

AGE OF EXPLOSIONS

COMMISSION STORY

BY CHALDEACHANGE



“Kazuma! Kazumaaaa! Did you see what I did!? I was *amazing!*”

In the wake of a powerful explosion, the talent caster Megumin had been fiending for a little bit of recognition. In her mind she had just done the *coolest thing ever*, even though the explosion in question hadn't done anything out of the ordinary... at least for her. But unfortunately? She couldn't find anyone to give her that recognition! ...Because that explosion had knocked everyone in her party *unconscious*.

But rewinding a bit, there was a reason this has all happened. Out of nowhere a gaping hole had formed just west of Axel, the town that was considered the starting point for aspiring adventurers. Not only was this hole incredibly *deep*, but within they had found a doorway that had led into a dungeon. Or, well, something *like* one. Instead of a proper dungeon with tunnels and the like, it was like an entire underground city had been found.

One that was evidently named *Nokron* based on items recovered from within.

And yet as Axel was where *beginner* adventurers gathered, they were lacking in manpower until the capital could send reinforcements. What's worse, unusual monsters seemed to be flooding in nearby. Giant ants were among the most common, but there were also strangely robed humanoids and odd slimes that mimicked the appearances of those that fought them.

Thing became dire, and so a last resort was called upon. A group of adventurers that lived in Axel that were *exceptionally* strong. The issue, and the main reason they were a last resort, was that they were also exceptionally *stupid*. Such was the reputation that Kazuma's group of himself, Aqua, Darkness, and Megumin possessed. Surprisingly though? The group had actually managed to get pretty deep into Nokron!

Eventually they had come against what seemed like an impossibly strong opponent though. A giant of sorts that had been created from one of those strange slimes atop a long set of stairs by a cathedral of some manner. It seemed to be guarding a chest, and yet the group was struggling to even hurt it! That was, at least...

Until Megumin had open-fired with her explosion magic.



“Uh... I guess everyone else got hit by something else while I was casting, huh?”

Megumin whistled to herself in the wake of it, looking at her unconscious companions scattered about the steps. Normally an explosion of *that* nature would have rendered her exhausted and immobile, but worried about the group? Wiz had given Megumin a potion to off-set the side effects a single time. Now that she had used it though? The next blast would be her finally before she became useless.

Not that it seemed like that would be the case! **“No other monsters? Did we finally clear this place out? All thanks to *me* of course!”**

The girl puffed out her small chest with pride. Well, Kazuma and the others were useless and there was still a chest to be opened... Since she was

the one who had taken down the giant, it made the most sense that she be the one to open it, right?

She practically skipped up the stairs until she was standing in front of the chest. It took a little bit of effort with those small hands of hers, but eventually? She managed to push the lid back so that it was open. Maybe in another world that chest would contain a very *disturbing* weapon. But in this instance? There was a *hat*. A witch's hat made with snow white cloth, the underside of its rim a shimmering blue.

“Well, I'm the only one around here who wears a witch's hat!”

Megumin wasn't *wrong*, but was this hat really her style? It was a lot bigger than the hat she was wearing, and wouldn't the white clash with the rest of her outfit? Regardless, the girl took off her current hat and

sat it gently on the ground. There was nothing wrong with trying this hat *on*, right? It wasn't like she could cheat on her old hat! Plus she could sense something about it. Something *magical*. Like it might make her explosions bigger!

And so? The hat went on. It was clear the moment she placed it on her head that it definitely wasn't her size. She was constantly holding the rims to adjust it. But it wasn't like she had the wrong sized head. It was more like she didn't have enough *hair* for it to rest comfortably. "**Whoa!**" But she had certainly been right about one thing. The hat contained a *lot* of magical power, and she could feel it tingling throughout her entire body. "**I bet I could double the size of my explosion wearing this thing!**"

And that would have been true if there hadn't been *side effects*.

They weren't side effects that Megumin *initially* felt though. It took about thirty seconds, and during that time she had chosen to investigate the chest a little more closely to make sure that there had been nothing else inside. If there had been something else of value then that should have belonged to her as well, right? She had done all of the work, and so all of the reward should go to her! But she just knew that Kazuma would try to spin things to make it sound like *he'd* been the hero of this little adventure. If not Aqua, since they both loved the attention so much.

"Huh. Guess there's nothing left after all. But since this seems to be the deepest part of the dungeon, does that mean that this hat was the most valuable thing inside?" It was hard to believe that a clothing accessory might be the most guarded item within the ruins, but if that was the case then she was *definitely* keeping it! She just had to grab her *actual* hat from where she'd put it down on the floor, but... **"H-Hey!? Where did my hat go!?"**

She knew *exactly* where she had put it, and it most certainly wasn't there. There was no wind this far underground, and no monsters were about. Megumin even checked to make sure her friends were still unconscious and they *were*, so had it just disappeared into thin air? She'd had that hat forever, it had to be around *somewhere*!

But, finally, the side effects of adorning that snow white hat finally hit her. "**Eh?**" A frosty chill rippled through the girl's body, prompting her body to shiver uncontrollably. It was almost as if her body temperature had just taken a sharp and sudden dive, but as of yet there was nothing that physically indicated exactly why this was felt to be the case. "**Wh-What's wrong with me!?"**

What transpired physically first wasn't exactly something Megumin wouldn't have taken issue with, and in fact it lulled her into a false sense of security that, while yes, something *very weird* was happening to her, maybe it wasn't really a bad thing. **"Whoa! Am I getting taller!?"** That seemed to be the long and not-so-short of it. She had always been shorter than her peers, standing only at 4'9", and she had quietly, and sometimes not so quietly, hated that.

But that reality had undergone an inversion, and she immediately noticed thanks to the obvious change in a rising eye level and the fit of her clothing. Inch after inch saw her body stretch upwards, the base of her tunic which functioned as a 'skirt' lifting higher and higher so that you could make out her thighs, hips, and even a little of her waist. Because ultimately she was rendered a height of 5'4", which was a fairly significant jump.

"This is weird! But the rest of my body is... I look like a stick!" She wasn't *wrong*. Her body had grown up, and even her face had aged to give the impression she might now be a young woman, but her figure hadn't grown out at all. Or, at least, the area she was fixated on most of all hadn't grown. Her hips had actually become much more pronounced, allowing her thighs to thicken graciously, and the cheeks of her ass to grow plumper. But Megumin didn't care about that! She cared about her chest! And that chest had remained super, extra flat!

Idly, she reached back to pick the wedgie from her ass that came from her panties being wedged into a more pronounced rear. **"But still, I'm more mature now, aren't I? I don't know *why*, but *mine fate* is pretty cool!"** Wait, what had she just said? Was that the way normal people spoke? It had honestly hit her tongue a little strangely. Not to mention her body still felt very, very cold. **"I can't wait to see Kazuma's face. *'Tis* certain to be a treat!"**

Speaking of Kazuma, it was probably time to make sure that her friends were okay. But as she turned to look at them from atop the steps? She found she *couldn't*. **"Wh-What!? I can't move!"** Had she been paralyzed? Was it a result of the cold feeling? Regarding the latter query, this actually seemed to be the case. Megumin's skin finally began to reap its ill-effects, and her complexion took on traits that almost made it look sickly.

At least in terms of *color scheme*, anyways. It dipped towards a deathly pale initially, only to find an even more bizarre coloration as a pale blue color surfaced, as if no blood was running through her veins whatsoever. Not only was this *true*, but her body as it was now? It didn't even *contain* veins. The skin that was being observed had lost its softness and hardened, the flesh, blood, and bone beneath following suit and being

replaced not with an alternative to blood and the like, but merely thick twine that almost seemed to pad her body.

The light faded from Megumin's eyes gradually, yet she was not dying nor losing consciousness. It was her eyes themselves hardening, become more transparent, until they were little more than glass decorations with icy blue irises within dry eye sockets. "*Mine... body...*" Her stiff way of speaking was just as stiff as the rest of her body, mouth dry and void of taste, cheeks just as porcelain as the rest of her form, face now utterly inexpressive.

She looked like a *doll*. A blue one, but a doll, nonetheless. This aesthetic was only heightened as the moving parts of her body became segmented. Joints were worn away, exposing the thick brown twine that bound her body together internally. This included her wrists, fingers, elbows, shoulders, hips, knees, ankles, and toes. But her torso also segmented between flat, nipple-less breasts so that she could still bend forward – more twine exposed here for the porcelain in the area seemed to have been broken.

Megumin was completely still and silent. She had lost the autonomy she'd possessed over her body, but this stillness demonstrated something. That the big, white hat was no longer sliding off of her head! This was because her brown hair had been lengthening beneath its rim. Each strand turned a deep blue, yet it looked *artificial*. Like the hair, naturally, of a doll. Long and wavy, it filled her hat and spilled out behind her.

RIIIIIIIIIIP!

Perhaps strangest of all, though, was the ripping sounds that rang out from beneath her arms. From the same joint, a pair of additional, blue, doll-jointed arms had erupted. But Megumin did not react, disassociated from her circumstances now as she was. Her heart still beat, but it wasn't truly a *heart*. It was a bit of magic meant to simulate a heartbeat; so that she would not forget that she was still alive regardless of her form.

From her perspective there was a strange *tug* suddenly. Not on her body itself, but on what felt like her soul if she could best describe it that way. It felt like she had been pulled out of the puppet corpse that stood in her body's place. She could still see through the left eye of the doll, but the right one suddenly closed to rob her of that vision temporarily. When that vision returned it *wasn't* because her eye had reopened. It was like she was seeing slightly off to the side.

The lines of a spectral face could now be seen attached to the doll's face, blue markings glowing on the porcelain below that eye. It was some sort of binding glyph, and its presence prompted the porcelain to crack oh so slightly on the opposing cheek. With this all said and done? The woman soon found herself with clarity. She knew things she hadn't known before. About Nokron. About another world. About the all-encompassing realm of magic. It changed her personality and motivations, and the second control of the doll body returned to her?

Megumin's old clothing froze over, turning to ice and glowing before the doll woman was hidden by a bright light. Once it faded? She was left dressed in a white dress and furry, grey cape that went much more suitably with her hat. The dress was so long and flowing that of her blue, porcelain body, you could only see her face and her four arms.

The fingers on all four of her hands flexed stiffly, the astral face beside her doll one forming a contemplative expression. This body was difficult to adjust to, but now that her new memories had usurped her old ones as the dominant recollective processes, she found it a touch easier. What she could do in this form was certainly *limited*, however. It was no wonder she was reliant on magic.



“Oh dear. Mine surroundings hath changed, it seems.” The old-timey manner of speech that the woman had begun speaking with throughout her transformation certainly hadn't gone away, and in fact it had *worsened*. But as she finally turned around to greet the stairs, *Ranni the Witch* realized something that someone without her keen magical prowess might not have. She was still in the city of Nokron, but Nokron itself had shifted worlds. She was now in a land governed by the Erdtree. The world that Ranni the Witch truly hailed from.

Two hands were laced together before her chest, while the other two rested on her lap. She understood who she was and what her role was here. The Lands Between had been fragmented and souls had been scattered. Now key players were absent from the world. Nokron had

ended up in Megumin's world because of this, but Ranni's hat had been sent to reclaim her soul. There were still key players to be brought back, however.

But to those ends, she had a solution. **“Mine memories of these fools are groggy, yet they may yet serve as a solution to our plight. With the correct preparations..”** The glass eye of her artificial doll body looked down the steps. Nokron had moved back to the Lands Between with Ranni in tow, but there were also *three others*. Individuals that, according to the memories she still held onto from her time as Megumin, seemed to be her friends.

Kazuma, Darkness, and Aqua. If Megumin could play host to one of those lost souls, then why not these three as well? Balance needed to be restored to the Lands Between so that the Tarnished could save it, but too many of the players to make that happen had been cast away. By using these three as anchors... **“Tis something they certainly would not consent to, but I suppose mine situation was one without consent.”**

Ranni gave a wave of her hand, and magic danced from her fingers and across the three unconscious people in her company. Now they would not awaken until she deemed it appropriate, and she would have to make preparations before that could happen. One by one she would awaken them once the time came, and one by one they would patch the holes of missing peoples from her lands. It was the only way to help save them, and the witch did not care much for how they felt about it.

“Thou wilt become what is necessary.”