PROLOGUE

BEAUTY IN ACTION

Hinata Sakaguchi was bored as she sat in her personal room, assigned to her within the Holy Empire of Lubelius’s main palace. This world was just so boring.

She was still fifteen when she fell into this world. It was her first day of high school, the date of the official entrance ceremony, and the only reason she attended was because she didn’t want to be at home. On the way back, passing by the temple she passed by every other day of the week, a sudden gale slashed across her body, so powerful she couldn’t keep her eyes open. When she did finally pry her eyelids apart, she saw a new and unfamiliar landscape before her.

Hinata liked it.

Now, she thought, she was finally free of her mother, who had gotten into religion and never gave a second thought to her family since. Her father had long ago disappeared, so sure it was only a matter of time before he’d hit it big at the horse races, only to find nothing but massive debt at the end. Unable to bear the violent episodes that inevitably followed, her mother escaped into her faith.

All this after Hinata tried so hard to kill her father so her mother could enjoy the life insurance payoff. Just a little while longer, and it would’ve all been in the family bank account. She made sure nobody would suspect a thing. All she needed was for her father to disappear.

Thinking about it, though, she came to the realization that pulling this off right would require her to commit other murders. She’d have to kill the religious officials who associated with her mother, and sooner or later, she’d likely have to take her own mother’s life. That was the result of Hinata’s cool-headed analysis—and that, more than anything, was why she didn’t want to be home.

Here, at least, she wouldn’t have to kill anyone else. Or so she thought, before some men surrounded her.

“Hey, there’s another one here!”

“Whoa! Another young girl, eh? Sweet!”

“Hey, nobody’s gonna know if we have a li’l taste before sellin’ her, will they?”

Oh… So it’s the same thing here. To her, the world was filled with nothing but despair. A world filled with the ugly, the repulsive. A world that should just be destroyed already.

—I will take from them. I will let them take nothing from me.

Confirmed. Unique skill Usurper…successfully obtained.

—I am in the right. My calculations are flawless, for the world is eternally unchanging.

Confirmed. Unique skill Measurer…successfully obtained.

Suddenly, her vantage point was clear. The fog lifted from her heart, sharpening her mind.

If the men in front of me want to take from me, let me take from them first.

—Take their lives.

Then the massacre began. Hinata didn’t even need five whole minutes to kill three men with her own two hands. She was freshly awakened to her skills and not exceptionally gifted with muscular strength, but that was all it took.

Those were the first murders she committed in this world.

Hinata did have people close to her, but she could never believe in them. They were too weak to trust. She felt she might kill them with her own hands sometime. So she left their side.

The killings continued, and with them came knowledge and technical skill. She used those newfound talents as a foundation to become a strongman, one of the rulers of the world.

Days passed…

And then Hinata found him.

The one god she was truly qualified to serve.

Gods actually exist in this world.

She could no longer remember how many she’d killed. Good people, bad people—it didn’t matter to Hinata, for everyone was equal before her god. She continued to fight, never questioning the orders of the one she served. Monsters, too. The orders were absolute, and her god refused to tolerate the monsters’ existence. Thus, with her unchallenged force, she eliminated her god’s enemies.

The little girl was no longer there. Now, she was the right hand of her god. She held the title of paladin—chief knight of the Imperial Guard, answering directly to the Holy Emperor—and she bore beauty worthy of the title.

A title that made her the nemesis of all monsters.

Then she was visited by terrible news. Shizue Izawa, her teacher and mentor, was dead. The only person in this world who showed Hinata any kindness.

There were no sentimental memories, no hatred. No name for the emotions that flew in and out of her soul.

—I can’t forgive this. How could some monster do that…?

Her boring days at the palace were over. An icy smile cracked across her beautiful, almost saintly face, and she sprang into action.