

NyanNyan @ N-City

This story takes place a long time before the events of Magical Girl Raising Project: Restart and shortly before Magical Girl Raising Project begins.

“Awesome! It says we’re Magical Girls now! That’s seriously awesome!”

“Also says we have to pick a name. What do you have in mind?”

“I know! First up, Tanahashi Himari! I’ll close my eyes and whatever character I pick will be my Magical Girl name!”

“You’re awesome, Himari!”

“All right, let’s do this! It doesn’t matter even if I get a name like Shit or Housefly or whatever!”

“Then, let’s start the roulette! Let’s see... got it!”

“What did you get? What did you get?”

“Let me see... @?”

“Puhahahaha! Well done! You’re amazing, china girl!”

“That’s Himari for you!”

“You’re next, Micchan!”

“Eh... I’ll pass to Masako!”

“Oops! Masako neatly ignores that nice pass!”

“That’s not fair! That’s not fair at all! How come I’m the only one playing!”

“That’s because you’ve always been that sort of character, haven’t you, Himari?”

“Exactly! We’re doing this to help build your character, Himari!”

“Aiya! It’s not like that at all ~aru!”

“Is it or isn’t it like that? Speak up clearly, Speak! Up! Clearly!”

“Ahahahah, seriously. It’s super vague! Ahahahahahaha...”

Michiyo, Masako and Himari of the girls’ soccer club got along very well, and in class they were known as the “Three Soccer Girls”. They were a trio of a bench-warmer, a team member who almost did not make the cut and an ace striker who had been the team’s trump card since her first year; despite their different circumstances, their friendship transcended their positions and their ball techniques, and like birds of a feather, they flocked together.

The three of them were easily excitable, the sort who could make a find something to laugh about even when it was just a chopstick falling to the floor. They patted each other on the shoulder, laughed out loud until their tummies ached, and whether they were at school or attending club activities or during the holidays, they were always seen together.

Himari felt that the three of them had a lot of fun together, like this was the way it ought to be. Even when she was scolded by her trainer for a mistake in passing the ball, even when the coach shouted at her for running in a laggardly fashion because of the hot weather, even when the teacher chewed her out in class and said, “Who allowed you to sleep during classtime?!”, even when their opponent managed a turnaround in the very first match of the Nationals and they lost, whenever the three of them were together, they could laugh off everything that went badly.

The three of them being chosen to be Magical Girls together was probably the biggest joke of all. It felt as though they were intoxicated by alcohol or drugs—even though they had never tried either of those before, it still felt something like that—when they had chosen their names. In contrast to their goofing around when picking their names, the three of them earnestly promised each other that they would help each other in their exams as much as possible, that they would work hard to ensure one of them was selected, and then they awaited the exam that would determine which of them could become a real Magical Girl.

The result of the exam was that Himari had been chosen to be the official Magical Girl, @Nyannyan, while Michiyo and Masako had had their memories of being Magical Girls erased and they went back to their normal lives... however, the two of them were involved in a traffic accident after returning home from the exam and had lost their lives. Only Himari—who had remained in the exam hall to be briefed on how to be a proper Magical Girl—had been spared this fate, and so she was the sole survivor.

Her memories regarding that part were hazy. Was it because she did not want to recall them, or had it all ended while she was in a trance?

She had made it into the school she was aiming for. She had friends. She got along with her parents.. She thought to herself, *maybe my life counts as pretty successful*.

Even so, every time she thought of Michiyo and Masako, her chest would ache as though it were being squeezed by someone and she would feel miserable. Whether she was playing soccer, or making someone laugh, or performing her duties as a Magical Girl, she would not not be able to help thinking of the two of them.

Himari stopped playing soccer. Even if she laughed because others did, she no longer went out of her way to make a joke so others would laugh. Neither would she take the initiative to carry out her Magical Girl duties. However, the Land of Magic was not kind enough to worry about Himari's emotional state.

Himari... @Nyannyan's Magic was "the ability to seal objects into talismans". While she could not seal living beings, she could seal anything that was not alive, regardless of size, into a thin talisman. Her Magic was excellent for moving or transporting objects, so she was often called on by the Land of Magic, and also asked to smuggle things.

She was utterly disappointed with the way she feared recalling her friends whenever she was contacted for work.

The New Year and winter vacation were over, and everyone was slowly returning to their daily, busy lives. Himari wore a longcoat over her Magical Girl costume to cover her tail and hide the fact that she was a Magical Girl. She had taken a train early in the morning and gone to a certain steel mill within Tokyo.

She had taken two jobs that day. One of them was to deliver equipment to a factory in another prefecture. In other words, she would be spending time, money and using specialized magical knowledge to transport magical electronics and other parts, dangerous magical drugs, heavy magical machinery, magical containers and other such objects.

"Er, sorry about this, but could I ask you do something for me?"

After sealing everything into talismans, the requester put his hands together and begged a favor of ehr over and over again. He wore old work clothes, a tough-looking safety helmet, a holey pair of work gloves and mud-spattered safety boots. His getup and, his face, the way he spoke and his actions made him look just like any other middle-aged worker you could see anywhere. The inhabitants of the Land of Magic and their collaborators pretended to be ordinary people like this, and they lived everywhere.

"This is it..."

The man's eyes went to the cardboard box he was holding in his right hand.

Himari was told the location where she was to transport her cargo; her destination was H-City, on the coast of the Sea of Japan. The man wanted her to take the cardboard box to N-City, which was in the same prefecture.

“There’s a Magical selection exam going on in N-City right now. They say this exam’s following a different format, so they want to use new Magical Phones as an experiment. These Phones have the ability to download items and the like. After you help me send the cargo, please give these to the examiner.”

“As long as I can do it.”

“Sorry. I owe you one.”

The worker cursed the Land of Magic and its miserly nature which led it to skimp on transport expenses, then handed the cardboard box with over a dozen Magical Phones to Himari and shoved an envelope to her saying, “Treat yourself to a meal with this”.

After she bade the worker farewell, she secretly checked the contents of the envelope, which were two 1000-yen bills. She bought a subway lunchbox, and moved her chopsticks as she watched the scenery go by outside the window.

Thanks to the full-scale merger four years ago, N-City had become the biggest port city in the region. While it was the largest in the area, it was still a prefectural city, and so as Himari took the express train from the Tokyo suburbs, she could not help but think, “Ah~ it’s really provincial” when she saw it.

After delivering the goods to the warehouse in H-City, she took a regular train and slowly travelled to N-City. Once she got onto the train, she recalled her graduation trip, and when she thought of her graduation trip, she also recalled, however unwillingly, Michiyo and Masako. Their school’s graduation trip had been to Kyushu. They had snuck out of the hotel at night, changed into their swimsuits and swum in the sea. While it was winter, they had watched the beauty of the night sky as they shivered and floated on the sea, and the memory had remained with her ever since.

The train reached N-city shortly afterwards. She checked the map in her Magical Phone, and then headed towards Mt. Takanami.

“Welcome, welcome, thanks for coming all the way here ~pon.”

There was a half-built hotel near the peak of Mt. Takanami. A lone Magical Phone sat in the middle of its ruined great hall. A 3D image floated above it. It was a spheroid whose right side was black and whose left side was white, with a pair of butterfly-like wings. Himari tilted her head in curiosity.

“Have I seen you before?”

“How could that be? This is the first time we’ve met ~pon.”

It would seem they had not met before. However, she had the feeling she had seen it somewhere in the past.

“Fav is a mass-produced model. Perhaps you’ve seen a mascot character of the same type as myself?”

“Ahh... that might be the case.”

The mascot character Fav happily described the functions of the new generation of Magical Phones and how they were incomparable to those of previous models. While it was expressionless, its tone sounded quite happy, as though it were talking about itself.

“Then, I’ll tell you the location of the various Magical Girls’ bases, so please distribute them to everyone ~pon.”

“Eh?”

“If the Master were here, she would send them herself, but unfortunately, she’s not around ~pon. And of course, Fav can’t physically interact with objects. Surely a kind Magical Girl like yourself will help me, won’t you ~pon? The Land of Magic will pay your transport fees, won’t it ~pon?”

“Hah?”

“Also, you mustn’t tell the Magical Girls about the exam ~pon. If they knew about the exam, we wouldn’t be able to make it a surprise ~pon. Exams should be surprises after all ~pon.”

“Hahhh...”

Her workload had increased.

This was the first person. She met her on the roof of a hotel. She was a Magical Girl who looked just like a robot. She had originally thought she was a mascot character—

“I’ve heard about this. I’m the Magical Girl Magicaloid 44. Pleased to meet you.”

It would seem she was a Magical Girl. Given that she had stated her name, Himari felt that she needed to introduce herself as well.

“Hello, I’m @Nyannyan.”

“@? What a strange name.”

The name she had picked with her friends while fooling around had turned out to be terribly embarrassing when she had to introduce herself to others. Every time she had stated it, people had commented that it was weird, and people had even angrily told her, “Pick your name with more care!” Each time that happened, she simply laughed it off, and when she got home, she drowned in the pain of remembering her two friends.

“Magicaloid 44 sounds like a really cool name.”

“Well, my friend picked it for me.”

If it was friends, then Himari had friends, once. People with whom she could mess around with, freely and without a care in the world. She did not have them any more.

“Nyannyan-san, are you going elsewhere to distribute the Magical Phones?”

“Yes.”

“If that’s the case, you won’t need to visit each and every one of them. After all, many of the Magical Girls have already formed their own cliques. All you have to do is visit a few places. I’ll write them down on a note for you to refer to.”

“Thank, thank you.”

“I’ll help you deliver to the people nearby or in the same group. Top Speed’s always flying around in the sky around this area, so I’ll help you send it to her. Also, Calamity Mary’s area is very dangerous, so I’ll help you send her Phone to her. Nemurin is a special case, so leave her to me.”

The mascot characters was very good at bossing people around, but the Magical Girl was much nicer in comparison. Himari thanked her and bowed, but when she raised her head, she saw a plasticky hand thrust out towards herself.

“1000 yen for a runner’s fee will do. Cheap, right?”

After paying the 1000 yen, she came to an abandoned temple. There were four Magical Girls inside.

“Hm~ so these are the new model of Magical Phones.”

While there were four Magical Girls, in truth only one of them spoke to her. The other three were doing something outside. The Magical Girl before her was dressed up like a princess and called Ruler, and the corner of her mouth twisted.

“Why is the display *still* heart-shaped? I told Fav to design a more functional model, didn’t I?”

“Er, but they say it has higher specs. Apparently it had new functions and so on.”

She was just a delivery girl, so why did she need to defend the Magical Phone? Even though it vexed her, after seeing Ruler and her wicked smile, she immediately began to panic and thought that she had to argue on its behalf.

“That’s only to be expected, no? The problem doesn’t lie there!”

The door suddenly opened with a bam, and a pair of angel twins poked their heads in.

“It’s terrible! Tama fell into her own hole!”

“It’s so deep we can’t hear the echoes!”

Ruler shouted, “That *idiot!*” and ran out, leaving Himari alone by herself. She thought to herself that if she continued complaining to her, she would get a headache, so she snuck out the back door.

Next was the top of the steel tower.

“Thank you for your hard work.”

“Thanks for coming all the way here.”

The knight and the schoolgirl greeted her. Compared to all the other Magical Girls until now, these two felt a lot better. The knight-themed Magical Girl with the gigantic sword gave her a can of juice.

“I bought this from the vending machine over there. Please help yourself, if you don’t mind.”

“Thank you. Then, don’t mind if I do.”

For some reason, this felt like the first time she had been treated kindly since coming to this city. After sighing, she sipped the warm red tea.

The Magical Girl in the school uniform picked up her new Magical Phone, and she looked very excited.

“Uwah! It’s so cute! The new Magical Phones have white frames!”

“They match you very well, Snow White.”

“It seems that they have a lot of added functions as well... but I don’t know how to use them.”

“Once you’re familiar with them, you won’t have to worry.”

“Then won’t I have trouble until I get used to them?”

“There’ll be a chat meeting tomorrow, we can ask the others then.”

It made her smile for some reason. After saying, “Thanks for your kindness,” Himari put the can down and left.

Next was the abandoned supermarket.

“Thank you for coming all this way to us.”

The nun-themed Magical Girl—Sister Nana—bowed deeply.

“And you even brought such wonderful Magical Phones too.”

“No, no, it’s nothing much.”

“Nana, come over here.”

The Magical Girl in the greatcoat and the scarf, Weiss Winterprison, was frowning as she looked at the Magical Phone’s screen. She was probably migrating her data to the new Magical Phone, so it would seem a problem had cropped up.

“What is this?”

“What happened?”

Sister Nana looked at the screen of the Magical Phone Winterprison had handed over, and she smiled brightly. In contrast to Winterprison, she seemed very happy. Since a lack of politeness would cause all manner of problems, Himari could only smile vaguely at them.

“Ah, I took that picture of you sleeping last week.”

“That’s not what I’m asking.”

Winterprison’s voice sounded very stiff.

“Do you mean the clothes? Well, I just couldn’t resist the urge to see you in a skirt. And you were sleeping so soundly, so I secretly put them on for you.”

Winterprison pressed her index finger to her forehead and groaned,

“That’s not a skirt... more like cosplay...”

“For a long time, I’ve felt you would be very suitable for cosplaying Cutie Healer Excellent’s Dark Odessa.”

Himari muttered, “Thanks for your kindness,” then cleared up her things and left.

Finally, she returned to the abandoned hotel on top of Mt. Takanami once more.

“Thank you, thank you. Thanks to you, the new Magical Phones have found their way into everyone’s hands.”

“Oh no, it was nothing much.”

Fav spun a neat circle, scattering golden sparkles everywhere.

“With the new Magical Phones, the Magical Girls will be able to deepen the bonds between each other ~pon!”

Fav was as cheery as always. Himari turned to leave, and then she unconsciously turned back to look at Fav. The 3D-image even illuminated the dust of the hotel, and it filled her with a nameless fright.

“So only one person can pass, right?”

“That’s the way it is, is there a problem ~pon?”

“So even if they have deep bonds and form firm friendships, in the end, only one person can escape the fate of having their memories erased, right?”

“That’s why it’s interesting ~pon.”

A strange emotion seemed to be on the verge of escaping from her body.

Ruler and her gang of four, Snow White and La Pucelle, Sister Nana and Weiss Winterprison, all those Magical Girls had very good relationships. And these people would now have to compete with each other.

Much like Himari, they would go from friends to enemies in order to win the title of the sole Magical Girl... enemies? They ought to be rivals at most, right? Besides, they had sworn to help each other before the exam—

Something seemed to be on the verge of surging out of Himari. However, that emotion writhed around inside her body, searching for an exit that it could not find. She looked at Fav, and Fav looked back at her.

And so, Himari left N-City, setting out on the road home. She did not buy a subway lunchbox on the way back, leaving the 1000-yen bill in the envelope as she looked out at the scenery. The lights of the buildings and the streetlights streamed endless past her. It was hardly more interesting than the scenery in the day, but she still rested her eyes outside the window.

Her eyes followed the scenery outside, but the sight of the Magical Girls she had seen today kept swirling within her mind, and they would not fade away. They had all gotten along with each other, and they seemed very happy. She imagined she could see herself and her friends from back then. Himari could no longer go back to that time, because her friends were no longer around. In addition, she would never again meet friends with whom she could share such deep bonds of friendship.

The next day, Himari submitted her resignation, and quit being a Magical Girl.

How much time had passed since she had retired? Himari thought that when she became @Nyannyan again thanks to the Magical Girl Raising Project.

The texture and glossiness of her skin, the softness of her flesh, her chinese qipao-themed costume, even the way she had to tuck her tail away lest she could not sit down properly, all

these lost memories awakened from a place deep inside herself. While she had the vague feeling that there was something else she had forgotten, she decided not to think about it for now.

She knew why she had lost her memories. It was before she had retired. She had asked the Land of Magic to allow her to stop being a Magical Girl, and to her surprise, it had been approved. All her memories of magic had been erased, and she no longer lived as @Nyannyan, but as Tanahashi Himari.

She had made it into the school she was aiming for. She had friends. She got along with her parents.. She thought to herself, *maybe my life counts as pretty successful*.

Even so, she occasionally felt that something was lacking. From time to time, she also felt lonely, as though there was a hole in her heart, but she could not vocalize why exactly that was the case.

“So that was why.”

Losing the part of herself that had been a Magical Girl made her feel like she had lost something in her chest.

While she was disturbed by the fact that she—who had already retired—was part of a game that was intended for Magical Girls only, the Land of Magic did have the habit of forcing people into things like this.

It would seem she was in the game world.

It looked like the real world, probably because of the twin selling points of “The Magical Trace System lets you control the game just like real life!” and “Extremely realistic and beautiful graphical effects!”. She was not quite clear about this, but to some extent, she understood.

The ability to twist, surpass, break, mock and trample the laws of physics—that was magic.

What she could not understand was why Tanahashi Himari—@Nyannyan—had been enlisted into this “social game targeted at Magical Girls.”

She looked up at the sky.

She had seen the sky of the southern islands during her graduation trip, and the sky then had been colored with many layers of colors and rich hues. The sky before her then had been clear, blue and cloudless, or speckled with countless stars at night, or covered in thick, heavy clouds.

The sky before her now was like a flat board with no depth, and the sunlight felt thin, and then there were the skeleton hordes from just now. They were all very video-gamey elements. Even the messages that appeared on the Magical Phone were just like a video game. The payment was also very unreal; could she really obtain that much money? If that was the case, then it would not be entirely unattractive to her. After all, everyone needed money in everyday life.

@Nyannyan decided to do as the message on her Magical Phone said and headed to the Town. While she found it difficult to understand her present circumstances, she had nothing else to go by. She made use of her shocking Magical Girl's endurance, ran around the sprawling wasteland for a good long while, and then she finally found a group of buildings which looked like a town, which she moved towards.

In truth, it was not a group of buildings so much as a collection of abandoned houses. They were barely in better shape than the abandoned buildings in the wasteland, but there were no pedestrians, and there was no way the roads would be paved with asphalt. @Nyannyan carefully approached the town as she kept an eye open for monsters attacking from hidden places, and finally, she came to a place which looked like a square. There was a dried-out fountain in the center, and someone sitting on its edge.

"Ohhh! Are you a Magical Girl too?"

She was a girl dressed in a sentai outfit from a tokusatsu film. Given her adorable appearance, her use of the word "too" and the fact that she was in a social game specifically targeted at Magical Girls, it basically meant that she was a fellow Magical Girl, even though she did not quite look the part.

"Aiyaya, you're the first friend I've met since I came here."

She offered her hand. @Nyannyan smiled embarrassedly and took it. She seemed quite friendly.

Just as she was about to state her name, she suddenly remembered. She had almost forgotten. Giving the name which she had picked while fooling around with her friends was very embarrassing. Nyannyan was fine; the problem was that @. Just as she wondered how to introduce herself, the sentai-suited Magical Girl stuck out her right thumb, pointed it at herself, and energetically stated her name.

"I'm Yumenoshima Genopsycho!"

—*Yumenoshima? Genopsycho?*

She had not misheard it. The other girl had called herself Yumenoshima Genopsycho. Her surname was apparently Yumenoshima, and Genopsycho was apparently her given name.

When she heard that name, she could not help but think, *what a crazy name*. Still, it did not feel like she had been forced to pick it. When she had stated her name, she had been very open and straightforward about it, as though she were not embarrassed or ashamed of it at all. In fact, she even seemed poised and composed.

Why had she picked such a name? Had she gone through the same process as @Nyannyan? Or had it been completely different? She had many questions to ask her.

Genopsycho smiled brightly to @Nyannyan. That smiling face overlapped with those of her past two friends. If it were someone like the Magical Girl before her eyes, perhaps she could forge a bond with her like she had with Michiyo or masako. Could she decide so casually based on her naming sense? She unconsciously racked her brains. She thought, and thought, and thought some more...

"I'll leave the rest to you."

Michiyo panted from where she lay sprawled on the floor, without even the energy to raise her head.

"Himari will take on the mission of beating her down..."

Michiyo had lost too much blood, and there was a 100% chance she would not make it. Himari shouted. Why did Michiyo have to end up like that? There was no reason for Masako to die either!

"Come, then."

Somebody seemed to be beckoning to Himari. It was a shadowy, black silhouette, and she could not make out her face.

"If you wish to avenge your friends, then this is the perfect opportunity to do so."



「後は任せる」

地面に倒れ伏した美千代が

ぼそりと呟いた。顔を上げる力も残っていない。

「あいつらぶん殴る役目は……」

あたしよか陽真理向きだから……」

娘々@N市

The scene before her eyes suddenly changed. It made her wobble on her feet and she almost fell, but she immediately pulled back her right leg, and managed to stand firm. What had happened just now? She seemed to have seen something from somewhere else.

They were hazy and vague. Even after entering the game and regaining her memories as a Magical Girl... they were still hazy and vague.

There was a smiling Magical Girl in front of her. She remembered she was called Yumenoshima Genopsycho. It took her a few seconds to realize that she had just stated her name.

What had she just recalled? It was probably Michiyo and Masako. The reason why she would think of them was because Genopsycho's laughter was practically identical to the way Michiyo and Masako would laugh without any restraint whatsoever.

@Nyannyan laughed. Perhaps it was because she had been infected by Genopsycho. Perhaps it was because she did not want to lose out to Genopsycho. Perhaps it was because she was on the verge of tears and wanted to hide it with a smile. She did not quite understand, but she laughed, then pointed to herself and said:

"My name is @Nyannyan...~aru!"