everything* that anyone offers you, you know.”

“Now, now, Résistance! He’s going to the trouble of offering them to us, so let’s eat them!”

Résistance and Aria enjoyed being completely passive spectators to the fierce duel between Wataru and Elphabelle!!



“Get a load of this!!!!” Wataru roared as a challenge! He charged forward magnificently as he made a horizontal karate chop, but Elphabelle bent over backwards to avoid it!

“Good reflexes!”

“I didn’t grow up in an assassin’s guild without learnin’ a thing or two!” Still bent over backwards, Elphabelle displayed her superior powers of flexibility with a swift rising kick, the target of which was—Wataru’s crotch!! Oh, the humanity!

“!?”

Wataru rammed his arms downward to bring her approaching kick to a screeching halt!

“Hey, I thought we agreed my balls were off limits!”

“Oh, did we?” Elphabelle laughed, without a trace of guilt on her face!

“Y-You little bastard...!”

“Did you forget, Wataru? I’m the daughter of a family of assassins! Rule breakin’, rule changin’, cruel and unusual punishments... all of those are just tools of my trade!!” As she was talking, Elphabelle appeared to have something in her mouth! Suddenly, she spat whatever she had in her mouth at Wataru!

“The hell are you doing!?!?”

A purple mist emerged from Elphabelle’s mouth! It was clearly poison gas!

Even our brave Wataru had failed to notice that she had, at some point, stuffed her mouth with poison! Poison had specifically been noted as being against the rules in this fight, but Elphabelle couldn’t be bothered to care about that! She was literally a walking example of a pro-wrestling “heel”; a “bad guy” in an event where the fights are, of course, “completely unscripted”!!

“Shit!”

Wataru was justifiably pissed off as he quickly retreated!

Aria, who was sipping her tea as she watched, shouted her objection to this new development! “Hey, now! That’s unfair!”

Résistance, who'd been munching on a cookie next to Aria, turned to Sebas to voice her disapproval! "*Om nom... Hey, Mr. Tiansteward... She may be an assassin, but this has to be crossing the line, doesn't it? Nom...*"

Sebas answered her without his expression changing in the slightest!

"Oho, Ms. Résistance, complaining now, are we? You, who with your friends forced your way into another's home, telling us that we must 'hand over our family heirlooms'? Surely you can't be too surprised that there are some 'house rules' that apply to this battle, as it were."

"W-Well... I guess you're right... *om nom nom...*"

Résistance was so overwhelmed by the force of the steward's words that she made no further complaint and went back to munching on her cookies!

It was then that Wataru, his face screwed up in rage, faced his opponent and yelled!

"Elphabelle... I HATE cheating bastards like you!! I will defeat you, no matter what it takes!" These words, the sheer epitome of a hot-blooded fighting teen's passion, deeply inspired Résistance!

"You tell her, Wataru! A just soul cannot bear the use of such underhanded tactics... You're truly amazing!!"

"But didn't Wataru sucker-punch Jacob while his guard was down so we could steal the second orb from him...?" Aria unintentionally countered Résistance's point about Wataru's "just soul"! And perhaps rightfully so! But Résistance was full-throated in her denial of Aria's argument!

"That was then! This is now!" I'm sure we can all agree with Résistance's logic!!

Now then! I may have said I'll do whatever it takes, but this is honestly looking pretty bad.....!!

Despite his rage, Wataru continued calmly assessing his situation as he kept his distance from Elphabelle! He may have had some sharp words for her a moment ago, but they didn't change anything about the stalemate they were in!

My opponent's an assassin, and I knew she'd try some dirty tricks... but at this rate, I can't see how I can beat her!

If he was going to win this battle, Wataru would have to continue dealing with all of Elphabelle's dirty tricks while continuing to assault her with ridiculously powerful blows! But Elphabelle was more than underhanded tactics! With her mysterious strength to back her up, she was an agonizingly difficult opponent!

If that's the way this is going to be... I'm going to have to do this...!!

Wataru's forte was the speed at which he could identify and fix his own weaknesses! The moment he realized that he would never achieve victory if he continued fighting this way, he instantly had a plan in mind to address it!

If I can't beat her this way... what about... this!?

In the very next instant Wataru did the most! Unbelievable! Thing!

—He lowered his fists!



“Hmmm!?”

When Elphabelle saw this, she grew confused, and for quite an obvious reason. Up until that point, Wataru had been relentless in his attacks, but now he had for some reason left his battle stance. He'd lowered his fists and was now casually leaning to one side, completely defenseless.

Was he surrendering? No.

He may have appeared to lower his guard, but in truth, the bloodthirsty gleam in his eyes had not yet disappeared.

“What's he thinkin'.....?”

Confused she may have been, but Elphabelle wasn't going to stop her attack. She swung her axe with great speed, aiming right at Wataru. He dodged her slash without so much as blinking. Just moments ago he'd been displaying the *Nio* face that he had when he was brutally attacking her, but now...

Damn... This is difficult...!

There is a tactic in martial arts that involves suddenly changing one's attack

style in the midst of battle. It's actually extremely effective when put into practice!

If you've been thrusting your blade, switch to throwing it.

If you've been using two swords, toss one and attack with a single blade.

You must suddenly and without warning change the style of your approach. Whether it's karate, judo, sumo, or kendo, this tactic has been used often throughout history.

There was, of course, one person who had transformed this "tactic" into a "technique." His name was Renchi Chou*. He was a great man in the world of Chinese martial arts in the 1870s.

(*Renchi Chou: A martial artist born in 1842 in the Wuhan region of China. He was a practitioner of martial arts from an early age, but his arrogance made him a target of much criticism, most notably from his former masters who had abandoned him, one after the other. By the time he reached adulthood, he had already mastered Tai Chi, Liang Yi Quan, and Wing Chun, but no one would take him on as an apprentice. On his own, he came up with the method of switching between the various battle styles he knew and using their most powerful moves. Later on, this way of fighting became known as the famous "Renchi Style." [3])

Wataru was, of course, a complete master of "Renchi Style."

By throwing away even that core part of his identity, his hot-bloodedness, and adopting this non-aggressive fighting style, he was able to interrupt the rhythm of Elphabelle's attacks.

This "interruption" was, of course, an opening for Wataru to attack.

Wataru had made his presence as faint as could be, and like a shadow he slipped slowly towards Elphabelle. Before she realized what was happening, he slammed his fist into her solar plexus, whispering a single word just at the edge of her hearing:

"Power."

The tone of his voice was unlike anything we have heard from Wataru thus far

in our story! With that single blow, however, he brought his enormous strength to bear against the girl.

“!?!?!?”

Pure pain raced through Elphabelle’s body. Dumbfounded, she wheezed in reaction to his blow.

I... I didn’t even see that one coming!

The force of his strike sent her flying backwards. She expertly twisted in midair to land on her feet, just like a cat. Cold sweat beaded down her cheeks.

This guy... All of a sudden, he’s completely changed...!

“As if I’m going to lose...!!”

She shoved off hard from the floor, diving through the air directly at Wataru.

“AHHHHHHHHH!”

With all her strength, she brought the axe down upon him...

And missed.

Wataru had shuffled ever so slightly to the side, just out of range of her axe. It was the smallest movement he could have made to avoid it. Then, without a moment’s delay, he rammed his elbow straight into Elphabelle’s face.

“Ngh!” Dizzied, Elphabelle stepped backwards to avoid the follow-up attack. But Wataru moved, with only the minimum amount of effort necessary, to ram his elbow into her face again and again and *again*.

Try as she might, Elphabelle was unable to avoid all of his attacks, let alone parry them. Some landed right on her, and in spite of all her efforts to resist, Elphabelle found herself bent over backwards as she tried to escape his elbow.

I can’t... take this anymore...!

Compared with Wataru’s previous attacks, which had been showy, full-body attacks like uppercuts and kicks to the face, this new technique was much more efficient. His feet were now always on the ground, and he left no openings for her axe. With how little energy the elbow jabs required, he was able to repeat them over and over at a higher rate of attack. For what each individual jab

lacked in attack power, it was made up for by the smaller range of motion of the attacks giving him a better defense.

“This... relentless idiot—!!”

She took her axe and again swung it with all her might and then some, as if to declare Wataru’s newest fighting style to be nothing more than an irritation.

The amount of power she put into her swing was more than enough to cut the man clean in two.

“I’ll freakin’ *destroy* you!!!”

This, however, was just the opportunity Wataru had been waiting for. When Elphabelle lifted her axe high above her head, her upper torso had been left completely unprotected. He locked his aim, lifted both fists, and punched with all his might using both his arms:

“Obliterate.”

His voice was softer than a whisper, but his strength was absolute.

Allow me to explain. He was using a technique that had been invented by an American martial artist, the “Two-Fisted Thrust of Aeolus*.”

(*The Two-Fisted Thrust of Aeolus: A technique invented by an African-American master of karate, Chad Gastin. Storing power in both fists, the fighter quickly punches at the enemy’s midsection. It is said he was inspired by the sight of someone beating a “*wataiko*,” a traditional Japanese drum, with two sticks at the same time. This extremely extreme attack, when executed properly, causes a blast of air as if the fighter is Aeolus, the God of Wind himself. [4])

BAMMM!!

“Ngh... Urgh...!”

Wataru had punched his fists deep into Elphabelle’s midsection. All the air was driven from her lungs, and she was unable to draw another breath. Every muscle in her body began to quiver, and the axe in her hands fell to the floor.

What she felt, right then, was not the pain of the punch—but a light, refreshing breeze blowing all around her.

Wataru... I'm so sorry... you are... stronger... than me.....

And so again Elphabelle was blasted off the floor. She flew through the air, unmoving, and shot straight into the wall of the great hall. The pain of the impact was enough to banish every last bit of her will to fight.

Not a single person could say otherwise: the winner of this fight was none other than Wataru Ito.



“Hey, you’re not bad at the whole fighting gig! Changing your attack style mid-battle is a lot harder than it sounds! But then you still kept up your precision in your blows, which was really impressive!”

“Whoa! Thanks a bunch! You were rockin’ it hard yourself!!”

It was a few minutes later! With the battle now over, Wataru had returned to his normal self and was smiling and talking with Elphabelle!

Seeing that the fighting was done, Aria and Résistance walked up to them!

“Nice job, Wataru!”

“That fight was fantastic, Wataru!”

I should mention for our readers that they had been so busy drinking the tea and eating the cookies Mr. Tiansteward had given them that they had seen almost none of the final phase of the battle!

“All right, so now that that’s over... Orb, please!”

Elphabelle blushed when Wataru said this, and replied: “Um, hey... There’s something else I’d like to ask you... You feel like gettin’ into the assassination business?”

“Huh!? What do you mean by that!?”

Elphabelle was positively bashful as she twisted this way and that in shy hesitation!

“Ugh... Are you really going to make me come right out and say it? In other words... I’m asking if you want to marry me and become a member of the House of Evil!”

Wataru froze solid upon hearing this! He was as still and stiff as a mammoth trapped in ice since the Ice Age!!

“...Huh!?!?”

Allow me to explain! Though Wataru was a manly, hot-blooded boy from Japan, he was also underage! Therefore he obviously had no experience with dating women! Despite his lack of experience, he suddenly found himself being proposed to! It's only natural he would freeze up in shock!

“Y'know, I've always wanted to marry someone stronger than myself! I fought you today, and then, I felt it, okay—! The only man I want to marry is you!!”

Nearby, Sebas looked positively delighted at this turn of events!

“Ohoho, that's an excellent idea, Lady Elphabelle. With a fighter as skilled as Wataru by your side, I'm sure you two will become the world's top assassins in no time at all.”

“Right, Sebas! Oh, and Wataru—call me ‘honey’ from now on, okay? I'm gonna call you ‘darling’!”

“Hey, cut that out!! I haven't agreed to a damn thing!!”

“What he said!” Résistance shouted, rather more forcefully than was perhaps necessary! “Wataru, getting married...? Inconceivable! Entirely inconceivable!”

She turned to Aria and yelled at her, too! “You'd better speak up about this *right now!*”

“Why...? What's the problem?” Aria was completely indifferent to the idea! How very unlike a proper light novel heroine!!

“A-Aria, are you *insane!*?”

“No, I mean, if Wataru marries Elphabelle, we can come hang out in this mansion anytime we want, right?”

“*Excuse* you? Don't try to weasel your way into my House, girl.”

Elphabelle might as well have slapped her across the face with those words of hers!

“Oh, it's not like that—I'm more like Wataru's pet, basically.”

“I don’t believe that crap for a second! I’m not about to let you get between my darling and me!”

“Oh, please, don’t be so petty. It’s a bad look! As long as I get my own room and meals prepared for me every day, I’ll be perfectly fine!”

“Are you out of your damn mind? Just how do you expect to be treated around here!?”

Wataru decided that now was the time to break up their argument with gentlemanly vigor!

“A-Anyhow! I’m not getting married anytime soon!”

“Whaaaaat!! Darling, why!?!?” Elphabelle began to throw an adorable little tantrum!

“Don’t call me ‘darling’!!!!” Wataru’s face was as red as a... thing that is very red! Totally red! “Look, all I want is the orb, anyway! So c’mon, gimme!”

“But what about marrying me?”

“We can, ah... put that on hold for now. Besides, I’m not old enough for that!”

“Ugh, if you insist! If you’re going to play hard to get, I’ll play along.”

Wataru was visibly confused! “What do you mean, ‘play hard to get’? Is that another fighting style?”

“Cut it out, Elphabelle!” Résistance shouted desperately, waving her arms up and down! “Our Wataru’s a pure and innocent boy! Don’t start filling his head with weird stuff!!” Our manly, hot-blooded Wataru still had no idea what “playing hard to get” could possibly mean!

“All right, all right, I’ll stop.”

Elphabelle looked bored as she turned away from Wataru and addressed Sebas!

“So who’s got the orb right now?”

“That would be the Master.”

“Huh. Guess we gotta call for Daddy, then.”

The steward nodded politely. “A moment, please.” He took in an enormously deep breath, and then yelled so loudly the great hall echoed with the sound!

“MASTER—! MASTERRRRRRRR—!”

Moments later, there was a loud *BOOM! BOOM!!* as a crashing, reverberating noise began to shake the very foundations of the mansion!

“Wh-What is that!?” Wataru shouted, uncomprehending. “Is it an earthquake???” Another surprise was yet to come!

BOOOOOOOOOOOM!!!

Wh-What in the world!? With a thunderous *CRA-BAHOOOOM*, the eastern wall of the hall exploded into a million pieces, throwing up an impenetrably thick cloud of dust!

From that cloud, a single human man emerged!! ...Could he really be called a “human” after an entrance like that!?

Perhaps even more unbelievably, the man was four meters tall! That’s twice Wataru’s height! Perhaps “human” is the wrong word after all, and “giant” would be a better descriptor!

“Hey, nice to meet ya...!!” the man rumbled, his nearly subsonic voice causing the bellies of all who heard it to shiver! The man wore a custom-made, white formal suit, though it was obvious that the man’s body was quite muscular and well-trained!

The man... I mean, the Man had the fierce, powerful visage of a demon—but his frown disappeared when he greeted the visitors!

“Hello...!!”

His face twisted into something that was almost probably a smile, though it was impossible to tell!

“H-Hello...” Even Wataru was beside himself with awe! The usually noisy and bickering Aria and Résistance could do nothing but look on, gulping in fear at the Man’s appearance!

“So you’re Wataru, huh? Defeating my daughter is no small feat, but you did well...! I was watching your fight from another room, using the surveillance

camera over there. Still, though... I'm really impressed...!"

The Man pointed one thick finger up at a box attached to the ceiling! I know some of our Dear Readers are thinking "Fantasy worlds shouldn't have surveillance cameras!" even after everything we've seen so far, but I beg of you to reconsider! Even fantasy worlds can have things like surveillance cameras!!

"Hang on, you just called her your 'daughter'... So that makes you...?"

"That's right," the man confirmed in his deep, full-throated voice. "I am the current Master of the House of Evil, Elphabill of House Evil. The father of Elphabelle...!!!!!!!"

Elphabill! The current master of the greatest assassin's guild on the Wind Continent, and the father of Elphabelle! Of course he would make his appearance by kicking down a wall!

".....!!"

Wataru subconsciously assumed his combat posture! It was his natural self-preservation instincts at work! With such a terribly massive *being* before him, he took on a defensive stance without even meaning to!

Elphabill took one look at Wataru trying to defend himself and laughed uproariously!

"HA-HA-HA! So you assume there's to be a battle! Yes, it's all very clear to me now...! People always react in one of two ways when they presume danger—but for you, it's always the 'fight' reaction, and never the 'flight'! I must commend you for your well-developed instincts!"

He raised an arm, thick as a log, and held one clenched fist in front of Wataru!

"Come get it!!"

Wataru, believing this to be the signal to begin the battle, backed away from him while maintaining his defensive posture!

That's only his fist... but it's as big as a giant meteor! Wataru broke out into a cold sweat, an almost unheard-of occurrence!

Elphabill slowly unclenched his fist! On the palm of his hand lay a small green sphere! There was no doubt about it! It was the orb!

The orb was about as large as a baby's head, but it looked like a marble in the palm of Elphabill's unspeakably massive hand!

"There's no need for such dramatics. Here, as promised... Now, take it!!"
Elphabill looked as ferocious as the Devil himself as he said this!

"Th-Thank you very much...!"

Slowly, ever so slowly, Wataru gingerly took the orb from the palm of the giant's hand as he expressed his sincere gratitude! The third orb was finally his!

Elphabelle broke out into a bright and cheerful smile!

"Hey, Daddy!"

"Hm? What is it...?"

"I want to make Wataru my husband!!"

Wataru cringed! "Th-That again...! I said before, I'm not about to marry *anyone* right now!"

At this, Elphabill folded his arms across his chest!

"Elphabelle, my dear. If Wataru feels that way, you are not to trouble him further. That said, I do think..." Elphabill paused and glared right at Wataru! "If Wataru were to become my son-in-law... I do believe that even one such as I would be happy." His eyes gleamed like those of a lion that had just spotted its prey!

Every cell in Wataru's body screamed in terror at this giant threat!

"But no matter. Now then, it's time for my daily 'Run Around the Wind Continent,' so I'll be taking my leave...!!" With no warning at all, he jumped straight up into the air, breaking through the ceiling, and the ceiling above that, and so on, all the way through the mansion's roof until he disappeared into the distant heavens!

Elphabill of House Evil... I'm not gonna mess around with him! I gotta train harder!!

Wataru found that he was unable to keep from trembling with excitement as he held the orb!

“Ugh, Daddy, really? How many times do I have to tell you to stop destroyin’ the mansion every time you go out!? Anyhow, that’s all! See you again, Wataru! You feel like marryin’ someone, you come back, y’hear!!”

Elphabelle looked as though she had not a care in the world as she held her axe over her shoulder and smiled at Wataru!

“Got it! I don’t think I’ll ever want to get married... but it was fun battling you!! Let’s hang again!!”

And so, Wataru & Co., seen off by Elphabelle and Sebas, left the mansion behind! The three of them had finally reached the halfway point on their journey to collect all six orbs!

To be continued in the next chapter: “Incident alert! Hot-Blooded Detective Wataru Makes an Explosive Discovery!”

*Sources:

[3] *Concerning the Life of Renchi, the Heretic of the Martial Arts* — Isekai Tensei Publishing

[4] *Punching the Air* — Isekai Tensei Publishing

Chapter 4: Incident Alert! Hot-Blooded Detective Wataru Makes an Explosive Discovery!

It was the day after the intense, fierce battle with Elphabelle!

After making their way through the wilderness, Wataru and his friends arrived in a small country!

“Mr. Sebas said that the fourth orb would be here... Was he telling the truth?”

“Well, he didn’t seem like the type of guy who would lie, so it’s probably totally okay! Still... It’s been a while since we’ve been in a place with this many people in it!”

Wataru spread his arms wide and took a huge breath of air, smiling as if it was the sweetest thing in the world!

“This is the Revant Kingdom,” Résistance helpfully explicated. “It’s a lot smaller than the Sky Kingdom, but the nearby wasteland happens to be a good source of high-quality clay, so they’re pretty famous for their pottery. They’ve actually grown fairly prosperous by exporting their pottery to the surrounding continents.”

“Wow, you really know a lot, Résistance!”

Résistance rubbed at her nose in embarrassment at Aria’s compliment. “Well, yeah! I may look like a brutal warrior, but my hobby’s actually pottery! I’ve been here loads of times!”

Résistance had decided to show some character development by declaring herself to be a “pottery enthusiast”! But this new bit of trivia has absolutely nothing to do with the story that follows, so our Dear Readers may forget it as they please!

“Okay, then, let’s find that trader who has the orb and go to his house!!”



The Revant Kingdom was a country in the northern reaches of the Wind Continent. It wasn't as brilliant a realm as the neighboring Sky Kingdom, and all the buildings around them were cozy little wooden structures. The roads were paved, yes, but not with the lovely cobblestone of the Sky Kingdom—they were merely hardened and flattened dirt in the shape of roads.

The climate was warm, and just as Résistance had said earlier, the pottery made using clay harvested from the nearby wastelands is what had made the place famous. As a matter of fact, they passed by a number of shops selling pottery wares along their way towards the mansion where the owner of the fourth orb lived. Among them were items that had images of birds and flowers etched into them in red, or other, more unique designs. Wataru's homeland of Japan had created a famous style of pottery known as "imari porcelain," which I mention only because the pottery here was nothing like that at all and so the different varieties they saw as they walked through the market were quite interesting to him.

"Here we are, Wataru. This is the place Mr. Sebas told us about. It's the residence of the owner of the fourth orb, a trader."

The house Aria pointed at was a sturdy stone building that had been painted a bright red. It was two stories tall, and it seemed all the more impressive in comparison to the meager wooden houses around it.

"What's this *mansion* trying to prove? My eyes hurt just looking at it..."

"I'm sure whoever lives here has to be a flashy old man, if he enjoys having his house be such an eye-catching red color."

"Cool! Let's head on in!"

Wataru was eager to get a move on. He walked up to the entrance of the house and knocked firmly on the large doors. "Hellooooooooooooooooooo!! Anyone hooooooooooooooooooooome??" Wataru had shouted with all his might, but there was not so much as a whisper of a reply.

"...What do we do? Break down the door or something?"

"No, *absolutely* not." Résistance hurried to crush Wataru's idea about violent entry.

—and that was when it happened!

Ca-reeeeek.....!!

Without warning, the doors in front of them slowly began to open, accompanied by the sound of creaking, scraping wood!

“Oh, it’s opening now!”

From beyond the doors emerged a single woman! She had beautiful pale skin and looked to be about nineteen years old, and she was wearing a maid’s outfit the same shade of red as the house’s exterior!

“Hello there. I am one of the maids, Mira. Do you have business with Master Alibaba?”

Mira was superbly polite to the guests as she bowed to greet them! “Alibaba” must be referring to the owner of this grand residence!

“Ah! Excuse us! We kind of want the orb!”

“.....?”

Mira was stunned into speechlessness, and could only stand and stare at Wataru! She didn’t appear to have been troubled by the sudden way he’d brought up the orb; rather, she looked as though she had absolutely no idea what he was talking about!

“Apologies for our indiscretion,” Résistance said, pushing her way around Wataru to speak to the maid. “We are adventurers. We’ve come to negotiate with your master, Alibaba.”

Nice save, Résistance! The maid Mira seemed completely convinced by this explanation of their abrupt appearance at the front door!

“Oh, I see, is that what this is all about? In that case, please allow me to direct you to the chambers of Master Alibaba.”

“Yes, ma’am!!” Wataru was bursting with excitement!

And so the three of them successfully entered the mansion without breaking

down any doors! But there was something the three of them could not yet have known waiting inside!! They could not have had any idea that once inside the mansion, they would be thrust into being involved in an incident of a most terrible and horrifying nature.....!!



They were within one of the largest residences in all of the Revant Kingdom! But, that being said, the three adventurers had already seen the outrageously extravagant estates of both Jacob and the House of Evil, and so this house seemed to be relatively normal in size to them!

The interior of this house, however, was just as flashy as the exterior. Not only were there plenty of pottery pieces, but the halls were decorated with glittering pieces of jewelry and paintings everywhere.

The three of them silently followed Mira, and in short order arrived at a room deep inside the house on the second floor.

“Herein lies the room of Master Alibaba. Please, enter as you will.” Mira gave them a polite bow to them after saying this. Without further ado, she quickly departed, leaving them behind in front of the doors to the room.

“Huh...? Mira isn’t going to show us inside?” Aria seemed to find the whole situation a bit suspicious.

“Hmm, she seemed to be in a rush to leave us...” Résistance agreed. “Oh, well. Let’s go inside.” She looked up at the beautifully decorated doors in front of them and slowly knocked three times.

Knock. Knock knock.

There was a moment of silence, then: “Yes, come on in.” A man’s calm voice greeted them. The three of them opened the doors and entered the room.

They were in a luxurious drawing room. There were beautiful glass tables here and there, and thick books lining the bookshelves on the walls. In the center of the room, a man with a rather *obvious* physique was lounging on a sofa.

“Hello there, and welcome. I am Alibaba.”

The overflowing rolls of flesh on his belly bulged and jiggled this way and that

under his clothes as he slowly stood up. The man's body itself was, of course, a total *disaster*, but the black suit he wore was the very epitome of elegance, class, and cleanliness, and it was obvious to see it was a product of a pricey luxury brand. He looked to be around fifty years old, and had a friendly face, like that of a kindly neighborhood gentleman who's gone to seed in his late middle age.

"Nice to meet you!! My name is Wataru!!" Wataru did a full ninety-degree bow and made his customary *Nio* face again as he greeted Alibaba.

The other two introduced themselves as well.

"I'm Aria."

"Name's Résistance."

"Hello, welcome, welcome. I, Alibaba, work in the trading industry here in the Revant Kingdom. Please, let us sit down." At Alibaba's urging, the three of them sat down on the sofa opposite him.

"Now then, what sort of business brings you to see me here today?"

"The truth is, you've got an orb and we really really want you to just give it to us!"

Alibaba looked distinctly displeased when he heard Wataru say this. "What did you say...?"

"I know it's rude of me to ask! But I really need that orb!" Wataru was taken over by his passionate desire as he begged for the orb.

"Oh, oh... Are the three of you treasure hunters, then?"

"No, it's not that! We need the orb to defeat the dragon!"

"'Dragon,' you say... Are you referring to the one that's been showing up in various places around the Sky Kingdom?"

"That's the one!"

Wataru nodded along enthusiastically to everything Alibaba said, and Aria couldn't help but laugh at Wataru's excitement before joining in with her own pleading.

“If it’s money you want in return, we have come prepared to bargain! I do believe that we’ll be able to pay any price you might name, sir!”

This was entirely true! Wataru and Aria had been awarded a great deal of money by the King of the Sky Kingdom for having defeated the Demon Lord, just before he’d given them the mission to defeat the dragon! While the sum wasn’t quite large enough a fortune for them to live in luxury for the rest of their lives, it was definitely enough gold that they should have some left over even after buying the orb from Alibaba!!

“Then why didn’t you mention that before!?” I hear you ask! *“If they’re loaded with money, couldn’t they have just bought all the other orbs!?”* Dear Readers, I knew you would ask this very question! But the fact of the matter is that if the protagonists can go around purchasing whatever items they need on their quest without any difficulties whatsoever, there’s no story to be told! So kindly leave off with your criticisms!

“Hmm... Yes, I do believe I know what orb you speak of. I acquired it at an auction around five months ago...” Alibaba gestured towards one of the walls! There, within a glass case, carefully padded with small cushions, lay a sparkling purple gem! No doubt about it, it was the fourth orb!!

“It is, as I’m sure you know, an *extremely* rare item. No matter how much money you might offer me, I simply cannot give it to you.”

“Bu-But, sir, please!!!!!!” Wataru was completely taken over by his desperate and sincere desire to save the people from the threat of the dragon! But Alibaba appeared utterly unmoved by this display of emotion!

“Say what you will, I simply cannot...”

It was at that moment that Aria’s mouth popped open, as if she had just thought of a brilliant idea!

“Well, in that case, why don’t we make an exchange? I actually possess something that is about as rare as an orb! Why don’t we trade with that!”

Alibaba was highly intrigued by her proposal! “Oho, a trade, you say! Now that sounds like an interesting idea! What might you have to offer?”

“It’s a first edition copy of Volume One of the light novel ‘WATARU!!! The Hot-

Blooded Fighting Teen & His Epic Adventures After Stopping a Truck with His Bare Hands!! What do you think? A first edition is rather rare, right?”

“Well, no. No further editions have even been printed yet—there’s *only* first editions available on the market. And they’re easy to find, at that.”

“You’re right.....” Aria was completely overcome by the logic of Alibaba’s refusal and fell into a stunned silence!

Will these three adventurers ever get this trader to hand over his orb!? Even Wataru was about to give up at this point—but then!

“Ahhhhhhhhhh!!!!”

From somewhere else inside the house, they heard a woman’s high-pitched scream!!

“What was that!?”

Wataru sprang into the air, and like an arrow loosed from a bow, zipped right out of the room! He sprinted toward the source of the scream, all the way down to the entranceway on the first floor!

“Y-Young lad! Halt!” Alibaba shouted! “Um... Ms. Aria, Ms. Résistance—please stay here!!” With this, he chased after Wataru, right out of the room!



“Whew...!” Wataru, who’d dashed at a blistering 140 kilometers per hour to get to the entranceway, saw something completely terrifying waiting by the door!

“Th-This is—!”

Wataru’s jaw dropped in utter astonishment!

A bespectacled maid, a different girl than the maid who’d greeted them earlier, had collapsed face-down on the floor in the center of the hall!

“Hey you! Are you okay!?!”

He panicked as he ran in circles around the woman, placing one hand against

her neck to check for a pulse! But then!!

“She’s—she’s *dead*...!!”

She had no pulse! None whatsoever! Undoubtedly dead!

“H-Hey! What in the world happened here!?”

Alibaba had taken his sweet time getting down to the entrance hall! Wataru jumped up in a flash, and calmly explained the situation!

“We’re in trouble, Mr. Alibaba! The maid is dead!”

Alibaba’s eyes went wide when he saw the corpse next to Wataru’s feet!

“Oh! The horror! Rio! Rio, it’s Rio!!” He was thrown into a complete panic! He began to cry and thrash about with anguish!

“Mr. Alibaba... We must gather everyone in the house, at once!”

Wataru’s face was completely serious as he made this order! Alibaba tried to calm himself down by placing one hand on his chest and taking a deep breath before nodding in response!

“R-Right! At once!”



Five minutes later, Wataru, Aria, Résistance, Alibaba, and Mira had assembled in the entrance hall. Wataru stood next to the maid’s corpse and shouted.

“Right! This is everyone! Let’s go over what we know!”

“Now then, Mr. Alibaba! Please, tell us about the victim and the time of the incident!”

“Yes, all right. First, the woman’s name is Rio. She was the mansion’s head maid. Several minutes ago, she let out a sudden scream, and Wataru discovered her here, collapsed on the floor. The front door, by the way, was still locked, so the criminal hadn’t escaped using that route.”

“I see...” Résistance nodded to herself, looking very solemn about the whole situation.

“Wataru, this has turned into something quite serious...” Aria said, concerned.

Wataru once again wore the expression of a *Nio* when he heard the worry in Aria's voice. He opened his mouth to speak, and proclaimed: "Fear not, Aria! This is a difficult case... *but I shall solve it!*"

Wataru thrust out his chest and shouted this with complete conviction!

"I swear on my honor as a hot-blooded detective!!!!!!"

Here we have witnessed the explosive birth of Hot-Blooded Detective Wataru! Will he be able to successfully puzzle his way through the mystery of this case!?

"Now then, we must verify everyone's alibis!"

Wataru shouted again as he looked carefully at the faces of everyone in the room!

"First! Mr. Alibaba! At the time of the incident, you were speaking with me in the drawing room!"

Alibaba trembled with fear as he nodded to confirm this! "Y-Yeah, that's right."

"Then we have Aria and Résistance! Both of you were of course sitting next to me at the time of the incident!"

The women both agreed to this statement! "Yes, I was." "Obviously."

"Lastly! Ms. Mira! At the time of the incident, where were you and what were you doing!?"

"Um... I was washing dishes in the first floor kitchen....." Mira managed to answer, despite her quivering fear!

"Huh, okay, okay...!"

It was at that very instant that Wataru realized something!!

Whaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaat?!?!? The only possible criminal here is Ms. Mira?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?

Indeed! At the time of the incident, Wataru, Aria, Résistance, and Alibaba had all been in the midst of their negotiations in the drawing room! They couldn't have committed the crime! By process of elimination, the criminal was

undoubtedly the alibi-less Mira! It was indubitably undoubtable!

But Wataru shook his head firmly from side to side!

Hold up! Hold up, me! A cute, pretty young lady like Ms. Mira would never kill someone! There's gotta be another possibility here!

As always, Wataru remained a hot-blooded fighting teenage boy from Japan! There's no way he could accuse a young woman of being a murderer!

Think! Magic exists in this world! Would it be possible to use magic and kill someone from outside the mansion!?

Having come up with this convoluted explanation, Wataru approached the corpse and began searching for the cause of death!

"Do you see anything, Wataru?"

"Hmmm... Well... Huh!? What's this!?!?"

Wataru discovered two small puncture wounds on Rio's neck!

Could this be... stab wounds from someone hitting her with an icepick, twice? No, the wounds are too small... These were made by teeth, or fangs, proving that she was "bitten".....! Likely a cat..... no, I mean, a snake!

While Wataru was racking his brain for an explanation, Aria unexpectedly started up a new conversation!

"Oh, by the way, Ms. Mira—you wouldn't happen to hold any special qualifications now, would you?"

Why the hell would she ask something like that at a time like this???

Wataru was confused! Confounded! Con-combobulated!

"Um, well, I *am* actually licensed as a first-class snake charmer."

Why the hell would she have such an incredibly specific license like that???

Wataru was utterly beside himself with bewilderment!

Uh, this clearly means it's her, right!? Ms. Mira clearly controlled a snake and murdered the head maid, Ms. Rio, by having it bite her, right!?

But Wataru was still unable to accept this! He shook his head in total denial!

No, it can't be! That was too simple! There's no way figuring it out would be this simple! This must be a red herring! There must be another suspect!

"Well, young Wataru? Have you found something?" Alibaba asked Wataru, furrowing his brow!

"Whaaa!? Um, yeah.....!"

What do I say!? Ms. Mira is clearly the killer! But how is that possible!? We're barely a third of the way into Chapter Four, and we've already identified the culprit!? Surely we're moving too quickly through the plot here!? Maybe I should prolong this whole scene, and then spend the next chapter describing how I solved the case!?

Wataru couldn't help but feel that things were moving too fast, both in terms of the case and of the plot itself! He needed to slow things down! However, he was at his wit's end trying to think of a way to draw out this scene!!

Yeah, this is too much of a pain in butt! I'm done thinking about this any longer!!!

"The criminal is! Ms. Mira!!" Wataru pointed directly at Mira, his face again contorted into that fearsome *Nio* scowl!

"What!? M-Me!?"

Mira looked completely shocked at this accusation and clapped one hand over her mouth in disbelief!

Alibaba was also surprised by this turn of events! "H-How can this be!? Young Wataru, you believe *Mira* is the culprit!?"

"Allow me to explain! At the time of the incident, Aria, Résistance, Mr. Alibaba, and I were all in his room, so we couldn't have committed the crime!"

"Well, yes..... hm?" Alibaba was a bit taken aback when he heard it put so plainly, but seemed convinced! "Oh, I see! The only one who could've committed the crime at that point was Mira!"

Wataru gave him a firm nod!

"Yes! Only Ms. Mira is without an alibi! Further, on Ms. Rio's neck, there are two puncture wounds, as if she was bitten by something!! This is likely proof

she was bitten by a snake!”

Aria’s jaw dropped in shock as she recalled what Mira had just told her!

“Ms. Mira, you... you told me that you are licensed as a first-class snake charmer!”

“Huh. I get it. Mira controlled the snake, made it attack Ms. Rio, and she died... Excellent work, Wataru!” Résistance was thoroughly impressed by Wataru’s bold logic!

...Surely anyone could have figured that out!!

Wataru insulted everyone in the room! But only in his mind! And this is an *isekai* novel!! Everyone knows that all of the side characters have shockingly low IQs whenever the protagonist comes on the scene!!!

“Is that t-true, Mira!? Did you kill Rio!?” Alibaba demanded! He had broken out into a cold sweat!

Mira stared straight down, and her shoulders began to tremble!

“.....Heehee..... Heh heh heh...”

“What’s so funny!!”

“AHAHAHA! To think that my crime would be discovered so quickly!”

Her head snapped up, and all could see she had an insane smile on her face! The sweet and pure persona she’d had just moments earlier was gone! No longer a pure young lady, now she was a pure villainess!

“Yes! It was I who killed her!” She showed not the slightest regret for her actions as she revealed all!

“Why would you do something like that!?!?”

Her face twisted with rage upon hearing Wataru’s question, and her fists shook with rage as she replied!

“That woman... the head maid, Rio... she asked me if I had any hobbies! And then when I told her I enjoyed taking care of my pet snakes, laughed in my face and called me ‘emo’! Of course I killed her!”

“Huh?”

“I’ve always had pet snakes! And then, for her to *laugh* at that... I couldn’t forgive her!”

“.....You can’t kill someone for a reason like that!!”

Correct, Wataru! Completely and unconditionally correct!

Aria decided that this was the time for her to interject!

“But Wataru, I can understand how she feels!”

“Wh-What in the world are you trying to say, Aria!?”

“Well, I’m a girl, but I like playing with toys marketed to boys, and if someone told me that playing with toys was a ‘kiddie’ thing to do, I’m pretty sure I’d **** them up.”

It’s somewhat against company policy to have a main heroine who says such things, so we’ve done our Dear Readers a favor by bleeping out the four offending letters. Still, it’s clear that Aria was being completely serious when she said that!!

“Anyhow, I suppose now that everyone knows I did it... There’s nothing for it except to kill everyone here!” Mira suddenly ripped a small whistle out from her bosom pocket!

“What’re you gonna do!?!?!?”

“I shall have you *taste* the true power of *snake venom*!”

“Wh-Whaaaaaaaaaat!?!?!?!?”

She put the red whistle against her lips and blew hard and long!

Wheeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!!!

The high-pitched sound of the whistle reverberated inside the entrance hall!

And then!!

Out of nowhere, a snake slithered across the marble floor towards our adventurers!

It wasn't a very thick snake, but at three meters long it was still big! Its skin was a mottled red and brown! It looked abnormally venomous!

Of course, it's not just Wataru & Co. who were surprised by the sudden appearance of the snake—even our Dear Readers must be finding themselves slack-jawed in amazement at this very moment!

“Wa-Wataru, what do we do!?” Aria panicked and hid behind Wataru!

“Hahaha! You cannot hide from him! Go now and feast, Snakey!”

Mira once again blew the whistle, to the rhythmical tune of a song!!

“Now what!?”

The snake on the floor was twitching in time to the beat of her whistled tune!

“Eeep!” Alibaba let out a whine of terror in a picture of utter patheticness! The snake moved its head in an elliptical arc through the area as it raced right towards Wataru!

“Come and get it!” Wataru roared at the creature, taking a fighting position while wearing the most fearsome expression on his face!

Mira blew even harder on the whistle!

Kshaaaaaaaaaaa!!!

The snake let out a terrible screech as it leapt at Wataru! It flew through the air at two hundred kilometers per second! From a distance of just two meters away! Any normal person would have found the attack impossible to avoid! But as we all know by now, Wataru is no “normal person”!!

He calmly thrust out his right hand and mowed down the flying snake with his bare hand!

Whing! The dry sound of hand-against-snake was heard—and then with incredible speed, the snake was deflected sideways! But while in midair, the snake twisted its body ever so cleverly to minimize the force of the impact when it hit the floor!

“Heeheehee, your attacks are meaningless! Snakey and I are the best fighting team ever!” Mira had an unpleasant smile on her face as she glared at Wataru!

“Hey, Wataru! There’s no other way! I’ll take care of the snake, and while it’s distracted, you get rid of Mira!” Résistance pulled out her sword from its sheath and roared! And yet—Wataru did not agree to her plan!

“I can’t! I can’t hit a woman!”

Wataru is a hot-blooded fighting teenage Japanese boy! Setting aside the special case of Elphabelle, there’s no way he could ever raise his fists against a woman!

“Hey now, Wataru, this isn’t the time to be saying things like that...”

“Don’t worry! I have an idea!” Saying so, Wataru yanked out “something” from the inner pocket of the coat of his school uniform!

“Th-That...!” Résistance was stunned!

And of course she was! Wataru had just pulled out a *microphone* in a situation like this!

“Heh, you thinking of using that against me? There’s nothing you can do to change this situation just by whipping out a microphone! Now hurry up and die!”

Mira put the whistle up to her lips again, and again began that rhythmic, whistled tune! The snake resumed its creepy shimmy across the floor towards our hero!

Wataru, watch out!!

—Wataru, however, was not concerned in the slightest! He took a great, deep breath, tightened his grip on the mic... and began to rap!

Dear Readers! Let’s all join in!!!!

Detective Ito’s here, and I’m bringin’ the heat!

Charmin’ errybody with my rhymes and my beats!!

Use a snake to do battle? Im’a school ya, NEET!

Bring a mic to get loud, and start crankin’ the bass

'Cuz that's all that I need to start rockin' the place!

Use my voice to defeat ya while still solvin' the case!

Things were lookin' tough, both for me and my friends!

But this anti-snake rap has got us groovin' again!

I've said just 'bout enough, so this is the end!

YEAH!!!!

Wataru's face was absolutely demonic as he screamed into the mic! But was there any point to him having totally lost his mind in front of the others like this!? I'm sure many of our Dear Readers are understandably confused by his decision to rap in the midst of battle!

However..... Readers, direct your gaze at *that*! Look! The snake ignored Mira's whistled commands and curled up on the floor to take a nap!

"Wh-Why won't you listen to my whistle!?" Mira was thrown into a state of total confusion!

It was then that Résistance realized what was going on! "Oh, I get it! The snake moves in time to Mira's whistling! If Wataru raps, though, and drowns out the sound of the whistle, she can't control it at all!"

Yes! This was Wataru's plan all along! By rapping unbelievably loudly, the snake would no longer be able to hear the shrill tones of the whistle!!

"You—You cheeky bastard...!"

Mira was visibly angered when she heard how he had ruined her snake-charming, and began to blow her whistle again!

Wheeeeeeeee—

—but it was no use!

The second she began to whistle, Wataru brought the mic back up to his mouth and began rapping again! It was all stupendously cringey to witness, but the participants themselves were totally serious!

Gotta hurry up and settle this once and for all!

Put a zipper on your lippers, so don't try to call!

If you're too weak or lack the rhymes to be dissin' me right

I'll have that nasty snake pay you back by the end of the night!

This smackdown may be brutal, but ya deserve what ya get!

You're a creepy emo maid, with a creepy emo pet!

Now listen to the rhyme I proclaim from my throne:

Snakey may belong to you, but you're the one gettin' owned!

YEAH!!!!

Another passionate verse from Wataru!



The snake before him moved not in the slightest, and remained as quiet and coiled as it was before! Just as he'd predicted, the snake couldn't hear Mira's whistle over his rap!

"Give it up already, Mira! You can't win!"

Wataru, still holding the mic in one hand, shouted at Mira! She burst out crying!

"Ugh... Oh, shoot...! Hey! I didn't even get a chance to say anything bad about you!!" Mira was an emotional wreck after the ruthlessly brutal disses delivered by Wataru's rap!

Indeed, they were cruel, but it's a cruel, cruel world! That's what it means when you decide to make your way in life following the principles of Freestyle Rap!*

(*Freestyle Rap: the definition of the art form varies according to time and place, but basically it involves a style of rapping where one improvises lyrics to a set beat. A common "rap battle" involves participants improvising lines, taking turns to insult, or "diss," one another back and forth in a competition of one's will and wit. In some circles, the ability to favorably participate in these contests leads to an increase in social standing. [5])



A few minutes later, royal guards arrived at the house and carried off Mira to the dungeons for the crime of murder. Those left in the entrance hall looked at each other.

"Well, that's one thing taken care of, right?" Aria chirped cheerfully, like a proper isekai heroine!

"Hey, you're right!" Wataru gave Aria a satisfied nod.

Next to him, Alibaba had a smile on his face as he said: "Heavens above! Thank you, Mr. Wataru! With your help, we were able to solve the case!"

"It was nothing! I did what anyone would do!" Wataru waved away Alibaba's praise with modesty befitting a noble gentleman.

"Please, allow me to express my gratitude. Yes... I shall present you with the

orb that you asked me for earlier!”

“Wha—!!!!!! Are you sure!?!?”

Wataru had a brilliantly happy smile on his face as he heard this most surprising proposal!

“Yes, I really mean it. I am sincerely grateful for your help.”

And so with this, Wataru had obtained the fourth orb! It was then that Résistance turned to Alibaba to ask him a most important question!

“Oh, by the way, Mr. Alibaba—You wouldn’t happen to know anyone else with an orb, would you?”

“Hmmm, another orb, you say...? Well, actually, I do know of another person in the Revant Kingdom who has one.”

“Oh, really!?” Aria couldn’t help but smile at the way the plot was progressing so quickly!

“Why, just a little bit ago I told you I bought my orb at auction, right? The truth is that there was another orb sold at the very same event. This other person bought it.”

“Well, who is it?”

At Résistance’s urging, Alibaba struggled to recall the other orb owner. “Hmmm, I do believe it was...” He stroked his chin, as if trying to recall some long-ago memory, and fell into a long silence before saying:

“Right! It was the manager of the Toys ‘B’ We store!”



In recent years, a national chain of toy stores had enjoyed explosive growth all over the Wind Continent; that chain, of course, was “Toys ‘B’ We”. With an enormous selection of toys and consistently high volumes of new products coming onto the shelves, they were well known for their low prices. Our own toy fanatic, Aria, was a frequent customer of their stores.

Toys ‘B’ We, as it turned out, also had a store here in the Revant Kingdom.

Wataru & Co., having obtained the orb from Alibaba and leaving the mansion

behind them, quickly headed over to the Revant Kingdom branch of Toys ‘B’ We. Alibaba’s mansion had been in a quiet, residential district, but as they continued down the street leading out of his neighborhood, they entered a lively market. Beyond all the shops advertising the famous pottery and the various fruit stalls stood a massive billboard advertising a very *specific* store.

On the billboard was Toys ‘B’ We’s mascot character, a green goblin whose name was “Goblob.”

“Wow, look! This is Revant Kingdom’s Toys ‘B’ We!” Aria exclaimed, full of excitement upon catching sight of the store. The massive, warehouse-like building was painted in bright rainbow colors designed to be attractive to children. Over the entrance, in big, bold letters read: “TOYS ‘B’ WE! REVANT KINGDOM BRANCH”.

“Whoa, so this is it...!”

Wataru had paid a visit to a Toys ‘B’ We before, back in the Sky Kingdom with Aria and Résistance. This store, however, was a good deal larger than the Sky Kingdom one had been. Just as one would expect for the less-populous Revant Kingdom, everything was bigger there. The Sky Kingdom was practically jam-packed with people everywhere one went, but here in the less-populated Revant, the land was cheaper.

“All right then, let’s head on inside!”

Led on by the biggest Toys ‘B’ We fan of them all, Aria, the three of them stepped inside the store. Just like the Sky Kingdom Store, the aisles were narrow, tall, and stacked with toys like stuffed animals and figurines, all carefully aligned in their spaces.

They were, of course, also selling “Payblades” here as well. Today was a school day, so there weren’t any kids around at the moment, but there *were* some rather ferociously *otaku*-looking young men looking feverishly at each and every Payblade as they inched down the aisles.

“Ahhh! It’s so nice to be back at Toys ‘B’ We!” Aria was practically walking on air as she strolled down the aisles.

Allow me to explain: Aria had been the perpetrator of a certain incident at the

Toys ‘B’ We store back in the Sky Kingdom (see Volume One’s *Special Side Story: No Holds Barred! The Duel at the Toy Shop!*) and as a result had received a lifetime ban from the store. What’s that, you say? You can’t believe that a light novel heroine would be banned from a toy store for being involved in a violent incident? Unprecedented it may be, but it’s the truth—that’s just who our Aria is, folks.

“Let’s buy something while we’re here!”

“Hey, Aria! We aren’t here to go on some shopping spree,” Résistance coolly admonished Aria for her immaturity. She was entirely right to do so, of course—the three of them weren’t there to buy things, after all.

“Excuuuuuuuse me!!” Wataru yelled at the nearest employee walking by.

“Yes, sir? How can I help you?” The employee asked with a friendly smile on his face.

To which Wataru reacted by demanding, “Can you get the manager out here right now!?”

Wataru’s request was most dismaying to the employee. “Ummmm... What business might you have with the manager?” The employee’s expression was now one of fear, and it was quite clear that he was afraid that Wataru would be complaining about him to the manager. But of course, anyone who worked at a store like he did would be positively beside themselves with anxiety at being told, “get me the manager” by a two-meter-tall, excessively muscled man.

“Oh, it’s just, there’s something I’d like to discuss with him!” Wataru may have had a stern expression on his face, but he certainly wasn’t attempting to appear intimidating.

But then—in the very next moment!

“I’m the manager! What can I do ya for!?” A gallant, dashing man suddenly appeared, claiming to be the manager!!

But he looked absolutely nothing like one expects such a person to look like! He was wearing ripped jeans that completely exposed both of his knees and a long, black leather coat! What was he, some sort of rock star!?

And then there was that hair! His long, bright red hair was spiked up by unbelievable amounts of hair gel into a massive mohawk! From a distance, it looked as though a red star had fallen from the sky and was walking around the store!!

“Who the hell are you!?!?!?” Wataru was quick to shout his indignance at this most unexpected appearance!

“I just told ya! *I’m the manager!!*”

“You’re lying! Nobody would want to shop here if they knew a freak like you ran the place!” Aria was quite upfront about her willingness to judge books by their covers!

“Well now, hey! That hurts, y’know? The name’s Justice, Justice Katou! I’m the one, the only, abso-frickin’-lutely real manager of this Toys ‘B’ We here in Revant Kingdom!” The whole time he was speaking, he thrashed his entire body about in a fluid series of martial arts poses, finishing by thrusting his right fist up into the air!

“...What the *hell* are you doing?” Résistance demanded, with the frostiest of frosty looks in her eyes!

“You don’t know what... *this* is?” Justice Katou answered, with his fist still in the air. “This here’s a victory pose!”

The employee standing next to him was kind enough to offer the adventurers a more helpful explanation! “Sorry about him. You see, our manager, he’s a little odd...” He bowed repeatedly to the three adventurers-slash-customers in apology!

“I-Is that so... All right then, Mr. Justice Katou! Know that my name is Wataru! I have something very important to discuss with you!” Wataru cut straight to the point! Justice Katou folded his arms and tilted his head to one side!

“What’s up??”

“I want you to give me the orb you bought at an auction!”

“Wha-Whaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaat!? The *orb*!? You want ME! To give *you*... the ooooorb!?!?” He was overreacting even by our own high-octane standards!

Justice Katou, shut up!!

“Yeah. If you’ve got it, hurry up and hand it over.” Résistance was not amused in the slightest by his theatrics! Not amused at all!

“Naw, man, I don’t *thiiiiink* so! I bought that cool, cool roundy boy a coupla months ago an’ it’s become one of my most cherished treasures!”

“We’ll pay as much money as you want,” Aria said! “Just *talking* with you has been one of the *worst* experiences in my life, so name your price and let’s get this over with, Mr. Manager.” Her face was completely straight as she said this! How unbecoming of a light novel heroine to be so mercenary!

Justice Katou let out a most confident, brazen laugh at her idea! “HA! I’ve no interest in money, kiddo! If it’s the orb you want... you gotta beat me in a ‘Monster Duel’!”

“A ‘monster duel’...? What in the world is that!?!” Wataru was befuddled! Luckily, Aria immediately stepped in to explain!

“You don’t know about Monster Duels!?” yelled Aria obnoxiously! “It just went on sale, and in just the blink of an eye, every single boy wants to have it! It’s a super popular card game!” Of course Aria knew all about boys’ toys! She was absurdly well-versed in topics like these!

Justice Katou nodded his head vigorously! “Yeah!!” he shouted!!

“Monster Duels is a super *lit* card game where players do battle using decks of forty cards each! I’m so good at it, they call me the ‘Monster Duel King’!!”

“W-Wow...!”

“So, what’s it gonna be? Are we gonna have ourselves a match to see who walks outta here with the orb!?”

“I don’t really understand what’s going on, but of course I’m going to take you up on that offer!!” Wataru was in the highest of spirits!

“Sweet, I’ll even lend you one of my decks!!”

Justice Katou flipped open his coat! The interior of his leather coat was lined with *pockets and pockets* full to bursting with decks of cards!!

“Right, then for you, since you’re a beginner, I’ll lend you this deck that has a bunch of monsters in it!”

“Whoa! That’s perfect for me! Thanks, dude!!!” Wataru thanked Justice Katou as he took the deck from him! “...But, where do we battle!?”

Wataru looked around the store for a likely spot, but a sneaky smile crept onto Justice Katou’s face!

“Well, we’re gonna have the battle... here, obviously!” He threw one fist up into the air and re-assumed his victory pose, then shouted loud enough to be heard in every aisle of the store!

“Duel Stadium! Let’s goooooo!!!”

Suddenly...!

Grrr-Rrrrr-Rrrr-Rrrrrrr...!!

The floor between Wataru and Justice Katou vibrated, then began to move! A line appeared in the floor, which widened into a gap, then further widened into a massive, ten-meter-square hole!! From its depths emerged a “stadium” that looked like a boxing ring! Metal poles stood in all four corners, with red ropes stretching between them!! Two wooden tables were placed at opposite sides of the area, leaving a large space in the center of the ring!

“Is this... a duel stadium!?!?”

“You better believe it! This will be the battleground for our Monster Duel!”

It’s worth mentioning, Dear Readers, that within any given Toys ‘B’ We store you could expect to find plenty of specialty arenas for all the latest toys and games, any of which can be summoned at a moment’s notice! No wonder the toy chain is famous all over the Wind Continent! They really go all out for their customers! Some of you may have no idea what I’m talking about here, but that is quite all right and completely normal for this light novel series!!

“Come on, Wataru! Into the ring! Duel me!”

“You’re on!!”

The two of them stepped under the ropes and right on into the ring! Each one took a position behind one of the wooden tables, the two of them facing each

other with their best *Nio* impressions!!

“All right, all right, all right! I’m gonna explain the rules now! They’re very simple! First, you got your deck of forty cards! Shuffle that bad boy up and draw five cards!”

“Okay!!” Wataru nodded and began shuffling his cards in a barely contained explosion of paper!

“Whooooooooooooooooooooooooaaaaa!!!!!!!!!!!!!!”

“That’s enough! Keep that up and the deck is going to catch fire from the friction!!”

“I guess you’re right!” Wataru stopped shuffling, laid his deck on the table, and drew five cards from the top!

“Sweet, now the duel really begins! Pick one of your five to ‘summon’!!”

“S-Summon!?”

“Now take that card and toss it up over your head!”

Wataru selected a card with an orc drawn on it, then, as he’d been told, threw it up into the air!

Flash!!!

What an astonishing turn of events! The card suddenly began to glow! The light began to grow larger, and larger—when suddenly, in the middle of the ring, an orc appeared!!

“Wh-Whaaaaaaaaat!?”

“Yeah, my dude! That’s a summon! These cards have magic spells on ‘em, so if you pitch ‘em into the air, they summon mindless beasts!”

“That’s... That’s amazing, dude!” This is an *isekai*, so all you have to do is explain that something happens using magic and you can make anything sound like it makes sense! What an extraordinarily convenient plot device!

“Here’s how the battle’s gonna go: Im’a summon my monster next, then we’ll have our monsters fight each other and we’ll see who’s stronger! The player whose monster wins the battle wins the duel!”

"I think I understand, bro! ...But when do I use these other four cards?????"

“You can just toss them around and play with them like they’re throwing stars!!”

This all sounded absolutely nothing like a typical card game!!

“Whoa! That’s baller!!”

Wataru picked one of his extra cards, held it between two fingers, and tossed it just like a throwing star! *Zoom!* Off it went!

“These cards fly really far!!”

The card made a beautiful arc back towards Wataru like a boomerang as it flew around the store! How immensely irritating to all the other customers! At six hundred kilometers per hour, the card came zooming back through the ring—only to embed itself right into Aria’s forehead with unthinkable force!!

[illegible]

“Aria, are you okay!?!?” Wataru was panicked!

But not to fear! Aria had excellent healing magic skills, so there was no trouble at all!

“...Uh, I think I got the hang of this whole battle system!”

Justice Katou, having finished explaining the rules of a Monster Duel, had yet one more thing to say as he looked at Wataru!!

“There’s one last thing I need you to know, Wataru! I... AM... STRONG!!! If you’re gonna tuck your tail between your legs and run off like a li'l baby, now’s the time!”

Justice Katou cocked his head to show off his excessively flashy red mohawk! The sheer amount of confidence pouring out of him was practically a physical

presence! Wataru, on the other hand, flexed every muscle in his body and spake thusly:

“Don’t you go underestimating me now! I *never* run from a fight!!”

Wataru and Justice Katou glared at each other again!! Lightning bolts flew from their eyes, clashing in a shower of fireworks in the center of the ring... metaphorically, that is! If this was a manga, that's definitely how this scene would be depicted!

For a mere card game, this was an *explosively* charged situation!

But then! At that very moment—!

Aria, having just healed her forehead using magic, launched herself into the ring!

"Stop it right there!!"

“—!? Whoa, Aria!”

Even Wataru was stunned speechless by this surprising turn of events! No one knew where she had gotten them from, but there were fashionable battle accessories all over her body! Silver bangles on her arms! Silver chains around her neck! A silver belt around her waist!

“Aria, wh-what’s going on...!?”

Aria turned to Wataru and shouted—

“Wataru! Let me fight this battle!”

“Wh-Why!? Have you even *played* Monster Duels before!?”

Aria shook her head “no”! Shock of all shocks! “Not once! I’ve only seen some brats in the neighborhood playing it before! But I have a deck! Those little kids told me that they ‘didn’t need these cards anymore’ and gave me forty cards, enough for a full deck!”

She whipped a deck of cards out from her bosom! She held her deck, consisting of cards abandoned by a bunch of children, high in the air!



“You... Are you really sure you wanna do this!?” Wataru looked sincerely worried as he watched Aria flash her cards about! In fact, everything she did made him feel worried!

“I know the rules better than you, Wataru! I am an *expert* in any battle involving boys’ toys! I *want* to fight! Monster Duel!!”

Aria looked steadfast in her determination! Could this newfound intensity have been due more to her desire to play card games instead of their true goal of obtaining an orb...? Who cares at this point!

Taken by Aria’s passion for the game, Wataru entrusted her with the battle!

“Okay... It’s all yours, Aria!! By the way, what’s with all those extra doodads you’re wearing!?”

“I don’t really know why, but there’s a rule when it comes to clothes and card games! You have to wear the flashiest outfit possible when you have a battle!!”

“O-Oh, really!?” Wataru was amazed by this newfound knowledge! Justice Katou smiled wide and gave Aria a wink!

“Girl, you really know your stuff! You got a pretty good sense of style, too! I’m digging that sweet silver necklace on you!”

“Flashy!” That was precisely the word Wataru had used to describe Justice Katou earlier, and he truly was the literal incarnation of the term! From his bright red mohawk, to his black leather coat, even his dangerously distressed jeans—all of it was flashy to the max!

Wataru tilted his head to one side in confusion!! “This world’s got a lot of strange customs...!”



And so, the fight for the fifth orb, a Monster Duel, became a one-on-one battle: Aria vs. Justice Katou.

Wataru returned his borrowed deck to Justice Katou and left the ring. Aria, now alone, was as cool as a cucumber in an Alaskan icebox in January as she prepared for battle.

“Now then, little lady... What’s your name?”

“My name’s Aria!” Aria stated her name with all the confidence of a world champ, her metal accessories clattering as she shook with excitement.

“Hm... Hear me, little Aria! I’ll have you know that I *do not go easy on women!*”

He whipped out his deck from inside his coat in one perfectly smooth motion.

Aria readied her deck as well. “Understood! That’s fine with me!”

There was a moment of silence. Inside the Toys ‘B’ We, it was as quiet as the calm before the storm.

Justice Katou shattered the silence with a wild, ferocious yell that echoed off the ceiling. “Here I go! *Start the Duel!!*”

Finally—finally!—the Duel began!

“I go first!” Aria laid her shuffled deck on the table and drew five cards! She looked carefully at each one!

.....*I have no idea which card’s the strongest!*

Yes, Dear Readers! No matter how much of an expert Aria was in playing with boys’ toys, it was her first time playing this card game, so she of course had no idea how to judge the strength of her cards!

Furthermore! Her deck was assembled from the passed-off playthings of neighborhood children, with absolutely no thought or intention put into its arrangement! She had no idea what sort of cards she had! On top of that, her cards were milquetoast monster varieties like “Orc,” “Slime,” “Harpy,” “Goblin,” and “Pervert”!

.....*Hold on, “Pervert”? The heck is that!?*

Aria was surprised to find the “Pervert” card in her deck! On the card was an illustration of a middle-aged man naked from the waist-up, and only wearing a skimpy pair of white briefs on his lower half!

Y-Yeah, definitely a pervert...! This is just a deck I pulled together at random, but to think that a weird card like this would be in here...!

The card game was called “Monster Duel,” so what would a human, a non-monster, be doing mixed in among these cards? ...I suppose some may consider this “Pervert” to be a monster as well!

Wh-Which should I choose? ...The Harpy is a “fairy type,” so that has to be strong, right? Or might the Slime be surprisingly powerful? No, I doubt it...

As Aria carefully looked over each of her cards, she found her eyes being drawn to one card and one card alone!

I want... to use the Pervert...! I’ve gotta see what summoning some rando in his underpants does...!

Aria found herself completely overcome with an intense desire to use this joke card, this “Pervert,” despite the fact that this battle would decide the fate of the orb!

“What’s taking so long, li’l missy? Hurry up and summon your monster!” Justice Katou had grown quite impatient with Aria’s slow assessment of her cards! He shook his head, flashing his red mohawk at her as he urged her to speed up!

“Very well! I... have decided!” Aria had made up her mind, and was holding a single card up into the air!

“I shall summon—this one!!”

Aria thrust it forward towards the center of the ring, and it began to glow with a brilliant light! In the center of the ring appeared a slightly overweight man wearing nothing but a pair of tighty-whities!

“Y-You chose... the Pervert!?” Justice Katou’s mouth dropped in shock upon seeing Aria’s monster! But his surprise was not because Aria had chosen a joke card!

“I see what you’re doing... You’ve got pretty good instincts for this being your first Duel, missy! The Pervert has a lot of secret powers because of its *Perversity* attribute!”

Résistance furrowed her brow and tilted her head in confusion!

“Huh, ‘perversity’...?”

“Yes! Each monster has a wide array of attributes! The Orc Wataru summoned earlier has high *Beastly* points! Which means it has high physical attack and defense, but it has no resistance against magical attacks! The Pervert that Aria summoned has high *Perversity*, which means that it can flexibly alter its attack patterns to deal with any foe! A very tricky monster!”

“Interesting... The game’s more complex than I thought!” Résistance was sincerely impressed by Justice Katou’s explanation!

“Sweet, now it’s my turn!” Justice shouted and lifted one card from his hand into the air!

“From the Deepest Depths of Darkness I summon thee! Inflammethyself with the Fires of Wrath! ‘Black-Eyed Blue Cyclops’!!”

The card gave off a brilliant light, and another monster was summoned into the ring! He had chosen the Cyclops as his monster!

The Monster’s body was more muscular than a bodybuilder’s and paler than glacier ice! Its one massive eye was pure black, and in its hand it carried an enormous club!

Even before the fighting began, it was clear who was going to win!

“All right! Let the battle begin! Let’s go, Aria!”

“Yeah!”

Aria nodded with incredibly serious intensity, and sent orders flying to her Monster, the Pervert, immediately!

“Mr. Pervert! *Charge!*”

The half-naked, middle-aged man began his assault on the enormous, demonic *beast* in front of him without so much as a twinge of terror! He lifted his right arm high into the air and slammed it into the monster!

It was a direct hit against the thick musculature of Black-Eyed Blue Cyclops! But his fist made only the quietest, pathetic *thump!* against that meaty bulk!

“Hey there, Mr. Pervert! What the heck was that lame-o punch! Couldn’t even kill a fly with a hit like that!”

Wataru ground his teeth in frustration as he watched from outside the ring! If Wataru were to fight the Cyclops one-on-one, it would have all been over in an instant!

But that's not how these Monster Duels work!

"Oh shoot! I forgot to say this earlier, but players can't touch their own monsters or their opponent's!"

"Roger that!" That meant that even if the Cyclops pulverised the Pervert into smithereens, Aria was forbidden from using healing magic to fix him up!

"Sweet, now it's my turn! Let him have it, Cyclops!" *'Crazy Super Smash of Annihilation'!!*

He shouted the name of the attack with every fiber of his being, and then the Cyclops, which had been still and quiet until that moment, suddenly began to move!

"Grrrrrrraaaaaaaaaaaaaaw!!" Its infernal, guttural roar reverberated throughout all of Toys 'B' We! The Cyclops lifted the massive club up with its right hand and charged right for Aria's Pervert!"

"Mr. Pervert! Do something, please!"

Aria screamed out of desperation, but her monster was a mere human, however perverted may he be! Against a monster with an overwhelming physical advantage, how could he possibly 'do something'!?

Just as expected, the Pervert could only look from side to side expressionlessly, retreat a few steps away from the Cyclops, and go no further! The enormous club mercilessly walloped him directly in the rib cage!! *Crack!* A sharp, meaty sound followed the hit, and the Pervert fell face-down on the ring's mat!

"How you like that! That's the power of the *Crazy Super Smash of Annihilation!* It took me a whole night to think of that name!"

Justice Katou had one fist thrust into the air as he gloated! If it took him a whole night to think of *that*, I think we can all agree that he has no sense at all when it comes to naming things! None whatsoever!

“M-Mr. Pervert! Please don’t die! Stand up, Mr. Pervert!”

Aria punched the air as she tried to encourage the Pervert! It was quite unprecedented in all the great and long history of Light Novels for a heroine to be cheering on a half-naked, perverted middle-aged man!

“Hey, whoa—it can’t be over already...?”

“Th-This is bad! At this rate, we’ll never get that orb...!”

Résistance and Wataru were despairing already! But Dear Readers, don’t give up on them yet!

After all... it was then that Aria realized “something”!

“H-Hold on, please! The battle isn’t over!!”

What’s this? The Pervert, lying face-down on the mat—his cheeks were red, and he was laughing!

“Huh!? What is going on here!?”

Wataru was yet again confused! The Pervert slowly stood up! It made a most disgusting, lecherous smile, opened its mouth, and... “Heh heh... heh heh heh...” let out a creepy little laugh!

“It’s... laughing...? That skeevy dude is laughing at a time like this?” Résistance was puzzled by this unexpected development!

“Hey, Cyclops! Don’t just stand there! Keep hitting him!”

At Justice Katou’s command, his monster began slapping the Pervert’s face with a palpable intensity!

Whack! Whack! Whack!

A critical hit! The Pervert was thrown to the side, and again collapsed down onto the mat!

Yet even that was not the end!

He rubbed his swollen cheeks and stood up yet again! From his mouth was heard that familiar laugh! “Heh... heh heh...”

“Wh-Why’s it acting like that! It’s freakin’ creepy!!”

And that was when Justice Katou realized the true nature of the Pervert, and his eyes flew open in surprise!!

“So that’s what this is...! Little Miss Aria here, the Pervert she’s summoned... At first I thought it was a normal Exhibitionist-type! But I was clearly wrong!” His face twisted up into a cruel, cruel grin of pure malice as he pointed at the Pervert, oozing with self-satisfaction! “Your Pervert... is an ‘*Ultra-Masochist*’ type!”

“*What the hell’s this guy talking about?*” Dear Readers, it is entirely natural for you to be puzzled by this sudden declaration!

“I’ll explain it for you!” continued Justice Katou, without anyone asking! “I said earlier that Monsters with high *Perversity* can change their abilities according to the type of monster they’re fighting against—but there’s a subclass of Perverts that can also change their abilities in response to certain behaviors!”

Wataru, Résistance, Aria—literally everyone within earshot was confused by this “explanation”! You could literally see the question marks hovering over their heads!

“And then Little Miss Aria here has an ‘Ultra-Masochist’ type! The more physical damage it receives, the more aroused it gets, and so the stronger its attacks become! It’s a super freaky ability to see up close!!”

Justice Katou ground his teeth with frustration, even as he explained the rules of the game!

“Of all the Monsters! A fearsome opponent, indeed... A monster’s type changes randomly each time you summon it, but for it to be *this type* during *this battle*...”

“Hey, Résistance! You got any idea what this guy’s saying...!?”

“Don’t worry about him, Wataru, I’ve got no idea what he’s on about. I bet anything that whatever he’s explaining right now is completely irrelevant in the later chapters, so don’t bother trying to remember it.” She was certainly right about that!!

“So, basically... This is a chance for me to turn things around!”

Aria mostly understood what was going on, and clenched her fists in anticipation! Now, Aria, press the attack!!

“Knowing that...” Aria took one of her four remaining cards from her hand, and suddenly sent it *zooming*—quick as a throwing star, it flew through the air—and stabbed right into the Pervert’s back!

“A-Aria! What’re you doing!?”

Résistance made a small nod of approval, muttering, “Ah, an excellent strategy...! Wataru, that Pervert is an ‘Ultra-Masochist’ type. That means that the more physical damage it takes, the more powerful its attacks become. So...”

“Wow! I think I get it now! If Aria damages the Pervert, then its attack power will go up!!”

Players were forbidden from *directly* touching their monsters in a Monster Duel! However!! The act of throwing cards at one’s own monster was not, in fact, against the rules! Aria had made a clever decision right there!

Without missing a beat, she threw the other three cards at its back in quick succession! Every time a card sliced into its back, it moaned in the most disgusting fashion! “Ooooh!” Truly, a Pervert!! The Author himself does not wish his Dear Readers to imagine something so grotesque, but he has no choice but to describe the events precisely as they unfolded!

Justice Katou let out something like a strangled yell as he lurched forward!

“Urgh! If that’s how it’s gonna go... Cyclops! Hit that Pervert so hard it can’t possibly absorb all the damage!”

His monster, the Black-Eyed Blue Cyclops, charged the Pervert! Raising its thick, wooden club high in the air with both hands, it flexed every muscle in its body as it prepared to bring it down!

It was then that Aria yelled!

“Now’s our chance, Pervert! Show us just how powerful you can be!”

The half-naked, middle-aged man, with four cards sticking out of his back, assumed an attack position with a bloodthirsty vigor! It lowered its hips, spread its legs, and clenched its fists! Its imposing stance was incredibly similar to the

way Wataru looked whenever he was about to use his thrusting attack!

The Cyclops brought down its club, aiming right at the Pervert's face! No matter how much of a masochist the Pervert may have been, if this attack landed head-on, it would be an instant knockout for sure!

"This is bad! If the Pervert doesn't dodge that attack, he's gonna lose!!"

But then! The Pervert's fists moved at light speed! Punching quite literally at the speed of light, it moved faster than the Cyclops could bring down the club, and successfully landed its attack right against its torso!

BOOOOOOOOM!!!!

It was unbelievable just how much stronger this attack was compared to its earlier, pathetic little love-tap!

"Ngh! ...Ooooooooooh...!"

The Black-Eyed Blue Cyclops froze, its club mere inches from the Pervert's face! Then, slowly... it fell backwards, landing with a crushing *boom* onto the mat!

Justice Katou hung his head in despair! "How can this be!? My... My strongest monster, lost...!!"

"Yeah, buddyyyy! Nice job, Aria!!"

"I wasn't sure how it would end up there for a moment... but that was great, Aria!"

Wataru and Résistance had nothing but praise for Aria! She turned to face the both of them with a smile on her face so radiant, it was as brilliant as the sun on a clear day!

"Thanks! I really beat him!"

The smile was extraordinarily cute, just like we'd expect from our main heroine!!

Now then, let's review the rules of a Monster Duel once more! In this battle card game, two players have their summoned monsters fight each other, and the owner of the winning monster wins the Duel! It's that simple!

As Aria's Pervert had landed a *crushing* blow on Justice Katou's Black-Eyed Blue Cyclops, Aria was the victor!

—But perhaps not! Justice Katou, at that moment, began to laugh most menacingly!!

“Hahahaha... We'll just see about that, Little Miss Aria!”

“What!? Wh-What do you mean!?” Flustered, Aria turned back around to face Justice Katou, with a look of total suspicion on her face as she listened to what he had to say next!

“The Monster I used, ‘Black-Eyed Blue Cyclops’... It has a special ability!!”

“Wha-Whaaaaaat!?”

Not even our Dear Readers can contain their surprise at this most shockingly unexpected development, I'm sure!

“I shall explain the special ability of my Black-Eyed Blue Cyclops! The truth is, whenever it is destroyed by an enemy's attack, it can, just once, wipe away the results of the battle as if it never happened!”

“H-How!!”

Wataru, Aria, and Résistance could scarcely believe their ears at this revelation!! All three of them were thinking exactly the same thing!! *You bastard! You should've told us about that sort of crap right at the beginning!!*

“But that's not all! The Cyclops returns to my deck, and I can use another one of my cards to summon a different monster!!”

“Wh-What a pain in the—!!”

In that instant, the fallen Cyclops disintegrated into tiny balls of light! Justice Katou watched as they disappeared, then raised another card high up into the air!

“My next summon is—this monster!!”

The card let out a blinding burst of light! Another monster appeared in the center of the ring!

“Heed him who Hails from the Holy Heavens High Above! Bestow a New Age

upon us, ‘White-Eyed Orange Cyclops’!!”

The new monster he had summoned was... another cyclops!

It looked almost exactly the same as the Black-Eyed Blue Cyclops that had been there earlier! The only thing different about it was its orange skin and large, pure white eye!

“It’s just different colors! What a joke!”

“Sure, but the words he used to summon it were kinda cool, I must say.”
Résistance was impressed with the flair by which Justice Katou had called upon this newest monster! His words had found a home in her hopelessly emo soul!

“You just watch yourself, little Aria! This isn’t just a different color! The White-Eyed Orange Cyclops has *way* higher attack and defense compared to the Black-Eyed Blue Cyclops! No matter how strong your Pervert—”

Then, as if to interrupt his arrogant little monologue!

Aria’s Pervert—*moved!*

WHA-BAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAM!!!!

“What... did you *do*... !?”

Justice Katou was shocked! In the blink of an eye, the half-naked, middle-aged man had darted from one end of the ring to another and had launched his fists right into the unbelievably muscular abdomen of the White-Eyed Orange Cyclops!!

“There’s—there’s no way! This thing’s supposed to have amazing defense! It won’t go down with just one punch!” So shouted Justice Katou, but however!

“Ngh! ...Ooooooooooh...!”

The White-Eyed Orange Cyclops fell over without so much as attempting a counterattack, baying a soulful, agonizing moan as it died!

“.....”

Justice Katou was silenced! Aria’s Pervert stood there, victorious, looking as though he was about to say something like, “Oh no, did I do that *again?*”

The Pervert was invincible! Using his Ultra-Masochistic abilities, he had been

strengthened to become more powerful than any other monster! What a cheap tactic!!

“Um...” Aria awkwardly asked, “Are you done now?”

Justice Katou, crestfallen, gave her one, quick nod!

“Yeah... I lose...”



Several minutes later, the battle was over. Justice Katou had left the ring and, as promised, handed over the orb. This fifth orb had a faint pink glow about it.

“Thank you very much, Justice Katou!”

Aria had removed all of her flashy accessories and was back in her normal outfit, smiling quite nicely at her vanquished opponent.

“My pleasure! That was a rockin’ hot battle, little missy! Next time you’re in town, let’s have another Monster Duel!”

Justice Katou flashed her a bright smile, showing off his nice, white teeth, looking a bit bashful, even, as he made this invitation. Wataru put his hands on his hips and asked him:

“Hey, Justice Katou! Do you think you could tell us where the last orb is!?”

Wataru & Co. now had five orbs! In order to fight the dragon, they would need one more. Justice Katou, still looking a bit shyly over at Aria, answered him thusly:

“Huh? The last orb? I dunno! I’ve got nooooooooooooo idea where that is!!”

Checkmate!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

What a terrible turn of events! To have come all this way, only to find themselves in the precarious situation of having no idea where the next orb was!

“Whaaaat!! Hey, Justice Katou! What the hell do you mean, ‘you don’t know’!!”

“Uhhh, what? I mean, that’s not a thing that I know? How else can I say it?”

“But—But...!!”

Wataru was drowning in despair, his face completely blue with sorrow as he cradled his head in his arms! Without knowing the location of the next orb, the story can’t continue!

There’s nothing else I can do! For the rest of the remaining pages in this book, I’ll list all the things that I’d like to talk about if I could be a guest star on a radio show with a young female voice actress!!

—Or at least that’s what I’d like to do, but Wataru still hadn’t given up!

“Damn it all! At a time like this, the only thing we can do is go on a fact-finding mission!!”



“...But having said that,” Wataru muttered, “where do we start!?”

“Not surprising that you’re lost already. You think it’s that easy to find out where an orb is?” countered Résistance.

Having discovered that Justice Katou did not know the location of the final orb, the three adventurers exited the Toys ‘B’ We Revant Branch Store with dark expressions on their faces and went back out into the city.

They needed to search for the final orb, somehow. Try as they might, however, they had nowhere to start in their quest to gather information. This investigation may have been the most difficult challenge they’d faced so far.

“Before we worry about all that, why don’t we go find something to eat?” Aria asked. “After that Monster Duel, I’ve worked up an appetite.” In Aria’s arms lay the five orbs. All of them glowed different colors, each one mysteriously beautiful. It was easy to believe that they, just as the dragon had said, truly did possess a “strange power.”

But then, something unexpected happened!

“...Huh!?!?”

Ziiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiing!!!!

All five of the orbs in Aria’s arms began to shine blindingly brightly!!

“Ahhh! I can’t see, I can’t see!”

Aria had instantly snapped her eyes shut due to the sudden burst of light! The beams of light blasting from the five orbs merged together into a single ray, shining right in the direction of a mountain of somewhat middling height to the southwest!!

“Could this be... Do you think that the light of these orbs will lead us to the location of the last one?” Résistance stroked her chin as she watched the orbs with interest!

Wataru’s dark expression disappeared, and was replaced with a joyful smile!! “I’ve got no idea, but there’s no harm in looking there! Let’s go check it out!!”

Just the type of decision we’d expect from a Real Man like Wataru, a man who acts before he thinks! In times like this, his firm determination to *act* allows for no deviation from the path towards the goal!!

“Whaaaat!? We’re not going to eat!?””

Squinting her eyes against the bright light of the orbs, Aria whined about this new plan! Wataru and Résistance completely ignored her complaints and immediately began sprinting to the southwest!

“H-Hey! Wait up, you two—!!”

And so our final act begins: the Quest for the Final Orb!!

To be continued in the next chapter: “Guardian Spirit of the Orbs, Awaken!”

*Sources:

[5] *A History of Freestyle Rapping* — Isekai Tensei Publishing

Chapter 5: Guardian Spirit of the Orbs, Awaken!

Led on by the light of the orbs, Wataru & Co. were able to leave the Revant Kingdom on foot in a mere two hours. Eventually, they arrived at the base of the mountain, where a large forest awaited them.

The five orbs that Aria was holding still glowed with an intense light, beaming right into the trees.

“Good grief, there’s *still* more walking to do?” Résistance grumbled.

“All this walking is rather tiring, isn’t it? I wonder if the sixth orb really is located beyond this forest...” Aria joined in. Neither of them was looking forward to the prospect of having many miles left to go.

But Wataru would have none of it! “There’s no use whining about it! Come on!!” He charged into the forest, taking an animal trail that wove between the trees. For a guy like him, with legs strong enough to launch him forward at the speed of one hundred meters per second, the little two-hour stroll they’d just been on was a mere warm-up for the main event.

It was four o’clock in the afternoon, and the rays of sunlight that drifted through the forest cover were slowly becoming more orange.

As the three of them finally made it through the first, thick layer of the woods, they found themselves in a small clearing. There they found a one-meter-square stone box, just lying there in the middle of the open space. It looked as though it had been there for some time, judging from the moss growing on its sides. And, surprisingly enough—the beam of light from all the orbs was pointing directly at it.

“...Is this... where we’re supposed to go?”

“...What the hell is this!?!?” Wataru tilted his head to one side, puzzled.

Next to him, Résistance stared at the stone box rather suspiciously. “This must be... a ‘shrine’ type of thing...” she muttered, unblinking.

“Yeah! Which means... The last orb is... *inside the shrine!!*” Wataru shouted with an immediate conviction as he sized up the box. The force of his emotion transformed him into the spitting image of the demi-god *Asura*, come again.

At that very instant, the five orbs Aria was carrying stopped glowing, which must have meant they had arrived at the correct destination. This box clearly held the sixth orb.

“Careful, Wataru,” warned Résistance. “Shrines belong to the gods, not man. If you don’t treat it carefully, you might get cursed.”

“Yeah! You’re totally right!” Wataru nodded in agreement. He tread lightly up to the front of the shrine, then paused, and—

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!”

BOOOOOOOOOM!!!!!!

He shattered the shrine as easily as you or I might smash a glass bottle!!!!!! In an instant, he had pulverized the shrine into a shapeless mound of stone shards!!

“W-Wataru, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!?!?!?!?!?”

“We need this to defeat the dragon!! The gods will understand!!!” Wataru didn’t appear the least bit ashamed at having just destroyed a holy object!!

Suddenly, a *black light* radiated out into the clearing from within the pile of stone shards!!

“Eh?!?!?”

Wataru noticed the strange light and quickly swept aside the remnants of the shrine to uncover the source.

“Ahhhh!!! It’s the orb!!!”

Aria and Résistance both looked over his shoulders. Just as he’d said, there was a black orb there, glowing with black light! This meant that they had finally gathered all the orbs!

Congratulations, Wataru! Our Dear Readers can’t help but smile and burst into a round of applause!!!!!!

—But then!!

“Wataru, wait—!”

Aria was the first to sense something “odd”!

“—!?”

Of all the most unexpected things! Out from the orb, with no warning at all, came billowing clouds of black smoke!

“Wh-What’s that smoke mean!?” Résistance was taken aback by this sudden turn of events!

“Dammit, this is really bad!!!!” bellowed Wataru. “I’ve been cursed!!!!”

“The Gods didn’t understand, after all...” explained Aria to no one in particular.

The gas, as if possessed of desires of its own, whirled in the air and spiraled directly towards Résistance!

“!!!”

Before she had even the slightest chance to react, the gas completely enveloped her face!

“A-Ahhhhhh!!”

Résistance screamed in sheer terror! She involuntarily breathed in the gas, twitched a bit, then fell face down onto the ground!!

“Re-Résistance!!”

“Résistance!”

Wataru and Aria immediately hurried over to her!!

“Yo! Get it together!!” Wataru was beside himself with worry as he shook Résistance as hard as he could! Seconds later, her eyes flashed open!

“Oh, Résistance!” said Aria in concern. “Are you all right?”

Résistance reacted not in the slightest, and merely stood up in complete silence! It was as though she had become a machine! No matter how cool she normally tries to act, this attitude of hers was frigid!!

Wataru found this very odd!

“H-Hey! Résistance.....???”

She looked back at him with the frostiest of expressions and said:

“*Résistance.....? That is not my name. I am ‘Phantasm,’ Guardian of the Final Orb...*” She looked the same as she always did, at first glance... But upon closer examination, one could see that her normally blue eyes had turned black!

“Huh? ...Résistance, don’t you think you’re taking this ‘emo’ thing a bit too far!?!?”

“That’s not what’s happening, Wataru! Résistance is being *possessed!*”

“Oh, so *that’s* what’s going on!”

Aria, with her sharp skills of observation and succinct explanation, quickly convinced Wataru of the truth! He slapped his thigh at the power of her insight!

“Hey... Listen to me, you human bastard. If you wish to take this orb, you must first defeat me...”

Phantasm, possessing Résistance’s body, glared angrily at Wataru with those black eyes of hers! The sound of her voice hadn’t changed at all, but those flat, emotionless words were as cold as the winter winds! Even our ever-eager fighter, Wataru, didn’t find this challenge of hers inviting at all!

“Wh-What’d you just say to me!? Résistance’s one of my best friends! I’m not going to beat her up just ‘cause you’re possessing her!!!!!”

Wataru was, truly, a most noble soul! A class act! A model Japanese youth! And also very loyal to his friends!! Should Heaven and Earth switch places, why, not even then would he consider attacking one of his friends!!!

“Oho, is that so? You shall never possess this orb if you don’t fight me, you know, and I shall possess this body—forever.”

“.....We can’t have that!!!!!”

Of course, what happened next almost goes without saying! Wataru, aiming right at Résistance—or should I say, “Phantasm”—slammed his fists into her stomach with all his might!

Heaven and Earth just switched places!!!

“Ungh!!”

Phantasm took the full force of those punches! She was sent flying backwards through the air, and slammed into a massive tree at the absolutely *murderous* speed of nine hundred kilometers per hour! The force of her impact literally *splintered* the tree into a million pieces! “Chop-chop-timber” this was not! More like “wham-bam-BOOM!!!”

“Wataru!” shouted Aria. “Please, you have to hesitate before you jump into action in situations like this! You’re moving the plot way too fast!”

“Who cares about that!!” Wataru was simply pissed off! But—but then—!

“Well now, you *can* throw quite a punch...”

Phantasm abruptly appeared out of the dust! Her beautiful blue hair fluttered in the wind!

“Howwwwwwwwwww!?!? There’s no *way* you should be able to stand up after a hit like that!”

“Now it’s my turn...!” She whipped Résistance’s sword from the sheath at her belt! It was an absolutely *massive* blade at 1.2 meters in length, yet she wielded it with ease!!

“Take *this*!!” Phantasm darted forward, swinging the sword in a wide arc! Wataru, watch out!!

“Jmp!!!!!” He instantly leapt out of the way! Phantasm’s sword cut through the air with a *whooom!* sound that chilled the very bones of all those who heard it! She swung her sword again, and then again, but each time, Wataru managed to *just barely* avoid the blade! His were the quick movements of a lithe, graceful predator!

“Hmph. You do nothing but jump left, jump right. To have made it this far, you must have already gathered the other five orbs, no? And yet, you seem to lack any sort of fighting ability whatsoever...”

Phantasm was clearly trying to provoke Wataru! And Wataru, being Wataru, took the bait! He was *pissed off*!

“The hell you say about me? I’m gonna—!!!!!!”

With a long, enraged shout, Wataru dashed right at his foe! He leapt into the air, whirled around, and kicked Phantasm right in the chest!

“Ngh!”

It was a kick far more powerful than the punch he had previously thrown, but it was a direct hit, right on her thick steel armor!!

That wasn’t the end of it, though!!

“...!?”

Shockingly! Phantasm grabbed hold of Wataru’s leg and threw him across the clearing!

“Hnnng!!”

“Grngh!”

Wataru somehow managed land on his feet! His face, however, showed how much of an effort he was making! He was drenched in sweat!

“The strength you wield... Résistance was never this strong before!”

Wataru would know this, of course! He’d fought her before—but never like this!

“Indeed, she was not... However, inside this body is not just her strength. The *power* of the orb is also mine to wield...”

“That makes sense.....!!”

Wataru wiped the sweat from his brow and got back into his fighting pose! Phantasm and Wataru glared at each other most ferociously!!

“.....!!”

They were five meters apart! Should either one of them jump forward and punch the other, they’d land the hit for sure! The fight was at a critical juncture!!

Aria was watching them from a little ways away! Even though Résistance was being possessed at the moment, it was still hard for her to see her two friends

going at it like this!!

“.....!”

Aria ground her teeth in nervousness and hugged the five orbs in her hands tight against her chest!

What do I do here... This bastard doesn't just have Résistance's strength, but the orb's energy too! There's no way I can beat her with a head-on attack.

While flexing every muscle in his body and glaring most intensely at his opponent, Wataru calmly assessed the situation! He tried thinking of the best way out of this quandary!

The biggest problem was Phantasm's reach! Wataru was fighting barehanded, but his opponent had a 1.2-meter-long sword! There was no way around it—this was a most disadvantageous position to be in!

Right... Maybe I should use a Hot-Blooded Shinken Shirahadori and break that sword into pieces...!?

This “Hot-Blooded Shinken Shirahadori” was the technique Wataru had used when battling Résistance in their first encounter! It's a most magnificent technique in which a barehanded fighter catches their opponent's sword between their hands, then snaps the weapon in half! Amazing!

Go back and read Volume One if you want to know more!!

“What's this, Human? Hesitating, are we? In that case... I'll come for you!” Phantasm got low to the ground, held her blade up to one side, and ran right at Wataru! She flew towards Wataru at the speed of light! Without missing a beat, she brought the sword crashing down on Wataru!!

“Urghhhh!!!”

With his rapid reflexes, Wataru twisted away to avoid the slash!

I can't take a blow like that! When I fought Résistance last time, I was able to stop her blade with my bare hands... But Phantasm is swinging that thing way faster than before!

Indeed she was! With the power of the orb, Résistance was stronger than ever! Not only that, the speed at which she attacked had accelerated to beyond

what Wataru could handle!

“Wataru, please! Do your best!”

Aria cheered on Wataru as hard as she could from the tree she was hiding behind!

Dammit! This is not good! I'll never be able to get close enough to attack her as long as she keeps whipping that sword around! I suppose I could always get up close and personal with her so I could punch her straight up, but she'd definitely land a blow on me, and I don't have any armor...!

Wataru was light on his feet as he retreated away from Phantasm, trying to think his way out of the situation! It was when he reached the edge of the clearing that he was shocked by the simplicity of the solution available to him!!!!

Hold on, there is something I can do! I can turn this whole thing around!!

“I've got it!!!!” He yelled into the air, turned to face the fifteen-meter-tall tree next to him... and *hugged* it!

“.....? Just what are you trying to—?”

Phantasm narrowed her eyes as she found this behavior most suspicious! It was then that Wataru—!!

“HAAAAH!!!!”

With every muscle in Wataru's body tensed up, he gritted his teeth together, summoned every last ounce of energy he had, and with that far-from-average strength he was so proud of, he *ripped the tree right out of the ground!!!!*

“H-How!?”

Of course, even Phantasm was amazed at this feat!

“Freakin' prepare yourself, Phantasm! I'm taking back Résistance's body!!” Wataru lifted the tree he had just yanked out of the ground over his shoulder as he yelled at his opponent!!!

Phantasm's sword had an attack range of 1.2 meters! But now Wataru, with his new weapon, had an attack range of a whopping *fifteen meters!!* The range

hierarchy had been *firmly* established!

“Tch! You may have a large tree, but being the human *bastard* that you are, you cannot possibly use that as a weapon!” Phantasm was carefully staying just out of range of Wataru’s tree, still holding her sword ready to attack!

Of course, she was completely right—a normal person could not swing around a fifteen-meter-long tree through the air like a sword!!

—A *normal* person, that is!!!

Dear Readers, you already know! Our Wataru is *not normal*!!

As an elementary school student, he had forced his way into the Olympics (completely ignoring the age restrictions!) and had won the gold medals of every track and field event! As a result, he became the only *Man* in history to be completely banned from all future Olympic events at the young age of eleven years old!!

On top of that!!

For a tree like this, that was “merely” fifteen meters long, why, of course he could swing it about!!



“Hnghh!!!!!!”

Wataru lifted the tree up high with both of his hands, aimed it right at Phantasm, and then slammed it down! He looked as though he was performing a *kendo* head-strike!!

“!!”

Phantasm was slack-jawed and flabbergasted at this turn of events!

And then!!

KA-BOOOOOOOM!!!!!!

With just one swing of his tree, Wataru smashed Phantasm!!

Dear Readers, allow me to explain! Even this simple attack had a long and respectable history! This move is called the “Crash of the Falling Timber-Blade*”!

(*Crash of the Falling Timber-Blade: The year was 980 A.D., in the Heian Era. A young man, born in the mountains near Kyoto, Sakata Doutoki, was famed throughout the land as the strongest in all of Japan. Standing at over two meters tall, he was given the nickname “Doutarou” out of deep respect for his great strength. What’s less well known, however, is that he was not only skilled in unarmed martial arts, but also in sword fighting. He created a style of fighting where, instead of a sword, he wielded a massive “Timber-Blade” to crush his opponents into the ground. It was a powerful, but simple technique. It is said that he would lift up his Timber-Blades, all taller than he was, and proclaim them to be “true” wooden swords. [6])

“Hah... Hah... How d’you like *that*!?!”

Alas, strong as our Wataru may be, using such a technique consumed a great deal of his stamina! His breaths were coming short and fast, and a veritable waterfall of sweat was dripping from his brow!

...But the fight was nowhere near over!!

“Hahaha... So you can... fight after all...!!”

“Wha—!”

A most astonishing development! Unbelievably unthinkable!

Phantasm had, with her unoccupied left hand, *completely blocked* Wataru's Falling Timber-Blade! A small crater had been created just from the force of the impact as it traveled down her body, from her hand to her feet, and yet there she was, still standing!

"You stopped that... with *one hand*!?"

Even so, Wataru was not about to give up! He pushed down hard with the tree, trying once more to crush Phantasm under the weight of its bulk! But his opponent, looking as calm as ever, casually shoved the tree right back up!

"How can you—!"

The surprise of this was too much for Wataru! The Timber-Blade slipped from his hands and then he nimbly leaped backwards, quick as a startled hare!

"Oh, make no mistake... That truly was an impressive blow," Phantasm said, "but it was not quite enough."

And with those words, she sent the tree flying sideways! The enormous tree, which must have weighed several hundred kilograms, crashed into the ground with a *BANG!* at the edge of the clearing!!

"Hah... heh... This is... really not looking good...!!"

Wataru was totally shocked that his attack had not crushed his opponent, and furthermore, that it had been stopped single-handedly! He felt something like excitement at the obvious strength he was facing—but still took one step back, just to be safe!

"Now... / attack!" Phantasm yelled and heaved her sword high up into the air! She dashed right for Wataru, each leap leaving an enormous footprint in the dirt as she rapidly closed the distance!

"Come and get it!!!"

Wataru knew that if he kept running about the clearing to avoid attacks, this battle would never end! He crouched down, ready to take the blow!

"Hiiiiiiyaaaa!"

Phantasm held the sword's blade parallel to the ground and swiped it sideways! If she made a direct hit on Wataru, there's no doubt that a single blow would take his head right off! But Wataru braced with his feet apart and bent over backwards as Phantasm swung her sword, completely dodging the blade!

Phantasm was stunned! "How can this be!?"

Allow me to explain! Wataru was, right then, using a legendary karate technique, the "Ina Bauer*"!

(*Ina Bauer: A karate technique created by a martial artist in the Saga Domain (now Saga Prefecture) in 1850. By spreading the feet wide and pointing the toes sideways, in opposite directions, one is able to easily bend over backwards in order to dodge attacks. One's sense of balance is quite important when spreading one's legs wide and pointing the toes at 180-degree angles from each other, but it allows one to avoid attacks on the upper torso with ease. This move has absolutely *nothing* to do with the figure-skating technique of the same name, the "Ina Bauer." Any similarity in the names of said moves, or similarities in the movements themselves, is entirely coincidental. [7])

"Oho, an excellent dodge! One hundred points for style!"

Aria was quick to praise Wataru from her vantage point behind the tree! She was doing an *excellent* job of fulfilling her role as the Light Novel Heroine, and all of our Dear Readers are no doubt completely satisfied with her compliments!!

When Wataru came back up, he used his forward momentum to slam his head into his opponent's abdomen!

"Ngh!?"

His headbutt smashed precisely into the weak point of her steel armor, fracturing the plate! When someone thought up the word "blockhead," they were certainly thinking of someone with a head as hard as Wataru's!

But Phantasm had not yet lost this battle!

"You think *that's* gonna take me down!?"

She screamed with rage as she brought the sword high above her head, then began to swing downwards—but look, that was a feint! She kicked sideways, and poor Wataru, who’d been focused entirely on the sword, was nailed right in the stomach by her foot!

“Gahh!!”

He groaned, and most painfully at that, as the air was forced right out of his lungs! In a flash, he slammed one foot against the ground and jumped backwards!

Th-This is really bad! I’m racking up damage...!! If I keep retreating like this, I’ll end up back near Aria—maybe I should have her heal me!? No, it’s too dangerous! She’ll be within range of that sword, and if Phantasm attacks her, too...!

Wataru found himself trapped by the circumstances! There was nothing he could do!

“.....!”

He racked his brain as hard as he could to think of a way out of this situation, grinding his teeth like there was no tomorrow! Before him, Phantasm lifted her sword, eyes full of rage and smiling most evilly at him!

“So, Wataru, or whoever you are... this has been a good fight. However, it seems like the battle has come to an end. Allow me to strike this *final* blow.”

Her malicious smile was one Résistance never would have made at her friends! If Wataru loses this battle, he will not only never obtain the orb, but Résistance might never get her body back!!

How—How can I win this...!?

Wataru—was terrified!

But not of losing! He was terrified at the very thought of losing his friend!

No... Never!! I absolutely can’t lose Résistance!!

Before he knew what he was doing, he had clenched his fists together, leaned forward toward Phantasm, and shouted with the face of a *Nio*! “I..... don’t want to lose you, Résistance!!”

“Hmph. Cry all you want, Human,” Phantasm spat at Wataru, and pointed the tip of her blade at his chest!

“Here and now, I shall run you through with this very sword...”

“R-Résistance.....” Aria said as though she was about to burst into tears!

“Résistance, please, don’t... He’s your friend, isn’t he...!?”

Her words, heartfelt as they were, could not reach Phantasm’s ears in her current state! Phantasm’s eyes glittered black as the night sky and glared cruelly at Wataru’s defeated face, ready to deal the final blow!

What do I do...!? What do I do...!?

Wataru, however, was not going to go down without a fight! He crouched low to the ground, watched his approaching enemy closely, and prepared himself to launch a counterattack!

If I can hit her with my counterattack, the best place to land it would be on her neck, where the spinal cord is... If I can knock her out with one hit, Résistance might just get her body back!!

“Haaaaaaa!!” Roaring at Phantasm as the blade stabbed through the air, straight for his neck, Wataru took a small step left, dodging her thrust with millimeters to spare! Then, without missing a beat, he swiped his flattened hand through, aiming right at her neck!

“You’re goin’ down!!!”

BOOOOM!!!

Wataru’s hand-chop was a direct hit to her neck! —Or so he thought!!

“!?”

An instant before his hand touched her, she had begun to spin herself clockwise! With that momentum, she was able to avoid his attack and managed to deliver a shallow cut to Wataru’s chest!

“Whaaaaaaaaaat!!”

Wataru’s pecs were stronger and harder than steel, so of course the slash resulted in a mere flesh wound! It was just a little scratch! What was more

shocking to him was the force of the cut! Although it barely broke his skin, our two-meter-tall Wataru was instantly sent flying backwards by sheer power of Phantasm's slash!

I might be in deep trouble right now...!

His school uniform was sliced and stained with the blood now dripping from his chest! But even so, Wataru was calm and focused as he nailed the landing!

"You're a hard one to kill, Human..." Phantasm said, and raised her sword once more!

What... What do I do!?!?

Out of the frying pan and into the fire! Wataru was cornered!!

It was then, at that very moment when Phantasm was about to launch her attack—that it happened!!

"—!?"

Suddenly, her eyes widened, and for some reason she *dropped the sword!* The weapon fell to the ground with a muted *ting-tang-clang*, a most lifeless sound for such a fierce blade!

"Wha-What's going on? In the name of..."

Aria furrowed her brow in suspicion at this unexpected turn of events!

Phantasm clapped her hands against the sides of her head, crying out in pain! "Ow... My head... feels like it's about to burst...!"

"—!?"

Wataru was dumbfounded! Overwhelmingly dumbfounded! The enemy, right before his eyes, had begun crying out in pain!! "Wh-What the hell is going on!!"

Then, from Phantasm's own mouth, came the most shocking words: "W-Wataru.....! Save... me.....!"

"Huh!? I-Is that you, *Résistance!*?"

What an unbelievable thing to occur! *Résistance*, whose body had been possessed by the orb, was fighting back, rebelling against Phantasm's control!

“Don’t get in my way...!”

“No...! I don’t want... to fight Wataru anymore.....!”

“Mortal soul, begone! This body is no longer yours...!”

“No! I won’t go!”

“My duty is to protect the orb! This man must die!”

“Then, my duty is... to stop you!”

Résistance and Phantasm were desperately dueling for control, the two souls warring with one another in a single body!

Wataru stood there, dumbstruck! “Just what am I supposed to do in a situation like this...!” he said to himself as he watched Résistance cradling her head in her hands! This would be the perfect moment to attack... but instead, Wataru dropped his fighting stance, took a deep breath, and bellowed!!

“You can do it, Résistance! I know you’re stronger than some orb’s ghost!!!”

“!!”

Wataru’s powerful voice rang out in every corner of the forest! The sincerity of his passionate encouragement, of course, also reverberated within her heart!

“You’re right...! My name is Résistance...! My name means.....‘to resist’...! I’m not going to give in to the likes of you!”

“Wha-What are you doing!? Foolish Human, you attempt to take back this body!? Wait—from where does this *power*—ngh!”

Phantasm..... or rather, Résistance’s body began to shudder all over! It was Résistance “resisting” Phantasm’s control of her body, trying to take it back!

As they watched this inner struggle, both Wataru and Aria cheered her on as best they could!!

“Push through it, Résistance! I know you can do it!”

“He’s right, Résistance! You’re our friend! Please, come back to us!!!”

“Wataru..... Aria.....!”

A thin line of tears quietly slid down Résistance’s cheek!

“You can trust me.....! You two.....! I’m—I’m not going to lose a fight like this...!!”

A human that had been possessed by an otherworldly spirit was reminded of just how strong the bonds of friendship were, and fought back against the being that sought to control her! How convenient that such an utterly clichéd plot device should appear at a time like this!

And so it was..... With the power of friendship...!!!

“Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!”

Résistance roared! Forcing all her strength into her voice, she lifted her head and raged against her captor! As she did, her entire body was bathed in pale blue lightning! The bolts flashed out to knock down the surrounding trees, and all the nearby birds flew up into the sky in a great crying cloud at the sudden thunder! Her eyes, which had been dark as night, were, slowly but surely, regaining their original blue hue!

Yes, this is the awesome power every human has within them! Wataru and Aria both watched her struggle with bated breath!

“I’m not going to lose..... Not here, not now!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!”

Résistance yelled for a good, long minute! The instant she stopped—the lightning bolts crackled and disappeared! Her pupils were entirely blue again!

“Haa..... Haa.....” Out of breath, she collapsed to her knees!

Wataru and Aria panicked and ran over to her! “Hey, Résistance, are you okay!?”

“Y-Yeah... I’m fine. Thanks, you two...!!” Résistance beamed at both of them, happy as can be! There was no doubt, this smile was definitely Résistance’s!!

“Résistance, that was amazing! You beat Phantasm, all by yourself!”

“Well... I did hear you and Aria cheering me on, so...”

Yes, Dear Reader! The passionate, sincere voices of her two friends had encouraged Résistance enough that she was able to shake off the cursed power of Phantasm!

It was then that the black orb, still buried in the pile of glass shards, began to glow once more!

A man's low, deep voice resounded through the clearing: "You have passed the test..." —and then the eerie light of the orb disappeared!

This meant... the three adventurers had finally overcome every obstacle and obtained the final orb!!

"It's done...! We did it!!" Wataru pumped both of his fists into the sky and shouted with joy!

"Yeah!" Résistance nodded, looking as happy as he did!

Aria opened up her rucksack and put the five orbs she was still holding inside, then grabbed the final one from the pile of rubble left from the shrine and put that one inside as well! "Nice! We've got them all!" She clapped her hands together excitedly, looking down at her bag, bulging with balls!

Then, that very next instant! As if her battery had suddenly run out of energy, Résistance closed her eyes and fell forward onto the ground!

"A-A-A-Are you okay!? Résistance!" Panicking, Aria laid one hand on her neck to check her pulse!

"...Well?"

"It's all right—she only fainted."

"Really? Whew, I'm glad to hear that...!!" Wataru patted his chest as he let out a big sigh!

With this, they had finally collected all six orbs! But things weren't going to be "happily ever after" just quite yet! After all, the real fight is just about to begin!!

To be continued in the next chapter: "The Rampage of the Dragon! Fear His Terrible Power!"

*Sources:

[6] *The True Story of the Legendary Doutarou* — Isekai Tensei Publishing

Chapter 6: The Rampage of the Dragon! Fear His Terrible Power!

“Aria! Could you get Résistance healed up?”

“Yeah!”

Aria nodded and knelt down on the ground next to Résistance, then slipped one arm under the fallen knight’s neck. She lifted Résistance’s head and rested it on her thighs, then clasped her hands together and held them against her own chest. A green glow began to emanate from them as Aria began casting her healing magic.

“Here we go...” Aria placed both her hands on Résistance’s pale cheeks. Slowly but surely, the cuts and scrapes on her face healed and disappeared entirely, as if one was watching a video in reverse.

Aria was an amazingly powerful healer; her potent magic was likely capable of completely healing any type of physical damage in a short time. Once Résistance had been healed, Aria turned to Wataru.

“Wataru, what do we do now?”

He hesitated a little before responding.



“Hmm, well... Now that Résistance is better, I guess we should head back to the Revant Kingdom first.”

It was now five o'clock in the afternoon. The sun hung low in the sky, and in just a little while longer it would set beyond the horizon. It would be dangerous for them to sleep under the stars that night, considering how tired they were from the intense battle they'd just fought. The smell of blood might lure wild beasts to attack them as they rested. Tonight, they needed to head back to Revant and find a safe place to sleep.

“That's a good idea. I think I'd like to go back there as well.” Aria nodded in agreement with Wataru. At this rate, Résistance would be healed in a mere half hour or so. Then, if they walked back to Revant on the road they'd come by, they'd be back in the kingdom in just a little over two hours. The path wasn't a difficult one either, so it would be an easy return trip.

—Or so they'd thought.

After all, this is *these* three we're talking about! Of course nothing's going to go according to plan!

Suddenly, without any warning whatsoever—

“...!? What's that!?”

—They found themselves covered by a massive, dark shadow.

“I-I think it's still a little too early for the sun to be setting...”

Wataru and Aria both looked upwards in a panic. There, high above them, was! None! Other! Than! A massive, magnificent dragon, with wings outstretched as it flew through the air!! Its enormous body stood in sharp contrast to its long, thin neck and pointed wings! Covering the upper half of its torso was a white and blue striped shirt!

This was the very same dragon Wataru had encountered just a few days earlier! It had appeared once again, blocking out the sun!!

“Hmph. So much for trying to plan things out...!”

A cold sweat broke out over Wataru's brow as he anticipated a sudden attack from the dragon flying overhead, but not a trace of fear showed on his face! In

fact, he had a big, wide smile, despite the *thorough* beating he'd been given in the previous battle mere minutes ago! His school uniform's jacket was still slashed, revealing his chest, and the fresh cuts were still dripping with blood!

"W-Wataru! Are you sure you don't want me to heal you?"

"These scratches!? Don't bother! Just focus on healing Résistance, Aria!!"

"Well, if that's how you really feel... Here!"

Aria paused her healing of Résistance to rummage for something in her rucksack! She pulled out the six orbs they'd collected over the course of their adventure!!

"You'll need these to fight the dragon!"

"Oh yeah, that's right!! Thanks, Aria!!!"

Wataru took the orbs from Aria, and with great determination began to place them in his jacket pockets! You might find this strange, since each one of the orbs was about the size of a baby's head and so even placing just one in his pocket would be quite difficult... but who cares about that!? We don't need to think about that! No siree Bob!

As if the dragon was watching them as it soared gracefully through the sky overhead, the dragon spoke to Wataru using telepathy!

Well done, young Wataru... I admit, I am impressed to see that you managed to successfully gather all six orbs...

"Of course I did! Just who do you think I am!?!?"

"Wataru, what's wrong?" asked Aria. "Why're you talking to yourself like that?"

"Huh!?"

Only Wataru could hear the dragon's telepathic message!!

"...I'm in the middle of something right now, Aria, so keep healing Résistance!"

"O-Okay!"

Wataru turned away from her to face the dragon above him, looking as

though he was ready for a fight!!

(All right, then... Come down and fight me, like you promised!!)

Indeed, we shall battle. But first, get on my back. We must move to a more appropriate location for our fight.

(Sounds good!!)

Wataru nodded his head up and down quite vigorously! He glanced back at Aria and said, “Aria! I’m going to go fight the dragon! Take care of Résistance for me!!”

Aria gave him a great big smile when she heard this!

“Okay! I believe in you, Wataru! Go win this!”

“I will!! All right, catch you later!!” With that, he leapt straight up into the air, flying three hundred meters up into the sky to make a perfect landing on the great dragon’s back!!

Just to be clear, it’s not like he did this using any magical powers or anything! His legs were simply *so strong* that they were able to propel him three hundred meters up into the air!!

“Let’s go, dragon!!” he yelled. “Take me to our battleground!!”

At last, the final battle was about to begin!



The orange glow of the sun was falling beyond the edge of the horizon. The time was 5:30 p.m. Night fell upon the world.

Wataru stood atop the dragon racing through the air roughly three hundred meters above the ground. His arms were folded, and his facial expression was most stern. Despite the wind blasting into him, he faced the world without moving one bit!

In that moment, he looked *exactly* like the *Kongo Nio* statue at the Tōdai-ji temple.

It is within sight now... Our battleground lies ahead.

“Yeah...!”

Beyond the forest, the terrain was full of steep mountains and sharp cliffs. Beyond that, stretching far out to the edge of what one could see, was an enormous desert.

We shall not be disturbed here. In this place, we may fight without concern for our surroundings.

“Yeah, I bet... but before that, there’s something I want to say to you.”

What is it you have to tell me, Human?

“I’ve come to defeat you because you keep causing problems for other people! But if you promise you won’t ever harm another village, I’ll let you just walk away!! What do you say?”

The great dragon opened its maw and let out a deep, guttural laugh:
“GAHAHAHAHA!!”

Wataru, cease with such foolishness. I cannot make that promise.

“Why not!? Why are you attacking places where people live!? What do you get out of it!?!?”

Hm. That is an excellent question. After all, I am a vegetarian, so I cannot claim to be attacking humans for sustenance. My reason for attacking human settlements is simple: I want to demonstrate my power. To strike fear in the heart of every human, every creature that scurries on the ground of this continent, and have them know true terror at the sight of my mere shadow... Seeing that fear is such a pleasure to me, I simply cannot bear to give it up...!

“.....!”

Wataru furrowed his brow and closed his mouth. What the dragon had just told him was *literal*, tyrannical oppression. But, it still “made sense”—he had a reason for his behavior. He wanted to feel superior to all other living creatures by scaring the living daylights out of them. For him, attacking people was entertainment, plain and simple.

For the dragon, assaulting people was a mere hobby.

“Is that so... in that case, I have to *take you out!!*” Wataru shouted at the dragon as he leapt off his back. Down, down, down he fell, all three hundred

meters down to the sea of sand below.

KA-BOOOOOOOM!!!!

Wataru's landing created a massive shockwave as he smashed into the desert. Tiny grains of sand flew high into the air, and the wind whirled about him as if he was standing at the center of a sandstorm.

Now, I have something to say to you, young Wataru.

The dragon folded his wings and slowly descended. There was a deep, reverberating *rumble* as he made landfall, his great bulk crashing to the ground. As he turned to face Wataru, he spread his wings wide once more as the massive beast studied the boy for a long while before speaking again.

Human... You are not of this world, are you?

Wataru's eyes widened in surprise. "You—You can't be—!!"

I am. I was once a resident of Japan. I recognized where you came from the moment you told me your name was "Wataru Ito." It's a very Japanese name, after all.

"I—I can't believe this is happening...!!"

Wataru froze with confusion!

About one hundred years ago, I was just another Japanese man. But, I ate meat every day, and ended up becoming quite unhealthily overweight until I died of heart failure. Then, after I died, I...

"You met a goddess and were reborn in this world, right...?"

The dragon squinted at Wataru through his glasses.

Just so. I met a goddess, and was granted the body of a dragon and the power to read the minds of others... But I had not known I would be reborn into a body completely shielded by magic. I regretted eating so much meat during my time as a human, so I resolved to become a vegetarian in this new body, in this new world."

"O-Oh, that makes sense. It's important to eat your veggies!" Wataru was a healthy, young Hot-Blooded Fighting Teen, so of course he ate a balanced diet

of both meat and vegetables!

"I wonder... Did you discuss the goddess with the Demon Lord, Deus, as well?"

"Yeah!"

Allow me to explain: It was only a few days ago that Wataru fought a terribly strong enemy, the Demon Lord, Deus! Deus had also been Japanese in a past life, died a hundred years ago, then found himself reborn in this world in an inhumanly powerful body.

The Demon Lord Deus had, of course, been reborn as a demon... But in this guy's case, he'd been reincarnated as a dragon. The circumstances of their rebirths were almost the same.

Ah, that reminds me. You defeated the Demon Lord Deus, didn't you, human? I spoke to him once, long ago—he had figured out I was formerly Japanese as well—and he'd proposed we "rule the world together."

"But, you turned him down, didn't you?"

The dragon slowly nodded. *"I prefer to be alone. Of course, I'm very interested in world domination—but I'm not going to let that be the reason I give up my solitude, boy."*

"You're still a surprising dude, though... You're wearing a t-shirt and glasses, so this still kind of feels like I'm talking to another human. And now I find out that you actually used to be one!"

"Indeed I was... By the way, how, pray tell, did you come to this world?"

"Me? I came here by stopping a truck!!"

"Huh?"

The dragon tilted its long, long neck to one side.

"Well, actually, I don't know all the details... I stopped the truck, and then when I opened my eyes, I was in this fantasy land! I never did meet that 'Goddess,' and this is my real body."

The dragon stared at him. *Is that so.....* The voice in Wataru's head was quieter than before. *So you were teleported to this world, not reincarnated.*

“Yeah, I think so!!”

—Dear Readers, I think I should mention that the name for this series was nearly *WATARU!!! The Hot-Blooded Fighting Teen & His Epic Adventures After Being Reincarnated In A Fantasy World After Stopping a Truck with His Bare Hands!!* I guess it’s a good thing I didn’t go with that, or else it would be totally wrong at this point, huh? Oh, well! Reincarnated, teleported, who cares?

However you came to be here, it is enough for me to know that you, Human, were born in Japan, just as I was.

The dragon suddenly looked up towards the heavens. The sun had completely set by now, and all that shined down on them was the lone light of the moon.

Young Wataru, I wish to fight you. I shall not be at ease until we have established who is more powerful. That is our nature as The Strong. Do you consent to this duel?

Wataru bobbed his head up and down. “Yeah! I totally get how you feel! I’m a fighter myself, so I’m always battling strong guys and winning, or losing, and it gets me *pumped!*”

Let us note here that the reason Wataru had immediately gone off to challenge the Demon Lord Deus after arriving in this world was decidedly *not* because he’d wanted to “save the people of this world.” Well, I suppose I should clarify: he hadn’t felt that way *then*, but after meeting Aria, Résistance, and many others, it was true that he *did* now feel that he wanted to protect the people from harm... But his adventures had all started based on that very simple feeling of wanting to prove himself against the strongest fighters in this new world and show that he was tougher than them.

“So, I guess I do, you know, understand why you want to ‘demonstrate your power’ to the world and whatever, and make them terrified of you! Gotta say, that’s a sweet personal goal to have!”

Is that so? How unexpected. I’d figured you to be some Hot-Blooded Man trying to be some sort of Ally of Justice. The dragon seemed truly amused. He even smiled a bit, revealing his sharp fangs.

“But dragon, c’mon, man... Didn’t your parents ever teach you that it’s wrong

to cause trouble for other people??? It's a *super* basic thing, but it's really important!"

Bah! To think that I must be subjected to a children's lecture on ethics! Look upon this body! See my fangs! My impenetrable scales! My immense wings!

As he spoke, the dragon grabbed his shirt with both hands and tore it away from his body in a single motion. Wataru stared at the body that had been revealed.

When it comes to creatures in fantasy worlds, dragons have always been typecast as "the strong ones." What Wataru saw here, of course, matched his expectations precisely: before him was undoubtedly the strongest, most fearsome living thing he'd ever seen.

He wouldn't be able to defend against those fangs if the dragon snapped at him.

No matter how hard he punched against his scales, he doubted he'd make so much as a dent in them.

If the dragon were to fly off, up into the sky, he'd have no way of giving pursuit.

However—Dear Readers, you already know this, but!

He! Is! *Wataru Ito!!*

He's no *mere human!!!!!!*

I am a dragon now! Why should I trouble myself with the affairs of humans! The strong should not be maligned for wielding their power against those who are weak!

"Doesn't seem like we're gonna come to an understanding, no matter how long we talk...!!"

Wataru stuck his hand inside his jacket pocket, like it was the most natural thing in the world to do! Out from the pocket, he pulled out a thin crimson cloth, one meter in length! This was his *hachimaki*, a legendary headband that had been passed down in his family for generations, the "Exploding-Blood Demon Slayer!" He always put it on whenever he had to focus every ounce of

his will during a fight!!

“All right then, let’s do this!”

With the face of a *Nio* he roared, his voice full of passion and rage as he tied the *hachimaki* around his head! Then, he got into his fighting pose! He spread his legs wide, crouched down low to the ground, and balled up his fists!

“You ready for this, dragon!?”

The tail ends of the red *hachimaki* fluttered in the wind as he shouted, his face still as full of tranquil fury as that of a *Nio*!!!

I am indeed!

The instant the dragon's telepathy entered his mind, Wataru charged at him like a racing horse coming out of the gate!

“AAAAAAAAAHHHH!!!!”

With a sharp yell, he slammed one foot against the ground and went soaring through the air, propelled right towards the dragon's snout! He smashed his fists right at him!

Wataru was two meters tall! The dragon, on the other hand, was fifteen meters long! They had, of course, *completely different* body types! More than that, their very *skeletal structure* was completely different!

Compared to a dragon's, human skeletons aren't exactly built for battle! If they were to both go all-out, the human would be at a complete disadvantage due to their relatively measly muscle mass and fragile bones!!

But none of that's a problem for Wataru!!

"EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEAAAAAAAHHHHHH!!!!"

KA-BAAAAM!!!!

Wataru's fists slammed into the dragon's snout with quick and unrelenting force!

With that single strike, Wataru... won the duel!

“—!?”

The hard scales of the dragon prevented Wataru's fists from punching through his skull, but the force of the blow shook the monster's head all the same! The glasses he'd been wearing flew off his head and landed down in the sand with a *plop*!

This... This feeling..... Is this what it is like to feel 'pain'?"

The dragon's expression had not changed, but it was clear that he was definitely shocked by what had happened!

"Yeah! That's what pain is!" Wataru answered in his usual Hot-Blooded fashion as he landed!!

The last time Wataru had encountered the dragon, he hadn't been able to damage him at all! The special, magical barrier protecting the dragon's body had made him completely invincible! But now that Wataru had collected all six of the magic orbs, Wataru was able to break through that barrier!

The dragon's shoulders began to shake slightly with laughter!!

Hohoho... ohohoho..... Isn't that something!!

He spread his wings and flew up into the sky!

I'm... grateful to you, Wataru Ito!! Now, I can finally fight again!!

Wataru watched the dragon wheeling about above him and broke out into a wide smile!

"This is the most amped up I've felt in a long, long time...!!!!"



Meanwhile:

"U-Ungh..."

"Oh, you're awake?"

Résistance awoke to find her head resting up on Aria's lap. She looked up into the younger woman's eyes. "Where—Where are we...?"

"You can't get up yet! I'm still healing you!"

Aria gently pushed Résistance back down into a lying position. Her hands

began to glow green once more as she touched Résistance's arms. They were covered with scrapes and bruises, but the blue-haired knight could see her wounds disappearing right before her eyes.

"Oh, right... I was... possessed by something, wasn't I...?"

Aria nodded. "Yes, you were. But we've fixed all that now, so there's no need to worry."

"Sorry for the trouble," Résistance muttered, closing her eyes again.

"Oh please, don't worry about it! After all, the reason you were possessed is because Wataru had to go and shatter that shrine, releasing the spirit that took over your body."

"Hmm, I suppose he is partially to blame..." Résistance smiled slightly and relaxed back against Aria's thighs.

"...Where's Wataru now?"

"Oh, Wataru? He's off fighting the dragon."

Résistance's eyes snapped open. "Oh no... The dragon's already come for us...?"

"He'll be all right, you know," Aria said quietly. "He's our Wataru, after all. I'm sure he'll win." Nothing in her speech or behavior showed the slightest unease about her fellow adventurer.

"You're right. Knowing him, I'm sure he'll manage." Résistance looked up at the night sky. It was full of stars, along with the lone moon, shining brightly. The green glow from Aria's hands was just visible at the edge of her vision.

It was 6 p.m. in this part of the forest. And while Wataru and the dragon were locked in their fierce battle elsewhere, here, in this calm, quiet clearing, the world seemed as peaceful as it could ever be.



Ngh!

Meanwhile: No matter where Wataru looked, the dragon's claws were everywhere! But every time Wataru was about to be cut to shreds by those

sharp talons, he would dodge them at the very last millisecond at the speed of sound!

Well done, Human!

The dragon made a quick U-turn in midair and came flying back down for Wataru! He made an attack only a creature with wings could: a falling dive at the target from directly overhead!

“—!”

Wataru watched the dragon carefully and leapt out of the way in the nick of time! However! He wasn't completely able to dodge the attack in time, and his opponent's claws scraped his shoulder!

“Dammit! I slipped in this sand! I hate sand! It's coarse, gets everywhere, and it's making me lose my footing...!!”

Wataru was pissed! He pressed one hand against his shoulder while taking quick, small steps over the fine desert sand, but every move nearly caused him to lose his balance!

What's this? Already running, are you!?

The dragon wheeled overhead and spiraled round and round through the air! Wataru lifted one arm, thick as his thigh, and punched the air three times in his general direction!

“I'm not done yet!”

Wataru bellowed a deep, *manly* roar up at the dragon and started running after him! The dragon turned sharply to fly towards him, and in an instant they were quickly closing in on each other!

Just before the dragon could land another hit on Wataru, our hero leapt high into the sky! He slipped through the dragon's claws with a hair's breadth to spare and landed on the beast's back, crouching down!

What!? Such impudence, Human!”

“Chp!!!!”

Without wasting a single moment, Wataru slammed his hand down in a quick

chop on the dragon's back! The *chop* whirred through the air at a speed that was his new personal best, an astonishing nine hundred kilometers per hour!!

Allow me to explain! This was no mere karate chop, but a special technique called a "Mach Blade Slicer"*!

(*Mach Blade Slicer: A technique created by the Mexican-American pro-wrestler Carlos Miguel in 1988. Carlos studied karate in Japan for many years before coming up with the move. After returning to America to become a pro wrestler, he combined the best aspects of both karate and pro wrestling to create a unique fighting style that made him quite popular. The Mach Blade Slicer had been inspired by a move he'd practiced every day while training in Japan, the *kawara-wari*, or the "knife hand strike." After lifting one arm high up into the air, he'd slam it down all at once at a stunning speed, transforming his hand into a "knife" made of flesh and blood. With that one move, he could chop through wooden boards, bricks, even concrete blocks. At the time when Carlos had left Japan to go back to America, the people's spirits had been worn down by the Cold War and other wars fought in the far-off Middle East. He'd chosen to become a wrestler instead of a karate artist so that he could entertain and inspire his fellow Americans. [8])

KA-BLAMMMMM!!!!!!

Wataru's chop was, of course, a direct hit on the dragon's back! The power of his strike caused the thick scales to fracture, and the dragon roared with rage! "GRRRRRAAAAWWWW!!"

You broke my scales! By the Goddess!

Despite the brutal fight they were having, the dragon sounded as though he was enjoying it! He sounded really, truly happy!! All because Wataru had been able to remove the magical barrier so that they could have a real fight!!

"Ha! That's not all I've got for you!!!" Wataru shouted! He raised his arm again and again, slamming the dragon's back with "Mach Blade Slicers" over and over!!

"NNNRRAAAAAAGGGGGHHH!!!"

The dragon suddenly found himself unable to fly after these massively

damaging blows to his back and plummeted down into the desert sands, nearly burying itself in the crash! Wataru was launched into the air by the force of the impact, and did three somersaults before making a perfect landing! That kind of gymnastics is “F”-ing hard!

It’s...! Not over yet.....!!

The dragon groaned as it attempted to force itself back up on its feet, and he stretched his wings out to intimidate Wataru! The sand cascaded off his body as he reared back!

My blood boils, Wataru! It boils hot!

“I hear you! Mine does too!!”

The dragon suddenly opened its huge mouth, and there was a heavy wind as the dragon began inhaling deeply!

“—!?”

Wataru was instantly aware that this was something different! There was no way the dragon was merely taking a deep breath!

—Something was coming!!

Wataru’s finely-tuned, animal-like reflexes sensed the danger, and he quickly readied himself for whatever might come! The very next instant, his instincts were proven correct!

The dragon took all the air in its lungs and breathed it all out at once, creating, *of all things*, a tornado of fire that spun right towards Wataru!

Here’s my special attack: Fire Blaze!

“Whooooooooooooa!!”

Wataru was stunned! He’d fought a lot of demonic creatures over the course of his adventures, but this was the first time he’d ever had an opponent who could breathe fire!! If he got caught up in that fiery tornado, why, even Wataru’s steel-strong muscles wouldn’t protect him from the heat!!

“—!” Wataru summoned up every bit of strength he had and leapt out of the tornado’s path! The dragon’s “Fire Blaze” just barely passed him by!

Ouch! I dodged those flames, but it's still so hot, my skin feels like it's burning!!

Heheheh! Of course you feel that way!

The dragon had read Wataru's mind, and laughed at his pain! I hasten to note here that the dragon's telepathic ability was merely a "spell-like ability," and not a form of magic on its own! That's why he was still able to use this power even in the presence of the magic-nullifying orbs Wataru was carrying!

How irritating for our protagonist!!

One more time, then!

"Whaaaaat!?"

The dragon opened up its great jaws once more, and sucked in enormous amounts of air! Wataru was still in midair from leaping out of the way of the first tornado! If he had to land, then jump again to dodge another one—there was no way he'd make it in time!!

I can't dodge his next attack... Wait! There is still something I can do!

Wataru tensed every muscle in his body as he fell towards the ground!

You're finished, Young Wataru!

The dragon sounded as though he believed this battle to be already done! Showing not the slightest hint of mercy, he blasted another Fire Blaze right at where Wataru was about to land!!

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!!

A whirlwind of air spiraled right for Wataru, red-hot!

"COOOOOOOME ON! MAKE ITTTTTTT!!"

And at that moment... Wataru!!! In a single horrible instant...!

Was swallowed by the great tornado of fire!!!!!!

H-How awful! Is this where the journey of our Hot-Blooded Fighting Teen, Wataru, would finally come to an end!?!?

To be continued in the next chapter: “Wataru’s Great Victory! This is What It Means to Be Hot-Blooded!!!”

*Sources:

[8] *Great Wrestlers of the Cold War Era* — Isekai Tensei Publishing

Chapter 7: Wataru's Great Victory! This is What It Means to Be Hot-Blooded!!!

Heheheh... the dragon laughed in the aftermath of his Fire Blaze attack. I've enjoyed our little battle, Wataru...!

The time was 6:30 in the evening. The soft light of the moon illuminated the vast desert beneath the night sky. The sand where the dragon had directed his Fire Blaze was scorched black by the intense heat.

The dragon slowly landed on the ground and folded his wings.

It's rather hot down here, isn't it? Perhaps I overdid it...?

The dragon found the level of heat strange. The desert at night is usually an extremely cold place, but even accounting for the Fire Blaze, all around him the air felt warm—hot, even.

Too hot!

This is far hotter than it should be!!

Something's wrong... Something is definitely wrong about this...!

The dragon held his breath and listened carefully to the desert night around him. As he did, the clouds of sand fell back down to the ground, until all was still and he could see the horizon in every direction.

—!

The dragon could not believe his very eyes!!

How... is this possible...!?

It was a most surprising turn of events! Two hundred meters away, in the same direction that the dragon had just blasted a pillar of fire, stood none other than Wataru! The sand all around him glowed a deep crimson, casting a red light on his face that made him look like a *Nio* come to life!

How—How can this be!? My Blaze was a direct hit!!

The dragon was unable to hide his surprise, and was most dismayed by this turn of events! The ground directly around Wataru was pitch black; clear proof that the Fire Blaze had been on the very spot the boy was standing!

But he was still alive!

Not only that, he looked even *livelier* than he had before!!

There was no mistaking it—Wataru had used his killer technique and activated every ounce of “Hot-Blooded” *heat* he’d had inside of him, and fended off the dragon’s attack!

However, he looked very different from the time when he had used this very technique against the Demon Lord! His trademark black hair had, for some reason, instantly grown longer!

His hair... All of a sudden, it’s grown over a meter longer.....? Impossible.....

The dragon was at a complete loss for words upon seeing Wataru’s transformation!

“.....!”

Wataru, on the other hand, said not a word in response to the dragon’s surprise, and merely started walking towards him slowly. The tails of the red *hachimaki* around his head and the wild black hair, now stretching down to his legs, billowed in the wind behind him.

I can’t... tell what he’s thinking.....!

The dragon watched the approaching Wataru very carefully, but no matter how he tried to read the human’s mind, he could not pick up a single thought! The dragon felt as though he was staring into a lake with a perfectly flat surface, where not a single ripple could be perceived—Wataru had become, in the truest sense of the word, “single-minded”!

“It is pointless to try. My mind has absorbed the strength of your *fire power*, so much so that not even you can read my mind!!” Wataru said, his voice as majestic and forthright as that of a king rising from his throne!

You “absorbed my fire power”...? What the blazes does that mean!?

“Hmph! I got you monologuing during the battle! You told me all about your

battle techniques!!”

How daring of him, to rebuke a dragon! The smile on his face was bold as brass as he told the dragon how he had survived!

Hmmm, I did indeed!

The dragon understood what Wataru had done! Still, I think our Dear Readers might get lost here if we don’t explain something first!

Wataru has activated his Exploding Bloodrush! But this was no normal Exploding Bloodrush!

This was…… Exploding Bloodrush: *Main Event Edition**!!

(*Exploding Bloodrush: Main Event Edition: One of the great secrets of the “Exploding Blood Style” passed down through the generations of the Ito family. Once activated, every ounce of hot-blooded energy inside the body is released, strengthening the user to an extreme degree. When Wataru faced the Demon Lord Deus, he used this technique to power up enough to be able to defeat his opponent.)

And yet, Wataru had been unable to activate the full power of the Exploding Bloodrush technique when fighting the Demon Lord. Exploding Bloodrush requires a “special activation condition” in order to be utilized to its fullest extent. What, you may ask, is that “special activation condition”? Why, it is *being engulfed in flames*.

As I said just earlier, the Exploding Bloodrush is a technique that enables one to release all the heat inside one’s body in one go. What’s not very well known, however, is that when Exploding Bloodrush is activated, the user is capable of absorbing any heat from their immediate surroundings and transforming it into further hot-blooded energy!

In other words, if there was a raging fire surrounding the user when they activated the technique, they’d instantly be able to transform that power into their own and use it themselves, strengthening their Exploding Bloodrush. The hotter the flames, the more heat that could be absorbed, empowering the user even more. Once they achieve peak power, they are said to have activated Exploding Bloodrush to the fullest extent. Doing so causes the user’s hormonal

glands to leap into overdrive, causing sudden hair growth and toughening their muscles. This secret technique is one of the strongest from the mysterious Exploding Blood Style. [9])

“All right then, here I go... I’ll show you that I am the strongest, hottest, craziest badass in this entire fantasy world!!” Wataru glared at the dragon with a fierce glint in his eyes!

To Wataru, being engulfed in his enemy’s flames was not a disadvantage—it was the most optimal situation he could have been in!

“We’re settling this once and for all, dragon!!!!!!”

And, of course, it barely even merits mentioning, but Wataru began sprinting towards the dragon at a raging two hundred kilometers per hour!

Bring it on, Human!!

The dragon spread his wings and leapt into the air, full of exhilaration and thrilled for the coming fight! He bared his sharp talons and spiraled downwards, right at Wataru!

The dragon was just as glorious and ferocious in flight as a bald eagle diving through the air to claim its prey!

“Uwaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhh!!!!!!”

Wataru did not fear his attack in the slightest! In fact, he ran even faster so as to meet the dragon even quicker! His running speed went—unbelievably!—all the way up to four hundred kilometers per hour! He was a veritable human steam train! With all of a steam train’s horsepower, speed, and overwhelming force!! It was no exaggeration to say that he was running faster than could ever be imagined to be possible for a human!!

You’re so—so fast!!

The dragon’s eyes flew open wide with surprise as he tracked Wataru picking up impossible speed towards him! But he was not intimidated by the fighting teen’s incredible velocity!!

His talons caught the light of the moon and gleamed most dangerously! Their sharp tips were aimed straight down!

With a *boom* the dragon flared his wings and took to the skies!

“Hmph, if that’s what it’ll take!!”

Wataru was pumped full of adrenaline and relishing every moment of this vicious battle to the death as the thrill of a lifetime!!

“Come and get me, dragon!” he yelled with all his might, glaring up at the beast above him! The dragon flared his wings once more!

BOOOOOOOOM!!!

The fierce winds blown by his wings kicked dust up into the air all around Wataru!

“Ngh!”

The winds blew into his face with all the raging force of a typhoon! Wataru crouched low to the ground and flexed his muscles as he strained to keep himself on the ground!!

I’ve still got more!!

The dragon beat his wings again and again, each time causing a small tornado that lifted up clumps of sand and sent them flying across the sky! They rode the wind, lost momentum, and then came crashing down onto Wataru! Dear Readers, you may think that falling sand may not be painful, or even itchy! I must impress upon you, however, that the force of impact is quite different inside a sandstorm! The sand that the dragon was pelting Wataru with through these raging winds was as forceful as ammunition from a shotgun!!

Wataru thrust his feet into the ground below him so that he might not get blown away! He closed his eyes against the onslaught, but even still, slowly but surely, the sand was wearing on his endurance!!

At this rate...You shall be rendered unconscious, human, as long as I keep you locked inside this prison of a sandstorm!

The voice of the dragon reverberated inside Wataru’s head as he desperately tried to resist being blown over!

“Ha! You think I can’t stand something like this...? I’ll show you..... HA!!!!!!”

Wataru shouted as he leapt straight up into the air, rising to an astonishing five hundred meters high! For reference, Tokyo Tower is only three hundred and thirty-three meters tall! Wataru had clearly gone beyond the ken of mere humankind!!

For a moment, he was higher in the sky than the dragon himself, and had broken free from the eye of the sandstorm!!

Just what we'd expect from our Wataru! An explosive display of force as he gets himself out of a near-death situation!!

How? How can you, a human without wings, fly into the air like that!?!?

"It's because every day is gym day for me!"

How absurd.....!

The dragon ground his teeth, or rather, his *fangs*, and again beat his proud wings, soaring up at Wataru! The dragon could no longer use his right arm to attack, so he opened his maw wide as he sought to clamp down on Wataru with lethal force! His fangs were sharper than a shark's, with a jaw stronger than that of an alligator! Not even Wataru, in his Exploding Blood: Main Event Edition state, would be able to withstand a bite from that maw without gaining a scratch or two!!

But Wataru looked not at all fazed as he cracked his right hand like a whip! He landed a direct blow on the front of the dragon's snout!!

!?

A sharp pain raced down the dragon's nerves! Wataru, wasting not a moment of this opportunity, jumped higher into the air and landed on the dragon's snout, staring his opponent in the eyes! Then, clenching his fists so that they were hard as steel, he reared back—and slammed his fists right into the hard scales of the dragon's forehead!!

"PNCH!!!!!"



At that very same moment, Aria and Résistance were—

"Pig."

“Gala.”

“Apple.”

“† Eden’s Forbidden Fruit: *le pomme d’Or †*.”

“Huh? What in the world is *that*? ...Isn’t that just French for ‘apple’?”

“Oh no, it is no mere apple. It is a legendary fruit that bestows *forbidden* powers on any who eat it. That’s why it’s called ‘† Eden’s Forbidden Fruit: *le pomme d’Or †*.’”

“Don’t you think you’re pushing it a little by just saying another word for ‘apple’ right after I said it?”

“Well, if you feel that way, I’ll choose a different item. What do you say to ‘† Eden’s Forbidden Fruit: *le raisin d’Or †*’?”

“‘What do I say’? The heck are you trying to imply? You just changed ‘apple’ into ‘grapes’ with your stupid French answers! Don’t you think that’s cheating?”

—enjoying a leisurely game of *Word Chain* in the forest!!



It so happened that there were, at that moment, two other individuals watching Wataru’s fierce battle with the dragon from afar.

One of them was a cute, short girl. The other was a big, burly, muscular man, bristling with brawny vigor.

Yes—they were none other than Elphabelle and her father Elphabill, of House Evil.

“Look, Papa! Isn’t Wataru amazing?”

Elphabill slowly nodded his head. “Yes... the way he fights that dragon is truly... quite something!!”

“That’s why, you know, why I want to marry Wataru, no matter what it takes! If we make some babies, they’ll be the strongest kids in the world!”

Elphabelle twisted and fidgeted with embarrassment, blushing as she said so. Elphabill merely had a most suggestive smile on his face as he watched the battle even more intensely.

“I, too, would like to one day try having a ‘battle to the death’ with that boy...!!”

He was unable to take his eyes off Wataru’s beautifully executed punches and kicks.

“But Father, what do you think of that technique Wataru’s using? His hair’s suddenly a lot longer—I’ve never heard of anything like that.”

“Indeed... Not even I, with my many years of experience, have seen anything like that before!! His form is even better now that his hair is longer...!!”

Elphabill put his hands on his hips. “The more I watch, the better it gets!! He truly is the right man for my Elphabelle!!!!!!”



“PNCH!!!!”

With careful and deliberate blows, Wataru slammed his fists right into the hard scales of the dragon’s forehead!!

KA-BAAAAM!!!

The sudden sound of the impact was the same as one might expect from a grenade detonating with full force against a concrete wall!!

Ngh.....! Rrrrroooo.....!

No matter how unbelievably strong the dragon may have been, there was no way he was going to come out unscathed from Wataru’s point-blank assault!! A raging, rippling vibration rammed around the dragon’s skull from the force of Wataru’s punch! It was an instant concussion! The dragon lost all sense of balance as he began plummeting down to the ground below in a free fall! Unable to regain control of his descent, he plunged right into the desert sand!

“How’d you like *that*!?”

Wataru leapt off the dragon’s snout a moment before it crashed into the ground, making a most beautiful landing! Somehow, the dragon managed to creakily maneuver his limbs back under himself and slowly stood up!

Ah... What have you done...? What have you done to me, Young Wataru...?

The dragon twisted and flexed its long tail—and the corners of his maw were lifted as if he was about to smile!

I cannot use my right arm... and with this concussion, I can barely move the rest of my body... hahaha.....

He lifted his head to the sky and opened his jaws wide, roaring loud enough to rend the night in two with all the force of his bestial power—every creature on the continent surely felt his voice as it shook the very earth itself!

I surrender, Wataru. You have completely defeated me... The loss is mine.

The dragon accepted his defeat! He looked completely battered by this point, with not an ounce of energy left to mount a counterattack!!

Wataru... Please..... The final blow...

Wataru heard the dragon's request and, with the face of a *Nio*, nodded his assent! It is the sacred duty of every martial artist to deal the final blow to any enemy who requests it after a ferocious fight!

“Farewell, dragon...! I really enjoyed our battle!!!!”

Wataru crossed his arms, one wrist over the other, then slowly opened his fists as he moved them to the right side of his body!

“This is it! My final attack..... Here I go!!!!”

In that instant, small balls of light materialized in the palms of his hands!

*"WH000A!!!
!!"*

Wataru let out a fierce, hot battle cry as he gathered his power! As if in answer, the balls of light grew larger and larger!

When they were ten centimeters in diameter...!

“HOT!!! BLOODED!!!”

Wataru shouted the name of this technique as he thrust both his palms towards the dragon! The balls of light leapt from his hands and rocketed straight at the dragon!

[illegible]



Allow me to explain! The name of this killer technique was none other than the Hot-Blooded Fighter Wave*, and it could only be used when the user was in a state of Exploding Bloodrush: Main Event Edition!!

(*Hot-Blooded Fighter Wave: a supremely strong, secret technique passed through the generations of Exploding Blood warriors. By collecting all the hot-blooded energy within one's body into the palms of their hands, the user can create balls of light, which can then be blasted at the enemy. This technique consumes all the heat contained within the user's blood, so they would be forced out of Exploding Bloodrush: Main Event Edition as a consequence. It is for this reason that the technique was called the "final secret" of the Exploding Blood fighters. Should a true master of the art unleash this attack, why, even the moon might explode into a million pieces from the force of the impact. [11])

The Hot-Blooded Fighter Waves Wataru had loosed from his hands blazed across the desert to fly right at the dragon! The sheer speed of the balls of light caused loud *BOOM!!*s as they raced over the sands, shining brilliantly out into the night! The force and speed of their attack was the same as Wataru's own lightning-quick punches and kicks!

[illegible]

The balls of light slammed against the dragon—and exploded!!!!

KA-B0000000000000000M!!!!

What an enormous impact! What a massive shockwave!!

Surrounded as he was by an explosion that was burning up every part of his body, the dragon still laughed!

My body... it burns... ahhhh.....!! Thank you, Young Wataru.....!!

“Yeah... I’m really glad that... I got to fight you...!”

The effort of using the Hot-Blooded Fighter Wave had pulled Wataru from his Explosive Bloodrush state, and our hero gasped for breath as he bade farewell to the dragon!

The dragon, surrounded in flames, lifted his eyes up to the night sky and turned his gaze to the moon!

You... I... We fought well.

Only a few seconds later, the dragon was consumed by the blisteringly hot flames, and was instantly turned into ash!!

The quiet wind picked up the ash where it lay and gently blew it out across the desert, where it became one with the sand!

It was as though he had been eliminated by Divine Providence itself! Wataru said absolutely nothing as he watched the ash swirl away!

“.....!!”

Unconsciously, he allowed himself to—cry!!

Wataru’s tears were proof of the utmost respect he had for the dragon, a fellow warrior who was now gone from this world!

“.....Hm?”

As Wataru wiped away his tears, he noticed something rolling around on the ground near his feet! It was the pair of glasses the dragon had been wearing! The glasses, which were far larger than anything a human could ever wear, were weighed down by the desert sands, as if they too were saddened by the disappearance of their owner!!

“.....!”

Wataru did not pick up the glasses, nor did he crush them beneath his foot—he simply turned his back on them and began to slowly walk away! The smoke from their battle still hung over the area as Wataru made his way back to his friends.



It was an hour later when Wataru returned to the forest to find Aria and Résistance having a gay old time playing *Word Chain*.

“Panda.”

“† Apple of Darkness, the Fruit of the Hellfire Orchard †.”

“Will you stop making up goofy ways to say ‘apple’ after everything I say?”

“That’s not what I’m doing *at all!*””

“Heyyyyyyyyy! You twooooooooo!!” Wataru called out to them and waved. Both of them immediately turned to face him. It looked as though Résistance had been completely healed, and as she watched him approach from her seat against the tree, she seemed full of energy and vigor.

“Oh, Wataru, you’re back... Hold on, what the *hell* happened with your hair!? Lemme come take a look,” she said standing up to get closer. Résistance was, quite understandably, completely shocked by its new length. He’d only been gone for a few hours after all, and now his hair stretched down to his waist.

Wataru folded his arms as he answered most unhelpfully: “Huh? Oh, this? It, uh, just kinda happened!!”

Aria just smiled when she heard this. “Ha! Well, I suppose our dear Wataru is quite capable of growing his hair out like that whenever he wants to!”

“Well, yeah!!!”

“As if he can just ‘want’ to have it grow out that much, all at once...”

Exasperated with Aria’s and Wataru’s typical antics, Résistance just shook her head and moved onto a more serious subject.

“So, what happened with the dragon? Did you defeat him?”

Wataru looked back and forth between Aria and Résistance before nodding.

“Yeah!! Of course I did!!”

Both of the young women let out a deep sigh of relief upon hearing Wataru’s confident reply.

“I *knew* you’d be able to pull it off.”

“Excellent, job well done, Wataru! Now we can get a whole lot more reward money from the King of the Sky Kingdom! I want to install a golden toilet inside my house with that money!!”

“Why would you *ever* want—!!”

Wataru paused, confused by what his senses were telling him.

At that very moment, Résistance happened to glance up at the sky to see a shadow—of *someone*. “Hey, take a look at *that*.” She pointed up into the air.

Wataru and Aria looked to see what she was pointing at, and saw something most surprising. The dark figure was getting larger and larger as it approached where the three of them were standing.

“Hey, watch out! It’s coming this way!!”

—and in the very next instant!

KA-BOOOOOOOOOOOOM!!!!

A roaring quake shook our three adventurers as they opened their eyes to see a Great Man was standing before them!!

Yes, just as you expected! It was Elphabill of the House of Evil! Riding on his shoulder was none other than his daughter Elphabelle!!

“Y-You two...!”

Wataru blinked rapidly in surprise at their sudden appearance! Elphabelle leapt off her father’s shoulder and landed without a sound!!

“Hey hey, Darling! You defeated the dragon just fine!!” Elphabelle was practically bouncing up and down as she greeted Wataru with a wink! Adorable!

“Don’t call me ‘Darling’! Wait, were you watching me fight the dragon!?!?”

It was her father, Elphabill, who answered this question!

“Heheh. As assassins, we are quite good at spying on our targets!! You were truly something in that fight!!”

“Yeah, yeah! You looked *super* cool! And that new hairstyle’s awesome!”

Elphabelle sounded truly pleased as she pointed at Wataru’s long, tousled mane! Adorable!!

Wataru, a Hot-Blooded Fighting Teen from Japan, had absolutely no experience with women, so of course he blushed beet-red at this compliment!

“D-Don’t try to change the subject! ...Wh-What do you want, anyways!?”

“Oh, Darling, you know that! We gotta decide when we’re gonna have our wedding ceremony, don’t we!”

Résistance exploded with rage when she heard this!!

“Wh-Whaaaaaaaaaaaaaat!! Quit your bullshit!! As if anyone would let Wataru marry into a shady family of bastards like yours!! I will not, I *shall* not allow you to marry Elphabelle, Wataru—!!”

Wataru was of course confused by how indignant Résistance was getting over the subject!

“Re-Résistance... That sounds like something my father would say!”

“...Ah! I’ve said too—My apologies Wataru, I got ahead of myself there.”

“Well, anyway, I don’t plan on marrying *anyone* right now!!”

Wataru put his hands on his hips and thrust out his chest, as he proclaimed this for all to hear! In Wataru’s mind, he was already in a relationship! With muscle training and his adventures!!

Aria nodded her head in complete agreement! “Why, of course you feel that way! If you do change your mind, though, and want to get married, please be sure to let me know! I’ll have to get ready for the move.”

Elphabelle frowned at these most unwelcome words from Aria! “I *toooooooooooooooooold* you before! Why’re you acting like you’re gonna come live in my house!?”

“Why, obviously I’d like to try living in a mansion too, of course.”

“And so that means you have to come live in *our house*!? That’s absurd!”

“Why’ve you gotta be so stingy with all that space you have!? You live in the biggest house on the continent!””

“The size of my house has nothing to do with it!!”

Elphabill laughed high and loud as the Devil himself as he watched the two of them argue! “MUAHAHAHAHA!!”

“Indeed, most amusing...!! Wataru, your friends truly are quite interesting characters!!”

Wataru smiled happily when he heard this. “Yes, they really are! I’m quite proud of my friends!”

“Just to be clear, you... don’t have any intention of marrying my daughter?”

Wataru shook his head firmly!

“Nope! I have absolutely no intention of getting involved in any love affairs right now! I need to get stronger, a *lot* stronger!!”

Wataru said this with clear eyes and clear words! Just what we’d expect from a Hot-Blooded Fighting Teen from Japan! There were no falsehoods in what he said whatsoever!

“Is that so... Well, I applaud your determination!! But, be careful, boy!!”

“Huh? What should I be careful of, sir?”

“Well...” Elphabill’s demonically fierce facial features became even sharper with solemnity before he continued! “Let us consider: the Demon Lord Deus and the dragon were, until recently, the ‘Absolute Rulers’ of this continent. But now that you have defeated them both, there is no ruler in this land... but you! From now on, you will be hunted by those seeking fame and fortune as they try to defeat the strongest on the continent...!!”

Wataru’s entire body began to quiver when he heard this! Was he quivering from fear? No! Absolutely not! These were the tremors of a fighter full of anticipation! Every part of his body was shaking with tremendous excitement as he thought of the battles to come!!

“Heh heh... You look pleased, Wataru!!”

Elphabill was quick to understand Wataru’s emotions, and flashed him a smile of recognition!

“You know, of course, that among the individuals aiming to defeat you... is myself...!!”

Despite the terror of his words, which were practically a declaration of war, Wataru simply smiled back at him and said, “I’m looking forward to our next battle!!”

At that moment, a wave of fierce, vigorous energy blasted out from both of their bodies!! When the two waves of energy collided—

SHHHHHHRRRRRRKKKKK!!

Space itself was twisted! Any normal person who might have been present

would have collapsed on the spot from the terrible sight!

If there had been a spark within range... This load of *dynamite* would have blasted right off!!

The whole situation was on a hair trigger!!

—but that was when Elphabelle, looking most exasperated, decided to step in!

“All right you two, that’s enough—stop!! Papa, you will *not* try to kill my future husband!”

Elphabill slowly came to his senses and the waves of manly, fighting vigor began to abate. “Ah, forgive me, daughter...!! Wataru looked so passionate that I, too, felt myself burning up with enthusiasm for battle!!”

“Ha...” She sighed. “Wataru!” she yelled, pointing a finger right at him, “don’t go gettin’ yourself killed until after I marry you, all right!?”

Wataru grimaced, but still he boldly answered her!

“HA! I have no plans of getting married... and I don’t plan on getting killed, either! No need to worry about that!!”

Elphabelle was as pleased as could be and gave him a most ladylike, gentle smile in return!

“Now then, daughter of mine! We must be getting home soon... I’m concerned about Sebas.....!!”

“Okay, Papa! Right then, we’re leaving now!” She leapt lithely up onto her father’s shoulder, sat down, and waved at the three adventurers! “Bye, everyone! See you next time!”

“Yeah! See you around!”

As Wataru gave her an energetic wave goodbye, Elphabill crouched low to the ground, flexed his legs, and jumped into the air with amazing momentum! It was a jump that would give Wataru’s own leaping prowess a run for its money! In the blink of an eye, the two of them had disappeared like falling stars flying beyond the horizon...!!

“They certainly are rather *bothersome* people, aren’t they...” Aria shook her head with exhausted disapproval in the general direction in which they had gone!

“You got that right!!”

“Anyway, Wataru, what do you plan on doing now?”

Wataru had to pause to think of a reply to Aria’s question!

“Hm... Well, I guess we should head back to the Revant Kingdom for the moment!!”

“Sounds good! Let’s find an inn in the Revant Kingdom where we can relax for the night, then return to the Sky Kingdom tomorrow!”

Wataru turned to ask Résistance about her plans!

“Hey, Résistance! What’re *you* gonna do now!?”

“Hm, me? I’m going to... take my leave, and continue my journey as I try to become a better fighter.”

“That so? We’ll miss you!! Hey, if you’re gonna do that, why don’t you at least come back with us to the Revant Kingdom! We’ll have a party tonight!” Wataru suggested, with a big smile on his face!

Aria nodded and cheerfully added, “That sounds great! Let’s do it!”

I’ll remind our Dear Readers that both Wataru and Aria are minors, so at their “party” tonight they’ll be drinking not liquor, but orange juice! This fictional work is *completely* compliant with any and all legal restrictions concerning the depiction of its characters, so of course we won’t have them drinking alcohol here just because we’re in a fantasy world!

After all, this is a healthy, morally upstanding novel series!!

Résistance found herself unable to *resist* this most excellent offer! “Haha!” she laughed, and replied, “Yes, that sounds excellent! Let’s have a party! Any liquor I drink tonight will taste better knowing that the two of you are partying alongside me!”

“All right! Let’s get going back to the Revant Kingdom!”

“Yes!”

“Yeah!”

And so it was that Wataru, Aria, and Résistance began walking back through the moonlit forest! The three of them were in the highest of spirits, having just successfully won the battle to protect humanity in this world!

But their real fight was yet to come! Wataru, especially, would find himself the target of bloodthirsty warriors from all across the continent!! In time, there may even come a battle where he might struggle to win! But I’m sure he’ll end up all right! After all, he’s got Aria, Résistance, and plenty of other allies!!

Hand in hand with his friends, Wataru will become stronger than anyone else!!

“I’m not stopping, not ever... Our adventure will always go on!”

His name was Wataru Ito! He was a Hot-Blooded Fighting Teen!

And on this day, in a world crammed full with dangers and demons, he would face them all in battle with nothing but his fists!!

The Hot-Blooded Fighting Teen! His Epic Adventures After Stopping a Truck with His Bare Hands!!

THE!!!! END!!!!

“Hold uppppppppppppppppppppppppppppp!!”

A great roar broke the quiet peace of the forest!!

“Huh!? What was that?!”

Wataru instantly turned to face the direction the voice had come from! Standing there was none other than a green-skinned orc, ready for battle! His burly brawn was rather similar to Wataru’s, and he stood over two meters tall! His upper half was nude, and his lower half was covered by a mere *fundoshi*! How wildly exhibitionist of him! All could see his thick, well-trained muscles covering his body!

All orcs have pig-like faces, but this one looked especially severe, like that of a general who’d just left the battlefields of war! He had a large scar across his chin!

Wataru could instantly sense that this orc was no mere random encounter-level enemy!

“You... Hey, monster! Who are you!?!”

“My name is Gordon! I am traveling this continent as a professional martial artist! I’ll get right to the point, Wataru—fight me here, fight me now!”

Aria’s jaw dropped in obvious shock and displeasure at this development!

“Wataru, what’s this guy’s problem!? We just wrapped up Volume Two all nice and tidy, and then he busts in and ruins the whole mood!”

Wataru understood not a word of what she said, but looked firmly upon Gordon and spake thusly!

“If you want a battle, I’ll fight! But before we do, you gotta tell me the reason why!!”

Gordon nodded his head in agreement and explained himself!

“Very well! I have two reasons to fight you: first, if I beat the man who defeated the Demon Lord Deus, my fame as a martial artist will only grow! In an instant, I’ll be known across the continent! My second reason is...”

He stuck one hand down into his *fundoshi* and rummaged about for some

time... before he pulled out a book!

“...Do you know what this book is!?”

Wataru looked at the book’s cover and was unable to control his surprise! On it was none other than an extremely lewd illustration of a glamorous orc woman posing in a highly revealing outfit!

“Th-That’s—!”

It was *It’s Me, a Shy Orc Loner with a Heart of Gold (Notice Me, Senpai!) Who Got Reborn In Another World, a.k.a. “Isekai,” Where I Am Getting Into All Sorts of Troubles, Hijinks, and Shenanigans, Oh My!* Known by fans by a shorter name, *Me, Oh My!*

“What the hell is someone like *you* doing with that book?” Résistance tilted her head to the side, looking suspiciously at this newcomer! She had a very bad feeling about him!

“The author of this novel is... My little brother, Jacob Yamada!!”

“.....!!”

Wataru was speechless! Stunned speechless!

“Wataru! You gave this book, written by my cute little brother, a pretty bad review, didn’t you!?”

Gordon could also have gone on to mention the fact that the adventurers had robbed his brother of their family heirloom, the orb, but fortunately for Wataru, it didn’t seem as though he’d found out about that quite yet!

“For the past several days, I’ve been looking all over for you to get my revenge! If I defeat you here, I won’t just become a more famous martial artist, I’ll pay you back for what you did to my little brother!” Gordon bellowed with rage!

Résistance calmly suggested to Wataru that he merely apologize to him and be done with it! “Hey, Wataru... We want to wrap up Volume Two as soon as we can here, so why don’t you just apologize for that whole business with the novel...?”

—However!

“.....But that novel was *so bad*...!!”

Of course! Taste in literature is not something our Wataru can compromise on!

“You, you *bastard*! Spewing trash about my little brother to my face—!”

Gordon’s fists shook with terrible rage!

“You better be ready for this, Wataru—!”

Gordon lifted one fist and threw a punch aimed right at Wataru’s eyes!

“Goodness gracious...” Aria sighed. “Wataru, get rid of him, would you?”

“You’ve made your bed, Wataru,” added Résistance, “now lie in it.”

Aria and Résistance showed not the slightest bit of distress, despite the distressingly dangerous situation they were in! In fact, they seemed positively exasperated by the orc’s behavior—and even enjoyed the prospect of seeing him defeated by Wataru! All our hero Wataru had to shout was: “YOU CAN LEAVE IT TO ME!!”

“Let’s do this, Gordon! Eat—my—fist!!”

And of course, as our Dear Readers should be able to predict by now, Wataru pushed off from the ground to go flying right towards his opponent! He swung his fist faster than the orc was able to, and landed a fierce uppercut punch directly on his chin!

“Ngh! I felt that, Wataru!”

Despite the blow, Gordon showed no sign of backing down, and returned the hit with a quick punch of his own!

“Oh—I felt that, too!” Wataru calmly lifted and crossed both of his arms in front of his face and chest to guard against the counterattack! “But I... *I never lose*!!”

It was then that Wataru slammed both his fists hard, right into his opponent’s stomach!!

The force from that one attack, fueled with his Hot-Blooded Energy, blasted through Gordon’s layers of well-trained muscle to his soft inner organs!

“Ngaaaaaaahhh—!”

“How’d you like that! That’s my pride and joy... my thrust punches!!”

Wataru shook out his wild, long hair as he declared this, with that face of a *Nio*! His brilliantly hot eyes gleamed with passion!

You’ll have to forgive me for stopping the book in the heat of battle, but I’m going to end Volume Two right here! After all, Wataru’s always in the middle of one fight or another, so it makes perfect sense to bring the book to a close just as another super-intense battle is getting started!

Farewell, Wataru! I’m sure all our Dear Readers have been thoroughly impressed by the way you live your life with your hot, passionate spirit!

Don’t ever change, Wataru! Keep on causing trouble in your fantasy world with your friends for us!!

WATARU!!! The Hot-Blooded Fighting Teen & His Epic Adventures After Stopping a Truck with His Bare Hands!!

THE END!!! (Seriously this time!)

*Sources:

[9] *The Truth About Explosive Bloodlust* — Isekai Tensei Publishing

[10] *An In-Depth Analysis! Closing in on the Secrets of the Exploding Blood Fighting Style! Part 1 of 2: “Punching Through the Laws of Physics: Hot-Blooded Lightspeed Fists”* — Isekai Tensei Publishing

[11] *An In-Depth Analysis! Closing in on the Secrets of the Exploding Blood Fighting Style! Part 2 of 2: “The Ultimate Secret Technique: The Hot-Blooded Fighter Wave”* — Isekai Tensei Publishing

Special Episode: The Shocking Epilogue! Aria Challenges the Novelist!

Two months had quickly passed by since Wataru defeated the dragon!!

Résistance had, just as planned, left the party to set out on a journey to become a better martial artist! Wataru and Aria had returned to the Sky Kingdom and gotten a great deal of reward money from the King!

Combined with what they'd gotten from defeating the Demon Lord Deus, they now had enough money to live in luxury for the rest of their days! But Wataru was not about to let himself get carried away by something like money! He was now living it up in one of the examination rooms in the clinic managed by Aria's parents! He had completely remodeled the place into a personal fitness room! And today, like all days, he was hard at work training his muscles!

"Nine-ninety-five... Nine-ninety-six... Nine-ninety-seven...!"

With carefully controlled breath rhythm, Wataru kept his body in a dauntingly precise form as he raised and lowered a barbell! The weights on the barbell added up to *an entire ton*! And he hadn't even eaten breakfast yet!!

"Nine-ninety-eight... Nine-ninety-nine... One thousand! Awesome!"

He slowly lowered the barbell to the ground, wiped away the sweat dripping down his forehead with his towel, and guzzled down an entire bottle of chocolate protein drink he had on hand!! His black hair had grown down to his waist during his fight with the dragon, but he had found it to be a huge inconvenience and so had cut it right back to the length it had been before!

"All right then, what kind of lifts should I do next?!?!"

Then! At that moment! The room to the door swung wide open and in barged none other than Aria!

"Wataru! Hey hey, boyyyyyy~!"

She looked nothing like the Aria we have come to know and love! She had

always worn a simple, pure white dress, but the dress she wore now was an eye-popping crimson! Massive black sunglasses covered her eyes, and she wore a golden necklace around her neck and a silver bracelet on her wrist! How unbelievably stylish of her!!

The instant Aria had gotten her hands on a huge amount of money, she'd gone on a spending craze that apparently knew no bounds! "Price" had no meaning for this wealthy young lady!



“Oh, hey, Aria, nice to see you here! I’d really appreciate it if you stopped going around wearing all that ridiculous stuff, though!!”

“Please, Wataru, don’t you lecture me! You went and wasted a bunch of our hard-earned money on a bunch of fitness equipment!” Aria took off her sunglasses and looked around the room, completely exasperated! The twenty-square-meter room was filled with barbells, dumbbells, treadmills, and a variety of other workout equipment! It was not at all the type of room you’d expect the two-time savior of the world to live in!!

“Hey, it’s my room, all right! ...Anyway, what do you want today?”

Aria answered Wataru’s question with an evil grin! “The truth is, I’ve brought along a surprise guest with me here today!”

“Huh!? Who’re you talking about!?”

Aria turned and called out to someone beyond the door! “You can come in now!” Slowly, the door opened wider—to admit a woman inside! She had sharp, clean facial features, and long, silky blue hair! Covering the rest of her body was spiky, sharp, wicked-looking black armor!

Yes, it was *Résistance*!

“Résistance! It’s you... but you only just left us! It’s too early for a reunion episode!”

Without a second thought, Wataru’s instinctive reaction was to criticize her sudden appearance!!

“It’s been a while, hasn’t it, Wataru?”

“It’s only been two months! What the hell happened!? Why’d you come all the way out here to the Sky Kingdom!?”

Résistance folded her arms with a most serious expression! “I’ll get right to it: I’ve come today because I have something to tell you both. I could’ve just written a letter, but it’s an important announcement, so I wanted to tell you face-to-face.”

“Oho..... An important announcement, you say?”

“Just *what* do you have to tell us!?!?” Aria tilted her head to one side! Despite having led Résistance all the way to Wataru’s room, it seemed as though she had no idea why she was back in the Sky Kingdom!

Just what in the world might Résistance need to tell the other two!?

With a solemn expression on her face, she stared at her friends, took a deep breath, and then opened her mouth to proclaim—

“I’m actually... going to debut as a novelist this month!”

There were several seconds of silence, then—!

“Résistance, please. Would you just cut that out?”

“She’s right, Résistance! Stop lying!”

Neither Aria nor Wataru believed her in the slightest!

“I’m not—! I’m telling the truth, you know.” Résistance was most resolute!

Aria, however, simply could not hold back her laughter any longer! She was literally doubled over in mirth! “Ahaha! Résistance, you could *never* be a novelist! Back when we were trying to get the second orb, your writing was completely awful!”

Wataru and Aria had discovered, through their ordeal as described in Chapter Two: “Chaos! A Novel Challenge for the Orb!” that Résistance had absolutely no talent when it came to writing novels! None whatsoever! It was quite ridiculous of her to claim that she was soon going to debut as a novelist!

“What happened was that as I was writing the outline for *Dark Taboo The Forbidden Abyss*[†], I remembered how fun it is to write. So that’s why after I split up from you two, I resolved to finish up my novel all in one go. After I got done writing it, I sent it off to a publishing house, and they told me they wanted to buy it!”

“Weren’t you supposed to be off training to become a better martial artist!?!? Do that first!” Wataru yelled at her, perfectly calm!

Aria was still a little suspicious of Résistance’s story! “Even though you’ve just told us how you did it, I still can’t believe *you* are going to be a novelist! If the publisher thought it was good enough to print, please show us your

manuscript!”

Résistance responded with a firm nod! “I thought you’d say that. I brought along a copy of the prologue for you to read. Take a look.” Résistance pulled a tightly rolled scroll out from somewhere inside her armor and passed it to Wataru! He unfurled the scroll and ran his eyes across what was written there, all the while with a *Nio*’s stern countenance!

“I can’t read!!”

Yes, that’s right! Wataru can’t read the language of this world! But how, then, you may ask, does he manage to speak with his friends just fine!? We don’t care about that right now!!

“That’s fine. Here, I’ll read it.”

Aria gently took the scroll from Wataru and began reading aloud from the parchment!!



Dark Taboo *The Forbidden Abyss*

Prologue: “Loneliness,” or, *Solitudinem*

My name is Lucifer. I, an Avatar of Shadow, live here, in this world covered with misery and darkness—the Infinite Hell, or rather, *Infinitus Infernum*. An Avatar of Shadow is more commonly referred to as a *demon*.

I loved a woman, once; her name was Tiara. She’d been the most beautiful demon in all of the Infinite Hell, and we had promised one another that we would spend the rest of our days together.

One day, however, she was murdered.

She was killed by one from the race of “humans” that had trespassed into this world.

The moment I learned how she had died, my heart was filled to o’erflowing by

a vicious desire for vengeance. I immediately set out to find the killer. Using my special demonic ability *Obscura Virtute*, I slipped into the human world, alone.

Right now, I am in the middle of a town at night. Everywhere I look, I see sharp, neon light. Humans walking all over the place. A herd of them surrounds me, lost as they must be in the confusion of haphazard buildings standing helter-skelter around the place we stand.

The name of the town was... Tokyo, as in, *Le To'kyou*.

I shove my way through the crowds, until I'm standing at a busy intersection of two streets where people are walking, practically scrambling, in every direction. I look up to the sky and beseech the full moon above in a solemn mutter: "Where is the one who killed Tiara...?"

Then, that's when it happens.

".....?"

Suddenly, every person around me stops walking. The loud music playing in the nearby cars stops as well.

Yes..... Time has stopped.

From behind me, I hear the sound of a man laughing.

"Heheheh... Like a moth drawn to a flame...!"

"!?"

I instantly whirl around to face him. Standing there was a man looking most suspicious, dressed in an all-black, hooded cloak.

"You bastard! You stopped time....."

"I did indeed. I wanted to fight you one-on-one. I used my *power* to stop time around us both."

"Why would human filth like you have *power*?"

Allow me to explain to all of our Darkly Enthralled Readers what they are discussing. When it says "*power*" here, they're actually using a word in a celestial language, describing abilities that normally only angels and demons are allowed to possess. Ever since Adam and Eve had been cast out of the Garden

of Eden, it had been *Forbidden vetiti* for humans to have *powers*.

“I forgot to introduce myself—I am Mirage Eclipse Catastrophe the Third. The other day, I journeyed to the world you live in, the Infinite Hell *Infinitus Infernum*, where I, a human, killed Tiara.”

“What..... did you just say.....!?”

I’m shocked. This fool, this *human*, has just told me that it was by his hands that my beloved Tiara had been murdered.

Unconsciously, I let go of the mental break that had been holding me back from using my full infernal power; I am now in Battle Mode ~*Proelium Modus*~.

“I am the head of an ‘organization’ known as the Right Arm of Divinity, or *Dextrum Brachium Sanctum*. We have one goal, and one goal only: with help from the angels above, we shall exterminate every last one of you demons.” Though his face was in shadow from beneath his hood, his right eye flashed gold as he said this. I instantly realize *exactly* what’s going on.

“So that’s what’s up. The angels are involved in this whole charade, huh?”

Without a moment to lose, I activate my Dark Power *Obscura Virtute*, and in my right hand, a weapon materializes. The weapon, a greatsword, reflects the light of the moon above in a most strangely brilliant way, twisting and breaking its pure white light. I call it The Eternal King of Destruction *Rex Interitus Aeternam*”

“Now, then... Let us see how your life ends here, at the hands of a demon, me!” I laugh in a shadowy manner.

The next instant, I am flying through the air at the speed of darkness. As I’m closing in on my enemy, I swing down my sword upon his head.

However—

As my sword cuts Mirage Eclipse Catastrophe the Third in twain, his body bursts into a million tiny balls of light, which then disappear.

“What..... was that.....?”

I hear his voice again from behind my back.

“Such a shame! That was only an illusion.”

How can this be? I completely fell for that obvious trick.

Mirage Eclipse Catastrophe the Third stabbed his dagger into my back. “Heh, all too easy...” he whispers with laughter.

My own body turns into tiny particles of light, and I disappear.

“What..... just happened.....!?”

Mirage Eclipse Catastrophe the Third is most surprised by this turn of events.

“Ha! Such a shame, right? That was just an illusion.”

I walk around from behind his back to face him once more.

Yes—he’s not the only one that can cast illusions. With this Dark Power *Obscura Virtute*, I too can create illusions of myself.

“Dammit!”

“Farewell, Mirage Eclipse Catastrophe the Third.”

And so I swing my greatsword, The Eternal King of Destruction *Rex Interitus Aeternam*, through the air and slice through my enemy’s back.

—*Did I kill him?*

—*No.*

“Such a shame. That, too, was just an illusion.”

“How..... did you do that.....?”

The Mirage Eclipse Catastrophe the Third I’ve just cut in half yet again dissipates into tiny particles of light and disappears. I realize that once again, he’s manoeuvred behind me.

He shouts in triumph. “Now, you have surely met your end!” Once more, his dagger plunges into my back.

Then—my body becomes tiny particles of light, and I disappear.

“What..... How.....?”

“Such a shame! That was another illusion of mine.”



“Wataru, do you mind if I stop reading this now?”

“Yeah!! Aria, you really pushed through that!! Nice job!!”

Wataru had been completely silent as he listened to Aria read the novel, and now he was completely exhausted from the ordeal!! Résistance frowned at them both!

“Whoa there, you two. There’s still more of the prologue left to read. Lucifer, the protagonist, and his mortal foe Mirage Eclipse Catastrophe the Third have just begun their battle!”

“Nope, we don’t need to read anymore.”

“Résistance!” Wataru demanded, “Is this novel *seriously going to be published!?*” His face remained, as ever, as stern as a *Nio!*

Résistance nodded and answered, “Yes, obviously.”

“That’s..... impossible! How can a novel like this get a publisher? The setup is bizarre and the battle scene is completely phoned-in! Just how many times do we need to read about them creating illusions of themselves...!?”

“Résistance, what’s the name of the publisher that offered to buy your book?”

“Sky-Novel Club.”

Both Wataru and Aria turn to look at each other with mystified looks on their faces!

“*They* agreed to publish... *this!?*”

“Make no mistake, Wataru: every single editor at that publisher is an incompetent idiot...!!”

Dear Readers! Let me remind you once more that this story is entirely fictional! Any names in this book have absolutely no relation to real people or organizations!!

“Hey, quit it, both of you,” Résistance said. “Stop saying rude things about my publisher. They were able to see how talented I am as a writer. They’re pretty

all right, you know.”

She sighed and placed both hands on her hips! “Well, anyhow... I’m going to be continuing my travels now, training as both a martial artist and making my debut tour as an author.”

“What is this world coming to...!?”

“By the way, just in case you’re curious—my pen name is ‘*Résistance, a.k.a., La Rebellatrix*’.”

Aria had some rather harsh criticism for that! “Don’t you think that’s a *bit* too on the nose?”

“Well, whatever. I’ve told you what I’ve come to tell you about, so I’m going to be on my way now. Once things have calmed down a bit more, I’ll come back and visit.”

“Yeah! Take care, Résistance!!”

“Thanks.” With a big, wide smile on her face, Résistance waved to the two of them, then left the room!

Wataru and Aria, now alone inside the room, looked at each other once more with expressions of total mystification!!

“Wataru..... I have an idea.....”

“.....What is it, Aria!? Tell me!!”

“...If Résistance can get published writing a novel like *that*... Don’t you think that the story I wrote could be published, too...!?”

“I was thinking the same thing!!” Wataru agreed, his face contorted up into that of a *Nio*!

Aria nodded to herself, folded her arms and shouted: “Excellent! I’ll get right to writing! If I become a novelist, I’m sure lots of people will be fawning all over me! I-WILL-BECOME-A-NOVELIST!!”

“I think your motives are a little suspect, but... who cares! I’m rooting for you!”

“Thank you so much, Wataru! Together, we’ll be standing at the top of the

literary world in no time!”

Within her eyes glowed the flames of ambition!!



Without further ado, Aria fetched some parchment paper and brought it to Wataru’s room, and together they began thinking about the plot for her novel!

Aria glared and groaned at the blank parchment in front of her at the table! “Hmmmm, this really is quite difficult, isn’t it...!”

“You wrote an outline for that romance story before...! It was called ‘Melly Love’ or something, right!? Why don’t you just turn that into a novel!?” Wataru was quick to offer advice from where he sat across the table from her, but his words failed to dispel the troubled look on Aria’s face!

“Well, of *course* I’d like to do that, but the whole ‘*Amour Mélange*’ outline was something I thought up on the spot... If I tried turning that story into a full-length novel, I think it’d actually be quite hard to write. Maybe I should just take my time and think up an entirely different setting for my story...”

“You’ve got a point...!”

Wataru and Aria found themselves quite perplexed by the complex vagaries of the literary activity known as Writing a Novel!

—and that’s when it happened!!

Wataru was struck by an idea that was devilishly tempting!!

Hey, that’s right! If we just copy popular stuff I read when I was back in Japan, maybe it’ll be popular here as well!?

Yes! This is a parallel world, so even if Wataru were to completely plagiarize something he read back in his former home, Japan, not a single person would find out!!

Sure, there may be others like the Demon Lord, the dragon, and Wataru, who all came from that world into this one... But surely it’ll all turn out okay!!

I kind of feel like it’s kinda ethically dangerous to do something like that, though... But... What if I didn’t completely copy something else, and just used

part of it? That should be fine!!

“Wh-What’s the matter, Wataru? You look even more grim than you usually do!”

Aria sounded concerned! Wataru slowly folded his arms and opened his mouth to say:

“I’ve thought of the perfect setting for our book, Aria...!”

“Oh, um, really!?”

Aria’s eyes were practically dazzling with admiration when she heard this!

“Yeah...! That publishing company will *definitely* buy this story! It’s the best setting ever!!”

Wataru, just now... sold his soul to the Devil!

“So what kind of setup were you thinking of?” Aria was really excited to hear his answer! And so Wataru began to explain his thoughts in detail!

“Well, first of all... our protagonist is a pirate!”

“Oooh, a pirate, you say! That’s rather common for an adventure story!” Adventure tales that had pirates as the main characters seemed to be fairly popular, even here in this fantasy world!

“Right, but this guy’s different! He’s a pirate, but his body is elastic!!”

“His body’s *elastic*!?”

Aria was astonished! She’d never heard of such a shockingly outlandish idea for a main character!

“This protagonist of ours is searching for a hidden treasure, hidden somewhere in his world... so he goes off on an adventure with his friends! He has, uh... two friends, at the beginning!!”

“That makes sense. I think if you want to write a long-running series, you need to start off with only a few characters!”

Aria bobbed her head up and down as she agreed with everything Wataru suggested! She began making some notes using the pen and parchment on the table in front of her!

“Cool, now we can talk about what his friends are like! The first one is the protagonist’s best friend, and he’s a detective with amazing powers of observation!”

“Oho! A detective, you say? It’s rather *novel* to have a pirate and a detective working together, if I do say so myself!”

“The detective, by the way, looks like a child but is actually an adult! They got involved in some past incident with a shady organization where they were made to drink some crazy medicine that shrunk their body!!”

“What!? S-Shrunk their body!?”

Aria was yet again beside herself with surprise! Surely there’s a limit as to how many “interesting” new ideas can be crammed into one novel!

“So he looks like a kid, but has the brain of an adult... That difference in real age, versus *apparent* age is really important!”

Wataru’s expression was contorted with anger as he explained this! Then he took a deep, gasping breath before continuing on!

“The other friend is a yellow mouse that can shoot lightning bolts out of its body!!”

“A mouse!?!?”

Aria had her socks knocked off thrice! It was absurd! Preposterous! Who’d ever heard of an electrifying mouse appearing as a character in a novel!

“I guess I should mention that the mouse obviously can’t talk—but he’s a really good fighter! When it comes time to sell merchandise, he’ll be a great mascot character for the series!!”

“R-Right.....! Yeah, every popular novel or franchise has a mascot character nowadays, don’t they!!”

Aria was honestly impressed by how deeply Wataru was thinking about this! He’d included considerations of *future merchandising* when thinking of her story!!

“Since the main character’s a pirate, there’s obviously gonna be some battle scenes, adventures, episodes when he makes new friends, and a whole lot of

other interesting plot twists! It'll be the ideal multi-volume series!!"

"I've no doubt that it'll be explosively popular, Wataru!! By the way, what are we going to name this series?"

"The title? Hmmm, that's a good question...!"

Wataru grew silent as he stroked his chin for a few moments, then his eyes flashed open wide as if he'd just been struck by lightning:

"Live from the Sky Kingdom on the Wind Continent: The Pirates!!"

He'd just copied the whole title from other, more popular series!!

But Aria had no way of knowing that!

"Hmmmm, that's a bit long, isn't it? Sure, it's better than Jacob Yamada's *'It's Me, a Shy Orc Loner with a Heart of Gold (Notice Me, Senpai!) Who Got Reborn In Another World, a.k.a. "Isekai," Where I Am Getting Into All Sorts of Troubles, Hijinks, and Shenanigans, Oh My!,'* but still....."

"It'll be just fine, Aria! This title has, you know... That feeling of being a well-loved title for many years! Don't you think so!?!?!"

"U-Uh, I'm not sure, but if you say so...?"

"I *do* say so!"

And so this was how Wataru half-forced Aria to adopt "*Live from the Sky Kingdom on the Wind Continent: The Pirates!!*" as the title for her novel!!



With Wataru's help in deciding the setting, the characters, and the title, Aria then spent three days and three nights hard at work writing the epic first volume of *Live from the Sky Kingdom on the Wind Continent: The Pirates!!* The very moment she finished, she mailed off the manuscript to Anytown, Wind Continent, where Sky-Novel Club had their offices! A mere one month later, they received a reply from Sky-Novel Club!

"1027... 1028... 1029...!"

Wataru was lifting his one-ton barbell in his room, same as always, when all of a sudden Aria slammed the door open and entered the room!

“Wataru! Sky-Novel Club sent us their reply!!”

She was practically yelling with excitement as she waved around a white envelope in her left hand!

“Whoa, nice! It’s finally here! What’d they say!?”

“I haven’t read it yet! Let’s see what they have to say together, Wataru!”

“Yeah! Let’s do that!!”

He laid down the barbell on the floor, wiped away the sweat on his brow with a towel, and walked over to where Aria stood with the letter! Aria, heart nearly bursting with anticipation, tore open the letter and read what was written on the single page inside!

“.....So, what does it say!?”

Wataru kept peeking over her shoulder in an attempt to catch a glimpse at the letter, but he *still* couldn’t read it! Or any other written materials in this world! Wataru, hit the books!

“Um, let’s see here...”

Aria began to read the letter aloud!

“To be perfectly frank, the novel you wrote was completely uninteresting. It’s unbelievably lame that the pirate protagonist can stretch his limbs like they’re made of rubber. Then there’s the detective. It’s totally unrealistic to have a character that looks like a child, but has the brains of an adult. What’s yet more ridiculous is the suggestion of an electrifying mouse as a mascot character—that doesn’t sound cute in the slightest. It also has that weird cry—‘bibabu〜≡≡!’—what in the world were you trying to convey with that? Finally, we have the title: ‘Live from the Sky Kingdom on the Wind Continent: The Pirates!!’ That’ll never be popular. Please, do yourself a favor and pick up a book like, ‘It’s Me, a Shy Orc Loner with a Heart of Gold (Notice Me, Senpai!) Who Got Reborn In Another World, a.k.a. “Isekai,” Where I Am Getting Into All Sorts of Troubles, Hijinks, and Shenanigans, Oh My!’ by Mr. Jacob Yamada, or the more recently published ‘Dark Taboo The Forbidden Abyss’ by Ms. Résistance, a.k.a., La Rebellatrix. Read one of those so you can find out what a real novel is like.”

“.....!!”

“.....”

The air inside the room was suddenly very heavy! Claustrophobically so!!

“.....Hey, Aria.....!!”

“.....What is it, Wataru.....”

“.....All the editors at this ‘Sky-Novel Club’ place really are awful, aren’t they!!”

“Without a doubt!”

Let me remind our Dear Readers one more time! This story is entirely fictional! Any similarity to real people or organizations is entirely coincidental!

And so it was that Aria’s dream of becoming a novelist and having “legions of adoring fans” came to naught, all hopes of achieving such a life scattered to the four winds by that cruel letter! Happily ever after! *Happiest* ever after!!

Postscript

To set aside any fears of being misunderstood, allow me to put it plainly: momentum is everything in *Wataru!!!*, and it's something of a joke novel. The writing style is so incredibly beyond the norm that, inevitably, opinions about it will be sharply divided. The fact that a *second* volume in this series was able to be published is something of a miracle.

Speaking of miracles, I've been told that Volume One of *Wataru!!!* is going to be published in America. I'm not aware as to when it will go on sale, but to the translator who ends up getting stuck with the job of translating it into English, all I can say is: "My condolences." Having said that, I am quite happy to learn it's being published there. A long time ago I trained with a ninja in America (see the afterword in Volume One), so when I heard the news I felt a strange sort of fate had brought it all about.

Lastly, I would like to make some acknowledgments: thank you to all the editors and proofreaders who so carefully went through my crazy manuscript and made their corrections. Thank you to RELUCY, who so beautifully drew my wild characters in all of their cute, handsome glory. And then of course, I have you to thank, Dear Readers. My heart is full of gratitude for you all.

—Simotti

WATARU



ETERNAL BADASS



“Why...?
What’s the
problem?”

Hot-Blooded Fighting Teen
Wataru Ito


“Wataru, getting
married...?
Inconceivable!
Entirely
inconceivable!”

“The only
man I want
to marry
is you!!”

One of the (Former)
Demon Lord’s Four Masters
Résistance

Daughter of a Family of Assassins
Elphabelle of House Evil

Fantasy World Resident
Aria



“All right,
then...
I’ll show
you that the
strongest,
craziest
badass
in this
fantasy
world—

—is ME!”

Wataru used his
“Exploding Bloodrush”
technique to
activate every ounce
of his hot-blooded
heat to fend off
the dragon’s
attack!

However—

He looked very
different from when
he had used this
technique against
the Demon Lord!

Bonus Short Stories

A Morning's Insanity in the Assassin House!

Nestled among the bleak emptiness of a forbidding wasteland somewhere on the Wind Continent there stood an immense mansion! What was this luxurious residence doing out here on its own in a place like this!? This is a perplexing puzzle and obviously a mystery our Dear Readers want the answer to!

The fact of the matter was this: the massive mansion was home to the most famous family of assassins in the Wind Continent's underworld, the House of Evil! Let's take a look inside!

It was five in the morning! The heiress of the House of Evil, the beautiful young Elphabelle—was sound asleep! Her bedroom was filled with opulent pieces of furniture, and the girl herself was in a deep slumber as she lay across her comfy bed! But this idyllic scene was disturbed when a balding man in a tailcoat appeared suddenly at her bedside!

The man took a moment to look at the sleeping Elphabelle's beautiful face... and plunged a sharp knife directly at her head.

Elphabelle, watch out!

But Elphabelle, with her extraordinary instinct for danger, quickly rolled over in her sleep to avoid the attack!

STAB!!

The man's knife drove deep into the pillow, right where Elphabelle's head had been resting not a quarter of a moment ago!

"...Good morning, my Lady Elphabelle. Your faculties for perceiving threats continue to serve you well, I see."

"Morning, Sebas."

Elphabelle slowly sat up in her bed, not looking at all bothered by what had

just occurred! Cool as ice! Yes, her would-be-stabber was none other than Sebas Tiansteward, the House of Evil's butler!

This may have appeared to be an attempted murder, but, when Sebas had tried to stab the young lady in her sleeping face, he was simply delivering Elphabelle's morning wake-up call! Elphabelle had been trained to be a top-notch assassin, and even while unconscious her reflexes allow her to react to any attack!! Tiansteward uses this ability of hers to wake her up every morning!

Just what we'd expect from a house of assassins!

"I have prepared your breakfast. Please make your way to the dining room."

* * *

Elphabelle finished getting ready and headed down to the mansion's dining room on the first floor! From the ceiling of the room hung a bright, sparkling chandelier that lit up the entire circular table, which was itself a whopping four meters in diameter!

At the far end of the table sat none other than the current head of the House of Evil, Elphabill!

He was a shocking four meters tall, and wore a white, custom-made, well-tailored button-down shirt! His abnormally oversized body made everything around him seem tiny—his chair, the table, even the very bun he was eating looked practically miniscule!

"Good morning, Elphabelle...!!"

Elphabill rumbled a greeting to his daughter, his face as fierce and stern as a demon's! She sat down in a chair to his right and asked him a question!

"Morning, Papa. You got work today?"

"Indeed. Today, I've got a job on the neighboring continent...!!"

"Oh, yeah? Are you gonna take a boat?"

"Inconceivable. I shall swim...!!"

This "neighboring continent," by the way, was separated from the Wind Continent by a sea eight kilometers wide! It took dozens of hours to cross over

by boat! But for Elphabill—why, it was a mere three-minute swim!

“Hmmmm, okay...”

Elphabelle looked not at all surprised and merely took a bite of the bun on her plate! This bread was laced with enough poison to kill any normal person with a single bite!

They were a rather special family indeed! As a way to develop a resistance to poisons, they poisoned *their own food* every day!

Just what we’d expect from a house of assassins!

“All right, I’ll be heading out now...!!”

Elphabill scarfed down the rest of his bun in one quick bite, then rose from his chair! Let me be clear: for most people, when I say he “rose from his chair,” it would mean that he stood up! But Elphabill simply launched himself skywards directly out of his seat! He broke through the ceilings of the floors above him with incredible force and blasted high up into the sky above the mansion, disappearing into its clear blue heights!

“Ugh, Papa! ...Don’t destroy the ceiling every time you leave the house! C’mon!!”

Elphabelle sounded completely fed up with her father’s antics!

But this was just another morning in the House of Evil, home to the most deadly assassins on the continent!

Special Interview with Résistance, a.k.a., ~*La Rebellatrix*~

For today’s feature, Sky-Novel Club’s editorial division has conducted an interview with Ms. Résistance, a.k.a., ~*La Rebellatrix*~, author of the soon-to-be published *Dark Taboo The Forbidden Abyss* (hereafter referred to as “Forbidden”). We’ve asked her some questions about the novel and her creative process in general.

—What inspired you to write this novel?

Ah, mockery from the get-go. For me, “writing novels” is something I’ve been doing for as long as I can remember. It came to me quite naturally, as I recall, as easy as breathing. There was no specific reason behind writing this particular novel.

—Are there certain things you keep in mind when you sit down to write?

Hmm, that’s a good question... I suppose I’m always trying to maintain a “spiritual fellowship” with my characters, you might say. There are a good number of unique, unusual characters in my novel, as you know, but they don’t just exist in some imaginary space—they live and breathe very real lives in that wonderful, free world we call “literature.” By communing with them in spirit, getting close to who they are, how they feel, I believe I can write more realistic descriptions of their world.

I am also, of course, constantly asking myself: “What is *true* literature, anyway?” Readers simply want their novels to entertain them. Should authors indulge that desire, however, and merely provide them with mass-produced *commodities* labeled “books,” well, that’d just make the literary world that much smaller, now wouldn’t it? Out of a desire to avoid that possibility, perhaps, I’ve come around to thinking that it is not *entertainment* that is important when writing a novel, but how *artistic* one can make the story. That fervent belief of mine, that literature is *art* and not merely entertaining *fanservice*, is clearly expressed in “Forbidden.”

—What would you, Ms. Résistance, a.k.a., ~*La Rebellatrix*~, consider to be your favorite part of the book?

I have so many, it’s almost impossible to say... but if there’s one aspect of “Forbidden” that I’m most proud of, it’s the careful, minute attention to detail I showed when describing the dark world and its characters: the protagonist Lucifer and his pain at the loss of his lover, the shadowy manoeuvres of the mysterious organization known as the “Right Arm of Divinity,” and the

sorrowful truth behind the lightless world of Infinite Hell, *Infinitus Infernum*. My descriptions of the subtleties of interactions between characters in this world will no doubt delight every reader to the greatest extent.

— As “Forbidden” is your first novel, have you encountered any difficulties in the process of getting it published?

Mocking me again, are we? I have not encountered a single difficulty in getting “Forbidden” published. I have absolute faith in my abilities as a writer, after all.

—Sorry for asking that. Anyway, when you announced that “Forbidden” was going to be published, what was the reaction from your personal acquaintances?

Well, actually, just the other day I had two of my friends read the prologue of “Forbidden.” Upon reading it, however, they threw out every insult imaginable: “Do you mind if I stop reading this now?” “Impossibly bad!” “Just how many times do we need to read about them creating illusions of themselves...!?” and even calling my pen name “too on the nose!” I did not buckle in the face of such criticism, however—there are a good many opinions about “classical” works of literature, aren’t there? Books that only receive effusive, shallow praise are lacking in what it takes to become timeless works of art... or at least, that’s my philosophy. The damning criticism from my friends only served to remind me once more that “Forbidden” truly is a wonderful work of art, pure literature.

—All right, then. Lastly, what kind of advice do you have for aspiring authors?

First, I’d ask them to read “Forbidden” before they write anything. My novel will illuminate them as to the meaning of what true literature is, and what it takes to write a classic and yet popular story. That’s the best start anyone could

have.

—Thank you very much. *Dark Taboo The Forbidden Abyss*, the debut novel of Ms. Résistance, a.k.a. *La Rebellatrix*, will be published next month by Sky-Novel Club. We hope you enjoy it.



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WATARU!!! The Hot-Blooded Fighting Teen & His Epic Adventures After
Stopping a Truck with His Bare Hands!! Volume 2

by Simotti

Translated by Adam Seacord and Roko Mobius Edited by Michael Meeker

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