



vol. 6

Yusura Kankitsu
Illustrator
Ruria Miyuki

Reincarnated Mage with Inferior Eyes

Breezing through the Future as an Oppressed Ex-Hero



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Noel

She's usually passive, but around Abel, she's very forward.

“Th-Then, would you go to the dance with me?”

Abel

A genius mage with **Amber Eyes**—the strongest one can have. He reincarnated into this world from two hundred years ago.

Ted

A spoiled noble who looks up to Abel as his magecraft master.

Zyle

The only classmate of Abel's that will try to lecture him.

“I'd like to go to the dance with you too. I'm confident you'll have much more fun with me than with Eliza.”

Eliza

The descendant of the Hero of Fire. She's beginning to be more forthcoming about her feelings for Abel.



“Heh heh.
It’s nice to do
this every now
and then, isn’t it?
Just the two of us
goofing off.”

But all fun things must
come to an end, and it
seemed that our
moment of fun had
been nothing but a
brief reprieve.

I didn’t respond.
I can’t deny that Lilith’s right.
Being up here, dancing with
her without anyone else
around is nice. It’s silent.
It was as if time had
stood still.

Though his body had been fortified by machines, in every other regard Barth was a complete novice. One of my attacks was more than enough to take him out. If I'd been able to use magecraft normally this entire time, Barth would have never had a leg up on me.

“G
a
a
a
h!”

Barth shrieked, tumbling across the floor from the force of my fist.

“Grit your teeth, Barth.”



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Chapter 1: Fall Is for Reading

My name is Abel, and I'm a mage who reincarnated two hundred years into the future. With the intense heat of summer behind us, we'd finally entered a time of more comfortable weather.

Some said that fall was the best season for reading; nights were longer, meaning you could spend more time enjoying a book with the window open, which was the best feeling in the world. Now that summer had come to a close, I'd started spending more time reading. Today was such a day, and I decided to go to a nearby antiquarian bookstore—a hole-in-the-wall that I'd discovered recently—to indulge in my favorite pastime.

When I arrived, a small dog was barking from where he was leashed to the front of the store. Though this bookstore was nowhere near the size of the huge ones near the school, they carried my favorite kinds of books—ones tailored for specialists. *Hm, it seems like they're carrying some interesting new books.*

I surveyed the titles; they carried *The History of Regalia* and *Applications of Regalia Manufacturing Knowledge*. I already knew everything there was to know about Olden Magecraft, so my interests had shifted to Modern Magecraft, which primarily focused on Regalias.

"Thanks for your patronage as always, kid," the old lady said as I finished my purchase.

I'd actually been coming here two to three times a week recently, so I'd become fairly well acquainted with her. I visited so often partly because I was fond of the place, but also because its atmosphere reminded me so much of the bookstore I used to frequent two hundred years ago.

It really feels nostalgic. Back when I was just a kid, I didn't have any money, so the bookstore owners allowed me to read books in exchange for walking their dog.

"I should probably tell you. We're closing shop next month."

Her words shocked me. While it was true that this bookstore didn't get as many customers as the bigger stores, there should've been, outside of me, other enthusiasts who came here. Then again, specialty books like the ones that were sold here were much more expensive than others, which could have put a large gap between their sales and what bigger stores made.

"Is it okay if I ask why?"

"Business hasn't been good for a while. Then you got devices like these popping up," the old woman pointed to a flyer with an unfamiliar tablet-shaped Regalia drawn on it.

"What is this?" I asked.

"No clue. A salesman came by to drop it off one day. Apparently, people can freely order books with this Regalia." *If I understand correctly, this tablet allows customers to automatically order whatever books they want through the salesman's agency.* "We've been able to stay in business until now thanks to our customers who want more specialist books that other bookstores don't carry, but with something like this making its way into the world, we're honestly gonna be put in a tough spot."

I see. For a store that sells rare, hard-to-find books, it'd be rough on their business if a device like this becomes widespread. For now, you still had to be inside a bookstore to use these Regalias, but it was possible that, eventually, you'd be able to get books without even having to leave your home. Time was truly cruel.

"What'll happen to all these books if you close up shop?" I asked.

"I'll probably have a vendor take them. Tell me now if there's anything you want, and I'll set them aside for you."

"Thanks. I appreciate it."

Hm. How unfortunate. Regardless of the impending innovation that would come with customers ordering their own books, this store carries titles that are already out of print. If I can, I should buy the most important books before the store closes down.

"Abel!" After I exited the store, a girl with a parasol immediately interrupted

my thoughts. It was Noel. With beautiful blue hair, Noel was a descendant of Daytona, the Hero of Water—the very same comrade I’d fought alongside two hundred years ago—and also a founding member of the Olden Magecraft Research Society, which I was a member of.

“I’m so happy to know you come here too.” She ran up to me with such enthusiasm you could practically see a tail wagging behind her. It wasn’t a coincidence that the two of us had run into each other here; she was a regular and the very same person who told me about this bookstore in the first place.

“What’s the matter? Something wrong?” she asked.

“Oh... Honestly, yeah. I just got some terrible news.”

I explained the situation to her while she listened intently to every word.

“I...believe I understand what’s going on,” she said. “Simply put, you need money, right?”

After hearing me out, she’d gotten right to the heart of the matter. “Yeah, that’s the gist of it.”

Tragically, I was but a student, and also living off of Lilith, the daughter of the demon king, who I’d saved two hundred years ago. I knew if I talked to Lilith about this she’d maybe supply me with additional funds, but it didn’t feel right borrowing anything more from her if I could help it.

I was already getting a headache thinking about what she’d say to me. “*You really are so troublesome, Master Abel. I suppose you owe me one now,*” she’d say sweetly. If I closed my eyes I could see her smug face, clear as day.

“Here, Abel.”

Hm? What’s this?

While I was lost in my thoughts, Noel had put something cold in my palm. *It’s got a certain weight to it... Oh, these are gold coins—and quite a bit of them too.* With this many, I could probably buy out the entire store, books and all.

“Sorry, but I can’t take all that money from you,” I said.

I completely forgot that her family is extremely rich. Well, it’s all thanks to Daytona’s great merchant’s sense. It was only natural that thanks to that sense

being passed down, Noel's family had remained affluent.

"No, you're misunderstanding. This isn't free," she said.

"Like a trade?"

"Right. I'll give you the money, and in exchange, you'll give me your love. How does that sound?"

I was speechless. *Uh, really? Can you hear the words you're saying right now?* There's no way that anyone could trade money for love. It seemed that on this matter, Noel had a twisted sense of things.



“Sorry, but I can’t take your money. I’ll scrounge up what I need on my own.”

“I see. How unfortunate.” I wasn’t sure why, but my refusal only made Noel disappointed. “Do you have any leads?”

“None. I’m sure an idea or two’ll pop up if I think about it enough.”

That’s how it’d been back then. Two hundred years ago, talented mages never ran out of job requests, and so never ran out of money. Applying that logic to modern times, I should be able to find work that’d pay me enough to buy some books.

“I understand,” Noel said. “Then at the very least, allow me to assist you. I’d really like it if I could.”

“Well, I guess that’s okay,” I replied.

“Really?! I’ll do my best!” At my acceptance of her offer, her face lit up with a bright smile.

Hm. Looking at her, I can’t help but remember when Daytona would tag along on my job hunting. It was possible that Noel possessed the same merchant gene that Daytona had. I hadn’t seen any glimpses of that yet, but maybe I could rely on her a little bit, and expect great things.

Chapter 2: The Quest at the Harbor

After deciding to raise funds, I started off by consulting one of the people closest to me for ideas.

“Gotcha. So that’s why you’re comin’ to me for help, huh?”

The first person I’d decided to go to was Ted, my childhood friend from the modern day. He might not have been the sharpest tool in the shed, but he was good with people, and due to his honest personality, well-liked.

“Sheesh, you’re quite the smooth operator, Master,” Ted commented. “You act like a cool guy, but you’re just as excited as the rest of us!”

What’s going on here? I came to Ted for leads on work, and now he’s accusing me with cryptic remarks. “Explain?”

“Huh? Aren’t you trying to get money to spend at the school festival?!”

“The what?”

It seemed that Ted was operating under a huge misunderstanding. *Hm, but now that he mentions this festival, I remember seeing posters on the school entrance bulletin board about this.* Some people did consider fall the season for art, so it made sense that there’d be a school festival around this time.

“Okay, well, I don’t really get what’s going on, but I’ll help you out!” Ted exclaimed.

With this, it seemed that both Noel and Ted were on board to help me with my financing.

“Do you have any ideas?” I asked.

“Well, with your talents as a mage, it’d be fastest to check out the school’s quest bulletin board.”

“Oh, I didn’t even think about that.”

During one of the explanations we’d first received when we came to the

academy, we'd been told that there was a system for people to post requests at our school, which students could choose to fulfill. In the past, there had been a similar system in the adventurer guilds. But those guilds, and the adventurers they gathered, had been abolished over a decade ago. It felt kind of strange knowing that the adventurer's guild system that I was familiar with still existed at this school.



With Ted's advice, we went to the quest bulletin board in the basement level of the academy.

"Whoa, there're so many people here!" Ted exclaimed excitedly.

There were more students than usual, most likely because they all wanted to earn some money before the school festival. At least, that was the most logical explanation as to why the quest bulletin board was currently being swarmed by students.

"Master! I think we might be able to get a peek through this gap here!"

You're really sticking your head there? I had no intention of following Ted's lead, so instead, I stood on my toes to try and get a look at the bulletin board. Since I was slightly taller than Ted, I at least had this option.

Hm, I think I can more or less see what's posted. The biggest takeaway was that these quests were very different from what I'd imagined.

There was a quest to look for a missing cat named Tama, which paid eight thousand cols. There was another request, for seven thousand cols, to spend a day helping clean a river.

Hm. All of these don't pay too much. Back in my time, most of the quests were centered around taking out magic beasts. Modern quests seemed much more like part-time jobs. Even if I took on a good number of these jobs, I didn't think I'd be able to earn enough in time to buy the titles I wanted before the bookstore closed.

Suddenly, I heard some students fussing.

"Hey, look, why don't you take that quest?"

“You’re kidding, right? Look at the name of the requester. You can’t pay me enough to work with that guy.”

It seemed that there was some commotion over a quest that’d just been posted: a request to help clean up a warehouse near the harbor for one hundred fifty thousand cols.

As I looked at the quest under discussion, I began to understand why there was such a fuss over it. The reward was magnitudes greater than the other ones posted around it—approximately the average monthly salary for young laborers in the royal capital. With that large of a sum as the reward, it was necessary to anticipate the inevitable trouble that came with it.

“Ted, wanna take this quest?”

“Huh?!” he loudly exclaimed with surprise. “A-Are you sure?! Even I can tell that this quest is as fishy as it gets!”

Of course I knew the risks. But nothing ventured, nothing gained. Risk and return were two sides of the same coin, and I had a personal interest in what the hidden risk of this particular job was. If Ted, Noel, and I split the compensation, it’d be fifty thousand each, which all in all made this a fairly fruitful job.



The next day, early in the morning on our day off, I met Ted and Noel at the school entrance, and together we headed to the eastern district of the royal capital. Due to it being an industrial region facing the harbor, it was a place filled with laborers; it wasn’t really a place students visited. With countless warehouses and stacks upon stacks of rusty containers, the harbor felt a little desolate.

When we arrived at the designated location, we saw a man waiting for us.

“So you’re the kids helpin’ out with the job?” the man asked. “The school told me you were coming. The name’s Edgar, and I’m the owner of the neighborhood Regalia recycle shop.”

Hm. I understand why the students want nothing to do with this guy. Men were creatures who made it more blatant what kind of person they were, and

this man in front of us exuded an extremely scummy aura.

“Could you tell us the details of this job?” I asked, deciding to keep our conversation as short as possible and quickly dive right into the heart of the matter.

“Sure. So, as you know, I need you kids to clean the warehouse. If you can tidy it all up by the designated time, and leave it sparkling clean, then I’ll give you the money I promised.”

“Huh?! That’s it?!”

I couldn’t blame Ted for being so surprised. A little cleaning for a hundred fifty thousand cols seemed really out of the ordinary.

“Yep, I’m a man of my word!” Edgar exclaimed. “Besides, I’d get in trouble with your school if I got students here under false pretenses.”

I stayed silent. *Hm. He might be telling the truth, but from the way he’s talking, there’s something important here that he’s keeping from us.* It was also true though that the school would take punitive measures if he posted a quest with obviously false details. Again, at any rate, risk and return were two sides of the same coin. I wasn’t sure what risks existed in this quest, but I was sure that everything would become clear once we started working.

“Here we are. This is the warehouse I need you all to clean,” Edgar said.

The place he’d led us to was one of the countless warehouses in the harbor. *There doesn’t seem to be anything fishy about this place. I don’t sense any traps either. From what I can tell, it seems like a perfectly normal warehouse.*

“Time to get it done!” Ted said, pumped up.

“Let’s make a lot of money,” Noel said.

Having the reward money dangling in their faces seemed to have lit a fire underneath the two of them. We had the option of immediately turning around if things seemed off, but for now, everything seemed okay.

“Okay, well, in you all go!” Edgar said.

Though I still had a sinking feeling that there was something going on, we were urged into the warehouse—and that’s when the other shoe dropped.

The sound of a door being locked rang out—Edgar had trapped us inside the warehouse. *Seriously? You're playing a dangerous game here.*

“Hey! What’s the big idea?!” Ted protested, trying to open the door, but apparently, the door was made so that it couldn’t be opened from the inside.

“Ha ha ha! Later, kids! Don’t worry, I’ll let you out at sunset. Work hard, ya hear me?”

Well, this certainly took quite the fishy turn. Normal cleaning jobs probably didn’t involve students being locked inside a warehouse. I could only assume that there was a big secret being hidden here.



In regards to the warehouse itself, I didn’t see anything especially suspicious, but I could sense the presence of creatures inside. Most likely, the reason the reward had been set so high was because of the things currently hiding in the shadows.

“Abel, look!” Noel was the first to notice the lurking creatures.

From where she was pointing came a squeak, revealing a huge mouse monster over forty centimeters in length, *excluding* its tail.

“Bad Rats, huh?” I remarked.

They were small magic beasts that typically lived in the forests. Cunning with a love for tricks, they typically did things like steal the prey of other monsters, or wait for parents to leave their nests so they could rush in and eat the eggs. They were real scoundrels.

“They’re annoyingly huge.” Those were my honest feelings, seeing them.

The Bad Rat let out a loud squeak.

They certainly look different from what I remember from two hundred years ago. They were without a doubt plumper. It must’ve been an effect of them moving from the forest to the city, where there was a lot more food to be had.

“Not really sure what’s what, but we just gotta take out those rats, right?!” Ted said, hitting the nail on the head for once.

In order to leave the warehouse “sparkling clean,” it was necessary to take care of these rats. It was clear that the high reward for this request had to do with the fact that it also included the huge risk of taking out the Bad Rats.

“Take this! Burning Bullet!” Ted shouted.

In the next moment, the air trembled and immediately a ball of flame, approximately twenty centimeters in diameter, flew out of Ted’s hand. *I see. It seems that he’s been working on what I’ve taught him.* The power of his spell was a little stronger from the last time I saw it. But, this time, there was a fatal flaw in his actions.

“Stop,” I said, holding Ted’s hand down with mine and using my other hand to nullify the magecraft he’d shot out.

“Wha—?!”

Negation Magecraft could be useful depending on the situation, but it could only be used if there was a significant gap in strength between you and the other person. It required you to analyze the composition of their magecraft and then create the exact opposite. The kicker was that you had to wait until the last second of their magecraft activating before you used it.

“Huh? What gives, Master?!”

“Our job here is to clean the warehouse, right? That means no Fire Magecraft,” I said.

“Oh...”

It seemed that Ted had finally understood his mistake. Even if our only job here was to exterminate the Bad Rats, leaving the warehouse in a state of disarray would be putting the cart before the horse.

“No Fire Magecraft in any shape or form, got it?” I insisted.

“B-But, I’m not as skilled as you, Master!” Ted protested. “I can’t use any other magecraft like I can Fire Magecraft. I can only muster like ten percent.”

Ted seemed to have lost all his will, but I couldn’t blame him. My Amber Eyes were special in that they gave me the ability to use all the different magecrafts equally. For people with other eyes, they could only use maybe thirty percent of

the strength of other magecrafts outside their primary one, but it seemed that Ted could only do ten percent. But as someone with Amber Eyes, I couldn't exactly teach people how to use other magecraft to its full potential, which was a bit unfortunate.

"It's okay. Leave it to me," Noel said. "Ice Arrow!"

Noel shot out tiny arrows of ice at the Bad Rat. *I see. Unlike Fire Magecraft, Ice Magecraft won't make a mess of the items in here. Clever girl.* She'd even adjusted the strength of her magecraft to not break any of the items.

But there was a trade-off for weakening the magecraft. Though Noel had carefully constructed her magecraft, her attack was evaded before it could land.

The next thing the Bad Rat did took even me by surprise. It squeaked while tauntingly slapping its butt.

"Wha—?!" Noel exclaimed. "Heh heh...you've got guts."

It seemed that, uncharacteristically, Noel had fallen for the enemy's taunt and was letting her anger show. *Hm. It seems that the Bad Rats have gotten better over the last two hundred years.* They weren't simply bigger, but they'd been living around people and had become used to it. They'd become much more devious.

Well then, what to do? They might've gotten better, but in the end, they were still low-level monsters. It'd take a few seconds for me to take care of all of them if I got serious. However...

"This is a good opportunity. Can I leave the two of you to take care of them?" I asked.

Maybe it was just my imagination, but both Noel and Ted seemed to be fired up.

"Yeah! This is finally my chance to prove myself to you! I'm gonna go all out!" Ted yelled.

"No problem," Noel said. "I want to be of help to you, Abel!"

Hm. I'm glad that you two are so motivated. The best way for mages to get better was to have a sparring partner. While they took care of that, I decided to

leisurely focus on cleaning.

Chapter 3: Noel and Ted versus the Bad Rats

After stumbling into an unexpected situation, Noel and Ted began their warehouse rat extermination.

“Hey! Not so fast, you rats!”

It seemed that Ted’s strategy was to use Body Fortification Magecraft to corner the rats. Since he couldn’t use Fire Magecraft here, that was probably his only option. For normal students, relying solely on their physical abilities to catch rats would’ve been a reckless plan, but not for Ted. Strictly in terms of Body Fortification Magecraft, Ted had instincts that paralleled a first-rate mage.

“Heh heh. Nowhere to run,” Ted gloated.

I’m a little surprised. I really didn’t think much of Ted’s plan besides it being stupid, but it looks like he’s actually succeeded in cornering one of the rats.

The mouse squeaked, possibly being shocked by Ted’s physical abilities.

Good grief. Who’s the human, and who’s the animal here?

In Ted’s case though, it was much more on brand for him to rely on his body to brute force a solution than try to use his brain.

“It’s all over now!” Ted yelled.

The rat squeaked loudly in response.

Hm. It seems that the enemy’s got a leg up on him this time.

Though it seemed like the rat had been cornered, it actually still had an escape route. At the very last second it darted into a hole, evading Ted’s attack.

“Ack!” Ted grunted. Failing to catch the rat, he instead collided with the wall. The hole the rat escaped into was small enough that it’d be impossible for a human to fit inside.

Hm. Now that I look around, I’m seeing a lot of these holes. Maybe it was better to consider this warehouse more like their home turf and keep our guard

up accordingly.

But Ted wasn't the only one having a hard time.

"Ice Arrow!"

The rats were also leading Noel by the nose. Her struggle might have been partially due to the fact that she had to adjust the force of her magecraft to avoid damaging any items inside the warehouse.

"Why can't I hit them...?" Noel said in disbelief as the rats mocked her, squeaking at her as her attacks missed.

Wild animals had sharper instincts and were highly sensitive to movement—much more than humans thought. Their living environments, unlike the humans of this era, weren't warm and fuzzy. Regardless of how much these two trained their magecraft, they were way behind the rats in terms of actual battle experience.

"Master! Do you have any advice?" Ted asked.

"I would like some pointers as well," Noel said.

Ted and Noel came to me for help at practically the same time. *Good grief. They can't figure this out themselves?* Then again, it was true that at this pace, we wouldn't finish by the scheduled time, so maybe it would be best for me to say something.

"Well, let me start by asking: what were your thoughts when you first went after the rats?"

"I was screaming, thinking, 'Wait, you rats!' Yeah, somethin' like that," Ted said.

"I only thought of making sure my magecraft hit them," Noel said.

How carefree. But now I get why they aren't catching any rats.

"You need to change your assumptions," I explained. "The most important thing when hunting is to think like the hunted."

"I'm not sure I follow."

"Me neither..." Ted agreed with Noel.

It seemed that I needed to shove a more specific example in their faces.

“Imagine you’re the prey. If you’re being chased around by someone who’s obviously trying to kill you, would you just stand there and let them?” I asked.

“Definitely not! Getting hurt sucks!” Ted exclaimed.

“I would try to run,” Noel added.

Animals had a more developed sense of survival than humans; they knew immediately when something was trying to kill them. After all, they needed to be able to go on the defensive the moment they were approached by someone intent on hurting them.

“What the two of you need right now is the ability to put yourself in the shoes of your target and think like them,” I said.

Sure, Noel and Ted might’ve been able to wipe the rats out easily if they used the full extent of their power. But in this situation, the Bad Rats had the advantage since they possessed instincts finely honed through real, deadly encounters, whereas neither Ted nor Noel had any actual fighting experience.

“You say that, but...”

“You’re asking for the impossible! How am I supposed to know what a rat’s thinkin’?!” Ted protested after Noel.

It seems that they need more than just my advice. I’ll have to demonstrate what I mean. Right at that moment, my prey showed up with impeccable timing.

“Watch me closely,” I prefaced, before stopping the natural flow of mana that my body was emitting.

“Wh-What?!” Noel exclaimed.

“It’s like you’re disappearing!” Ted said.

You get it now? It seemed that their instincts regarding mana weren’t too bad. Magecraft wasn’t the only thing that used mana: it sustained our very existence. Cutting it off—and thus, erasing your presence—was one of the most basic techniques in assassination.

“Amazing! It’s almost as if you’re not even here!” Noel remarked.

It was easy enough to explain the technique, but it wasn’t something they’d be able to master in a day. Even after working as an assassin for years, I couldn’t completely stop myself from emitting mana. In their case, it’d most likely be enough if they could stop about half of their mana emissions.

“I’m just getting started,” I said.

Next, it was time to erase all the other traces: my footsteps, my breathing, the tension in my body—even the beating of my heart.

Both Noel and Ted gasped in surprise as they noticed my body change, but fortunately didn’t actually say anything. If they were too loud, everything I’d just done would have been for nothing.

This should do it. I could now boldly walk over to my target without it even noticing me. By cutting off most bodily functions and limiting it to the barest of necessities, a human’s presence becomes extremely faint.

“With enough practice you could even catch them with your bare hands,” I said.

But I’m probably the only person in modern times who’s good enough at erasing their presence to actually catch a rat with my bare hands. The assassins from Chronos had been pretty sloppy when hiding themselves.

The rat squeaked in surprise as I held it by the neck, not knowing what was going on.

“Abel! How did you do that?!”

“Whoa! You’re so amazing, Master!”



Seeing my work with their own eyes, Noel and Ted couldn't help but react. *Well, I'm not really looking for the two of you to get to this level right now. I just want to show you the ropes.* After all, if anyone tried to do what I did without proper training, they'd put themselves in a lot of danger.

"You got your advice. The rest is up to you guys," I said.

Just learning in classrooms wasn't enough to sharpen one's battle senses. Fighting these rats would be valuable battlefield experience for them.



"Abel! I got another one!"

"Master! I got one too!"

After hearing my advice, the two of them improved drastically. Noel ended up catching eleven and Ted caught two, and that seemed to be all of the Bad Rats. All that was left was to clean out the dead rats and tidy up the warehouse, and with that we'd have successfully fulfilled the quest.

"Whoa...seriously?" At the scheduled time our requester Edgar returned, his eyes wide with surprise as he saw the inside of the warehouse.

"One clean warehouse, as promised!" Ted said.

"Urk. What happened to the rats in here?" Edgar asked.

"Heh heh. Ya really doubted me, huh? Don't you know who I am? I'm top of my class at the prestigious Arthlia Magecraft Academy. Around there, they call me Ted the Demon King."

Well...he's not really lying. After our first physical education class, I'd made it look like Ted had used very impressive magecraft, which resulted in Ted getting the name "Demon King Ted." But here, too, the one who had eliminated the most rats wasn't Ted at all, but Noel. Regardless, such facts didn't deter Ted from acting full of himself.

"Dammit..." Edgar muttered. "It's my fault for underestimatин' ya 'cause you're kids."

What does he mean? This isn't a win-lose situation.

“Well, we won, so it’s time to pay up!” Ted said.

Edgar clicked his tongue in annoyance. “Fine. A promise is a promise. Take it,” he said, his face bitter as he dropped gold coins into Ted’s hand.

“Hold up! This isn’t nearly enough!”

I didn’t blame Ted for being so angry. All Edgar had given us was fifty thousand cols, which was only a third of the reward promised.

“Yeah, about that. I don’t got all that dough on me. Sorry, but let me off the hook?”

Hm. Even after all this, he’s trying to weasel out of paying us?

But since he simply didn’t have the money on him, getting the rest of the reward would be difficult. We could try to come back another time to get the money from him, but that probably wasn’t a great idea. Even though we’d done the work, it didn’t mean that we’d get equal compensation. And considering this guy’s personality, trying to ask him for the money again would most likely end up with him only attempting to weasel out of paying with yet another excuse.

In that case, there was only one solution I could come up with: we’d need to get him to pay us with something other than money.

“What plans do you have for the items in the warehouse?” I asked.

This was a good chance to get the answer to something that’d been on my mind. Odds were that he’d rented this warehouse as storage space for items from his recycling shop. Among these items were quite a few that had piqued my interest.

“I’m plannin’ on tossin’ the lot of them. They’re basically junk Regalias that can’t be sold anymore. They’ve just been sittin’ in here, collectin’ dust.”

Edgar was right—the items stored here were in pretty bad shape; it didn’t seem like there’d been any maintenance done for a long time. Among the Regalias caked in dust were some that showed traces of having been chewed up by the Bad Rats.

“How are you gonna get rid of them?” I asked.

“Gonna ask a company to come and destroy ’em. It takes money to destroy ’em even if they’re trash.”

“That’s such a waste!” Ted chimed in.

“Don’t got much of a choice with the mass production of Regalias. We live in an age where buyin’ and throwin’ away Regalias is a normal part of life.”

Hm. If even Edgar, as greedy as he is, is willing to pay money to get rid of these Regalias, they must be pretty worthless. As soon as I thought that, something that Emerson had said to me popped into my head.

“It’s more lucrative to make products that weaker people can use. No matter the age, people desire the simplest, cheapest, and most quickly produced products.”

Selling low-quality Regalias had advantages to both the consumer and manufacturer. Though their very existence was lamentable—being, as they were, one of the main reasons for the sorry state of mages today—the mass production of cheap products also meant mass consumption. People stopped treasuring their Regalias and instead threw them away as if it were the most natural thing in the world to do.

“I’ve got a question,” I said to Edgar. “Could we use the remaining balance of the reward that you owe us to buy up the Regalias here?”

“Huh? Hm... Well, I guess if you kids insist, then I don’t mind sellin’ them to you as an exception.”

What a snake. Even now, he’s trying to frame it as if he’s doing us a favor? None of the Regalias here had any value to him in the first place, so if anything, I was doing *him* a favor.

“What’re your plans for this junk?” he asked.

I see. He’s trying to get a taste of my plan to see if he can profit off of it, huh? He was really every bit as scummy as his reputation said he was.

“Nothing in particular. I just have some personal ideas for them,” I said.

At this point, there was no need to be transparent about my plans. If he knew about the potential of these Regalias, he’d possibly become less willing to give

all of them up.

Edgar sucked his teeth in annoyance. “Fine, twist my arm, why don’t you? I’ll make an exception and give my precious merchandise to you! Be grateful to the great Edgar for his benevolence!”

Though he made it look like he was only reluctantly accepting the deal, I saw a grin flash across his face. *Seriously...it’s good he’s not in the acting business.* From his perspective, he was on cloud nine, having successfully pawned off all his trash onto kids.

“Master...are you sure you wanna buy his junk for that much money?” Ted asked, worried after hearing my conversation with Edgar.

“Yeah, it’ll be fine. This is all according to plan,” I said in a low voice.

Work wasn’t something that only other people could give you. Sometimes, you needed to come up with opportunities on your own. Thinking for yourself about what people wanted and working to meet that demand was the most efficient way to turn a profit.

One person’s trash is another’s treasure. If my thinking was right, then the trade we just made would lead to a huge profit.

Chapter 4: Peddling Wares

A few days had passed since we'd completed the warehouse cleaning quest, and it finally felt like the time was right. During it all, I'd been secretly working on a certain project, and I was finally ready to show it all off at the Royal Capital's eastern district.

"Phew, this is really exciting, isn't it, Master?" Ted said as he helped to push the cart that we'd borrowed from the school.

Inside the cart were the secondhand Regalias we'd gotten from Edgar. The reason I'd bought everything he had was to repair and modify them for resale.

"Abel, what does this cat logo mean?" Noel asked as she held up one of the Regalias from the pile.

"Oh, that? It's just a little design of mine."

Even with well-made products, there was no guarantee of success. It was important to both grasp the needs of the consumer and spread knowledge of your product. That's why I'd decided to slap a black cat logo onto all of the Regalias I'd fixed up. The logos had no real function, but they made it easier to have news of my products spread by word of mouth. In other words, I was hoping the image would work as a kind of branding.

"This looks like a good place. Let's get things started!" Ted said, making a move first. He clapped his hands and started to advertise as planned. "Ladies and gentlemen! How about some Black Cat Regalias? They're super cheap and super powerful!"

It's moments like these where impulsive people like Ted are quite reliable. He was naturally cheerful, which easily caught the attention of the large number of people passing by. It didn't take long before we'd attracted the attention of everyone around us.

As proof, I heard some of the people we'd attracted talk about us.

"Hey, there's something fun-looking over there!"

“Let’s check it out!”

Students were a rare site in the eastern district, which was essentially filled with laborers. Thanks to our presence being so unusual, we’d already attracted quite a few passersby.

“Ahem. As you can see, what we have here is a plain old knife,” Ted said.

“B-But, it comes with a Sharpness enchantment cast on it,” Noel stuttered nervously, a huge contrast to Ted’s boisterous attitude.

Hm. Daytona was really good at these kinds of things, but it doesn’t seem like that skill got passed down to Noel. It was easy to tell how hard she was trying, but her effort couldn’t mask how stiff she was.

“If you use this knife...” Noel started.

“Presto!” Ted exclaimed. With the enchanted knife he clearly sliced straight through the rock. “You can cut through even the toughest rocks like they’re butter!”

Seeing this, the crowd gasped, amazed.

“Whoa, for real?!”

“Who makes that knife?! Even the Chronos-made Regalias aren’t that sharp!”

None of these are anything too special. They all come from generic manufacturers.

“But wait, there’s more! If you channel your mana into it, you can use Fire Magecraft! It’s perfect for cooking!”

“You can use Ice Magecraft too,” Noel chimed in. “It’s very convenient for preserving food.”

The Sharpness enchantment wasn’t the only one I’d cast onto the knife. I’d also added a simple magecraft composition that allowed both Fire and Ice Magecraft to be used.

“No way... You can do all of that?!” A person in the crowd exclaimed.

“It’s so strong too!” another said. “I haven’t seen any Regalia with that high of an output!”

The people in the crowd that had gathered were understandably surprised. The Regalia they were familiar with had all been mass manufactured. However, the ones I'd prepared were ones that'd been crafted by the very same person who'd been called the "peerless prodigy" two hundred years ago.

Since I was so proficient with Obsidian Eye magecraft, it meant I was talented with Imbuement Magecraft. Back then, there'd been a fifty-year wait to get my imbuement work. Of course, I made sure that the ones I was currently selling would be good enough for commercial use, but not as good as if I'd put in as much effort as possible. Even so, I was certain that they were of a much higher quality than any of the mass-produced goods on the market.

"What's all the fuss?!"

The next person to appear before us was a familiar face. "Urk! You're that kid from before..."

It was Edgar, the owner of the recycling shop. It seemed that his shop was right next to where we'd set up.

"W-Wait! This is all the junk I had in the warehouse!" he exclaimed. Upon seeing the situation he immediately understood what was going on. "Why are they sellin' like hotcakes?!"

The fear that potential customers had been stolen from him was overwhelming Edgar; even his arms and knees started shaking.

"Calm down, people! We have enough for everyone!" Ted yelled.

"Thank you for your purchase. Here's your Black Cat Regalia," Noel said.

The customers were swarming around us like ants to sugar.

"Wh-Why?! How is this possible?!" As we made sale after sale, Edgar's face slowly puckered up.

Hm. It looks like business at his store has come to a halt because of us. Good grief. Revenge wasn't part of my plan, but this might have been just deserts for a man who'd willingly give out dangerous quests to students while keeping them in the dark about the harm they'd potentially face. This'll be a good lesson for him.



About an hour later, in what seemed like an instant, the approximately one hundred Regalias I'd prepared had sold out. I'd thought I'd need to rely on word of mouth to sell these over the course of a few days, but it seemed that they'd made a bigger splash than I'd expected; it hadn't even taken a single day to sell everything. We had been selling Regalias so quickly, we'd had to make multiple trips with the cart to fetch the remaining stock we'd left at the school. Ultimately, we'd made about nine hundred thousand cols total. Everything we'd sold had been something we'd gotten for free, so we'd made a profit of three hundred thousand each.

"Master, when are we gonna do this again?!"

It seemed that Ted had gotten a taste of this life now that his pockets were full. His eyes were practically sparkling.

"Not anytime soon. There's no need to get more money right now," I said.

"Aw, come on! That's such a waste! Look at how much of a killing we made!"

I'd gotten more than enough money to accomplish my goal. With this, I could buy the books I wanted from the bookstore.

"Are you sure?" Noel asked, tilting her head. "With your talent, I'm sure you could turn a huge profit."

I didn't blame them for reacting the way they did.

"I'm not so sure about that. The world isn't as predictable as you might think." At that moment, I couldn't help but remember something that Daytona had told me.

"You gotta blend in and play the game. You can't keep winnin' if you wanna have others play ball with you..."

The reason we'd done so well had to do with the fact that we were students—our youth disarmed any suspicion people might have had from buying our Regalias. If we made this into an actual business, we'd no doubt have to begin involving other people. Another problem we would face was earning so much money as kids, which would come with its own risks. For now, I was just happy

that I had finally earned enough money to buy the books I wanted.



Elsewhere, there was a tall building outside of the capital, which played host to a certain large organization—the AMO, or Anti-Magecraft Organization. Two hundred years ago, after the Demon King of Twilight was defeated, the humans began a war among themselves, struggling to decide how to divvy up his territory. The war lasted a hundred years and yielded many victims. The resulting hatred towards magecraft birthed the organization known as AMO, whose ideology resonated with the sentiments of those who desired a peaceful world without magecraft. But among their numbers were radical factions who tried using force to realize that dream, and overall made AMO controversial.

At this very moment, two very important individuals in AMO were in the middle of a discussion.

“Well, well, what brought about this change of heart? I didn’t think you’d lend a hand to our research.”

This man was Guiltina, the general of the demon army. The former tactician for the Demon King of Twilight, he had lived for over eight hundred years and was known as the oldest living demon.

“I’m still not thrilled about it. There’s parts of your research that aren’t exactly ethical,” Emerson said, casually adjusting his glasses.

Emerson was considered the best Regalia inventor and was also a professor at Arthlia Academy of Magecraft.

“Heh heh. You’re no fool,” Guiltina replied. “You should know that in magecraft, there is no progress without sacrifice. The Link Regalias will usher in a revolution to the world.”

Emerson fell silent.



The Link Regalias were something that AMO had developed with Emerson's help.

"With the Ground System, we can link all the Regalias together. That's precisely why I developed the Link Regalias," Emerson explained.

The Ground System that Emerson developed was revolutionary, and had the potential to make all current Regalia obsolete. All Link Regalias would connect to a colossal Regalia called the Mother, which would constantly update the Link Regalias with updated magecraft equations. Through this system, Link Regalias could store massive numbers of magecraft equations that regular Regalias couldn't.

"How wonderful! The fruits of your research will truly be helpful in our pursuit of making world peace a reality," Guilltina said happily.

But Emerson returned that joy with a cold gaze. "Because using the Link Regalias would mark the return of demons like you, right?"

Guilltina silently gasped at Emerson's accusation, his surprise slightly showing on his face. "I've...no idea what you might be referring to."

Emerson chuckled. "I'm not as dumb as you might think. I know you're a demon."

Guilltina was so shaken he couldn't speak. Thinking that all mages of the modern age were weak and foolish, he must've lowered his guard far too much. Though he was confident that he'd perfectly transformed into a human, it seemed that the young, actual human before him had seen straight through his disguise.

"Let's start over, then," Guilltina eventually said. "Why did you help, knowing full well that I'm a demon?"

It didn't make sense to Guilltina. Up until now, Emerson had refused to help anyone with their research. So what had caused him to change his mind? The man's eccentricity preceded him. He was known as a once-in-a-century genius, but also as someone with absolutely zero interest in anything but his own research, making him a loner.

“I suppose it’s because I’ve met someone who I want to challenge with everything I’ve got,” Emerson said after a pause. “In order to surpass him, I’ll even sell my soul to a demon. That about sum it up?” Emerson chuckled.

Abel flashed through Emerson’s mind. In the end, nobody could defeat him. Even the elites of the most powerful domestic Magecraft Association, Chronos, couldn’t hold a candle to Abel.

“I must say, you’ve piqued my interest. Who could have caught the attention of a genius like yourself?”

For someone who’d lived over eight hundred years, Guilltina was fully aware of how weak modern mages had become in terms of purely combat ability. They lacked battle experience and relied on support items, and were completely unable to really produce any decent magecraft on their own.

They were worse than incompetent—they were a disgrace.

But even so, there was one big difference in ability between the mages of old and modern mages. It was big enough that one couldn’t definitively say that mages of the past were superior to mages of the present. The new technology that Emerson had developed would have even left mages from the past stunned.

“So you think you can defeat this person with Link Regalias?” Guilltina asked.

“I do. Using any other kind of Regalia to challenge him would be reckless. But with Link Regalias...”

Link Regalias made it possible for someone to use magecraft that exceeded Abel’s power with ease. It was quite possible that the time where even someone such as Abel could be defeated was just around the corner.

“Abel... Just wait a little longer. The next challenge I bring you will be your last,” Emerson thought, smiling to himself in the dimly lit room.

The impending challenge would no doubt be Abel’s biggest test, especially as a person who exclusively used Olden Magecraft.

Chapter 5: Ted's New Hairstyle

Several days had passed since we'd made a large amount of money by selling the Regalias I'd fixed up.

Hm. The school's gotten more colorful and boisterous with each passing day.

The school festival was fast approaching, and it was easy to tell; many dazzling decorations had been hung up around the school, and stalls had already begun to be set up outside the school building.

"Open wide, darling!"

"Heh heh. I must be the luckiest guy in the world to be able to eat your homemade breakfast."

"Oh, darling. You're such a smooth talker!"

I felt as if my ears were gonna rot off from the extremely clichéd conversation I overheard. One more thing that'd changed recently was that there were a lot more couples. At any given time of the day, everywhere I looked there was a couple engaging in flirtatious activities.

Hm. Is this just because the school festival is coming up? How stupid.

It went without saying that a student's first priority was their studies. How weak were they to neglect their training in exchange for canoodling?

With these thoughts in my head as I walked into the classroom, a familiar voice called out to me.

"Mornin', Master!"

It was Ted. For some reason, he was even more hyper than usual. *Uh...what exactly is going on with him?* When I turned around to face him, I was met with a sight that stunned even a great mage like me.

"Heh heh. Cat got your tongue, Master? Somethin' about me you can't keep your eyes off of?!" His smug face irritated me.

Let me guess. He's waiting for me to react.

It was true that there was something weird about his hairstyle. Until now, his hair had been thick, but it'd always grown straight upwards, as if defying gravity. Now, it'd been styled into curls.

Maybe it'd have been better to begin calling him "Afro Ted." This wasn't a matter of the hairstyle looking good or bad on him. It simply looked odd.

"You changed your hairstyle?" I asked.

"Heh heh. I knew you of all people would notice, Master!"

If you'd only slightly trimmed your bangs, I could see why you might be surprised I noticed, but if you change your whole head of hair like that, anyone will notice.

"It's a very...unique hairstyle you're sporting," I said, deciding to give him my unfiltered opinion.

One's hairstyle was a personal decision, and I had no intention of criticizing him. But I couldn't shake the feeling that this was only going to attract the wrong kind of attention.

Ted wagged his finger at me, still acting smug for some reason. "You don't know anything about the heart of women, Master. Get with the times! The curly, wavy, fluffy hairstyle is all the rage now! It's the hottest trend!"

I know nothing about what you're talking about. Then, a thought crossed my head. Did Ted use the precious money he'd earned from the job we did to get this haircut? It seemed that his foolishness knew no bounds.

Ted chuckled. "If you wanna be popular with the girls, you should try changin' up your hairstyle too, Master!"

I'm not sure why, but Ted is a lot more annoying today than usual. That being said, I felt like I understood why Ted had changed his hairstyle so suddenly. He'd most likely been influenced by those around him and as a result suddenly started wanting to catch the attention of girls.

"Yo, Ted. Nice hair!"

A certain guy approached us after hearing our conversation. It was our

classmate, Zyle. Ever since I'd shared the same room as him on our school trip, he'd pop into our conversations every now and then.

"Hey, Zyle! Whoa! Those shoes!"

"Heh. I knew you'd recognize 'em, Ted." Now Zyle looked smug. His leather shoes had a strange sharp shape at the tips. "These are the famous Vallensmith 95s from NAV. You wouldn't believe what I had to go through to get these."

Though Zyle looked really proud of his purchase, I personally didn't think the shoes suited him at all. To put it nicely: those shoes were designed for only *some* people to pull off.

"They say that fashion starts from the feet," Zyle said. "If you wanna be Mr. Popular, you should at least invest in some good-lookin' shoes, Ted!"

"Yeah! You bet I'm gonna!" Ted replied.

I was completely lost as to what these two were going on about. Though it was true that to be fashionable one mustn't overlook the power of a good pair of shoes, there was ultimately no point in focusing on only one's shoes if the rest of the outfit was to be neglected as a result. That did not make a good outfit at all.

Hm. Maybe beauty standards have changed over the past two hundred years? It was possible that their sense of beauty was correct by modern day standards, but it didn't change the fact that I didn't understand what the two of them found "fashionable" whatsoever.

"Hey, Abel, by the way, did you already make a decision?" Zyle asked me.

"About what?"

"You serious? About your dance partner."

Hm. Now that he mentions it, I do remember hearing about that. At Arthlia Academy of Magecraft, there was apparently an event where pairs of boys and girls would get together at night when the festival ended and dance together.

I see. That's probably why there are so many more couples around than usual. I'm glad I solved that mystery. In the interest of finding a dance partner, the students had approached those they were interested in, leading to an increase

in couples.

“Listen to this! From my research, we’re the only three guys in the class who haven’t found a dance partner!” Zyle said.

“What?! Are you serious?!” Ted exclaimed, apparently extremely shocked.

I couldn’t blame Ted for being so surprised by what Zyle said. I could only imagine how pathetic it’d feel if every one of our classmates had a dance partner and you didn’t.

“Hey, Abel. If you’re up to it, wanna go to the station and hit on girls?”

“Huh?” It took a bit for me to process what Zyle had asked.

Me? Why? For what purpose should a mage who was once lauded as a peerless prodigy stoop to base actions such as flirting? This was more ridiculous than I could even imagine.

“Sorry. Not interested,” I declined at once, electing to ignore his invitation and returning to the book I’d been reading.

As of late my attention had shifted to the books I’d bought the other day regarding Regalias. Reading was an infinitely better use of my time than going along with Zyle’s whims.

“Come on, Abel. You need to change that about yourself.” Usually, whenever I refused an invitation, they’d back down, but for some reason, this time, Zyle persisted. “You don’t have any concept of working together with others! Sure, you might be book smart, but when you get out into the real world, you’re not gonna survive if you can’t cooperate with others!”

Huh? I’m getting déjà vu. I could’ve sworn I had this exact conversation before. Hm. Though at first he sounds ridiculous, Zyle has a point. It was true that all my staying indoors for the sake of magecraft research resulted in lacking social skills.

“Fine. If you insist, I guess I don’t mind helping,” I relented.

It wasn’t wise to write something off before experiencing it. There might indeed have been something to learn from flirting publicly with women, as pointless as it seemed. The only way to know for sure was to try it out. I could

think about whether or not it was worth it afterwards. It was good to try new things in order to avoid being captive to old ideas.

“Hell yeah! Let’s get this party started! Unpopular Guy Alliance, roll out!” Zyle called.

“Yeah! Let’s do this!” Ted eagerly agreed.

Wait. I’m not included in this alliance, am I?

At any rate, I made a promise to my two classmates to go out with them after school.



Chapter 6: Flirting at the Station

After classes ended for the day, Zyle, Ted, and I headed towards the train station in the Royal Capital's eastern district. It was where the Magic Express was, but riding it wasn't our objective today. Instead, we headed to the station—where the most foot traffic would be. It was there that we'd achieve our goal: find girls willing to be our dance partners.

"Hey, Ted," Zyle said. "Why don't you start us off?"

"No way! Why don't *you* start, Zyle?!" Ted shot back.

Hm. Looks like those two have already started squabbling. Though Ted had been good at calling out to customers when we were peddling our wares, it seemed that didn't translate to talking to girls.

"Listen up, Ted. We're in a dire situation!" Zyle said.

"We are?"

"According to my research, the people who don't find a dance partner for the school festival have a mere eight percent chance of ever finding love as a student! This is a fork in the road of our destiny!"

Ted gasped at Zyle's words. Meanwhile, I was just left once again wondering about how Zyle had gotten any of his information.

But again, Zyle had a point. People weren't able to really change the traits they were born with. It was highly likely that if you weren't brave enough to ask somebody out in your first year, you'd probably never work up the courage during the remainder of your time at school.

"Urk. So you're saying that we have no choice but to go for it..." Ted muttered, seeming to steel himself despite his nerves—and desperation.

"Hey there, ladies! Wanna go grab a bite with us?!"

Good grief. I guess his hyper attitude is a kind of self-encouragement, but I doubt springing that energy on someone out of nowhere will make them too

happy. As proof, despite how gallantly he'd approached these women, they both responded with a cold attitude.

"You really think you can hit on people when you look like that?" one asked.

"Try again when you drop a few pounds," said the other.

"Oof..." Ted said, clearly demoralized.

Usually the only thing he had going for him was his unfettered optimism, but receiving a blow like that from the opposite sex must've cut deep.

"I'm not even fat... This is all muscle!" Ted wailed in frustration, falling to his knees.

Knowing Ted meant that knowing what those women had said about him was horribly ignorant. It was true that he had a more corpulent shape—a side effect from the way his parents had doted on him from a young age. But through his daily training, he'd turned all of that mass into muscle, even if to the untrained eye his body still looked like it was excessively flabby. What girls like the ones he'd called out to might have wanted was someone with a more typically toned body.



What ensued after that was a continuous streak of very sad strikeouts between Ted and Zyle.

"Hey, miss! How's about you come with me to eat buckets of chicken?!" Ted exclaimed.

"Oh, miss, could it be?" Zyle asked. "Did you fall from the heavens? Because your eyes sparkle like stars."

Though they'd mostly put their hearts into their attempts, neither of them had gotten any results to speak of. It was truly painful to watch. The saying goes that you miss all the shots that you don't take, but in their case, they were missing every shot that they *did* take. At this rate, the sun would set and they'd still be partnerless.

But while I thought that, I noticed something strange. After surveying the flow of people, I recognized someone acting oddly.

“Hm?” *Isn’t that the older of the spoiled noble brats, Barth?* Like Ted, he was another person that I hadn’t been able to get away from since a young age.

“Heh heh. Just a little more and my body will be complete...”

I could tell that he was muttering something to himself, as if it was a curse.

Hm. Is he up to no good again?

He looked different from the last time I saw him—almost like a completely different person. He wore an eye patch and had bandages wrapped around his left arm, but it didn’t seem as if he was injured. I had no clue why he’d be wearing those things otherwise.

Hm. Now that I think about it, the last time he looked off like this was when he borrowed the power of a demon to fight me. Back then, he was deep in the principles of the Anti-Magecraft Organization.

“Agh! Master! Please, help!”

As I thought about this, Ted came up to me, wailing. It seemed that Ted hadn’t even realized that Barth was close by. Though Barth bothered me, he currently seemed harmless, so I decided to put the matter aside.

“Abel! You’re the only one who can break out of this situation! Do something! Please!” Zyle begged.

“Master! Avenge us!” Ted shouted.

Good grief. I guess I don’t have a choice.

It wasn’t as if I was exactly good at this sort of thing either, but I couldn’t bear to watch this tragedy any longer. I would step up to the challenge to regain the honor of my classmates.

“Oh, you’re gonna go for it, Abel?!” Zyle asked excitedly.

I began making my way towards a girl roughly the same age as us. I didn’t need words. The less talking, the better the chances of success. After all, unnecessary words lowered a guy’s attractiveness.

The girl I’d chosen gasped slightly as our eyes met. It would’ve been extremely stupid to avert my gaze; the fastest way to a woman’s heart was

through the eyes. Successful flirtation all came from a good first impression, and it was no exaggeration to say that avoiding failure hinged on this moment.

Hm. It seems that she turned away after we made eye contact, but not because she's wary of me—more like she's shy towards men. This is my chance.

Making up my mind, I decided to continue my approach.

“Pardon me, madam.”

“Y-Yes?” she asked nervously.

Her nerves were yet another sign that there was potential here. “I’m actually on my way to have lunch, but I’m not really familiar with this area. It’d be a big help if you could show me around.”

The important thing here was to be natural with the invitation. Regardless of the era, girls are always cautious creatures. Running at them with the same frantic energy as Ted was out of the question. Using corny lines like Zyle had would also have the opposite effect in a lot of the cases. Though it was important to try to put yourself out there as much as possible, it was equally important to know how to *actually* talk to girls before trying anything else. Otherwise, success would be hard to find.

“Oh, yes, I’d be happy to do that! I know a pretty good sandwich place in the area,” she responded.

Hm. It looks like my first try went pretty well.

Almost anything in this world could be accomplished by building off of your past experiences. *After we get to the store she recommended, I’ll probably be able to naturally invite her for lunch.*

The moment I thought this I felt a sudden burst of killing intent. The density of this mana wasn’t human—and thus, it was obviously from a demon.

“Heh heh heh.”

It’s Lilith. It seems that she’s watching me from the second floor of a nearby building. I’d been careless and had dropped my guard by doing something new. Who would’ve thought that a mage who was once called a peerless prodigy two hundred years ago could make such an error?

“Oh. Ow. Sorry, my stomach’s hurting all of a sudden,” I said.

“A-Are you okay?” she asked, concerned.

“Yeah, I’ll be fine, but sorry. I’ll have to take a rain check on lunch.”

I know my acting could be better, but I don’t have the luxury of trying to make it good. After curtly taking my leave, I ran away from the girl.

“Wh-What just happened...” she reacted.

Sorry, girl whose name I never got. Trust me. You don’t want Lilith targeting you. It’ll only end in pain. With that in mind, I took the opportunity to swiftly retreat.

“We’re making a run for it, you two,” I said.

“Huh?! Why?! You had that in the bag!” Zyle said.

“Yeah! She was super cute too!” Ted remarked.

Since the both of them had wanted me to succeed, this outcome disappointed them greatly.

“I’ll explain later. But right now we have to get away before *she* gets here.”

But as soon as I said that, I realized that she’d already disappeared from the building and was closing in on us. *Good grief. Seems like we’re out of time.*

“Oh, well, if it isn’t Ted and Zyle. What are you two doing here?” Lilith giggled, ice in her voice.

By the time the two of them had noticed Lilith, it was too late. The second they heard her voice come from behind them, their faces went as pale as sheets.



“P-Professor Lilith?!” Zyle sputtered.

“Ms. Lilith?! W-Wait, you got it all wrong! This isn’t what it looks like!” Ted exclaimed.

“It’s not good to make excuses. Illicit relations are against school rules,” she giggled in the face of their panicked excuses.

Hm. This might be the chance of a lifetime. While she’s occupied with them, I’ll erase my presence and make my escape.

“And where do you think *you’re* going, Master Abel?”

Hm. Well, I guess that’s Lilith for you. I can’t pull a fast one on her because she sees right through it.

“Line up next to them for your lecture,” she commanded me sweetly.

I had no words. *Good grief. This is what happens when you try new things.*

Afterwards, Lilith lectured the three of us right there in public. Thus, due to Lilith’s surprise interference, our quest to get dates ended in failure.



An hour before Abel and the others arrived at the eastern district, elsewhere there was a pair of girls tucked into a certain café. Despite it being located in the western district, which was visited often by students, it was hidden within an alleyway.

Eliza—one of the two girls, who had crimson hair—picked up her drink from the counter before returning to the table where she sat and waited for her friend. This café was Eliza’s favorite. The owner was a woman who used to work as a court chef, and upon retirement decided to open this café partly because she enjoyed this kind of work. But not many customers actually came in. That being said, it was known by certain girls as a hidden gem for high-quality, affordable sweets.

“Sorry for the wait, Eli!”

In the next moment, a young girl with black hair and Obsidian Eyes appeared before Eliza, holding a tray filled with colorful sweets. Her name was Yukari. She

was in the same class as Eliza and had also been part of the Hunt team during their first physical education class. After that experience, the two of them became joined at the hip.

“Now let’s begin our meeting!” Yukari said.

Eliza fell quiet. The meeting in question was about how to get Abel to look at Eliza as a love interest—a topic of frequent discussion. At a certain point, Yukari had installed herself as Eliza’s romantic adviser.

“Okay, Eli. Tell me about your progress from last week!” Yukari said, fixing her glasses. For some reason, Yukari was dressed up like a teacher.

“Well...there wasn’t much progress...” Eliza said embarrassedly.

“Explain!”

“It’s not my fault... Our club activities have been canceled so we can help prepare for the festival... I haven’t had many opportunities to talk to him...”

You could count on one hand how many times Eliza had spoken with Abel this past week. It was hard for girls at school to approach Abel in general; he was handsome, with a cool personality, had amazing grades, and on top of it all possessed an aura of mystery. He was someone who people would easily think was out of their league. Aside from a few boys, hardly anyone could talk to Abel casually.

“You’re being too soft on yourself! You’re softer than this chocolate brownie!” Yukari said, slamming the table.

Eliza couldn’t respond. After hanging out with Yukari long enough, Eliza realized that though her friend seemed very reserved, she was actually quite lively. When Yukari was with someone she was comfortable with, she turned into a chatterbox.

“I’ll be honest with you Eli. Your situation isn’t looking too good!” Yukari lifted up a notebook filled with hand-drawn pictures before continuing her explanation. “First, a great rival by the name of Noel appeared. Since then, Abel’s popularity with girls has only skyrocketed!”

“I know that much...”

Abel had Amber Eyes—special eyes—and, as a result, had drawn a lot of attention to himself at the beginning of school. But over the course of half a year, opinion towards him had quickly shifted. He was the only student in the academy who'd been born a commoner, and though there weren't many students who openly professed any romantic feelings for Abel, still...



Abel not only had a bottomless amount of talent for magecraft, but he had a mature air about him, vastly different from the other boys their age. All this only served to earn him many secret admirers from the girls at school.

Eliza let out a long sigh. “How am I supposed to get closer to Abel?”

At this rate, chances were high that another girl would pop up and steal him away before Eliza could do anything. Eliza knew she needed to stop that from happening, no matter what.

“You’re in luck. I’ve come prepared with a special strategy just for you, my lovestruck friend,” Yukari chuckled proudly. Her eyes flashed as she began to tell Eliza the plan she’d come up with. “What do you think about inviting Abel to the dance?!”

Eliza fell silent, her expression changing to one that basically screamed that she hadn’t even thought about such a thing.

“According to my research,” Yukari continued, “guys and girls who dance together at the school festival have a max sixty percent chance of getting together within the month.”

Eliza wasn’t sure where that percentage came from, but it was specific and convincing enough. Though she had some questions about why it was a *maximum* of sixty percent, it did make sense that there was a higher chance for guys and girls who got to know each other during the school festival to become a couple.

“But there are a lot of girls going after Abel, aren’t there?” Eliza asked.

As mentioned earlier, due to his fearsome growth in popularity, there were quite a few girls who’d become interested in Abel. In all likelihood he would’ve already been asked by a lot of girls, and had agreed to one of them.

“No need to worry about other girls! According to my investigation, he hasn’t gotten a partner for the dance yet!” Yukari said.

There was something lucky about Abel seeming so far out of everyone’s league: there hadn’t seemed to be a sign of anyone asking him to the dance yet.

“Seriously?!” Eliza said excitedly.

“Yep! According to my investigation, Abel is currently in the midst of searching for someone to take to the dance!” Yukari said happily.

Eliza’s face brightened after hearing Yukari’s advice. From coincidentally overhearing certain conversations in the classroom, Yukari knew that Abel had gone with Zyle and Ted to go hit on girls at the station. But she knew better than to tell Eliza that last part.

“Okay! I’m gonna do my best!” Eliza said as she ate her favorite chocolate brownie, eyes brimming with motivation.

This might have been a once in a lifetime chance to get ahead of all the other girls who were going after Abel.

You got this, Eli! Yukari thought, observing Eliza’s excitable joy. She hoped to see her friend’s romance work out, and truly wished for it to bear fruit.



In a dimly lit room some time after Abel saw Barth at the station, suspicious shadows were squirming around. The location of this room was in the AMO headquarters in the eastern district of the Royal Capital. As this room was itself inside an old multi-tenant building not far from the station, it made it the perfect place to avoid the public eye. At the moment, Ted’s older brother, Barth, was lying on a hospital bed, surrounded by a number of men in white lab coats.

“Aaagh! Raaagh!” Despite being administered a powerful anesthesia via IV drip, Barth still was screaming in agony.

His body was no longer human. His left hand had become mechanical, and his right eye had become artificial as well. Many of his body parts had been replaced by Link Regalias, making him half-human and half-Regalia.

“How’s the experiment going?” an old man with a sharp gaze asked, observing Barth.

The man’s name was Guilltina. The leader of AMO and its tens of thousands of members spread across the country, he was also a greater demon who once served the Demon King of Twilight as his close aide. He led AMO in order to fulfill his desire of returning demons to their former glory.

“Compatibility is over ninety-two percent. It should only be a matter of time until we’re finished.”

Guilltina smirked after hearing the report from his subordinate. *Heh. A little longer. Just a little more and our dream will be realized!*

Compared to humans, demons had much higher mana capacities and stronger bodies. But they held one fatal flaw: compared to humans, they were severely outnumbered. This flaw had been a factor in the demons’ defeat two hundred years ago; unlike humans, who could dispatch forces seemingly at will, demons were far more limited in number.

Humans had the numbers advantage, essentially making the difference between humans and demons a matter of quality versus quantity. More humans meant more chances for an extreme prodigy to rise among them. But that’s where mechanizing the body came in—to make *all* demons stronger than humans.

None of the humans working on this project know that they’re actually dancing in the palms of our hands, bringing us one step closer to the revival of demon rule.

The ideas of AMO—of anti-magecraft, of a world without wars—were nothing more than sweet lies to incentivize people to join the organization. Guilltina successfully used the latent negative emotions of humans to manipulate them into becoming his soldiers.

“Heh heh. How do you feel, Barth?”

“Sir Guilltina...” Barth winced in pain, responding in a daze to the master he respected so much.

To Guilltina, Barth was the most perfect pawn he could’ve hoped for. Fervent in his beliefs, Barth questioned nothing, and so it had been incredibly easy to brainwash him into being so devoted to the organization that he was willing to give his life for it without a second thought. That’s precisely why Guilltina chose Barth to participate in this extremely risky experiment.

“Rejoice, Barth. The exciting day we reveal our efforts has been decided. We’ll attack on the day we chose previously—the day of Arthlia Academy of

Magecraft's school festival."

Barth panted. "Magecraft... Academy..."

"Indeed. I'm sure you have some feelings towards that place, don't you?"

Barth fell silent. In the next moment, the image of Abel—his enemy from a young age—flashed through his head. He wasn't sure where he'd gone wrong in life, but thinking back, it had all started with Abel. The dark anger that suddenly bubbled up from inside him overflowed to consume his whole body.

"Abel... Abel!!!"

The chains that bound his four limbs creaked. He was demonstrating enough strength that he threatened to break his own restraints.

"Abnormal compatibility rate!" a researcher cried out.

"One hundred, one fifty, two hundred, three hundred! I-I can't believe it! His compatibility rate has exceeded four hundred percent!" another exclaimed.

The alarm started blaring. The meter measuring his compatibility rate was displaying abnormal numbers that'd never been seen before.

"Th-This isn't possible! The anesthesia should be enough to keep him immobilized!"

"Where is he getting this strength from?!"

The researchers were astounded. Now that Barth's body had been replaced by Link Regalias and his mana additionally boosted by various drugs, there was no human who could stop him. They'd taken precautions to ensure that even in the most unexpected situation during his augmentation surgery, Barth wouldn't be able to move—but now those precautions were failing.

"What are you doing?! Increase the anesthesia!" Guilltina commanded.

One of the subordinates pushed a button, administering the sedative through tubes inserted into Barth's body.

I can't believe a mere guinea pig made me fear for my life for even a second.

Despite being a demon, Guilltina had lived for over eight hundred years, and his age showed on his feeble body. The reason he had his eyes on Barth was to

use him as a test subject for when he replaced his own flesh with Link Regalias.

The least you can do is show me a little bit of fun. I look forward to the day that the power of the Link Regalias is shown to the world!

The day that the magic academy was attacked using the Link Regalias would also be a test run for the demons' return.

Under the dim light of the experimentation room, an evil smirk filled Guiltina's face.

Chapter 7: Preparing for the School Festival

It was now a day after Zyle, Ted, and I had been lectured by Lilith for trying to pick up girls at the station. When I arrived at the classroom before classes began, I found myself in the middle of a truly childish situation.

“We should do a haunted house! I’m not budging an inch!”

“Nobody cares about those anymore! We should do a classy café that sells pancakes!”

It seemed like the guys and the girls were in a shouting match.

Good grief. Ridiculous as this is, they’ve been bickering over it for about a week.

“Why don’t the boys just give it a rest?!”

“Why not the girls?!”

They were arguing over what the class could best contribute to the school festival. The other classes had already made a decision and had started working on their contributions, but our class was currently nowhere near that.

“How about we put it to a vote? Whoever’s idea gets more support wins!”

Can’t say I’m a fan of this. In these cases, stifling the minority opinion could lead to a divide which would only create bigger problems down the road. But on the other hand, there wasn’t much time left until the school festival.

In the end, without anybody else being able to come up with a better way of deciding what the class would do, the class put it up to a vote.

“No way...the votes are even? How’d that happen?!” one of the girls gasped with surprise.

But since all the girls wanted to do the pancake house while all the guys wanted to do the haunted house, and the ratio of guys to girls was almost one to one, this result was honestly inevitable. They weren’t going to get anywhere by going with what the majority decided when there wasn’t really a majority to

begin with.

“No. There’s still one guy we didn’t get a vote from,” Zyle said, walking towards me. “Whaddya say, Abel? You’re gonna put a vote down for the haunted house, right?”

I fell silent. *Hm. Looks like things have gotten pretty troublesome.*

If I support the haunted house, I’ll earn the ire of the girls, but the opposite will happen if I support the pancake house. So after racking my brain about what to do, I came up with a third option.

“Hm. Why not both?” I suggested.

My suggestion surprised every student in the room.

“Seriously, Abel? What do you mean by that?!” Zyle asked.

“Couldn’t we simply wear costumes while also doing a pancake house?” I elaborated.

The room fell into silence.

Yeah, I know. Strictly from a business point of view, my idea is completely irrational and absurd.

But this was for the school festival, which all in all was a one-day event. It might be better to make sure that everyone is satisfied and that we had an option that everyone could accept.

“Abel...” one of my classmates eventually said, “you’re a genius.”

“A fusion of a haunted house and a pancake house? We’ll call it the haunted pancake house!” another chimed in.

“Good idea! That sounds so awesome!”

Hm? What just happened? I pretty much said the first thing that came to mind, but it looks like everyone likes it.

“So is everyone good with goin’ with Abel’s idea?” Zyle asked.

It seemed like everyone was in favor.

I have to say, I’m a little surprised. I was sure that the people who didn’t like

me would've immediately let the critiques fly, but none of that happened at all.

"Okay then, now that we've got that settled, let's work hard on the prep!" Zyle said.

"Yeah!" the class yelled in response.

Hm. Well, regardless of how we got here, it's good to see the class united. With our contribution decided, we began to prepare our haunted pancake house.



After successfully deciding on our contribution, the class got to work getting everything ready. The girls put the costumes together while the guys constructed the pancake house's interior. It was fascinating to see how the skills of each group were, surprisingly, best suited to fulfill the initial idea of their counterpart.

"Could you take care of this please, Abel?" a girl asked, coming up to me holding a bag filled with rubber clumps that had holes in them.

Hm? What're these used for? "Sure," I said.

My job was to help carry stuff from the storehouse to the classroom. *This kind of simple work would be over in a second if I just used magedcraft, but that might be an impolite thing to do.* For this task, the process was more important than the results.

"Abel!"

A certain girl called out to me right before I reached our classroom, 1-A. It was Eliza. I wasn't sure why, but it seemed that she'd been waiting for this opportunity.

"Um, Abel? Have you already found a partner for the school festival's dance?" she asked, nervously twiddling her fingers.

"No, not yet."

Hm, now that I think about it, I forgot to find someone. Apparently the ball was the high point of the entire festival, and one that all the students were looking forward to. But since Lilith interfered with my attempt to secure a date,

I still didn't have anyone to go with.

"Th-Then, would you go with me?" she asked.

I see. So she reached out intending to invite me to the ball. Hm. I don't really have a reason to say no.

After all, it was much more convenient to go with someone I knew—in that case, Eliza was the perfect fit.

"Sure. In that case, I'll..." But just as I was about to accept Eliza's invitation, the situation changed.

"Abel..." a serene voice called out.

It was Noel. In a rare turn of events, she wasn't in the library. Her extra special status as a student allowed her to be exempt from all classes.

"Whoa, look over there. Isn't that..."

"It's the Ice Queen! What's she doing here?!"

Our classmates started fussing. *Hm. I forgot that people called her the Ice Queen.* Apparently the name came from her icy attitude towards others, but right now, there was not a single trace of that. In this moment she seemed incredibly friendly.

"Need something?" I asked.

"Yeah."

She surprised me with what she did next. I wasn't sure what she was thinking, but she took my hand and placed it close against her side.

"I'd like to go to the dance with you. I'm confident you'll have much more fun with me than with Eliza."

Seriously? Noel came up to me at this exact moment? Hm. Maybe it's her way of throwing down the gauntlet at Eliza. I'd always thought that Eliza and Noel were rivals, and were always competing against each other in one way or another.

"Hey! I asked him first!" Eliza protested.

"The order doesn't matter. Only Abel's feelings do," Noel retorted.

“A-Anyway, get away from him!”

“No.”

“T-Two can play at that game!” Eliza nervously declared.

Well, this has turned troublesome. In the next moment, Eliza did something that greatly confused me—she copied Noel and wrapped herself around me as well.

Good grief, these girls are shameless. I’d heard of people envying others for having a girl on either side of them, but I didn’t welcome this situation one bit. After all, this whole thing was taking place in the hallway, where lots of people were passing by. It was inevitable that the two of them making a scene like this would attract quite a bit of attention.

“Whoa! Master, you’re so popular!” Ted exclaimed.

“Dammit!” Zyle cursed. “Why is it always Abel?! What happened to our eternal bond as the Unpopular Guy Alliance?!”

They were probably in the middle of getting their costumes fitted; Ted appeared as a mummy while Zyle was dressed as a vampire.

As boisterous as usual. But also, I have no memory of ever joining this mysterious “Unpopular Guy Alliance.”

“Who are you gonna choose?!” said Eliza and Noel, at the same time, right in my ears.

I sighed. Though it was good that I’d found potential dance partners, the situation had turned into a real headache.

“I’ll sleep on it and let the two of you know,” I said.

With some thought, I ultimately decided it was best to evade the question altogether. If the situation had been different—if only one of them had asked me—I would’ve had no reason to refuse. However, the two of them asking me at the same time completely changed things; choosing right here, right now would only create hard feelings. Putting off the decision for the time being was the best way to keep things calm.

“Did something crazy just happen?!”

“Who’s Abel gonna choose?!”

Onlookers of my conundrum buzzed around me.

Good grief. All I want to do is have a peaceful school life. Why do things always end up this way? Ever since I’d started school here, it’d just been one thing after the other. I couldn’t catch a break.

Chapter 8: The Day of the School Festival

A few days passed. I'd been so busy with preparations for the festival that the day arrived before I knew it. After much trial and error, our class decided that half of the classroom would function as a pure haunted house, focused on scaring the people who came. The other half would be a haunted house-themed space that served novelty pancakes.

"Welcome! Get your haunted pancakes here!"

"We got the biggest thrills and the best pancakes!"

My classmates, dressed in ghostly costumes, called out to attract potential customers. Upon further consideration, what our class had come up with was quite the peculiar combination. Compared to the other classes, we stood out like a sore thumb.

"Look over there! Seems fun, doesn't it?" A passerby said.

"Let's check it out!" another replied.

The world was full of surprises, much more than I'd thought. Though our class had come up with a truly peculiar concept, it had, from the moment the festival began, the converse effect of attracting a large number of people.

"How're things going, Abel?"

About four hours into the festival, as I was manning the counter, a suspicious individual appeared in front of me.

"What do you want, Emerson?" I asked.

"Aw, don't be like that. No need to look so frightening. I'm here as a customer."

He's so transparent. It was impossible not to have my guard up around him. There were so many reasons for it too: he had developed Regalias for monitoring just so he could look into me, had Chronos mages attack me, created an unreasonably difficult question on his test, and many more

annoying things.

“Sorry, but we’re full. Why don’t you try going somewhere else,” I said.

“Heh heh, well, that’s okay. I just had something I wanted to tell you.”

Though I hadn’t said he could, Emerson took the seat next to me. *How cheeky*. Then again, for better or worse, the best mages *were*, as a whole, self-centered. He was just another who fit the mold.

“What is it?” I asked.

“Nothing big. Just that, if you want to see something *very* interesting at the festival today, make sure you stay until the end.”

“That’s pretty cryptic.”

“Heh heh. Look forward to it. I can’t give you any specifics now, but I will say that after all these years of research, I might have created a new possibility for Modern Magecraft.”

Hm. I have a bad feeling about this.

Going off of combat strength alone, Emerson himself wasn’t anyone I needed to be concerned about. Even in my current body, as immature as it was, I had no concerns of ever being defeated by him. But a mage’s strength wasn’t solely determined by how well they could fight. In terms of modern magecraft’s Regalia development, Emerson was currently leagues ahead of me.



“Well, I gave you fair warning, so I’ll take my leave here,” Emerson said, once he had said his piece and left me no choice but to listen to him. He started to leave, face brimming with satisfaction.

“Wait,” I said.

“Hm? What?”

“Looks like a seat opened up. You came all this way. Why don’t you try one of our pancakes?”

It didn’t feel right to let things end here and just let him walk off. Something about his words and actions also concerned me, so I decided to have him go through the activities the class prepared.

“Heh heh. Truth be told, I have a weakness for sweets, so I might be somewhat harsh as a critic. I guess I’ll take this chance to see how good you all are at this.” Emerson looked supremely confident, the lens of his glasses glinting as he spoke.

Now that my target’s taken the bait, it’s time to set up the rest.

I ducked inside the classroom to give the members on standby some direction.

“Ted, Zyle,” I said in a low voice, “don’t hold back on the next customer—give them *everything* you’ve got.”

“You got it!” the two of them responded.

Despite being put together by students, this haunted house wasn’t to be underestimated. *I’d* helped put this place together, after all, and thus, the quality was more than good enough.

“Oh? It seems that this place isn’t just a regular pancake house,” Emerson said, impressed, as he looked inside the classroom.

Emerson didn’t seem to know about our classroom’s unique hybrid haunted pancake house concept. I was surprised, especially considering how many people had been talking about it. But then again, Emerson didn’t care about anything in this school outside of me.

Now that I think about it, this might be a chance to give him a good scare.

“I’m excited to see how you’ll entertain me this time, Abel,” Emerson said, chuckling.

“Cut the talk and get moving already,” I said, roughly pushing Emerson into the classroom, hard enough to make him grunt.

Okay, now all that’s left to do is lock the door behind him so he can’t run away.

“Wh-What’s going on here?! It’s pitch-black!”

Even with the door shut, I could still hear Emerson from inside.

Welcome to the belly of the beast, Emerson. You’re surrounded—and the animals are starving.

In no way did the students here view Emerson favorably, not by any means. Now that he was firmly in their clutches, they could take this opportunity to get back at him and vent some of their frustrations.

I heard my classmates scream and screech: the haunted house had begun. By this time they’d gotten incredibly in sync. If they were trying their hardest, they could scare the pants off anyone, even adults.

“Whoa! Wh-What’s going on?! Who’s there? Show yourself!” Emerson desperately shouted as my classmates pounced. “Wh-What are you doing?! Stay away! I’m a member of Chronos!”

Hm. As expected, Emerson’s reactions are pretty great. At first, I’d thought that he’d been reacting like that to be nice to the students, but it seemed that every last bit of the way he was acting was genuine.

“Aaaaaaagh!”

As devoted to science as he was, it was possible that occult matters were still a sore spot for Emerson; his terrified screams continued to echo throughout the classroom.



After that, it was only a matter of time until the busy school festival finally

began to wind down.

“Good work everyone!”

“Phew... I’m so tired for so many reasons...”

“Hey, what do you mean? This is where the fun starts!”

As they closed down their class contributions, the students were getting ready for the next event—the main event, the one everyone had on their minds and discussed constantly: the ball. It was a yearly event that was the highlight of the fall season, one that both students and people from outside the school could attend. Students were making their way to changing rooms in order to switch into their formal wear and then head over to the great hall.

What was I doing in the meantime, one might ask? Well, I headed in the opposite direction: to the top of the school’s clock tower, in order to observe.

“Are you sure you’re okay not going along with the rest of your classmates?” Not too long after I reached the top of the clock tower, I heard a voice call out to me from behind.

“Yeah. Unfortunately, I have something I need to take care of.”

It was highly likely that during this event—the one event a year where the school freely opened its doors to nonstudents—the enemy would try to strike. They’d done their best to blend in with the students, but were obvious due to the suspicious movements I could see here and there.

“You’re here because you realized what was going on too, aren’t you Lilith?” I asked.

Lilith didn’t respond. Instead, she listened silently as I spoke.

Good grief. This has gotten really troublesome. Most likely, the “interesting thing” that Emerson said I’d see was about to happen. If he had prior knowledge of it, then there was a good chance that he was involved.

“There seem to be quite a few enemies,” Lilith said.

She was right. A quick estimate told me that there were about twenty or so adversaries. Things were hard enough for me trying to act while staying under the school’s radar, so having to deal with this many foes by myself would be

difficult.

“Please leave the protection of the students to me, Master Abel. I believe it’ll be best if you focus on taking down their boss,” Lilith said.

Fortunately, we’ve come to the same conclusion. If it wasn’t possible to beat all of them covertly, then targeting the most important enemy would be my best bet.

Oh. It looks like the ball’s begun.

I could hear instruments playing a refined melody from within the grand hall. *Hm. Now that I think about it, I’ve done something pretty mean to both Eliza and Noel.* They’d both invited me as their dance partner, but due to a series of troublesome problems, it didn’t seem like I’d be able to attend the ball at all. It was possible that at this very moment, they both were in the great hall, looking for me.

“Master Abel, would you like to dance?” Lilith asked.

Hm? Where did this come from? More than anyone, Lilith should’ve understood how dire the situation was and how there was certainly no time for dancing. *Just what is she thinking?*

“We can’t act until the enemy makes their move regardless, so why not enjoy our time while we can?”

I fell silent. *Hm. Lilith has a point.* This time, the enemy had assumed the form of regular humans and joined the crowd gathered in the great hall. Anticipating all of that before it happened and completely stopping their attack was difficult, even for me. We could only wait until the enemy made the first move—right after the hall fell into a panic in response.

“All right, then. Might as well relieve the boredom for a while.”

I took Lilith’s hand. Slowly, we began moving to the rhythm of the melody coming from the great hall.

Hm. Like this, I can’t help but tell how tall I’ve gotten. After reincarnating, I’d been right at Lilith’s chest, but now I was a little taller than her. Over the past few years, I’d shot up.

“Heh heh. It’s nice to do this every now and then, isn’t it? Just the two of us goofing off.”

I didn’t respond. *I can’t deny that Lilith’s right. Being up here, dancing with her without anyone else around is nice. It’s silent.* It was as if time had stood still.

But all fun things must come to an end, and it seemed that *our* moment of fun had been nothing but a brief reprieve.

“It seems we should start getting ready,” I said.

“Seems so. How unfortunate.”

Right after we exchanged those trifling words, there was a sudden explosion. *Good grief. How dangerous and crude. Don’t they know that people are trying to enjoy this elegant moment?* The refined melody playing in the great hall was replaced by the sound of fearful screams.

“Let’s split up.”

“Understood. Be careful, Master Abel.”

Every second counted in this situation. There was no time for unnecessary conversation. We both jumped from the clock tower in separate directions, acting as quickly as possible.

Chapter 9: Terrorist Attack

Thirty minutes prior to the explosion, Eliza was in her party dress walking around the grand hall, nervously surveying the area.

Where are you, Abel?

Abel should have been with their classmates helping with the class café just a moment ago, but he'd disappeared before she knew it. Ultimately, Abel never indicated who he'd take as his dance partner, leaving Eliza in a state of limbo. But that's also why Eliza had prepared for the day of the ball—to receive his answer.

Maybe he's up there? Eliza thought, looking up to the more deserted second floor.

The first floor was where the dancing was taking place, and where the majority of the people were living it up. The second floor was quieter, and for those who'd rather engage in conversation. Considering Abel's personality, it was more than likely that he'd be there.

But right as she began climbing the stairs, Eliza noticed something strange. Just a ways ahead of her was another girl, one who looked familiar, but something was off with her legs; they seemed weak, and like she was about to fall any second.

"Huh?"

Eliza's guess had been right on the money; the girl lost her balance and began to fall down the stairs.

"Watch out!" Upon sensing the danger, Eliza immediately activated Body Fortification Magecraft on her legs so she could swiftly move to catch the falling girl in the nick of time.

"Seriously, what are you doing?" After seeing the face of the girl she'd saved, Eliza couldn't help but ask this question.

“Too many people... Feel dizzy...” the girl answered, her face pale.

For the girl Eliza had saved was none other than her childhood friend, Noel.



Following their unexpected reunion, Eliza and Noel relocated to a table on the second floor, and were gazing upon the lively scene unfolding below.

“So, what brings you here?” With the chaos of the moment over, Eliza used the chance to ask Noel something that had been on her mind for a while.

Noel had come to the ball dressed in a gown, so she must have wanted to attend. But if she’d wanted to *dance*, she didn’t have a partner to do that with.

“Don’t ask... After all, I’m sure it’s the same reason you’re here,” Noel said.

Eliza fell silent, realizing that because Abel hadn’t decided whose dance partner he’d be, Noel had come to the ball to find him. Despite finding crowds uncomfortable, Noel had forced herself to come to the ball anyway to search for him, which had ultimately left her in a debilitated state.

Eliza sighed. “How am I supposed to get Abel to look my way...?” Eliza suddenly whined.

Apparently the second floor had become a gathering place for those who’d been unable to find partners to the ball. In contrast to the students dancing downstairs, a defeated atmosphere thickly permeated the second floor.

“To be honest, I’m pretty confident about my looks, but...” Eliza trailed off.

Eliza was prettier than other girls her age: she had a well-formed nose and a small, feminine face, and it went without saying that she left a strong impression on people. Though she had a little bit of a complex regarding the meatier parts of her, her body was, as a whole, good-looking and well-developed.

“There’s no point going after him with your looks. Abel’s looking past that. Way past that,” Noel said confidently, perhaps after being spurred on by Eliza’s whining.

Of course, there was nothing wrong with being beautiful, but to catch Abel’s heart solely on the basis of looks suggested pure hubris. Magecraft talent,

intelligence, physical fortitude, *and* looks—compared to other guys his age, Abel possessed these traits in spades.

“I’ve no doubt that Abel’s keeping some kind of big secret from us,” Noel said.

Eliza enthusiastically nodded her head, agreeing. She also had a vague sense that Abel was no ordinary student. Too many things about him just didn’t add up. Most likely before he’d enrolled in Arthlia Academy of Magecraft, or maybe even way before that, he’d lived a unique life that he couldn’t tell anyone else about.

“If he doesn’t trust you enough to know that secret, you won’t have even the slightest chance of being his girlfriend.”

What Noel said struck Eliza speechless. She was embarrassed by how shortsighted she’d been. It seemed that, unlike her, Noel had been thinking about the big picture.

Oh... So this entire time, all I’ve been doing is thinking about myself, Eliza thought.

The saying “love is blind” was apt; she’d been so enamored by Abel that, before she knew it, she’d only been thinking about her own feelings while entirely neglecting to think about things from Abel’s point of view.

“Okay! I’m gonna shape up!” Eliza said, Noel’s words inspiring her to rethink her approach. “Even if things don’t work out this year, then I’m sure there’ll be a chance next year, and the year after that!”

Abel barely opened up to anyone, so Eliza knew that having him see her as a prospective romantic partner would be no easy feat. Even so, they had five years at Arthlia Academy of Magecraft. There was plenty of time left to find her chance.

“I won’t lose,” Noel said, nodding.

Possibly being infected by Eliza’s newfound drive and their exciting conversation, Noel found herself healed of her previous fatigue.

“But seriously, where *is* Abel?”

Just as Eliza asked this, there was a large explosion inside the grand hall, loud

enough to burst one's eardrums. Everyone on the dance floor stood dazed, unable to process what'd just happened. The ensemble stopped playing, replacing the relaxing melodies that'd come from their instruments with terrified screams.

"Don't move a muscle! This school is now under AMO control!"

Taking advantage of the confusion, a group of men wearing white uniforms suddenly appeared.

AMO? Why are they here? Eliza thought.

Everyone at school knew AMO. Their ideology was over a century old, and in modern times they were known for having many radical branches in different areas.

"Hmph. You must not value your lives, showing up at the peerless Arthlia Academy of Magecraft and causing a commotion."

"Let's take them out!"

Several of the upper-level students rallied for a counterattack during the chaos. In contrast to the first-years whose study of magecraft was still in its early days, these students were the mages of the school whose skills were on par with adult mages.

"Burn! Fireball!"

"Get blown away! Wind Edge!"

The upper-level students shot off their magecraft to get rid of the intruders. Consistently the top of their class, they were the strongest students at the academy and were supremely confident in their abilities. In no way were they inferior to mages outside of school. It was for these reasons that they felt comfortable responding to a terrorist attack with a counterattack of their own.

"Ice Storm!"

But the students' courage, birthed by the confidence their abilities had given them, was destroyed in an instant when the terrorists responded with their own magecraft.

"Dammit! How is their magecraft so powerful?!" an upper-level student

cursed.

“Their magecraft was stronger than ours, even though we shot first?!” another exclaimed.

For mages, those who launched their magecraft second were at a disadvantage. After all, the stronger the magecraft, the longer it took to activate. By the time one responded to the first strike of magecraft with their own, they’d need to make sure to launch something even stronger than the initially cast magecraft.

What’s going on?! Their magecraft was perfect! Eliza thought. She couldn’t believe what she was seeing.

The upper-level students had launched flawless magecraft. It didn’t make sense to Eliza how they’d lost out in terms of technique. On pure strength alone, the upper-level students seemed much more powerful than the terrorists.

Are the terrorists using a different kind of Regalia?

That was certainly a possibility. The Regalias they were using were of a design Eliza had never seen before—the output of their magecraft far exceeded what their small size suggested they were capable of. Was it possible that AMO had overcome the gap in strength with the overwhelming performance of their Regalias? It was the only idea that made sense.

“Time to give these cocky kids their just deserts!” an AMO terrorist jeered.

“Eek!”

In a complete reversal, the moment their magecraft was repelled, the once courageous upper-level students recoiled in fear.

“P-Please! No!” one of the students pleaded.

“You get what you deserve for baring your fangs at us!” a terrorist shot back.

The upper-level students completely lost any speck of courage after seeing the enemy’s magecraft right in front of their face. And there was no one else in the crowd who could help them. But once the terrorists drew their weapons towards the students, the atmosphere inside the hall completely changed.

Suddenly, all the windows shattered as a black mist infiltrated the building. It was almost like a huge, black storm cloud had blown inside, and in the blink of an eye, it'd filled the entire hall.

"Wh-What is this?!"

"This wasn't a part of the plan!"

The black mist began moving, confusing the terrorists and obscuring their vision.

What's going on? Is it saving us?! Eliza thought.

The black mist that'd come out of nowhere seemingly had a mind of its own, and was assisting the students in their escape. Though Eliza was curious about the source of the mist, the current priority was to get away as quickly as possible.

"Noel, you know what to do, right?" Eliza asked.

"Yeah. Leave it to me."

Aware of how the tide had shifted, the two of them yelled before quickly springing into action.

"Everyone! Get away now!" Noel shouted.

"This is the way out! Don't panic!" Eliza added.

With the black mist currently going after the terrorists, now was everyone else's best chance to escape. Eliza and Noel had calmly assessed the situation and shared instructions to everyone on the first floor.

"I don't know what's goin' on, but this is our chance to get out of here!"

"Let's listen to whoever's saying that!"

Hearing Noel and Eliza's words, the students did their best to get out of the dire situation they'd found themselves in. Amid all the screaming, the students inside the hall exited the venue in a swarm.



Ten minutes prior to the explosion, on the top floor of Arthlia Academy of Magecraft—a location normal students couldn't enter—there was a

conspicuous and luxurious door leading to the headmaster's office. This entire area was protected by a barrier that only a handful of politicians or the professors in charge of each grade year could pass through.

"It seems like this year's ball has begun without any problems as well," an old man observed from his large chair, listening to the music coming from the great hall.

His name was Mikhael. He was the current headmaster, but when he was younger, he'd made a name for himself as the best mage in the country. But that wasn't all—he was also a descendant of one of the four heroes, and as such, he was not only an icon of the academy, but had great domestic influence as well.

"Hm? This presence..."

As he relaxed in his office, Mikhael suddenly sensed something unpleasant. Being a first-class mage, he'd noticed the strange air that'd fallen on the area, and it was possible that an uninvited guest had made their way onto this floor. But as soon as he understood the situation he was in, he heard a sudden voice from behind him that sent chills down his spine.

"Pardon the intrusion."

Mikhael was in disbelief. He couldn't understand how he hadn't noticed the infiltrator until now. All he could do was sit there in a daze as he watched events unfold.

The strangest part of all this was that the only way into the headmaster's office was through a single door, and this door had shown no signs of having been opened. Mikhael hadn't experienced anything like this in his seventy years of life. He couldn't believe that he hadn't detected an infiltrator's presence until they had decided to reveal themselves.

"Who are you...?" he asked.

The even more confusing aspect of this was how the infiltrator was much older than Mikhael; he was using a cane, and was hunched over. At first glance, it seemed the man had trouble moving freely.

"My name is Guilltina—formerly known as the right arm of the Demon King of

Twilight!”

Hearing mention of the Demon King made Mikhael gasp. He grew even more distraught. “Wh-Why is a demon in our academy?”

“As one who carries the blood of heroes, you should know! This is for the noble desire of all demons!”

Guilltina had targeted Mikhael and the academy because he’d found out that there were other descendants of the four heroes residing there. Leaving them be would prove a threat to the future prosperity of demons, so he decided to cut that possibility off by the root.

“Shatter!” Guilltina shouted, beginning to construct his magecraft.

Mikhael didn’t recognize the magecraft at all but could sense that it was dangerous, so he immediately used a Defensive Magecraft.

“Wind Shield!”

As the descendant of Roy, the Hero of Wind, Mikhael regarded himself as the most proficient mage with Verdant Eye magecraft in the country. It didn’t matter if his opponent was a human or a demon. If he activated his magecraft with everything he had, there was nobody that could match him—or at least, that’s what he believed.

“Wha—?!” Mikhael’s eyes widened at the surprising sight before him.

Though he’d been so confident that nothing would get through his Wind Shield, it had completely shattered before his eyes. After perfectly using it against other mages for many years, he’d prided himself on this skill.

Mikhael quickly came to the realization that if defensive magecraft didn’t work, he was left with only one option—fleeing. He immediately activated Wind Magecraft at his feet and started towards the door. Maximizing movement speed was the bread and butter for those proficient with Wind Magecraft. In general, Wind Magecraft had less killing potential than Fire and Water Magecraft, so they relied on speed to maintain a combative edge. Verdant Eye mages were more often than not very confident about their speed.

This is the last job for my old body. I need to alert everyone to this emergency,

Mikhael thought.

Demons infiltrating the academy was already an unprecedented and deadly occurrence, but another dangerous thing to consider was the fact that these specific demons had connections to the Demon King of Twilight. Mikhael thus concentrated his full speed to move to the door.

“Not so fast.”

Before Mikhael knew it, his escape path had been cut off.

The difference between demons and humans is this large?!

Now that his reliable gambit had been quashed, Mikhael was thrown into further despair. While it was true that Mikhael was no longer in his prime, and that in his old age of seventy, he'd already essentially reached the limit in terms of mana and fatigue, the same should've applied to his opponent. Guilltina looked like he was over ninety, meaning that he should've been in even worse shape than Mikhael.

Weak... He's so weak! I can't believe my plot to weaken humanity has worked so well! Guilltina thought with glee, smirking at his opponent.

Though it'd been a plan that'd taken over a hundred years, it seemed that it'd worked. One of the reasons Guilltina had led AMO was to weaken humanity in general by pitting humans against each other and fanning the flames of discourse between them. It was clear that the strength of modern day mages was a shadow of what it used to be. By burning all the Olden Magecraft tomes, he'd ensured later descendants of mages had no knowledge or wisdom from the past. This had also been a directive from Guilltina.

“Stop right there!” Guilltina shouted.

“Urgh!”

Mikhael took a heavy blow from Guilltina and tumbled across the floor. He'd immediately tried to get back up in order to quickly protect his students, but he just wasn't as young as he used to be, and that made fighting demons extremely difficult. Mikhael let out a pained gasp as he fell to the ground, simply too feeble to act.

Hmph. How pathetic. Humans have become almost too weak.

Guilltina began to think that maybe he'd overestimated humans up until now. There was no sign that Mikhael was getting back up. He'd been incredibly frail, and overall, an opponent with no bite.

And so, the battle between the one who'd inherited the will of the Demon King and the one who inherited the blood of a hero had ended.

"Now then. There are just two more descendants remaining..."

Guilltina had already confirmed that the descendants of the Hero of Fire, Maria, and the Hero of Water, Daytona, were at the academy. But the two descendants essentially posed no threat to Guilltina. They were mere students, inexperienced as mages. His battle with them would be even more one-sided than the one he'd just had with Mikhael.

As soon as he thought this, Guilltina noticed something strange—a sudden presence. It surprised him so much that he stood in place, baffled. After all, now in the room was a young boy with Amber Eyes.

"Pardon the intrusion," the boy said.

"Who is this brat?!" Guilltina exclaimed.

Guilltina had no idea how he'd entered the room. The single door into the headmaster's room showed no signs of having been opened.

There's no way that a lowly human would get the jump on me! Guilltina thought.

He hadn't noticed the boy's presence until he'd revealed himself. That being said, he recognized that it wasn't impossible for the boy to have appeared without him noticing. The boy could've used the same method that Guilltina had used to enter the room in the first place. All the boy would have had to do would be to erase his presence, leisurely enter the room, and then shut the door behind him without anyone noticing.

But there was something that didn't make sense to Guilltina—he still should've been able to notice the boy. There was only one reason he wouldn't have been able to: the difference in strength between him and this boy was

astronomical.

Chapter 10: Abel versus Mecha Barth

After parting from Lilith, I jumped from the clock tower and went to the top floor of the academy—a place that I hadn't had many opportunities to visit. I could sense the presence of an evil demon—probably the mastermind behind this attack—as I closed in on my destination. It seemed that they'd used the confusion in the great hall to sneak into the headmaster's office.

Hm. This mana signature feels nostalgic. Specifically, it's identical to Roy, the Hero of Wind. Now that I thought about it, the headmaster was actually Roy's descendant.

It seemed that a battle had broken out before I'd arrived. I used the fight as an opportunity to enter the room undetected and see what was going on for myself.

"Who is this brat?!" the demon in the room spat the moment he noticed me.

He's really quite up there in his years. This might be the first time I've seen a demon this old. Typically, due to their love of fighting, demons lost their lives in incessant battles with not only humans, but with other demons as well, meaning they seldom lived long enough to die of old age.

Hm. When I was with Chaos Raid, my mentor Grim was the one who taught me all there is to know about demons. He emphasized one thing in particular: old demons are survivors, and not to be underestimated. Those words were one of the reasons why I'd decided it'd be best to stay on guard when facing my current opponent.

"Shatter!" the demon yelled out as he attacked, using his staff to fire a magecraft bullet.

He's using a Regalia? Is it to make up for his weakened magecraft strength? I've never fought against a demon who used Regalia before.

"Wha—?!"

I dodged his bullet and quickly closed in on him to land a blow.

“Urk! Who is this brat?!” he grunted, using his staff to block my attack.

Hm. He doesn't seem to be an opponent I need to be worried about.

Compared to the demons I'd fought until now, he was slightly better than average but much weaker than the stronger ones. Though he continued to block my flurry of attacks with his staff, his response time gradually dragged as I incrementally increased my speed. Knowing this, I put all my strength behind a punch that he had no choice but to protect himself from with everything he had.

“No!” Guiltina cried out.

I was aiming for the Regalia, as he'd been holding it as one would a precious item. The most certain way to finish off an enemy was by taking away their means of attack.

“Gah!”

You're mine.

I got up close and personal, gripping his throat. He had the same weakness as mages who relied on Regalias: without them, their combat ability was greatly diminished. Of course, now that I had him, I wasn't going to simply kill him. There was still time to figure out why he had attacked the academy, and have him come clean about all his plans. I could decide how to punish him after I got everything I needed from him.

“Heh heh... Ha ha ha!” But despite the seemingly hopeless situation he was in, the man kept his carefree expression.

“Die!”

Even I was surprised by what he did next. In the next moment he took off his glove, revealing a prosthetic hand.

Hm. It seems that the entire arm is a Regalia. I was careless.

Essentially, the staff was a decoy meant to misdirect his enemies. This kind of strategy took the assumption that Regalia users were powerless without their Regalias and used it to its full advantage. By making the opponent think you disarmed them, you could surprise them with a different Regalia and gain the

upper hand.

“Shatter!” he yelled as he once again composed his magecraft.

He’s fast. If he’d been using regular Regalia, there was no chance he could’ve produced magecraft with that speed and this strength. I’d been caught off guard, and been summarily put on the back foot.

I don’t have a choice. I wanted to drag more information out of him, but now there’s a possibility that he’s hiding more tricks up his sleeve. I need to settle this fast.

At the very last second I dodged his attack and made my move: I cut a straight line across his neck and beheaded him, his head flying as a showy spray of blood splashed across the room.

“Wha—?!” Shock and surprise flooded his face as he realized he’d lost. “Th- This can’t be! How could I have lost to a human brat!”

Hm. He can still talk even after taking this much damage? He must’ve still had a decent amount of fight left in him, marking him as one of the tougher demons.

“Those glowing gold eyes of yours... You... You’re the legendary golden-eyed black cat, aren’t you?!”

Hm. Seems like he knows me from two hundred years ago. The nickname was one that I’d picked up back then. A special facet of Amber Eyes was how they’d glow brightly after casting powerful magecraft.

I’d been *really* careless; not even a second after I used the full power of my magecraft and my identity had already been figured out.

“Oh... It all makes sense now! You were the one who killed Navir of the Moonlight too, weren’t you?!”

Hm, well there’s a nostalgic name. I kinda remember fighting him. He was an AMO executive, and also the one who’d turned Ted’s brother Barth into a half-demon and sicced him on me.

“Do you remember me?! This is the face of the Demon General Guilltina! This scar is one that you inflicted on me two hundred years ago!”

Hm. He's volunteering this information without me even asking. How generous. But hearing his name brought me back to the past, and I could remember that he'd served as the right hand of the Demon King of Twilight. The last time we'd met, he'd already been considered an elder demon, but it seemed that two hundred years later, he'd gotten even older.

"I *will* get my revenge on you! You're dead! I'm going to kill you!"

Hm. Big words from a talking head. I couldn't really feel intimidated given the circumstances, but that's when something unexpected happened. In the far distance, I could sense a wicked mana signature from the eastern sky.

"Do it, Barth!" Guilltina yelled.

Right as he did, the window shattered, and through it entered a rather suspicious individual.

"Yes, my master!"

I was taken aback by the person who had just entered. It was the first time in a while that I felt so surprised.

Well, well. I was wondering who barged in here, but it's the older of the spoiled rich brats: Barth. It'd been a few days since I'd last seen him, but in that time he'd turned into something that looked even less human.

His left hand and right eye were both prosthetics. Even more surprising, however, were the mechanical wings on his back that seemingly granted him precise control of his flight. If one had called him "Fallen Barth" when he'd been turned into a half-demon, he'd now become "Mecha Barth." For better or worse, Barth always exceeded my expectations regarding his next move.

"Ha ha ha! Die! Sonic Boom!" Barth yelled, shooting out a blade of wind from his mechanized left hand.

Hm. Being able to shoot out magecraft of this strength with practically no incantation isn't normal. The same applied to the Regalia that Guilltina had used when we'd fought. Normal Regalias weren't able to produce such fast and powerful magecraft.

Seriously. How troublesome. His spell screeched through the air as it

approached me. I swiftly dodged it, and that resulted in a nearby wall splitting in half, the connected ceiling crumbling and revealing the night sky.



“Wind Bullet!” Barth screamed, not letting up his attack.

Most likely, his initial attack had been to open up the room to the outside. His attack now was much more powerful than his first one. Given how thick the bullets were, dodging would have been difficult.

“Wind Shield!” I said.

I chose Wind Shield thinking that I’d defend myself using the same magecraft element that he invoked in order to cancel out his attack. With that in mind, I’d constructed a protective shield made of wind, but I hadn’t been prepared for what happened next: right as I activated my magecraft, it misfired—like there’d been an error in its composition.

Me? Make a mistake like that? There shouldn’t have been a chance. I’d constructed this magecraft hundreds of thousands of times. There was no way I, of all people, would fail in such elementary magecraft. In that case, there was only one possibility I could think of—Barth had done something.

“Ha ha ha! Die, Inferior Eyes!”

Powerful wind bullets rained down on me without respite. It took everything I had to simply not die, and even then I couldn’t avoid all of them.

The taste of blood filled my mouth. *Good grief. This truly might be the first time in two hundred years that a mage has managed to injure me this badly.*

“Ha ha ha! I did it! I did it! I hit you with my magecraft!”

After succeeding in landing a few hits on me, Barth rejoiced, floating in the air.

Hm. I’m not sure what’s going on, but I can save figuring this situation out for later.

The most important thing right now was to regain my composure. In a battle between mages, the first mage to take damage was most often the one who lost. It was vital for a mage to keep their calm when composing magecraft, otherwise the power and precision of their spells would suffer greatly.

I activated my magecraft after taking cover underneath some rubble. “Heal,” I said.

I never thought the day would come where I'm put on defense. An average mage in my position would be in the deepest pits of despair. But as for me, I could easily recover from the damage I'd taken. After all, I'd undergone special training to make sure these kinds of situations wouldn't affect my healing capabilities.

"You can try healing if you wanna, but it's not gonna work," Barth said.

Huh? Again?!

The magecraft I'd perfectly constructed had misfired. It'd be one thing if this had only happened once, but there was no way that I'd fail twice. The most likely suspect in this instance was Barth's suspicious artificial right eye. Every time it glinted, my magecraft was nullified.

"Heh heh. Seems like you've realized what's going on. Master gave me a special Regalia—Magecraft Canceler—to beat you!" Barth yelled.

I've never heard of that before, but I think I have an idea as to how it works. The Regalia most likely analyzed the opponent's magecraft and then sent out the opposite magecraft composition to cancel it out in an instant—Negation Magecraft. If his Magecraft Canceller, or whatever it was called, was a Regalia that could activate Negation Magecraft, then it'd make sense how all my spells weren't working.

"Ha ha ha! You're so, so slow, Inferior Eyes!"

Barth continued his aerial attack, showering me with Wind Magecraft in all directions. It was a difficult situation, but I was still able to dodge his attacks. I activated Body Fortification to strengthen my legs and increase my agility.

"Ha ha ha! That's not gonna work! Analysis complete! Magecraft Canceller!"

As soon as Barth yelled that out, it felt like the strength had been sucked out of me.

Well, then. This is truly an annoyance.

His eye could even negate Body Fortification. With my Physical Magecraft, Recovery Magecraft, and my Body Fortification Magecraft essentially sealed away by his eye, I wasn't left with many options.

“Ka ha ha! Bask in the power of the Link Regalia, black cat!” Guilltina said, watching our battle with a look of total satisfaction.

Link Regalia, huh? First time I’m hearing of this. Then I remembered Emerson’s words: *“I can’t give you any specifics now, but I will say that after all these years of research, I might have created a new possibility for Modern Magecraft.”*

Hm. Most likely Link Regalias are the completed version of what Emerson was working on. The difficulty in fighting Barth wasn’t just his right eye, but his left arm, which could shoot out magecraft with a force that put regular Regalia to shame. It was necessary for me to understand his combat tactics as soon as possible, otherwise I’d never get the upper hand.

“It’s all your fault! If it wasn’t for you, my life would’ve been perfect!” Barth screamed.

Barth was still an inexperienced fighter, so as long as I could figure out the timing of his attacks, I could deal with him, even if I couldn’t use Body Fortification. But I’d still be taking a lot of damage. As much as I wanted to say Barth and I were evenly matched, I knew that was wishful thinking—right now I was objectively at a disadvantage.

“Ha ha! I can win! I’m gonna beat you!”

Barth must’ve been getting impatient due to how long the battle had been going on for; as soon as he screamed his declaration, he chose to attack with his fists. Most likely as an effect of his new body, Barth’s movements were as fast as a first-rate mage from two hundred years ago.

“It ends now, Inferior Eyes!” Barth shrieked, assured of his victory, swinging his fist towards me with his full strength.

Good grief. I’m really cutting it close.

It seemed that at the very last second, the goddess of victory smiled on me.

“Wha—?!”

In the nick of time, I managed to activate my Body Fortification. Seeing me catch the fist that he’d thrown with all his strength, Barth’s face flooded with

surprise.

“H-How can you use magecraft?!” he screeched.

From Barth’s perspective, it must not have made any sense; up until this moment he’d been able to seal my magecraft and put us on an even playing field. At some point Barth must’ve realized that even with his mechanized body, he would’ve been at a disadvantage if we fought evenly.

“Urgh!” Barth, recognizing the strangeness of the situation, jumped back and switched to firing magecraft at me. But the moment he tried to do that he noticed something stranger still.

“Huh?! My magecraft won’t activate!” he exclaimed, despairing.

Looks like my plan for revenge was a perfect success.

It’s your turn, Barth. Experience the pain of having your magecraft taken from you.

“Th-This can’t be! My body is perfection! There’s nobody I can’t beat!”

Hm. Victory falling out of reach must come as a huge shock to him. Now in a difficult dilemma, it seemed that Barth had chosen to run away from reality.

“Grit your teeth, Barth,” I commanded.

Though his body had been fortified by machines, in every other regard Barth was a complete novice. One of my attacks was more than enough to take him out. If I’d been able to use magecraft normally this entire time, Barth would have never had a leg up on me.

“Gaaaah!” Barth shrieked, tumbling across the floor from the force of my fist.

Barth...I have to commend you, even though you’re my enemy. You challenged me once when we were children, a second time when you sold your soul to demons, and now a third time, after augmenting your body with machines. Even two hundred years ago, there wasn’t a single person who challenged me three whole times. Your obstinacy and obsessiveness are impressive. They’re your strengths.

“Th-This can’t be... This isn’t possible!” Guiltina wailed, after observing Barth’s defeat.

Hm. It seems like there's somebody else here who can't accept when they've lost. The Regalia that Barth had used had an unbelievably high output, one that I hadn't believed possible based off of the Regalias I'd seen up until now. It could use a wide variety of magecraft, including Negation Magecraft, and of which all could be used in quick succession.

The first clue as to how this was possible was in the name: "Link Regalia." These Regalias were connected remotely to other Regalias. If they had an extremely large, super Regalia somewhere that other Regalias could borrow from, it all made sense. As long as I understood how it all worked, it was easy to come up with a counterstrategy.

With a counterstrategy in place, I then needed to analyze my opponent's magecraft and interfere with the link to the other Regalias. After that my opponent was exposed and vulnerable.

To be honest, this was something that only I could really pull off. If an average mage attempted to do the same, they'd have no chance to counterattack and would get run over.

"Urk! Grr! Wait! You'll regret it if you kill me!" Guiltina pleaded.

What a quick change of tune. Gone was the gutsy attitude, and in its place was someone begging for their life.

He must have realized the disadvantage he's at. Oh. I finally remember who he is. He was the first to flee as soon as things turned sour for the Demon King's army. Though he made it seem as if he was loyal to the Demon King, he was nothing more than a coward who prioritized himself above all else.

"Oh, I know! Let me go, and I'll give you the blueprints for the Link Regalias! How's that? It's a must-have item for magecraft researchers!"

Hm. Can't say I'm not interested. Though only briefly, it's true that the Link Regalias actually pushed me into a corner. This technology might even revolutionize the world.

A basic system that used Link Regalias had lots of applications, even outside of combat. But still, I had a different way to access them. There was no reason to try and rely on untrustworthy demons.

“Any last words?” I asked.

“W-Wait! Let’s talk!” Guilltina replied. “Our species may be different, but I’m sure that humans and demons can come to understand one another.”

“Time’s up.”

Conversation was pointless. I gripped his head and activated Crimson Eye magecraft.

“Eek! It burns! Stop! What do you want?! Money? Women?! I’ll give you everything you want! Just let me liiiiiive!”

Noisy to the very end.

Though he might’ve been a demon, it wasn’t as if all demons were cut from the same cloth. There were demons like Lilith—who wanted to try coexisting with humans—just as there were demons like Navir, who just sharpened their claws in their desire to kill all of humanity. Guilltina was no doubt the latter. Every time AMO did something fishy, it was always demons like Guilltina pulling the strings.

“Graaaaaaaaah!” Guilltina screamed, his death throes echoing across the academy.

Even for demons with high vitality, burning their head to a crisp would surely kill them. All that was left after I was done was ash and bone.

Hm. Seems like I’ve smoked out the root of this evil.

And just like that, the sudden incident at the school was more or less brought to a close.





While it was great that I successfully defeated my enemy, there was one problem I was worried about, and it concerned Barth.

What should I do with him?

Even if I manipulated his memories with magecraft, it wouldn't change the fact that he'd be left with a partially mechanical body. If I didn't put him back to normal, it'd be hard for him to return to his daily life.

"Masterrr! What happened?!"

It just so happened that the perfect person had appeared at the perfect time. Most likely, he'd arrived out of concern after hearing Barth's voice—Ted, Barth's little brother, had showed up quickly after the battle ended, out of breath from his rush to get here.

Hm. How do I even begin explaining this situation? There was a partially wrecked room containing a knocked out headmaster, the headless corpse of a demon, and an unconscious mecha, who was for now, Barth.

Judging by his gaping open mouth, it seemed that Ted was at a loss for words, not knowing what to begin commenting on.

"B-Barth! My brother's become a robooooooot!"

Hm. It seems that's the thing in the room that he's bothered by the most. Rationally, Barth's mechanically augmented body must've been a surreal sight.

"Hey, Ted. I need your help to turn Barth back to normal. Will you help?"

Restoring missing flesh was much more complex than regular healing. In the realm of magecraft, creating nothing from something was impossible. We'd need to pay an equivalent price if we wanted Barth's body to recover.

"O-Of course! I'll do anything I can to help!" Ted said.

Good. He's in. Now he can't complain, no matter what I do. After getting Ted's permission, I promptly used Wind Magecraft.

"Wind Edge," I said, targeting Ted's excruciatingly fluffy head of hair.

I didn't need any special ingredients to make a human body. After all, the

human body was composed of sixty percent water, twenty percent protein, fifteen percent lipids, and other small components. These were all normal, household things that could be found anywhere. But the important thing was the genetic information inside DNA. If I haphazardly made an arm, there was a chance that Barth's body would reject it.

"Aaaaaagh!" As his hair—his pride and joy—was cut from him, Ted released a cry I'd never heard.

Sorry, Ted. This is all for the sake of returning Barth to normal. Then I used Obsidian Eye magecraft to create Barth's new body.

"Okay, I'm done."

In terms of components, I'd used the soil from a nearby flowerpot, water from a water tank, and Guilltina's corpse. The final, secret ingredient, was Ted's hair.

"That should do it," I said after removing the mechanical parts from Barth's body and replacing them with the new ones I'd made.

All I had to do now was use Healing Magecraft to reattach everything and Barth would be back to how he looked before. Since I had thrown his new body together with whatever I could find lying around, I was a little concerned for the result. But I'd done all this out of the goodness of my heart, so he had no right to complain. If there happened to be any problems, I'd simply fix them then and there.

"M-My hair! My fashion!" Ted wailed.

Seeing how torn up he was about his hair, I decided to hold in what I wanted to say to him. But at the cost of Ted reverting to his old haircut, Barth had been able to regain his body. It was honestly a win-win.



An hour after Abel's battle with Barth...

Over two thousand kilometers away from Midgard, where Abel and the others lived, there was an island where, up until recently, demons ruled over humans. It was one of the few areas in the world that way. Over the course of

several hundreds of years, demons had governed this area and had been engaged in a constant battle with the original residents—the humans. It was known as one of the few places in modern times where the number of powerful demons grew.

“Master Cain, I have a report!”

“I know what you’re going to say, Ayane.”

Currently, there was someone who ruled this island and called himself the “Demon King.” Surprisingly, he wasn’t a demon, but a human by the name of Cain. He was the very same person who’d been a part of the Great Four that had defeated the Demon King of Twilight two hundred years ago.

Cain was an expert on Ashen Eye magecraft. In regards to strictly Ashen Eye magecraft, he was superior to even Abel. After Amber Eyes, Ashen Eyes were considered the second strongest out of the five eye types due to their wide range of abilities, including healing, fortification, and body modification.

“It seems that Mr. Abel’s beaten Guilltina,” Cain said.

“Right. My shikigamis recorded the battle. Would you like to watch?” Ayane asked.

“That’s all right. There’s no need. I implanted one of my eyes into him.”

A master of Ashen Eye magecraft like Cain could even implant his eyes into others without them noticing. The number of eyes he’d implanted into others had already reached the thousands. He had them in politicians, royal families, demons, and researchers—all the important people in the world were under Cain’s surveillance. There was no information in the world that he wasn’t privy to.

“I was thinking about sitting back a little more before going, but I can’t wait any longer.” A faint smile crept across Cain’s face, a jovial intonation in his voice. “Next, I think I’ll go greet him personally.”

It would be their first reunion in two hundred years. It was a big difference from his usual unemotional self. In the dim darkness, the white-haired man wore an innocent smile, like a little boy.



Epilogue: Future Path

Let's talk about what happened afterwards. Two weeks after the sudden terrorist attack on the school, everything seemed to have gone back to normal.

Corruption! Demon Ties at the Center of AMO!

When coincidentally passing by a store, I saw a newspaper with that headline. Recently, news about AMO had been a very hot topic. After all the years of growing its influence, the large organization was rocked by scandal, which made the world eat up all the drama in an instant.

The questions on everyone's mind had to do with when had the organization been infiltrated by demons, and why had they done so. The media had created multiple ridiculous conspiracy theories. But now that the darkness that'd been buried for so many years had come to light, it was possible that AMO's days were numbered.



After the terrorist attack, the school had shut down for a bit, but it was now opening its doors again. The atmosphere reset itself as we neared the end of fall. The heat of summer was long since forgotten, and everyone was getting ready for the cold of winter.

I heard the sound of wood crackling as it burned: it seemed someone had lit a small fire. I passed through the school gates, decorated by a dragon symbol, and walked onto the campus. But I wasn't heading to a classroom—I was going to meet a certain person.

"Hey there, Abel. I thought it was about time you showed up."

My destination today was Emerson's research room underneath the school. *This is strange. The last time I came here, he had a lot of barriers erected, but the lack of any kind of security now gives me the creeps.*

“I lost this one—completely,” Emerson said, noticing my eyes and acting like he’d given up. He plopped down onto the couch. “I know what you’re here for. My life, right?”

Hm? What? I wasn’t even remotely planning on that.

“It’s okay. Do it,” Emerson continued. “After all, that’s what I’ve been trying to do to you.”

It seemed that Emerson was operating under a very critical misunderstanding. I couldn’t deny that this man had put me through a plethora of annoying things—his greatest hits included surveilling me with remote controlled Regalias, stalking me, and then sending Chronos assassins after me. Just imagining all of this made me realize how much I’d had to endure because of him.

“Calm down. I’m not here to kill you. I have some questions about the Link Regalia system,” I said.

After all, I was sincerely interested in it. This system resolved some of the inherent flaws in contemporary Regalia technology. If my prediction was right, in the not so distant future, the Regalias currently in circulation would become obsolete and be replaced by the Link Regalias.

“Heh heh. Link Regalias are magnificent! They really are!” Emerson exclaimed, his eyes sparkling as he began breathing heavily. It seemed that some kind of switch inside of him had been flipped.

“The Link Regalias are special in that they link up to the Mother, which is a huge magecraft compendium. I call this the Ground System. All magecraft are connected seamlessly through the Mother. That’s where the name comes from, because it essentially gives birth to the magecraft. It’s possible with the Mother to output magecraft at levels so high that current Regalias can only dream of producing! It’s amazing, isn’t it? By getting feedback from the user, and improving the Mother, all the connected Regalias can be updated as well. It’s extremely efficient. If this system becomes widespread, the current monetization system will change from a pay-per-use method to a subscription system. In other words, sales will be more stable. From the standpoint of Regalia manufacturers, it’s an incredibly efficient method. The user, developers, and companies—all of them will be winning off of this. I predict that one day

the Link Regalias will be the standard.”

Hm. It seems that he’s gone off on a long, very quickly spoken, explanatory rant. But I think I more or less understand Link Regalias now.

There was a limit to the number of magecraft you could put into traditional Regalia. Usually you could only activate simple, weak spells. At the same time, the types of spells you could actually put in a Regalia were so limited, I could count them on one hand.

For better or worse, my impression of Regalias was that they could only activate weak magecraft. But Link Regalias were remotely connected to a large, high capacity Regalia. This helped them overcome the biggest flaw of Regalias—their power output.

By using this method, Modern Magecraft could obtain all sorts of applications. It was true that Olden Magecraft had its own advantages, but that didn’t diminish the amazing feats of Modern Magecraft. It was possible that in the future, Olden Magecraft wouldn’t be needed at all. It felt a little sad, but nothing was forever.

“Oh, sorry,” Emerson said. “I rambled on. I was just so happy that you showed interest in my area of expertise.”

I see. Now I think I finally understand why I haven’t tried killing Emerson all this time: he resembles me.

True—he had pitted himself against me many times, but it was never adversarial. He was simply interested, as a genuine researcher would be. And it’s why I never truly hated him.

I was getting the feeling that it was about time that I started choosing my future career path, even if I wasn’t a hundred percent sure about what it would be. Two hundred years ago, I’d tried perfecting my skills with Olden Magecraft. But now, maybe it wouldn’t be too bad to try and perfect Modern Magecraft. If I tried walking down the same path as Emerson, as a Regalia developer, then I’d probably never know a boring day in my life.

“Show me around your lab next time. I’ll treat you to tea or something,” I said.

I didn't really want to admit it, but at my current state, I wasn't nearly as knowledgeable about Modern Magecraft as Emerson was. The most efficient way to learn about it was to have Emerson teach me for a bit.

At my words, it seemed like Emerson had fallen into shock.

What's going on with him?

Then, in the next moment, his face was overcome by an expression of pure ecstasy, and some kind of gross sound escaped his mouth.

"Sure... Yeah... You're really great, Abel. When will you get tired of making me feel good?"

Am I going to be okay learning Modern Magecraft from him? I couldn't help but feel uneasy as, across from me, Emerson continued his creepy, eccentric gestures.

Afterword

Yusura Kankitsu here. Thanks for helping me get to the sixth volume! Any readers who start from the afterword should watch out for spoilers!

The story this time focuses around two things—the school festival and Barth's rechallenging of Abel. To be honest, the plan for Mecha Barth has been in my head since I was writing the first volume. I love bad guys who don't give up.

Ever since the first book, I was thinking of continuing to give Barth opportunities to challenge Abel again. He fought Abel in his natural body in volume 1, but as the story progressed, he continued to get stronger. Ultimately, in volume 3, he fought Abel as Fallen Barth, and then in this volume, we saw the birth of Mecha Barth lol.

Will poor Barth ever find happiness? Even as the author, I don't know. While writing, I couldn't help but think that, despite his objectives being twisted, I do hope that a day comes when his hard work is rewarded.

Now then, thanks to all you readers, the Reincarnated Mage series has sold upwards of nine hundred thousand copies! Most likely, we will pass a million with the next volume. I like even numbers, so reaching a million would be very nice. The feeling of accomplishment would be next to none.

Of course, we have no plans to stop the serialization of the manga. The book has reached its climax, so I'm thinking about stopping it soon. To be honest, I have a bit of a trauma when it comes to throwing away series without finishing them (I did this in the past), but I have strong feelings about continuing the series to its end while the stamina of the author and the momentum of the series are still strong.

If all of you reading this series stick with me to the end, that'd make me very happy. Well then, I look forward to seeing you in the next one.

- Yusura Kankitsu



vol. 6

Yusura Kankitsu
Illustrator
Ruria Miyuki

Reincarnated Mage with Inferior Eyes

Breezing through the Future as an Oppressed Ex-Hero



Noel

She's usually passive, but around Abel, she's very forward.

Abel

A genius mage with Amber Eyes—the strongest one can have. He reincarnated into this world from two hundred years ago.

Ted

A spoiled noble who looks up to Abel as his magecraft master.

Zyle

The only classmate of Abel's that will try to lecture him.

"Th-Then, would you go to the dance with me?"

"I'd like to go to the dance with you too. I'm confident you'll have much more fun with me than with Eliza."

Eliza

The descendant of the Hero of Fire. She's beginning to be more forthcoming about her feelings for Abel.



“Heh heh.
It’s nice to do
this every now
and then, isn’t it?
Just the two of us
goofing off.”

But all fun things must
come to an end, and it
seemed that our
moment of fun had
been nothing but a
brief reprieve.

I didn’t respond.
I can’t deny that Lilith’s right.
Being up here, dancing with
her without anyone else
around is nice. It’s silent.
It was as if time had
stood still.

Though his body had been fortified by machines, in every other regard Barth was a complete novice. One of my attacks was more than enough to take him out. If I'd been able to use magecraft normally this entire time, Barth would have never had a leg up on me.

“G
a
a
a
h!”

Barth shrieked, tumbling across the floor from the force of my fist.

“Grit your teeth, Barth.”





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Reincarnated Mage with Inferior Eyes: Breezing through the Future as an Oppressed Ex-Hero Volume 6

by Yusura Kankitsu

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