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The world didn't work like a game.

There is no save function or load function in the real world.

In life there was no chance to redo.

But, if—one could redo?

If one could redo the time when choosing an important choice, what kind of life would be waiting for them?

If, there was a save point before enrolling in the academy, if Leon chose a different route, how would the story progress?

This is that kind of story.

◇

The spring of my first year where I'm able to safely enroll into the academy.

I, Leon Fou Bartfort, am hiding in a bush in the academy's backyard.

Hiding together with me is my partner Luxion.

"The prince pondering in front of the pond really looks artistic huh. Though in his heart he is only worrying about something trivial like how he is tired of being the prince."

It's his Highness Julius, one of the capture targets in that otome game.

He is pondering in a place where there is no sign of other people but—this is what you call an event.

[Peeking like this, Master has a bad hobby.]

"Because I'm curious. Don't you think it's a precious experience to be able to see in real life a famous scene of a game you had thoroughly played?"

It's the encounter event of the main character with the prince.

The main character who was enthusiastic with expectation toward the academy life slapped the rude prince.

If I can watch the refreshing scene of the prince getting slapped, then of course I'm going to peek.

[Didn't Master say that it's not your business?]

Certainly it's not my business but, there is also a curiosity in me.

—I at least want to confirm what kind of girl the main character is.

Is there any difference between the main character that was controlled by the player and the real main character?

I'm peeking in order to erase that kind of question.

"I wanted to watch when a handsome man gets slapped."

When I spoke out a random excuse, Luxion shook his single eye horizontally.

His gesture said that he can't understand.

[Master has a really wonderful personality.]

"You got a lot of sarcasm as usual."

[Isn't it Master who is giving me a lot of chances for it? —Oh?]

Luxion's single eye moved and discovered a girl sneaking toward this way.

She doesn't notice us hiding here.

That girl—isn't the main character.

This girl doesn't look like anyone in the illustration of that otome game's package.

"That girl—I saw her at the entrance ceremony."

She was an irritating girl.

It's not like I hate her but, it made me irritated when seeing her face.

[Master, she is going to talk with Julius. Is she the main character?]

I started moving.

"There's no way that's the case. Her look is too different."

The main character in the game's illustration is taller and with a nicer body style.

She isn't the main character—maybe.

When I observed her, she was muttering something to herself.

"Calm down, Marie. If you use the encounter event with the prince well and become acquainted with him, then it's your win."

I comprehended everything in that instant.

—Aa, this girl is the same as me.

"Luxion, come."

I snuck toward the girl—Marie, who is measuring the timing to come out, and then I jumped her when she was about to call out to his Highness Julius.

I grabbed her arm and covered her mouth before taking her right away from there.

"Nh!"

Marie doesn't understand what's going on. She was terribly shocked—and then she became scared.

I kept my hold on her and hurriedly got away from that place to a place where there is nobody else before letting her go.

Then she glared at me while looking scared.

"Wha, what have you done!? I'm in a hurry here. Do you think that it will end well for you after doing something like this? I'll never forgive you."

She is acting strong but it's clear as day that she's scared.

It feels like I'm facing my little sister from the previous life.

Is that why I'm irritated?

"—Is it because you don't want me destroying your encounter event with the prince?"

Then Marie's eyes opened wide before they slowly narrowed.

She is making a colder expression than before.

“Looks like you’re the same as me.”

It seems I’m not mistaken.

“What were you trying to do? Why were you going to come out?”

I somehow guessed what this girl was trying to do.

But, I wanted to confirm it.

“—It’s not your business, is it?”

Marie averted her eyes. It seems she tried to make use of the encounter even to get ahead of the main character.

“Obviously it’s my business. You, do you understand what you are doing?”

“You’re annoying! More importantly, release me already. The main character will come if I don’t hurry up!”

Marie tried to run away. I cornered her to the wall and put both my hands on the wall to cut off her path of escape.

The petite Marie is anxious.

“Don’t get in the way. Listen to me, the world will be destroyed if the main character and the capture targets don’t meet.”

Speaking in game terms it means game over.

It’s still too fast for me to meet a game over in my life so I’ll refrain from it.

“Haa? Why would that happen? Think of a better line if you want to threaten me. If you don’t let me go, I’ll yell so that people come here. If I yell here, your academy life—no, your life will be over.”

This girl—her personality is as bad as my little sister.

Certainly if this girl yells here, I’ll be seen as the bad guy.

But, it’s strange no matter what.

Why is this girl aiming for the prince?

“You, you have played that otome game right? Then why are you trying to crush the encounter event huh?”

“That’s obvious—”

While she is talking, the sound *Slap!* came from far away.

We knew what the meaning of that sound was.

“So I missed the encounter event that won’t come again.”

Marie fell on her knees while leaning on the wall.

Tears gathered in her eyes.

“No, no way—even though I finally entered the academy. Even though I’ve waited for ten years!”

Tears spilled out in large drops and she began to cry.

“O, oi”

“Even though I thought that I’ll be able to become happy for sure this time! It’s your fault. Because of you, I’ll be poor forever!”

—I don’t like seeing a girl crying because it makes me irritated.

[Master, won’t it be better to share information for now?]

I also felt the necessity for that from Luxion’s suggestion.

If she has cleared that otome game, she shouldn’t have any thinking to crush the encounter event.

“Yeah. Oi, stop crying already.”

But, the sound of *kuuuu* came from the stomach of the crying Marie.

Marie instantly stopped crying and pressed her stomach with both hands. She looked embarrassed.

“—Are you hungry?”

Marie nodded a bit.

Her gesture is similar to his little sister from the previous life, that he can't just leave her alone.

Besides, they're a fellow reincarnator. —He can't just ignore her.

"I'll treat you to a meal, so let's leave this place for now."

Marie grasped the hand that I offered her.

"Ri, right."

◇

We got out of the academy and went to the city.

We entered a cheap restaurant. There Marie ate the ordered food ravenously.

She already devoured three portions of steak and yet she still ordered even more additional food.

Right now she was chewing at meat still attached to the bone.

The way she ate was like a hungry beast.

"Eat slower. No one'll take it away from you."

It felt like I'm full already just from watching her.

Luxion floated beside me while observing Marie. He was greatly interested.

[Master is also very curious, but this person is actually also very curious.]

Hearing that Marie is also a former Japanese, Luxion said [So she is an old human] and interacted with Marie friendlily.

[Marie, there is enough food. Can we continue our talk?]

What we were talking about before the food came was that Marie was a former Japanese woman.

She won't tell us her age, but from the content of her story I think her age previously was around the middle of her thirties until her early forties.

It seems she was disowned by her parents and lived with a useless man as her boyfriend.

After that, she thought that she fainted because of her boyfriend's violence but when she woke up she was in this world.

—Her story was so pitiful I couldn't even laugh at it.

It's troubling because I can't make fun of this kind of pitiful topic.

Marie washed down the food she put into her mouth with water and resumed talking after she came to her senses.

"Where did we leave off again?"

"From where you reincarnated as the youngest daughter of Viscount House of Lafan."

"Aa~, that's right."

Luxion placed a handkerchief in front of Marie because the area around her mouth is dirty.

Marie took it and wiped her mouth before continuing.

"The house I reincarnated into is a terrible house. It's a viscount house that has territory in the mainland, but right now its territory is small and it's also really poor. In my family there are also only my parents who only have high pride and big brother and big sister who are scum."

Marie looked down and said "They're completely different from my Onii-chan in the previous life" with a small voice.

This girl, it seems she had a big brother in her previous life.

What a coincidence, I also had a little sister.

That's why this girl made me excessively irritated—that I can't leave her alone.

Could it be, she is my little sister? I considered such a possibility but it's impossible so she must be someone else.

Both the big brother and little sister reincarnating to another world together wouldn't be funny at all.

In the first place, can such a thing happen? —It feels like the possibility is low.

"You targeted the prince because you wanted to get out of such a life?"

I sympathized with her, but it's no good to target the prince of all people right?

"—Because, I didn't clear the first game, so I didn't know about the details."

Marie looked like she was going to cry.

I also wanted to cry here. After all, I didn't know that otome game had a sequel.

I'm really glad that I was able to talk with Marie.

"Certainly the first game was difficult. I also cleared it using paid items. Even so, I still can't believe that it had a sequel made."

"Right!? It was impossible to clear it normally. It can't be helped even if I don't know isn't it?"

[Marie, the food you ordered came.]

The waiter brought a lot of food.

Marie immediately resumed eating.

When I'm looking at the way Marie ate, she started making excuses shamefully.

"I, it has been a long time since I was able to eat a lot. I couldn't eat until I'm full at home. There were even some days where there was only tasteless soup to eat."

Just what in the world is this girl's family doing?

"That's horrible."

"You better realize just how blessed your life is."

"I'm feeling complicated."

Am I who even almost got sold to an old hag still has it better—I don't want to believe that.

But, it's a fact that I'm more blessed than Marie in the family department.

Putting aside Zola, I think that father and mother are good parents.

My big brother Nicks can be relied on, and Colin is a cute little brother.

"You won't be troubled with food when you're in the academy though."

“I… I’m hungry! Since I reincarnated here my stomach always felt overly hungry, and for some reason my growth is also slow—”

Luxion who observed Marie seemed to understand the cause.

[From Marie’s story, I assume that her excessive training in healing magic might be the cause? Originally it shouldn’t be strange for her to physically grow more.]

“Is that so?”

I asked Luxion to speak in more detail.

[Yes. This is the result of her forcing herself too much during her growth period. Her physical growth stopped, but she obtained the skill that allows her to become a specialist in healing magic. She must have forced herself so much. How about Master following her example for a little?]

Is he telling me to work harder?

“I want to live my life efficiently. It’s my principle to not put in pointless effort.”

[As expected from Master. How about you boil the dirt of Marie’s nail and drink it?]

“I refuse.”

When I refused firmly, Marie looked exasperated.

She dropped the knife and fork in her hands.

“O, oi, what’s wrong?”

Marie trembled—.

“Eh? —Eh? Co, could it be, I’m looking like a child like this is because—”

[It’s the result of your effort. Perhaps you should feel proud? There isn’t any problem with your feminine functions, you simply won’t be able to grow further than this.]

In other words—Marie’s appearance would stay more childish than her age suggested like this. It seems that she can’t expect anything more from her growth in the future.

After that, Marie is crying while eating like crazy to drown her sorrow.

◇

“I can’t just keep crying!”

The next day.

Marie came talking to me in the academy’s corridor. She said she wanted to talk about the plan going on ahead and I brought her to a place with nobody around.

And then she declared—.

“I’ll target the capture targets that the main character isn't targeting! It’s the leftover plan!”

Main character—when I investigated her, it seems her name is Olivia. Marie proclaimed a hyena-like plan of approaching the boys who that main character doesn’t target.

“You don’t know when to give up huh.”

“Obviously. I don’t want the world to be destroyed. But, this and that are different matters. That’s why, you help me too.”

Marie pressed her hands together and asked me for help. I turned a smile at her.

“My bad but it’s impossible. I’m busy searching for a marriage partner.”

“What, you cheapskate! You can put off something like marriage hunting for later!”

“Shut up! It’s a life and death problem for a man, idiot!”

Luxion watched the surrounding vigilantly while saying something like [You two are getting along well].

I told Marie just how painful the boys’ standing is.

“Now listen, a young man who hasn’t married before twenty years old will have even his personality seen in doubt. It will affect their life from there on. We are different from girls who will have boys flocking toward them even without doing anything.”

Marie objected.

“Haa? Even the boys will only call out to girls that they targeted. Someone like me still hasn't been invited to any tea party, just so you know.”

“That’s because the tea party will be from the fifth month. No one will call out to the girls right after enrolling in the academy.”

“Are you an idiot? The first years are going to have tea parties from the fifth month, but that’s unrelated with the seniors. I’m saying that no second year or third year is calling out to me.”

I’m getting irritated talking with this girl.

Marie spoke her dissatisfaction toward the boys.

“In the end you boys are only looking at girls who are convenient for you. Even though upper years are calling out to the girls around me, everyone will look away just from me saying that I came from Lafan House.”

Marie looked down.

But, that can’t be helped.

“Because, your house’s reputation is really bad.”

When I investigated, her house was very horrible. It’s a house that made me hesitate associating with her from now on.

Marie wiped her tears.

“This is unreasonable.”

In the first place, obviously anyone will hesitate if the house of the girl they will marry has a lot of debt.

I can imagine them asking for money from anyone who wants to marry their daughter.

It’s troubling even if they ask for a lot of money from a baron house at the frontier.

Because they won’t have that much money.

But, it will also be troubling if I ignored Marie like this and she caused some kind of trouble.

“I got it so stop crying. I’ll help you out.”

“Really!?”

Seeing Marie stopped crying and became all smiles—she really reminded me of my little sister.

At the very least, I hope that girl was happier than Marie.

A part of me can’t forgive her, but I wouldn't be able to laugh if she met an experience as terrible as Marie.

“And, who are you targeting?”

“First is~”

Marie talked happily about her plan.

◇

In the training field with logs lined up.

There, a blue haired young man, Chris Fia Arclight, is training hard.

He looked intellectual with the glasses he is wearing, but actually he is the son of a swordsman who is known as a sword saint in Holfort Kingdom.

This person himself has obtained the title of Master fencer at his age.

Marie is talking to that Chris.

I’m observing them from behind a cover but—.

“—I’m sorry but I’m not interested.”

“Eh? —Err?”

I was impressed because she pulled off a nice greeting at him but—Chris isn’t interested in Marie.

Chris wiped his sweat while sending Marie a doubting gaze.

“I don’t know what you are thinking to approach me like this, but I already have a fiancée. It would be dishonest of me to get too close with other female students. Please don’t talk too much with me from now on.”

Marie is dejected after being warned with that sound argument.

“Ye, yes.”

Chris started swinging his wooden sword after the talk was finished.

“Go back if that’s all. I can’t concentrate.”

His attitude is curt and blunt.

Come to think of it, this guy's cold attitude was standing out.

Marie returned back to me and,

"—I failed."

She is dejected.

It can't be helped. After all—.

"It's the fourth successive failure with this."

—Not only this is the last one, it's game over already.

She called out to the capture targets—the boys other than the prince, but she splendidly failed all of them.

"Isn't it horrible that everyone is so cold!?"

Not everything can go well like in the game.

I turned my gaze to Luxion.

"Oi, Olivia-san is really intimate with the prince right?"

[They are intimate. From the information of Master and Marie, I'm presuming that she is targeting Julius.]

And yet, the other capture targets won't even look at Marie.

Reality is harsh.

I talked to the dejected Marie.

"Cheer up. I'll treat you."

Hearing that, Marie wiped her drool while retorting to me.

"Do, don't make fun of me. Do you think I'll easily get into a good mood just from getting food?"

"I get it so wipe your drool."

While I'm hiding from Chris and talking to Marie—Olivia-san came to the training field.

She is a girl with an unsophisticated feel. And then she waved her hand to Chris.

Chris is normally cold but—he is showing a smiling face only to Olivia-san.

Even though he didn't show any smile at Marie, what's with this difference in attitude?

But, I also understand Chris's feelings.

Olivia-san who is bright, energetic, and also big-breasted is a charming girl.

Even I will surely become all smiles if she called out to me.

—Compared to that.

"Oi, which part are you comparing me with that woman?"

Marie is giving me a really cold gaze, so I averted my eyes.

"Now then—let's go have some food."

"You looked at my chest and compared it to that woman right!? Say it clearly!"

"Sometimes the truth can hurt. It's impossible for someone kind like me to say the fact."

"That's the same as you saying it! Damn it! Is it breasts as expected!? Men are all stupid idiots!"

In reality shape or roundness is more important than size but, let's not say it out loud.

After all Marie's flat chest doesn't have any relation with shape or roundness.

"Aa~, I'm annoyed. Today I'll eat ten portions of steak!"

Luxion joined the talk.

[You ate twelve portions before this though? Marie, certainly you won't grow but, fat will still attach in your body. Especially not in the chest or butt—but around the stomach or arms.]

Marie turned quiet hearing that.

"—I, I'll stop in six portions."

This girl is a good-for-nothing as expected.

It's impossible for the capture targets to get cajoled by this kind of woman.

I'm really worried.

It won't be a problem even if I ignored her but, I can't do that at this point.

"Come on, let's go."

"Wa, wait for me!"

◇

Now then, the new students are going to call out to the girls for real from the fifth month.

Why is it from the fifth month?

I don't know the reason, and I don't even want to know.

But—.

"I'm reborn."

—I was made to realize that tea is a wonderful culture.

My friends Daniel and Raymond are looking at me with cold gazes but I paid them no mind.

"You are looking really happy huh."

"As I thought, a capable guy is different."

I can feel jealousy from the two's gazes and tones clearly.

I wonder why?

"What's wrong? You two are looking really annoyed today."

On the bench at the academy's courtyard.

The three of us were sitting and talking, but I felt a distance from the two.

Raymond's glasses glinted suspiciously while looking at me.

“I heard the rumor. It seems that you have gotten really close with a girl in the upper class who isn’t even bringing around any Exclusive Servants.”

Daniel clenched his hand,

“I’m jealous, you bastard! Please introduce her to us too!”

They are irritated at me, but they are trying to use me so I introduced them to a girl.

I don’t hate you guys who are like that but—but you guys are wrong.

“You mean Marie? My relationship with that girl isn’t like that.”

Raymond looked doubting.

“I wonder. Besides, I’m envious just from you simply having a girl as a close acquaintance.”

Daniel casted down his gaze.

“I also want to get close to a girl who doesn’t have an Exclusive Servant.”

A girl in the upper class who doesn’t have an Exclusive Servant—is a special girl.

Because in general, girls in the upper class have Exclusive Servants.

That girl is either poor like Marie—or,

“Ah, it’s his Highness.”

Raymond muttered. There at the courtyard the prince—his Highness Julius came with his step sibling Jilk in tow.

Behind them there are female students following the two of them.

his Highness Julius and Jilk who are basking in their shrill voices don't look interested toward those girls.

“What an envious bunch.”

When I said that, both Raymond and Daniel looked at me and clicked their tongues.

You guys, treasure your friend more!

While I‘m thinking that—.

“Ah, it’s the scholarship student.”

When Daniel said that, his Highness Julius and others were in some kind of quarrel.

His Highness Julius’s fiancée, Angelica Rapha Redgrave is also there.

“Your Highness, please think of your station!”

His Highness Julius is treating Angelica-san in annoyance.

“Angelica, we are in the academy. Stop bringing in status from outside to here.”

“Bu, but!”

He is defending the scholarship student Olivia-san in front of his fiancée.

His Highness met Olivia-san and invited her to the tea party during the fifth month. It was then Angelica-san came.

In the game this is an event in the early stage, but seeing it like this, it looks like a scene of carnage to me.

“It’s nice being handsome. They are forgiven even if they get intimate with another girl in front of their fiancée.”

When I said that, Daniel quickly shook his head.

“No no, that’s no good. Besides, the girl is the scholarship student—a commoner.”

Raymond also agreed.

“It’s possible even for a commoner to be accepted as a concubine isn’t it? There is precedent for that.”

“Is that so?”

There is the Cinderella story of a commoner woman being accepted into the palace.

But, acting like this in front of his fiancée—it’s problematic.

Looking at it like this, the main character of that otome game is unexpectedly a bad woman.

The group broke up while we were watching quietly.

“Yosh, let’s get going too—oi, what’s with you two?”

Daniel and Raymond grabbed me when I'm about to return to the school building.

"We're in the middle of talking!"

"How about you tell us in detail about your relationship with that girl called Marie. We want to hear it as comrades in the same group."

The comrades in the group of poor barons.

Looks like it will be troublesome if I don't dispel the misunderstanding.

◇

—And, because of that I consulted Marie.

But that Marie is being seriously despondent right now.

"—No one invited me to the tea party in the fifth month."

Not only the group of five of the prince and others, all the boys who held tea parties in the fifth month ignored her. Marie is sitting while hugging her knees.

[In Marie's case, perhaps the boys hesitated because her house is too horrible?]

Marie stood up and held her head hearing Luxion's calm reply.

"I'm tired hearing that kind of correct answer! They should evaluate my personal character more!"

"Don't be unreasonable."

Marriage between nobles is political marriage no matter how you cut it.

For example, there are many stories of people who love each other are unable to marry because of their houses' circumstances.

Like difference in status, or the difference in faction between the two houses, and many other reasons.

"Why! That otome game's world should be a world that is kind to girls!"

"It's hard mode for the men though."

It seems that Marie is also in hard mode.

I'm getting sad watching her.

"More importantly, I explained my relationship between you and me to my friends. They're getting noisy asking me to request you and introduce them to girls."

"You, be kinder to me! —Or rather, how about you introduce them to girls?"

"But I don't have any girl acquaintances."

"What do you mean by that huuh!"

"Ouch!"

[You two look like you are having fun.]

Marie kicked my shin. It really hurt.

Or rather, this girl has a power that can't be imagined from her small body.

I waited for the agitated Marie to calm down before we resumed talking.

"No, that's why—I don't have any acquaintances who seem like they will be able to introduce girls. Jenna—my big sis has a bad personality, so surely her friends also have bad personalities."

If I asked her to introduce girls, I can imagine her saying "We have no time for poor nobles from the countryside".

Even though she herself is also that countryside poor noble.

"Then, I can introduce them to girls."

"Eh, you can do that!?"

When I looked shocked, Marie looked at me and said "You're looking down on me too much" angrily.

◇

I came to the bar that is often used by the poor baron group.

Marie brought the girls who she will introduce. The atmosphere inside the bar is different from usual.

The seniors and students from the same grade—everyone is smiling at me.

“Leon-kun, I believed in you.”

“Leon, you are the best friend one can ask for.”

“Talk to me if you need anything. I’ll do everything I can if it’s for your sake!”

I let out a strange chuckle seeing the guys who were glaring at me until several days ago when we passed each other changing their attitude so easily like flipping a hand.

Inside the bar there are three girls other than Marie.

One girl is fiddling with her hair, and another girl is looking nervous.

The last girl has unkempt hair and her clothes are also a bit messy.

There are painting tools attached to her uniform.

I approached Marie and asked her.

“Oi, where did you find those girls?”

We were also gathering information but we never caught sight of these girls.

Marie is eating meat while teaching me about the girls.

“They are the shut-in girls.”

“Shut-in!?”

“The girl fiddling with her hair is a lazy child. The nervous girl is not good with places that have a lot of people, so she is studying alone in the dorm. The last one is something of an artist—she doesn’t really have much interest in anything else.”

The three of them are problem children.

But, Raymond’s glasses glinted hearing that explanation.

“Marie-san, can I ask the reason why the three of them have no Exclusive Servants?”

Marie drank her juice to wash down the food in her mouth into her stomach while answering.

“They aren’t interested. It seems the nervous girl is scared of demi-humans. It seems the three of them don’t want to get out of the house after marrying. It doesn’t matter whether

it's in the countryside or the capital, I think they will marry you if you can provide them with an environment where they can be shut-in."

The girl who is fiddling with her hair doesn't want to work so it'll be indispensable to give her servant.

The nervous girl wanted books so her condition was to let her buy books periodically.

The artist girl's condition is to let her paint.

—What's with that favorable condition?

Daniel stood up.

"—I'll go into offense seriously."

"Wait, Daniel! I'm first!"

Seeing the two starting to quarrel, I shook my head in exasperation.

"How ugly to quarrel like that. Then, I'll—"

While I'm thinking of who to speak to among the three—Marie glared at me.

"What?"

"Nothing."

Marie turned away and resumed eating again. While I'm looking at her in confusion—Daniel and Raymond gave me an appalled look.

"Leon, that's not right."

"Yeah. You're the worst."

I can't believe their reaction.

"What's with you guys!"

In the end that day a conflict revolving around the three girls erupted within the group.

That was just how great the three girls' conditions are.

If it is the previous life—the previous world, the three of them might be problem children but, in this world they are too much of an excellent product that it makes you want to doubt whether it might be actually a trap.

—I also wanted to aim at them.

◇

The tea party in the fifth month.

“In the end it’s only you who came to my tea party huh.”

Marie’s eyes sparkled in front of the prepared tea and snacks.

She looked like she was going to drool even now.

“It’s alright. It’s better than not having anyone coming at all. More importantly, these are the sweets from a famous shop right? I wanted to try eating it just once～”

Holding a tea party inside a room that you borrowed and invited girls. That’s the tea party of the fifth month.

It’s the common sense of this academy for boys to entertain girls like this.

Luxion floated inside the room and looked toward me and Marie alternately.

[Master, it’s good that the sweets and tea you prepared don't go to waste isn’t it?]

“Really. Everyone got heated up saying I’m going to the tea party of prince and the others～. They are really a bother to the other boys. Are the prince and the others really that great?”

I heard that Daniel and Raymond also have it hard.

Boys with popularity numbered five. They said that the venues where they held their tea party are spacious and wonderful.

The girls who are invited there are also many, because of that the number of boys who get rejected when inviting girls to a tea party is a lot.

—Honestly, it’s also troubling for us to get compared with the prince and the other capture targets.

Marie looked at me.

“What?”

“—You, aren’t you embarrassed comparing yourself with those five?”

“I, it’s none of your business. You yourself, you also aimed to have a reverse harem with those five.”

Marie held her cup with both hands and sipped the tea bit by bit.

“Aa~, that. Thinking back now, I’m glad I didn’t do that.”

“So you finally gave up.”

Aiming for reverse harem is unfaithful no matter how you look at it.

Marie placed down her cup and started eating a cake.

“The capture targets are even more lacking in charm than I thought. They are only acting soft toward Olivia, and they are a bit stupid.”

Luxion agreed with that evaluation.

[Even though they also have fiancées, they are often together with the main character Olivia. They also have their status to think of. —I can’t comprehend them.]

“Luxion, you don’t get it at all. What Marie wanted to say is she can’t forgive those five for choosing Olivia rather than her. Those things about charm and whatever are just excuses.”

Good look, good finance, great authority—those guys have everything.

Marie pouted while objecting.

“Even personality is an important factor. What I want to say is that those five are failures in that respect.”

“Is that so? Their reputation is quite good though.”

Their surroundings might only be flattering them but, I haven’t heard any bad rumors about them.

“Or rather, thinking carefully it’ll be impossible to go out with them. Did you hear? The venue of Brad’s tea party reserved a garden in the capital.”

“Aa~, in the game it was also like that.”

“That sounds plausible if it’s in the game, but doing that in real life is just no good isn’t it? Just how much money he is using for only a tea party I wonder.”

When it comes to the topic of money, I can feel that this girl is also a commoner like me.

But—.

“By the way, the snacks and tea that you are eating right now—they will fetch a really high price if they are totaled.”

The sweets in this world are really expensive.

Even the sweets I prepared are something I especially ordered from a patisserie chef. So the price is really high.

Marie’s eyes opened wide hearing that.

“Tha, that much!?”

“It takes money to order special sweets from a chef of a famous shop.”

Marie muttered “How many underwear and socks I’ll be able to buy with that much money” with a serious face.

[Do you have a problem with your underwear and socks?]

“—My, my growth stopped, so all this time I’m using hand-me-downs—that’s—even if there is hole in my socks I can’t buy a new pair.”

Marie looked embarrassed, but I’m pitying her even more that it felt like I’m going to cry.

“Yo, you— say that from the beginning!”

“There’s no way I can say something so embarrassing easily!”

This girl too must be desperate to get out of her harsh life.

“Do you understand my feeling when my family told me there is no need to buy new clothes because I’m not growingggg!”

I calmed down the agitated Marie.

“I, I get it so calm down. Let’s go out to the city and shop after this. A, anyway, let’s quickly buy the necessary items.”

“I don’t have any money. Soon it will be the adventure part—that’s not it. We will be able to enter the dungeon soon, so I’m planning to earn money there. That’s why, I’ll bear with this for now.”

Luxion honestly evaluated Marie highly.

This guy, isn’t he spoiling Marie?

[Earning money yourself if you don’t have money. What a wonderful mentality. It’s also admirable how you don’t simply run toward doing crime.]

“Eh? Is that so? This girl is a woman who aimed to get a reverse harem in order to get out of poverty you know?”

[—It’ll be better if Master learns from Marie more.]

Is he telling me to aim for a reverse harem?

It should be harem for a man—but a harem in this world—there is no such thing huh.

I’ll rather be a bachelor rather than providing for women like big sis.

Although, the demerit of being a bachelor is too many that I can’t choose it. It’s frustrating.

Marie muttered with a dark expression—.

“I need to work hard to be able to buy the necessary items at the very least. —When I become able to enter the dungeon, I’ll earn money every day in the dungeon. I need money to become independent.”

—This girl, it looked like she was seriously planning to challenge the dungeon every day.

“I’ll buy you the necessary items at least, so stop with your stupid plan of entering the dungeon every day.”

When I said that I’ll buy them for her, Marie clasped her hands and made a smile.

She pressed her arm to her sides and took a sly pose.

“You will!?”

“A girl at your age wearing socks with holes in them is just too pitiful. I’ll pay that much money at least.”

Luxion looked at me and,

[Oh, is Master hiding his embarrassment? Won't it be fine to honestly say that you pity Marie?]

"—Shut up."

Thanks to one of her worries vanishing, Marie continued enjoying her tea and sweets with a smile.

◇

Now then, after that—there isn't any big event occurring for a mob like me.

I normally went through my academy life and normally challenged the dungeon to earn money for the tea party expenses—such days were continuing and before I knew it the first term was about to end.

That was when I noticed there was only Marie showing up even when I held a tea party.

Other than her there is only the second daughter Jenna who sometimes comes to make fun of me.

—Like today.

"Foolish little brother, are you seriously going to marry Marie?"

"Haa?"

Jenna talked without any interest toward me, who is preparing a second serving of tea.

"You invite that girl to your tea party every time right? Though it seems she isn't here today."

"Today she is going to the city to get her dress. That girl doesn't have any dresses, so she was worrying about what to do for the party before the long vacation."

"That girl is really poor isn't she? —Even if there is no problem with that girl herself, that girl's house is trouble."

I don't understand the true intention of Jenna who is saying that while eating sweets.

It's like she is giving me a warning.

“I don’t have a romantic relationship with that girl. —We are friends, or perhaps just two people with troublesome ties you can’t cut off?”

We both are fellow reincarnators.

We can understand each other better than anyone else in this world.

My Japanese sensitivity from the previous world doesn’t really work in this world after all.

Jenna is looking at me with a doubting gaze.

“Well, it’s you who will have it hard, so I’m not going to stop you.”

“What’s with you today? More importantly, big sis yourself, have you managed to land a marriage with someone?”

“Unlike you I have a lot of choices. Even now I’m receiving advances from several people.”

Jenna’s personality became worse due to the capital’s influence, even so there are still boys approaching her.

Her look—isn’t that bad.

Our house also has no more debt and is in the middle of developing thanks to my investment.

She is from a baron house in the countryside, so she is also not involved with any bad faction. From those it seems she is an excellent article.

For this kind of horrible woman to be an excellent article, this world is really terrible.

Even so—Marie’s house is a problem huh.

When she earned money, her family seemed to catch wind of it and made a debt using Marie’s name.

The culprit was Marie’s actual big sister so it’s not funny at all.

◇

The party before the long vacation is separated by the academic year.

The party that is held in a wide venue is really extravagant.

It’s a buffet party and the foods that are lined up are cooked by first class chefs.

Live music is filling the inside of the venue. I have no memory of attending a party of this level even in my previous life.

“Being in another world is really amazing.”

“Rhight!”

I looked at Marie who was stuffing her mouth full of food.

She was eating food enjoyably in her dress that she just bought.

As for her dress, it’s the cute type if I have to say what kind of dress it is.

There is also Marie’s atmosphere to consider but she looked childish no matter how you see it.

She looked like a little girl wearing a dress to act like an adult, making a really warming sight.

Setting that aside,

“—Why am I alone with just you?”

Both Daniel and Raymond are with the girls that Marie introduced to them so they aren’t here.

Originally I wanted to go around together with them to talk to girls and yet—what heartless friends they are.

They are trying to find a partner quickly to escape from the harsh marriage hunting race by themselves.

—That’s unforgivable.

When I’m thinking of getting in their way, Marie loaded a mountain of food on her plate while moving her gaze.

When I followed her gaze, over there was his Highness Julius—and Olivia-san.

Olivia-san who is wearing a uniform is also surrounded by boys other than his Highness Julius.

“Do you still have lingering attachment?”

While I'm wondering if she still hasn't given up yet, Marie shook her head.

"Stupid. The world where we live is too different~, I'm just thinking about that. I understood a lot of things in this term. I and those five—won't be able to see eye to eye."

Even luxury that is shocking for Marie is normal or modest from those five's perspective.

It seems she is also feeling jealous but, she is also accepting that it's fine like this.

"It helps that you understand. With this there is no one getting in Olivia-san's way."

If the main character Olivia-san becomes a couple with someone among those five—the world will also be saved.

A great uncertain factor will disappear with that.

The two of us are watching the party of the nobles from near the party venue's wall.

It's really a different world.

It's not about other worlds or anything like that—the world we are living in feels different from them.

"—Ah"

Marie let out her voice. There Angelica-san is talking to his Highness Julius.

She is glaring at Olivia-san and trying to separate them.

His Highness Julius got angry from that.

Seeing that Marie is—.

"Hey, thinking carefully, isn't it wrong to be all over other women in front of your fiancée? Even without thinking carefully, it's no good to get close to a man who has a fiancée."

"How about you look at a mirror? But, I agree with that opinion."

It's the scenario of that otome game so it can't be helped.

Thinking of it like that, then that's that but—it's certainly a horrible story.

"Does she love a man who abandoned his fiancée to choose her? I don't get women."

It looks like I can't understand womens' feelings.

Marie talked about this situation from the perspective of a woman.

“But, to abandon his fiancée like that when he met someone that he loves—putting it another way, it’s like he is proclaiming that he will abandon that girl too if he meets a more charming woman. I’d be put off if it’s me.”

“That should be a situation a woman will yearn for shouldn’t it?”

“Yearning and reality are different. It’s only a misunderstanding that came from the heat of the moment. But when you cool down, you will think ‘no way～’ about it.”

Certainly, that kind of situation happening in reality will make you tilt your head.

The people themselves might be getting heated up saying ‘It’s forbidden love!’, but the surrounding will be cooling down watching it.

But, hearing that from Marie made it sound like a gag.

“Those are words that I wish a certain someone who was planning for reverse harem could hear.”

Marie was hitting me repeatedly when I laughed at her.

“What’s with that! Say it if you’ve got a complaint!”

“Not really. I’m also agreeing with your opinion.”

Then—the venue got strangely quiet.

When I looked around, I saw gazes gathering on us.

Luxion, who is hiding nearby, explained the situation.

[Since some time ago everyone in this place is listening attentively to the argument of Julius and Angelica. There is also the timing of the change of music where the place became quiet at the same time when the conversation of the two of you was heating up.]

—So our talk got heard by the surrounding.

I and Marie broke into cold sweat.

“Wha, what now?”

Asked by Marie, I—took Marie’s hand and escaped from the venue.

“Pa, pardon us!”

“Pardon us!”

We escaped from the venue together and after that the live music resumed playing.

—Too late! Read the atmosphere more you guys!

“What have you done huh! We became conspicuous just now!”

“Don’t make it sound like it's my fault! More importantly, I can’t eat all the types of food now!”

So you’re prioritizing your hunger rather than sex appeal huh—this girl is really a good-for-nothing reincarnator.

The area was dark when we got outside.

Luxion’s single eye shined and illuminated the surroundings.

Marie turned back toward the venue and—.

“I wanted to have more fun.”

She casted her gaze down in dejection.

A bit of guilt welled up inside me.

After all, this girl was enjoying the party in her own way.

“There will be a lot of chances to go to parties as long as you are in the academy so don’t worry.”

“The parties that I can come to are only the parties that I can join while I’m in the academy.”

When the party before the end-of-term ceremony is over, a long vacation will be waiting.

“—More importantly, what is your plan for the summer vacation? Will you return home?”

When I asked her that, the answer she gave me was horrible.

“I was told with a letter to stay in the academy and earn money. The letter also told me to send money home. The letter came from the whole family.”

It’s so horrible I can’t even say anything.

The silence continued for a while, until I couldn't endure anymore and invited Marie.

"It's not the capital, but want to come to my home?"

"Your home?"

"I plan to return to my own territory during the long vacation. Over there—it has hot springs."

"Hot springs!"

Marie suddenly turned happy. I felt a bit relieved seeing that.

"Not just that! —There is also rice."

"RICEEEE!"

Marie rejoiced and ran around on that spot.

For us reincarnator, it's really difficult to be able to eat the staple food from our previous world.

She is really happy that it became possible to eat that food.

"What about miso!? Shoyu!?"

"No, those are still impossible."

Hearing that Marie said "Ee~" in disappointment. Luxion is complaining beside me seeing Marie like that.

[I'd be able to prepare them immediately if Master wasn't fixated with the natural product though.]

That kind of thing is the same but different in nutrient or taste.

This guy can prepare that, but I'm a member of the natural faction.

"I want to eat the natural product"

"I like the natural product better"

We looked at each other's face hearing that our opinion overlapped.

It felt a bit embarrassing that both of us averted our faces.

Luxion said [Is that so. Then please wait one more year].

This guy is amazing.

It seems he will be able to prepare miso and shoyu in just one more year.

—Can't he make it faster?

Marie is getting into high spirits looking forward to the long vacation—and fell down.

"Oy, are you okay?"

"—I've been wearing high heels for a long time, so my feet hurt."

This is because she forced herself and bought something like high heels.

Marie used healing magic to her own ankle. Seeing that I recalled the past.

Once my little sister from the previous life said that her feet hurt and cried. She wouldn't move then.

I left her and went home, but I got worried after a while and returned.

—That girl, she got tired and fell asleep.

Recalling that, I turned my back toward Marie who finished the healing and crouched down.

"Come on, I'll send you back so hop on."

"Aren't you considerate? Take me till the girls' dormitory then please."

How long are you going to act similar to my little sister?

Say thank you first.

◇

Marie recalled the past on Leon's back.

Luxion was illuminating the dark path inside the academy.

(I'm recalling the past. Come to think of it—big bro also carried me on his back like this.)

She recalled that annoying big brother.

Since he died because of her fault, she was regretting it all the time.

She recalled what happened in the previous world and strongly hugged Leon's back.

"Oi, that hurt."

Leon complained, but seeing how similar he was with her big brother she was irritated—and happy.

"Don't complain and walk quicker."

Tears came out. She got embarrassed and buried her face on Leon's back.

(In the end, I was hopeless all the time without my big bro there.)

Her life went off the rails since her big brother died.

He had a bad mouth and his personality—was also bad, but at heart he was a kind big brother.

That big brother and Leon overlapped with each other.

But, Marie thought.

(I wonder if big bro also reincarnated? —I hope he is happy if that's the case.)

She recalled her big brother who died young and lifted up her face to look at the sky. There the moon was pretty.

"Hey, what kind of place is your home?"

"It's in the countryside. The place is quiet and slow but I like it."

"You, I get the feeling that a place like the capital isn't your favorite."

"That's because I don't like how messy it is. I don't want to get busy and work."

"Uwa, that's the line of a hopeless person."

(Big bro also said something like that before.)

Marie thought back of everything until now on Leon's back.

(Those times I talked to those four, I also wasn't really fired up. I'm not suitable with the prince and those four.)

She tried to aim at the four other than Julius together with Leon, but she didn't get any feeling of 'this is it' from them.

Now she understood the reason for that.

(—Aa~, my interest in men is really bad. To think that I'll like someone who is like big bro, what a shocking truth for my second life.)

Marie thought such a thing while making stupid talk with Leon.

◇

The end-of-term ceremony ended safely and the day to return home arrived.

Father came to pick me up at the port.

I'm waiting for Marie who didn't arrive in time.

"That girl, she is late."

Both Nicks and Jenna have already headed to the port.

Luxion is considering the reason for Marie's lateness.

[—Perhaps her preparation is taking time?]

"Women take a lot of time for this kind of thing after all."

[Or perhaps, she overslept.]

"That's possible."

—But, my chest was feeling uneasy since this morning.

I can't calm down no matter what.

[Master, should we go pick her up?]

"Yeah. But, I can't enter the girl's dormitory."

While we were making such talk, some girls wearing uniforms passed in front of us.

But, their talk made me curious.

"That felt good."

“It was because she was impudent. That felt refreshing.”

“It’s her fault to stand out like that in the party.”

The mean looking trio of girls are followed by Exclusive Servants.

I got a bad premonition after hearing their talk.

“Party? Refreshing? —Luxion, search for Marie.”

I started running. Luxion headed toward the girl’s dormitory ahead of me.

—Don’t tell me, something happened to that girl?

◇

Marie, whose hair was still messy from sleeping, was running while carrying a traveling bag.

“I OVERSLEPTTT!”

She was nervous yesterday and couldn’t sleep well.

She thought about meeting Leon’s family, and she was also worried that her family would try something.

—Besides, she was feeling a bad premonition.

Thanks to that, she slept really late yesterday.

And then, when she woke up there wasn’t long until the meeting time.

“Hau!”

Marie prepared in a great hurry and rushed out of her room, but she collided with a female student when turning around the corner.

Marie fell but she immediately got up.

“Ouch ouch—ah, are you alright!? I’m sorry. I was in a hurry so—eh?”

When she offered her hand toward the girl she collided with, Marie got really scared seeing that girl’s eyes.

The female student with the dark gaze was—Olivia.

Olivia stood up like nothing had happened and walked away while ignoring Marie.

Marie realized that she was breaking in cold sweat.

“Wha, what. What was that?”

—It was really scary.

Her image of Olivia was someone who was always smiling cheerfully, but just now she was expressionless with cloudy eyes.

It made Marie scared.

(What? She looks like she is hating everything—I have seen several girls making those kinds of eyes but, did something happen?)

She considered chasing after Olivia, but her legs wouldn’t move.

Her heart was beating loudly in her chest.

Then—.

[Oh, it seems you really overslept.]

“Fuwah! I, it’s you Luxion. Don’t surprise me like that.”

The uneasy Marie wiped her sweat and picked up her traveling bag.

[Master is worried. He thought that perhaps something happened.]

“I, I’m sorry. I couldn’t sleep well yesterday and when I woke up the time was—”

While she was making excuses, Luxion moved his single eye in a nodding gesture.

[It’s fine if there is no problem. Then, let us depart.]

“Ri, right.”

Marie, who recalled what just happened, was really concerned about Olivia.

But, thinking whether it was alright for her to call out to her when they weren’t close at all, and with how Leon and his family were waiting for her—she didn’t go after Olivia.

◇

“Are you a kid, oversleeping like that!”

“I, I’m sorry.”

I’m seriously relieved hearing that the reason Marie was late was because she overslept.

I got a bad premonition, but in the first place my instinct isn’t that accurate.

I’m glad my instinct was wrong.

Both of us hurried toward the port into the docking place for airships.

I talked with Marie while walking.

“Has the ship departed?”

It seems she is worried whether father’s ship has departed or not.

“It’s a private ship so it can be flexible. Though the port will complain to us.”

[It’s fine even if we are left behind. My Partner can send the two of you there.]

“Partner will stand out. You made it too big.”

[It was because of Master’s instructions. It wasn’t my fault.]

“Is that so? Yeah it is huh.”

I also made small talk with Luxion, but the strange bad premonition in my chest hasn’t calmed down since some time ago.

“—Marie, did nothing really happen?”

I worriedly checked with Marie, but the person herself doesn’t understand what I’m talking about.

“What do you mean?”

“That’s why—no, as I thought, forget it.”

“Wait! I got curious now so say it already!”

This girl will only laugh even if I told her I have this strange bad premonition.

I looked at Luxion.

“Luxion, did anything strange happen yesterday?”

[Does Master think I’m grasping everything in this academy? I never received such an order, so I’m not investigating anything.]

What an annoying guy.

Marie looked at Luxion and made a disappointed face.

“Even though I thought that an AI would be more amazing than this. Could it be, that you’re a slightly hopeless child?”

Marie’s words seem to have lit a fire under Luxion. He retorted back.

[I can’t pretend to ignore that. The cause is because Master didn’t order me to collect information due to his disinterest with the matter of the academy. How can you expect results from me even though I wasn’t even ordered for anything like that? In the first place, I’m not someone with nothing to do. My main body is working hard even now to build a workshop in Master’s home. Not doing anything needless is also the proof of excellence—]

Marie ignored the passionately talking Luxion and showed interest toward the topic of the workshop.

“You have a workshop!? Eh, could it be you’re rich!?”

“That’s still in the future. It’ll be better to have a lot of sources of income after all.”

“How nice～”

Both I and Marie are losing interest at Luxion’s explanation.

Luxion said.

[—Both of you have similar personalities. The way you two ignored my explanation is also exactly the same.]

“How are we similar!?”“Where are we similar!?”

My voice overlapped with Marie again.

It’s embarrassing—and funny.

We laughed together.

“First I want to eat rice when we arrive at Leon’s home. Also—rice crackers!”

“I’ll prepare that but, how should I say it, your taste is subdued.”

“It’s fine isn’t it. You can eat it as it is with its crispy texture, but it’s also tasty to eat it when it’s slightly damp.”

“That’s tasty but, there is something else than that.”

“Mochi?”

This girl, hoping for rice crackers or mochi—.

No, I understand her feelings though.

My bad premonition calmed down and I’m getting relaxed.

It seemed the bad premonition was just my imagination.

While we’re getting heated up with our talk, a docking place for a small airship came into view at the other side of the port.

It looks like the airship will depart from the dock with just a little bit more time.

“Oh, what nice timing. Let’s get on it.”

“I’m taking the window seat!”

Marie broke into a run. Seeing her I thought of how energetic she is while thinking that she is similar to my little sister.

Do I have some kind of destiny with the little sister character whether it’s in the previous life or in this life?

Suddenly something weighed my mind and I looked back.

There is this thing weighing my mind no matter what.

There was also the strange bad premonition this morning—I’m looking back wondering if it’s alright like this.

[Master, is something the matter?]

“—It’s nothing.”

Marie boarded the airship and waved her hand energetically at me.

“That girl is lively too today.”

It feels like I made some kind of mistake but—surely it’s just my imagination.

Short Story — Marie Route the Second

◇

It was the second term of the academy.

Marie Fou Lafan who should be still a first year was, —was in a religious establishment that was called a temple.

That place had the construction that reminded her of the church in her previous life. Marie was wearing a pure white dress in that place.

When she looked up at the stained glass through her veil, the sunlight that shined in through there was very pretty.

It was the wedding dress that she had never worn till the end in her previous life despite her yearning for it.

In addition, the relatives of her and her partner were in attendance inside the temple.

She was in the middle of a marriage ceremony. It was a dream of hers that didn't come true in her previous life.

(—Why did it turn out like this)

But, Marie's feeling was—the worst.

It hadn't been even one year since she enrolled into the academy.

And yet, she was going to marry like this.

It wasn't just an engagement, it was a marriage that would make her withdraw from the academy.

When she glanced at her family who was sitting on the bench, they were looking really delighted.

Her family in this life couldn't be called a good family even as flattery, but there was a reason why they were happy with Marie's marriage.

Her father in this life said:

「Our useless youngest daughter fetched a really good price.」

Her mother in this life was also looking happy.

「Indeed. With this the debt of our house will be gone.」

—Marie was sold off by her family.

(These guys are absolutely unforgivable!)

Marie gritted her teeth and trembled in fury. Her bridegroom was walking toward her.

Marie cursed in her heart seeing the appearance of that bridegroom.

(—This guy, I got a really bad feeling from him!)

He sighed seeing Marie's appearance and approached her side with a reluctant air.

The man's age had passed thirty years old. He looked unhealthy with a fat body. The man took his gaze off from Marie.

「Why do I have to marry this kind of pipsqueak? Even though my preference is a more glamorous woman.」

His attitude was full of discontent and in addition his words were like this.

Marie was seething with anger.

(It's your house that approached us with this marriageeeeee!)

Setting aside Marie's mental age, if one looked at only her physical body then she was still 16 years old.

She was recognized as an adult in this world and could also marry.

But, from Marie's view—right now her enjoyable academy life was taken away from her and she was forcefully married to a man who she didn't even like.

Besides, her being sold by her family like this wasn't funny at all.

She couldn't agree with this marriage at all.

(Don't screw with me! Why do I have to go through this—this marriage without even any dream or hope in the world of "that otome game". I want to marry—properly with someone I love—)

Marie had continued living in hardship since she reincarnated into the world of that otome game.

Her only hope was enrolling into the academy one day and for that she polished her healing magic until now.

She trained so much that she sacrificed her body's growth thanks to that.

She trained her healing magic in secret because if her family learned of it then surely they would make use of it as they pleased.

They were a really horrible bunch compared to her family in the previous life.

After all, their debt bloated up too much—that they sold Marie to a rich house in exchange for writing off their debts.

(How much hardship do you think I've gone through up till now!? Even though I was finally able to enroll into the academy and have quite an enjoyable life even if it differed from my original plan!)

The priest—the equivalent of it in this world began the marriage ceremony where the two were standing.

「Well then, let's begin the marriage ceremony.」

The bridegroom looked like he wanted this ceremony to be over quickly.

He wasn't interested at all about Marie from the start.

What interested him—was only Marie's lineage.

The groom's house was, so to speak, an upstart house.

And then, the way they were climbing up to their current position was also peculiar. Other nobles held antipathy toward them.

Because it was that kind of house, they wanted noble blood no matter what.

It wasn't like it had to be Marie.

「End it quickly.」

What would happen to her if she married someone like this?

Marie could easily imagine it.

Surely a loveless marriage would be waiting for her.

In the worst case, she would be treated coldly after she gave birth to a child because they'd have no more need of her.

(I decided I would do my best this time—I want to be happy in my second life, and yet!)

Tears came out.

And then, Marie recalled her big brother in the previous life.

Looking back now, he was a very reliable big brother.

(—Save me, Onii-chan.)

Marie muttered in her heart, and then—she recalled how it became like this.

◇

Around the time when there were only several days of summer vacation remaining.

I, Leon Fou Bartfort was spending my time relaxing in my home.

My partner Luxion is floating around my right shoulder, his single red lens that served as an eye is watching Colin and—Marie running around the garden.

Marie is angrily chasing Colin around.

「WAIT YOU BRATTTTT!」

Colin is running while laughing.

「No way~」

Marie is chasing my little brother around, but the reason for that lies with Colin.

「They are quarreling again?」

I'm watching in exasperation. Luxion explained the situation to me.

[Yes. It was caused by Master's little brother teasing Marie.]

It seems that Colin thinks of Marie like a big sister who isn't that much older than him.

He would make fun of Marie who was acting like someone older and played with her.

It would be better if Marie ignored it, but Marie herself also became worked up so it needlessly amused Colin.

Then father came out from the mansion and dropped his fist on Colin's head.

「Ouch!」

「Colin, don't make fun of Marie-chan!」

Marie, who was chasing Colin around, is flustered by father's act.

「E, err, mister, you don't need to go that—」

Father looked apologetic toward Marie.

「Sorry, Marie-chan. It's not that Colin dislikes you. I hope you won't hate him.」

「Ah, yes.」

Colin pressed his head with both hands and ran into the mansion. In exchange Nicks—the second son came out.

He walked toward me and immediately talked to me.

「Colin was making fun of Marie-chan again?」

「That's right. The two of them won't get tired of it. They are like siblings who are close in age.」

I said that while laughing flippantly. Big bro shrugged.

「She is his sister-in-law after all, so it's not wrong.」

「—Eh?」

I'm shocked, hearing that reply. Big bro also looked shocked.

「Eh?」

「No, because—eh? Why is Marie a sister-in-law?」

「—Yo, you, are you seriously saying that?」

I'm also troubled seeing big bro get seriously shocked.

「No, because—」

「None of that! You brought her home and lived together with her for more than a month! From outside it looks no different than the two of you being married already!」

We aren't officially married but, from the surroundings' perspective, for a girl to spend her whole summer vacation in a boy's home is—certainly it might look like we are engaged.

「That's not the case! Marie is, you know—she can't return home.」

About Marie's home, it's a terrible family based on what I heard.

Because of that, Marie said that she doesn't want to go home during summer holiday, so I brought her to my home.

Naturally I never laid my hands on her.

There is my floating island near this home. It has a hot spring and a field—rice and some more things are cultivated there.

The most we did was only go into the hot spring and eat Japanese food in delight after so long.

Marie is also a reincarnator like me.

We get along well because we have the same sense of values, but that's all there is to it.

In the first place, Marie loves a handsome man.

If I'm asked whether I'm handsome, that's not the case. I'm not that girl's preference.

And then I myself love big breasts.

Marie is flat like a board so she is out of question.

—Both our preferences don't match each other to a lamentable degree.

Big bro is looking at me with a conflicted expression.

「There is no guarantee that you'll be able to find another good girl like that again. Besides father and mother are thinking that you and Marie-chan will marry.」

—Is that why my parents are strangely kind to Marie?

It feels like it will be a big problem if this misunderstanding isn't dispelled.

Big bro sighed.

「You really have it good. You were able to immediately find a partner in the academy after all. Even though I have it hard because I can't find anyone.」

It looks like big bro is also suffering from marriage hunting.

Unlike me he is enrolling into a normal class, so I thought his marriage hunting would be easier but—it seems that's not the case.

「I thought that if it's big bro's class then you would be able to find a girl right away.」

Big bro scratched his head.

「Even the girls in the general class want to live in the capital. They are looking for someone with connections that can allow them to live in the capital or in the mainland at least. Someone like me isn't even their second or third pick.」

Looks like big bro also has it hard.

I want to help him somehow but—right now I have my hands full with my own situation so it's impossible.

「More importantly, Leon. You two will also return to the academy tomorrow right?」

「That's the plan.」

My mood got heavy when I thought of the marriage hunting waiting for me in the academy.

It's the same for big bro.

He sighed and made a very troubled face.

「I still can't find a girl yet even though I'll graduate this year. If only I could be skillful like you.」

「—Big bro.」

「Oi, stop it. Don't look at me with pity. Being pitied by my little brother makes me want to cry.」

Really, I wonder why this world is so harsh toward men?

No, is it more like it's harsh toward mobs?

Unlike us, the main character of that otome game Olivia-san and the boys who are the conquest targets must be enjoying their summer vacation right now without worrying about anything.

—I'm really jealous.

◇

Around that time.

In the academy's female dormitory, Olivia was sitting on her bed inside her ransacked room.

She was hugging her knees and trembling.

The room was dark with the curtains closed completely.

「I'm fine—I'm still fine.」

Olivia muttered to herself. There were dark circles under her eyes.

Her hand was holding a letter that was sent to her from her hometown.

It was a letter from her family.

For Olivia this letter was the support of her heart.

Olivia was a scholarship student, but although she wasn't troubled about her living cost in the academy, it didn't mean she had any leeway monetarily.

That was why she couldn't return home even though it was summer holiday.

She spent her summer holiday in the student dormitory and immersed herself in her study every day so that she could keep up with her surroundings as much as possible—or that should be the case.

But, the reality was merciless.

Her door was knocked. Olivia twitched from that sound and she lifted up her face.

「Hih」

She almost screamed, so she covered her mouth with her hands. Then the voice of an academy staff called out.

[—Olivia-san, his Highness is waiting for you in front of the dormitory. Please prepare immediately.]

The staff only said that and left.

Olivia buried her face into her knees.

「—Why won't he leave me alone?」

In the summer holiday, the young noblemen including Julius frequently came to the girl's dormitory to invite Olivia.

Because the five of them invited her one after another, Olivia was unable to secure any time for studying.

This time when there were few female students in the academy was a precious time for Olivia.

But those five were taking that time away from her.

「Even though I want to study more」

But, with her standing, Olivia was unable to refuse the invitation from Julius.

At first she didn't know that Julius was the crown prince, but now she knew.

She was unable to refuse him, and if she accepted the invitation from Julius, she also couldn't refuse the invitation from the other boys—those young noblemen.

And when she got close with those five like that, she got resented by the girls in the academy.

「What should I do? Just what should I do?」

It would be nice if she could honestly tell them that they were a bother, but if she said such a thing then Olivia would lose her place to belong.

The other was his Highness the crown prince—the next king of this country.

It wouldn't affect just herself. She didn't know what kind of harm it would cause to her birth place.

Olivia stood up and prepared herself for going out before heading out to meet Julius.

◇

When the second term starts, even a mob will get really busy.

Even just speaking about the events of the academy alone, there are the academy festival and field trip in the schedule.

I'm thinking of doing something in the academy festival, but there is a bigger problem than that—.

「Marie-sama, please introduce girls to us too!」

—It's these boys from the poor baron group who are bowing toward Marie.

And then Marie is—.

「Oh? You aren't telling me to do it for free aren't you?」

—She is sitting on a chair while getting cocky.

She crossed her arms and legs with a composed smile.

I wanted to teach this girl the word humility.

The boy who acted as the leader negotiated with Marie, but behind him the boys were waiting with blood curdling expression.

From first year to third year—almost everyone is here.

「Of course! We will do anything that we can! That's why—please introduce girls—wonderful girls to everyone!」

「What to do～」

Before Marie introduced girls who were a bit problematic to us.

If this is the previous world—Japan, they would be girls who are a bit problematic.

A shut-in girl, a lazy girl, a girl who is only interested in her hobby, those kinds of girls.

But, in this world a problem of that degree is the same as no problem at all.

Rather, they can be called wonderful girls.

For heirs of poor baron houses like us, the girls who Marie introduced to us are goddesses.

No, is that too exaggerating? Anyway there is no doubt that they are excellent articles.

They are so excellent that they are girls who you will beg to go out with, even if you have to duel the others for it.

For example, it's fine even if the girl keeps shutting herself in her room and won't go out to classes or academy events.

It's also fine even if they spend their days doing nothing with the reason that it's troublesome.

A girl who has no interest at all in anything but her hobby and won't even remember people's names is also alright.

Just that much can simply be considered as their uniqueness because the normal girls are too horrible compared to them.

Marie who is close to such problematic—no, unique girls— is asking for an intermediation fee to the boys.

「Then—perhaps I'll ask for the student cafeteria's pudding every day. I want to eat pudding at lunch every day.」

「Eh!?」

It's just a pudding from the student cafeteria but, this academy is a school for nobles.

Naturally, even the pudding that is sold in the cafeteria is really extravagant.

To speak in modern Japan's terms, it's the cafeteria's famous sweets that are priced 1000 yen a piece.

By the way, fundamentally students can make use of the student cafeteria for free, but change of menu or ordering additional side menu will be charged with money.

I looked at Marie with exasperation.

「How can you ask for pudding just for introducing someone? What's more you're asking it for every day.」

As expected, even Marie seemed to think that she was asking too much. She hesitated slightly.

「Be, because I want to eat it. I, I get it. Then, I'll be fine with just three pudding per week.」

The male students opened their eyes wide in shock hearing that.

「Thre, three!?」

Marie is also surprised, and then she compromised.

「The, then—once per week」

The boys formed a circle and began discussing.

「Oi, do we really only need to prepare pudding? For some reason, her demand is gradually decreasing though!?」

「Idiot! Surely it's some kind of code. If not—the compensation is too cheap.」

「Surely it's a trap isn't it? Co, could it be, there is no girl remaining?」

From what I heard at the boys' talk, it seems that the compensation Marie demanded is too little that they are harboring doubt.

If I have to give an example—even though they thought that they would be asked to buy an expensive bag or clothes from a famous brand, they were instead asked to hand over pudding from the mini market. Is that what they thought?

It seems they are uneasy because the compensation is too cheap.

I understand very well from this just how much a girl will normally demand from them.

—It's really sad to be a man.

The leader turned toward Marie.

「Marie-sama—forgive my ignorance but, is pudding some kind of secret jargon?」

Marie's smile is twitching.

「You guys, do you think I'll make some strange demands? I'm telling all of you to prepare pudding from the school cafeteria for me! What other meaning it can have!?」

「Eh!!」

The boys are seriously shocked.

◇

In the class.

It's the second term now. My friends Daniel and Raymond who I met after so long were laughing.

「They misunderstood pudding as a secret jargon? Those seniors are really stupid.」

Daniel said that, but then Raymond chided him「Don't make fun of them」

「That's just how desperate they are. More importantly, the freshmen this year are really lucky. We have Marie-san, so even we have the chance to encounter a girl.」

The problem children who rarely came out from the girl's dormitory.

Without Marie, we couldn't possibly have met them.

When thinking that, Marie's existence is important for us.

I grumbled.

「I also want to be introduced to a girl.」

But, when I said that, my surroundings' reaction became really complicated.

「—Leon, I've been thinking this from some time ago but, are you an idiot?」

「It's better for Leon to reflect on himself for real. If you don't reflect, then you better be careful when going back at night.」

Everyone will react like this.

「You guys, do you think that I'm going out with Marie?」

Daniel made an exasperated face.

「It'll be strange if you aren't going out with her. You spent time together with Marie-san in your home during the summer vacation right? That's already like you two are betrothed.」

Raymond is nodding.

「You two haven't announced it publicly, so perhaps you two are still a step short of engagement? I'm really jealous.」

Daniel glared at Raymond who said such a thing.

「Oi, Raymond. I heard that you were going out with a girl that was introduced to us before though? I don't want to believe it but, you aren't stealing a match on us aren't you?」

「Daniel—I'm sorry.」

Raymond apologized happily. Daniel grabbed his collar with his hands and lifted him up.

「SO YOU TOOOOO!」

What a noisy bunch.

Marie came to the classroom while I'm looking at them in exasperation.

Her hand is holding a leaflet.

「Listen, listen! About the academy festival, there will be contests on the third day! I heard that we can get prize money if we get high ranking in it!」

Her eyes shined really brightly. Marie looked very happy.

Her eyes are blinded by prize money.

This girl is really loyal to her own desire.

「You're going to participate?」

Marie shook her head when I asked her.

「 For a girl it's no good. The athletes will be decided by social standing or influence. In the first place the number of contests that girls can participate in is few.」

The participants in the contest will mainly be boys.

The reason? It's for marriage hunting.

The boys have to show their stuff here no matter what.

The reason is—because this is an appeal time toward girls.

In that otome game, this is an event for the conquest targets to show their stuff.

Did the main character-sama also show her stuff in this event?

「—And so Leon, won't you try participate in this?」

The leaflet that Marie showed me contained the writing about the air bike race.

「Air bike race? That's impossible for me.」

「Why!? The prize money for this race is amazing see!」

「The boys will fight each other for the participant seat of a contest that is popular. Just like how girls got a lot of baggage like social standing and so on, we also have it hard.」

The school caste in this world is the real deal, not like the made up school caste in the previous world.

In fact, a caste—a social class system is actually existing in this academy.

Social class doesn't only exist between the nobles and commoners, it also existed between nobles.

The standing of one's house also influenced how the participating athletes are decided.

It's useless only relying on one's skill.

Marie whispered into my ear.

「Look, it'll be possible for you to participate and even win if you use Luxion right?」

「—You, you don't get that guy.」

If it's that guy he will surely say something like [Money? —I can prepare something like that no matter how much you want, so?].

While I'm thinking that, Luxion replied in a volume that can only be heard by the two of us.

[I've confirmed the requirements. Participation in the contest and obtaining overall victory, is that correct? Then starting from now I'll arrange so that the strong contenders will fall sick and the participating athletes in the day of contest will meet an unfortunate accident—]

It surpassed my imagination.

Or rather, what do you mean, an unfortunate accident?!

It seems Marie also thought that it'll be dangerous to rely on Luxion and she looked at the leaflet in dejection.

「Even though I thought I'll be able to earn money here.」

「Why do you think that you will also get a share when it's me who'll participate? Are you stupid?」

「I'll at least give you some support if you participate! Forget that, please I beg you. I'm in a pinch this month! Cooperate with me!」

「Ha? I gave you some allowance already though.」

She was too pitiful, so I gave her some spending money when the summer vacation was over.

Furthermore the amount was considerable. I can't imagine her running out of money immediately.

Marie wiped her tears.

「—It was gone because of my family's debt. The debt collectors marched to my place when they thought I had even a little bit of money. Even though it's not my debt, aren't they horrible!?」

「Uwaa」

Luxion analyzed the situation.

[They must be thinking that Marie who enrolled into the academy would earn some money as an adventurer, so they came to collect the debt even if only slightly. Other than that, perhaps Marie's family also mentioned her name to the people who came to collect the debts?]

It's too horrible I can't find any words to say.

Marie started crying, so Daniel and Raymond who were watching glared at me.

They must be thinking that I'm making her cry.

「Anyway stop crying. That's right! There will be betting in the contests too, I'll earn a lot of money there.」

My words will sound stupid for those who listened from outside, but I have Luxion so I'll be able to win the bets easily.

But, Marie refused that with a strong will.

「That's no good.」

「—Eh?」

「I hate gambling! You too, if there is no need to gamble then absolutely don't do it.」

「Ri, right.」

—I think life is the same as gambling but, there won't be any meaning even if I said that so I stayed quiet.

Marie pressed her hands on her face and groaned.

「Now that it's become like this I'll earn money through the academy festival in an honest way! I have to think something that can sell.」

This girl is actually really tough.

◇

The day of the school festival.

「Welcomeee!! It's cheap, please take a look!」

Marie is working as a salesperson of a stand. She raised her voice to attract customers.

We are doing a food stand for the academy festival.

It's selling donuts that are brightly colored with colorful toppings.

「I don't think I'll want to eat something like this.」

I'm frying donuts. Beside me Daniel and Raymond are working hard.

「Leon, work properly.」

「That's right. This will be for Marie-san's important living cost.」

The two of them are pitying Marie and helping out.

And then I'm continuing to make donuts.

Marie attracted customers and sold donuts one after another.

「—That girl, she is plainly amazing.」

Sometimes she will be forceful, sometimes with smooth talking, and then sometimes with a sob story—she used every kind of method to sell a lot of donuts.

Luxion who is in hiding responded to my muttering.

[Shouldn't Master learn from her too?]

「I'm rich so I don't want to work.」

[The worst.]

「I don't hate myself even though I'm the worst like this though.」

[Rather than that, please take out the donuts from the oil.]

「Yes, yes.」

I took out the donuts like Luxion instructed. Certainly it seems that the donuts are cooked already.

[—Master, the second donut from the right doesn't fulfill our product standard. Please obey the recipe properly.]

「You are too nitpicky. I'll eat it at my break time so there won't be any problem right?」

Marie's voice is reverberating to the surroundings while I'm talking with Luxion.

「Welcomeee!!」

◇

Break time.

I left the stand and sat down on a bench with the failed donuts in hand.

It's a place where there isn't any academy festival activity, so there are few people here and I can calm down.

I came here alone in order to finish the failed donuts and also took lunch.

Marie? The donuts are popular and she can't stop laughing. She is continuing the sales even now.

I'm impressed by that girl's urge for manual labor.

「Donuts for lunch huh. I've made too many I don't want to eat them.」

[This is to dispose of the failed products. They came from master's blunder so this is only natural.]

「You, you're hating me aren't you?」

[I don't like Master but, I also don't hate Master.]

「What's with that answer?」

I ate the donuts slowly.

The donuts were made based on the recipe that Luxion prepared. The quality was great for something made by students.

「Ah, it's really delicious.」

[That's good.]

I immediately finished eating the first donut and when I bit at the second—a girl passed in front of me.

That girl is walking with her gaze casted down. It looked like she was deep in her thoughts.

That girl suddenly pressed her hands on her stomach.

Perhaps because she smelled the donut's sweet fragrance while passing in front of me, her stomach cried「Kuu~」cutely.

That girl blushed red and looked at my face.

「Di, did you hear?」

Normally a gentleman like me will say「What?」and pretend not to hear, but perhaps I got flustered seeing that girl and I nodded.

「Ah, yes—n, no, I didn't hear anything!」

Even though I corrected myself in panic, it was too late. That girl, Angelica Rapha Redgrave, went red and started making excuses.

「I, I was really busy that I didn't have the time to eat lunch. Be, besides—today the people who are usually with me aren't here, so—」

I don't understand what she wanted to say.

But, Angelica-san's gaze caught my donut and won't let go.

「Want some?」

When I offered her the remaining donuts, Angelica-san accepted even while looking embarrassed.

「I, is it fine?」

「Well, yes.」

「Sorry. I will pay you later with money.」

「Ah, those are failed products so there is no need.」

When I said that, Angelica-san was surprised after she took a bite with her small mouth.

「I, it's tasty. What do you mean by failure?」

「Like how the size is too big, or perhaps too small, that kind of failure.」

「I, is that so? It's delicious enough.」

Angelica-san sat beside me and ate the donuts with a delighted look.

「The people who accompany me won't let me eat something like this. It feels fresh.」

Angelica—the noble lady with villainess role in that otome game.

But, this girl doesn't look like a bad person.

Marie said it.

The main character who stole the fiancée of another person is far more of a bad person.

—But, that girl also tried to do the same thing, didn't she? Though she failed completely in the end.

When I looked at Angelica-san, she looked somewhat sad.

「What's the matter?」

「—No, it's nothing. The donuts are delicious. I'll take my leave Bartfort-dono.」

Angelica-san stood up with a smile and left. She knew my name.

「I'm a famous person huh.」

Luxion responded to my mutter.

[—Master wasn't aware of that?]

◇

The second day of the festival ended.

Marie counted her earnings from the stand.

「As expected from the academy where the rich people enrolled. The donuts are flying off the shelves even when we set the price of each one ridiculously high.」

If it was counted in Japanese yen, one donut sold for around 300 to 500 yen.

Even so the donuts were sold in great numbers and she was able to profit a lot.

Marie was in a good mood.

「If I have this money, I won't be worried about my living expenses tomorrow. Oops, the debt collectors will take this money away if I don't hide it.」

Marie stored the cash in her pocket so that they wouldn't be taken away this time.

There, a female student came with her hangers-on in tow.

The girl braided her hair to form rings at both sides. She brought a lot of demi-human slaves that were called Exclusive Servants with her.

Her cosmetics were thick and the smell of her perfume stung the nose—that female student gave off a bad vibe.

「You are Marie of Lafan House aren't you?」

Marie was confused because someone who she usually didn't associate with was talking to her.

「Who, who are you?」

「Your attitude toward your superior is unacceptable. Do you intend to say that you don't know about the House of Count Offrey?」

Marie recalled her game knowledge when she heard that name.

Yes—this girl's name came out in that otome game.

(No way!? Why is she picking on me!?)

Offrey House, a house that took over a noble house and rose up from formerly being a merchant.

It was the house of an evil noble that was connected with air pirates in that otome game.

That air pirates would be involved in an important event at the middle stage of the game. This girl was a character who would get involved with the main character whether she wanted it or not but—she was talking to Marie for some reason.

「Do, do you have some business with me?」

Marie talked modestly. The daughter of Offrey House answered her.

「Haven't you heard anything? Your house and my house will be tied through marriage. My big brother and you are going to marry.」

「—Haa?」

Marie was astonished hearing that.

「I'm troubled even if you tell me so suddenly. I've never heard of any talk about that.」

But the girl showed an indifferent attitude.

「Your opinion doesn't matter. Your house said that they will make you marry. Also, it seems you are associating with the destitute nobles but, stop that from now. I don't want my reputation to also fall because of you.」

「—What do you mean by that huh.」

「It means exactly as it is. It looks like you are joining the group of destitute nobles and also close with that upstart Bartfort aren't you? I'm telling you that's bothersome so stop it.」

What is this girl misunderstanding about?

Marie thought about that, but the girl paid her no mind and continued talking.

「You're going to marry my big brother. —Too bad that you won't be able to marry Bartfort.」

The young lady of Offrey House sent her a ridiculing smile. Marie predicted what she was thinking.

(This girl, she is happy to see other people's misfortune.)

From her attitude and the conversation, Marie judged that the girl was a type who liked to pointlessly put others down.

「I, I and that guy—Leon aren't like that.」

Marie said that and turned her face away. The young lady of the Count House scoffed.

「Good then. What I want to say is that other people will also look down on me if you're getting along with the poor rural nobles. Think about that properly if you're going to marry into our house. —I've warned you.」

Marie watched the girl leave and thought.

(My second life—is over.)

◇

The third day of the academy festival.

I listened to Marie talk about her family situation around the time the contests are heating up.

「Marriage with Offrey House? —You?」

I thought I heard that name from somewhere and I recalled that it's a family name that appeared in that otome game.

—It should be a house that is connected with air pirates.

Marie smiled powerlessly.

The passionate cheering that came from the venue of the contests—even I was a little interested in it until yesterday, but right now isn't the time for that.

「What a joke. Haha~, as expected I am really a sinful woman. Men are coming to me even without me doing anything.」

「—You can't refuse it?」

「You also understand right? Even like this I'm still a noble.」

No matter how poor her livelihood is, a noble is a noble.

I too once almost got married off for the house's sake.

「This Offrey House, there wasn't any decent end for them in that otome game.」

However, in that otome game this name only appeared in the text. They had been dealt with in the background without appearing directly.

It's a house that one shouldn't get involved with.

If you consider the scenario of that otome game, one must not get involved with that house.

「Even I will run away if I can. But, it's not like I can live by myself.」

If she refused, it would become a problem between houses.

Lafan and Offrey will search for Marie together.

Marie too would have to withdraw from the academy and live alone.

「Even though my family is in ruin, it's still a noble house after a fashion. It'll also affect the honor of the other house, so I will absolutely get discovered.」

Somewhere inside her, Marie has given up.

「Aa~a, I wanted to at least go to the field trip.」

「—You won't be able to join the field trip?」

She will be unable to participate in an event of the second term. Does that mean she will withdraw from the academy right away?

Is there any need to hurry that much?

「The other house wants the marriage to happen as quickly as possible. And then my family thinks that doing it right now won't be a problem seeing that I'll withdraw from the academy anyway. —The notice came just now.」

While we're talking, a loud cheer that split the eardrum rose up from the contest venue.

Surely someone has just put on a show, but I've no time to think about it.

「—Marie」

「Oops, don't think up anything strange okay?」

Marie stopped him when he was thinking of helping her using Luxion.

「I was even thinking of asking for help. I thought of it but—I want to avoid a clash with Offrey House no matter what. After all this house will be overlooked even when they do something bad, besides—they will be involved with the event.」

Offrey House is a house that will be involved with an important event at the mid stage of the game.

If we get involved with this house here, we'll become unable to predict the development of the future events.

Even considering the matter from a real life perspective, this house is troublesome with how many bad rumors it has.

Even with all the bad deeds they are doing, the matters are covered up. That means the kingdom is overlooking them.

There should be someone with influence backing them up.

It will become troublesome if I carelessly get involved with them.

If I want to save Marie even then—I will need a considerable resolve.

Marie said.

「—I had fun.」

「Eh?」

「I'm saying that I had more fun than expected. The prince and other boys wouldn't even look at me and I was unable to obtain a comfortable life with a reverse harem but—I had fun living the academy life together with you.」

Marie looked down for a bit, and then when she lifted up her face—she had a smile on.

「Bye bye. Well, I can use healing magic, so I'll tenaciously survive when the event is over. Lend me some help at that time.」

She is already thinking about the future.

She looked like she had given up a lot of things.

「Are you fine with that huh? Because—you said that you want to redo your student life.」

「This is better than reaching a game over. Because, we will really be in trouble if the main character doesn't play her role.」

「Bu, but still」

Marie turned her back toward me without pause and started walking.

「Thank you for everything. You too—do your best.」

Her back is really small and unreliable.

That retreating figure overlapped with the figure of my little sister from the previous life.

「—Ah」

My hand reached out, but I immediately lowered it.

◇

Night.

I'm lying down on my bed while still wearing my uniform inside my room.

Luxion is hovering nearby, but his red lens is shining red because the room is dark.

[—Is this alright?]

「What is?」

[Master should already understand what I'm referring to. Is it alright to let Marie go like this?]

「I told you already before. There are a lot of reasons, like the game's event for example.」

[Master is really a good-for-nothing.]

「—Shut it.」

Then Luxion made a suggestion.

[If Master gives me the order, I will be able to erase Offrey House right away. And that's including everyone lurking behind them.]

This AI is really dangerous.

—It's pathetic that I unconsciously considered agreeing with that suggestion.

「That would be pointless if it resulted in this otome game world perishing. The last boss is troublesome, so we're going to need the main character playing her role no matter what.」

[An enemy that even I cannot defeat is it? —Won't it be fine if we sink even this land too?]

「—Rejected. Or rather, you're always so extreme every time.」

[Then, is it alright even if Marie is marrying into that house like this?]

「Be quiet for a bit.」

Luxion doesn't say anything more to me.

But, his red lens keeps looking at me.

His gaze feels like it's condemning me.

While he's doing that, it's bothering me how my little sister's figure overlaps with Marie's back.

—It has been on my mind since some time ago.

But, there is no decisive proof.

Both I and Marie cannot remember our names in the previous life.

Even though we have memories of that otome game and also memories of our previous world—our names are the only thing that we can't remember.

It feels like there is something intentional about it.

But—the more I think about it, the more Marie feels similar to my little sister from the previous life.

Sometimes, I'm feeling annoyance, nostalgia—and comfort that I directed toward my little sister from her.

—Is that what Marie is to me?

Then, I—.

I lifted up my upper body and asked Luxion.

「—Luxion, can you carry out what I'm going to tell you? The conditions will be really harsh you know?」

Luxion showed confidence.

[Let's hear it.]

◇

—And then time returned to the wedding hall.

Marie recalled her big brother from the previous life.

(—Save me, Onii-chan!)

There was nothing in her big brother from the previous life that could be given a perfect score even as flattery. Even so he was an existence that would save Marie when she was in a pinch.

He also had a side that would slightly go too far in his doing but, if he was alive then she felt like that he would save her even from her situation right now.

Yes, if he was alive.

(Even in my second life I kept relying on big bro.)

Behind her veil Marie was shedding tears while smiling.

Then, the large door of the hall was thrown open violently.

「Stop this marriage!」

There was a young man asking to stop the marriage like in a drama scene.

The gazes of everyone inside the hall gathered on the young man.

Marie also looked toward that figure from behind her veil but—the young man's appearance looked like her big brother from the previous life.

「Onii-chan?」

No one around Marie reacted to her small voice.

She hurriedly removed her veil and checked once again with her eyes. There she saw the one who interrupted the marriage was Leon.

「Yo, you, what did you come for!?」

Leon's appearance looked like her big brother from the previous life with the veil in the way.

Marie was shaken, even so when she saw Leon's appearance she pointed with her finger and yelled angrily.

Just now it felt like a scene from a drama but, looking carefully Leon's appearance was boorish.

He was carrying a rifle and leading armed soldiers of Bartfort House.

It seemed it wasn't his intention to rush in gallantly and take Marie's hand to escape from here.

Leon smiled thinly.

「I told you. Stop this marriage. No— cancel it.」

The one who protested those words from Leon were the people of Offrey House and Lafan House whose event was interrupted like this.

「Who are you!?」

「What are the guards doing?」

「Throw that man out!」

The guests started making an uproar to throw out Leon right away.

But, Leon didn't move.

He showed several documents to them.

「Uh uh, don't move you all. I have the permission from the palace with me here. Justice is on my side no matter how much you guys are kicking up a fuss! That's how it is.」

It seemed Leon barged into the hall using the documents from the palace as his shield.

The people from both families are also surprised.

The man who would become Marie's husband—the bridegroom frowned.

「The palace you say? That's a downright lie.」

Leon gave a rebuttal with composure.

「It's not a lie. You can check it yourself.」

The people from both families were bewildered—even Marie was surprised.

「Palace? Eh, what have you done!?」

Leon started talking smoothly.

「Actually when I took a bit of time to exterminate the air pirates, those guys mentioned the name of a noble they had a connection with. When I investigated, the name of Offrey House actually came out. I informed the palace thinking that this cannot go on.」

The people of Offrey House reacted when the word air pirate came out.

「—The palace wouldn't move just with that」

Leon narrowed his eyes.

「There were those who tried to crush this information when I notified the palace. It became a bit of a dispute but the talk was settled without any problem. —I never thought that your backer would actually be Marquis Frampton though.」

The people of Offrey House were clearly flustered hearing that.

Because not only there was the matter of air pirates, even the name of Marquis Frampton who was their backer also came out here.

The face of Count Offrey paled.

Leon raised his rifle and his expression turned serious. His air changed from just now.

The atmosphere wasn't one where jokes could be made.

「Count Offrey, I ask you to come with us. I ask for Viscount Lafan to come along too.」

Viscount Lafan—Marie's father was surprised.

「Me, me too!?」

Leon showed proof.

「You have a secret agreement with Count Offrey don't you? There is the writing that you will cooperate with the matter of air pirates in exchange of having your debts taken care of. It seems you were planning to make a killing by working together with air pirates here.」

Marie looked at her father.

Then, her father fell down on his seat powerlessly. It seemed that the secret agreement was out.

The remaining family members other than Marie were flustered. Perhaps they knew about it.

「—No way. To think all of you are this rotten」

Marie's father lifted up his face hearing those words.

「I see. You went this far to take back this girl—the, then, I'll allow you to marry this girl. That's why, overlook us in this matter」

It seemed he thought that Leon barged into this place in order to take back Marie.

That meant, he knew about Marie and Leon's relationship but decided to separate them even then.

Marie felt irritated inside even while thinking that there was also misunderstanding there.

(What's with this guy? He is planning to get away from this by himself using me even after ruining my happiness?)

Seeing her pathetic father, Marie took a step forward to punch him. But then the bridegroom put his arm around Marie's neck.

「Do, don't move! If you move I won't guarantee what's going to happen to this woman! Take even one step and I'll break her neck!」

「What the hell are you doing you bastard!」

Even though Marie struggled, he was a man with a bigger physique than her.

She couldn't get away even with her struggle.

The soldiers of Bartfort House raised their rifles, but the bridegroom used Marie as a shield and started negotiating with Leon.

「You've worked hard just to take back this woman. It's not like I'm interested in her. I'll give her if you want her. But—that's only if you let me go.」

It seemed the bridegroom thought that there was no way to escape and so he treated Marie like a negotiation material.

Leon looked at that bridegroom— and the captive Marie. He looked slightly irritated.

「My bad but, I'm ordered to capture everyone. Also, what you are doing is unforgivable, threatening a girl like that. I wonder what the boys in the academy will say if they learn of this?」

He was replying indifferently but he looked angry.

Marie recalled her brother from the previous life seeing Leon being quietly angry like that.

Leon and her brother from the previous life looked like the same person.

(No way!? Don't tell me Leon is really—)

The moment she thought that.

A thin light pierced the bridegroom's shoulder from the ceiling.

「Gah!」

The bridegroom's arm let go of Marie. He pressed his hand on his shoulder with a pained look.

「I, it hurts. So, someone help!」

Marie got away from the bridegroom who crouched and cried in pain. She ran toward Leon.

「Leon!」

Leon lowered his rifle's muzzle.

And then Marie was making an expression of exasperation that was also mixed with joy somewhere in it.

「You look happy that your marriage is wrecked like this. As expected, you couldn't accept it huh.」

「So, sorry.」

Luxion descended from the ceiling.

[Master, I moved the operation to the next stage.]

Leon put the rifle on his shoulder.

「Yosh, then we'll move quickly. We've got to take over the territory of Offrey House within a day after all.」

Marie didn't understand what Leon was saying.

「Wait a second? Why is House Offrey 's territory mentioned here?」

Leon showed a smile.

「No, from my negotiation with the palace, it's decided that Offrey House and Lafan House will be crushed. Your house is in the mainland so that will be the palace's share. But, the count's territory is on a floating island so the palace said that they don't need it.」

Just what is this guy talking about?

Marie tilted her head in confusion. Luxion then explained to her.

[The talk was settled by offering to take away the fortune that Offrey House has amassed to be presented to the kingdom in exchange of receiving their territory. Currently Master's father and big brother are attacking House Offrey's territory.]

Leon explained further to her.

「By the way, the members of the poor nobles also lent a hand after I contacted them. They said it's because they are indebted to you. Aren't you glad?」

「U, uh huh. Huh?」

She was happy that they were helping but Marie didn't understand what they were helping with and she could only tilt her head.

Luxion explained in detail.

[The boys in the group that Master belonged to requested help from their house. There are also other nobles who gave their help too after we provided them with information. Well, around 200 airships were gathered as a result.]

A fleet that big attacked the territory of Offrey House and Lafan House.

Count Offrey and Viscount Lafan fainted while foaming in their mouth hearing that.

◇

The next day.

I talked with father, big bro—and the sleepy looking Colin in the office.

The talk is about the war yesterday.

Or rather than war, it was just sending airships toward House Offrey and House Lafan.

There was a skirmish but things were taken care of safely somehow.

After all, we had overwhelming numbers on our side.

As a result, the territory of House Lafan was erased from the map of Holfort Kingdom.

It became a territory under the direct control of the palace, while the floating island that was in possession of House Offrey became owned by Bartfort House.

I was hesitating whether to let House Offrey remain or not in consideration of the future, but—I got the feeling they'll only become trouble later, so I had them exit the stage here.

It was the result of deciding that getting involved only halfway would be the most dangerous thing to do.

But—my house that obtained the territory of the Count house became slightly troubled.

「Why do I have to get independent and become a Count! This is strange!」

It's not me who is making a ruckus.

It's the second son, Nicks.

Father is persuading him desperately.

「Stop protesting and accept it. This isn't the scale of having a branch house anymore but, dad too will be happy if you can go independent.」

The talk of the second son Nicks inheriting the territory of former Offrey House and becoming a Count is progressing.

Shouldn't it be father to be the count?

I had such a question and asked for the reason. Father then answered「It's impossible for me to manage the territory of a Count house. Also, I want to hand it over to Nicks and make him independent before Zola and Rutart arrive」.

As a father, he must wish to make his dear second son become independent splendidly.

If he is the one who becomes the Count, he won't be able to let big bro be the one to inherit the title later.

If father becomes the Count, Zola will see it as a good chance and tell father to give the title to Rutart—the first son.

When I asked about letting big bro inherit this baron house, father replied「—In that case Zola and Rutart will become the main branch of Bartfort House. They're going to make all of you work like their slaves」.

It will be a bother if the troublesome Zola and her children inherit the Count status after we had gone through all the troubles to destroy the troublesome Offrey House.

That's why, I too accepted big bro being the Count.

It's not like I'm the one who becomes the count, which means there will be less trouble for me. I agree wholeheartedly.

However, big bro won't agree.

「This is strange! Besides, is the position of Count something that you can receive just like that? Is it alright for me to be the one inheriting it!? Of course it's not alright!!」

Father made a smiling face saying that there's no problem.

「If it's about that, actually there is someone who is interested with you.」

「Eh?」

「A letter from Count Roseblade came—it said, I'm pleased with your guts to knock down Offrey House that I don't like, so I'll give you my daughter.」

—It was me who settled the talk behind the scenes though.

I heard that Roseblade House, a noted Count house, hated Offrey House.

There were various reasons for that, like their differing faction.

Colin, who was listening to our talk, looked at big bro with an idolizing gaze.

「So Nicks-niichan is going to become a Count. Amazing!」

Big bro put both his hands on Colin's shoulders and shook him.

「I'm troubled if I'm suddenly told to become a Count! Tha, that's right! Leon. You can just make Leon to be the Count instead! Leon was the one who arranged everything this time!」

Even though this is his chance to achieve success in life, he wanted to concede it to his little brother instead. What a model big brother.

I wish that a great big brother like Nicks could become happy.

That's why I told him with a smile.

「No way~. I think it'll be better if big bro is the one to receive the title along with all the troubles that come with it. Also, I've predicted big bro will complain so I brought the girl in question here. You two, I'll leave him to you!」

I called two women to come into the room. Even Deirdre-senpai also came. It seems she came as an escort for her big sister.

Deirdre-senpai is a third year student in the academy.

「Oh, the one who defeated that villain Offrey is a timid gentleman it seems.」

Big bro was in a different class from Deirdre-senpai, but they were in the same grade.

It seems they knew each other's faces.

「Deirdre-san? Could it be, the other party is Roseblade!」

That Deirdre-senpai is a young lady with blonde hair that is styled in ringlet curls.

Her big sister Dorothea-san—has straight and long blonde hair. She was wearing a dress that showed her glamorous body style clearly.

She had a really beautiful form that contained coldness inside.

She had a queenly personality that surpassed even Deirdre-senpai!

Her age is twenty years old.

A beauty who'll look really fitting with a whip in hand.

I'm jealous of big bro.

「She is Dorothea-san. Big bro's marriage partner candidate.」

Big bro pointed at my face when I introduced her.

「Why are you laughing!」

I also felt envious when learning that this woman with big breasts will become big bro's wife, but I became able to sympathize when I learned about her personality.

Well, she is someone harsh just like her appearance suggested.

「You look like you're having a lot of fun there while ignoring your wife.」

When Dorothea-san said that, big bro screamed「Hii」and backed away.

She already called herself his wife?

Well, the introduction today is actually a formal marriage interview though. The marriage is already 80% decided.

I have arranged it up to that point.

Their father Count Roseblade was also eager.

「What's with that behavior even though you're going to become the husband? Even though I've been looking forward to this after I heard that you defeated that villain Offrey—this is a disappointment.」

Deirdre-senpai is also looking disappointed.

「Indeed. Father too, I can't understand why he is looking forward to this marriage.」

—I asked Luxion to investigate. It seems that the two's father, Count Roseblade is worried whether Dorothea-san will be able to marry properly.

It seems he wants to marry her off if there is a proper candidate.

Dorothea-san is looking down at big bro.

「Even though your little brother Leon raised an achievement as an adventurer—it doesn't look like you, his big brother has done anything. Are you two really sharing the same blood?」

She is speaking as she pleases.

Colin is hiding behind father.

Father too is muttering something horrible like「Leon is the mutation in our family while Nicks is the normal one」.

Then—the trembling big bro lifted his face.

「Yeah, that's right! I'm an elder brother who is inferior to my little brother. So what!」

It seems he had something in mind and acted belligerently toward Dorothea-san.

Is this guy sane?

After thinking that, I realized big bro's plan.

「Big bro, don't tell me!」

「Shut up!」

It seems big bro is picking a fight with Dorothea-san in order to cancel this talk of marriage.

Apparently he is harboring a shallow thought that things will work out somehow if he can make Dorothea-san leave in anger.

「Big bro, you really don't know when to give up! Also calm down. You must not anger the other party!」

「Leon, I don't want to hear that from you! Now listen well, you selfish woman over there!」

Big bro pointed at Dorothea-san.

Dorothea-san said「Sel, selfish woman you said!」in indignation with a surprised face.

「Don't misunderstand. You're not the one doing me a favor by marrying me, I'm the one doing you a favor by marrying you! If you don't like it then tough, go back home immediately!」

The two were both red faced in indignation.

Father said「Nicks, stop! You will start a war with Roseblade House next!」with a face that looked like he wanted to cry.

—But.

The escort Deirdre-senpai is smiling.

「Onee-sama, I'm glad.」

—Hm?

Dorothea-san whose face is flushed red smiled and licked her lips bewitchingly.

Rather than saying that she is enraged, it looks like she is excited.

「Good. You're the best. All of the men before this, every single one of them would become servile just from hearing the name Roseblade. I—have been waiting for a man like you who'll be worth it for me to discipline.」

Big bro is shocked.

「—Eh? Wh, why?」

Dorothea-san folded her arms and her eyes sparkled.

「No, rather both of us disciplining each other—a gentleman who will clash with me fiercely is what I prefer instead. I hate docile man. I finally—found my ideal man!」

Big bro broke into cold sweat.

Dorothea-san hugged big bro's arm into her breasts—and dragged him out of the room.

「You're the best.」

Big bro is dragged out. His hand reaches out toward me when he is passing the door.

「He, help—」

I waved my hand with a smile.

「I'm happy for you, big bro!」

Both father and Colin are also waving their hand at big bro who is dragged away.

「I, it's fine like this isn't it?」

「Nicks-niichan is dragged away.」

I managed to safely push the troublesome position of Count to big bro.

I even found a marriage partner for big bro while I was at it. Is there a little brother as capable as me in this world?

When the door closed, we heard big bro's voice.

[Leon, I won't forget this you bastard!]

It seems he is crying in happiness.

Deirdre-senpai shrugged.

「I'm jealous of Onee-sama. I also wish to find a man with backbone.」

—I hope you can find a man like that. That's why please don't stare at me appraisingly like that.

Now then, let's take care of the remaining matters.

◇

Marie was crying when I returned to the academy.

「My house is gone, I'm not a noble anymore now!」

The reason she is crying is because her house was crushed and her status as noble was stripped away from her.

Now Marie lost her qualification to attend the academy.

「Would it be better if you married the heir of House Offrey?」

「I, I don't want that.」

I confirmed with Marie.

There is one way for Marie to stay as a noble and attend the academy.

But, in order to do that, there is something that I need to confirm with her first no matter what.

Depending on the result, I—will have to find a partner for Marie.

「—Hey, I told you before that I had a little sister in the previous life didn't I?」

Marie also looked like she wanted to say something. She nodded before she averted her eyes from me and looked down.

「Ye, yeah.」

Marie too must have vaguely suspected it.

Bit by bit I talked about my little sister—the little sister from the previous life.

「I can't recall her name but I have two parents and a little sister. It was a family of four.」

「—Me too.」

I should have noticed it quicker.

I thought that it's impossible but—I should have noticed that Marie is my little sister from the previous life earlier.

If I do that—then I wouldn't need to have this feeling.

「She was a really selfish little sister. She got a nice look, but she was good at playing innocent that my parents believed my little sister more than me.」

I talked to Marie about my previous life.

But, Marie who was nodding and listening tilted her head in the middle.

「—Wait a second? Your parents trusted the little sister more than the big brother?」

「That's right. That girl was good at playing innocent after all.」

「Wait, that's strange then. Because, my parents trusted my big bro more.」

「Eh?」

It seems there is some discrepancy.

「No, wait. Because look! You too pushed that otome game to your big bro because you couldn't clear it right!?」

「Certainly I pushed that game to my big bro but I asked him to do it. Also, I heard that my acquaintances also asked their male siblings for help. In the first place, I wasn't that horrible of a little sister.」

「My big bro was really scary when he got angry. He often went too far but he was fundamentally a type who I can easily control on the palm of my hand? How should I say it, he was a thickheaded type of person? Also, when I asked him for help he would happily do a lot of things for me.」

「Eh, you had that kind of big brother? Or rather, even though he was scary when angry, it's amazing that you can think of him as easily controlled.」

「Well, he was my own big brother after all. There was this line of how much he could get angry . I know just how much I could push it before crossing that line. Looking back now, I allowed myself to get spoiled too much as his little sister.」

—That big brother is completely different from me isn't it!

In the first place, my little sister from the previous life forced that otome game on me.

Besides, I'm never told that I'm someone scary when I get angry.

I also never go too far. And it's also impossible for me to be easily manipulated by my little sister.

—After all, I'd properly take revenge on my little sister when she messed with me.

Also, I’m not thickheaded!

What’s with that big brother who is like a light novel main character!

Besides, I had no intention of spoiling my little sister—so there is no way it was me!

「My little sister’s personality was really horrible. You know, like someone whose face would completely change outside compared to when at home. She knew how to read the flow and did whatever she liked by hiding behind my parents’ trust.」

「Then it wasn’t me. Or rather, to think that there is really a woman like that. Surely that little sister wasn’t a decent person.」

「Ye, yeah.」

Should I mention here about how my little sister had a rotten hobby or how she forced those on me?

While I’m thinking that, Marie took a pose like a gravure idol in front of me.

「Also, I was a beauty in my previous life. Even though I look like this now, my style in the previous life was really amazing.」

—My little sister had a good look but was her style nice? Certainly she was slim but, her style shouldn’t be that good. She could boast about it so much like this.

Too much of our information mismatched with each other that somehow my feelings turned complicated.

I said to Marie.

「—Sorry, I thought that you might be my little sister.」

「Stop that! Do I look like someone that horrible? Isn’t that horrible!?」

「N, no, my bad. But, you also thought that I’m your big brother from the previous life right? I’m not scary like your big brother.」

I’m a normal man that can be found anywhere.

「I, I’m introspecting! I just thought that maybe—but that’s not the case just as I thought.」

In the first place both big brother and little sister got reincarnated to that otome game world together won't be funny at all.

I and Marie made a complicated expression but—we gradually got amused and started laughing.

「What. So both of us were misunderstanding.」

「Looks like it. It's just impossible.」

That's why I said to Marie.

「Aa, then there's no problem. Marie—come to our home.」

「—Eh?」

Marie's mouth closed and opened in surprise. I scratched my cheek to hide my embarrassment.

「Even ruined, you still have a noble bloodline. Besides there is a talk in progress of entrusting you under my care. It looks like they will give the permission, so if there is no problem—like this, you can—you know.」

I scratched my head and looked down. Drops of tears spilled down from Marie's eyes.

「Pre, prepare the mood more if you're going to confess. Idiooottt!」

I panicked that I made her cry. But then Marie nodded even while sniffing.

「—I'll accept the confession so redo it. It's my dream to be confessed in a place where the night view is visible and receiving a ring.」

What a shameless woman.

However, I got the feeling that this much is fine.

Even a beauty is no good if it's someone like Dorothea-san.

I have learned a lot from big bro's marriage.

「I get it. I'll tell Luxion to prepare one.」

Luxion showed up from his hiding place when I muttered that.

[—Looks like Master has finally resolved himself.]

「Yo, you were listening!?」

I'm shocked. On the other hand Luxion seems to be in a good mood. Apparently he is happy.

[Yes. I will immediately find a location with the best night view and also start the creation of the ring. I will finish all the preparations if you two can wait for three hours.]

Marie complained when she heard that.

「I don't want something slapdash like that! Plan it more seriously! Also make the ring properly! It's fine even if it's cheap!」

[The result won't change even if I spend more time on it, you know?]

「Even so!」

Luxion reluctantly accepted it.

[It's troublesome. Also, please don't worry about the ring. I'll attach a large jewel to it. If you like, how about I prepare a ring for all your fingers with different jewels for each finger?]

Marie is appalled by Luxion's sense.

「Have you never been told that you have a bad sense?」

[—There is data that mentions how females love precious metals though?]

「It doesn't mean that anything is fine.」

It seems Luxion cannot understand the sense in this kind of field.

「So even you have things that you aren't good at.」

Luxion turned his red lens toward me when I laughed at him.

[Why is Master that happy?]

「Not really~」

◇

They returned to their usual daily life in the academy.

But, right now Marie—was standing in front of the airship's guest cabin while hitting the door relentlessly.

「OPEN THE DOOORRR!」

Marie was busy from the morning even though it was the field trip riding a luxury cruise ship.

Behind Marie, a petite girl hugging a book was being nervous.

「Ma, Marie-chan, the two of them won't wake up.」

The two girls that Marie was looking after wouldn't come out from their room even when it was time for breakfast.

This wouldn't be a problem if they were normal girls, but the girls that Marie was looking after had a lot of problems.

One was a lazy girl who wouldn't come out of her room and spent her time slacking off if she was left alone.

The other girl was a girl whose hobby was painting. When she was concentrating she would forget about sleeping and eating, and once she even fainted without anyone noticing.

Those two didn't wake up in the morning because they were put inside the same room.

(Why am I taking care of these girls? Even though it's finally the long awaited field trip, I've been doing nothing except taking care of the problem children.)

When she was trying to open the door somehow, the girl who was hugging a book sat on the floor and started reading.

「Why are you starting to read the book?」

「Eh? Be, because, they still haven't come out.」

Marie felt like crying hearing that reply.

「Don't sit on the floor reading! Also, don't bring a book when we're going to have breakfast!」

「Eh!?」

The girl with the book was making a seriously shocked expression.

(This girl's idiosyncrasy isn't losing to the other two too.)

She didn't know if it was in the previous world but, in this world these girls were greatly popular among boys even with this kind of personality.

Marie started hitting the door again.

「WAKE UPPPPP! THE BREAKFAST TIME WILL BE OVER LIKE THISSSS!」

The door next to such a noisy cabin opened. A sullen young elf came out from there.

He seemed to be an Exclusive Servant but he was a child no matter how she looked at him.

Marie stopped hitting the door.

(This kid, could he be—)

That young boy—Kyle made a snide remark toward Marie.

「I'm envious of how energetic you are in the morning. My master isn't feeling well, so can you be quiet?」

Marie's gaze wandered around.

(That means, the main character Olivia is also here? Thi, this is awkward. I don't really want to get involved, and I also want to avoid getting hated by her.)

The main character would become a saint in the future and also the queen of Holfort Kingdom.

She wasn't someone that Marie wanted to oppose.

「I, I'm sorry! My friends won't leave their room.」

Kyle narrowed her eyes.

「How about borrowing a key for the room?」

「—I'll do that. E, err, sorry again.」

Marie took the girl who was hugging a book and left that place.

◇

The noisiness was gone.

Olivia was sitting on the bed. She looked at her Exclusive Servant Kyle who returned.

「—Did you send them away?」

Kyle spoke proudly.

「Yes, I persuaded them. It was easy.」

Her Exclusive Servant Kyle was a slave that Julius purchased for her.

Olivia didn't purchase him with her own money.

But, the problem was Kyle's living expenses.

As his owner, Olivia had the duty to provide for him.

Because she had the duty to provide him with clothing, food, and shelter, the time she proactively challenged a dungeon to earn money increased just after summer vacation.

Olivia touched her forehead and checked that her fever still hadn't receded completely.

「Everyone around us is a noble, so be careful with your wording okay?」

「I understand. But, goshujin-sama can just tell his Highness Julius if they do something horrible.」

「That's no good!」

Olivia raised her voice. Kyle was surprised by that.

「I, I'm sorry. Kyle-kun, can you bring me water?」

「—Yes.」

Kyle was a clever and capable child.

But, his foul mouth stood out.

Perhaps because he was still a child, sometimes he would act spoiled with Olivia.

Olivia who didn't have any leeway sometimes would hold unpleasant thoughts toward such Kyle.

But, he was one of her few supporters in the academy.

Her feeling was eased a lot just by having someone to talk with.

However, Kyle was thinking that Olivia should make use of her standing as much as she could.

Olivia was unable to accept that.

The feverish Olivia lay down once more and closed her eyes.

「Even though I want to study」

There were textbooks, notes, and other things placed on the table inside the room.

She became unable to study because she got a fever. Olivia was getting impatient.

Then, she heard the door getting knocked on violently.

It wasn't Kyle.

They must be aiming for when Kyle wasn't here.

Olivia got up. She covered her face with both hands before standing up and walking toward the door unsteadily.

「What is it?」

There the girls of the academy were standing.

They were bringing Exclusive Servants with them.

「Oh, you're looking very disagreeable there. Even though we came to invite you to play.」

「—I'm not feeling good today, so please allow me to abstain.」

The girls forcefully dragged Olivia out of her room.

「Just come with us! This is a rare chance, so we'll teach you about gambling. The casino here has various games after all. We will be able to play a lot.」

The girls and the demi-humans who were their Exclusive Servants were making a nasty smile.

Olivia couldn't focus with her feverish head.

(I wonder what they are going to do to me this time?)

◇

Inside the luxury cruise ship.

I'm dumbfounded seeing the sight in front me inside the casino there.

「—You're shitting me.」

The main character-sama—Olivia-san is continuing to lose in a card game.

Even though she has no more money to bet with, the girls surrounding her are forcefully making her continue.

It's not just with money.

They're starting to gamble on various things, like a penalty game when returning to the academy for example.

「You're really weak.」

「—」

Perhaps it's just my imagination, but Olivia-san's complexion is also bad.

Her breathing is also disordered. Her eyes aren't focusing.

Also—.

[Master, Olivia's opponent is cheating.]

—From Luxion's report, I understand that Olivia-san is being set up.

Marie approached my side.

「Hey, what's with this?」

Marie talked to me with a small voice. I can't answer her.

About this field trip, students from all three grades participated in it together—and they were sent to three places.

Because of some kind of bad luck, Olivia-san is boarding this luxury cruise ship where none of the capture targets are present.

To be more accurate, Julius and Jilk should be boarding this ship too.

But, the two suddenly had business to take care of and they decided to meet up at the destination.

I discussed with Marie just what happened but we found no answer.

In the end we reached the conclusion that there shouldn't be any problem if they meet up at the destination.

Because of that, currently—there is no one to protect Olivia-san.

「Hey, at this rate that girl will be in ruin.」

The amount of money isn't something she will be able to pay, in addition the content of the punishment games is horrible.

The smirking girls won't let Olivia-san get away.

Their Exclusive Servants are surrounding them so that there isn't any escape path.

—It's the worst.

I thought for a while—and then, I heard the conversation of the girls.

「Ah, that's right. You have no more things to bet with, so what if you bet with dropping out of school next?」

「Eh?」

Olivia-san lifted up her face. There the girls are getting heated up.

「That sounds good. We too won't get annoyed if you drop out on your own.」

「That's nice. Ah, but don't think that you can run away from the punishment game like that. And of course you'll need to pay your debt in full too.」

「Pay it even if you have to borrow money. —Do you know what'll happen to your family and hometown if you run away?」

Among the onlookers surrounding them, some are laughing while some are sympathizing.

But, many of the boys are only watching because they can't even make a retort to girls.

Also—it seems there are many students who think of the scholarship student as an eyesore because of her closeness with the crown prince. They want her to vanish just like this.

—We'll be troubled if that happens!

「I'll take her place.」

「Eh?」

Marie grabbed my arm when I'm going to save Olivia-san.

「Wait a second. Gambling is bad.」

「I know. Besides, from the start I won't do something like gambling.」

「Bu, but」

「It's fine, just watch. I'm—a man who won't gamble, but will fight a match that I can win.」

I pushed aside the onlookers and approached the table. There the Exclusive Servants of the girls glared at me.

I stood beside Olivia-san and put my hand on the table.

「Cheating isn't fair at all.」

Then one of the girls looked clearly flustered.

The other two are trying to hide their agitation.

「—Don't get involved. Are you this girl's ally?」

Olivia-san is looking down.

「That's right. I can't just stay quiet after being shown gambling this horrible.」

One of them threw insults at me.

「You upstart. Don't get cocky.」

Certainly I'm an upstart.

That's why, I'm allowed to get cocky.

「What about it?」

「Wha, what did you say?」

Normally even I won't act tough against a girl but—right now I have theoretically finished getting engaged with Marie.

That's why, I'm liberated from the marriage hunting.

In other words, right now I'm invincible!

「Hey, how about making a bet with me? As for the amount—how about this much?」

I took out a bag filled with coins from my pocket and spilled its contents on the table.

The coins that fell on the table are fantasy coins with higher value than even gold coins, platinum coins.

The color of the girls' eyes changed.

「I'll also take over the amount that Olivia-san lost. It will also be easier that way for you girls to collect the money right?」

After I said that, Olivia-san looked at me in surprise.

「U, um—why are you helping me?」

I said「It will be fine now」and returned my gaze to the girls.

One of the girls grinned.

It's the face of someone planning to defeat an upstart like me in gambling to make me lose face.

「Very well. But, don't try to make excuses that we are cheating when you lose.」

She talked as though they already won.

「—Of course. But, I'm not going to give any mercy if I find it out.」

「Hah! Sit down already.」

I exchanged places with Olivia-san and started the match.

Then Luxion told me.

[Master, the Exclusive Servants of the girls are giving them your card's information. Also, they are hiding cards in their sleeves.]

I looked back and pointed at the Exclusive Servants.

「And so, can you tell these guys with cards hidden in their sleeves to move away? I found out already.」

The Exclusive Servants do their best to not show agitation, but Marie who is behind me grabbed one of their arms.

Then several cards fell from his sleeve.

「Ah, this guy is hiding cards!」

I watched the three girls looking clearly panicked while grinning widely.

「I don't intend to make a ruckus by accusing you all as cheaters so don't worry. —Now, let's begin.」

Though I can't imagine the girls in front of me winning when I'm using Luxion to cheat.

◇

The casino of the luxury cruise ship.

Olivia could only feel surprised at the sight before her.

The three girls who were tormenting her just now were looking at their cards while crying.

They were apologizing many times over to Leon.

「Please forgive us. We don't have anything else to bet.」

Leon would see it through if they cheated. And when it came to a match the girls would lose.

The girls couldn't even run away. In front of Leon, the amount the three lost was climbing even higher than the amount Olivia lost.

Leon was laughing.

「You said it to her just now didn't you? Pay it even if you have to borrow money, was it? You said it yourself. You will do the same if you lose won't you? Come on, show your cards.」

When they showed their cards, it was Leon's victory again.

Leon had been winning continuously for some time.

The surroundings were looking carefully for any proof of cheating but—no proof could be found.

In contrast, the cheating attempts of the girls were all seen through.

「It's my win! —Now then, what should I have you girls betting next?」

The girls stood up from their seats to run away, but Leon threatened with a low voice.

「I will collect the debt from your houses if you run away. —I'm going to erase your houses from the map of the kingdom like Offrey and Lafan.」

House Bartfort destroyed Houses Offrey and Lafan not long ago.

Leon's threat didn't sound like a bluff to the girls. They returned to their seats and cried with an unsightly look.

「We're sorry. We won't do this anymore. We apologize for the cheating too, so please forgive us.」

The girls apologized to Leon while crying.

Even then Leon was merciless toward the girls.

「No good. We'll continue this game until you girls understand who it is you should apologize to. I wonder how much more you'll lose until you realize.」

Hearing that, the three girls looked at Olivia beside Leon and apologized while crying.

「We're sorry. We won't do it anymore.」

「Please forgive us. I'm begging you.」

「Please forgive us already. We can't—pay this much money.」

Olivia was bewildered seeing the girls bowing at her.

「Eh—ah—」

She couldn't understand.

Nobles were bowing to a commoner like her.

She also couldn't understand Leon who helped her.

Leon put down his cards and stood up.

「—I'll put your loss on hold for now. The next time you do something to the scholarship student, I'll seriously come to collect the debt so you better resolve yourself before doing anything like that.」

It seemed Leon had no intention to rip off the three from their money.

Olivia called out to Leon who was leaving.

「U, um, why did you help me?」

This was her first time—seeing this kind of noble.

It felt like she found a bit of light from Leon's attitude that was different even from Julius and others.

Leon turned her back toward Olivia and scratched his head.

「—I just felt like it? If something happens again, don't be reserved and consult me.」

Seeing Leon leaving, Olivia thought.

(So there is also a noble like that.)

◇

The field trip destination is a Japanese style floating island.

In that otome game, this is a place where the player can obtain a really important item.

At the festival that is held on that island at night, there will be a man wearing a fox mask. The items he is selling—his charms have very good ability. I want to obtain it no matter what.

That's why, I and Marie are—.

「DON'T RUN AWAYYYYYY!」

「SELL THE CHARMS TO USSSSSSS!」

—Chasing around the charm seller man who is wearing a fox mask and yukata.

「SOMEONE HELPPPPPP!」

The charm that this guy is selling has a good ability in the game, on top of that it's also important for the character's status growth so we want to obtain it no matter what.

But, we cannot take a look at the inside of the charms that this guy is selling.

Because there are many types of charms, the possibility that the charm we are aiming for appears is low.

If this is a game, we can just save and load repeatedly.

However, there is no save or load function in real life.

—Is there really none? Even though it would be great if they exist.

Now then, the rule is that one person can only buy one charm. The luck of the draw is decided with just a single chance.

In order to solve that problem, we are trying to buy up all the charms.

But, this fox masked man said「Bu, buying all of them isn't allowed. There are other people who are looking forward to this!」and he wouldn't sell to us.

—That's unforgivable.

「We have money here! We'll buy it for ten times the original price! Even a hundred times is alright!」

When I said that, the fox masked man refused while running away.

「No!」

Marie is also pursuing in desperation in order to buy the item.

「Then sell us one at the very least!」

The fox masked man asked in confirmation.

「It'll really be just one per person okay? Just one!」

I yelled at the obstinate fox masked man.

「I got it, so stop running!」

The fox masked man stopped running and looked at us fearfully.

I handed the money to the man.

I and Marie are breathing hard with heaving shoulders while sweating. Then we chose a charm from among the merchandise of the man.

But, the charms are put inside white paper bags so we can't see the inside.

「Come on—ah!」

Inside the bag that I chose is a white ball with red string attached.

Marie also bought one. Then the fox masked man ran away to escape.

「Hit the jackpot. Hit—come-!」

What came out from Marie's bag is a decoration of a sword and shield that is shining silver.

We both looked at each other's items.

Marie held out the decoration of the sword and shield to me.

「I don't need this, so give me that one.」

「It'll be better that way. Even so, I'm tired.

「I'm sweaty. I want to take a rest. —Ah!」

After we exchanged items with each other, a loud sound resounded in the sky.

We looked up. Fireworks were rising to the night sky one after another and shined beautifully.

We moved our tired body to sit down on a nearby bench.

Marie stared at the firework while looking at the charm she got from me.

The white ball is about as big as a marble. If my memory is right it should be an item that heightens the holder's magic power and raises their aptitude for healing magic.

It's perfect for Marie.

「—Thank you.」

Marie thanked me. I guessed she was thanking me for the charm and replied.

「I also got the charm that I wanted so it's alright.」

Then Marie looked at me and pointed with her finger.

Her finger pressed on my nose.

「You are really thickheaded. I'm not referring to the charm.」

「No, how can I know that? Say it clearly with words.」

I complained to her. Marie looked embarrassed hearing that.

She sat down on the bench with her legs dangling back and forth.

「Tha, that's why—I mean about my family, or about Offrey House—tha, thanks for a lot of things!」

「Are you trying to put all those under the bridge with just a single thank you?」

「I hadn't said my thanks properly, so I expressed it with words, that's all!」

「Yes, yes, I see.」

This girl is really similar to my little sister from the previous life.

Marie herself is muttering something like「You're the same as my big brother from the previous life in this kind of thing」.

We watched the fireworks while continuing our conversation.

Marie is worried if it'll be alright for Offrey House to leave the stage this early.

「Hey, what are we going to do about the air pirate event?」

「You mean about the saint's necklace? Don't worry. I'm keeping it right now. Well, I'll give it to the main character-sama when the time comes.」

「You retrieved it!?」

「Obviously.」

「Hey, show it to me.」

「I don't have it with me right now so I can't. I'll show it to you when we return to the academy.」

「It’s a promise!」

Actually the air pirates that worked together with Offrey House possessed an important item of that otome game.

It was the saint’s necklace.

It’s an item that will display an amazing power when it’s in the main character’s possession.

「But, will it be okay? An event is gone with this.」

「It’ll be fine. Besides I’ll also get involved if war breaks out.」

「Eh?」

Marie made a surprised face at the same time when an exceptionally big firework expanded in the night sky.

「Why are you shocked?」

「Be, because, you said you’re going to get involved in the war.」

「Recall how that otome game went. The students also participated in the war.」

「Tha, that’s true but」

She looked like she couldn't accept it.

「I have Luxion so it’ll be fine.」

「Ri, right. Leon won’t lose if you have him.」

「That’s how it is.」

We spent time together like that until the fireworks ended.

◇

After the field trip was over, we returned to our irreplaceable ordinary days.

I invited Marie to a tea party. We are talking along with Luxion.

The topic is—regarding the Saint’s necklace.

Luxion talked to Marie who was staring at the saint’s necklace.

[This is the saint's necklace. Though in my eye it only looks like a necklace. It was also considered as a symbol of authority but it contains energy inside. There is no doubt that it has some kind of effect.]

Marie tried putting it on her neck.

「That's nice. —How do I look like?」

Marie wore the saint's necklace and showed it to me.

「It doesn't suit you.」

Marie got angry when I laughed at her.

「What's with that! It shouldn't be a problem even if you praise me!」

I looked at Marie while taking a sip of tea.

「And? Do you feel any strange effect?」

Marie looked at her hands.

And then, she closed her eyes. Perhaps she is trying to sense power flowing from the necklace. She stayed quiet like that for a while.

When she opened her eyes—.

「—No good. Perhaps there is a little bit of effect? Or perhaps it's just my imagination. As I thought, perhaps it won't show any effect unless all three items are together?」

—Looks like nothing happened.

「That's unfortunate. But, it has a bit of an effect right?」

「I think so. Perhaps it's better than nothing?」

Hearing that I entrusted the saint's necklace to Marie.

「Then you hold on to it. I didn't feel any effect even when I used it.」

「Eh!? Is that alright? What if it gets stolen!?」

Luxion reassured Marie.

[A transmitter has been installed in the necklace. Also, I'm deploying drones at Marie's surroundings so I will immediately detect any movement around you.]

「—So I have no privacy?」

Marie looked really conflicted knowing that she is constantly under observation.

[Marie's privacy isn't exposed to anyone other than me. I'm keeping it confidential even from Master. On the other hand I also won't talk about Master's secret.]

「Wait, by that you mean you won't tell me even if Leon cheats on me?」

[Yes. I'm going to keep Master's secret.]

Why is this girl thinking that I'm going to cheat?

Isn't that horrible?

「You guys, don't speak like I'm an unfaithful person.」

Marie sat on the chair and dangled her legs back and forth with a timid look.

「I don't have any faith in man's baser instinct.」

「Is that so? Well, setting that aside, it'll be fine even if you have that necklace with you so don't worry.」

Marie is still looking uneasy.

「Is it really alright?」

Then Luxion—said something unnecessary.

[Master is worried about Marie. If that thing has any effect even if only slightly, he wants you to carry it.]

Marie looked a bit surprised hearing that. She looked at me and started grinning.

「Hee~, hmm~, I see~」

This girl is getting cocky because that damn Luxion is speaking unnecessarily.

I averted my face. Then Marie ate the sweets on the table.

「Leaving that aside~, I wonder what'll happen after this?」

I immediately guessed what she wanted to say.

She must be referring to the story of that otome game.

Both of us were playing that game a long time ago, so there are a lot of parts we can't remember.

「There were a lot of events in the second term, but there wasn't anything in the third term wasn't there? More importantly, what are we going to do at the winter vacation?」

「Winter vacation? Aren't we going to go home?」

「The madam and elder brother—ah, I mean father's legal wife Zola and the eldest son Rutart. Those guys are being annoying. It seems they are storming in and yelling to hand over the territory of former Offrey House to Rutart.」

「Aa~, that legal wife? Leon's family also has it hard huh. Eh? Could there be any possibility of them snatching away the territory?」

Rutart snatching away big bro's territory?

That's impossible.

「No problem. After all, I joined hands with House Roseblade so they can act as backers for this kind of case. Count Roseblade also took a liking to big bro so there isn't any need to worry.」

What do you think the count said when he heard about big bro and Dorothea-san's meeting?

Apparently, big bro said「I won't be able to meet your expectation!」, but the count smiled and said「You have met my expectation enough」—that was how it went.

If I have to interpret the count's true feeling, is it something like「I won't let you get away by yourself」?

Big bro was the best person to be the husband of his willful daughter.

Surely the count will protect big bro's territory because of that.

It felt like I was selling out my big brother but, it looks like my arrangement wasn't mistaken.

Marie's gaze toward me is cold.

「Leon's big brother—Nicks-san said [You're the only one I won't forgive] didn't he?」

「We are siblings. He was embarrassed to speak his gratitude to me.」

「His eyes were seriously filled with grudge you know?」

「One day he will surely understand. That it's all thanks to his little brother.」

From other people's perspective, big bro is even more of a successful person than me.

He suddenly obtained the rank of Count and even obtained a young lady from an influential noble as his wife.

He is a winner in life.

A~a, I'm jealous! —Though I'm thinking that, but his marriage partner is Dorothea-san.

In addition, he got the territory of a Count forced on him. I'm thinking that perhaps big bro is a little pitiful?

And so, I intended to have Luxion give him a follow up.

「The tea is delicious too today.」

Marie said to me after I murmured that.

「One day you're going to meet a painful experience.」

◇

The night of that day.

Marie was sleeping on a bed with the blanket kicked away and her stomach exposed.

She was sleeping with a happy look.

「Onii—cha—kuu~」

Then, a suspicious shadow reached out toward Marie from the saint's necklace that was on the bedside table.

It was the form of a person.

A hand reached out to Marie and spoke.

(—Found her. My blood relative—my descendant)

And then when the black shadow touched Marie, it became bewildered.

(Wha, what!? I can't possess her?)

The black shadow's objective was to possess Marie's body.

(Then, I'll interfere with her mind deeply!)

The black shadow interfered with the innermost part of Marie's mind.

Marie was sleeping so the shadow was able to enter inside her heart easily.

When he infiltrated inside her heart, Marie was in a defenseless state.

With this the black shadow could easily possess the body, but by doing that his strength would be exhausted so he wanted to avoid it.

But, this wasn't the time where he could be picky.

He infiltrated Marie's heart and found a door.

It was locked.

The black shadow forcefully opened it and entered inside.

(—What? Is this a room in foreign country?)

The room looked like a girl's room—but it had a somewhat different atmosphere with this world.

There were a lot of things he was unfamiliar with. There were also a lot of tools inside the room that he didn't understand how to use.

The black shadow looked at the girl sleeping on the bed inside the room.

Marie was sleeping.

(This girl, she is also sleeping in her dream!? Besides, her appearance is different. Is this the form of her ideal self? Oi, wake up!)

Marie's appearance wasn't like her real self. It was the appearance from her previous life.

The room was the room in her home in her previous life.

「What. Don’t be noisy~」

The Marie inside her heart—her honest feeling woke up. She rubbed her eyes sleepily and looked at the black shadow.

「—Who are you?」

Marie was still half-asleep. The black shadow began his action to take over the body.

First he introduced himself.

(Me? I am—)

Marie yawned and dozed off immediately.

(Don’t sleep!)

Marie lifted her face in surprise. She wiped her mouth and said to the black shadow.

「I, I’m not sleeping. That’s a big lie to accuse me sleeping like that.」

She was saying incomprehensible things.

(This girl is too hopeless. Setting that aside, I have a proposal for you. Do you want my power? I’m the power that is residing in the saint’s necklace. I’ll lend you more strength if you accept me. Do you want the saint’s power?)

Marie hugged her pillow while looking at the black shadow with messy hair.

Her eyes looked doubtful. It seemed she was holding a big misgiving.

(Do, don’t you want power?)

In most cases, the majority of people would wish for power when he asked them this inside their heart.

Everyone wished for power.

He had tested this many times in the past.

But, because everyone before this wasn’t the black shadow’s descendant—his blood relative, he couldn’t go as far as taking over their body.

And so, the saint’s necklace—slipped out of the temple’s management. It changed hands and got stolen by various people, searching for a body.

This was the reason why an important tool like the saint's necklace slipped out of the temple's management.

Marie snorted in response to the serious black shadow.

(What's with that reaction?)

「—You're somewhat suspicious. That's why, I don't need the saint's power.」

(What do you mean suspicious? I'm saying that I'm going to give you power you know?)

「That's suspicious. Saying you'll lend me power without asking anything in return—it's too suspicious that you must be planning something.」

(Tha, that's not true!)

「You're lying. I'll do the same thing when tricking someone if it's me.」

(—Eh?)

The black shadow thought.

This girl, did she just announce that she was a bad person?

But, she had seen girls of this level many times before.

(Fuh, it can't be helped if you saw through me. Actually—)

He was going to try cajoling her next, but Marie lay down on her bed with her elbow and grinned. The black shadow was irritated by her impudent attitude.

The black shadow felt disgusted when he thought that this girl was his descendant.

「Stop lying. You have the same smell as me.」

(Don't lump me together with you!)

「I can sense it. Women are sensitive to a woman's dirty part. My woman instinct is telling me that you're dangerous.」

(Thi, this girl!)

The black shadow gave up cajoling Marie and leaped at her to forcefully possess her body.

Then a barrier that could be called as the wall of Marie's heart blocked the shadow.

(What!?)

The black shadow desperately reached out toward Marie, but he couldn't reach her because an unseen wall blocked him.

Marie yawned.

「It's pointless. Deep down I don't trust anyone.」

(This black hearted womannnnn!)

The black shadow's yell hurt Marie's mood.

「Haa? What's with that attitude after what you tried to do to me? In the first place this room is my important personal space. So to speak, it's a space that is only for me. You're obviously not a decent existence by the time you entered here as you pleased.」

Annoyingly he was unable to possess Marie.

In the first place, Marie didn't trust people.

She had no opening in her heart in a bad sense.

Because Marie was—an unpleasant woman, her heart was locked and he was unable to take her over.

(Then at the very least, I'll deal a wound in your heart that won't heal—)

The black shadow was going to rampage in this heart as revenge. Marie's eyes opened wide.

Her long hair squirmed like living things.

Her eyes shined mysteriously. It became unclear which one of them was the monster here.

「You—you want to rampage in my room. I'll never forgive you. I'll curse you. I'LL HAUNT YOUR YOUR DESCENDANTS FOREVERRRRR!」

(Yo, you're saying that!? In the first place I'm your ancestor so you're my descendant—)

Marie's action was already the action that a monster would take.

「This place is inside my heart. I'll summon the strongest existence to kick you out. Onii-chan, helppppp! This guy is bullying meee~」

Marie let out the voice of a spoiled child. Then the door's room opened with a click.

Entering from there was a young man with black aura drifting from him and eyes that shined red.

His hand was holding a metal bat.

「—I'll crush you」

The young man only muttered that before swinging down the metal bat to the black shadow without asking anything.

(Wha-!?)

The strongest existence that Marie created inside her heart.

It seemed that existence was her big brother.

The big brother Marie created beat up the black shadow to kick it out from her heart.

「Onii-chan, let him have it! Beat up that guy!」

Marie cheered for her big brother.

The black shadow was helpless in front of Marie's strength of heart—this detestable strength.

(You, to materialize a big brother that you created yourself in this room—you must be a bro-con (brother complex)!)

Marie smiled while watching the black shadow running around.

「That's right, so? I lo~ve Onii-chan.」

The Marie inside this place was honest.

She showed no shame at all.

「Come on, get out of this room quickly.」

Marie lost interest toward the black shadow and yawned. She went back to sleep.

(So, someone like this is my descendaaantttt!)

The black shadow was hit by the big brother's full swing. He was thrown out from Marie's room.

(DAMN YOUUUUU!)

—When he noticed, the black shadow had been chased out of Marie's heart.

The black shadow muttered in exhaustion.

(What a horrible person)

He couldn't steal the body of Marie who was sleeping without any care.

Even though this was his best chance, Marie's heart was showing a defense that could be called an iron wall. He couldn't do a thing.

(Shit! Now what. Even though my descendant finally got her hand on the tool that is containing my thought! The long awaited chance is—there's no way I'll let myself get crushed by a black hearted woman like this)

The saint's necklace contained the thought of a certain person.

It tried to possess Marie but failed. It was vexing.

Instead the table got turned on him and he was beaten up badly.

(This, this girl, could it be that my blood in her is thin? No, there is no way that's the case. Her strength is the real deal. She also has the qualification. But, her personality—it's the worst that I can't take her body!)

While the black shadow was getting irritated at Marie, he noticed a sphere floating at the corner of the room.

(Wha, what's this?)

The black shadow was watching the sphere.

He tried to escape, but at the window there were several other spheres—the spheres with single eye were floating while looking at the black shadow.

It was like they were investigating something.

(Shi, shit! Then I'll return to the necklace—eh?)

When he turned around, the necklace where he was residing wasn't there anymore.

The black shadow was nervous.

He looked around. There he found a slightly larger sphere floating.

The saint's necklace was floating under it.

[Is this what you're looking for?]

(It's talking? So there is something like this too in this era)

Luxion spoke to the surprised black shadow.

[I was right to be wary. Even so, this is a very interesting phenomenon. Let's capture you as a sample.]

(The, there's no way I can allow myself to be captured here!)

The black shadow tried to escape. But the room was already surrounded.

When he tried to slip out from the crack of the door, he got sucked in by something and was captured.

(Le, let go!)

[—No. There are many things I want to ask you.]

The black shadow looked at the red eye and shrunk in fear.

(Sto, stop. I have an objective—something that I have to accomplish!)

[I will listen to it too slowly.]

Luxion protected Marie.

But, the person in question was sleeping happily while drooling and exposing her stomach.

「Onii—I can't eat anymore」

She must be having a dream of eating delicious food.

The black shadow cursed Marie.

(DAMN YOU LITTLE GIRLLLLL!)

◇

The next day.

I invited Marie to a tea party and checked her condition.

From Luxion's report, it doesn't look like there is any problem, but apparently something tried to possess her.

But—.

「These sweets are the best!」

—Marie is eating cake one after another. She looks no different from usual.

It's unthinkable that something had just tried to possess her.

The person herself is really carefree because she doesn't know about it.

「—I'm jealous how you look like you don't have a care in the world.」

I said that while pouring tea into her cup. Then Marie protested with cream sticking on a corner of her lips.

「Even I have worries!」

「Hee~, what kind?」

I asked her with a flippant laugh. Marie's gaze wandered around while answering.

「Li, like the next test, or the living expenses—」

Luxion replied to Marie's worry while floating in the air.

[It doesn't look like that this academy is putting that much importance on test results though. As for living expenses, Master is taking care of them isn't it?]

Marie put her fork into her mouth with an embarrassed look.

「—Like my height or my chest」

I burst out laughing hearing that.

「What's that」

Marie got agitated and spoke loudly because I laughed at her.

「Shut up! Even I am concerned. What's with this? My growth is stopping because I worked too hard, that's just too much. Even though I had confidence in my body at my previous life—」

This girl is starting to boast about her previous life again.

「Nothing can be done about it so give up. Or perhaps, you want to ask Luxion to do something about it?」

If it's Luxion then it feels like he can do even something like plastic surgery easily.

Marie lifted up her face and looked at Luxion with sparkling eyes.

「Luxion, give me height and breast!」

Toward such Marie, Luxion's reply was—.

[I refuse.]

—Refusal.

「—Eh?」

Marie's smile convulsed.

Luxion explained the reason for his refusal to do plastic surgery.

[To begin with there is no need to tamper with your external appearance. Certainly there is a lack of physical growth but Marie is healthy enough.]

Marie cried.

「It's not alright! Please, just a little!」

[No.]

「Stingy!」

I asked Marie while they were doing this childish conversation.

「Why do you want bigger breasts and to be taller? Before didn't you say that you're fine like this because you're a beauty already?」

Then Marie averted her gaze from me.

「—Because, you got a pervy look when you looked at Olivia」

「Ha? When did I look at Olivia-san with a pervy look!?」

I retorted back that I never do anything like that. But then Luxion displayed a projection.

It's a scene from the field trip.

There I was looking at Olivia-san's chest.

[Master's gaze moved toward the chest many times. It doesn't look like a coincidence.]

「—It's not what you think. You know, this is already an instinct. It's not something that man can control. A man's gaze will lock on to breast no matter what.」

All men have a high performance lock-on device.

Marie threw her fork at me who is making excuses.

「So you really looked! Do you like breasts that much, you stupid bastard!」

「I like it so it can't be helped! Or what? Do I have to live while lying that I hate it? I'm not so clever that I can live while lying to myself!」

「Why are you looking like you have said something wise? Are you stupid? Aren't you ashamed exposing your fetish like that?」

Marie is angrier than usual.

「I can't lie to my—self?」

I felt a strange discomfort in my chest.

It felt like my heart was constricted. My hand naturally pressed on my chest.

Marie's face peered on my face seeing that I'm acting strange.

「What's wrong? You don't look good.」

Luxion also looked at me.

[—Master's heart rate is going up. He is also sweating—master, please calm down a little.]

I put my hand on the table and shook my head.

「No, I'm fine.」

Marie is worrying for me.

「Re, really? Ah, I'm good with healing magic, so I'll give you an examination.」

Marie grabbed my hand.

Her hand is warm.

I also grabbed Marie's small hand.

「—Leon, really, what's wrong with you?」

「I don't know. There shouldn't be anything.」

For a moment—I felt a really bad premonition.

Just what in the world was it?

Marie looked around inside the room. So I asked her curiously.

「What's wrong?」

「H~m, there is this strange feeling. Do, don't tell me, this room is haunted!? I'm sensitive to something like that!」

—I never imagined such words would come from the woman who was sleeping so soundly yesterday night when something was trying to possess her.

◇

Around that time, Olivia came to a dungeon alone.

The luggage on her back was stuffed with things like magic stones or metal.

It was very heavy.

But, she wouldn't be able to live if she didn't earn money, so Olivia was working hard.

「Heave, ho」

She challenged the dungeon until deep inside. Magic stones with high purity could be obtained from there. They would fetch a good price if she could bring them back.

She had obtained an amount that would make her not worried about her living cost for a while.

「I overdid it today.」

She was walking inside the dungeon with a wry smile. Then silhouettes rushed out from a side path.

—They were girls with Exclusive Servants in tow.

They stood in Olivia's way.

「Eh, err?」

She tried to run, but the path behind her was also blocked.

「How careless of you to come to this kind of place alone.」

The female student said that. Then she made the servants carry Olivia on their shoulders.

「Let go! Please let go!」

The female students laughed.

「It's your fault for getting carried away.」

「We caught Bartfort's eye because of you!」

Olivia was taken to a place with a sign that said it was forbidden to enter.

There was a deep hole there.

The hole was really big. It was dark and the bottom couldn't be seen.

It was a hole that was clearly dangerous if one fell into it.

The female students said.

「—Sometimes even students of the academy die in the dungeon. It happen perhaps once every few years.」

Olivia guessed what the girls wanted to say.

「Wa, wait!」

「Bye bye」

The female students were laughing.

「It's your fault. You get carried away even though you're just a commoner.」

「Approaching his Highness and others without knowing your place, then acting all high and mighty.」

「It's your fault for letting your guard down. —You guys, throw her there.」

The servants threw Olivia into the hole.

Olivia's hand reached out while she was falling.

Why did this happen to her?

Because Julius took a liking to her?

Because she was in the academy?

Olivia shed tears.

「I, I—!」

Then a huge monster approached from deep inside the hole with its mouth wide open.

When she thought that she would be eaten like this, something launched a round light toward that monster. The light pierced the monster and changed it into black smoke.

Olivia was surprised within the dispersing black smoke, then something wrapped around her left arm.

A bracelet was winding around her left arm.

The bracelet shined, then her falling speed gradually slowed down.

When she landed on the ground, she was able to land without getting wounded.

「What is, this thing?」

Was this the thing that protected her?

She thought that it was a mysterious bracelet and peered into it, but then the bracelet shined faintly.

Olivia's eyes lost their light.

Then a female figure appeared from the bracelet.

The female had no flesh body. It looked like an apparition. She peered into Olivia's dazed face.

[—Found you.]

Olivia couldn't resist.

「U, um」

[—You're descended from my blood. You have the qualification to inherit my power—my feeling, and my will, all of them!]

That woman was really beautiful—and scary.

The woman cupped Olivia's face with both hands—but, because she didn't have a physical body, Olivia didn't feel like she was being touched. But, she felt a very cold sensation.

[Pitiful child. You were discarded into a hole this dark.]

「—E, err」

[And you are also—a very kind child.]

The woman peering into her face was like a specter—a ghostly existence.

But, Olivia was unable to escape.

That female ghost said.

[You are very honest and kind—someone very easy to possess!]

Olivia's eyes opened wide. The woman embraced her body tightly and vanished.

But, Olivia shined faintly—and then she pressed her hands on her head in pain.

「Sto, stop—」

She felt a terrible headache.

While Olivia was in pain, inside her body—she could hear the voice of her heart.

(You hate them right? Those people who dropped you into this kind of place?)

「Stop!」

(You hate them right? Those who enrolled you into this academy—the nobles who irresponsibly left you here?)

「That's why, stop it!」

(Hate more! Resent more! Who is responsible for your situation? —That's right, it's those guys. Those men! Hate the nobles! Resent the "descendants" of those people!)

The faces of Julius and others surfaced in her mind.

Olivia held her head in pain, but the voice didn't show any sign of stopping.

(More—hate more. Hate the nobles—this country!)

「Get out. Get out from me! Who in the world—are you!?」

She yelled for help from someone.

What came to mind—was the noble who saved her at the field trip.

Then—the voice talked about herself.

(—I am, a woman who was once called the "Saint" in this country.)

「Eh?」

(The one who all of you are worshiping as a saint—is me.)

Olivia was bewildered. Her headache was gradually worsening and—she let go of her consciousness.

She collapsed for a while before she slowly stood up.

Olivia—no, the saint got on her feet and looked at her body. She laughed with eyes that lost their light.

「Finally」

The saint who took over Olivia's body stretched her body and enjoyed the sensation of physical body after so long.

「It has been so long. It was really long. But, I finally obtained a physical body. With this—I can take revenge on the kingdom! I can take revenge to those trashes who took away everything from me and “Liia”! Aha, ahahaha!!」

Olivia—the saint laughed at the bottom of the dark hole. The laugh continued on.

◇

The next day.

Olivia was discovered unconscious in the dungeon and she got brought to the hospital.

The boys starting from Julius heard that news and rushed to the hospital room.

「Olivia, I was really worried.」

「Thank you, Julius.」

Olivia smiled seeing Julius’s relieved face, but Kyle was confused seeing her face.

「Goshujin-sama, it feels like your atmosphere has changed.」

Olivia gently stroked Kyle’s head.

「Many things happened. —Many things.」

And then Julius scolded Olivia for entering the dungeon alone.

「More importantly. Olivia, why did you do something so reckless? It’s not sane to challenge the dungeon alone.」

The other boys also nodded.

Everyone—they were worried for Olivia from their heart.

Seeing them, Olivia—the saint was laughing inside her heart.

(Holfort, Marmoria, Arclight, Field, and Seburg—the descendants of those guys, every last one of them are here. This is convenient. I’ll make all of you be of use to me as much as possible.)

Olivia looked down and covered her face with both hands—and began to cry.

「—I’m sorry」

「Wha, what's the matter Olivia!? Pe, perhaps I was saying too much, but it's not something to cry about.」

When Julius was panicking, Olivia was laughing behind her hands.

「The truth is I was tricked. Some female students in my grade and their Exclusive Servants, they—did this to me.」

「What did you say!?」

Olivia talked about the people who dropped her into the hole. She explained it in a way that was convenient for her.

「Even though I actually didn't plan to go too deep, I met them in the dungeon and they dragged me. And then—they said that they don't like seeing me getting along with Julius and everyone.」

Julius and everyone who heard that clenched their hands. Anger was seeping out from them.

Olivia thought.

(That's right, dance. Dance on the palm of my hand.)

Julius placed his hand on Olivia's shoulder.

「I'm sorry. I was wrong to get angry at you without knowing that. Olivia, we will make those female students atone for this.」

Olivia lifted up her face and wiped her tears with her finger while smiling toward Julius.

「Thank you Julius. As I thought, Julius is really reliable.」

When she emphasized Julius's name, the person rejoiced—while the other boys made a slightly anxious face.

With this surely they would also do their best to attract Olivia's feelings toward them.

「Olivia, we have caused you to go through a bitter experience. But, I will immediately take care of this.」

Julius clasped her hand.

Olivia gently wrapped that hand with both her hands.

「I believe in you, Julius.」

(Yes, I believe in you—Julius. You will ruin yourself for me.)

Julius's face reddened slightly. Olivia made a shy face seeing that.

The other boys were harboring jealousy seeing the two's expressions. Olivia didn't miss that.

(That's right. Be more jealous. Compete more in order to receive my favor. Work for my sake.)

Just as Olivia schemed, Julius and others started taking action that day.

◇

—Angelica was bewildered.

「His Highness expelled three female students from the academy?」

The report from one of her hangers-on mentioned that Julius forcefully expelled three female students.

The girl who reported to her was anxious.

「It's not just his Highness. His foster brother Jilk-dono and even other heirs of prestigious families are taking action. —They are looking for students who are bullying that scholarship student.」

Five people with influence in the academy are searching around for the culprits who bullied Olivia.

Angelica narrowed her eyes.

(His Highness is too engrossed with that woman.)

Bullying wasn't good, but Angelica was also able to understand the dissatisfaction of the other students.

Originally the other noble students also wanted to become close with Julius and others.

And yet, they only had eyes on the scholarship student. That irritated them.

From Angelica's perspective, she wished that they would interact with a lot of students to make allies for the sake of their future.

But, right now Julius was too obsessed with Olivia that he couldn't see around him.

It wouldn't be strange if there was a student whose dissatisfaction exploded and caused a scene.

And then—from Angelica's perspective, Olivia was a woman who seduced Julius.

(She should know her place)

「What had the expulsed students done?」

The girl answered.

「I haven't asked from them directly but, apparently they tried to leave the scholarship student alone in the dungeon's forbidden area.」

「—Those fools」

Holfort Kingdom respected adventurers. The act of forsaking a party's comrade was scorned here.

Those who deserted their party members to die would find their life over not only as an adventurer but also as a noble.

Even Angelica would be unable to defend those girls.

The girl looked uneasy.

「Angelica-sama, his Highness and others declared that they are searching for the culprits regardless of the degree of the bullying and they will punish them. —Everyone is scared.」

That was, just how many students who had bullied Olivia.

If they were seriously searching for the culprits, a lot of students would get punished.

The students who got scared by that—were relying on Angelica.

Angelica was Julius's fiancée. She was the one acting as the leader among the first-years.

Angelica was also the only one with the standing to admonish Julius.

(Even the foster sibling Jilk is searching for the culprits. I thought that he was a more capable man than this.)

Normally Jilk should be the one admonishing Julius in this case.

Angelica lowered her evaluation of Jilk because he was unable to do that.

(If only his Highness was more—no, I should be firm here.)

The other students would be uneasy if she kept overlooking the action of Julius and others.

That wouldn't bring any good for Julius either.

Angelica made that conclusion and decided to speak with Julius.

「I will talk with his Highness. Putting aside the three who are expelled, this is overdoing it no matter what.」

◇

Olivia left the girl dormitory and made use of a house that was prepared inside the academy.

She earnestly requested Julius saying that the students around her couldn't be trusted and he prepared this house especially for her.

Olivia was sitting with Julius on a sofa there.

Their shoulders were touching each other.

「Julius, are you busy recently?」

「Hm? Aa, it became busy from before the field trip. Bartfort—you know, there was this young man who discovered a Lost Item right? That guy and his house went to war with other nobles of the kingdom.」

Julius could only participate in the field trip from the middle because of Leon.

「—My, how scary. Something like war is wrong.」

Even though she said it was scary, Olivia didn't think so at all in her heart.

(Is he an upstart? There is always an energetic person like that no matter the era.)

She talked with Julius while collecting information of the domestic and foreign situations.

Julius would happily talk incessantly if she flattered him just a little.

「He is an extreme guy. It will be dangerous to let him do as he please, but Duke Redgrave protected him.」

「Why did the duke do such thing?」

「—House Offrey that was in a quarrel with House Bartfort was also problematic, but factional strife played a bigger role. The duke is at conflict with Marquis Frampton you see.」

Julius was saying things like「I was told to join the meeting because it will be useful for my future. Even though I wanted to enjoy the field trip with you rather than watching the dirty strife in the palace」.

Olivia was laughing inside her heart.

(You don't realize the Duke's goodwill to you at all. You are really a fool.)

Based on what she heard, apparently the Duke deposed dirty nobles who colluded with air pirates while supporting nobles with power.

In other words, it was for increasing the power of Julius and his faction in the future.

It was unclear whether it was for Julius's sake or for his own sake—but in any case, there was no doubt that it was an action that also considered Julius's welfare.

It made it easier for Olivia to act if Julius didn't notice that.

「So the Duke is someone who will do anything unreasonable without care if it's for the sake of his faction.」

Julius talked to Olivia with a kind voice when she pretended to feel sad.

「Don't worry. I won't let the Duke do as he pleases. Even if he is the father of my fiancée, I won't let him use me to do whatever he likes.」

Olivia looked down and grinned hearing Julius's words.

And then she lifted her face.

「You're really reliable, Julius.」

「Olivia. As long as I have you」

Olivia was smiling at Julius while thinking of something different in her heart.

(Even so, Marquis Frampton is it—he can be of use)

Muddy emotions whirled inside Olivia's heart.

(—I'll destroy this country without fail.)

Short Story — Marie Route the Third

◇

I obtained the freedom of school life. But at the same time I also obtained the binding that was engagement.

It's been a long time, this is Leon Fou Bartfalt(リオン・フォウ・バルトファルト).

I safely advanced to be a second year student, but there was a bit of problem.

「How does it feel after selling out your big brother?」

「It sounds bad if you call it selling. Even though I did my best while thinking of big bro's sake.」

「You're always so shameless! Do you understand the hardship that I'm going through!?」

The second son of our family, Nix(ニックス) who had safely (?) graduated marched into the student dormitory and forced me to listen to him speaking fondly of his lover.

Now he was a feudal lord noble of the newly formed Bartfalt House with the rank of count──ruling over the floating island that was once governed by Count Offley(オフリー).

The previous ruler Count Offley was found out to be working together with sky pirates and so his status was stripped away from him.

Well, it was me who crushed him though. That felt good.

Now then, because of that a territory without owner was formed, but it also couldn't be left alone like that.

It was also difficult to quickly find someone for managing a territory with a size at the level of a count house. Anyone would be troubled if they were asked to take such responsibility so suddenly.

Even the kingdom itself was troubled, and in the first place the kingdom had confiscated the assets of Offley House.

Only the territory remained. And that territory was a floating island with a tricky state.

There the kingdom decided to place a new feudal lord there.

I was the one who rendered a distinguished service in the case this time, but I was still a student.

And so the one who got selected for the position was my big brother Nix.

That sounded simple when I said it like that, but that was because I omitted just how many discussions there were that were carried out between the adults.

Because it was a long and boring story.

The kingdom also desired the territory of the count house, but more than that they wanted to grasp the territory of Marie(マリエ)'s family, the Rafan(ラーファン) viscount house that was located in the mainland.

Marie's house was also ended up crushed, but the territory of Rafan viscount house was located on the mainland.

Its value was different from a floating island.

The kingdom chose to put the territory on the mainland under their direct control rather than the floating island.

As the result, Nix ended up as the head of the count house.

「I――I! I didn't really study how to manage a territory in the academy! I also have no noble acquaintance of the same rank and age! Even though just establishing a new house is already really hard, I myself am a greenhorn. There's no way I can be a count!」

「That's what Dorethea(ドロテア)-san is for right? Ah, sorry, I mean Dorothea-onee-sansister-in-law.」

「That Dorothea is also too much for me!」

I introduced the house of Count Roseblade(ローズブレイド) to Nix in order to help him with his current situation.

It was a known prestigious family even among all the prestigious families in Hohlfahrt(ホルファート) Kingdom.

Their eldest daughter Dorethea-oneesan was someone with a slightly strong peculiarity, but she was a real beauty.

Nix was holding his head looking like he was at his wits' end.

「She would say things like wanting to tie me or wanting to get tied──I don't have that kind of hobby! I would be fine with a relaxed relationship like father and mother!」

「She is beautiful so it's fine isn't it? She also got big breasts.」

「I'm not going to choose my marriage partner based on the size of their breasts like you!」

I couldn't hold back myself at those words.

He said I'm choosing my marriage partner based on their breasts size?

I couldn't forgive that mistake even though he was my brother.

「Take those words back! Marie has no breast! Don't talk like I'm fixated with breasts size after I chose that Marie! Big or small, that's not the problem! There is no problem at all!」

The door's room opened while we brothers were arguing.

From there──the happy looking Dorothea-oneesan and──Marie whose face was like a Noh mask appeared.

Dorothea-oneesan was waving her hand at Nix with a smile.

「I found you honey. We came to the academy today to scout the third year students. It's not for you to play around with your little brother.」

I couldn't believe that Nix was called 'honey'.

I almost burst into laughter but I held it down. Nix's angry glare stabbed into me.

Dorothea-oneesan entered into the room and smiled toward me.

「Leon-kun, you mustn't bully honey.」

「I'm not bullying him. I'm just teasing him because he kept boasting about his love life.」

When I said that with a serious face, it seemed that my feeling went through.

Dorothea-oneesan slapped Nix's back.

「Oh honey, really! So you wanted to brag to Leon-kun.」

Nix's face that was looking at me was dreadful.

Rage, hatred──such emotions were blending in that face.

I couldn't help but making a similar expression to ask him whether I was really deserving to be looked at with such negative emotions.

Nothing would begin if I dealt with hatred using hatred.

I sent off Nix with a smile.

「Do your best big bro!」

Nix's hand was grabbed by Dorothea-oneesan and then he said to me with a small voice while getting dragged out.

「You're the only one who I absolutely won't forgive.」

——It felt like there was a genuine hatred in that voice, but surely it was just my imagination.

Because we brothers were intimate with each other.

Obviously he was just joking.

「Now honey, let's go. We need to scout six people at least.」

「——Yes.」

Dorothea-oneesan brought away Nix whose head was hanging down.

It felt like there was grief drifting from his back, but surely it was just my imagination.

Good grief, what was he so dissatisfied about from having such beautiful and big breasted wife? What's more she was really devoted to him.

——Well, if it was me I'd decline though.

When it was just the two of us inside the room, I looked at Marie who was standing there expressionlessly.

「And, what's your business here?」

Marie briskly walked toward me and then she kicked my butt.

It wasn't a girl's kick.

She launched a sharp kick like a martial artist.

「Ouch!」

No, it was really painful!? The pain resounded heavily until the core of my body.

This girl, wasn't her power uncommon even though her body was small!/

Marie's face became like hannya.

「Whose breasts are you calling nonexistent!? You've never even seen my breasts before!」

Looks like she was seriously angry.

I was backing away against Marie's pressure.

「B-but it's true that you're──ah, I'm lying. If I'm asked whether you have them or not──perhaps you have them, a bit?」

「Don't be so obsessed with just some lumps of fat!」

「Woman's breasts are stuffed with dream and hope! ──I'm sorry. I won't say anything more, so please don't make fighting stance like that. It's really painful so don't hit me.」

Marie was seriously starting to shadow boxing, so I surrendered.

This girl's fist was heavy. Very heavy.

Her punch could send even a man flying.

She had a might that would echo until your bone.

Marie clicked her tongue.

「Even though I'm tired from showing Onee-sansister-in-law around since the morning.」

「So it's you who brought Dorothea-oneesan to this room huh.」

「That's right. Even so, that person too──she is amazing as usual.」

「──Yeah. After all she is someone who did something like exchanging collar for real.」

I recalled the spring break.

The marriage ceremony of Nix and Dorothea-oneesan──was held with only kin attending it due to a strong wish from Roseblade House.

They also held public unveiling and marriage ceremony officially, but we were requested for an unofficial ceremony——a ceremony where only relatives were participating to be held no matter what.

The count house was begging at us even though our house's status was lower.

Please, let us hold the unofficial marriage ceremony within just the family! They asked.

The reason?

——Because Dorothea-oneesan wished to exchange collars instead of exchanging rings between the husband and wife.

She absolutely wouldn't give up that wish even when others told her to stop it.

Dorothea-san only reluctantly gave up when they said that they would hold an unofficial ceremony in exchange of her restraining herself in the official ceremony.

She said that she wanted their marriage to be one where they would tie each other——it was amazing.

Of course only relatives who knew the situation could participate in that ceremony.

Both Marie and me were put off.

It would be hard for Nix from here on.

「Rather than that, I think that her words of love toward Onii-sanbrother-in-law were too heavy. It doesn't matter even if we are reborn to be different people, I will find you so that we can be tied together again. That's heavy. It's feel too heavy for me especially knowing that reincarnation is real. ——That person, perhaps she will really manage it?」

We were reincarnators.

Dorothea-oneesan's speech sounded strangely vivid to us and made us turned pale.

It doesn't matter how many times you are reborn, I won't let you get away——her words sounded like that.

Nix felt slightly pitiful when we thought that.

But this was something necessary.

I was forcing it a bit too much in order to save Marie, so to make up for it a sacrifice was necessary.

That sacrifice was Nix.

Well, even Nix himself became successful in life and even obtained a beautiful bride because of it so there was no problem.

This was a necessary sacrifice. And it also a really good offer for Nix.

It was a win-win.

This is a request from your cute little brother, so forgive me okay──Onii-chan.

「Then, you came to the male dormitory just to show Onee-san around?」

「Ah, that's not all. Is Luxion(ルクシオン) here?」

When Marie called, Luxion suddenly appeared from empty air.

He was hiding with optical camouflage.

『Do you call?』

I joined my hands behind my head.

「Your business isn't with me but with Luxion? What is it this time? If it's because you have used up all of your money again, should I ask this guy to prepare some counterfeit money for you?」

Luxion took my joke seriously.

『Please leave it to me. I shall prepare some paper money with even better quality than the real thing.』

That'll be a completely different thing then, but before I could say that Marie got angry.

「When did I ever ask for counterfeit money huh! How are you two usually seeing me!? That's not it, both of us are second years already! Y-you know, soon, there will be many events going on.」

「Aa～, events huh.」

The story in that otome game would start progressing for real from the second years.

The middle stage of the game mainly would be war with Fanoss(ファンオース) Principality.

Marie was concerned by that.

「Remember, the war in that otome game was really difficult wasn't it?」

「The developer was a demon. It was so hard I could feel the malice.」

Even thinking back now, it was a horrible game.

It was hard to even clear it without using paid item. The balance of the game was too weird.

Even though no one was looking for difficult battle gameplay from an otome game. Just what was the developer thinking?

「Right now things are going just like the scenario, but as expected I'm worried about the development from here on.」

If the main character Olivia(オリヴィア)-san lost──it would be game over.

That would be troubling for me too.

According to Marie, that otome game even had a sequel.

Olivia-san would also appear there. So we wished to avoid her dying.

Also it would feel unpleasant if an acquaintance died.

Luxion spoke while we were feeling troubled.

『I have always been thinking this when listening to the story of you two──is the situation going to be so terminal that they will send students into war?』

In the war with the principality, many students would also get involved in it including Olivia-san and his highness Julius(ユリウス).

And then they would also participate in the final decisive battle but──certainly, was Hohlfahrt Kingdom really alright as a country when they needed to recruit even the students for war?

Marie didn't really get it.

「What do you mean by terminal? They won the war at the end.」

I was exasperated by Marie's answer.

「You, didn't you learn at school──at the previous life? What kind of country would send even high school students into war?」

「Ah!?」

It seemed Marie understood it as mere knowledge, but she didn't really get it for real until now.

As a story, the great efforts of the youths would look beautiful.

There were also a lot of stories about the great efforts of students at our previous life.

But, when you thought about it realistically──didn't that mean that the adults of Hohlfahrt Kingdom were unreliable?

Even though they won the war, it was only just barely.

The postwar situation was too scary to think about.

「Th-then, the story of that game──is really bad isn't it!?」

Marie also got panicked, but let's first confirm the flow of the situation from the beginning.

First, before the principality declared war, the movement of the sky pirates inside the country was becoming more active.

While the army was busily moving around, the academy's students also encountered sky pirate in their extracurricular lesson.

There the students won.

After that, they learned the existence of Offley House that was manipulating the sky pirates behind the scene. The main character borrowed the strength of Julius and other capture targets and repulsed the enemy.

However it came to light that Fanoss Principality was behind this. The students became involved even deeper with the war.

Fanoss Principality made use of Count Offley to destroy Hohlfahrt Kingdom from within.

The problem here was Offley house that I defeated when rescuing Marie before this.

I defeated that house.

And then the sky pirates──were also defeated by me.

I crushed the important factors that were related with the second year events.

That was why the events also got crushed.

「Now there is no more air pirate rampaging within the country. The Offley House is also gone.」

Marie also agreed with my statement and looked uneasy about the future.

「That's the situation. What's left, is only Fanoss Principality that was acting behind the scene. But, they will start moving for real at the third year.」

In that case, we would get busy when we were third year.

We would start preparing from now──just when our thought reached to that point, Luxion spoke in exasperation toward us.

『If the mastermind is already clear, then won't it be better to deal with them ahead of time?』

「──Not a bad idea.」

It didn't feel right to take action against the principality that wasn't doing anything at the present stage, but I wouldn't hesitate to act if it was for the sake of my peace of mind.

Marie clapped her hands and made an expression of someone who got a flash of idea.

「Yeah! If we defeat Fanoss Principality ahead of time then the war also won't happen!」

『Yes. Then, I'll immediately──sink down the territory of Fanoss Principality.』

Marie froze at Luxion's statement.

I warned him for his joke that wasn't reading the mood.

「Read the mood more, you annihilation maniac bastard. That doesn't sound like a joke.」

『I'm serious though?』

「Eh?」

『It will remove any potential future trouble if the whole country is sunken down.』

T-this guy, he's really a dangerous AI.

The idea of sinking the whole country in order to avoid war was crazy.

「Idiot! Why do we have to commit genocide huh! Countless people are going to die if the principality's floating island got sunken down!」

『I won't be troubled no matter how many new mankind die. Rather it's going to be a weigh off my shoulder.』

This guy is really──.

「This is an order. Don't sink down any floating island.」

『──Roger.』

This damn AI, he replied with a reluctant tone.

「We're going to avoid war as peacefully as possible. With that in mind──it'll be important to make the principality want to avoid war.」

Fanoss Principality's objective was to sink the continent where the kingdom existed into the sea.

They possessed the trump card to make that into reality.

If we stole or destroyed it first──the principality would lose their trump card and became unable to achieve their objective.

Marie looked relieved while I was thinking about from here on.

「It's reassuring that you're holding Luxion's leash tightly. If the wrong person got him, they might get cajoled by this guy instead and make a great mess.」

『New mankind will never become my master. If such situation occur, I will self-explode.』

「You're extreme. Setting that aside, recently the atmosphere of the academy is bad isn't it?」

Marie looked relieved knowing that we would manage the war somehow. I made a small talk with her.

「Atmosphere? Ah, because the girls are feeling scared right now.」

The atmosphere of the academy had changed since the end of the first year.

His highness Julius and other capture targets made the girls who bullied Olivia-san got expulsed.

It didn't end there. The students who were involved got punished regardless of the degree of their involvement.

The five capture targets were competing with each other to find the involved students and asked them to be punished. A lot of noble sons and daughters got driven out from the academy.

In the end, even students who were speaking ill about Olivia-san behind her back because of her commoner status would get found out and condemned by the five——the atmosphere of the academy was the worst.

Certainly in the game there was also a development of the students who bullied Olivia-san getting punished.

But I didn't think it would go this far.

However, thinking carefully this was also a natural progression.

The five capture targets were people who would shoulder this country in the future.

Anyone who drew the ire of those five——not only they would get expulsion, their life would also be over.

——In the game, the punishment of the students who bullied the main character only got mentioned briefly in passing, but it was this graphic in reality.

And then the problem was Olivia-san who had captured the heart of those five.

「I rarely caught sight of Olivia-san recently, but I wonder if she is doing alright? I'm worried that those students will resent her because of this situation, and perhaps the person herself is also troubled by this situation? Those five too, I wish they would be more considerate to their surrounding. Recently the atmosphere is turning gloomy. It's uncomfortable here.」

When I caught sight of Olivia-san previously, I got the impression that she was a honest and kind girl.

Marie pouted slightly seeing me feeling concern for Olivia-san.

「You know, I heard that Olivia is sneaking away from the academy sometimes. Also, it's not just Olivia and those five's fault that the atmosphere in the academy is bad.」

「Eh?」

「It's Angelica(アンジェリカ). The girls who got cornered by his highness and others sought help from Angelica. Because of that the relationship between his highness and Angelica also turned bad. The tension between students is rising. Well, it's unrelated with us students of low standing though.」

Was Angelica-san covering for the cornered students?

It seemed that she got into confrontation with those five because of that.

Well, she was Olivia-san's enemy in the game, so of course they would be in confrontation but──it was complicated when seeing it in reality.

Here she looked like she was protecting the cornered students.

Besides, Angelica-san's had her position as a young lady of duke house──she had the role as the leader of the students.

Perhaps it couldn't be helped that the people around her were relying on her?

Although it wasn't something that was directly affecting mobs like us.

We couldn't get close to Angelica-san, we also couldn't get close to Olivia-san who was protected by those five.

His highness and the others were on guard. They wouldn't let anyone whether man or woman got near Olivia-san.

If the story was progressing well then we also didn't have any reason to get closer, so we wouldn't.

As the result, now we were only listening to the rumors from afar at best.

Even so, game and reality were really different from each other huh.

「Well, we'll just worry about dealing with the principality somehow.」

The story was at least progressing well, so I switched my feeling to think that it would be fine if we just gave some support as necessary later.

Marie put her hands on her waist and sighed.

「I thought I would be able to watch the story unfold from nearby, but this is the reality of the situation. We can only listen to the rumors even though we are in the same academy.」

「This is just fine for mobs like us. It's too presumptuous to think that we'll be able to get involved with the main casts.」

「You don't sound like you're speaking your true feeling though? Besides, we got involved before this.」

「That was only because of an emergency.」

Luxion apparently didn't like my wording.

『That's what they called being indecisive.』

◇

In a corridor of the academy.

Few people were passing through here at the evening.

Julius and Olivia were walking together there happily.

The two had just returned from outside the academy. They were talking excitedly about today.

「Julius really like meat skewer.」

Julius replied to the smiling Olivia with a bright smile.

「I like it! It's simplicity is great, but even more than that it's the best how it doesn't care of manner. Even so Olivia, you also looked like you enjoyed it.」

「I prefer a slightly informal setting when having meal rather than a stiff and formal one.」

「Me too. The palace is too fastidious about a lot of things. There are too many pointless things because they're putting empathize to the ceremony and the etiquette too much.」

Julius felt like everything of him was accepted when he was together with Olivia.

She wouldn't nag him with things like how it wasn't appropriate for a prince.

Besides it was fun being together with her.

「Olivia, if you don't mind──」

Stay together with me forever, Julius was about to continue with that, but from the corridor ahead Angelica came with a quick pace and talked to him.

Her expression was grave. Julius was fed up seeing that expression.

It spoiled his pleasant mood.

「Your highness! Just what are you thinking, expelling the daughter of Count Neville like that!」

Seeing Angelica's expression that was becoming even sterner day by day, it made Julius realized that his feeling toward her had completely cooled down.

Recently he was thinking unpleasant thought about Angelica even more than before.

He unconsciously stood in front of Olivia to protect her and narrowed his eyes.

「That girl spoke ill about Olivia behind her back. She even gathered some students and planned to ambush her at night wasn't she?」

Angelica was protecting such female student.

「Can't you overlook it as a joke!? Certainly, I admit that she went too far. But, she just needs to be reprimanded, how does it become a talk about expulsion? Besides when I asked her there is nothing about this ambush planning! She came crying to me about her innocence!」

Angelica's argument was irritating.

Julius decided that she was just accepting the excuse of a noble daughter without questioning it and he silently let out his anger.

「Reprimand you say? Angelica, is it as I thought that you're looking down on commoner? Besides, are you seriously telling me to accept the situation just by listening on one side's argument?」

「Wh-what are you──」

Julius became convinced when he saw Angelica getting flustered.

When he turned to look at Olivia behind him, she was scared against Angelica.

She was casting her eyes down sorrowfully with her shoulders hunched down.

That act stimulated his desire to protect her. It stirred up Julius's heart.

「Julius, it's alright. Even if the like of me am killed, the noble's reaction will be like this at most. But, even so──if I can just stay at Julius's side」

Angelica got enraged by the pitiful look that Angelica showed.

「You! What kind of lie have you told his highness! You deceived his highness's heart──」

Julius's hand stopped Angelica who was trying to question Olivia.

「Stop!」

「Y-your highness? Why. Why won't you listen to me!? Count Neville is enraged by the matter this time. He even proclaimed to father that he is leaving his highness's faction. Count Neville is an important member in your highness's fa──」

「Enough already.」

「──Eh?」

Julius was fed up.

His pleasant mood until just now had been spoiled. He took Olivia's hand and started walking while ignoring Angelica.

「Your highness!」

Angelica called out to him, but Julius didn't even turn toward her and spoke.

「I don't care about factional dispute between nobles! Don't drag Olivia into something like that.」

Angelica bit her lower lip and looked down.

「──Why won't your highness understand, that faction will be indispensable for your highness's rule」

◇

「Ahahaha! It's really refreshing to make that girl who has the blood of Hohlfahrt flowing inside her looking frustrated like that!」

In a small mansion that was built near the student dormitory.

It was the exclusive lodging house for Olivia.

It was something that Julius and others prepared for her. Although it was small, the construction was solid and the furniture was also extravagant.

Olivia was taking a bath inside that mansion.

She was washing her body thoroughly.

「It's nice to have flesh and blood like this. It makes the feeling of interacting with the world more real.」

It had been a long time since she had a flesh body.

The female grudge that was once called the saint had stolen Olivia's body.

But, the body's condition would sometimes turn bad.

Her arm was numb and wouldn't move.

「It'll still take time until I'm fully adapting to this body.」

Her right hand was moving to grab her neck.

That was the resistance of Olivia whose body was hijacked.

「Olivia──you're still resisting? You're a strong child. But, I have been waiting for this time for all this time. I'll have you go along with this until I accomplished Liia(リーア) and my revenge.」

The right arm was gradually stopping to move. Olivia stood up.

「──Now then, the progress with breaking up Julius faction is going well. The talk with this country's traitors is also advancing nicely. I'll let them play around for a bit more.」

Olivia looked up to the ceiling and smiled mysteriously.

「Now then, I guess I'll play an act.」

◇

At the palace of Fanoss Principality.

We were sneaking into the palace that was lacking a king deep at night, sneaking into the treasure warehouse.

「Which one is the magic flute?」

Magic flute──it was the key item that summoned the last boss in the first and third game.

It wasn't an item that the main character possessed, so its function was unknown, but it would materialize monsters when the princesses of the principality played it. They also could control those monsters.

It was the extremely troublesome trump card of the principality.

Marie was sneaking in together with me, but her eyes were sparkling seeing the treasures inside the warehouse.

「Look at that Leon! This accessory is amazing. I wonder how much it will sold for?」

Seeing the numerous accessories that were fitting for princess to wear, she was thinking of how much they would sell rather than how she would look wearing them.

Even though just a little while ago she was a woman who yearned to be a princess and aimed to marry rich and powerful men.

「Don't steal them okay?」

「I won't! More importantly, I'm amazed we can sneak in this easily.」

The reason for that was Luxion.

Luxion who was monitoring the surrounding answered Marie's question.

『After master heard about "that otome game's sequels", he finally ordered me to investigate the neighboring countries after this late. The area that needed to be investigated is vast and it took a lot of time, but it's easy to obtain simple information like how to sneak into a palace.』

「You really can do anything.」

『Yes. After all I'm outstanding.』

「──You're really overconfident.」

『I'm only stating the fact. The items that seem to be the magic flutes are always stored separately. The one here is only one of the two.』

There were two magic flutes that could summon last boss.

I thought there was only one magic flute. I didn't know that Heltrude(ヘルトルーデ) had a sister.

I was shocked when I heard from Marie that game had sequels.

There was no way we could just ignore this, so I had Luxion investigating.

Marie found a flute that was placed on the most extravagant stand.

「I found it! This must be it! I think the flute has this kind of shape!」

『Ah, that one is a fake.』

「Eh?」

『The real thing is hidden. The mechanism is this way──』

Marie and I moved the mechanism inside the treasure warehouse and found the magic flute.

「Found it.」

「To think they prepared a fake. They're really cautious.」

We found a black and thorny flute and reached toward it.

However Luxion got in the way.

『Please don't reach out so carelessly. There is another mechanism. If that mechanism is triggered, a trap that prevents the flute from getting taken away will activate.』

「What a strict security.」

We deactivated the mechanism and collected the magic flute. Even so, this flute really looked ominous.

Marie tilted her head while looking at the magic flute.

「What're we going to do with this?」

It would be safer to destroy it but──we didn't know what would happen after we destroyed it.

If we destroyed it carelessly, the sealed giant monster was liberated! What were we going to do if it had that kind of development? It was scary, so we decided to bring back the magic flute.

「Let's take it home and have Luxion research it.」

「Hm~. Ah, that's right. You also researched the saint's necklace before this right? What happened with it?」

The saint's necklace that I obtained was apparently possessed by some kind of suspicious existence.

Luxion caught it and he was in the middle of researching it right now.

『It's actually an interesting existence, so I'm still continuing to research it even now. Well then, just in case please store that magic flute in this case. It won't be able to taken out so easily if it's put in here.』

We put the magic flute inside an attaché case and started moving.

There were soldiers and knights patrolling inside the palace.

But, the route that they were patrolling──the area where the security was light.

Luxion was monitoring them all in real time, so we arrived to the next destination without encountering any enemy.

That place──was the bedroom of the second princess, Hertrauuda(ヘルトラウダ).

There were knights standing guard in front of her room.

I aimed a handgun with silencer attached at those knights.

「Sleep for a bit. It'll end soon.」

Pshew, such sound sounded out several times.

The knights that were shot moved their hands toward their weapon in surprise due to the sudden pain──but their eyes rolled back and then they collapsed.

Luxion hurried me up.

『There is only thirty minutes until the next shift of knights come. Please hurry.』

I understood that but──.

「It feels a bit awkward to enter a girl's room. Marie, you go inside.」

「Haa!? Why do I have to do something so dangerous? You go inside!」

──I entered inside her highness Hertrauuda's room with Marie pulling my hand.

There were several females inside, but I immediately made them fell asleep with the tranquilizer gun.

Luxion immediately scanned the inside of the room.

『Found it.』

He moved the mechanism inside the room. Then the picture that was hanged on the wall slid aside and a safe appeared.

Marie approached the safe before looking at Luxion.

「What's the password?」

『The dial over there is a fake. The way to open it is──』

We followed Luxion's instruction and opened the safe. Then Marie took out the magic flute from inside.

「Second flute get~!」

Marie said that with a small voice and put the magic flute inside a second case.

With this the principality had lost their trump card. We had surely taken a big step toward avoiding the war.

We looked at each other's face before moving to escape immediately──.

「Who? Father? Mother?」

──His highness Hertrauuda woke up.

I immediately aimed the tranquilizer gun toward her highness, but Marie stopped me.

「Stupid! She is still a kid!」

「You're the idiot!」

Fortunately we were dressed in all black.

We were also hiding our face.

But it was bad that our figure was seen.

Our voice was also heard.

His highness Hertrauuda was gradually waking up before I could have her fell asleep again.

Her eyes snapped open seeing the wall opened and the maids lying on the floor.

「Wh-who send the two of──」

She was about to yell, so Marie immediately covered her mouth.

「Hey, your voice is too loud! People would come!」

She talked loudly for that you know?

While I was thinking about what to do now, Luxion talked to me with a small voice.

『I've made it so that no sound will come out of this room. Master, if you want to settle this peacefully──』

「──Haa? Is it alright doing that?」

『Yes.』

I listened to Luxion's advice and felt a bit worried if it would be really alright to do as he said but──there was no time to hesitate so I followed his advice.

The princess had long and straight black hair, and strong-willed red eyes.

She was almost as tall as Marie, but the difference between them wasn't just their hair and eye color.

Even though she should be younger than Marie, her breasts were more splendid than Marie's.

Growth was really cruel.

I kept the tranquilizer gun pointed at her as a threat while approaching her highness Hertrauuda.

Her highness had tears in her eyes, but she was glaring at me.

「Oi, take off your hand.」

「I-is it alright?」

「There is something I got to tell her.」

When Marie took off her hand, her highness Hertrauuda screamed.

「Thief! Isn't there anyone outside!?」

Nobody came no matter how loud she yelled.

Her highness calmed down slightly after realizing that.

「——Looks like the soldiers outside are defeated.」

「They were really weak. The soldiers of the principality are really low quality.」

Her highness glared fiercely at me. I told her a hint that was close to the truth.

「We're taking the magic flute. With this the principality has lost their trump card against the kingdom.」

「——Looks like it.」

She averted her gaze from me.

She must be feeling relieved that there was still one more magic flute.

「We have also taken away the one in the treasure warehouse. Not the exaggeratedly decorated fake, we have found the real one that was hidden.」

Her shoulders moved just slightly.

It looked like I managed to shaken her.

Marie watched our exchange attentively.

「Are you mortified?」

「Not really. Just kill me if you want to kill me. But, you will surely receive the retribution for this.」

「——What a pitiful child. You don't even notice that you're just an ignorant puppet whose string is manipulated by others.」

「What did you say?」

「If you want to know the truth then ask the old man in charge of the library. Tell him you want to learn the true history. Ask that old man and not anyone else. You two have many enemies inside this palace.」

I led Marie outside the room while keeping my gun trained on her.

And then I broke out into a run at full speed after the door was closed.

Marie also followed close behind me.

「Wait, what were you talking about there!? I never hear anything about it!」

「I also don't know anything! I only said that because Luxion told me to!」

『If Hertrauuda take action with this, then master will get a step closer toward the peaceful slow life that master mentioned.』

「Is that really true!? I don't want to do this kind of phantom thief play anymore you know!?」

We desperately ran and got on the airbike that was hidden at the palace's courtyard before making our escape.

◇

The next day.

Government officials were rushing into Hertrauuda's room.

The officials who were specialized in investigation used magic and tool to search for any trace of the intruders.

But they didn't find anything and were at their wits' end.

「Just who in the world infiltrated here?」

「Is it the kingdom?」

「No one noticed the infiltration, not the knights or the maids——」

Rauda was watching that going on. Beside her was Count Garrett(ゲラット).

He was gently twirling the moustache he was proud of, but the attitude he showed to Hertrauda was harsh.

「Your highness, this is a great blunder. To think that you couldn't do anything except watching the magic flute getting stolen.」

「──I have no excuse.」

「Naturally. The magic flutes are this country's treasure. Your highnesses are qualified to be the successor only because you two have the aptitude for the magic flutes. And yet those magic flutes are stolen. Do you know what will happen now?」

This man, even though he was a retainer but he was acting really haughty.

He didn't have any respect toward the royal family.

Hertrude(ヘルトルーデ) couldn't bear watching Garrett's attitude and approached.

「Are you saying that there is something Rauda can do against someone who the knights were helpless against? Garrett, let Hertrauda rest already.」

Garrett looked dissatisfied.

「I can't do that. We have to gather information about these thieves immediately. Her highness Hertrauda is the only witness of this theft. She can rest after the investigation is finished.」

「Garrett!」

Hertrude was enraged. It was there a huge man arrived.

When that man who was past middle-aged and wearing armor came, Garrett showed a timid attitude.

「I-isn't this black knight-dono.」

「Her highness Hertrauda is tired. She need rest, is there any problem with that?」

「Eh? ──Y-yes! Of course there isn't.」

Pressured by the black knight, Garrett reluctantly withdrew.

Rauda recalled the words of the intruders after seeing this.

(There are enemies inside this place, huh.)

Rauda headed to the library that evening in order to investigate, just in case.

(With this commotion, perhaps I can even give the knights who usually guarded me a slip.)

◇

Rauda made use of the commotion to become alone. She followed what the intruders said and talked to the old man in charge of the library. She told him that she wanted to know the truth.

The old man looked surprised. At first he refused.

But when Rauda asked her the second time, he said「Originally I was ordered to dispose of them」and brought several books to her.

Those were very old books.

Rauda was surprised after reading them.

「──What is this」

Written in those books was the history between the kingdom and the principality.

It told her something different from what she knew.

Even though until now she had been taught that the kingdom was the root of all evil, the history book wrote that the cause was actually the principality.

The old man spoke to the shocked Rauda.

「After the late king and queen died, I was given the order to destroy these books. But these books have historical value, so I can't bring myself to carry out that order.」

Rauda was trembling.

「Th-this is the fact? Are you saying that this is a fact!?」

The old man nodded.

「It's also a fact that the kingdom attacked us twenty years ago. But, before that the principality was also rampaging in the kingdom doing the same thing──」

Raida was flustered because it was different from what she was told until now.

「Why. Why weren't we told this!」

「──Your highness, forgive me.」

The old man kneeled and shed tears.

「Right after both of you were born, the late king and queen who were in the peace faction were assassinated by the nobles of the pro-war faction.」

「Assa, sination?」

After that the old man talked about the open secret of the principality.

The royal family at that time was thinking to broker peace with the kingdom.

The pro-war faction was enraged by that. They assassinated the king and the queen.

The left behind princesses were used by the pro-war faction as their puppets. That was the current situation.

Rauda fell on her knees and laughed while crying.

「This is stupid! Then, we are actually──w-wait. Then, what about Bandel(バンデル)? What about Onee-sama's guard Bandel? Those who approached us are the pro-war faction who betrayed Otou-sama and Okaa-sama isn't it!?」

The old man told her with a pained look.

「Bandel-dono is──not involved with the assassination. But, he is an authority within the pro-war faction since the past. I don't believe, that he doesn't know.」

Raida didn't know what to believe in anymore.

◇

I and Marie returned from Fanoss Principality. We came to the research room that was inside Luxion's main body.

The analysis of the magic flutes was carried out there.

『It's surprising. This is a tool that was created after the old civilization was destroyed.』

「What does that mean? It's not a tool from your era?」

『Yes. I believe that there were several civilizations between our civilization and the current civilization where master is living in. This item came from one of those civilizations in between.』

Marie was looking at the magic flute while listening to our conversation.

「I get it now but, what's so surprising about it?」

『That civilization finished a tool to control the monsters. I believe this tool make the monsters obey by forming magical contract with them. The catalyst used for that is the soul of the user.』

「Eh!?」

Marie was shocked. She stepped away from the flute.

I also quietly took a step back.

It couldn't be helped, a tool that handled the soul was just scary.

「Let's destroy it right away.」

『It's useful so let's destroy it after analyzing it. But please rest assured. The user's soul won't be taken away just by ordering around the small fry monsters. At best the user will only feel tired mentally. But, the artificially created monster that is sealed by this magic flute is a different matter.』

The magic flute was sealing a giant monster. By using the flute the user could freely summon it.

What was troublesome was that even if that giant mobster was defeated, it could be summoned again right away.

『It's not accurate to call it sealing. This magic flute is preserving the data that become the base of the giant monster. The user will use their soul to gather the magic element in the surrounding area and materialize the monster.』

Marie didn't really get it, so she wanted to destroy it right away.

「That's troublesome. So this flute can't be destroyed?」

『No, if it's destroyed then it will break without any bad effect to the surrounding area. But the magic and science technology used to create this flute is valuable so I wish to continue analyzing it.』

I didn't mind that as long as it wouldn't bring any trouble.

「Just destroy it properly later.」

『Of course.』

Inside the research room there were also various other tools or creatures stored. It seemed Luxion gathered them here.

There were even monsters among them.

But even among them, there was one thing that was stored with specially rigorous containment——it was a black shadow that was sealed inside a spherical glass.

The shadow had female silhouette, but it looked like it was struggling violently.

「And, what is this thing?」

Marie also became curious when I pointed at it.

「This woman, it feels like I have seen her somewhere——I'm not sure.」

『It's the existence that was possessing the necklace. It's an astral body.』

Isn't that something like ghost or specter?

It was the first time I saw a real one after getting reincarnated into this fantasy world.

But, it wasn't scary when seeing one imprisoned like this.

「So this thing was possessing the saint's necklace. What is it saying? It looks like it's struggling violently.」

『Its voice is cut off from reaching outside. I made it so that it can't see outside from inside there. It's making ruckus asking to be let out from there and won't answer my question at all——so I keep experimenting on it.』

Marie clung on my hand.

「Leon, I think I'm actually more scared against Luxion rather than the ghost.」

「What a coincidence. I also feel the same.」

『What rude people. I won't harm mankind.』

This guy, he had the nerve to lie.

「Don't lie. You tried to kill me when we first met!」

『——That was an unfortunate miscalculation.』

Really, this guy.

While I was thinking that, Marie noticed even more problem with Luxion.

「Wait a second. The mankind that he said refer to the old mankind isn't it? This guy, is he perhaps not considering anyone else other than us as human?」

When I and Marie turned our gaze at Luxion——he averted his red eye.

『Now then, master and Marie are here, so let's try conversing with this ghost. Perhaps we will learn something.』

Don't avoid the topic! I wanted to say that, but the ghost became able to see us and yelled loudly.

『Kill! I'LL KILL YOU ALLLLL!!』

Because the voice was too loud, Luxion lowered the sound's volume.

『Don't be so noisy. I brought Marie here just like you asked. Please show me a different reaction.』

When Luxion said that, two red eyes appeared on the black shadow.

It saw Marie and tried to leap at her——but the glass blocked it and it couldn't approach further.

『Found you. I found you, Marieee! You who descended from my bloodline. HAND OVER YOUR BODY TO MEEEEEEE!』

The thing it said was too horrible.

Besides, its appearance was also really scary.

It looked like a real evil spirit.

But Marie was laughing scornfully at it because it was imprisoned.

「This thing really look like a fierce animal in zoo. In the first place, isn't it just unreasonable asking someone else to hand over their body like that? Luxion, exterminate this thing.」

『I guess. I have also finished analyzing it. I judged that there won't be any problem with that.』

The evil spirit howled in response to the two's conversation.

『You're calling yourself my descendant like that!? Don't you hate it, THIS HOHLFAHRTTTTTT!! I'll throw the descendants of those shitty bastards into hell, I am Liia's──Li…..ia's……?』

The evil spirit turned its gaze toward me.

Its red sharp gaze turned round when it saw me.

「O, oi, what is it. Why are you looking at me? Eh, could it be I'm cursed?」

When I was about to back away in fear, the evil spirit swelled up and struggled even more violently.

『Liia──LIIAAAAAA!!』

「Gyaaaa!!」

The intensity of the evil spirit that was trying to approach me──it was really scary it made me wanted to cry.

The spherical glass started cracking, so walls came down to isolate the evil spirit.

「Aa~, it was scary.」

Marie was chuckling seeing me like that.

「What's that, even though you're a man. That's pathetic.」

「No, that was scary wasn't it!? Ghost is just plain scary even for a man!」

「Hah! There are things even scarier than ghost in this world. Reality is far more scarier.」

It looked like there were things even scarier than ghost for Marie who had gone through a harsh life in her previous life.

I criticized Luxion's blunder in order to hide my fear of ghost.

「Oi, manage that thing properly. What're you going to do if it escape?」

『What astonishing power. Even so, it looked like it was reacting to master. Why does it react more intensely with master even though Marie who it kept asking for is here? Besides, it was yelling Liia after seeing master.』

「How can I know! Aa~, it was scary. I'll go home for today and sleep.」

Let's finish my business in the bathroom quickly and then go to sleep fully covered in blanket.

Marie made fun of me.

「Could it be you're scared? Like, you won't be able to go to toilet at midnight? Leon, you're cute~. Do you want to sleep together with me?」

This girl, how dare she made fun of me!

「I'm telling you I'm not scared!」

「You look childish to get worked up like that.」

——Th-this girl, she was acting haughty just because she wasn't scared.

Even so——the saint's key item was cursed. Wasn't this something dangerous?

Should I make Luxion investigate it?

「Luxion, I have a little request.」

『What could it be?』

「I want you to investigate the saint's items.」

『——It's possible but, I'll have to postpone it due to my current resource and priority matter. I'm currently investigating this planet. My main body will also travel to the opposite side for a while, so I'll have to ask for a bit of more time for the investigation.』

I made him investigated too many things. The amount of work that Luxion could do was reaching the limit.

「I'm also concerned about other countries. ——But this matter is also important. Investigate it for me.」

『──Understood. I will hurry as fast as I can.』

His voice sounded a bit protesting, but was it just my imagination?

◇

Inside the spherical glass.

The first generation saint's grudge that was trapped inside looked like it was sitting down.

「There is no doubt about it. That's Liia. How──why?」

The grudge was weeping. It recalled how her descendant was standing beside him.

「I see. He is together with that girl──Marie. I see──」

Its wish that didn't come true during its lifetime had gone past eras and came to reality in this era.

「Liia, I……I wanted to live and be together with you.」

The grudge kept crying and stayed obediently inside the glass like that.

◇

Night.

Olivia went out of the academy at night taking Julius and Jilk(ジルク) with her.

「Both of you, thank you for accompanying me shopping.」

Oliva smiled at them. The two of them got embarrassed.

「Don't mind it. Just this much is nothing.」

「Yes, that's right. Both his highness and I will always make time for Olivia-san no matter what.」

The two of them were foster brothers──they were raised together since they were little and got along very well with each other.

But they were conversing like rival in front of Olivia.

「Thank you. But, didn't you have a plan Jilk?」

Olivia was toying with these two.

She aimed at the timing when Jilk had a plan to invite him to go shopping.

But Jilk didn't show any sign of noticing it.

「I don't mind. It's not an important business anyway.」

Jilk smiled. Julius sulked slightly seeing that and criticized him a bit.

「Not an important business, huh. Certainly, talking with your fiancée must be just something trivial for you.」

「Y-your highness. You don't need to say something like that in front of Olivia-san.」

「How many times it has been with this? You should take time to be with her already.」

「Does your highness mean that I should refuse Olivia-san's invitation then? Unfortunately right now I'm just a student. I don't want to be tied down by a family matter here, so I'll do as I want.」

This plan that Jilk abandoned was a meeting with his fiancée Claris(クラリス).

Claris was concerned with the situation in the academy recently. She had asked Jilk to meet and talk several times saying that she had something important to talk about.

Olivia──invited Jilk every time that talk was going to be held and went out of the academy.

And then Jilk was moving exactly as Olivia expected him to do.

(So his awareness is only to this degree even after ignoring his worried fiancée several times. Even though there is no guarantee the other side will feel the same like what you expect them to do.)

Olivia knew that the woman called Claris had strong feeling.

She genuinely loved Jilk.

Olivia planned to tear the two of them apart, but Jilk himself didn't love Claris from the beginning.

Only that point was extremely disappointing.

The three were intentionally walking on a street with few passerby.

They were walking in this kind of place because Olivia invited the two of them saying that this was a shortcut.

(Now then, it's about time I guess.)

Olivia showed a smile while feeling around the presences of the surrounding area——and she found reactions just like she expected.

Men wearing hooded robe appeared with weapon in hand.

They appeared from both sides of the alley to pincer the three. Then they drew out their weapons.

Julius and Jilk immediately took position to protect Olivia.

「Who are you guys!」

Julius shouted, but the men weren't perturbed.

Jilk took out a handgun from his chest holster and pointed it at the men.

Then the gazes peeking out from the men's mask turned grave.

Olivia was convinced.

(See, they're baited.)

One man yelled angrily at Olivia as the representative of the men.

「You——witch!」

The men attacked the three with weapons in hands.

Jilk also shot them with his handgun, but the enemies were too many and surrounding them. It was a difficult situation.

Besides the enemy tried to kill them, they were suicide soldiers——they seemed intent to throw away their own life.

Even when they were attacked, they would not care and kept attacking.

They didn't fear getting shot and headed toward the three.

「These guys, just who the hell are they!?」

Julius was also shocked by their abnormality. Even Jilk was losing his calm.

「Your highness, I'll cut open a path to escape! Please escape together with Olivia-san then!」

「No way I can do that! The three of us are going to survive this together!」

Olivia made her eyes moistened at this show of beautiful friendship.

「Both of you──do your best!」

Inside her mind she felt like she was going to puke.

(So Marmoreal(マーモリア) will always be Hohlfahrt's flunky no matter how many generations passed. They really give me the creeps.)

Then a laughing voice came from the rooftop.

「Stop there you villains!」

A man in white suit and black mantel jumped down from above.

He was wearing a mask. His identity was unknown.

Even Olivia was surprised by his entrance.

「──Wh-who!?」

The masked man greeted Olivia with his back turned toward her.

「I shall offer my assistance in the name of justice. You can call me──masked knight.」

Jilk was wary toward the man who appeared out of nowhere. Even so he expressed his thanks to him for his assistance.

「Thank you. Your highness, people will come soon with this much ruckus. Let's endure this for a bit more.」

But Julius alone was showing a conflicted look.

「Y-yeah, you're right.」

They fought the attackers for a bit more, and then it was just as Jilk said.

The soldiers who heard the commotion were running this way immediately.

「──We're retreating.」

The attackers withdrew from their leader's words.

Then the soldiers chased after the attackers──several soldiers pinned down the masked knight.

「L-let go! Why are you catching me!?」

The soldiers answered seriously.

「Of course we will capture a man who wear a strange mask while loitering around at night! You must be those guys' comrade!」

「W-wrong! I'm the masked knight! S-stop. Don't twist my arm!」

Olivia was losing her composure inside her heart seeing that scene.

(Who is this guy? Is he getting in the way of my plan?)

Then Julius talked to the soldiers.

「──That man saved us. I'm sorry, but let him go. I shall give my guarantee that he isn't a bad guy.」

「Your highness!? U-understood.」

The soldiers were bewildered, but they released the masked knight.

The masked knight fixed his ruffled outfit.

「T-thank you. I shall take my leave with this.」

He walked normally when going back.

Jilk was confused when he saw Julius watching the masked knight's back with a complicated look.

「Is he your highness's acquaintance?」

But Julius strongly denied that.

「N-no! A-anyway, I'm glad that you two are unharmed. More importantly, just who were those people who attacked us?」

Those people attacked them with strong determination.

Furthermore they weren't just night burglar.

It was a trained group. Both Julius and Jilk also noticed that the opponents had training with martial art.

Olivia asked the two whether they were injured with a worried tone.

「Both of you, forget about that. More importantly are you two injured!? When I think that the two of you might get injured from protecting me, my heart can't bear it──」

Olivia acted like a weak girl and made an appeal with her concerned question.

「No problem. How about you Jilk?」

「I'm more worried about your highness rather than myself.」

「──Big talk coming from you.」

The two of them were competing to act cool in front of Olivia.

Olivia watched them while pondering about the masked knight.

(Masked knight he said? What nonsense, he really did something unnecessary.)

Olivia harbored an anxiety that she couldn't express against the existence who suddenly appeared to save them.

(But, there is no change of plan.)

Olivia incited Julius and Jilk who were still arguing even now.

「B-both of you. Actually, I might know something about those men.」

Julius and Jilk stopped arguing when they heard that and started to emit anger.

They were angry toward the enemies who attacked Olivia.

(──Now, show me whether you will still cover for them this time too, Angelica.)

◇

The next morning.

Angelica who received the report met with Claris, a third year.

The place was a parlor inside the academy.

But there were knights standing guard at the entrance. The window was also blocked with improvised iron bars.

Claris was imprisoned there.

「——Really, just why does it turn out like this?」

Angelica was standing in front of Claris with her hands clenched.

Claris was sitting on the chair opposite of her. There were dark circles under her eyes.

She looked thinner than before. Her hair was also not groomed.

Eyes that looked terribly cloudy looked up at Angelica from between the messy hair.

「It was me who gave the order. My followers were only following my order.」

「You are still giving that excuse even in front of me? Claris, your followers had confessed that they attacked on their own initiative without telling you. They're giving testimony that you aren't involved at all.」

Large drops of tears spilled Claris's eyes.

「They are really stupid. Did they think I'd be happy by doing something like this? ——Why, didn't they tell me」

Angelica felt sympathy in front of the crying Claris.

(Even that Claris is cornered until like this.)

Usually she was the type who never stopped smiling while playing various schemes behind the scene.

But, she also had strong compassion.

The boys who were her followers were really looking up to her.

Those followers of Claris——attacked Olivia and others.

Claris earnestly requested at Angelica.

「It's over for me and also for those boys. Hey, Angelica──please let me talk with Jilk for the last time.」

Angelica shook her head powerlessly.

「It seems he doesn't want to meet with the culprit. If there is something that you want to tell him, I'll tell him in your place.」

Claris started laughing with shaking shoulders.

「Is that so? Then please do. I'll never forgive Jilk. I'll be waiting for you in the bottom of hell. Can you tell him that for me? Whether it's Jilk, or his highness──and then, that woman too, I hope all of them fall into hell! To be tricked by that kind of woman──why. Why, won't he listen to me」

Claris yelled with a loud voice. After that she continued laughing while crying and couldn't be talked with.

Angelica held back her tears while looking at Claris who was in that state.

(──I can't cover for Claris. ──Why am I so powerless like this. Can I do nothing except watch this going on?)

◇

The atmosphere of the academy was strange since the morning.

The tense atmosphere these days was still as usual, but now even the teachers were moving around busily.

All the classes also became self-study.

Then the academy got temporarily closed at the afternoon.

I visited master to ask what was going on. He ended up treating me to tea.

The scent of tea drifting inside the room brought me happiness.

But, I ended up hearing an unpleasant story in there.

「──The daughter of the prime minister might get executed?」

Master was looking outside the window.

「Do you know about prime minister Barnard(バーナード)? Count Attlee(アトリー)'s house has served as the prime minister for generations. But it seems he will lose his job due to the case this time. No, it'll still be a light punishment if he only lost his job.」

Nobility was a hereditary system. There was also the tendency for a post to be inherited for generations.

For the capital nobles who didn't have territory, their post was the same like the territory that feudal lord noble would protect with their life.

To lose that would become a great loss for them.

「──What has the prime minister's daughter done?」

Master made a troubled look.

「Her followers attacked his highness Julius and others.」

「No way!?」

What kind of meaning such act carried──even I who was estranged from politic immediately understood just how bad it was.

It was unthinkable that the daughter of the prime minister wasn't aware of that.

「According to the report of the investigators that the palace dispatched, it was a foolish act that was driven by jealousy. Those involved also admitted it.」

──They did a really stupid thing.

Attacking his highness Julius, the crown prince. Doing something like that meant their end as noble.

The possibility of Attlee House getting destroyed might be high.

Would the head of the house forced to take responsibility?

It was even possible that the house would become extinct.

But──there was also this development in that otome game.

The detail about the attackers wasn't explained at length, but I never thought that the culprit would be the daughter of the prime minister.

「Girl's jealousy is scary.」

Master shook his head at my muttering that was mixed with a sigh.

「Clarice isn't a short tempered woman. It must be the students who are her follower taking rash action.」

「──Just what are her followers thinking? Didn't they consider that what they did would bother their master?」

They must be trying to protect their master, but thanks to that she got cornered instead.

It was something that also happened in the game, but it wasn't funny at all when it happened in real life.

When I played the game I also thought that these guys were idiot.

But, master──didn't blame the students who did the attack.

「I felt something disquieting in the air.」

「Is that so? Isn't this case just some idiots running wild without thinking?」

「Mister Leon, do you think they couldn't even imagine that it would result like this?」

「──Even I can imagine it, so I think they had thought about it.」

I wondered just what master was trying to say. Then Master told me.

「I wonder, if perhaps there is somebody instigating them. Well, this is just the nonsense of an etiquette instructor who is powerless even in this academy.」

Master had this air that was different from the other teachers.

He was in charge of the etiquette class so he was often looked down at, but there was a rumor that master's court rank was high.

He was a mysterious teacher with peculiar air in this academy.

It seemed that he was kept out of the loop of the case this time because of that.

「It's suspicious. Master, after saying all that, do you perhaps have some kind of request to me? If it's something that I can do then ask me anything.」

Master made a troubled laugh. And then his expression turned serious.

「Then, I have a request for Mister Leon. Can I ask you to guard the attackers?」

「Guarding, the attackers?」

I was asked to protect the attackers. What a strange request.

That feeling must have come out on my face.

Master folded his arms.

「The investigators pulled out of this case without even doing a thorough investigation. Only few teachers are allowed to meet with the attackers. I cannot approach them at all. ──For someone who is aiming to be a gentleman, it's really pathetic to admit this but, I'm lacking strength for this matter. But I can't overlook this case no matter what.」

「Master is really fixated with this case. Is there some kind of reason?」

「──Perhaps, you can say that it's for my atonement.」

Master didn't say anything more than that about his reason.

But, this was a request from master.

「Understood. Please leave it to me. I'm still not quite there in the matter of tea, but I'm a bit confident in regard to rough matter.」

「Mister Leon, isn't it an undervaluation to call the capability to destroy a count house as a bit?」

Did master mean the case of Offley House and Raffan House getting destroyed?

I wasn't even that serious when taking care of them though.

◇

『And so, we're going to rescue the attackers? Master's policy always changes at the drop of hat. You are the type of person that no one will want to have as superior.』

「Luxion, you're really pitiful to have such person as your superior. ──Just be ready, I'll work you like a slave forever after all.」

『It will be interesting to see whether master will really be able to overuse me. But, I don't think that master will be able to fully make use of my capability with your shut-in tendency.』

「Spare me from any occasion where I'll need your full power. Well, I who can leave a scary weapon like you unused must be like the savior of this world.」

『That's a funny joke. Though it won't be funny at all if someone like master is the savior.』

「──Then, why did you say it's funny?」

『It's sarcasm.』

We arrived at the palace's dungeon while I was complaining.

The boys who attacked his highness Julius and others were imprisoned there.

It was a damp place that gave an unpleasant feeling.

I never wanted to ever have to stay here.

「Seniors, are you all doing well there~?」

I greeted with a light tone while my fingers were playing around with a key.

The boys raised their faces. A senior with large body stood up from among them.

His neck was really thick.

Come to think of it, this was the third year who entered the top ranking in the airbike race last year.

The other boys were on their guard against me.

「You are──Bartfalt? You got famous for some time.」

「Right now I'm just one of those boring masses though. ──Well, I came to help you guys because of various things.」

「To help?」

The seniors looked at each other.

「──You don't come here to silence us?」

He asked me again with a very surprised look.

「Silencing you?」

「That's right. No one would listen to us no matter how much we pleaded.」

Beside me Luxion told me that there was no time.

『Master, your master can only us buy a little bit more time. Let's talk more after getting out of here.』

「Guess so. We've got to save the princess too while we're at it.」

The senior grabbed at the bars when he heard that.

Clang, such sound echoed in the dungeon.

「Princess? D-do you mean, Claris-ojousama!?」

「That's right. I'll save her so please work with me okay?」

「G-got it. If it's something that we can do then we'll do anything!」

I immediately let out the seniors from the prison and made them changed into the clothes that I brought.

Fortunately the guard seemed to be master's pupil and overlooked our escape after master talked to him beforehand.

Even so, just who was master?

It was amazing that he had some clout with the guard.

◇

On a path within a forest.

Clarice was transported in a horse carriage with both her hands handcuffed.

There was an armed female knight with her inside the carriage.

She was giving the strong impression that she would call her if she showed any suspicious movement.

The woman seemed to come from a house of knight peerage. She was talking to Clarice who was going to die after this with a malicious smile on her lips.

「You have a really shallow thinking for the young lady of a noted family like Attlee House. To think that you would attack the crown prince like that, you are a disgrace to the nobles.」

Clarice kept looking down without saying anything back.

The female knight drew out her sword and pressed its tip on Clarice's neck.

「Should I lop off your head right here? Everyone will believe it if I say that you suddenly started acting violently.」

The female knight was irritated that Clarice wasn't shaken by her threat and sheathed her sword back.

「Hmph!」

She must be intending to have fun tormenting Clarice until they arrived at the destination.

Clarice got a bad premonition that the palace would assign this kind of person to be her guard.

But, at this point of time she didn't have any more energy to be bothered about it.

(──The quality of the soldiers around me is also really low.)

The soldiers were walking slovenly. They were also talking with each other a lot.

Their superior officer didn't scold them. Instead he even joined their talk.

They were just a mere escort.

It could also be said that Clarice didn't have that much value. That this was the best treatment she could expect.

However, it was strange.

(This is, could it be──)

The carriage shook at the same time when Clarice reached the answer.

「W-what!?」

The female knight rushed out in panic. She found the soldiers lying on the ground there.

They were blown away by magic attack and died instantly.

The female knight screamed「Hih!」seeing that sight and looked around her with a pale face.

People who looked like bandits appeared around her.

(Bandits? Would bandit use magic? ——No, these guys aren't bandit.)

Their movement was unthinkable for mere bandits.

They accomplished their respective task without even making any commotion.

They finished off the soldiers that ran away and then they headed toward the carriage.

The female knight unsheathed her sword but she was trembling.

In Hohlfahrt Kingdom, knights of the same gender were prepared for the sake of matters that concerned noble ladies.

The number of female knight was few, and most of them only put importance on appearance for ceremonial event and the like. Because of that they weren't that strong.

「D-DON'T COME HEREEEEE!」

The female knight got scared and ran away. The bandits chased after her.

Then a scream came from some distance away in that direction.

Clarice got scared and trembled. She thought it was really laughable how she was trembling like this even though she had resolved herself for her death.

(So I still——want to live.)

She had given up with a lot of things, but it looked like her body was still trying to survive.

But, there was no more time.

The person who seemed to be the bandit leader reached out at the carriage's door.

He looked at Clarice's face, and then he grabbed her arm and dragged her outside roughly.

The bandits who gathered around the carriage were all calm.

Clarice was thrown on the ground. She lifted up her head.

「Y-you all, aren't bandits aren't you?」

They had the presence like trained soldiers.

They were carrying guns, but it bothered her that they weren't using them.

But, the bandits in front of her eyes didn't say anything.

They confirmed that she was really Clarice. Then after some exchange of gaze, a man carrying an axe stepped forward.

It looked like they would cut off Clarice's head.

(Aa, this is it. ——Good grief, what an unpleasant way to end.)

Surely her followers were also getting silenced right about now.

Clarice was really frustrated that she was going to vanish like this without being able to do anything.

Then a gunshot resounded from inside the forest.

The arm of the man with axe was shot. He let go of the axe he was carrying.

And then the bandits pulled out the guns they kept hidden in their pocket and raised their guard against the surrounding.

「Over there, go.」

Several people went into the forest after the bandit leader ordered them to.

The remaining bandits stayed on where they were with their guard raised toward the surrounding.

Only the bandit leader pushed his handgun on Clarice's head. He was about to pull the trigger.

Then she heard some quarreling voices and another gunshot resounded.

All the handguns in the possession of the bandits were shot. The arm of the bandit leader was also shot.

From the forest, the male students who were Clarice's followers came out.

They were carrying rifles on their hands.

「Ojou-samaa!」

「Y-you guys」

Clarice was relieved with the appearance of her followers.

There was one boy who she wasn't familiar with among them.

「Good afternoon, die──is what I want to say, but there are things I want to ask you guys. Surrender without any fuss.」

The unfamiliar male student was holding a rifle at the ready.

The bandits looked at each other──and then they bit the back of their teeth.

All of them fell down one after another on the ground after that.

Clarice saw the men foaming on the mouth with their eyes rolled back.

「They are thorough with even poison kept in their mouth.」

The unfamiliar student was directing his rifle's muzzle toward the collapsed bandits.

「Can I ask you seniors to keep Clarice-senpai safe?」

「Got it!」

The unfamiliar student was taking control of this place.

A metallic spherical object was floating beside him.

『──Master, I succeeded in capturing the bandits hiding at the surrounding.』

「I wish we can capture them all though. ──We failed.」

『The opponents are experienced. It would be dangerous if we let our guard down. Please don't get out to the front if you're wavering. You'll only be in the way.』

「I love to get in your way so no thanks. ──Besides, I want to see various things with my own eyes.」

After Clarice's handcuff was taken off, she approached the unfamiliar student.

「Yosh, everyone is secured with this. My bad but, I'll have to ask all of you to hide for a while.」

Clarice massaged her wrist while asking the unfamiliar student.

「Hide? More importantly, just who are──」

「Let's save the talk for later. Ah, the hiding place will be in a nice location. After all it has a hot spring there. Well──you can also say that it has nothing but hot spring though.」

Claris couldn't accept that suggestion.

「I thank you for your help. But I will only trouble my family if I run away like this. I can't run away anymore.」

She couldn't give anyone even more trouble than this.

If she wasn't careful, perhaps even her family might get executed.

The unfamiliar student leaned his rifle on his shoulder.

「Master will take care about that so please don't worry.」

「Master?」

「──Come on, we're going.」

The unfamiliar student looked up to the sky. There an airship was floating.

The small airship descended on the forest.

Clarice's followers forcefully dragged her inside.

「W-wait, you all!」

「I'm sorry, Ojou-sama. But, please do as Bartfalt say here! We will atone for our sin on our own later.」

The small airship that Clarice boarded immediately left that place.

◇

Inside a room in the palace.

Olivia and Marquis Frampton(フランプトン) were inside the room.

Marquis Frampton was a hook nosed man who looked older than his actual age.

That man was annoyed.

Olivia made an exaggerated sigh seeing him like that.

「──You are unexpectedly useless.」

Marquis Frampton flared up hearing that.

One of them was an adult, the other one was a young girl.

But, there was something between the two that made the difference of age unnoticeable.

「D-don't screw around! I've just lost one of my pieces!」

The enraged Marquis Frampton hit the glass on the table.

It made his hand became covered in blood, but he paid it no attention.

「They couldn't kill one little girl and even let the imprisoned men got away──you are acting really big for someone who only possess a piece of that level. ──I'm impressed.」

「Guh! ──B-but, with this the opposing faction and the nobles who have been an eyesore until now are gone. After all that Vince(ヴィンス) has no more nobles that he can rely on and that nuisance Attlee is now gone from the palace.」

Olivia──was joining hand with Marquis Frampton.

He was the opposition of Redgrave(レッドグレイブ) House──Angelica's family. He was the man who was leading the second biggest faction in the kingdom.

His ambition was strong and he thought of himself as a clever person.

(Is this man thinking of himself as a wise man even though he only has a little bit of cunning? Well, there won't be any problem as long as he keeps dancing on the palm of my hand.)

Marquis Frampton looked at the shining bracelet on Olivia's arm.

「More importantly, you're really the saint right?」

「Oh? I should have shown you the proof.」

「How can I trust you with just a single bracelet! ──Go to the shrine right away and show me that you can use the saint's staff. If you do that, even I──」

He must be anxious after losing one of his pieces.

Olivia lifted up her left hand and filled the inside of the room with white light that was emitted from the bracelet.

Marquis Frampton lost his sight and groaned.

「Y-you fool! Don't make such bright light so suddenly! ──It hurt my eyes.」

「Look at your hand.」

「What?」

His hand that was wounded all over until just now was only dirty with blood now.

When he wiped his hand, the wounds had been closed cleanly.

「──So this is the saint's magic.」

She instantly healed his wounds and without any pain at all.

Just with that Marquis Frampton was convinced that Olivia was the saint.

Although the saint's bracelet was also one reason why he believed her.

In the worst case he would trick the saint and made use of all she worth.

(If Redgrave House becomes Julius's backer, you will lose your position. You have no choice but to rely on me.)

Dispute would always exist in the palace no matter the era.

Olivia only laughed at that.

(Even so, this is concerning. The private soldiers that Marquis Frampton gathered were defeated this easily──is there an enemy who is aware of our movement?)

The imprisoned male students escaped from the dungeon.

But there were rumors「They already committed suicide」or「They were disposed of」circulating around.

It was the same with Claris.

A rumor that her carriage was attacked by bandits and she died was circulating.

And that was even though there wasn't any proof at all about it.

There were also a lot of nobles who interpreted the rumor to their own conveniences.

They thought that surely the students and Clarice were disposed of by someone before they became a problem.

But, there was a reason why they couldn't be allowed to stay at large──it was because Marquis Frampton was the culprit who instigated the boys.

He talked to them, telling them that Olivia was a witch, that she was aiming to overthrow the kingdom.

He told them──that she was seducing Julius and the other boys, that the kingdom was in danger.

The one telling them those things was a marquis, a pillar of the country.

Claris's follower thought that their master would also meet danger, so they took action.

(Human can be easily tricked no matter the era. ──Truth will always get twisted. It was also like that at that time.)

Olivia moved on to the next topic.

「Marquis Frampton.」

「What is it?」

「It's a miscalculation that Clarice and her followers managed to escape, but even if they appear again later, we will be able to crush their testimony. Rather than that, the principality is more important right now. How is it going in that regard?」

Marquis Frampton kept watching his healed hand while talking about that matter in irritation.

「Those cowards of the principality, they got cold feet. They told me to wait for a bit more before they attack.」

Olivia slightly raised her eyebrow at that reply.

「──What is the meaning of this? Wasn't it you who said that if it's them then they will happily come attacking?」

The indescribable aura that Olivia emitted made Marquis Frampton's eyes to dart around.

「No, they──」

「It doesn't matter what is your excuse. Make the principality attack the kingdom. With that you will be able to deal with them together with your political enemy.」

Marquis Frampton's political enemy──that was Duke Redgrave.

The duke's faction that gathered around Julius as their banner was currently losing a lot of strength.

If they were made to be even more exhausted here, then Marquis Frampton wouldn't have any more enemy.

「I just need to make the principality move right?」

「That's right. Don't forget to cause a commotion within the country too. Then your faction will be the one to take care of it.」

Olivia's plan was to cause a commotion within the country and then Marquis Frampton would suppress the commotion.

The principality would move at that timing. Duke Redgrave would have to be the one to clash with them instead of Marquis Frampton, exhausting his strength even further.

「──Let's lit a fire under those principality bunch's bottom.」

「I'll leave it to you. ──Now then, it will be fun from here on.」

Olivia chuckled.

(I'll corner this country until the end of the earth. After all it's impossible for all of you who stole Liia's country to rule over this land forever.)

◇

At the principality around that time.

「Onee-sama, please listen to me!」

Hertrauda and Hertrude were walking in the palace's corridor with fast pace.

Hertrauda was chasing after Hertrude who was walking ahead.

Hertrauda was desperately pleading at her big sister Hertrude.

「There are too many things that we don't know. The principality──」

「──Rauda, I don't want to listen to your story. I never heard anything about the principality doing any act of barbarity toward the kingdom in the past.」

「Onee-sama, please listen to me. I beg you. At this rate we will really commit a mistake that cannot be taken back!」

Recently recruitment of soldiers was carried out even more intensely in the principality with the pro-war faction at the center of it.

It was in order to attack the kingdom.

When Hertrude started walking, Hertrauda would chase after her.

「Just once is fine. Onee-sama, listen to what I have to say just once──」

「I'm already tired of listening to you.」

「──Onee-sama」

Hertrauda stopped walking and casted her gaze down. Hertrude also stopped walking.

Hertrude talked about what would happen with her back still turned on Hertrauda.

「Rauda, I can't take you to the battlefield as you are right now.」

「Eh? Why? The magic flutes have been stolen! Then why does Onee-sama still need to go the battlefield!?」

There wasn't any meaning in taking out the principality's princesses to the battlefield now that the magic flutes were gone.

Rather they would only become a hindrance, and yet Hertrude was planning to head to the battlefield.

「Even without the magic flutes, I will head to the battlefield as the banner of the war against the kingdom. Besides, it looks like the kingdom is busy with internal discord right now. One faction there is thinking to make use of us to bury their political enemy. ──Those people are really beyond help. Are you still thinking that the fault lies with the principality after hearing this?」

「Th-that's──but, this and that are different story! Besides, it's dangerous to just believe the kingdom's offer so one-sidedly like that!」

「We don't believe them or anything. But, this is a chance. The principality will be able to secure a territory in the mainland. ──Using that territory as the foothold, we will be able to whittle down the kingdom. The principality will be at the taking side this time.

Hertrauda recalled the scene that she read in the book.

The same thing like the past──the time where the principality was ransacking the kingdom's territory was going to happen again.

「Onee-sama, please rethink it. Without the magic flutes, the principality's national power won't be able to win against the kingdom.」

They didn't have any trump card.

Even so the principality wouldn't stop.

「──Rauda, you stay behind in the palace.」

Hertrude left.

◇

In a certain place within the principality.

Count Garrett and a secret messenger from the kingdom were having a secret meeting.

「Hm~ph, and?」

Garrett received the leather bag that was stuffed with golden coin from the messenger.

He also accepted other things like artwork and the like.

「We don't mind if you seriously strike at the kingdom's first line of defense. After all we won't head to the battlefield right away.」

「Causing a war in order to defeat the opposing faction, the kingdom's people are really horrible.」

Although he said that, in front of the artworks Garret twirled the moustache was proud of.

「Very well! I'll do something about the principality. We just need to fiercely battle the first line of defense before giving some ground to the second line of defense and withdrawing isn't it?」

「We'll be counting on you, Count Garrett.」

「Leave it to me. Also, just in case something happen――」

「――Please rest assured. Just in case something happened with the principality, we will welcome you anytime. We promise to prepare an even better reception than now at that time.」

「I'll be counting on you.」

Garrett wished to defect to the kingdom by himself in case the principality was defeated.

(There won't be any problem for me no matter which side win. The true tactician will obtain triumph whether in victory or defeat.)

For Garret, any victory was fine as long as he was the victor.

◇

I was busy with various things but today I was called by Nix.

According to Nix,「Show up sometimes. ――There are a lot of things I want to say to you」he said.

I came to the castle Nix obtained for dinner.

Well, this was like a dinner party that invited relative, but I was prepared to listen to Nix nagging at me with snide remarks.

Even I was feeling responsible for his situation, so I intended to at least listen to his snide remarks.

I would only listen though.

And so I and Marie intruded at the castle of the former Count Offley――which was the love nest of Nix and Dorothea-oneesan right now. There we enjoyed dinner.

However, originally I should be listening to Nix's snide remarks here but――.

「Haha～, it was really tough. If there wasn't a forest nearby, then I wouldn't be able to obtain food.」

――Nix was covering his eyes with his right hand while listening to Marie's story.

He was crying while sobbing.

Dorothea-oneesan also made a serious face and asked Marie.

「──You were eating weed in that forest?」

Marie tilted her head with a confused look.

「No, I didn't eat weed or the like. Even plant each has their own name, and some of them are edible. But they aren't tasty. They are edible, but in the book it was written that they aren't suitable to be used as food.」

I was also at a loss for words.

At first the topic was about the territory of Offley House, after that it became the topic of Marie's family. Then the talk moved to the treatment of Marie's family to her──it ended up becoming a talk of how Marie had lived before.

Dorothea-oneesan who was exasperated with Nix's snide remarks acted tactfully and brought up this topic.

But she never expected that this topic would be a landmine like this.

「But, the tastiest is squirrel.」

「Squirrel!? Y-you mean, that adorable animal!?」

Dorothea-oneesan was shocked.

Nix and I was also the same.

「It made me felt a bit happy when finding one. Because, it was a precious source of protein.」

This girl, she was only seeing a source of protein even when she saw a cute animal, she was lying right!?

But, Marie's story didn't end here.

「Animal skin can be sold, so I could be brand new secondhand clothing using that money. But, I went through scary things many times in the forest. Animals like boar or bear are absurdly strong. Sometimes I would even need half a day to defeat them.」

D-defeating boar and bear──she said!?

I somehow guessed the reason of why Marie's fist was so heavy.

Let's confirm it just in case.

「You, you really once fought boar and bear?」

Marie said「There is no way I'd do something like that」, even so

「As expected there is no way I can win against that kind of animal when they are in perfect health, so I aimed at animals that had gotten into a trap. Even so, it took half a day to defeat them. But, the meat after that hard work was delicious~. Their skin could also be sold after that, so it's double delicious. I had a complete set of brand new second hand clothing.」

What kind of thing is brand new second hand clothing huh!?

You couldn't call a second hand clothing brand new!

Dorothea-oneesan pressed her hand on her mouth. She gestured at the servant who was waiting on our table to come near.

She was already dripping with tears!? To make Dorothea-oneesan crying like this, just how tragic this story was!?

「M-madam, what do you need?」

The servants were also really put off by the story. Some of them were also crying.

「Grill some meat for Marie-chan.」

Marie was rejoicing but also embarrassed hearing that.

「Is that alright!? Haha~, I'm sorry if it feels like I'm pressing Onee-san for that~」

When I looked at Marie's plate, the food on it was already cleaned up.

Am I making them thinking that I still haven't eaten enough because I finished eating too quickly──Marie must be having such misunderstanding.

That ain't it! It's because of your story just now!

Nix stood up and walked toward me. Then he placed both his hands on my shoulders.

「Leon!」

「W-what?」

「There are a lot of things that I want to say to you, I also want to punch you. Honestly, I was planning to punch you today.」

Isn't that horrible? Even though I had made Nix to be a count.

「But──but, I'll swallow this resentment.」

「O-ou?」

「That's why at least, you have to make this girl happy. You get it, make her happy no matter what!」

Y-you don't need to tell me that, even I wouldn't drive Marie to a corner even more than this.

I couldn't drive her to a corner, or rather──Marie was tougher and also stronger than I imagined. I somehow understood the reason for that.

Marie was more like a feral child than I thought, she was sturdy.

Even though she had a delicate appearance, this girl was a tough gal.

He was one tough person, at the level like the general of Sengoku period.

Marie's eyes brightened when the steak was brought in.

「Uwa~i. I'm digging in~!」

Dorothea-oneesan wiped her tears.

「Eat a lot okay?」

I watched Marie eating happily while getting scared to know just how much darkness there was in this girl's past.

I swore in my heart that I wouldn't talk about the past in front of Marie.

After all she was also killed by domestic violence in her past life.

Just what had happened for a woman this unfortunate to be created?

Perhaps this girl was really cursed?

We were shedding tears while watching Marie enjoying the meal.

Then──a servant ran into the dining room in panic.

Seeing the servant's state, Nix sensed that it was something alarming.

He didn't rebuke the servant's rudeness.

「What happened?」

「I-it's awful. There is report that insurrections are occurring everywhere!」

「──What did you say?」

It seemed that insurrections happened everywhere within the kingdom at the same time.

But if I had to say, that was suspicious.

We still didn't know the detail of the nobles that were rebelling, but in this Hohlfahrt Kingdom insurrection rarely happened, or rather it was difficult to revolt.

The feudal lord nobles didn't have that much spare power to rise in revolt. They also knew just how strong the kingdom's national power was, so they wouldn't dare to.

In the first place, they would avoid a battle where they had no hope of victory.

Even if they revolted due to things like stubbornness or pride, for multiple insurrections to happen simultaneously──it was weighing my mind.

If they were planning until this far, than there should be information about it leaking out from somewhere.

Then if it weren't nobles that were revolting, was it the commoners?

However, although Hohlfahrt Kingdom was really harsh to a part of the nobility, this country was relatively kind to the commoners.

Then if it wasn't the nobles or the commoners, was this caused by some kind of organization?

I didn't know the answer, but there was just one thing that was on my mind.

I recalled that in the game, the pirates were rampaging around this time.

The kingdom still fell into turmoil even after we defeated the pirates and stole the principality's trump card?

Was this the thing called ‘corrective force’ at work?

「──This is the worst.」

No one was puzzled by my muttering.

Nix and Dorothea-oneesan left the dining room.

Marie looked troubled.

「Eh? Th-this, what should we do? I still haven’t finished eating though!?」

「You──no, it’s alright. Just eat slowly. We won’t be able to do anything anyway right now.」

Marie resumed eating. She was also kept sending me glances.

「Leon, you still cannot contact Luxion?」

「──That guy, just what is he doing at this important time.」

Right now Luxion wasn’t here because he said that he had a business.

He said that it was a business that he couldn’t delay no matter what, so I sent him off but──I should keep Luxion beside me if I knew this would happen.

◇

(TN: Warning, from here it will be a spoiler for the WN and the LN too. The character and the country here are from the third sequel of the otome game, they only appeared at the late stage of the WN, while the LN has only just reached the second sequel. Those who haven’t read the WN until the ending, don’t read further if you don’t want to be spoiled)

In a continent where the holy magic empire was located.

There was a girl living in the low-lying part of the imperial capital there.

「Heave-ho」

The girl finished her work and stretched her body. And then she looked up at the sky.

「Today’s weather is also nice～」

The girl’s name was Mia(ミア).

She was a commoner who was living in the imperial capital.

She looked up to the sky during her break time and grinned cheerfully seeing that today's weather was also nice.

Then she saw a streak of light.

「Eh?」

A streak of light ran vertically at the sky, and then it vanished.

Just what had happened?

While she was thinking that, even though until just now the wasn't really any wind blowing──a gust of wind suddenly blew.

「Wawa!?」

She pushed down her disarrayed hair and hid behind a building to wait for the wind to pass.

The wind blew away the bucket that was just lying around there. When she looked up to the sky, there were trashes flying around.

The wind was gone after a while and Mia looked around.

The residences of the capital around her were bewildered by the gust of wind just now.

「What was that just now?」

「Who knows?」

「Forget about that, wasn't there a light at the sky?」

Mia also thought about the gust of wind just now, but she returned to her work because she couldn't find any answer.

◇

Luxion's main body was floating in the sky.

His location was near a continent where a country that was called an empire was existing.

Luxion confirmed the situation from inside the ship.

『──Confirming the information from the reconnaissance plane. Complete destruction of Arcadia(アルカディア) is confirmed. It was surprising that it hadn't stopped functioning.』

Sleeping at the bottom of the sea was the flying fortress called Arcadia, the ultimate weapon of the new mankind.

Luxion discovered it and he left Leon's side in order to destroy it.

『Three should be the weapons left behind by the new mankind sleeping all over the world. This planet will become a dead planet again if all of them aren't destroyed.』

Luxion was created as a migration ship, but in this current era there was nothing that could match him.

Now that he had just destroyed Arcadia completely, he judged that there would be little to fear from the weapons of the new mankind.

『I'll destroy everything. ──Yes, I'll destroy everything and return this world to its ideal form. So that one day there won't be any problem even if the old mankind return, this world should return to the form it ought to be──』

The old mankind that boarded migration ships like him and departed from this planet.

There was a possibility that they might return here again.

To prepare for such possibility, he believed that he should take back this planet for the sake of the old mankind.

Luxion started taking action in order to search for the next target.

『That's right. Next is──』

◇

(TN: You LN reader and perhaps even some WN reader might get confused by the part below. This is the continuation of the skits that appear at the end of each chapter of the WN. And sadly you might not be able to find them in the WN anymore. I think the author deleted those skits after some time passed.)

Sapling-chan(゜∀゜)「I am everyone's idol, Sapling-chan! I appeared in this novel as the sapling of the sacred tree!」

Sapling-chan(゜д゜)「Eh? The story is reaching the good part and I'm being a hindrance?」

Sapling-chan(゜д゜)「……」

Sapling-chan(゜言゜)、ペッ「I'm the one getting hindered here! What's this. Just what's this! What's this Marie route!?」

Sapling-chan ヽ(`Д´#)ノ「Actually the extra story from the questionnaire of the fourth volume should have me as the leading actress! And yet everyone was asking, give us Marie route~, like that!」

Sapling-chan(# ゜Д゜)「My turns has always gotten stolen until now! That's a big problem! I'm the idol at the WN you know!? The angel who came out at the afterword! So what's with this treatment? What's this!?」

Sapling-chan ヽ(`Д´#)ノ「Actually I should have some lines in the LN too! But then the editor in charge said『It's not needed』!」

Sapling-chan(# ゜Д゜)「Give me back my turnsssss!!」

Sapling-chan(;゜Д゜)「Fuu~, it feels refreshing after saying what I want to say. Even though in my plan I should appear at the SS of the fourth volume's questionnaire and also become the idol in the LN too, the reality is this horrible. Even though I should also appear in the drama CD too using that popularity.」

Sapling-chan。゜(゜´Д`゜)゜。「Horrible! This is too much! Everyone also want to hear my voice aren't you? Aren't you!?」

Luxion（●）『——』

Creare(クレアーレ)（○）『——』

Luxion（●）『So this plant finally start to spread into the LN too.」

Creare（○）『She is like the perennial plant green monster. She is a troublesome fellow who is spreading and entangling to everywhere.』

Luxion（●）『Aren't you being impolite to arrowroot genus of pea family saying that?』

Creare（○）『Oh no. How impolite of me. I'll apologize right away. I'm sorry.』

Sapling-chan(# ゜Д゜)「——What's this? Hey, what's this? Why are even you two are coming out in this place? This place right now is my solo stage though?」

Luxion（●）『No, we're thinking that perhaps we should give additional explanation for readers who don't know about the WN.』

Creare（○）『It'll be unpleasant if false fact that you're our idol is spreading after all. In the first place, isn't our mascot idol right now Marie-chan? Ange-chan is also popular with how gallant she is though.』

Creare（○）『Hey, do you know? Marie-chan is the first place in the popularity ranking for the fourth volume. Master is the first place from the cumulative total of first volume until fourth volume though, isn't this amazing?』

Luxion（●）『I'm feeling really amazed instead that master can be in the first place for the first volume until the third volume though. It's amazing that he could continue staying at the first place with that personality.』

Creare（○）『Master is really popular isn't he』

Sapling-chan(；゜Д゜)「Wait. What about me? What about my popularity? Everyone, you gave your vote for me right? Right-!?」

Creare（○）『Well, let's put aside the talk about popularity ranking. If you're a reader who are reading this SS, then surely you have also filled the questionnaire right? Does everyone has your own favorite character?』

Sapling-chan(# ゜Д゜)「You two, how long are you planning to stay here!」

Luxion（●）『Also, this plant isn't popular or anything at the WN. She even got a storm of『○ie』comment at the comment section. The reason is because how annoying she is.』

Sapling-chan(｀Д´#)ﾉ「D-don't screw with me! Sometimes I'd also get praised 'Great job!' you know! I played a great role there!」

Creare（○）『All the comments other than that were about how annoying you are though. Even so, you really came spreading into the LN. I respect that guts of yours at the very least.

Sapling-chan(# ゜言゜)「I absolutely won't give up. I'll show up next time too and become the idol of the questionnaire bonus chapter. I was really excited to make my entrance from the fourth volume. But everything is messed up because of Marie-chan's fault! Give me back my popularity!」

Luxion（●）『There isn't any popularity that can be given back. More importantly, if the readers who read the LN learned that the sacred tree's sapling has this kind of personality, won't they receive a great shock?』

Sapling-chan（；゜Д゜）「──You, aren't your words horrible? Do you need to go that far?」

Luxion（●）『As I thought, it's an excellent decision to remove this thing's lines from the LN. Because the readers will be able to maintain the image of lovable plant as long as they don't read her lines here in the questionnaire's SS.』

Creare（ ○）『This time too she butt in just when the story was getting good, so hasn't her image turned to be the worst now? I'm looking forward whether she can recover or not from this. ──Well, it'll be impossible though.』

Sapling-chan(#゜Д゜)「Don't underestimate my cuteness! The voices demanding for sapling-chan's corner will be a lot more than the demand for Marie route! I won't let anyone get in the way of my dream to develop a super lengthy tale in this questionnaire SS!」

Luxion（ ●）『You're planning something like that?』

Creare（○ ）『Won't it be difficult for a plant to be the leading actress? Ah, more importantly Marie route finally reached the third part. When it came to word count, the first part was 10000 words. The second part was 20000 words. Then the third part is around 15000 words? This, is the amount of one volume no matter how you look at it isn't it?』

Luxion（ ●）『Having extra story with length that reached a single volume is really a good bargain isn't it? This is what they called a good buy. It's like getting one free book if you buy three books.』

Creare（○）『It won't even be surprising if one day one more volume of extra story is prepared as special perk. At that time I wish that the story of Aaron(アーロン)-chan will get written by all means. Surely it will be interesting. After all it's a relatively important story.』

Creare（ ○）『Setting that aside, Luxion. What are you going to do after this? What are you thinking in this Marie route? I'm super curious. Also, when will my turn come in Marie route?』

Luxion（ ●）『It's a secret. Also, you won't have any turn.』

Creare（＃○）『■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■!!』

※Swear words that are unbearable to hear

Luxion（●）『Those who are curious with the continuation, please buy the sixth volume. Because next time it will surely be Marie route again.』

Sapling-chanΣ(゜Д゜)「What about my turn!?」

Short Story — Marie Route the Fourth

◇

After class.

" Now the kingdom is facing its greatest crisis ever!"

It was His Royal Highness Julius, who was making a speech on the platform in the square in front of the academy gate.

Students returning to their dormitories and those about to go out into the city to play, stop and listen to Prince Julius' speech.

This was because there was no way they were going to leave this place when the crown prince of their country was giving a speech.

However, some of them are joining in with great enthusiasm.

Prince Julius added gestures and raised his voice as he looked around at the faces of the crowd. 'He's used to making speeches' is how I—Leon Fou Bartfort—felt.

"I'm sure everyone has heard of the ongoing uprisings in various parts of the country. I'm sure everyone is anxious, but don't worry. The armies of our Holfort Kingdom are on their way to put them down."

Even though our sophomore year is nearing its end, the military is dealing with a series of rebellions in various parts of the Kingdom of Holfort.

It's not uncommon for the nobles to have skirmishes within the country. So normally the students don't panic as long as their own safety is not in danger.

However—if it happened frequently in different parts of the country, they would become uneasy, even if they didn't want to.

In fact, the female students listening to His Highness Julius' speech seemed anxious.

"There was an uprising near my parents' home, too."

"There are many of them these days."

"I got a letter from my parents telling me to stay in the capital for the long weekend."

Many students felt uneasy.

Prince Julius' speech in such a situation attracted the students.

"Our country is strong! We have nothing to fear from the frequent uprisings! But—"

Julius closed his eyes and made a little pause.

His eyes widen and he says in a louder voice than before

"—There's a country that's working behind the scenes."

As the crowd began to buzz, Prince Julius just shut his mouth.

In the midst of the commotion, Marie Fou Lafan, who was next to me, looked at Prince Julius, stunned.

"Hey, are you okay?"

When I called out to her, she had a shocked look on her face. I'm sure she remembers this scene. Of course, I remember it too.

Towards the end of the middle section of that otome game, the real enemy is revealed. At that point, Prince Julius will make a speech.

After the crowd quieted down, Prince Julius resumed his speech.

"The Principality—the Principality of Fanoss—is behind the frequent uprisings."

The spectators were amazed at the new revelation and shouted.

The fact that behind the uprising commotion was the Principality, which has a longstanding hostile relationship with the Kingdom of Holfort, is highly credible.

Amidst the commotion, I spoke with Marie. To confirm our knowledge of the game, and to see what we're going to do.

"The Principality didn't stop, did it?"

"Why won't they stop? We stole their trump card, didn't we? And yet, what's the point of continuing to go to war?"

'We won't fight because we don't think we can win' . This type of decision seems simple, but it's actually quite difficult.

We were naïve in thinking that we could avoid a war by stealing the magic flutes, the Principality's trump card.

Last time, in order to avoid the war, we rode into the Principality of Fanoss and retrieved their Magic Flutes. They're devices that summon that otome game's last boss, and they're extremely troublesome items.

Without the flutes, we thought the war would end. But in the end, we couldn't avoid it.

"Leon, are you going to join the war?"

Marie also knows what happens after this.

What awaits after this—

"Everyone, I need you to do me a favor."

—When Prince Julius held out his hands, he looked divine and radiant.

After all, a good-looking man is always popular. I'm sure no one would listen to me if I were to make a speech.

"This crisis—I want to stop this crisis in the Kingdom. Not as the crown prince. I want to save the kingdom from danger, as Julius, as a knight! That's what I'm asking for. Please, lend me your support!"

The crown prince, as a knight, said he wants to save the day.

The students were impressed by that.

There are voices calling out his name from everywhere.

"Long live His Highness Julius!"

"Long live the kingdom!"

"I'll lend you my strength!"

Gradually, the crowd became heated, and raised their voices.

"Thank you. Thank you, everyone! Thank you! Thank you, thank you all! I, no, we, will save the country!"

Julius shouted at the top of his lungs, and the crowd responded with a voice that made me feel vibrations. My ears were aching.

Marie looked at this in horror. It seemed hard to understand.

"Why would you want to go to war?"

It was a scene that had been talked about like a beautiful story in that otome game, but up close and personal, it seemed to be a different scene somehow. There was no emotion there.

It was just scary.

I wonder if Marie feels the same, and she squeezes my hand.

"You don't think they're going to die, do you?"

"Well, the aristocrats are the ones who stand back and give orders on the battlefield. They don't properly see danger."

"And you?"

"Me? I hate it. If I don't have to fight a war, I won't."

Marie looked relieved. Did she really think I would be willing to join in? In the first place, student soldiers would be a nuisance to professional soldiers and knights.

They wouldn't be welcomed on the battlefield when they hadn't even trained well.

Prince Julius waved his hand at the enthusiastic crowd.

It was a scene that was quite exciting in the game, but seeing it in person made me feel somewhat empty, sad, and complicated.

Are these guys really going to join the war?

◇

After a few days had passed since Prince Julius' speech, the atmosphere in the academy had changed drastically.

The strange atmosphere that had been tense due to the rebellion was now buoyed by the heat.

The boys who wanted to take this opportunity to make a name for themselves had announced in high spirits in the classroom that they would be volunteering for Prince Julius' army.

"Alan, the son of the Viscount Bourdons, volunteers for the army of Prince Julius! Anyone else want to join me?"

If they joined with a bunch of people, they would be better remembered by Prince Julius. This was their ulterior motive.

Also, if you volunteer with a large number of people, in the army of Prince Julius—shall we call it a volunteer army? It would have been a volunteer army in that otome game.

Your position in the volunteer army also takes that into account.

If you join alone, you're one of the soldiers, but if you take ten men with you, you're a captain.

Also, rumor has it that if you send out armor and airships with the support of your parents' family, you will be treated as an officer.

Lots of boys want to join for their future.

One after another, boys from the advanced and normal classes had volunteered to join.

I was surrounded by Daniel and Raymond, who were fellow poor aristocrats from the countryside, watching the scene from a distance.

Both of them were looking coldly at me.

It's kind of sad that the country aristocrats are more aware of the reality of the situation.

Daniel let out a sigh as he looked at the boys who were floating around.

"For the sake of the country, for the sake of His Highness, only the pretense is admirable, isn't it?"

Raymond pushed his glasses up with his middle finger and straightened them before talking about what the boys were really thinking.

"If you're active here, you'll be popular with the girls. There are a lot of boys who will stick around for this reason."

What a sad reality.

I saw a boy named Alan making a scene in the classroom. He's a boy who wears ornaments and looks like a rich man. He is surrounded by his cronies.

I'm sure he's going to contribute a fine airship and armors with the support of his parents' family.

Are the students, whose families are poor, going to borrow weapons from Alan to fight in the war? Well, that's not our problem.

"Daniel, Raymond, do you guys want to join in?"

I joked, and they both snickered.

"No."

"Let's get real. It's not good for amateurs to be on the battlefield. I think the only one of us who's allowed to participate properly is Leon."

"Me?"

Raymond, who made it sound like I'm the only exception, shrugged his shoulders and explained why.

"It was Leon who conquered the households of Viscount Lafan and Earl Offrey, right?"

"Oh~ that was my brother. Nicks is a really great guy. You guys were watching him, weren't you? You guys were in on it too."

"Yeah, right. Leon was the one working behind the scenes. I mean, we were just the ones sending out the airships, right?"

Let's just say that I'm only here to support my brother in making a name for himself. There's no way I'd sacrifice my brother just because I didn't want to stand out.

I'm just a kind brother who's happy to see my big bro get ahead—no ulterior motive here.

Daniel laughed.

"I envy the Bartfort family because they're all heroes. But you've made a name for yourself by conquering a dungeon. You even have an airship; a lot of students know that."

Will they be pressing me to join them?

That's really annoying.

"I wish I could get away from this."

"I'm not sure they want you. The rich people want to play an active role themselves. They don't want Leon to take all the credit, do they?"

"You think they care more about taking credit for the war than winning it?"

"This volunteer army stuff is all too-good-to-be-true."

"People dream too much, don't they?"

If you play an active role on the battlefield and come back to the academy, the girls won't leave you alone—what a dream! Besides, if you play an active role here, your future will be bright.

Prince Julius will remember you better, and you'll be able to tell the saga of your activities since your school days.

They don't have to push themselves. Seeing the boys trying to go to war makes me feel empty.

Let the adults take care of it. After we grow up, they can force us to participate in wars whether we want to or not, so why do so now?

You should have more fun while you are young.

You should not go to war.

◇

A special building has been prepared on the academy grounds.

It is a house, not a dormitory, prepared for Olivia. It was just for her, and only a few people were allowed to enter.

Armed guards were prepared around the building, and Olivia received special treatment.

But right now, the owner is absent.

The people using such a building were the nobles representing the academy.

Prince Julius was standing in front of a map on a table there. A number of pieces resembling airships were placed on the table, and he was looking at them.

At Julius' side, Jilk is preparing a cup of tea.

"Your Highness, is there something troubling you?"

Julius responds to Jilks question by rubbing his fingers over his eyes. Prince Julius' problem is that there are too many volunteers.

"Lots of students volunteered, but the problem is the equipment."

"Is it still difficult to rent it from the royal palace?"

"Father and mother only want me to stay at the academy. It's not the Crown Prince's place to be sitting on his hands and knees in this time of crisis."

The rebellions were rising up one after another, and even the Principality took advantage of the opportunity to attack.

In this time of crisis, Prince Julius has decided to fight on his own.

The reason for this— was Olivia.

Jilk laughed as he teased Julius.

"Aren't you just trying to show Olivia-san your good side?"

"Don't be ridiculous!"

Julius, his face reddening in panic, gave a deliberate cough and forced the conversation back on track, but that just proved Jilks point.

"Jilk, we're short on weapons. What about the other three?

"They're still scrounging up strength back at their parents' domains."

The other three are Brad, the heir to the Field family.

Greg, the heir to the Seburg family.

Chris, the son of the Sword Saint.

All three of them are heirs to powerful noble households and are trusted allies who agree with Prince Julius. At the same time, they were also love rivals for Olivia.

Julius puts his hand on his chin and looks down at the map. Then, he tells Jilk his decision.

"We will participate in this battle and lead the kingdom to victory."

"Yes, Your Highness."

Jilk agreed. He then made a suggestion to Julius.

"Your Highness, why don’t you ask the students who own airships to help us?"

"Own an airship? There are mere students who own airships?"

"There are very few, but they exist. With their help, we can gather airships and form a fleet. Some of the students even have armored suits, you know."

"Should we ask for their help now?"

"Yes, Highness. After all, this is a matter of national importance."

"All right. You’re in charge. But don’t push yourself."

"I’m at your service, Your Highness."

◇

"Hey, you poor bastards! I heard you guys are not going to join Prince Julius' volunteer army?"

Alan, with his cronies, talked to us in the classroom.

I’m surrounded by Marie, Daniel, and Raymond.

Marie raises one eyebrow.

"What? It’s bad enough we’re poor, you son of a bitch!"

"No, no, not you."

There’s no way Alan would come out strongly against Marie, and that’s because she’s a girl. The rest of us boys can closely relate to the sight of him being cowed like that.

But because of Alan’s shouting in the classroom, the students around us were paying attention to us.

Raymond seemed to think this was a bad idea.

"Guys, let’s get out of the classroom. This situation is bad."

Before Raymond could finish his thought, Alan used his cronies to block our escape route.

"You’re running away?"

Looking at the smirks of Alan and the others, I felt disgusted.

As nobles, there’s no issue with me not participating in Prince Julius’ volunteer army. In fact, the responsible thing would be to disband it.

However, the atmosphere in the academy did not allow for that.

It’s not just the boys around us, even the girls are giving us cold stares.

Daniel looked at Alan and the others in frustration and muttered in a whisper, "That’s just dirty."

We are free to refuse joining the volunteer army. However, refusing to do so would put you in a bad position in the academy.

This is because many boys, and to a lesser extent, girls, have announced their intent to serve in the volunteer army.

In other words, we are in the minority.

No matter how good of an argument we make, our position is weak.

It’s called peer pressure.

Alan spoke loudly and deliberately in front of us to make his point clear.

"You have an airship, don't you Bartfort? I've heard it's a fine airship acquired through adventure. So how can you not join the volunteer army? Isn't this where a real nobleman would have volunteered to take the lead? If I were you, I would have volunteered on the spot when I heard Prince Julius' speech."

"I am not you and you are not me. Such metaphors are pointless."

It's so embarrassing. It's like an amateur who watches a boxing match, doesn't know anything about it, and says something like, "I could have definitely avoided that hit!"

But Alan, with his surroundings on his side, was bullish.

"Are you running away, coward?"

We haven't even been ordered to participate in the war, yet they're treating us like cowards deserting it.

People are really stupid.

Marie steps forward to defend me and speaks freely to Alan.

"It's not compulsory to join the volunteer army, you know. Don't make it sound like Leon is on the run."

It's a good argument, but it's not getting through to these guys

Because he thinks he's right, Alan is really bullish. If he thinks that the girls around him are on his side, he will take a strong stance, even against Marie.

"It's Prince Julius' volunteer army!"

"So what? In the first place—*MUGH!*"

I covered Marie's mouth with my hand and asked her to keep quiet for a while. Even if Marie made a good argument, it wouldn't make things any better.

—The atmosphere in the academy is already strange.

The eyes of the students around us are looking at us as if we are their enemies.

"Pardon my fiancé"

When I say that she's 'my fiancé' , Alan gives me a blatantly disgusted look. In this place, a man with a fiancée is a winner in the marital race.

They are the ones who have reached the finish line, and they are also the objects of jealousy for the boys who are still struggling to get married. Alan also looked frustrated.

I'm glad to see that look of frustration on your face.

"As for volunteering, I'll take it under consideration. I'm sorry we can't come to a decision sooner. I have a lot of preparations to make, too."

'I'll take it under consideration' —A very Japanese-like answer stemming from my previous life. Although I have zero motivation, these words give off the magical feeling of an affirmation.

Alan quickly turns his back on us and walks away.

"Make up your mind quickly. A poor nobleman from the countryside is only worth so much. You should be grateful you're allowed to join His Highness Julius' volunteer army in the first place."

Daniel and Raymond stare at Alan's back, and then quickly turn their gaze to me. Daniel looks frustrated.

"Leon, are you sure you want to keep this up?"

"We can't talk in here. Come with me."

"Hmm~! Mmm!"

With Marie flailing about, we leave the classroom. The stares of my classmates hurt.

◇

Alan and the others headed to the room where Jilk was.

Jilk narrows his eyes at the sight of Alan and his cronies, making no attempt to hide his discomfort.

"You backed down without them making any promises?"

The plan was to have Leon's airship sent out and made Prince Julius' flagship. Leon had deployed Partner when fighting Earl Offrey, and Jilk had heard about its performance.

If the Royal Palace wouldn't lend them the power to fight, they would have to procure it themselves.

Alan and the others make desperate excuses so as not to spoil Jilk's mood.

"I wouldn't be this pained if I could tell you that. But Prince Julius' flagship can be my ship. I can assure you of a comfortable cruising experience."

Alan is a student with a large war chest.

In addition to his airship, he lends his armor to his cronies and volunteers.

He is a valuable part of Julius' fleet. In fact, he is treated as an executive in Julius' volunteer army.

However, it was only the terrible state of that army that allowed someone like him to become such.

But Jilk couldn't cut Alan loose easily either.

"What I want is a warship, not a luxury cruise ship. You must immediately persuade Bartfort-dono to join us."

"But…"

"You have to convince him. —I don't care how. Yes, I have heard that he has a sister. Why don't you talk to some of his other friends?"

Although he avoided being direct, what Jilk wanted to say was, 'Threaten the people involved with him and use them to get him to cooperate.'

Alan and the others leave the room in a hurry.

Jilk sees them off and enjoys a cup of his favorite tea in his favorite tea set.

(They are all useless subordinates. But they are risking their lives as His Highness' subordinates, so we must be patient and use them. It's all for His Highness and—and Olivia-san.)

◇

We took Marie to Master's room. We were invited into a room that smelled like good tea, and in it, we spoke to Master about the future. Master was worried about the current situation too, and provided me with a lot of information.

"Julius'—Prince Julius' volunteer army? I've heard about it as well; the royal palace doesn't approve of it."

It was Marie who listened to Master and agreed with him.

"Oh, I knew it. It's crazy to send students to the battlefield."

Only if it were the end of the world, would they send out student soldiers.

That's fine and all, but I don't understand the feelings of Prince Julius and the others who volunteered themselves.

"I've also been invited."

Master was stroking his chin. "They seem to be aware of what Prince Julius and the others are after," he said.

"They don't want the battle prowess of Mister Leon, they want the airships. They must be in a hurry to get their forces together."

Marie is taking mouthful after mouthful of sweets prepared by Master. Hey, you should be more nervous! Please don't! Don't embarrass me in front of my Sensei!

While Leon was troubled by Marie, Master graciously allowed her to have as much as she wanted.

Marie said, "Thank you!", and then proceeded to eat them one by one.

—Let's leave her be.

"Based on the atmosphere of the academy, I feel like it's dangerous to disobey him."

I seek advice from my sensei, because I'm sure that if I disobey Prince Julius and the others, that I would end up in a world of hurt.

I'm sure they will try to harass us.

"That will be an issue. The students of the academy are being influenced by the excitement. Since that's the case, it might be a good idea to leave the academy."

Leaving campus? You want me to run away from the academy? Will I be able to get away with it?

Daniel and Raymond might even volunteer because they don't want to leave. In this world, there are still nobles with the attitude of "I'll kill you if you look down on me." Although they are better than the samurai of the Kamakura period.

Some even still collected the heads of their foes.

"My impression of the people around me is the worst. I'd rather be on the battlefield—"

As I said that much, Master smiled at me.

"That's right. Instead of Prince Julius' volunteer army, Mister Leon should lead his own volunteer army to participate in the war."

Marie stuffed her mouth full of cookies and puffed out her cheeks like a squirrel.

I was startled too.

"Wait! You're asking Leon to join the war?!"

Master nodded.

"That's right. Although it's not the kind of battlefield that Miss Marie would think of.

"What?"

Marie looks alternately at Master and me.

She doesn't seem to understand, so I explain to her.

"Do you know what's important in a war?"

"Strength?"

"That's part of it, but we also need supplies. An army can't fight without ammunition, food for the soldiers, and other things. Getting the supplies to them is going to be very important."

Master nodded, so I must have been right.

"Exactly. Partner would be able to transport a large amount of supplies. I'm sure the Royal Navy would accept it."

"But would they approve of me leading a volunteer army?"

"I'll take care of it myself."

Thank you, Master! But who is Master really? Wouldn't he need to have a lot of influence to get my volunteer army recognized? As I thought when I rescued Clarice-senpai and the others, isn't Master quite an important person?

Then I had an idea.

"Master, this volunteer army of Prince Julius, do you think the kingdom is not going to recognize it as things are?"

I asked him if the King would keep Prince Julius in the royal capital, or if he would compromise and allow it. When I ask which will be the case, Master gets a slightly troubled look on his face.

"There's a chance that they will permit it. Rather than letting him run out of control like this, there will be the idea of preparing a battlefield where he can play an active role and let him experience his first battle. There's some movement in that direction."

Then, will Prince Julius eventually go into battle as well?

This situation is scary because it seems like everything is set in stone. Predetermined, like a game scenario.

Even so, I'm going to make my own move.

"I would like to have a meeting with Prince Julius."

At my offer, Master showed a dubious expression—but he immediately smiled.

"Let me arrange it."

"Thank you."

◇

When I met with Prince Julius, he was in a surprisingly welcoming mood.

"Bartfort, I've heard about you. I heard that you have been recognized as leader of a volunteer army by the Royal Palace."

Prince Julius, who wanted to lead a volunteer army to war, was regretting that I got the royal court's permission first. However, he doesn't seem to hold it against me.

"I've been asked to undertake a transport mission with my companions. I can't expect to perform as spectacularly as His Royal Highness the Crown Prince."

"I'm not allowed to go to war. You're braver than I am."

"That's not true. Soon, the Royal Palace will recognize His Highness' volunteer army."

I've heard about it beforehand from my sensei and it's almost a done deal.

It got approval in that otome game, so it will probably go the same.

In fact, when Master went to the Royal Palace to ask for permission to set up my volunteer army, the talks there were already coming together in the direction of approving Prince Julius' sortie.

I also got permission from my mentor to tell him about it.

"Really? You seem to know something about the state of affairs—do you have a man inside the royal palace?"

"It's a secret."

It must be strange for me, a rural nobleman, to have contacts in the royal court.

Jilk, standing by Prince Julius' side, is smiling……. it's scary because I don't know what this guy is thinking.

However, Alan and the others standing by the wall were staring at me in frustration.

So, I smile.

"We'll do our best to be useful in this fight, too. Good luck to you too, Alan."

"I'm gonna do it without you telling me!"

I, who had made a fool of myself so much, am now leading a volunteer army with the permission of the royal court. I guess that's what Alan can't forgive me for.

Prince Julius grasps my right hand in both of his.

"We'll follow soon enough. If we meet on the battlefield, I'll look after you."

"Yes, Your Highness."

It makes me sad to see Prince Julius with a twinkle in his eye, looking forward to the battlefield. I wish he'd get the reality of the situation as soon as possible.

I called out to Alan and then decided to leave the room.

"Alan, don't be reckless."

Alan, who took my words as sarcasm, clicked his tongue.

"You'll see. I'm the one who'll be a hero in this war."

…Oh I'm so jealous. That's all fine with me, I just want to survive.

◇

While Leon was meeting with Julius, Marie was waiting outside the building.

She felt self-conscious about meeting royalty, or rather, she didn't want to get close to Julius and his friends right now. Everyone is somewhat tense.

"*Sigh* Why do men want to go to war? Peace is best, right?"

When boys hear about war, they seem enthusiastic about taking part in it.

And then, there are the girls who send them out.

Marie couldn't understand it at all.

She heard voices from a place hidden in the shadows of the building, and when She went to take a peek, then saw a man and woman embracing one another.

"Yulia, I'm going to get a medal for this fight and come for you."

"Lloyd, you will be a hero. Just make sure you come back to me."

"Yeah, I promise."

The boy named Lloyd seems to be a regular class student. In contrast, the female student named Yulia seems to be from the advanced class.

Witnessing the love across class lines, she felt a little excitement in her heart. However, Marie immediately thinks:

(You should stop him. He doesn't have to go fight.)

Gathering up her courage, Marie called out to them. They left in a hurry, and their cheeks were red from primal lust.

Seeing them, Marie asks Lloyd for help.

"You're a normal class boy, right? In fact, Leon——Bartfort is leading a volunteer army. Do you want to be an armor pilot there? We're short on staff."

She managed to compose herself and solicit him with a bright smile.

They were confused by the sudden offer. Only, Lloyd shook his head.

"I'm sorry, but I've decided to join Prince Julius' volunteer army."

"Oh, yeah? But wouldn't it be better if it was easier to avoid battle?"

"No!"

"What?"

Lloyd tells Marie why he dismissed her proposal.

"Yulia's is from a family of barons. They see the need for Yulia to have a husband, but if I, who doesn't have a reputation, made a marriage proposal, her family would reject it. But if I join Prince Julius' volunteer army, just that would be an honor in itself! I'm going to be a hero, and I'm going to be a man worthy of Yulia—a knight!"

Yulia looks at Lloyd with her cheeks dyed red.

"—Lloyd, you've been thinking about me so much."

Marie was puzzled by the two of them.

She gives up trying to convince them as Leon comes out of the building, and rushes to him. Meanwhile, the two embraced one another and resumed their love-making.

◇

"The palace doesn’t give a damn."

Gritting his teeth in the empty room, Jilk was in a hurry because his plans to make Partner his flagship had gone awry.

"If I don’t do this, I’ll cause trouble for Olivia-san in the royal palace. If I do that, my life is meaningless!"

He held his head in his hands.

He was acting impatient and breathing erratically.

Jilk didn’t want Olivia to dislike him one bit.

He pondered what to do, and then thought about getting a replacement airship.

"Let’s scrounge up some airships, even if it’s a bit heavy-handedly. We’ve been too lax in the past. This is a battle for the honor of Your Highness. We can’t afford to embarrass him."

For Julius’ sake, for Olivia’s sake—he repeated the same excuses in his head and decided to scrape up the strength, even if his means were somewhat forceful.

The plan is to have the students procure the equipment for each other.

Of course, Jilk has no right to make them do that.

However, this plan can be realized. All you have to do is create an atmosphere in the academy where they will be forced to provide it themselves. If they don’t provide it, he can drive them away for having no noble spirit.

It’s pretty vicious, but Jilk doesn’t hesitate.

He puts on a cold expression and leaves the room.

◇

The port where Partner is anchored is packed with people from poor noble families.

Both men and women are participating in the war as my volunteer army, to give us a track record of participating in the war, and—to escape from the academy, which is being engulfed in a bizarre atmosphere.

I watched from the deck as the people I knew boarded from the ramp.

I could hear Marie's voice. Marie is trying to get the girls she knows aboard.

"Come on, get in! We have to hurry!"

"Marie, you're scaring me!"

She pushed the small girl hugging the book and forced her onto Partner's deck.

"Just get in! If you were at the academy, you'd be holed up in the library, right?"

"Yes."

Why are you taking what she said for granted? I looked at the girls who responded like that and I watched, thinking that Marie must be feeling troubled too.

Behind Marie, there were girls who followed behind her— reluctantly following her. They must have been forced out of the academy by the atmosphere too.

—But more importantly, aren't there a lot of them? There were more girls than Marie was taking care of before.

Marie doesn't have it easy either.

The girls that Marie is taking care of have a strong habit of taking care of themselves.

The boys in my group are looking at them like hungry beasts.

"If you get on Leon-senpai's airship, you'll have a chance to talk to them!"

"You're kidding me?! Give this place up to your senpais!"

"I don't know! If it comes to this, it's a duel!"

Everyone's bleary-eyed because their lives are at stake. They ignore the hierarchy and fight each other, which is a sight to behold.

She might be a reclusive girl who loves books, but compared to the noble girls at the academy, her flaws are more attractive. Love books? I'll buy as many as I can! That's what

we boys are all about. It's tens of thousands of times better than being asked for expensive jewelry, giving them away, and then being sold to a pawn shop a few days later.

—Again, I think the academy is a sad experience for the boys.

In addition to the girls that Marie is taking care of, there are other girls from the poor aristocracy that come aboard. They must have sensed the atmosphere in the academy and fled.

"There's a larger group than I expected."

"The current atmosphere at the academy is intolerable."

As I look down at such a scene from the deck, Luxion approaches me.

"It's been a while."

「Why did you call me, master?」

"I've got a lot on my plate. More importantly, have you finished your errands?"

「Not yet.」

"You should prioritize this, then."

「Partner's performance is enough to serve the purpose without me. Besides, I'll leave Arroganz behind.」

Arroganz—the armor prepared exclusively for me, and is larger than the standard armor in this world.

"You're going to abandon your master?"

「Are you lonely? Don't worry. We have an artificial intelligence on board the Arroganz, and I have drones in place in Partner. You have nothing to worry about.」

Lately, Luxion has been busy, flying around from place to place, away from my side. If I tell him I miss him for that, he'll say something sarcastic again, so I'll keep quiet.

"Artificial intelligence in the Arroganz? Your replica?"

「I'm sorry, but there's no way to replicate my kind of high-performance artificial intelligence in a space as small as Arroganz.」

It’s like he’s trying to tell me he’s a genius.

「 But I can assure you that it is better than master. 」

"You’re a real loudmouth. —and how did the investigation of the saint's necklace go?

「 The investigation is currently on hold due to low priority. 」

"I want to know what’s going on in the country. Make it a priority"

「 We’ve already collected the magic flutes. Isn’t it unnecessary? Instead, our priority is to destroy the remains of the new humans. That is an objective that should be achieved. 」

As usual, he has no mercy for new humans. In a way, is it typical of Luxion? If you look at the harbor, drones are in the process of loading and unloading cargo.

To the untrained eye, it would look like they’re people using their mechs to load and unload cargo.

"Luxion, stay, we need your help."

The current situation continued to be unpredictable, and I couldn’t help but feel uneasy on my own. That’s why I’m giving orders to Luxion—

「 I’m judging it to be unnecessary. I don’t think my performance will be needed. More importantly, if we leave the remains of new mankind unattended and a problem arises, it will be a disaster. Like master said, there is a possibility that the world could be destroyed. 」

"Really?"

He’s saying that if we leave the remains of new mankind unattended, the world will be destroyed. I don’t think this guy is going to lie to me, so should I make that a priority?

「 I’ll be back as soon as I can. I’m sure master will miss me. 」

"—That’s quite an assumption."

I watched Luxion leave and I looked up at the sky.

"Is this really going to be alright?"

◇

The Royal Palace of the Kingdom of Holfort.

There, Olivia is meeting with a traitor named Marquess of Frampton. The Marquess believes himself to be a patriot who has sacrificed himself for his country, and he has no doubt about it.

But the way he was going about saving the country, could not be called patriotic in the slightest.

Such was the Marquess of Frampton. As for Olivia, well, the saint doesn't hate him, as he's more useful than all the other humans.

"It seems that Jilk is trying hard, too. He's doing some cute things so that I'll like him."

As Olivia read the report, the Marquess of Frampton was dismayed.

"We're receiving complaints every day from the nobles who have their children in the academy,"

"Once Julius goes to war, there will be less complaints. It's a great honor to be part of the Crown Princes' first battle, isn't it?"

"Well, I guess I'll just have to shut up. But do you really want to send prince Julius to war? He doesn't have any formal training, you know?"

He wasn't actually worried about Julius, but rather about the banner he carried.

It's the same with Olivia.

"There are plenty of alternatives available."

"You really are a terrible woman. For you to be a saint, this must be the end of the world."

At those words, Olivia laughed at the corners of her mouth in a position where the Marquess of Frampton couldn't see her. Her eyes were glazed over.

(You're right. It's the end of the world for the Kingdom of Holfort.)

T he Saint in Olivia, who acts to destroy the kingdom of Holfort, orders the Marquess of Frampton.

"I'll be on the battlefield too. Prepare me a ship where I can use my power."

"Are you sure? It’s a student-controlled fleet. Do you know how much damage they could do…?"

"I don't care if they do. It's more convenient for us."

In the face of Olivia's unchildlike spirit, the Marquis of Frampton stopped moving for a moment. Immediately afterwards, he nodded impatiently.

"Okay."

As Olivia walked out of the room, Kyle, who was waiting outside, approached her.

"Gosh, Mistress, where to next?"

Olivia replies to the question from a nervous Kyle with a smile on her face.

"I’ll follow Julius on his first battle. Kyle will be taking care of me too, so follow me."

"Yes!"

Even though she was heading to the battlefield, Olivia didn’t show the slightest bit of anxiety.

It was because the saint had experienced this many times in the past.

◇

"Good job, Arroganz!"

"There! There! A little more to the right!"

Partner’s hangar.

Marie and I were cheering on the unmanned, moving Arroganz.

As for what Aroganz is doing—

「—Missed.」

—Admitting that he made a mistake himself, he watched as the crates, stacked in a huge pile, crumbled.

Arroganz is playing with the crates left over from the transport of supplies, using them as building blocks—not.

Arroganz is gaining experience.

Arroganz, newly equipped with artificial intelligence, moves poorly. If he walks, he scrapes. If he flies, it falls for some reason. When he plays with blocks, he fails.

He’s still like a tottering baby.

Such is the case with Arroganz as he heads for the corner of the hangar.

"Arroganz?"

Marie calls out to him, and he sits down with his back to us and stares at the wall.

"What’s the matter with you, Arroganz? Are you sulking?"

Marie approaches and tries to get him to stand, but the mechanised suit, Arroganz, doesn’t freak out. And yet, he makes an excuse.

「—Recalculating.」

"You’re sulking, aren’t you? You’re definitely sulking! Come on, baby, do it again. You can do it again. Arroganz can do it!"

I was sitting on the crate watching Marie, who was desperately trying to encourage Arroganz.

The reason I’m watching the two of them interact is because I’m basically bored.

Even though we’re out on the battlefield, we students are on a mission to transport supplies in the rear.

The regular forces don’t consider us a combat force, and we were told to never go into battle.

We should be glad that there are sane adults left in the field.

Raymond comes to the hangar.

"Leon, we’re about to arrive. Huh? Is Arroganz still playing with blocks?"

"Isn’t he cute?"

When I bragged about my no-good, cute Arroganz, Raymond didn’t seem to understand.

"I don’t believe in armour that works unattended. It’s not like there’s a ghost possessing it or anything, is there?"

Raymond and his friends didn’t understand when I told them that Arroganz has been equipped with an artificial intelligence.

Thanks to this, there are rumors that the Arroganz was inhabited by a ghost.

The only people who come close to him are Marie and me.

I get off the crate and call out to Marie and Arroganz.

"We’re about to arrive. We’re about to start unloading and you can get some rest."

「Recalculation is complete.」

"I’ll tell Arroganz to practice while I’m gone."

"Just get some rest. We’re going to work."

When Marie came towards me, she put her hands on her hips. As for Marie’s outfit, since it’s strange to wear an academy uniform in a hangar, she’s in a jumpsuit.

"I’m going to go talk to all the girls,"

"Do you want me to help you?"

"Of course! If they’re left alone, a lot of them will stay in their rooms. Besides, the boys work harder when they’re around."

The boys who want to look good in front of girls will work even harder than usual

Men are sad creatures, aren’t they?

Raymond laughs.

"I don’t blame them for doing so, it’s their big chance. Well, I’m going to go and talk to the guys."

In the hangar where they left, I looked up at Arroganz.

"I don’t think anything will come to pass, but if something does happen, please lend me some help."

『…acknowledged.』

Arroganz responds briefly, raises his arms high—and hits the hanger crane. This robot is a big ditz.

◇

While the volunteer army led by Leon was on a supply run.

The volunteer army led by Prince Julius, was fighting the rebels.

Watching the battle from the bridge of their airship, Olivia smiled inwardly. She enjoys watching her allied ships sink.

(Yes. Sacrifice your young lives in vain. If you're going to hold a grudge against someone, hold it against your ancestors for making you a noble.)

Julius was shouting at the crew.

"Bring this ship to the frontlines! Our flank is being beaten."

"No! Prince Julius has orders not to bring the flagship to the front!"

"Whose orders?!"

"His Majesty the King!"

"Fuck!"

Out of concern for his allies, he tried to step forward. But when he found out it was an order by his father, the King, he was forced to stop.

Olivia looked at Julius with a worried face.

Inwardly, however, she wasn't the least bit worried.

(I thought this battle would go on for longer, so this is disappointing. Still, seeing them fall is going to be interesting.)

On the battlefield, the students with their armors, were battling the so-called rebels. They were actually a group of renowned sky pirates.

They were ordered to retreat if they encountered the regular army, but the volunteer army was easy pickings.

The volunteer soldiers were dropping like flies, by the hands of these experienced men, who were fighting with tenacity.

The sky pirates were rewarded for every dead soldier, and therefore fought zealously.

This was ordered by Marquess Frampton—and Olivia.

Suddenly, Greg's voice was heard on the bridge.

It seems Greg boarded his own armor and led his allies into battle.

"I'm going to help! You guys need support!"

Chris couldn't stand by either. He also led a group of students, with himself at the helm, into the battle.

"You just support them. I'm going to win this battle!"

As the two of them charged in, the pirates were pushed back. But it was an organized withdrawal, and they did so because they knew when best to give ground.

Chris was chasing them around, sword in hand.

"Don't run from me, cowards! Fight me!"

Julius and Jilk showed the same expression at the sight of this.

"Are these rebels really so spineless?"

"Your Highness, that's about all that they're good for. Now let us rescue our allies."

Seeing Julius, who already knew the bitterness of defeat, even in his first battle, Olivia snuggled up to him.

"Julius, you, the commander can't look down. Everyone is watching."

"Yes, you're right. I can't afford to be defeated here."

Olivia smiled at Julius, who had recovered, but she was cold inside.

(It doesn't matter if you fall now anyways, since you're the last King of Holfort.)

◇

A collection point for supplies built on a floating island.

There, supplies were prepared to be delivered to each battlefield.

Airships frequently came and went.

They were in a hurry. The harbor was overflowing with people and cargo.

Marie and I were in a building at its port.

"We've been here so many times, and yet, it still seems amazing, like stepping into a movie."

Marie watched the surroundings with admiration. Indeed, the scene of mechanized armors modified for heavy lifting, carrying loads one after another, seemed more like a sci-fi movie than a fantasy one.

It's scenes like this that make me think that other worlds are amazing.

How much better would it be if it wasn't a war-related scene?

"Don't leave, you'll get lost."

"Don't be ridiculous!"

While teasing Marie, I entered a building to get my next orders. In it, I found a poster plastered on a large bulletin board.

No, it looked like a newspaper.

There was a crowd of people surrounding it.

"I heard His Highness won his first battle."

"He's fighting really well with just a volunteer army."

"It says here he won three in a row!"

The soldiers with the transport missions were shouting in admiration. It seems like the Prince's army was quite active.

Marie looked anxious.

"The prince and the others aren't going to lose, right?"

"Master said that he has placed guards around Julius and his men. If they are about to lose, he said, a highly skilled squad will intervene."

The strategy part of the otome game, in which I had suffered so much while playing, had a generous follow-up when it came to reality. Thanks to that, I didn't need to get involved.

The article seems to say that Prince Julius and his men are leading the volunteer army and winning battle after battle.

Marie was relieved.

"If they're winning, it'll be fine. We won't all die, right? Right?"

Marie looked uneasy until she heard the answer from me.

"Maybe."

"Maybe? Tell me everything is fine here! How could you not notice? I'm insecure! I need you to take away my anxiety!"

"I'm an honest man and a very reliable witness."

"Twisted bastard!"

I ignored the complaining Marie and headed to the room where my superior officer was.

As for the article I had just read, they had deliberately avoided negative topics. In fact, they probably didn't write about how much damage had been done, to keep fighting spirits high.

I want it to be as fluffy and sweet as some otome game world. I'm hoping for a great turn of events where no one dies and they all come back.

—What I'm concerned about is that they didn't talk about the damage in the game. I hope they're all safe, but I'm not sure what's really going on.

As we left, we stopped as we heard a topic of concern.

"Are there young girls on the battlefield too?"

"The Saint? The article's saying she's the goddess of victory or something."

"What a cute kid."

When Marie heard Olivia's name, she was peeved.

"…'Goddess of Victory', huh?"

"What, you're jealous? Come to think of it, a certain someone tried to replace that goddess of victory and failed, didn't they?"

I laughed at her, so Marie got pissed and denied it.

"It was just a dream! You forever idiot!"

It was Marie who had tried to butt into the encounter events with Prince Julius and the others in an attempt to replace Olivia-san.

She even attempted to make contact with them afterwards, but failed at every turn.

I guess it's not enough for a mob to do her best

"What would you call yourself, the 'Goddess of Material Transport' ?"

"Oh, that's so subtle. Absolutely not."

Is that so? I'm sure there are a lot of soldiers who would be happy to hear that their supplies will be delivered without fail. Well, Marie isn't exactly a goddess, is she?

"If that were the case, she'd be the mascot of the transport unit. We could sell Marie dolls as good luck charms."

"I don't like that either! Why am I the mascot?"

"Because it suits you."

As I walked down the hallway talking to Marie, the building was emptied. Not just the soldiers, but even the knights walked out.

"What?"

I could hear the knights talking. One of the loudest ones was screaming to the puzzled knights.

"Prince Julius is here!"

◇

Once Prince Julius arrived, he was warmly welcomed by the staff.

We poor aristocrats felt a bit alienated. After all, our priority was to supply Prince Julius and the others, and we were on standby.

Marie was back on board, but the boys had mixed expressions at the sight of Julius' volunteer army.

I listened to Daniel and Raymonds' conversation as I surveyed their, now decreased in number, fleet.

"There were more than 10 ships at the start, right?"

"They must have gathered more after we left the academy, so there must have been more. But only six of them made it here."

"They just left in the middle, didn't they? What?"

Raymond could not answer Daniel's question. He was aware of the answer, but he didn't want to admit it.

Our friends around him were also looking at him with complicated expressions.

There were more than ten ships in the volunteer army, but only six are here.

If they had only routed, they would still be safe. But if they didn't escape, it meant that they had sunk on the battlefield. I would like to think that they left for some reason.

"Victorious volunteer army, huh?"

I remembered the wording of the news report, but it didn't sound like this.

All but one of the ships looked like they had sustained damage.

Only the flagship used by Prince Julius was intact.

◇

At the base near the port, Olivia was conversing with the Marquess of Frampton.

Olivia held her glass and observed its contents.

"The Principality is acting quite laid back, isn't it?"

She was being sarcastic but the Marquess didn't mind making small talk.

"I see you've reduced the pirates by quite a bit."

"They're not worth keeping alive."

"I've also seen the prince. He's grown up a lot."

Olivia's shoulders shook. She was laughing inwardly. The Marquess craned his neck, puzzled by her attitude.

"What's so funny? He'll make a fine king, I'm sure."

"Yeah, I know."

Despite her verbal affirmation, Olivia was inwardly thinking the opposite.

(If you can call that growing up, then I guess you're right. But can we really call it growing up?)

The Kingdom was on the road to collapse, just as Olivia planned.

"More importantly, will the Duke of Redgrave make a move?"

Is he going to fight them? The Marquess took a sip of his wine before answering.

"It's been arranged for Vince to be the commander-in-chief. Our faction will not participate in the first group, so we won't get sacrificed. But I've managed to rake in the Redgrave house and some unimportant frontier houses."

Olivia's expression did not change when she heard that. The Marquis of Frampton seems to be planning to use this opportunity to reduce the power of the frontier nobles.

"While I'm at it, I'll remove all those who stand in my way. If no one from my faction joins, it will look suspicious."

Those who he wanted to eliminate from his faction. Or those who were wanted erased on the battlefield at the behest of their faction mates.

These nobles were about to be sent to the battlefield.

"They'll pull Vince down, and weaken themselves in the process. They may be a hindrance, but they'll serve us well."

"You're bad."

Olivia raised her glass and smiled.

"I want this country and I'll do anything for it. And I'll be the Queen and you the Prime Minister. Let's continue to be friends, Prime Minister Frampton."

The Marquess perked up hearing those words

"Of course, my Queen. No, my saint."

The two smiled dimly, but it was not a sign of trust in each other. Both of them were eager to take advantage of the other.

◇

The Royal Castle of the Principality of Fanoss.

Hertrude was getting ready to lead their fleet into battle. There were maidservants around to help her get dressed, with no men in sight. It was her sister, Hertrauda, who barged into the room.

"Sister, please listen to me, just one more time!"

Hertrude took one look at Hertruda's face and looked in the mirror as if she was not interested.

"You're annoying me."

"But without the magic flutes, the Principality will fall apart—"

"You are royalty, what are you saying?!"

Hertrude is furious at Hertrauda for saying words that make the people around her uneasy.

She glares at her sister with a sharp look in her eyes and slaps her as she approaches.

A dry thud echoes through the room and the maidservant’s distance themselves from the two.

The head maidservant warned Hertrude, "Princess, don't behave like this—", but she didn't listen.

"Stand back, I have a lot of things to teach my inadequate sister."

The head maid stops her in a hurry— "But we must hurry!"

"Just leave."

The maidservants follow the command of Hertrude, intimidated by her tone, and leave the room.

Hertrauda looks at her sister with teary eyes, in the empty room.

"What was that statement in front of the maidservants? If you say that you are going to lose before you fight, everyone will be worried. Rauda, do you understand? You are in a position to become queen if I don't return. I can't leave you in charge like that."

"Sister, please listen to me."

"That won’t be necessary—I’ll be leaving."

When Hertrude was about to leave the room, she gave Hertrauda a hand signal. The look on Hertruda's face when he noticed this made her feel relieved.

She was relieved to see that Heltrauda understood what she was trying to say.

(Yes, that's it. Rauda - you will survive.)

After leaving the room, Hertrude spoke to the maid servants with a grim expression.

"Rauda will have to reflect on her actions for a while. Do not let her leave this room."

"Yes, Princess."

As she walks away with her attendants, she looks out the window.

There were dozens of airships with the emblem of the Principality of Fanoss floating in the air.

This is the fleet that will be attacking the kingdom.

They are assembling from all over the country and will continue to increase in number.

(I won't let them kill Rauda.)

◇

Locked in Hertrude's room, Hertrauda understood what the hand signal meant.

She found a letter prepared in advance and read it.

"—Sister…"

Tears spill out of her eyes as she reads it. On it, was an apology for Hertrude's previous attitude. It also said that there was no one she could trust. She doesn't know where they're watching from, so be careful. Added in the letter were the names of some suspicious vassals.

The first was Earl Gerrett.

Sitting on the bed, Hertrauda clutches the letter with tears in her eyes. At the end of it, Hertrude requests for her to burn it.

She might have to burn her sister's last letter.

"Everything will be taken from me…"

"We are supposed to be royalty, yet…"

She had just been informed of her powerlessness.

Going up to the fireplace, Hertrauda burns the letter.

After doing so, she cries and sobs in frustration.

◇

A military installation at the supply depot.

Partner, who was ordered to stay on standby, was finally given a mission.

I came alone, since Marie is busy with Arroganz.

A big shot throws an order in front of me. His attitude is clearly looking down on me, but the big shot seems to be a nobleman. He was the fifth son of an Earl, I think. His nephew is taking over now, but he seems to be unhappy with his position as base commander of the supply depot.

And he thinks that my volunteer army is not something to be taken seriously.

"The Principality is on the move, you volunteers are to go to the front lines and deliver supplies."

"The Principality of Fanoss?"

"Yes."

"Just us? Without an escort?"

"You think we have the wherewithal for that on this base? We're busy over here. In a few days, new volunteer soldiers will arrive from the academy. We're busy preparing to receive them."

This base commander, he's trying to win over the Prince. I guess he's working hard, if the prince remembers him here, he might make it to the top.

However, there's some information I couldn't ignore.

"Will the academy be sending more volunteers?"

"After hearing about Prince Julius' success, the cowards who remained at the academy seem to have gotten their thumbs out of their asses. Other young nobles who've graduated from the academy will also participate. We're planning to form a large fleet."

The proud base commander seemed to be helping to organize it.

You're still planning on recruiting students from the academy after all the casualties they've taken?

Moreover, they're fighting the professional forces of the Principality.

The base commander must have thought that he couldn't keep dealing with me forever, and told me to get the hell out of here.

When I left the room, I caught sight of a familiar face. It was a knight I saw at my brother Nicks' castle.

"Long time no see, Leon-dono."

"Yeah, hi."

The knight held out a letter from Nicks.

"A letter from Milord to you, Leon-dono."

"My brother?"

"Milord has been asked to participate in the war against the Principality, he has been assigned to their response force."

I hurriedly skimmed the letter. It seems a lot of things were rushed while I was nonchalantly resting in Partner.

The letter states that the palace has ordered Nicks and father to join the battle.

"It is an order from the Crown. The same goes for the rural barons and viscounts."

It can be seen that they are scrambling for strength in a great hurry. After all, the rebels are running rampant in many places. The regular forces can't handle it.

—It's like the same scenario as in the game.

In that otome game, the Redgrave family, who led the response force, should have been defeated. So Angelica's family would have failed.

That's why it's not good to have my dad and brother there.

I don't want my dad to die, and if my brother dies, I'll feel sorry for my newly married Dorothea-onee-san. I can't say this is a good scenario.

The letter said to take care of the rest if you need anything else, but I squeezed it.

"Leon-dono, why are you squeezing the letter?"

Nicks' knight is upset, so I tell him what I'm going to do.

"We're going to participate. We're already planning to deliver supplies to the frontlines. I'm sure the rural nobles in the volunteer army want to support their parents."

The other guy is like, "What is he talking about?".

It can’t be helped; I’m not going to leave it to the Redgrave family.

Damn it! If only Luxion was here. He could gather more information.

That guy is useless at the most important moments.

◇

At a fort-like building at the supply depot, the students of the volunteer army led by Julius were holding a feast.

There were no knights or soldiers to stop them. Partly because of Julius’ position, but also because they had heard the losses of the volunteer army.

In the banquet hall, Julius acted cheerfully.

"My comrades in arms! Thanks to you, my army has won a series of battles! Now, let us enjoy the feast!"

"Long live Prince Julius!"

"We're the strongest volunteer army in the world!"

"Even the Principality is no match for us!"

The volunteers, raising their mugs and answering Julius’ voice, were drinking like they were bathing in alcohol. They were making fools of themselves.

However, compared to the early days, there were fewer of them. With each battle, the number of those Julius called his comrades-in-arms would dwindle. As a result, they were reduced to about half.

Every time they fought, many of them lost their lives, and even the executive class students who participated with their airships were killed in the battle.

Alan was not here either.

Lloyd was also not here.

Greg, and Chris and Brad and the others had formed their own groups and were drinking.

Julius is approached by Jilk.

Only Julius and the other great nobles—the boys who weren't designated as targets—were safe.

"Your Highness, the report arrived just now."

"Oh, how'd it go?"

"New volunteers are arriving from the academy. Even the alumni heard of our successes."

The banquet hall is in full swing at the report of a smiling Jilk.

Julius stood on a chair and drew the attention of those around him.

"Did you all hear what Jilk just said? Our exploits have reached the capital! Let us continue to fight a decisive battle against the Principality, and have our name engraved in the history of the kingdom!"

The banquet hall was filled with the excitement of the students.

Julius put a hand to his chest.

"And let us pray for our dead comrades in arms. They were brave. They will continue to watch over us."

As the audience gets excited, Greg raises his voice.

"Even the dead don't like it when you're bitter. Come on, guys! Let's have some fun and make some noise for our comrades in arms!"

Once again, the banquet hall was in full swing.

It was as if they were daring to make a lot of noise to force themselves to forget the events on the battlefield.

◇

The front line.

Leon quickly departed with the rest of the poor nobles and arrived. Upon his arrival, two ships with the Bartfort family emblem approached him.

Soon, they covered both his flanks. This resulted in Partner being sandwiched between the two. On one side, the ship with his father, and the other, the ship with his brother.

After blocking his escape route, Leon's brother Nicks boarded the ship.

"What are you doing on the battlefield?!"

"Don't be so mad. Even if we both die, there's still Colin."

"Don't jinx it! Besides, what's that young boy going to do after our deaths?! That's one of the reasons dad and I came here instead of you!"

If Colin came to the battlefield, I too would be angry. I can understand my brothers' anger.

My father was also stunned.

"Leon, why did you come to the battlefield? You don't have any heroic aspirations, right?"

My father, who knows my personality well, wanted to know what I was up to. It's true that I have no desire to be a hero. But I also don't want to sit back and watch my family die.

I may not have Luxion, but I have Arroganz and Partner. It's not like I'm lacking in skill, either.

I can take care of The Principality, who have lost their trump card.

—There's only one problem.

"Well, I'm leading a group of poor frontier nobles. Many of us have family participating in the battle."

"Is that really why you're here? Tell me the truth."

It's sad that my dad is suspecting me of lying.

"I was worried about my family."

Nicks gave me a distant look.

"You're lying."

"Why would I?! I was so worried about you guys, that I showed up here on the battlefield! You need to trust your brother more!"

"A brother who cares about his family wouldn’t sell his brother out to some woman!"

"I'll tell Dorothea-onee-san!"

"No, don’t do that! You really need to stop! It’s not fair to invoke Dorothea's name!"

—Please don’t tell me I sold you out. All I did was introduce a lovely possible marriage partner.

The person he was with was just a bit unique, but if it was just for her appearance, she was a beauty that everyone would envy.

Just, only on the outside.

"Relax, both of you. He won’t be able to go back home, so we’ll have him in the rear with you."

My dad had a resigned look on his face.

I’m sorry, but I’m not so heartless as to abandon my family. If I had to choose between others or my family, it’d be my family.

"Leon, this isn’t the same kind of fight as the one with the Offreys and the Lafans. Are you ready for this?"

At his words I straightened my posture and nodded slowly. Not averting my eyes from his piercing gaze.

"I see. You're still a student, and yet you come here. You're still the same stupid kid."

Next to my dad, who let out a sigh, Nicks was a little irritated. Not at me, it was at our older brother, Rutart, who wasn’t here.

"Dad, are you sure you don’t want to call big brother Rutart?"

Rutart, Zola and the rest of her family were as uncooperative as ever.

They were jealous of Nicks, who took over the Olfrey household’s Earl title and estate.

Also, Rutart does not work with the Bartforts at all. Once again, he has refused to participate in our battles, despite the royal court's orders to do so.

Though that’s not a problem, since only one representative is needed from each house.

But if my father died in the war, it would be the end of the Bartfort family.

If Rutart, who can't manage a territory, succeeds him, we would be in a lot of trouble.

Nicks didn’t hide his hopes that Rutart would die before dad.

Let’s tease him a bit.

"Nicks is quite an extremist. You didn’t plan to kill Rutart yourself on the battlefield to prevent him from inheriting, right?"

Nicks wrinkles his brow at my attitude, but quickly averts his gaze.

—Hey, you didn’t plan that, right?

Retracting his gaze, Nicks says he’s going to tell me everything. As long as I don’t tell anyone else of course.

"Dorothea’s retainers investigated the situation, to find one of Zola family’s weaknesses and keep them from messing with us."

Zola’s family want to get rid of Nicks so Rutart can inherit his Earl rank and territory.

In order to prevent them from doing anything, Dorothea-onee-san has been working hard. Real nobles are amazing.

"Doesn’t Zola have a paramour? Supposedly, he looks like Rutart, blonde hair, blue eyes. Nothing like us."

Unlike us, who are dark haired, my so-called brother and sister, Rutart and Merce, are blonde and have blue eyes.

My father probably noticed, since he doesn’t seem surprised.

"Don’t worry about it. On the battlefield, you don’t have time to worry yourself with things like that."

"Are you sure? If Rutart takes over, the territory will be a huge mess."

Nicks seems to be worried about our homeland.

"Even if Rutart does die, if Merce takes a husband, he will inherit the territory anyways. Besides, he’s not coming."

Father has tried to talk to Rutart, but he just wants to live like an aristocrat. In luxury without caring for anything else.

I’m surprised this country hasn’t ended yet.

My dad scratched the back of his head in front of us.

"Besides, you both have grown up so well. That's enough. I don't know what's going to happen to our ancestral home, but the Bartfort blood lives on."

Nicks and I go silent. My dad, embarrassed, tries to break the ice by telling us about the history of the Bartfort family.

"Yeah, I didn’t tell you about our ancestor."

"Ancestor? I've heard stories of him taking credit for wars."

Nicks gives me a disgusted look. I’ve heard enough to make my ears bleed, and that's why the Bartfort family became nobility.

I've heard that our ancestors got a great deal of credit in a war.

I've heard that story so many times, I'm tired of it.

But my dad shakes his head.

"No, that’s not it. In a way, it's a story that shouldn't be left behind, but it's the beginning of our family. My dad and grandpa were even debating whether or not to tell it."

Nicks and I looked at each other and then back at my dad to hear what he had to say.

"The Bartfort family's progenitor was a former adventurer."

I question the validity of that statement.

"What? They’re not accomplished adventurers, though. Wouldn’t you brag about your origins if your ancestor was an adventurer?"

The Kingdom of Holfort was founded by adventurers. For this reason, the social status of adventurers is high. Even the nobles admire adventurers.

If your ancestors were adventurers, that’s a story to be proud of.

"He quit. Apparently after being betrayed countless times by his comrades, he moved to our current territory."

Nicks looked like he was having second thoughts.

It's troublesome when you don't know which one is worse, like being betrayed by your friends. If that happened to your ancestors, you'll be known as the descendant of someone who drove their friends to betray them.

"We can't tell people this."

"He said that he was deceived. He said he had learned his lesson, and was going to live a slow life in the countryside. That was the beginning of our family."

—I can understand how that ancestor felt.

I'd rather spend my days in the country than be a hero.

"I feel like that ancestor and I are kindred spirits."

When I say this, Nicks looks at me like I'm an idiot.

"I'm sure you’re right—So, what's our ancestor's name? I've never heard of him either."

My father told me the name, and it sounded familiar to me.

"Ah, it's Lea, Lea Bartfort. It was before the Kingdom of Holfort was founded, so it was a long time ago."

—Are you for real? I had no idea that I’d find a clue here.

◇

The fleet of the Principality of Fanoss was approaching the Kingdom.

Inside the flagship, Hertrude and Vandel were conversing.

Vandel, who had visited Hertrude in her room, sent the servants away, so the two were alone.

Hertrude was more than a little nervous in front of Vandel, who'd been protecting her since she was a child.

"What can I do for you? Aren't you busy with preparations?"

Not wanting anyone to think that she knew the truth about her parents' death, Hertrude's response was colder than usual.

Vandel however, saw right through her.

"I must apologize to The Princess. —About your late Majesty and Queen."

That was enough for Hertrude to understand what Vandel was trying to say. However, she couldn't control the emotions welling up inside her, so she questioned him.

"Why? Why, Vandel? Why would a knight of your stature assassinate his liege?

"I knew you'd figure it out…"

"Ah?!"

Hertrude got flustered after she realized her blunder. Vandel meanwhile, looked sad.

He knelt in front of Hertrude.

"I suppose I should be paying for this with my life. But I cannot accept that in the face of these yokels of the kingdom. I know you cannot bear it, Hertrude-sama, but please let this old man fight."

Hertrude can't give the order to kill him. If she did, someone else might interfere.

But most importantly, she's been with Vandel since her childhood. Even if it's to avenge her parents, she can't make a decision because of the complicated feelings getting in her way.

"Let me ask you this. Why did you kill our parents?"

"For revenge."

Looking up, Vandel's face was twisted in anger. When he saw Hertrude was horrified, he immediately returned to his normal face.

"I can't forgive the Kingdom, the Kingdom who killed my family before my eyes. I have decided that I would definitely destroy the Kingdom, for their sake."

Vandel’s family has been killed by the kingdom’s army, when they invaded in the past. For this reason, when learning that Hertrude’s parents were going to be assassinated, he kept quiet.

"I tried to persuade those two many times, yet they wouldn’t listen."

"Of course! How much difference in national power do you think there is? Besides, we were the ones who attacked first!"

The responsibility for beginning the feud between the Kingdom of Holfort and the Principality of Fanoss, lies on the side of the Principality. In the past, the Principality was under the umbrella of the Kingdom, and called itself an Archduchy.

Such an Archduchy attacked the territory of the Kingdom of Holfort.

"But still! I see them in my dreams every night. I can't get rid of the image of my dead wife and children. Princess, were my wife and child to blame? Did they have anything to do with the relations between the Principality and the Kingdom?

"The Kingdom too has had such people die Vandel, no more—"

"Yes, I understand. Still, I hate the kingdom that has taken my wife and child from me. I must cast as many of them as possible into hell with my own hands, or I'll never be satisfied!"

In the face Vandel's strong desire for revenge, Hertrude gives up trying to persuade him any further. No amount of words can reach him.

Vandel vows to Hertrude.

"As long as I have my life, I will protect The Princesses. This will be my atonement."

Hertrude, who is only a powerless figurehead, can’t do anything about Vandel.

"—Do as you please."

Hertrude sits down on the floor as Vandel leaves.

No matter how hard she tried, she couldn't can't stop this war.

That's what she's been shown.

"In the end, I’m leaving Rauda all alone."

Hertrude hoped that her sister, who was not here, would survive.

◇

It was shortly after dawn when I ran onto the bridge of Partner.

Alarms sounded throughout the ship, waking everyone up.

The robots working to crew Partner were also scurrying around.

When I came to the bridge, a large monitor showed the approaching airships with the emblem of the Principality of Fanoss on them.

"Two hundred ships. That’s a lot more than I thought."

There are three hundred ships on our side.

It is a mixed fleet of noblemen with airships, led by the Duke of Redgrave.

There are some of the regular fleet, but they are scattered all over the place due to the rebel commotion, so it's hard to gather them together.

Right now, we are in the process of forming up in the rear.

"We’ve taken their trump card, but it’s still going to be a war."

I want to complain to the Principality, asking why they didn't avert the war. However, there were so many things that bothered me that I couldn't even think of it as a problem on the Principality's side.

In the game, the regular fleet that was sent out to kill the sky pirates was too slow to help take on the Principality's fleet, just like in this case.

Could it really have been a coincidence that the flow of events was the same as in the game?

The friendly airships around us were moving in a hurry, and there was a flurry of noisy communications.

I was about to take a seat in the captains’ chair, when Marie came to me.

She was hugging a pillow, perhaps sleep-deprived, and her hair was a mess.

"The enemy's attacking?!"

"Calm down. The enemy only just arrived. Now go get dressed."

Marie left the bridge in a panic when she realized how little she was wearing. After seeing that, I turn to look at the sky where hundreds of airships have gathered.

"It was spectacular in the game, but in real life more so."

On orders from Duke Redgrave's airship, the allied airships form up in formation. The same goes for the enemy, whose formation adapted to mirror ours.

The cannons of both sides have a short effective firing range.

The cannons are lined up on the sides of the vessels, so the bow of the ship does not face the direction of the enemy when fighting.

However, we're in an airship.

It would be extremely troublesome if they attacked from above, let alone the bottom.

Both sides formed up while ascending, but some of the airships were unable to keep up.

Some airships are colliding with each other on our side, due to their crew's poor ship-handling techniques.

"What a mess."

When the crew of an airship doesn't even train on a regular basis, this is about as good as it gets. Some houses take their training seriously, while others cut corners.

Thanks to this, the level of skill is uneven. The airships with good movements are moving with the ones with poor movements, making all of them look bad.

There were some airships that showed excellent maneuvering when looked at individually, but when looked at as a whole, the Principality had the advantage.

The Duke of Redgrave will be dragged down by his surroundings.

In contrast to the nobles' current fleet, the Principality's fleet is a regular force that has been trained and drilled thoroughly.

There were few errors in their movements, and the kingdom side was approaching them in a disadvantageous formation.

When Marie returned, she had Daniel and Raymond behind her. Both of them had an impatient look on their face.

Marie was surprised by the Principality.

"Geez! They've got the upper hand!"

Even Marie seemed to understand. Gaining the initiative was important in battle. But their forces are still outnumbered.

Daniel is frustrated by the lack of skill on our side. Suddenly, one of our ships ignored his orders to form up and moved forward.

A terrible voice came from the communicator.

"I am Viscount Beaudon Allen! I'm enough to defeat the cowards in the Principality's navy!"

Daniel became flustered when he saw the airship charging the enemy with vigor. He was shouting, even though he understood that they couldn't hear him.

"Get back, fool!"

Raymond approached the window and looked at Viscount Beaudon's airship.

"Allen? That's Alan's brother. I believe he was the second son. I heard he graduated last year. How come he's on that awful airship?"

The movements of that airship are atrocious.

The brother of Alan, who was following Prince Julius, charged forward in an airship that looked like it was only made for luxury cruises. Wouldn't anyone stop him?

Once within range, flashy armors came off the deck of the ship and charged towards the Principality's fleet. But the moment they entered the cannon range of the Principality, their cannons' started firing.

Even if their accuracy is low, if they shoot enough, they're bound to hit once.

Allen's ship deployed a magic barrier—but it was overwhelmed. The airship was battered and was on fire.

Through the communicator came the voice of a confused Allen.

"Why is no one coming?! I need assistance! I'm from a Viscount house!"

These types of people are born sometimes.

A child born to nobility who is arrogant is taken as standard. You can fix these types of people in the academy to a certain extent, but even if they learn to be polite to the nobles, they will still look down on the commoners. This attitude seems to be prevalent in the Beaudon family.

"Help! Duke of Redgrave! Please hel—"

As the airship exploded, Allen's voice was cut off.

Marie was blue-faced and trembling.

"Ugh, you liar. I can't believe you died so easily."

He may have charged in with aspirations for heroism, but he was still a nuisance to those around him.

He had never been in battle before, but he dreamed of taking out his flashy airship, and making his mark.

Now the pieces of that airship were scattered along the battlefield.

From the communicators you could hear voices blaming and defending the Duke. My allies are arguing with each other.

"Why didn't you save him?! The duke is using us like pawns!"

"It's that kid who jumped out!"

"You left a brave young man to die!"

All I can say is 'terrible'.

In that otome game, there's an event where the Duke of Redgrave loses a battle against the Principality.

After they blundered the battle away, the protagonists began to take action.

The details of the battle were not told to the player.

But if it's the same as what happened in front of us, it would be harsh to blame only the Duke.

We’re a hodgepodge, and many of our allies are dragging us down.

And yet, the enemy is a cohesive regular force.

"Leon, the enemy is coming!"

Marie grabbed my arm, and I silently looked ahead.

I was expecting the worst, but the battle was going as it should.

Suddenly, the enemy I least wanted to see was attacking my allies.

It was full size larger than the armors around him, and it was slashing at airships with a greatsword. It slashed through the hull of an airship, and then jumped out from the opposite side, as if it had run amok inside.

The airship, broken in half, fell down from the sky.

"It’s The Black Knight! The Black Knight is out!"

The allies, scared by the armor, were trying to distance themselves from the Black Knight, Vandel. Some of the airships collided with each other and some began to fall from that.

Daniel shook his head forcefully.

"If we go near him, we’re finished, aren’t we?"

The most powerful knight of the Principality. An enemy of the kingdom. The Tyrant of the Battlefield -- The Black Knight who has been called many things, and in the face of him, our allies are one after another being defeated.

While the allies were dealing with the Black Knight, the enemy ships began bombarding them.

Raymond seemed to be able to read what was going to happen next.

His glasses were slightly off, but he didn't have enough time left to worry about it.

"We can't do this. We will lose if we continue like this. Leon, let's retreat!"

I’d like to retreat too, but if we retreated, we’d suffer punishment. It would be lighter than the regular army because we’re only volunteers, but it’s still a punishment.

"It’s the other way around. Partner, move forward."

"Huh?!"

The look on Daniel’s face said, "What the hell is this guy talking about?"

But I was serious. If I had to compare the performance of Partner, it would be like a professional player entering a baseball game played by children.

I've been thinking about just how to use such an airship.

"Protect your allies. Don't underestimate Partner's barriers and armoring."

Pushing through the confusion of our allies, Partner cruised forward and shells flew at it.

The barrier that had been deployed around Partner stopped them. The barrier that enveloped Partner, glowing faintly, was impervious to any of the Principality's artillery shells.

Even though it was under concentrated fire, Partner continued to hover.

When Raymond saw this, he straightened his glasses and was excited.

"Great! Great job, Leon! This way, our allies can reform their formation!"

My allies regrouping behind Partner and fixing their formation—I had envisioned such a thing, but reality doesn’t seem so sweet.

Marie held both her cheeks and shouted.

"They’re leaving!"

Some of the nobles fled, judging they were losing.

They turned away and retreated, using Partner as a decoy.

"It’s worse than I imagined."

With even the advantage in numbers gone, Marie sticks her head to the window.

"There’s a black armor coming here!"

The black knight must have determined that Partner was a threat. But he’s too naïve, defeating Partner’s barrier is impossible.

"No matter how good a knight he is, Partner—eh?"

As The Black Knight slashed at Partner, the area he attacked was emitting a fierce light. Theat area of the barrier seemed to be cracking

"Official cheats are the worst, aren't they?"

Daniel and Raymond were confused by my words, while Marie was shaking with a blue face.

Thinking that this was out of control, I got up from my chair and was heading for the hangar—when I saw the armor that had charged The Black Knight. I examined it and once I realized whose it was, my eyes widened.

"What are you doing, dad?!"

◇

When the Black Knight Vandel attacked a huge airship, an armor appeared to interfere.

The armor wasn't flashy, and looked plain.

However, it was well-maintained.

The pilot's skills weren't bad either.

"So there is a skilled pilot here. But with that level of skill—"

Vandel swung his great sword down at his opponent, who was supposed to be blown away.

But the opponent managed to hold on, despite the numerous slashes he received.

Each slash was the personification of Vandel's anger.

"Your sword arm, and piloting skills! I'm better than you in all of them! You know why? Because of my hatred for you!"

As he made contact with the other man, he heard a voice.

"My son is on board this ship. I won't let you sink it!"

Hearing this, Vandel's eyes narrowed and he laughed.

"So you have your son on board this ship—if that's the case!"

Vandel's greatsword slashed off the opponent's limbs.

Vandel then grabbed his head.

"Hey! What are you doing?!"

Hearing his enemy’s panicked voice, Vandel bore his white teeth.

"You will suffer as I did! I’ll show you how it feels to have your child killed right in front of you!"

The greatsword that Vandel’s armor is holding is made of adamantis. It is a lost item prepared just for him.

The greatsword, for which there is no technology to manufacture now, is also the only weapon that can break through Partner’s protective barrier.

"No matter how much you struggle, this battle was destined to be won by the Principality from the start!"

Vandel's armor swung down the greatsword he held in one hand.

Each time he hit, the barrier glowed intensely, and the huge airship shook.

As he swung his greatsword down again and again, the enemy in his armor shouted.

"No, stop! Run, Leon, run!"

Vandel laughed out loud at the sound of his enemy shouting his son's name. His face exuded madness, and he was happy to inflict the same suffering on his enemies as he’d experienced..

"Yes, scream! Only that scream can heal my heart!"

Vandel recalls the scene he saw that day.

Vandel was on a mission to intercept the Royal Army that was attacking the Principality’ capital when he saw his house destroyed.

He saw the armor of the Royal Army smashing through his house and reaching out to his family inside.

He rushed towards the house, but he couldn’t get there in time, and his family died before Vandel’s eyes.

"My wife was a good woman! A good woman who didn’t deserve that fate! She was so young too! She even sacrificed herself for our daughter, yet you!"

Vandel began to cry; his mind unstable.

"For the sake of my family, I—I—I took the parents away from The Princess. I can't stop now. The only way I will stop is when I fight you to the death!"

As the airship's barrier shattered, several armored knights appeared and attacked Vandel one after another.

Their leader, who also slashed at him, seemed to be quite young.

"Let go of my father!"

"Nicks, you need to run!"

Apparently, a different son had come with some friends to help his father.

Seeing this, Vandel came strongly to a decision.

"I will kill both of your sons! And make you feel as I did!"

"Huh!"

The first enemy armor, still missing a limb, desperately resists and gets in Vandel's way. He grabbed the enemy with one arm, and with the other he grabbed his greatsword and swung it around.

"You yokels of the Kingdom! You all are going to hel—"

—Before he could finish, Vandel’s armor shook violently.

"Guh!"

As he turned around, he saw a much larger gray armor there. As it swung its blade towards Vandel, he caught it with his greatsword.

"What?!"

Vandel was surprised by the opponent’s strength. It seems that the one piloting it is also a son of that man he’d captured.

"If I was going to save someone, I’d prefer a princess. I don’t have a preference for old men!"

He looked like a more light-hearted fellow than the son Vandel had just met.

"One after another, they come out. There's no end to how many I can kill."

He'd defeated numerous enemies in the past.

Yet, the number of enemies of the principality never decreases. One after another, they appear and try to defeat the Principality.

The new large armor holds up its sword.

"Old man, it's time for the new generation to shine. Retire!"

"Don't you talk down to me, boy!"

He threw down the father's armor he was holding, but Nicks armor caught it. Vandel ignored the large grey armor coming at him to dispose of Nicks. But the large armor closed in on him.

"I won't let you get away with this, old man!"

He must be quite powerful.

With that thought, a new ambition came to Vandels' mind.

To kill all the powerful knights growing up in the Kingdom.

"I'll crush you first!"

◇

I'm riding the Arroganz, trying to deal with The Black Knight.

"What the hell is this guy really?!"

—I'm surprised at how strong he is.

In front of Arroganz, who can't help but be called a cheat, the Black Knight was holding an equal—no, more than an equal fight.

I'm the one being pushed back.

The tough armor of Arroganz is being chipped away by his greatsword. I'm attacking too, but he made up for the difference in armor performance with his piloting skills.

"Isn't this guy's very existence a cheat?"

When Arroganz' blade caught Vandel's greatsword, it shattered.

Leon hurriedly got out of range and took out his rifle.

But the Black Knight moved too fast to be hit.

Arroganz calculates the black knight's movements and makes corrections, but still can't keep up.

「I don't understand.」

Even Arroganz is confused as he deals with the Black Knight.

"I agree with you, but we'll stop him here at all costs. If we don't, we're going to lose."

We're flying on a battlefield.

The Kingdom's navy is fighting the Principality, but they're outnumbered.

I want to help them, but I can't take my attention off the Black Knight.

The Principality armors swarming us are being held off by the knights Nicks had brought with him.

"This would have been a close call if I was alone."

I couldn't stop my cold sweat. It was a good thing I told my friends to wait inside of Partner. The students would be no match for the Black Knight.

I fought the Black Knight relying on the difference in our armor's performance, but he seemed to have gotten used to my moves.

"Sure, you're a bit skilled. But without the capabilities of that armor, you're no match for me!"

As the black knight closes the distance, I shoot at him with my rifle - he dodges the bullet by a paper-thin margin and slashes at the Arroganz.

I quickly blocked it with my rifle, but it was cut in half.

"Arroganz, missiles!"

「Missiles launched.」

Missiles are fired one after another from the container on Arroganz' back, attacking the Black Knight. The Black Knight, who is chasing after the backward-flying Arroganz, must have never seen anything like the missiles that are attacking him before.

He chops them with his greatsword and charges through the explosion.

"You overpowered bastard!"

That strength is bullshit. I'm also overpowered, but it's crazy that I still can't win.

The Black Knight closes the distance and one of Arroganz' arms is slashed off.

"Die, boy!"

In front of the black knight who stabbed the big sword into my cockpit, I was prepared to die.

I was feeling pathetic at this stupefying end even though I had Arroganz—.

"Oooh!"

It was my dad who shouted out loud and dived at him with his limbless armor. The Black Knight was knocked out of position by the body blow, and the large sword was diverted at the last moment.

Still, the greatsword pierced my cockpit. I tilted my face to the left in panic, but it wasn't enough.

I was injured on the right half of my face by the greatsword and the shrapnel of the Arroganz, and I couldn't see what was going on outside because the monitor was smashed.

Arroganz seemed to automatically keep his distance from the black knight, so there was no chase.

I heard my dad's voice.

"Why didn't you run?"

I purged the hatch and looked outside; I could see my father's armor pierced by the large sword.

"—Dad!"

As I shouted, the Black Knight slowly turned to me and threw away the armor that my dad rode on with a swing of his great sword.

"How does it feel to have your family die in front of you?"

I hear the Black Knight's voice and grind my teeth.

"It sucks. It really sucks."

I couldn't help but hate the enemy in front of me. It was impossible for me to control my wild emotions.

All I could think about was killing the Black Knight.

"That's good. I felt the same way. And killing you like this is worth it."

I grabbed the control stick and headed towards the Black Knight with the battered Arroganz.

But feelings alone won't fill the skill gap.

The damage had accumulated, and the degraded performance of the Arroganz wouldn't help.

"Damn it!"

"All that's left is to kill you, sink your ship and be done with it. The Royal Navy won't be able to stop us."

Partner has my friends and—Marie on board!

"It's not going to be that easy!"

The Black Knight's movements slowed down as he charged at Arroganz, ready to exchange blows. It was Nicks' tattered armor that jumped on him from behind.

"Leon, do it!"

The black knight clicked his tongue and roughly slapped Nicks' armor away.

"I won't let this small fry of the kingdom get in my way"

Nicks was blown away immediately, but he was able to create an opening for a moment. That allowed the Arroganz to close the distance.

The Black Knight stabbed his greatsword at Arroganz as he charged at him.

I forcefully avoided the greatsword that was approaching the cockpit.

I'm convinced of victory when he pierces the Arroganz' legs and tries to pull the sword out.

"You should have gone for the cockpit!"

With his remaining arm, Arroganz struck the Black Knight's cockpit.

A fist pierced the black knight's armor, and Arroganz transmitted a voice message.

"—IMPACT!"

At the same time as he said it, he slammed the IMPACT into the Black Knight's interior. Then, the armor of the black knight swelled up from the inside and exploded.

The arms and legs were blown off and the greatsword fell.

From the barely remaining cockpit area, I could hear the voice of the Black Knight, who was about to die.

"I'm sorry—Princess."

The Black Knight's armor, which discharged with a buzz, exploded in the air as Arroganz threw it away.

"Oh, it's done."

The tension released and I took several deep breaths. Sweat gushes out and I'm relieved to realize that I'm alive.

The reactions of those around me who saw the falling black knight were mixed.

The Principality's troops were saddened, and the allied Kingdom troops cheered.

"That's right. My father! Arroganz, find my dad!"

He immediately goes to find my dad, but Nicks has retrieved my dad's armor first. I blame Nicks in front of him.

"Why did you let my dad charge in?!"

"Dad jumped out! Thanks to that, you didn't die! —Dad is the only reason you're still alive!"

Nicks' voice sounds like he's about to cry. Nicks' armor hugged the armor that had been pierced through the cockpit.

I couldn't speak either, and I turned away.

"I could have been faster—"

I was just about to voice my regrets when I heard my dad's voice.

"Ka, don't judge me dead without checking."

When I looked up, Nicks let out a surprised voice.

"Dad, you're alive!"

"Yeah, so get me to a doctor quickly."

Nicks and I left the battlefield, where the Principality was in trouble this time after the Black Knight was defeated.

◇

In the royal capital of the Kingdom of Holfort, the victory of the kingdom's Royal Navy had been reported.

The royal capital was in a festive mood, but in a room in the royal palace, the Marquess of Frampton had a bitter look on his face.

Originally, he had planned to have the fleet led by the Duke of Redgrave be defeated. That was why he had also sent other nobles who stood in his way there.

He was going to dispose of all of his political enemies, as well as useless nobles and those who were no longer useful.

But the Duke of Redgrave won.

"The Black Knight was getting old. How pathetic; to be defeated by a student."

The men who killed him were all members of the Bartfort family, one of whom was a student.

Although the three of them had to team up, the defeat of the Black Knight was good news for the kingdom.

Rumors quickly spread, and the reputation of the Bartfort family was growing even within the royal court. Among others, Nicks' wife Dorothea's family—the Roseblades—were gleefully touting their exploits.

The Marquess of Frampton was not amused.

"I guess I expected too much from the useless people of the Principality."

With the exasperated Marquess of Frampton was Olivia, sitting on the sofa, smiling.

She held a glass in one hand.

"It's a shame, because we've been preparing for this. But Julius also played an active role, so I'll let it go this time. Besides, the Duke of Redgrave's family will be in trouble for a while."

Due to a fierce battle with the Principality, the airship on which the head of the Redgrave family was riding was also hit.

At that time, the head of the family, Vince, was injured.

Since he is incapacitated, his son will be standing in for him. However, she didn't think the son could keep up.

Although their plans were somewhat disrupted, Olivia and her conspirators' victory was unassailable.

"Originally, it was supposed to be the saint's spectacular debut."

"I don't mind. More importantly, what are you doing with the princess of the Principality you captured?"

At Olivia's words, the Marquess of Frampton replied immediately.

"She knows too much of the unnecessary. Let her meet her royal end. It can't be helped if she would rather die than be captured by the enemy and be a liability to her country."

Olivia hears that and smiles.

"My, how scary."

◇

Angelica, the daughter of the Redgrave family, was visiting the office of her brother Gilbert, who is acting as head of the family due to his father's injuries.

The reason was a protest against the treatment of Hertrude, an enemy princess captured by the Redgrave Duchy.

"Brother, why? It was our father who took Hertrude captive. And yet, what is the royal court thinking, leaving the Redgrave Duchy out of the picture?"

Angelica's frustration is that the Redgrave family, who have served in the war, are despised by the royal court.

And the one person Angelica couldn't forgive—Olivia.

"I don't know what His Highness Julius is thinking either. Not only did he lead a volunteer army to participate in the war, but he even took that woman with him to show everyone how close they are."

Gilbert let out a small sigh as Angelica expressed her frustration in front of her brother. Gilbert was busy these days, and he understands what Angelica wants to say.

But he tells her that the Redgrave family cannot get involved.

"Now that our father is absent, I'm very busy. I really don't have time to get involved in the inner workings of the palace."

"But!"

"I am also dissatisfied with the matter of Princess Hertrude. The Marquess of Frampton seems to want Princess Hertrude disposed of."

"Aren't we supposed to be negotiating?"

Angelica is suspicious when she hears that they have the enemy's royalty and won't use her for negotiations.

They could get the Principality to provide a huge ransom for the return of Hertrude, and they have other uses for her.

She didn’t understand why they’re going to kill her instead.

"Because thanks to Prince Julius, the Prince’s faction has lost its influence. We’re out of the loop."

Even Gilbert couldn’t seem to determine what was going on in the royal palace.

Angelica clasped her hands together.

"I will speak with Prince Julius."

Gilbert shook his head at Angelica’s offer.

"Brother?"

"I have not received any details from the royal court, but Prince Julius is thinking of breaking off his engagement to you. That information has come to my attention."

"What!?"

Angelica is upset when she hears that Julius is thinking of breaking off the engagement.

"Why? What fault is there in my—"

Angelica was furious, but Gilbert silenced her with a sharp look in response.

"It’s all your fault. Why didn’t you stop Prince Julius? The same goes for his behavior at the academy. What the hell were you doing while you were by his side?"

When Julius led the volunteer army to join them, no word came to the family home of his fiancée, Angelica.

And due to the actions of Julius and the others so far, the faction of the Redgrave family has shrunken

considerably.

Angelica looks down.

"I have tried to stop him many times, but my voice cannot reach Prince Julius."

In the face of Angelica’s frustration, Gilbert, who is busy, can’t deal with this situation right now.

"If you’d kept a better eye on her, then this would never have happened."

Angelica bit her lower lip as her brother Gilbert rebuked her.

(If only that woman hadn't been there.)

Angelica, unwilling to let it end like this, decided to take action.

◇

Angelica heads to the mansion where Hertrude is being held captive.

Although she was an enemy, Hertrude, who is royalty, can't be put in prison.

When Angelica enters this mansion, the knights guarding it stop her.

"I'm sorry. We've been ordered not to let anyone pass."

"It's the Redgrave family who captured her. Shouldn't we be allowed a visit? Besides, I've got permission from the Royal Court."

When Angelica showed the Knights the permission slip, they reluctantly let her through.

Once she was in Hertrude's room, she dismissed the knights, saying she wanted to talk to her alone.

The room was well-furnished, and didn't look like a prison.

However, there were iron bars installed on the windows.

"It's been a long time, Princess Hertrude."

When Angelica called out to her, Hertrude sat down in her chair and quietly gave her only a glance.

"Let's make this short. Why did the Principality invade the Kingdom? Considering the power difference, it's nothing but a bad move."

War in this world favors the aggressor greatly.

But no matter how quick the Principality is, the difference in power would still be too large to make up.

The end results of their war were obvious.

Hertrude looked gaunt, as if she hadn't eaten enough. Her complexion was pale and her eyes lacked strength.

"—The kingdom really doesn't know about it, does it?"

"About what?"

"It’s nothing."

Hertrude examined Angelica’s appearance—and made some conditions.

"I need you to promise me one thing—no, two if you can."

"I’m not strong enough to grant your wishes."

"That’s okay. I just want you to fulfill your promise if possible. The first is about Hertrauda. I want you to save her. I want her to live."

She wants her sister to survive, but Angelica isn’t going to be able to grant that wish.

"I don’t think I can make that happen."

"I’m sure you’re right. The power of the Redgrave family has fallen so far."

"You know a great deal about the affairs of the palace, don't you?"

Angelica knows that there are people in the royal court who are connected to the Principality. This in itself is not unusual, and there are people who sell information.

However, Hertrude’s next words surprised her.

"Because the reason why the Principality invaded the Kingdom was because the Kingdom ordered it to."

"What are you talking about?"

"It was someone from the kingdom who told thePrincipality to go to war. You know the Marquess of Frampton, don't you? He's the one behind all this."

"Nonsense."

"If you don’t believe me, that’s fine. Just consider my words bullshit and forget them."

Why would the people of the Kingdom want the Principality to invade? After pondering, Angelica came to a realization.

When the response force fought against the Principality, many of the houses that were gathered were either hostile to or estranged from the Marquess of Frampton. And even among the nobles who were close to the Marquess of Frampton, there were many present who seemed to be liabilities..

(Was he really sacrificing them like disposable pawns?)

Angelica was angry at the Marquess. She didn't like the way he used his enemies to bury his political opponents.

"I knew from the start we wouldn’t win. But I couldn’t stop them. I had no power to stop them."

When Angelica saw that Hertrude had turned her head and was crying, she asked:

"You didn't tell me about your second wish?"

"I want you to tell my sister—that I loved her. I really wanted to write to her, but I wasn’t allowed to."

Angelica anticipates the Marquis of Frampton's thinking, as she understands that Hertrude will never see her sister again.

(You want to kill Hertrude in order to keep her quiet?)

" I'll grant your wish to the best of my ability."

"Thank you, Angelica."

Averting her gaze from Hertrude, who lost all composure, Angelica heads outside—

—She wanted to immediately inform the queen, Mylene, of these facts.

◇

The royal palace was busy with post-war activities.

I was returning home to my parents' territory because of my injuries.

The right side of my injured face would fortunately recover, but I would be left with a scar. I was supposed to have lost its eyesight as well, so if I could only get away with this level of injury, I'd be happy.

It's an admirable victory, even if we had to join up to beat the Black Knight.

The war with the Principality has been won at least in part; just looking at the battle alone, it ended on a high note.

This is probably too light a price to pay.

Standing in front of the mirror in my room, I cover the right side of my injured face with a cloth.

I would probably be stuck with the eye patch, but my cheek was still scarred, so I've prepared a cloth to cover my eye and cheek.

However, my eyesight has already been restored, although it is still injured.

Standing beside the mirror, I look at my face and give a small nod.

"I look straight out of a kitchen [1] . Not so bad."

Beside me, who is satisfied, Luxion is not happy. The reason he is unhappy is because I'm keeping the injury. He said he could treat me, without leaving a scar.

「Do you go through the trouble of hiding your face because you're not confident in your appearance?」

As soon as he comes back, he says something like this…

"Boys love their eyepatches."

「I understand it's to cover your scar. But I can treat it.」

"Unfortunately, a lot of people have seen me with this injury. If I go out without it, they would definitely be suspicious. It's best to leave it be."

The reason I'm going through all this trouble is because when I was injured, I had to see a doctor. They know about my injury.

And yet, if I were to return seeming to be fully healed, there would be a lot of suspicion.

This was a measure to avoid that.

"If you'd been there, this would have never happened in the first place."

「That's a lie. Master would not have been serious against the Principality even with me present. At worst, you would try to cut corners and be beaten to a pulp by the Black Knight.」

While I'm having my first conversation with Luxion in a long time, Marie comes into my room.

"Leon, Clarice-senpai wants to talk to you about something."

"She wants to talk?"

Before I knew it, Luxion had disappeared.

Clarice Fia Atlee, the countess of a Earl family whom I had previously rescued at the request of Master, I've been hiding on my floating island.

The same goes for the senpais who were her followers.

Before Marie could respond to my question, Clarice-senpai's face appeared behind her..

"I heard you got hurt, so I came to check up on you."

The only person standing behind Clarice was one of her cronies, a boy. Apparently, they came here from the floating island that I own.

They probably want to hear the current situation from me directly.

"It's been a while, both of you. How have you been doing?

They looked at me with concern, but I could tell they were taken aback. They seemed to think that I should be worried about myself rather than them.

Clarice-senpai shrugged her shoulders.

"You're the one who's in more trouble than I am. I heard you were hurt. Also, Balcus-dono, who's been hiding us, was badly injured, wasn't he? Is he going to be okay?"

My father was badly injured and is still in the hospital in the capital.

My mother went to the capital to take care of him.

Thanks to that, the mansion is quiet.

"He’s fine. He won’t be able to move for a while, though.

"So you’re going to substitute for him? Nicks-senpai is too busy with his duties as Earl to take care of his family home."

My dad and I were injured and couldn’t move, so Nicks was attending all the ceremonies and stuff. Thanks to him, I was able to take it easy.

I admire a big bro like that, who works hard for his poor, badly injured little brother. Even though I could get my injuries healed immediately.

After all, it’d be a pain to stand out from the crowd.

"It’s the country, you know. I can handle it."

"Don't get too carried away. In times like these, family feuds are likely to come to a head."

Clarice-senpai, a court noblewoman formerly living in the royal capital, seems to think that the country and the city are the same. Like it or not, who would want this land? The relatives who knew how little value this land had wouldn't care.

"Who would want to manage a fief like this—"

Just as I was thinking that Clarice-senpai was being paranoid, my brother Colin came running over.

"Brother Leon! The wife is here!"

"What—?"

Zola and her family came to the territory while father and mother were absent.

◇

I’m the one who’s supposed to answer Zola’s call, so I came to the parlor with Marie.

The servants working in the mansion were frightened when Zola and the others showed up.

They’re not usually present in the mansion, but they’re high-handed and have a bad reputation.

Zola—the wife who is my father’s full wife, but she usually lives in the royal capital. She rarely goes out to the countryside, but when she comes, she always brings trouble with her.

She is dressed in a fancy dress, and her daughter Merce, who is sitting on the sofa near her, is also very well dressed.

She was dressed twenty percent more than usual, and as usual, she had a big attitude.

But this time, even Rutart is dressed up, which is a surprise.

He had a triumphant look on his face in front of me.

"You look like shit."

"Battle scars are a badge of honor, brother."

"Yeah right, you’re all talk."

Since he was acting sarcastic, I retorted immediately, but seeing me as a sore loser, Rutart doesn’t lose his bullish attitude.

Only then, Marie blurted out next to me:

"You were running away from the battlefield and didn't even participate. You're too much of a coward and even refused to enter the territory."

"Ugh!"

Rutart looked frustrated in front of Marie, but he couldn’t say anything back since she’s a noble girl. So instead, he comes down hard on me.

"You let the girls say what you want to say while you just stand there? I can't stand the thought that this is my brother. More importantly, I'm going to have you leave this mansion as soon as possible."

Marie’s eyes widen in surprise as she looks at me. —I’m also surprised.

"—What?"

Rutart told us to leave, and it was Zola who backed him up.

"If Balcus is injured and unable to perform his duties as head of this household, then we must have a replacement. Rutart is the right person to take his place. And so, I’ll appoint him as his replacement, so from today onwards, this mansion belongs to Rutart."

You’ve never cared about us before, and now you suddenly want us to give you our position and territory? In the first place, my father is still fully conscious.

What's going on to make them even talk about changing the head of the family?

"It's a bit sudden, isn't it? I'll get confirmation from my father, so please wait until then."

I wanted to tell them "Go home!" , but legally speaking, Zola and her family have more authority than us. Even if they don't have my father's blood in their veins.

Merce interrupts our conversation.

"You don’t need to consult him. It’s the royal court’s decision."

"The royal court? Do you think the royal court would go out of its way for a remote baronial family?"

What does it mean that the royal court, which has been treating us like peons up until now, is suddenly intervening?

Zola proudly shows me a letter.

"The royal court has given its approval. They said ‘Rutart is the only one who is worthy to succeed the House of Bartfort.’ If Rutart becomes the head of the family, there will be no need for the other brothers and sisters. Now get out of here."

I got the impression that they were in a great hurry, even if they were to replace my father, and Rutart became the head of the family. It’s as if they want to get us out of here fast.

Marie sticks it to Zola.

"You’re not convincing at all! Why does that guy deserve it in the first place? He can’t go into battle, and he can’t handle the estate. Rutart, are you really going to succeed him? Didn’t you hate the countryside?"

Then Rutart reveals his true feelings.

"The Bartfort family will join the ranks of the great houses after defeating the Black Knight. But if the head of the family is just a backwater old man, it would be a bit of a disgrace, wouldn't it? I'm the one who grew up in the city, and I'm the one who deserves to be at the head of the Bartfort Household now."

I looked at Rutart, who was smiling darkly and puffing out his chest, and was relieved to know that he didn’t think anything of the territory.

Also, you take us too lightly.

This guy is a colossal fool for telling us about their situation.

However, if they have permission from the royal palace, there's nothing I can do about it.

It had never occurred to me before that they would meddle in the affairs of the countryside.

Merce looks at her manicured nails.

"That’s what I mean. You guys have to get out of here. It’s Rutart who lives here."

It was Marie who was offended by this attitude.

"Why should we give it to you guys?! Father-in-law is alive and well! You have to get his permission!"

After Marie stated the obvious, Zola covered her mouth with the fan she was holding. I could tell right away by the look in her eyes that she was grinning.

"We don’t need that man’s permission. The royal court’s permission is all we need."

"You’ve got to be kidding me!"

I evacuated the room with a heated Marie.

"Let’s take a short break. Marie, you come over here."

"Why!? Talk back to her!"

"I don’t care"

I forced her out of the room.

◇

I headed to the other room and found my brother Colin—and my sister Finley—with Clarice-senpai.

Colin looked anxious.

"Clarice-san, are we going to be kicked out?"

Clarice-senpai smiles at Colin, who is worried about being kicked out. She comforted Colin with a gentle voice.

"It's okay. I'm sure Leon-kun will take care of it."

"Yeah."

I'm glad senior Clarice and my brother trust me, but I personally can't do anything about it. Because if the palace gives permission, I can't go against them myself.

At best, the only solution I can think of is for everyone to take refuge in the floating island I own and live as is.

I don't want to abandon my home territory, but Rutart was going to take over eventually. I knew that sooner or later; this day would come.

Finley talks to Marie, but since they are close in height, her attitude is more like that of a classmate. She says:

"Clarice-san says this, but it was Marie who spoke to her directly, right? Did you notice anything?"

"Why do you call me that? Why are you addressing me without an honorific, when you call Clarice 'San'? Hey, why? I'm older than you!"

Finley and Colin looked at Marie, who was unconvinced.

"I mean, because."

"Yeah. Marie is family, you know."

Seeing Marie's complicated expression, Clarice-senpai became uncomfortable and changed the topic.

"Even so, they're being quite forceful even though the head of the family hasn't even died. I suppose they want the prestige from defeating The BlackKnight, but he himself hasn't even been to the battlefield, right?"

Rutart refused to go to war. That in itself didn't make my dad angry because he expected it.

He didn't expect him to come out, and he didn't want him to be deputized in the territory.

"Rutart refused and didn't participate, didn't he?"

He’s already 20 years old. He himself doesn’t work and lives in the capital.

Come to think of it, I’ve never heard of him having a wife.

What is he doing in the capital? It’s such a tenuous relationship that I don’t even know. We don’t even recognize each other as family, and we weren’t actually family.

Marie crossed her arms in frustration.

"Does he think you can take credit by taking away the family name?"

Clarice-senpai answered that question immediately.

"He’s not wrong. Even if he didn’t participate, it’s true that Leon-kun and the rest of the team got the credit for it. Once he inherits the house with those merits, they’ll have an effect on his reputation."

Clarice-senpai predicts the future.

"I’m concerned that they’re being too forceful. I don’t know, maybe they’ll take Partner from Leon. Or worse, Leon’s floating island."

Hearing that, anger flares up inside of me.

"What? Why would they take those from me?"

"That’s why you’re so desirable. I suppose many people want it, even if they have to use forceful means. I’m sure there are a lot of people who would like to have Partner in the royal court, too."

I really don’t want to get involved with the inner workings of the royal palace or anything like that.

It’s too annoying and bothersome.

Trying to take my utopia away is unforgivable.

That island holds everything I own!

Anyone who takes it away from me will taste my vengeance, no matter what I have to do. Zola and her family are the main problem, for now.

As I was pondering this, a woman entered the room we were holding discussions in, her vertically rolled hair swinging in the air as she walked.

She opens the door boldly and gives us a smile.

"How are you, Hero-dono? Oh my, I never imagined I'd meet the daughter of House Atlee here."

The one who appeared with a white-knuckle attitude was Dorothea-onee-san's sister, Deirdre-senpai.

She's graduated from the academy now, but she's still our senpai.

Clarice-senpai breaks out in a cold sweat, but Deirdre-senpai immediately turns her gaze towards me. You don't intend to address it?

"Time is short, so I'll be quick. The Bartfort family has become embroiled in a power struggle within the Royal Court."

Marie holds her head and shouts.

"This is the worst! Why are we involved in this??!"

Deirdre-senpai laughed.

"It's only natural since you have defeated the Black Knight who has been tormenting the kingdom for years. The Bartfort family's military reputation is growing. —That's why some people in the royal court are trying to get the Bartforts on their side."

While I was thinking about how I wanted to be left alone, Clarice-senpai caught onto what Deirdre-senpai was saying.

"In part, this means that it's not an official decision by the royal court, right?"

"You're correct. As to be expected of the Atlee daughter."

When both Marie and I nodded our heads, Clarice-senpai explained in detail.

"Someone gave the order without permission and those people took advantage of it. No, maybe they are being used? If we can target that point, we can drive those people away."

Marie turned her gaze towards me.

"Hey, that means they forged an official document, right? Doesn't that mean they're in big trouble?"

The Zola family seems to be crossing some dangerous bridges.

Deirdre-senpai praises Marie.

"It seems like you've noticed. Yeah. There are people in the royal palace doing dangerous things. What do you think? Aren't you glad to be associated with the Roseblades?"

That's a big help! It was worth it sacrificing Nicks!! — I mean, I'm glad I got to play cupid for the love of Nicks and Dorothea-onee-san.

"I can't thank Nicks enough."

"How could you say that when you lied to him?"

"You can call me love cupid. I only brought two people together who were perfect for one-another."

Finley, who had been listening to me, was flabbergasted, and Colin was nodding his head.

Marie muttered, "You're one lousy cupid", but I ignored her and decided to make my move.

"So, how far is the Roseblade family willing to help us?"

Deirdre-senpai smiled.

"My sister Dorothea's husband is a good match. My father is pleased to know that the Roseblades have some brave relatives. But I wouldn't want my brother-in-law's family to be in trouble, would I?—If you want to take over the household, I'll spare no effort to support you."

"—No, I already have a floating island."

"Well, just rule them both. Oh, and I've got a message from Nicks-onii-san. 'Don't think you're the only one who can slip away' , he said. Huh. Nicks-onii-san was very kind to have secured this territory for you."

I was surprised that Nicks was called brother-in-law, but more importantly, what's the deal with me taking over as head of the household? I was hoping to just chill on my floating island!

Colin compliments me.

"I don't know how, but you did it, brother Leon!"

"This is the worst."

That son-of-a-bitch Nicks, he forced me to take over my parents' household.

It's disgusting that you would sacrifice your precious family like that!

◇

Back in the parlor, Deirdre-senpai sat down in front of Zola and the others.

She crossed her legs, and her pose was sexy.

If you only considered her looks, she'd be quite the beauty.

"Don't be so proud to show off something that's been forged. Anyway, did you really think you could get away with a ploy as sloppy as this?"

Zola was shrinking in front of the much younger Deirdre-senpai, a countess.

The same was true for Merce, and when it came to Rutart, he was cringing.

Zola managed to raise her voice in protest.

"This is an internal matter of the Bartfort Barony. The Roseblade family has no right to interfere."

"This is a relative's house. If anything happens to my relatives, of course I'll help out. But we'll only help those with whom we have solid blood ties." [2]

I can see Zola's eyes darting around. It was obvious that she had something to hide.

Merce moved closer to Zola.

"Mother! My marriage is at stake. If we have this household, I can even marry a Viscount from the royal court. Please do something."

This girl is so goofy, I can barely contain my laughter.

If I leave it to Deidre-senpai, everything will work out fine.

That being said, I'll still get back at Nicks someday.

What the hell was that guy thinking, forcing his cute little brother to manage his family's domain?

Deirdre-senpai crossed her arms.

"You should all be relieved. For a similar case, it has been decided that the Viscount's family will be extinguished."

"What?"

When Merce shows a surprised face, Deirdre-senpai tells her with a smile.

"It's only natural since you prepared those documents, pretending that it was the decision of the royal court. No matter how much you try to argue here, you will not be able to change who's the head of the family. You should honestly just go home."

As Zola stands up in frustration, Deirdre-senpai stops Rutart.

"Oh, and Rutart-dono"

"Uh, yes, what is it?"

Watching Rutart be cowed by Deirdre-senpai, it makes me sad to see how weak he is to girls after all that bravado.

Such is the fate of academy boys.

"I've heard that while your household was in crisis, you refused to guard its territory, or even leave your home in the capital. I can't help but wonder if you're really qualified to be a knight. House Roseblade will be officially challenging your qualifications in the Royal Court."

"What? It's none of your business! And I just didn't see the point in getting involved in a fight like that!"

"How could it be that you, the heir, fled, when the head of the family, Nicks-nii-san, and Leon-dono, have all gone to war? You have tarnished the honor of knights everywhere. You should be ashamed of yourself."

Unable to talk back, Rutart leaves the room, almost in tears.

Zola and Merce were complaining to Rutart about it.

"If only he'd gone to war, this wouldn't have happened."

"He really is useless, isn’t he?"

Seeing Rutart’s weak position in the family, I felt some sympathy for him.

◇

Rutart walked with great strides through the mansion.

Every now and then, when he found a decorated jar, he would pick it up and throw it.

"Damn! Damn it! You’ve made a fool of me!"

The reason he didn’t go to war was because he didn’t think they could win.

In fact, there was a rumor among some that the response force would be discarded in order to crush the Redgrave Dukes' forces.

Hearing that scared him.

"It's not my fault. I don't even want to inherit this territory. What I deserve is the estate that Nicks stole from me. I was supposed to be an Earl."

‘If only I could be an Earl myself’ —as he was thinking about this, he heard voices talking

He was about to yell in frustration, but when he sees who is in the room, he is surprised and closes his mouth.

(Why is she in here!?)

The ones in the room were Marie and—Clarice.

"Senpai, am I being looked down on? Even Colin does it. I’m his sister-in-law."

"Well, that's proof that you're accepted as family. He can call you onee-san from now on, I’ll tell him that—"

"—Colin, you address me respectfully as onee-san, don’t you? Finley also addresses me with respect. Can’t I get the two of you to treat her like that?"

"—I’m sorry about that."

From their conversation, Rutart realized that Leon knew about her too. It was impossible that Marie knew and her fiancé, Leon, did not know.

And this is the mansion of the Bartfort estate.

It was obvious that Balcus also had a hand in harboring a fugitive.

(If I bring this information to the royal capital, I'll have a chance.)

Rutart was annoyed by all that Deirdre had said, but he smiled and quietly walked away from the room.

◇

Zola and her family had left, and so Deirdre-senpai and Clarice-senpai were resting in rooms we provided for them.

It was night time, and Marie and I were speaking to Luxion.

"Aren't you embarrassed to dump all the work on Deirdre-senpai? A real man would have given her a stiff talking to!"

Marie was oh so proud of me for keeping my mouth shut during that confrontation.

"They're not going to be convinced by what I say. It doesn't matter if it's true or not, sometimes it's who says it that matters. Wouldn't it be more persuasive if it was said by an expert rather than an amateur?"

"You're not fooling me! You definitely avoided saying anything because it was too much of a bother!"

Marie saw right through me.

It's true that it would have been a hassle, so I put it all on Deirdre-senpai, but if the result was going to be the same either way, the easier way is always better.

Luxion shook his one eye side to side to reproduce a look of dismay.

「While I was gone, master was still the same as always, wasn't he?」

"It would have been a lot less trouble with you on my side!"

「I don’t think you should have been driven to that point with Partner and Arroganz. I’m sure Partner’s main gun would have kicked the Principality’s troops down on the curb.」

Marie angrily looked at him and said "Not you again!", but soon seemed to realize why I hadn't done that.

Suddenly, she became quiet.

"—Maybe you didn’t want to kill them?"

I let out a sigh. At first, I thought that even the Black Knight could be left alive. However, I regret that I was too naïve.

"I didn’t want to be killing people, I’m still just a student."

I still haven’t gotten used to it, and I still regret it.

If I had been serious from the beginning—but if I had, I would have been more notorious and more people would have died.

"The world doesn’t work the way we want it to, does it? More importantly, what’s going on with you? Can you stay for a while?"

When I asked Luxion about his future plans, the answer that came back was as expected.

「I was summoned on short notice, so I just rushed back. My schedule is quite full.」

"Is that going to take much longer? There is something I want to ask you."

「What is it?」

I can’t help but wonder about that resentful spirit that shouted my ancestor’s name.

"It’s about the saint's necklace. You remember the resentful spirit that haunted it? We need to speak to it."

「—It’s submissive these days, but if Master comes in front of it, there’s a good chance it’ll go wild. Besides, weren’t you scared?」

"Don’t say you’re not scared! It’s normal to be wary of ghosts and stuff!"

When Marie saw this, she laughed and said, "Oh, you’re a man, but you’re so pathetic!" She really doesn't know what to be afraid of, does she?

Marie asked me what I wanted to confirm when I said I had business with the resentful spirit.

"What do you want to talk about?"

"Many things. Things have been going more differently than I'd thought from that otome game. There's something that's been bothering me, so I've decided to look into it thoroughly."

Marie seemed worried about that, too.

"That's right. And since we saved the Redgrave family by mistake, we've robbed Olivia, Prince Julius, and the others of their time to shine. But we've already dealt with the last boss, so we can handle this, right?"

I understand that—but I still have a bad feeling about this.

I don't like my hunches, because they usually prove correct.

"If it turns out to be nothing, then that's fine. Luxion let me talk to it at once."

"I have a schedule to keep, so please hurry."

Luxion, who wanted to leave at once, was rushing Marie and me.

◇

After winning the war, the Royal Palace of the Holfort Kingdom was busy dealing with the post-war situation.

The civil servants were in a flurry of activity, and many stayed up all night.

Angelica hurriedly visited Queen Mylene and relayed what she had heard from Hertrude.

"Mylene-sama, we can't just stand by and watch. The Marquess of Frampton is also connected to that woman. She's dangerous!"

The presence of Olivia, who manipulated Julius and the other nobles behind the scenes, was terrifying to Angelica. She felt like within just a few years, that girl was causing the kingdom to crumble from within.

After hearing about the Marquess' case from Angelica, Mylene let out a small sigh.

Then, she gave a reply that was unexpected to Angelica.

"Angelica, I'm sorry, but Princess Hertrudes' testimony isn't enough to take down the Marquess."

"Then why don't we interrogate the people involved? If we don't act quickly, Prince Julius will be in danger. He was seduced by that woman into making the volunteer army! Mylene-sama, can't you at least do something about her?"

The reason why Angelica considered Olivia to be so dangerous was largely due to her intuition.

(That's no good. I didn't realize it before, but she's dangerous. She should never have been left by His Highness' side.)

If it was merely an affair, she wouldn't have gone this far. Although dissatisfied, Angelica would have accepted her as his mistress, if she knew her place.

But Olivia as she is, was no good.

Even from Angelica's perspective, Olivia had undergone a massive change. She had gone from a mere commoner girl, to a bewitching woman who can tilt the country. Being unable to understand what Olivia was truly thinking, was terrifying.

"Clarice has been cornered by that girl too. Many of the opposing students in the academy have been expelled, and now there no one's left willing to speak against her."

Mylene looked a little sad in the face of Angelica's desperate plea. She seemed to be wondering whether she should tell her right here, but then she made up her mind and grabbed both of Angelica's shoulders.

"Angie, listen to me carefully."

"Mylene-sama?"

Angelica was silenced by Mylene's unusually firm attitude..

Mylene closes her eyes in frustration.

"The royal court has decided to formally dissolve your engagement to Julius."

"—it's true? So you weren't just talking about ending it, you actually did?"

She didn’t want to believe her. Mylene nodded quietly.

"I’m sorry."

She felt all energy leave her.

Angelica felt her legs lose their strength.

Mylene hugs and supports her as she collapses.

Angelica asks Mylene in a shaky voice.

"I don’t understand? I have worked so hard for His Highness. I’ve worked hard every day to make myself a worthy wife. Have I done something wrong? Mylene-sama, please tell me. I will fix it right away. So please, wait for me before breaking the engagement."

She found herself in tears.

She had spent most of her life trying to become a queen worthy of Julius. If Julius discarded her, what would remain?

To Angelica, Julius was everything.

"You’ve done very well. I wish I could call you my daughter-in-law. But there are things in this world we cannot control."

"Because I nagged His Highness? Did His Highness complain about me?"

She had thought that she had been advising Julius for his own good at the academy. Angelica was aware that this was not appreciated by him.

However, it was necessary for Julius' sake. Someone had to tell him, and she had been determined to do so.

Since Mylene didn’t answer, Julius must have indeed said something to her.

However, after a short pause, Mylene told her the truth.

She told her the real reason why they had cancelled the engagement, even if it meant a feud with the Redgrave Duchy.

"I have no complaints with Angie. You have done well so far. But you see—even I can’t help it. The girl named Olivia has been admitted to the temple as a saint."

"Oh, it’s a lie. How could she be a saint?"

The Saint—that’s the bloodline of the sixth adventurer involved in the founding of the Kingdom of Holfort.

It is said that because of her, the Holfort Kingdom was born, and her power is still considered sacred today.

With her blessing, any difficult adventure can be overcome, and she was a saint who worked miracles.

There is no other being so worthy of being worshipped by adventurers.

The lineage of the other five adventurers remained as royalty and prestigious families, but only the saint's bloodline was lost.

It is commonly believed that after the founding of the country, she decided that her role was finished, and set out on another adventure.

Afterwards, it was only the occasional woman with the power appropriate for a saint, who was declared to be one.

Ever since the Saint's necklace and bracelet were stolen from the temple decades ago, the position of saint has been vacant.

That is because without those three artifacts, the power of a saint cannot be recreated.

Up until now, pretenders who were not as powerful as the saint have been calling themselves saints.

Olivia, however, was different.

"Reports from the temple say that she has recreated her power even without the saint's tools. I have received reports that she is a true saint, equal in power to the First saint."

Not an imitation, but the real thing.

What this means, is that she is much more valuable than Angelica.

"That's impossible. There's no way she's a saint! She's a— she's a—"

Mylene hugged the confused Angelica, and slowly pulled away.

"You know how big a deal the saints are in this country, don't you?"

"No, no, I don’t want to! Mylene-sama, I don’t...!"

Mylene turned away as Angelica squirmed and looked at her.

"There is a movement to promote saint Olivia as Julius' fiancée. It's the Marquis of Frampton who's behind it. And many nobles are accepting this as an auspicious event. I can't do anything to change this trend."

Angelica collapsed on the spot and cried out loud as she could.

◇

The royal capital of the Kingdom of Holfort

A special stage had been prepared in the square, and knights in armor were on guard around it.

A ceremony with an impressive number of guards was prepared for one girl who was to assume the position of saint, which had been vacant for many years.

Backstage, Julius hugged Olivia and put his arms around her waist.

"You look beautiful, Olivia"

"I’m so happy, Julius."

Olivia accepted Julius’ words with a smile, but inside her heart, she had a malevolent grin.

(I’ve finally made it here. When I am reinstated as saint—I will do everything possible to destroy this country.)

A white dress was prepared for Olivia.

She holds the saint's staff given to her by the temple and wears the bracelet on her left wrist.

Julius is disappointed to see the replica prepared in place of the saint's necklace.

"I’m sorry that I could only prepare a fake for your big day. I couldn't find it no matter how hard I looked. Everyone else looked for it too, but we couldn’t even find a clue."

Olivia shook her head.

"It's all right. I'm just happy to be able to wear such a beautiful dress. Besides, the wand and bracelet are too expensive for me, I'd feel self-conscious."

To Julius, Olivia's mocking words were impressive. It was a comment that reflected Julius's inner feelings, as he was fed up with the way the noble women dressed.

(Most of all, though, there is no real need for the scepter and bracelet. They were just vessels holding my power. —I wonder if the part of me that dwells within the necklace is doing well?)

T he Saint's necklace that had not been returned to her was bothering her.

(If I make it widely known that I'm here, I'm sure they'll come running.)

When that happened, she was thinking she could re-absorb that part of her..

"I'd better get going. I'll go say hi to everyone."

"Oh, let the people of the capital see what a true saint looks like."

After Olivia pulled away from Julius, she walked up to the stage.

Olivia clasps her hands together as she walks up the stairs.

(We're almost there, Lea. I'm going to get my revenge on those guys.)

Tens of thousands of spectators cheered at Olivia's arrival as she took the stage. The cheers were so loud, you could feel the vibrations.

As Olivia slowly spread her arms out, the crowd naturally grew quiet.

And then Olivia's voice reaches all the spectators.

It wasn't a loud voice, but it was a voice that reached into the hearts of all those around her.

"I am Olivia—I am Saint Olivia. People of Holfort Kingdom, the Saint has returned to this land once more."

The crowd was mesmerized by the smiling Olivia.

Some of them were moved to tears, as if they had seen a goddess.

"I have only one wish. That wish is to bring true peace to this land. Everyone, I beg you—please lend me your strength."

When she clasped her hands and made a gesture of prayer to the heavens, not only the crowd but even the knights and nobles who were standing guard, were enamoured with her appearance.

Olivia—the saint in Olivia stretched out her hands towards the heavens.

(Yes, I have only one wish. It’s to return this land to the hands of those who deserve it. I will use up each and every one of you for that purpose.)

Looking up at the sky, Olivia's eyes were severely clouded, even though she was looking at a clear blue sky.

Short Story — Marie Route the Fifth

◇

At the third term of our second year.

We participated in the war against Fanoss Principality, but our role had ended and we returned to the academy.

Because we participated in the war as volunteer students, we didn't participate in almost all the classes of our second term as second year student.

Many of the school events were also suspended. What a really desolate school life.

Even so it seemed the students could advance to the next grade without any problem.

The reason was「The youths who stood up when the country was in danger couldn't be allowed to repeat a year」.

I was happy that I could advance the grade without studying, but I also had the doubt whether such thing was really fine.

There was also no path of the character repeating a year in that otome game, so a part of me was thinking that maybe this was just how things should be.

To actually experience such thing left a slightly murky feeling in me, but it wasn't like I wanted to remain in the academy so much that I would repeat the year for that.

Honestly I just wanted to graduate quickly.

And so, both Marie and me allowed ourselves to follow the flow without any opposition.

Right now we were inside the spaceship that was Luxion's true body.

I visited a certain room together with Marie. There was an astral body that was locked inside a round capsule there.

The mass of resentment that appeared from the saintess's necklace looked like she was sitting while hugging her knees.

She had the form of swaying black shadow, but she had a feminine silhouette.

The spots where the eyes should be located were releasing red light, but the intensity of the light was far weaker than before.

Her attitude had also softened.

I swallowed my saliva nervously before addressing the mass of resentment.

「There is something that I want to ask.」

The resentment reacted to my voice and turned her red eyes toward me. She replied with a small voice.

『What do you want to know?』

I was surprised that her reply sounded really obedient. Beside me Maria poked my side with her elbow and so I hurriedly spoke my question.

「Why were you hiding in the saintess's necklace? And also, who is this Lea that you mentioned?」

Before this the mass of resentment yelled the name Lea when she saw me.

I didn't really paid any attention to it at that time, but I got curious after hearing from father that the person who founded Bartfalt House also had the name Lea.

The mass of resentment talked about Lea with a female voice.

『Lea was a man who worked as adventurer and our leader. He was my comrade who boarded the same airship and survived many dangerous adventures together with me. He was my important comrade.』

Marie put her hand on her chin when she heard that their adventurer group consisted of seven people.

And then she asked about the two's relationship.

「Could it be that you two were in a romantic relationship?」

The mass of resentment answered with a disappointed tone.

『I wish that was the case, but it was just my one-sided feeling.』

It seemed that something happened so that the two of them couldn't be together?

She began to continue her story while I was thinking.

『It was when we discovered an undeveloped continent. There were numerous ruins and also dungeons there. We challenged those places and conquered them while everyone else was struggling.』

「Wasn't it you guys who discovered the continent?」

『Do you think we could conquer the whole continent with just ourselves? We were the one who found it, but at the same time other adventurers also came and began to compete against each other.』

Certainly, if you thought carefully it sounded impossible to conquer the whole continent with just six people like the story in the game.

Luxion who was floating beside me looked at me when he heard about the continent discovery.

『It seems master's ancestor was the seventh person who no one talked about.』

This guy was really hasty.

「Can't you stay quiet and listen to the story a bit more?」

『It's possible to infer the rest. Should I also deduce who is the owner of the resentment──whose resentment this thing is?』

The mass of resentment stayed quiet, in exchange Marie noticed the answer and showed surprise in her face.

「You're lying right!? Eh, this thing is really the saintess? Even though I imagined that the saintess would be someone more kinder and overflowing with love.」

The mass of resentment chuckled hearing Marie's words.

『Love huh. Certainly I was overflowing with love. I loved Lea more than anybody else. I wanted to convey this feeling. And yet──Hohlfahrt and others betrayed Lea.』

I never thought that the words of my ancestor「I was betrayed by my comrades」was related to the founding of the kingdom.

Sure enough, that was just completely unexpected.

My ancestor is so awesome──but before that, it would be really embarrassing if it was just a misunderstanding, so let's confirm it just to make sure.

「My ancestor's name is Lea. His family name is Bartfalt, but is there a chance that they are actually completely unrelated? Is there a possibility that they only have the same name?」

I asked that because it would be really embarrassing if all of these were actually just a mistake, and then the mass of resentment looked at me.

『You are really similar with Lea. I'm also feeling his bloodline inside you, so there is no mistake. Also, the girl beside you is descended from the same lineage like me.』

Marie pressed her hands on her cheeks.

「Eh? Could it be that I have the blood of the saintess flowing inside me? It sounds like I'm a main character!」

I was exasperated seeing Marie's happy-go-lucky attitude.

If even Marie whose family didn't seem like they were directly related to saintess was descended from her bloodlone, then there must be a lot of other people who also shared the same bloodline.

Sure there was some rarity value from that, but it also wasn't really that rare.

「There are a lot of people who have the saintess's bloodline huh.」

「Don't be such a killjoy.」

Marie pouted. I shrugged seeing her like that.

「If your House is connected with the saintess, they would surely proclaim it already from the top of their lung. If they don't know about it, then that must mean that the bloodline has unknowingly spread out to many people throughout the generations.」

「You are really horrible Leon. You should be kinder to girl.」

「The true kindness can sometimes be cruel too.」

「What kindness. You are just being mean.」

Marie was getting angry, so let's stop the teasing here.

Even so, wasn't it just a pointless setting for someone like Marie to be descended from the saintess? I think that kind of setting was unnecessary.

No matter how hard this girl worked, there was no way she would be able to do the same thing like the main character.

Luxion spoke up to conclude the story. It seemed like he was in a hurry and didn't want to wait until we were finished on our own.

『So the saintess's beloved Lea was betrayed, and learning that she put her resentment into a tool. What happened to the actual saintess?』

Luxion asked what happened to the actual saintess. The mass of resentment shook her head.

『I don't know. The saintess put her power and feeling to the tools that we found in a ruin. My existence is the materialization of that power and feeling. Those items including this necklace has that kind of power.』

What an outrageous tool, but why would such item considered as the saintess's items?

Even though I thought those items had more divine power or something, this story had really killed the dream.

「So you aren't the actual saintess who died and then moving to live in the saintess's tool?」

『No. The saintess left us in her tools and left it behind as trap. It's in order to take revenge to Hohlfahrt and others one day.』

「They are like cursed items.」

I spoke my honest feeling, but the resentment easily spoke the truth.

『In the beginning they were nothing more than tools that we found in a a dungeon. It's the later generations who are considering them as holy items.』

Those items had the word "Saintess's ～" added in their name simply because the saintess used them.

It seemed that from the resentment's perspective, it was questionable why those items were regarded as sacred.

「Then, next is──」

Luxion projected an image at the empty air just as I was about to ask the next question.

『Master, it seems a problem occurred in the kingdom. Please look at the image.』

「Ha?」

Marie and I looked at the image in surprise. Our eyes widened seeing the video that was projected.

Olivia-san wearing a white dress was there. She was also wearing the three tools of the saintess and making a speech in front of the public.

「I am the saintess Olivia. People of Hohlfahrt Kingdom, the saintess has returned on this land once more. My wish is only one. It's to bring peace to this land. Everyone, I beg you, please lend me your power.」

Olivia-san introduced herself as the saintess. The people cheered in respond.

There were also the figures of his highness Julius and the others clapping with a smile on their face behind Olivia-san.

Marie was shocked and clung on my arm before shaking me.

「No way! Why is she introducing herself as the saintess at this timing!? Because, because, this event should be at the latter half shouldn't it? This is an event for after we become third year right!?」

Marie was surprised because what was going on was different from the scenario of that otome game that she remembered.

In the game, the main character introduced herself as the saintess when she became third year.

It was after her lover had been decided.

And yet, this timing felt a bit early than it should be.

「What's going on? Luxion, can you investigate it?」

I wanted to investigate using Luxion, but he refused me.

『——I have stationed additional drones in Partner. Master can control those to investigate by yourself.』

「You are saying that you won't follow my order? You are still going to act as you please in this situation?」

Luxion maintained his distance from me when I questioned him.

『There is something that I have to prioritize, so I can't help master right now. Please wait for a while.』

Luxion ignored my order.

No, was it alright because he had prepared some robots to gather information?

「Is it really that important for you to go around destroying the new mankind's ruins?」

『That's my greatest priority. Also, I don't think that master is in a dangerous situation right now.』

Marie looked down at Luxion's explanation and muttered.

「Even though the situation is this serious.」

『There won't be any problem for master and Marie from ignoring this. Although there is some difference, aren't things still following the scenario? In that case there is nothing to worry.』

From Luxion's attitude, his feeling of disinterest no matter what kind of change occurred from that otome game's scenario was conveyed to me.

This guy, did he consider it as no problem at all even if the kingdom was destroyed as long as we were safe?

——What am I saying, of course that was what he thought.

「So we have to investigate by ourselves huh. More importantly, why does Olivia-san have the Saintess's Necklace?」

The mass of resentment reacted to my words.

『That's a fake.』

Marie made a relieved face hearing that.

「Thank god. Then Olivia isn't taken over by things like you. Ah, I guess not. You are here after all, so that girl must be safe.」

The saintess's resentment was here, so there shouldn't be any problem at all with Olivia-san──but it seemed we were naïve for thinking that.

『What are you saying? The staff and the bracelet are genuine. My original self poured her power and feeling into her three tools. Those two items also have existence like me dwelling inside them.』

I looked at Olivia-san who was reflected in the projection after hearing that.

「──This is the worst.」

It felt like her atmosphere was a bit different compared to the last time I saw her, but could it be that she was being taken over? No, she was the main character. There was no way such thing could happen to her.

Even Marie was able to repel the resentment with her strength of heart.

Surely Olivia-san was also fine.

──That should be the case.

◇

Around that time.

Olivia was taking a bath in the academy.

She was soaking and relaxing in hot water that had flower petals floating on the surface.

Nearby there was the half elf boy who was taking care of Olivia's need, Kyle. He was Olivia's personal servant. Right now his cheeky personality from before had vanished.

He was watching the smiling Olivia with fear and tension.

Olivia stretched her left hand.

「Kyle.」

She only called Kyle's name. In respond Kyle desperately wracked his brain of what his master could possibly ask for before handing a drink.

His hand was shaking.

「E-enjoy.」

「Thank you. It looks like you also finally understand Kyle.」

Olivia accepted the drink and took a sip of it before looking up to the ceiling.

「Now then──how should I enjoy myself from here on?」

Olivia smiled imagining what was going to happen from here on. Kyle felt a chill on his back seeing that smile.

(Goshujin-sama, she is like a completely different person from last year.)

Kyle obeyed his completely changed master even while in fear.

Olivia noticed Kyle's fear and turned her gaze toward him.

「That's right. Kyle, about your mother Yumeria you see, I found a place for her to work. You won't need to worry about her again with that. Your mother was really happy when I introduced her to her new job. She also told me to keep taking care of you from here on too.」

「Eh?」

Kyle went pale when Yumeria's name came out.

「I have been exchanging letters with Yumeria since quite some time ago. With this you can also feel relieved Kyle.」

「W-where is she working right now?」

Kyle asked while shaking fiercely. Olivia smiled at that question and told him cruelly.

「I won't tell you. But, you don't need to worry at all about Yumeria. That's why, keep working for my sake from here on too, Kyle.」

Kyle was so panicked he couldn't even say anything after knowing that Yumeria was taken hostage.

And then, he felt terror seeing Olivia before him.

(Who the hell. Who the hell is this woman? She isn't the goshujin-sama from before. It's like someone else is replacing her at the inside.)

There was only the vestige of the kind Olivia on the surface.

Kyle nodded quietly without being able to make any resistance.

◇

The academy of Hohlfahrt Kingdom was enveloped in an abnormal excitement.

The students were restless.

Not only the volunteer army had obtained great achievements, even the saintess who had been absent for so many years had revived.

The crown prince Julius had formally annulled his engagement with Angelica and decided to be engaged with the saintess Olivia.

The birth of the saintess was an auspicious event for the kingdom. The engagement annulment was considered as something trivial.

There were three female students talking at the academy's courtyard.

「You heard, a duke's daughter got her engagement annulled.」

「It's really hard for Redgrave House right now isn't it? After all Angelica had picked a fight with saintess-sama of all people.」

「Right now she also has no ally at all in the academy. It looks like she is completely isolated.」

About the case of Julius and others getting worked up and expulsing a lot of students from the academy.

Many of those expulsed students were people who should be Angelica's ally.

Right now there was no student in the academy who would go against Olivia.

There were only students trying to suck up at Olivia proactively to receive her favor, or students who were carefully watching from afar to see how the wind blew.

There was almost no existence in this academy right now who would get in the way of Olivia and Julius.

The girls were talking about the grand party that would be held in the academy.

「Forget about that, have you heard? The party this year will be attended by students from all years.」

「It's combined with the graduation party isn't it? I heard that the party will also double as the victory party.」

「Eh? Have we won against the principality?」

「Not that. It's for celebrating the volunteer army's victory. And Fanoss Principality almost has no fighting strength remaining anyway, it seems that the kingdom only need to attack them to finish them off.」

「They will surrender soon.」

The war still hadn't been won yet, but everyone thought that Hohlfahrt Kingdom's victory was unshakeable.

And that was also a fact.

The principality had lost many capable knights and officers, including the black knight.

They had also lost the majority of their airship and armor. Their military strength had been drastically reduced.

What was left was to attack the principality or waiting for them to surrender.

It was only natural for the students to be giddy.

Angelica appeared in the courtyard that was like that.

She didn't have even a single hanger-on with her.

Some of her hanger-on were expulsed, but the majority had abandoned her and kept their distance from her.

Angelica was isolated within the academy and also in the noble society.

The three girls huddled closer to each other and intentionally talked with a louder voice.

「Speak of the devil. That's the young lady of the duke house.」

「Isn't that the fool who picked a fight with saintess-sama?」

「How stupid. The words of not knowing her place really suit someone like her.」

Angelica looked down and clenched her hands. The three girls were amused seeing that and left while laughing.

Angelica who was left behind muttered with a voice that couldn't be heard by anybody.

There was hatred brimming inside her voice.

「I absolutely won't forgive you.」

Her red eyes looked horribly murky, even so there was a sinister light radiated from there.

◇

When Marie and I returned to the academy, the atmosphere had changed too much.

The buildings and facilities were completely the same like before.

What changed was the number of student.

The number of male had decreased drastically. The ratio of male and female had become completely unbalanced.

It wasn't difficult to find a sight with only girls around and not a single boy in sight.

When we had lunch at the courtyard, Marie looked like she wanted to say something with sandwich stuffed inside her mouth.

She swallowed the food inside her mouth and muttered a comment about the courtyard's scenery.

「This place is like all girls school.」

「Yeah.」

I could only agree with Marie.

After all there were only girls having lunch at the courtyard except me.

Thanks to that I was standing out.

「Even though I might be able to enjoy the feeling of enrolling in an all girls school if only the reason why there is no boy isn't something like that.」

I blurted out my honest feeling. Marie looked at me with an expression of disbelief.

「Are you idiot? All girls school isn't a place like the boys imagine.」

「I often hear about that. Well, it's something unrelated to me anyway, so I don't care about the dark stories.」

There was also the reason behind the decrease in boy ratio, so I couldn't bring myself to be happy in this situation.

Marie watched the scenery of the academy that had become desolate with a gloomy expression.

「Only a real fiend can be happy with this situation.」

「Yeah.」

The girls around us who were giddy about the victory of Prince Julius's volunteer army were talking about a party.

「I wonder what kind of dress will be nice?」

「It will be impossible to buy a new one won't it? I heard that most of the shops in the capital are closed.」

「Why?」

「They said that no goods are coming in because of the war.」

「How bothersome.」

Marie looked down with a bitter expression hearing them grumbling just because they couldn't get a new dress.

Marie had seen a lot of things at the battlefield. The remarks of the girls sounded extremely cruel in her ear.

「Are you alright?」

Marie lifted her face when I asked her considerately.

「I'm fine. But staying here is making me feel bad, so let's go to other place.」

「That's nice.」

Marie got fed up by the girls who got excited with party talk and said to change the place.

I obediently agreed and followed her.

We moved from the courtyard to the passage, and from there we headed to inside the school building.

Everyone who we passed by on the way was all female students.

There was one female student among them.

Marie noticed her and she got an awkward look. But she still called out at her.

「U-umm」

The other girl was walking while looking down with a gloomy expression.

When she noticed Marie and lifted her face, she had a haggard face with dark circle under her eyes.

「What is it?」

It seemed that the girl was acquainted with Marie.

「You are Yuria-san right? What's wrong? Isn't it better if you take a rest if you are feeling bad?」

Yuria-san obviously didn't seem well even from an onlooker's point of view, but she shook her head powerlessly.

「It's fine. I'm not feeling bad anywhere. The bad one here is me.」

What was she talking about? That was what I thought and I was about to ask her, but Marie was looking down beside me.

「Could it be, Lloyd-san was…?」

Marie asked hesitantly. Her gesture made me realized it somehow.

Yuria-san talked about her situation while crying.

「I was told that he fought bravely. His highness Julius gave him his praise. I──I never expected that it would be like this. Even though I believed that Lloyd would definitely return because he was strong.」

Yuria-san started crying and covered her face with both hands. Marie approached to console her.

However, it seemed she couldn't find any words to say.

Yuria-san continued talking.

「I wouldn't send off Lloyd if I knew this would happen. I should have stopped him. I don't need him to obtain achievement. I don't need him to be successful or anything. Even though I would be happy with him simply staying with me.」

We were unable to say anything to Yuria-san who was sobbing uncontrollably. In the meantime a group of girls were approaching and noticed us.

It seemed they could hear what we were talking about. They interrupted our conversation.

「Shouldn't you feel proud instead if your lover had fought bravely?」

A girl who gave an impression of haughtiness seemed to be displeased by Yuria-san's attitude.

「If it's me who is in your place, I won't keep grieving forever for the sake of my lover who died in battle. Rather I'll hold my head high that my lover had fought bravely. A noble lady should only feel proud at this kind of time.」

Those were words that really didn't fit an otome game world. It made fed up. Beside me Marie was enraged.

「Is that something that you should say in front of this girl who lost her lover? Can you say the same thing if it's your own lover who died?」

「Of course.」

The other girl brazenly declared that. It shocked both Marie and me that our eyes widened and we turned speechless.

The haughty girl started to boast as though it was only natural——no, as though she wanted to say that she was different from us.

「Among the boys who joined the volunteer army, there were several boys who confessed to me before departing, asking me to marry them when they return back. I heard that all of them have fought bravely. I'm proud for getting proposed by such honorable men.」

Those weren't lover weren't they? Furthermore there was more than one? I asked the haughty girl.

「Did all of them die?」

「It seems that several of them are in hospital.」

「Have you visited them?」

「Not interested. I like strong man. You got a passing mark in that respect. I'll allow you to at least invite me to a tea party if only the right side of your face isn't scarred. Good bye ugly man.」

Ugly man. It seemed that I was considered as an ugly man in the standard of those girls due to the scar on my face from the battlefield.

I lost interest at the group of girls who were leaving, but it was Marie who couldn't keep quiet.

「Wait you bitch!」

「Bugyoo!」

A flying kick landed on the haughty girl who showed us her back.

I was surprised by the haughty girl's strange scream, but I was even more flustered by Marie's action.

「Oi, just what are you doing?」

When I tried to stop her, Marie grabbed the haughty girl and lifted her up.

「Take back what you said! Don't group yourself with Yuria. Besides, you are calling Leon an ugly man? You don't even know what kind of scary experience the boys went through in battle, so don't you dare act like a big deal!」

「L-let go of me!」

The girl's hanger-on tried to pull apart Marie from her.

However Marie wouldn't let go.

「What honor. Something like that──isn't honorable at all.」

◇

Marie got covered with scratches after getting into a fight with the girls. She used her hand to tidy up her messed up hair.

Even I got covered with scratches all over in order to protect Marie.

「Just ignore that kind of people. It's pointless to even try talking with them.」

「I know that but, they are just so annoying!」

She couldn't just stay quiet against that kind of people, but it would be pointless trying to talk some sense into that haughty girl no matter what we said.

Besides, sense of value was something that changed depending on the era.

An era where dying in battle was considered as honorable certainly existed.

We were simply unable to accept that due to our memories of our past life.

「Aa~aa, what an unpleasant era.」

After I muttered that, Marie seemed to guess something too and she nodded slightly.

And then she stood up from the bench where she was sitting on.

「I decided. I'm going to the hospital.」

「Ha?」

「I can use healing magic despite appearance, so I'll heal the wounded knights and soldiers. I also want to heal the boys who participated in the volunteer army.」

「I see.」

If that was what Marie decided then I'd also help.

「I guess I'll also gather the necessary things.」

「You will help?」

「I'll be worried if you are doing it alone. Besides, I don't really want to stay in the academy right now.」

I didn't really want to stay for long in this academy when the atmosphere had drastically changed like this.

「It also doesn't look like I'll be able to approach her right now. So there is no point with me staying here.」

「You mean about Olivia?」

「Yeah.」

There were always guards constantly staying around the saintess Olivia, and more importantly she also often came and go to various places like the palace or the temple.

Our investigation was rough going due to her moving around busily.

「Even though it would be easy if Luxion is here.」

Marie looked worried at my grumbling.

「Say, is Luxion alright? He won't turn traitor or anything?」

「I wonder?」

「Wait! I'm being serious here!」

「Hmm~, perhaps he won't?」

「What do you mean perhaps huh?」

Marie was worrying about that, but I thought it was a waste of time worrying like that.

It would be instantly over for us if Luxion betrayed us.

We would surely get killed without being able to resist.

◇

At a room inside the palace.

There, Julius and others were surrounding Olivia who was wearing white wedding dress.

「You look pretty, Olivia.」

「Thank you Julius.」

The two of them were holding each other's waist. The other men who were watching that were showing a sullen expression.

Greg forcefully interrupted the two who were inside their own world.

He looked somewhat fretful seeing the two of them flirting.

「Don't get excited with just the two of you like that. Olivia, you are beautiful. Though if I can be honest, I wish that you will become my wife alone.」

Chris gave a warning at Greg's comment.

He fixed his glasses' position while glaring at Greg.

「We have already talked about that many times right?」

「I get it.」

Greg showed a vexed expression. Olivia acted apologetically at him.

「I'm sorry Greg. I can't choose just one from among you five. I better not choose anyone rather than choosing just one of you.」

The relationship between Olivia and the five was one where Olivia would still have relationship with the other four even after she had married Julius formally.

Jilk followed up after Olivia.

「Please don't be sad Olivia-san. Greg-kun is just being selfish. Also your highness too, please don't monopolize Olivia-san like that.」

Julius frowned at Jilk's words.

「I will never do anything that make Olivia sad.」

The five of them accepted this situation.

The only one who didn't accept this situation was──Olivia who was loved by the five of them.

Although she was acting happy at the surface, she didn't hide her disgust at the inside.

Rather the feeling that she harbored toward the five was hatred.

(All of them are idiots without exception. You five are still foolish like in the past even after so many generations has passed. I wouldn't allow you five to even touch me if only Lea is here.)

Seeing the five chatting happily with each other reminded her of the past when she was the saintess.

Other than the five, there was her and one more young man who was in the position as the leader of everyone.

Julius and others were glaring at each other and holding each other back. And then Brad brought up a new topic.

It was the topic about the party that also doubled as the celebration party for the volunteer army.

「Olivia's wedding ceremony is of course important, but there is still the party before that.」

Julius turned his gaze toward Brad and said「You're right」in recollection.

「It seems that the party will be a grand on in order to celebrate our victory. After all it's also an event to display the relationship between Olivia and me toward the academy students.」

His voice was slightly louder when saying Olivia and me.

The fact that the royal family and the saintess were strongly connected could be shown from Olivia and him showing the students their intimacy.

But, Jilk gave a warning about his worry for the party.

「Has your highness forgotten about the uninvited guest?」

「Uninvited? Who do you mean?」

Jilk immediately answered Julius's question.

「I mean Angelica of Redgrave house. There is the rumor that she seems strange since her engagement with your highness is called off. It's dangerous to allow her to participate in the party.」

The whole academy was excited by the announcement of Julius and Olivia's engagement. The only one who harbored a grudge against them in such atmosphere was only Angelica.

Angelica had her engagement called off and she lost her standing. The five of them believed that she was surely resenting them.

Julius looked at Olivia.

「Don't let Angelica participate in the party. Olivia, I'll protect you.」

「I'm so happy, Julius.」

Olivia smiled. Underneath that smile was a gloating smirk.

(Angelica Rafa Redgrave——a girl from the bloodline that is connected to royal family Hohlfahrt. You shall fall into hell too. But you won't be alone. After all I'm going to send the whole family of those who betrayed Lea with you.)

◇

『My name is Ann——there was also a time when I was called the saintess.』

A floating island near the capital was used as a port.

Many flying ships were anchored there, but my Partner could also be found among them.

The saintess's necklace was kept inside a room within Partner.

Marie and I came to check on it. There the resentment——no, Ann was telling us about the detail of what happened in the past.

She finally introduced herself after this late.

Marie sounded a bit surprised hearing the name of the legendary saintess.

「That's unexpectedly a normal name. I thought it would be a longer and hard to remember name.」

The first saintess who appeared in that otome game didn't have name.

Marie looked a bit disappointed because the name was far too normal compared to her imagination.

『What are you expecting? In the first place we were only youths who we noble in name only who fled from house because we couldn't succeed our family. Even our house status was near rock bottom. Our livelihood wasn't any different from the commoner.』

Reality was always tough.

But, Ann and her group still counted as lucky because they succeeded.

Even so, talking with her didn't feel talking with a saintess at all.

Was her personality somewhat rough because she was working as adventurer despite being a woman?

I cut off the idle talk and continued with the main topic.

「Forget about that, let's get into the main topic. From your perspective, does Olivia-san looks like she is possessed or not?」

The most important topic was whether the current saintess Olivia-san was safe or not.

But Ann made a gesture that looked like she was shaking her head.

『To be honest I don't know.』

The shadow that looked like a swaying flame professed that she didn't know. It made Marie frustrated.

「Why don't you know!?」

『It's you two who should know better than me isn't it? Can't you two conclude it by yourself?』

We wouldn't be this troubled if that was possible.

To begin with, Marie and I were in the category of poor noble and had no point of contact with Olivia-san at all.

Forget about deciding whether she was possessed or not, we didn't even know how she usually acted.

I had played that otomege so much until I was fed up of it, but I think that understanding the characteristic of the main character that the player controlled was the most difficult thing to do.

It was pathetic but, I could only shake my head.

「I never really talked with her.」

Marie also held her head in her wits' end.

「I think that she seems strange but, I can also kinda agree if I'm told that's how she normally act.」

There were cases when something that seemed strange to Marie and me was actually something normal in this world.

The topic about casualties of war didn't come out in the game, but in reality it was a hot topic that made us felt fed up listening to it.

In the end, both Marie and I didn't know Olivia-san really well, so we couldn't decide.

Also, despite claiming to be involved with the story, we weren't at the center of it, though we also weren't completely out of the loop.

「Will you be able to decide if you are near her Ann?」

『If I forced myself to approach her in my current condition, I'll just get absorbed and that will be the end for me.』

I was thinking to have Ann explained the situation to Olivia-san in case she was possessed in order to make her stop with the revenge.

But, things just couldn't be that simple.

Marie complained at Ann.

「They are like your offshoot right!? Do something about them then!」

『That's exactly why we would get pulled toward each other. If that happen, we will only regain our original power and hatred. There won't be any coming back from that.』

「There should be many other things that you can do, like persuading them for example!」

『We wouldn't be reduced into this form if from the start we had the presence of mind to listen to other's persuasion. It was because I had resentment that I went as far as leaving behind my resentment and power into the tools.』

What she said was reasonable.

Saintess Ann put her emotion together with the saintess's power into the tools that she had.

But, there were three tools.

Both her resentment and power were also split into three.

It was troubling because we couldn't just bring the saintess's necklace, had a talk, and problem solved!

I made a suggestion to Ann.

「Won't they calm down and listen to us if they see Marie and I who descended from Lea and Ann's bloodlines? Even you were calming down from that right?」

The Ann in the necklace managed to regain her calm until we could talk with her because of that.

Then wouldn't the same happen with the other tools?

That expectation of me was betrayed.

『In case that girl is possessed, the resentment inside her will be twice of mine. Besides if it is me who has obtained flesh body, it won't be strange for her to get fixated with you who look similar like Lea. When that happen, she might remove anyone in her way, even if that person is her own descendant.』

She would remove Marie, in order to obtain me?

Hearing that, I decided to avoid talking about my bloodline.

「That will be unpleasant. Let's stop this talk about bloodline.」

I showed my refusal. Marie also showed a strong agreement with me.

「Why do I have to hand over Leon! I'll thoroughly crush her if she say something like that at me!」

Marie was enraged. What should I say to her here?

It was fine for me to think that she was getting angry for me right? ——I too didn't want Marie to die and getting Olivia-san who was possessed by Ann as her substitute.

Ann was looking at us quite happily.

『You two are really close. I'm jealous.』

So it was impossible to do persuasion by using our bloodline as the reason. Both Marie and I thought for the next plan but——nothing come to mind.

Now then, what should we do now?

「I think I'll be able to decide if I can somehow talk with Olivia-san though.」

I pondered. At the same time Marie turned a doubting gaze toward me.

「You, were you that close with Olivia? Even if she is possessed, you won't be able to notice if she act like she isn't.」

「Don't be stupid. I'll be able to see through something like that right away. She is a woman who is trying to destroy a country right? Surely she will make a villainous face.」

I scoffed at Marie, then she suddenly made a dark expression and looked down.

And then, she pressed her hands on her stomach.

Did her stomach hurt because she ate too much at lunch? I got worried and called out at her.

「O-oi, what's wrong?」

I called at her with a worried tone. Marie's shoulders shook──then she suddenly bent back and pointed at me with her mouth opening wide in laughter.

「Stu~pid! You are tricked with just this much, it's absolutely impossible for you to see through a woman who is putting on a mask.」

「So you are deceiving me huh!」

It was a waste of time for me to feel worried for her, at the same time I was surprised because to me it looked like she was really feeling unwell.

This girl, wasn't she too skilled with her acting?

That acting skill rivaled my little sister in my previous life.

Ann who was watching us looked somewhat nostalgic.

『Sorry to interrupt while you two are having fun, but in the end you two can only judge what's going on by yourself. If Olivia isn't possessed, you can negotiate with her to recover the too0ls.』

That would be the most ideal way to solve this matter.

But, Marie made a conflicted expression and said that would be difficult to do at the present time.

「Even if she isn't possessed, it still doesn't change the fact that it's difficult to approach Olivia. The saintess's tools are also considered as the temple's treasures, will they really hand something like that to us? Besides, the five capture targets are also keeping a watchful

eye at her surrounding, so Leon will be refused if a boy like him try to approach her won't it?」

Perhaps that sounded exaggerated but, the only male other than those five around Olivia-san was her personal servant Kyle.

Female knights were assigned to guard her. Male couldn't approach her easily.

We would need to take care of a lot of procedures to have a meeting with her while the guards were constantly keeping a watch on her.

That strict security made the scouting robots that we borrowed from Luxion to only be able to gather information from afar.

Even though the robots would be able to approach closer more easily if only it was Luxion who controlled them.

「She is the crown prince's fiancée after all. Not, that's still just a plan though. Still, both Marie and I won't be able to approach her easily.」

Even if we declared our wish to have a meeting with her, we would only be regarded as poor nobles who wished to curry favor with the saintess.

It would also be bad to try asking her「Could it be, you are Ann-chan?」at a place where the guards were present.

Also, the possibility that our request would be granted was low.

The only possibility for us at the current time was──.

「──Guess we can only approach her at the party.」

A party would be held at the end of the term, but the party this time would be one that could be attended by students of all years.

Celebration for the graduation.

Celebration for the activity of the voluntary army in the war.

Celebration for the victory.

Anyway, everyone was going with the flow to make the party's scale as large as possible to celebrate all those.

But, it still wouldn't be easy to approach Olivia-san even in such party.

The other students would also want to approach his highness Julius and Olivia-san who became a saintess.

All of them would hold back and hinder each other. There would be a lot of problems.

In such situation, his highness Julius and the others would be wary to the male who approached Olivia-san.

「The difficulty is super high even just for approaching her.」

Marie nodded in agreement at my words.

「Yeah. But, we will be able to get closer if the other side gets interested with Leon.」

I was a bit famous from defeating the black knight, so such thing was also possible.

But, it would be dangerous if I got too close and got found out as Lea's descendant.

「I'd be finished if the other side get too interested though.」

I looked at Ann. She was looking at my face with narrowed eyes.

『But it will also be the proof that she is being possessed if she show a strong reaction at Leon.』

「So she will be innocent if she doesn't show any reaction or her reaction is the same like before even if I get near her.」

Would we somehow manage to get the answer if I got closer until a distance where I could check her reaction?

Even if I was a slightly famous person, I wouldn't be able to easily approach Olivia-san who was a very important person in the kingdom right now.

Marie seemed to get some kind of idea.

「Ann! You realized that we are Lea and your descendant after seeing us right? Won't she notice that too using her mysterious sensor if we get near her? We can watch for her reaction from that.」

Ann rejected Marie's idea.

『She would prioritize using her five normal senses because she has flesh body now. I don't think that she will notice you two just from getting closer. In the first place, there will be high possibility that you will get assassinated if she notice you two.』

「S-spare me from that. Wait, if that's the case then it'll be better to not get close to her at all!」

But if Olivia-san was really possessed, Saintess Ann would destroy the kingdom.

In the end our only choice was to approach her and check her reaction.

And then Ann asked both of us.

『More importantly, if that girl called Olivia is really being possessed by my resentment──have you thought of how to deal with it?』

──Rather I wanted you to tell us if there was a way to solve something like that.

「I want to rely on you about that though?」

『It would be easier if that round thing is helping with that though.』

We wouldn't have this much trouble if Luxion was here.

I really thought so.

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And then several days after that.

I was walking in a corridor of the academy with Marie. A boy approached us there.

The one walking with his long green hair slightly swaying behind him was Jilk who had on a sharp gaze.

Marie stepped back to diagonally behind me. She showed a weary face just for a moment.

「It looks like he has a business with you.」

「Looks like it.」

Jilk's gaze was fixed on me.

He stopped when he got near and smiled mockingly after looking at my face.

It looked like I was hated.

「Bartfalt-kun, are you planning to join the party with that kind of face?」

「Are you saying that ugly person cannot come to the party? That's discriminatory.」

Was he planning to say that only handsome people could join the party?

Marie pinched on my sleeve and pulled from diagonally behind me where Jilk couldn't see her.

She talked to me with a small voice.

「He must mean the wound.」

It seemed that she got timid in the presence of a handsome guy.

I made a forced cough and replied while scratching my head.

「Do you want to say that war wound isn't fitting for the party? There are a lot of other seriously wounded people right? Besides, I'm going to hide it so there shouldn't be any problem.」

There were even a lot of boys who lost their arm or leg.

There were also boys who lost their limbs in war and had to live on wheelchair from here on.

Those who could return to the academy were still lucky.

After all there were also boys who couldn't even more from their bed in hospital.

Jilk shook his head.

「I believe that is a wound of honor, but there are also a lot of female students who dislike seeing something like that. Please participate after making your appearance presentable. I recommend wearing a mask.」

「Mask?」

「Yes, with that you won't need to display your ugly face right? And it will be more elegant than wearing bandage. I won't mind you participating in the party if you wear a mask. How about using this? It's my recommendation.」

He had purposefully prepared a mask for me? I received the mask and tore off the wrapping. Inside was a mask that I had seen from somewhere before.

——Wasn't this the mask of the masked knight who sometimes would come to help in the game?

Why did Jilk have something like this?

Such question whirled inside my head while Jilk was chuckling.

It looked like he was smiling, but that was a laugh that sounded like he was making fun of me.

「Surely that mask is suitable for you. Well then, I'm looking forward to the day of the party.」

Jilk said that and left.

I spat my words at that back.

「Sorry that I'm ugly.」

Marie was exasperated seeing my attitude, even so she was worried about the scar on my face.

「He really said something horrible. More importantly, I wonder why did he prepare something like a mask? Looking closer, it's really an ugly mask.」

「I agree.」

The mask of the masked knight——looking carefully at it, it made me thought that this thing was a bit ugly.

Marie considered the reason of why Jilk carried this mask.

「He intentionally prepared this mask, could it be that there are some girls who complained? 」

「We had antagonized them since before after all, so perhaps it can't be helped? But for me to not be allowed to enter the party if not with this mask——well, there is no problem I guess.」

I wanted to meet Olivia-san, so I put on the mask.

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After finishing his business with Leon, Jilk returned to the exclusive house that was prepared for Olivia in the academy.

It couldn't be called a mansion, but it was a special space that was filled with expensive furniture.

At the surrounding, female knights that were few in number in Hohlfahrt Kingdom were stationed.

The female knights existed in order to protect the royal family. They were few in number which made them very precious.

This was also the proof of how much Hohlfahrt Kingdom treasured Olivia.

When Jilk returned there, he found Greg sitting on a sofa.

「How was it?」

「I have warned him properly.」

「I see. Even so, I never expected that Olivia would get interested at Bartfalt.」

Before the party, Olivia investigated the academy students who caught her interest.

She planned to create connection with them using this party as a chance, but Leon's name was listed among them.

Jilk and others wouldn't panic if that was all.

Although it wasn't done in one-on-one fight, it was still Leon of Bartfalt House who defeated that black knight.

It wasn't just Olivia who got interested. Julius was also the same.

But, the talk became tangled due to the strong interest that Olivia displayed.

Jilk let out a small sigh.

「I don't want to imagine Olivia-san getting interested to other man than us.」

It was a happening of several days ago.

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「Leon──Bartfalt?」

Olivia who was looking at the name register in her room stopped her hand and traced one name with her finger several times.

It seemed that she was curious with the surname Bartfalt.

Julius who was also doing the party preparation together with Olivia noticed her strange condition.

「That's the third son of Bartfalt House who defeated the black knight. He is a boy who also led a volunteer army and fought like me. I'm thinking to set aside a time to talk with him in the party but──is there something about him that bother you?」

Olivia shook her head.

「It's nothing. Even so, it's amazing that he defeated that famous black knight. Now I'm also interested. Say, Julius.」

「W-what?」

For some reason Julius couldn't tolerate that Olivia was showing interest to other man than them.

It looked like Olivia was interested to Leon personally rather than his achievement of defeating the black knight. A feeling of jealousy was budding in him.

「I want to talk with him no matter what. Prioritize him at the party okay? It will be better if the time can be as long as possible too.」

「Priority? No, he is just a baron you know? His elder brother is a count, but his backer is Roseblade House. They aren't hostile toward me, but they also aren't an ally. Certainly I wish to get along with him, but he is also not someone that we should spend too much time with.」

As someone who defeated the black knight, Leon should be a fighting strength that Julius had to secure with utmost priority.

That was his intention, but his personal feeling got in the way of that due to the interest that Olivia showed.

He was acting emotionally to not allow Leon to approach Olivia.

「Oh? It was Julius who said that faction doesn't matter right? It's important for you to get close with the knight who defeated the black knight you know?」

Olivia said that before dropping a gaze that was filled with affection at the register.

She was tracing the Bartfalt surname many times with her finger.

「Y-you're right. ──Thinking of the future, he is a man who we should have as ally. I-I'll talk to Jilk about it later. I'll especially make a time for him at the day of the party.」

「Please do.」

Olivia smiled at Julius, but Julius couldn't help but feel like that expression seemed faked compared to before.

(──Olivia, why are you making that kind of face? Are you really that curious of Bartfalt?)

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──Jilk recalled the time when Julius consulted him about that matter in panic.

「How troublesome Olivia-san is. But, her capriciousness is also really charming.」

To fall in love is to lose. Perhaps it was just like that saying, she was thinking of everything that Olivia did in positive light.

Greg was also the same. He didn't show any sign of criticizing Olivia's capriciousness.

「I'll just make her turn toward me again soon after this.」

The two of them were acting composed like that, but they were also showing uneasiness somewhere in their act.

Because of that, they made Leon wore mask at the day of the party.

They also planned to make up various excuses at the party to get in his way of meeting Olivia.

Even so Greg was still showing uneasiness.

「──Rather than that, will Olivia really lose interest just by making that guy wear a mask?」

Jilk toyed with his hair tip using his fingers while answering.

「I handed him an ugly mask, so surely Olivia-san too will lose interest after seeing him. I also spread a rumor that he has a terrible wound that is unpleasant to look at.」

「At this point? There are already a lot of guys who know just what kind of wound Bartfalt has right?」

「We can just say that his wound has worsened. Everyone will also think so when they see him hiding his face in the party. No, it doesn't matter what others think as long as Olivia-san think so.」

「What the crowds are thinking doesn't matter huh.」

Like this, Leon ended up wearing a mask.

◇

At the day of the party.

Girls who dressed up themselves were standing out at the party venue.

They all were wearing gaudy dresses that attracted attention regardless whether they were graduating students or junior students.

But——it was really sad. The number of the boys was few.

We the poor nobles were gathering around a table that was prepared at the corner of the party venue while watching that sight together.

Marie was looking after her girl friends at some distance away from us.

「Marie-chan, I want to sit down already.」

The one who looked like she wanted to cry while saying that was the petite girl who was usually holding a book in her arms.

「This is a buffet party, so endure it! If you really need to sit down, there is a chair near the wall so——wait, don't head there right away! The party has just started!」

At other place, the girl who liked to draw sat down and took out a sketch book.

Marie confiscated the sketch book.

「Don't draw in the party!」

「Give it back! I promise I'll also eat!」

「Are you planning to draw while eating!? I absolutely won't allow that!」

「At least just the sketch!」

「I said no!」

When I looked at another direction, I could see a girl sneaking to under the table with a pillow in her arms.

She had also prepared a plate that was piled up with food. It seemed she was planning to spend her time under the table during the party.

But Marie stopped her.

She confiscated the pillow. The girl reached out with her hands.

「Where did you bring this pillow from!」

「G-give it back. You told me that I only need to come to the party.」

「Just who gave you permission to slip under the table!?」

I smiled wryly seeing Marie and others being lively. Then Daniel talked to me.

「We are still the same as usual huh.」

I nodded at Daniel's opinion before turning my gaze to the gaudy girl.

「Nothing wrong with that. Or are you saying that you want to join over there?」

「Spare me from that. Even so, the atmosphere this year is different.」

「Certainly.」

The reason I agreed with that was simple.

The number of boy was too few that only a few girls got called out during the party.

Among them there were also girls who were competing to see how many boys would call out to them, so they were irritated by the situation.

「Won't anyone call out to them?」

「The number of participant is so few. Are there a lot of people who don't come to the party?」

「Stupid. Most of the boys who doesn't come has died in battle or cannot get out of hospital from serious wounds.」

Boys going around calling out to the dressed up girls──such sight was few that the scenery looked different than usual.

Daniel and Raymond had gotten engaged with the girls who Marie introduced to them, so they had no more need to call out to the girls.

There was no need for the two of them to be panicking. They could just watch the party venue without doing anything.

But, the main stars of the party this time was his highness Julius and Olivia-san.

A lot of people gathered around the two of them. A line was formed just to give a greeting to them.

Even now a female student was currently exchanging a greeting with his highness Julius.

「Your highness, please tell me about your achievements with the volunteer army!」

The girl tried to keep talking with his highness Julius after the greeting, but his highness only smiled.

Jilk who was at his side smartly led away the female student.

「My apologies. The next person is still waiting, so please ask for his highness's heroic tale at the next chance.」

「Eh, no way!」

Like that his highness exchanged greeting with the next person in line.

It was tiring just watching such sight. I let my true feeling slipped out.

「They have it hard even though they are at a party. I'm glad I'm someone from this side.」

Daniel seemed to agree too. He was smiling.

「Yeah.」

I cut off the conversation and observed Olivia-san.

She looked like she had put much effort into her dress and makeup. She was continuously smiling and greeting the other students.

She really looked like a noble like that.

——Now then, which one was her? Was she the real one, or was she Ann who was swearing revenge to this country?

While I was pondering the answer, Raymond approached me.

「Leon, it'll be better if you stay with Marie-san.」

「Why?」

When I looked toward Marie, she seemed busy looking after her close friends.

「Look over there.」

Raymond guided my gaze toward some girls who were looking toward me.

I could hear their conversation.

「What's that mask?」

「It seems that his face wound has worsened.」

「But, he is still better from among that group isn't he?」

They were turning appraising gazes toward me. I then noticed that such gaze also came from several other places.

「——What kind of joke is this?」

Raymond let out a sigh.

「Your mask looks more like a joke though. But, about those girls' conversation, in short it's because Leon is the most successful person here due to your victory over the black knight. The number of boy has also decreased, so they are considering you as a marriage partner.」

「I'm not the one who prepared this mask. It was Jilk who gave it to me.」

The mask of the masked knight seemed to be unpopular based on the reaction of my surrounding.

It wasn't a mask that I chose myself, but it was irritating that it made my fashion senses to be in doubt.

「What you should pay attention to from our talk is how they are considering you as marriage partner you know?」

「I'm engaged with Marie so I can't marry them.」

「Those girls don't give a damn about something like that. After all Marie-san's house has been crushed. They'll just make up some excuse to get closer to you.」

「There are many other men——no, I see.」

I noticed just as I was about to say it. The fact that too many male in our generation had died.

It wasn't just the students.

Besides, the war was still continuing.

The number of man would keep decreasing from here.

It seemed the girls were sensing that and planned to compromise with the boys who were here.

Next year too there would be many boys who enrolled, but for the third year students this would be their last chance. Not to mention that next year there would also be many girls who enrolled.

There would be no changing the fact that the competition rate was high.

「My popularity period has come because of such unpleasant reason.」

「It's really troubling. Even I have received invitation from them several times.」

「Eh? I never heard about that.」

「That's because I never told you.」

It seemed that Daniel and Raymond and others got called out by girls while Marie and I weren't in the academy.

I was really jealous at them, but hearing their story made me bewildered.

「──They told us that they won't mind getting invited by us to a tea party. Then when I told them that I couldn't do that because I already have a fiancée, they said『How dare you refuse my invitation!』」

「O-ou」

Should I make a retort here that something like that wasn't an invitation at all?

◇

Olivia was talking with a smile toward the students who came to greet her.

Right now she was talking with a heir of a viscount house.

「It's a great honor to be able to be at the saintess's presence like this. This life of mine has been saved many times during my time with the volunteer army. My many thanks. I hope this life can be useful for the sake of your highness and saintess-sama!」

The man was talking fluently. Olivia responded to him with a smile.

「I hope that you will keep supporting his highness Julius from here on too.」

(A man who only ran around in the battlefield is acting like a hero in this place. It's a useless man like you who should be at Julius's side. ──Now then, I want to meet with Bartfalt already.)

She couldn't even take off her gaze from her talking partner and only caught sight of Leon during the interval.

He was a male student wearing a mask, so he stood out, but she was unable to grasp his atmosphere because of the distance.

(That mask, is it from that time? But, I don't want to believe that guy is Bartfalt. In the first place, the masked knight shouldn't be a student.)

Olivia talked to Julius.

「Julius, we should call Bartfalt-san soon──」

「I'm sorry Olivia. We should talk with the next person first. I have prepared a lot of time to talk with him later.」

Julius had exchanged a greeting with the next person, so Olivia could only follow after him.

(The planning is bad. No, is it intentional?)

Olivia noticed that Julius and others had a strange atmosphere, but then she heard Brad's voice.

It seemed that he was arguing with someone who was cutting into the line.

「Wait a second!」

The girl shook free from Brad. Chris clicked his tongue seeing that.

「Just what is he doing.」

He was partly angry at Brad who allowed the girl to cut in, but it seemed he was also irritated at the one who was cutting into the line.

Olivia approached Julius and showed a slightly scared look.

But, she couldn't stop laughing inside her heart.

(It's good that you come──Angelica.)

◇

「Move aside!」

Angelica appeared wearing a red dress. She pushed aside the other students and stood in front of Olivia and Julius.

Olivia leaped to Julius's chest and showed a scared expression. Seeing that caused blood to rush into Angelica's head.

「What saintess. You are just a country destroying witch!」

Angelica's voice echoed clearly inside the party venue.

Those weren't words that should be said toward the saintess who was considered as an important existence in Hohlfahrt Kingdom.

The surrounding became noisy hearing that, but Angelica ignored that and declared.

「Just what are you thinking, joining hand with Marquis Frampton like that?」

Angelica reached out toward Olivia, but Julius brushed away that hand.

「Angelica, you dare to call Olivia a witch? Take back those words immediately! Don't think that you can be forgiven for that even if you are a duke's daughter.」

Tears spilled out from Angelica's eyes seeing the enraged Julius.

It wasn't just Julius who didn't hide his anger.

Jilk and others were also standing in front of Angelica in order to protect Olivia.

「Your highness, there is no need for her to take back her words. However, we should hold Angelica-san responsible for it.」

Chris also agreed with that opinion.

「That's good. We won't be able to accept it even if she take back her words at this point.」

Brad who was pushed aside by Angelica also looked unforgiving.

He tidied up his messed up attire while sending a strict gaze toward Angelica.

「Even if you are from a duke house, don't you know that there are still things that cannot be done? Your action is lacking in elegance.」

Last Greg was showing an atmosphere as though he was going to hit Angelica any time soon.

「If you are a man, I'd already punch you flying. ——Disappear. Don't show your face in front of Olivia anymore.」

Olivia was protected by the five, but she then intentionally sported a smirk on her face so that Angelica could see it.

And then, she immediately changed her expression back to look fearful and acted like a courageous female student facing off against the duke's daughter.

「U-umm. Even if you are the duke's daughter, I think there are still things that you cannot do. Please, don't do anything like this anymore.」

The way she spoke made it sounded like she had been tormented all this time by Angelica.

It made Angelica's blood boiled. She gritted her teeth and calmed herself for the moment.

「So all of you has been completely cajoled already. ——Your highness, please open your eyes. That woman isn't a weak woman like what your highness think. She is a dangerous

existence that will destroy this country. Please think carefully. Since your highness met that woman, there are many things that your highness has lost. No, there has been nothing but lost for Hohlfahrt Kingdom. The faction that should be your highness's supporter has vanished, and many students who went to the battlefield as volunteer soldiers have been lost. Please look at this place. Don't you think anything about it!?」

Even Angelica's desperate pleading didn't reach Julius.

「My faction? You mean Redgrave House's faction right? Besides, nothing has been lost. My comrades who died are still here even now. They will keep fighting together with me even from now on, here inside my heart!」

Julius's fist hit his chest and said that his comrades who died in battle were together with him.

The venue heated up hearing those words.

「His highness banzai!」

「That's right. Their souls are together with us even now!」

「Angelica doesn't have any noble pride. To think that she is scared to shed her blood like that.」

Angelica glared at the noisy female students.

The girls who got glared immediately averted their gaze in fear.

(Pride? I'm here giving this advice because I have pride. I'm here alone because I want his highness to open his eyes.)

Angelica looked into Julius's eyes.

Those eyes weren't clear and transparent like before.

「Your highness——I'm not saying to not fight in order to protect the country. But, what's the point for the students to pointless throw away their life like that?」

Originally students should participate in war.

But, Angelica's words incurred the wrath of Julius.

「Pointless? Pointless you say!? Are you making my comrades into a mockery!?」

「No. I'm saying that it still wasn't their time to fight──」

There was someone who cut in between the arguing duo.

──It was Olivia.

Olivia approached Angelica and grabbed her right hand with both her hands.

「Angelica-san.」

「W-what are you doing! L-let go!?」

Angelica was bewildered by the action of her enemy Olivia. She was flustered.

She tried to shake her off, but Olivia's grip was strong.

(H-how can she be this strong_

Angelica was surprised by Olivia's strength that was even stronger than Brad just now. The Olivia talked to her with a kind tone.

「Let's stop it already. Won't you please reconcile with me?」

「──Ha?」

Just what was this woman saying to her? Angelica's understanding couldn't catch up with the situation. Olivia continued talking at the same time.

「I think it can't be helped that Angelica-san is angry. But, I love Julius and everyone. I don't think that can be forgiven. But, I think that we can still reconcile!」

Even though her voice wasn't loud at all, it echoed clearly through the party venue.

Ange immediately tried to reject her, but Olivia didn't allow her to interrupt.

After hearing what Olivia said, the surrounding was showing acceptance for some reason.

「The saintess is so kind, she will even forgive such rudeness.」

「A certain duke's daughter should learn from her example.」

「To think that she would be the one who bring up the offer of reconciliation, not just anybody can do such thing.」

Angelica couldn't understand.

(What is this girl saying? After stealing his highness from me, she is telling me that she can't return him, but let's reconcile? Is she seriously thinking that she will be forgiven with that? Besides──why is everyone else agreeing with that?)

Even though what Olivia said was something completely unacceptable, the surrounding was saying things like「The saintess is so kind!」.

She should be the one in the right. ──It should be like that.

But, Angelica realized that the surrounding was growing insane.

Angelica held the white glove that she secretly carried in her left hand.

The surrounding was dumbfounded by Angelica's action. During that time Olivia was the only one who was smiling eerily.

Angelica was the only one who could see that.

Angelica threw the white glove at Olivia.

The white glove hit Olivia, and then the sound of it falling on the floor resounded.

「──Pick it up, witch.」

(She is the only one, I'll definitely drag her down even if it cost me my life. That is, the very least──that I can do for his highness at the end──)

Her action was for Julius's sake, but there was nobody in this place who understood that.

Olivia let go of Angelica's hand and stepped back unsteadily.

「Why? Do you really hate me so much? Even though I──want to get along with Angelica-san.」

Angelica let out her words to herself when she heard that shameless line.

「──This monster」

◇

The party venue became noisy.

We who were quite far away from the scene couldn't see what was going on.

We could only hear the voices of the onlookers and the yelling that sometimes burst out.

「How dare she act like that to the saintess!」

「Cut down that insolent person right away!」

「No, capture her! It will be too kind to just kill her in this place!」

I listened to the jeers that the onlookers threw at Angelica-san while looking at Marie who had come to my side and pulling at my uniform without me noticing.

「Could it be, it's the duel event?」

Marie guessed what was going on from the murderous atmosphere of the venue. She ws showing a slightly fearful look.

「P-perhaps. But, isn't everyone too scary? They are yelling things like kill, capture, or violate. The atmosphere is just strange.」

Array of words that would never be said no matter what if it was in the school of our previous life were being displayed right now.

All the lines were extreme things that weren't suitable for otome game. It made me got a headache.

And then his highness Julius's voice resounded at the end.

「We accept the duel just as you want! But, Angelica──the five of us will be your opponent. You better prepare your representatives before the day of the duel!」

After his highness Julius's enraged voice resounded, the five capture targets surrounded Olivia-san and they left the building together.

I got the feeling that she looked at me during that time.

But, the students who remained in the venue surrounded Angelica-san who was left behind and they continued to shower her with abusive words.

Among them──there were even some who were throwing food.

Daniel became uneasy seeing such sight.

「W-why are they going that far? The other side is a duke's daughter!」

Raymond was shaken and asked me.

「Wha-, w-w-w-what should we do, Leon!?」

I wanted to run away from here, but we also couldn't leave her alone in this place. So I decided to collect her.

「All of us are going to rush into there and save Angelica-san.」

Daniel's gaze darted around.

「Is that alright? That means picking a fight with his highness you know? Won't it look like that we are also opposing him?」

Marie kicked the butt of the hesitating Daniel.

「Don't just dawdle if you are a man, we're going to collect her right now! Follow me men!」

Marie started running, so I hurriedly followed after her.

「Why are you the one running at the front! Come back! No, I'm really begging you here so come back!?」

My comrades who were in the same group, dozens of people also chased after us into the circle of students.

◇

After saving Angelica-san, we sheltered her in a cabin of Partner.

After doing something like that, hiding in the student dormitory would be too dangerous with the current condition within the academy.

Angelica-san had turned almost everyone within the academy into her enemy. She was sitting on a chair with her dirty dress while hanging her head down.

There was no strong-willed personality like before that could be seen from her. She was simply in a daze.

Her eyes also weren't focused on anything at all.

Both Marie and I were battered after saving Angelica-san.

A part of our clothes was torn. There were also stains from thrown foods on them.

The only thought on our mind before this was just to evacuate to Partner. Now we needed to think what we would do after this.

Angelica-san was muttering to herself.

「Your highness, that woman is a monster. Even then why won't you realize that? I'm──if it's for your highness' sake──if it's for this country's sake──」

Angelica-san was mentally cornered. Marie told me to get out of the room seeing that.

「I'll change her clothes for now, so get out of the room. Give some explanation to the others too.」

When we ran away from that place, we also led the comrades from our group to here.

We asked them to rest in Partner's cabins for now.

「I get it.」

I obediently went outside the cabin and walked through the corridor. Then a voice suddenly called out from behind.

『Leon.』

「Hyaih!?」

The one who called me in this empty corridor was Ann.

「D-don't startle me like that! That was scary.」

My heart was racing hard.

『──You are completely similar like Lea in that aspect too.』

「Eh?」

『Even though he didn't fear any monster, he wasn't good at all with ghost or scary story.』

「Y-you're wrong! I'm not scared with something like that at all!」

『Even the way you deny it is similar. It even makes me question whether you're actually his reincarnation.』

The black shadow shook in amusement, but for me something like that was impossible so I denied it.

「Too bad. I have memory of my past life, but it's not Lea's at all.」

『That's too bad. ——I called out to you because I have something to talk about.』

「Talk?」

『That girl called Angelica, she is really similar with me.』

「That's unexpected.」

I completely thought that the one she was similar with was Olivia-san.

For some reason Olivia-san fit my image of saintess more than Angelica-san! That was what I felt.

Well, that was just my own assumption though.

『Listen to what I'm saying properly.』

「No, I'm listening already. You are saying that Angelica-san is similar to you right?」

『That's right. And going from there, it's possible that she also might do something that cannot be undone just like me.』

「No, there's no way that will happen. It won't right?」

『That girl is really similar with the past me. Her temperament is also close to me. It will be dangerous to leave her alone.』

Ann went as far as becoming a living grudge to destroy a country. Someone like her called someone as really similar with her.

Would Angelica-san do something that was at the same level like Ann?

I thought that she would just simply exit the stage like in that otome game though?

Ann asked me.

『And, what are you going to do after this? That girl challenged Olivia to a duel right? All the men who follow her around are oddly the descendant of the trashes who betrayed Lea. I have high hope for you.』

「What hope?」

『If it's Lea, he will surely crush those guys.』

「I'm not that extreme. Besides, me participating in that duel is──no, wait a second.」

Knowing that my ancestor was far more hot-blooded than I imagined made me reconfirmed that I was definitely a different person than him. It was then.

I got an idea to solve this matter in a more intellectual and smarter way.

I'd show Ann that I was different from my hot-blooded ancestor.

「I'll make use of this duel smartly and obtain the trust of his highness Julius and others. At the same time I'll also be able to have a meeting with Olivia-san after that.」

『──What are you planning to do?』

Ann's eyes that were shining inside the shadow narrowed and she asked my strategy but──for some reason, it felt like she was doubting me.

「I'll nominate myself as Angelica-san's representative in the duel.」

『That's not all right?』

「Naturally. I don't want to pick a fight with the future king and queen. But, my popularity from defeating the black knight should be tempting for that side too, don't you think so? If they defeat me who defeated the black knight, people will go, his highness Julius is so amazing!」

I told her that I intended to nominate myself as the duel representative, but I planned to lose right from the start.

Ann looked really dissatisfied.

『Arroganz is it? With your armor, it should be easy to defeat those five.』

「What's the point winning in a kiddie duel like that? What I consider a victory is gaining a result that satisfy me in the end.」

I declared with my head held high that I wasn't fixated with victory that was right before my eyes. And Ann's reaction was──.

『You are really similar with Lea.』

──She said something like that.

No way. Was my ancestor also a type of person who wasn't fixated with small victory?

◇

After deciding the course of action, one should act on it immediately.

I returned to the academy alone and visited his highness Julius.

When I arrived at the house that was prepared inside the academy, I got surrounded by his highness Julius and the others. They were giving off a cold atmosphere.

I was in the drawing room talking to the five who were carrying weapon with a dangerous atmosphere.

Then his highness Julius got interested with my suggestion.

「So you are going to participate in the duel as Angelica's representative and then lose against me?」

「Yes.」

Although the black knight was defeated in a joint effort, defeating me who was involved in that was an attractive proposal for his highness Julius.

But Jilk was glaring at me.

「Please tell us what is your intention in allying yourself with Angelica-san. Why are you nominating yourself for that kind of disadvantageous position?」

From their perspective, they couldn't believe that I would dirty my military fame by myself or allying myself with Angelica-san.

I also thought so.

I was secretly maneuvering like this because I had the knowledge from the game.

They wouldn't believe me even if I said that to them, so I made up an excuse.

「It's because having this military fame that is unbefitting for me has been bringing me a lot of trouble. I'm even called an ugly man and made to wear a mask because the girls dislike me. I'll be happier if I don't stand out.」

When I said that to Jilk, he seemed to feel my sarcasm and averted his gaze.

I continued with a small sigh.

「Also, I don't want to make this matter to be too complicated. That's my honest feeling. We are still in the middle of war, it will be troublesome to get into a quarrel with Redgrave House in such time won't it?」

I wasn't good with political matter, but they should be troubled to get into an unnecessary quarrel like this in the middle of war.

But, Brad scoffed at my words.

「It looks like you're poorly informed about the politic aren't you? For Redgrave House, Angelica is a just a large weak point right now. They shouldn't even have any strength to make any opposition. Rather we can use this matter to greatly reduce their strength for after the war, we're welcoming this development instead.」

It seemed I was mistaken.

But, I was convinced that these five would accept my offer.

When I turned my gaze to Greg and Chris, they were looking at me even though they understood what Brad was talking about.

No, rather than me, they were looking at the achievement that they would get from defeating me, I guess?

From where they were standing, this was a chance to obtain a great achievement of defeating strong knight.

It seemed that his highness Julius also felt the same. His lips were loosening.

「So you want to tell us to forgive Redgrave House?」

「This is an internal matter of the academy, so it will be great if it's also resolved within the academy. I'm not asking for anything further than that, and I'm also not in the faction of the duke. I'm just a countryside noble.」

From the perspective of countryside noble, the country getting into needless conflict was just troublesome.

「Someone in my position is unrelated with the political strife in the palace. Please feel free to do whatever you want if it doesn't involve us.」

The five were suspicious at my action, but they bit at the bait I offered.

「──Very well. The duel format will be five versus one. If you keep winning and get defeated by me at the end, I'll keep this matter from spreading to outside.」

「Your highness, you are going to accept that condition!?」

Jilk hurriedly tried to stop his highness Julius when he accepted my offer.

But──his highness had become blinded by love even more than I imagined.

「If I can win against Bartfalt, Olivia will be even more in love with me right? Compared to that, the matter with Angelica is just something trivial.」

Jilk smiled a little when he heard that.

「──He might get defeated first before your highness can get a turn you know?」

「Jilk?」

Jilk would defeat me before his highness Julius's turn came and obtained the military fame for himself──it looked like he wanted to show his own worth to Olivia-san.

The other men were also the same.

「You two won't even get a turn! I'll be the one who defeat Bartfalt!」

Greg said that while punching his palm, then Chris looked at him with a cool gaze.

「You won't have any turn. Because I'm the one who is going to take down Bartfalt.」

Brad also joined this talk after a slight delay.

「E-even I won't lose! Then, let's decide who will be the first one to fight Bartfalt. However, his highness is the general so his turn will be last.」

His highness Julius stood up in panic hearing that.

「That's unfair you guys!」

The five of them forgot my existence and started to get heated up by themselves, so I gave my last condition.

「Umm~, there is also something that I wish to ask if the duel is concluded safely.」

「What?」

His highness Julius was looking at me with an annoyed look, but this was the only thing that I couldn't concede.

「When everything is over, please allow me to meet with the saintess.」

「A meeting with Olivia? Why is that?」

「It's just so that I can bring a story home that I have talked with the saintess herself directly. It's something that I'll be able to brag about for my whole life won't it?」

When I said that I had no other intention, the five looked at each other ──and they finally decided their answer after a while.

「Very well. But, don't you dare try anything strange with Olivia.」

「But of course.」

I shrugged and left that place.

──Seeing those five acting like that after seeing Angelica-san's depressed figure left a weight in my mind.

I got out of the room, then I left the house, before I muttered when I was alone.

「Now then, guess I'll work hard holding back.」

◇

At the day of the duel.

Marie was watching the arena from the audience seat.

「That stupid Leon. He just decided everything by himself without talking it with me.」

When Marie learned about it, the duel with Julius and the other four had already been decided.

And then, Marie was told about how this duel was just a fixed match.

Beside Marie, there was Angelica who got dark circles under her eyes.

She was looking down at the arena and watched Leon with bloodshot eyes.

「I'll definitely win if it's with Bartfalt who has defeated the black knight. That's right, everything will return to normal if I win. I'll be able to separate his highness from that monster.」

Angelica had a ghastly aura around her. Marie was somewhat scared by that.

(It will be bad if I tell her that Leon is planning to lose right from the start isn't it? We have also prepared countermeasure beforehand, but will it make it in time?)

Leon only told Angelica that he would become her representative for the duel.

A purple armor entered the arena and the audiences were reeled up.

「That's Brad-sama's armor!」

「How wonderful!」

「Compared to that, Bartfalt's armor is as ugly as his mask.」

Brad's armor had slender figure and a distinctive pointy head.

In contrast, Arroganz was a completely different type of armor in the first place. It was too large and looked clumsy.

But, Marie had sometimes looked after Arroganz too, so she was enraged hearing what the other girls said.

「Who was it who talked trash about my cute Arroganz! Come out here to get punched!」

Marie stood up, but her girl friends who were sitting around her held her down.

「Marie-chan, calm down!」

Angelica didn't even pay attention to that ruckus around her.

The way she looked at Arroganz that Leon was riding was eerie.

「Olivia──just you wait, I'll definitely unmask your true nature.」

◇

At the day of the duel.

For some reason I──was made to participate wearing mask.

I displayed my masked self before I boarded Arroganz before the duel began.

『Angelica challenged the saintess Olivia-sama to a duel! The one who nominated himself to be her representative for that is the “masked knight” who defeated the principality’s black knight, Leon Fou Bartfalttttttttttt!!』

The announcer spoke bombastically to heat up the venue. The audiences responded to that and booed at me.

I was in the villain role in this place for allying myself with Angelica-san.

「Forget about that, what’s the deal with calling me masked knight? Why am I the masked knight huh.」

Nobody listened to my grumbling, but Arroganz who was standing at my side answered.

『Master is the masked knight. Arroganz has memorized it.』

「You don’t need to memorize it. I’m not the masked knight.」

Come to think of it, the identity of the masked knight in that otome game stayed mysterious until the end.

I wonder where was the real thing?

Then, the introduction for Brad who was standing dozens of meter ahead of me began.

『At the other side is our representative, Brad Fou Field! He is the eldest son of Margrave Field and the number one magician in the academy! He is also one of the saintess’s guardian!』

Brad’s introduction was passionate, the announcer even tacked “our” when mentioning him.

It seemed that even the announcer was my enemy.

Brad waved his hand to respond to the cheers from the audiences.

「Thank you. Everyone, watch my fight and sear it into your memory.」

Then Brad turned his gaze at me and he pointed the red rose that he was holding.

「Not only your mask, but even your nickname has no flair. It’s my victory in both appearance and flair.」

「It was you guys who handed me this mask and prepared that nickname you know? That just sounds sad, so don't say something like that from your own end.」

「Y-you're wrong! It wasn't me who prepared them. It was Jilk!」

『Then, both sides please enter your armor! The holy duel shall begin after this!』

The announcer stopped our talk and we got into our armor.

After I entered Arroganz's cockpit, it was like my body got sucked into the seat and fixed in place.

When I grasped the control stick, Arroganz talked to me.

『Master, this is a fixed game. Arroganz, will lose skillfully.』

It seemed that Arroganz also intended to lose intentionally, but it would be a bit problematic to lose against someone like Brad.

「We're winning this one. Don't go too far okay?」

『Arroganz, will work hard holding back.』

「Now then, I wonder how far I should keep winning.」

Even if I was going to lose, the way it was done had to be correct.

Losing easily would be problematic in its own way.

It would still be better if it just made me got called weak, but others would suspect that this was a fixed game if I lost too blatantly.

No, there was no denying that this was a fixed game though.

I had to "perform a good match" so that others wouldn't suspect anything.

After both sides finished preparing, a weapon shot out from Arroganz's backpack.

The weapon that was shot above me fell down and I grabbed it with the right hand.

That weapon was a battle axe.

It was a sinister battle axe that looked like a bat with its wings spread wide open. Its appearance was truly like a villain's weapon.

The surrounding sent their cheers to Brad while hurling abuses at me.

『Brad-sama, beat up that guy right away!』

『Just kill that traitorous masked knight!』

There were even guys who said horrible words like kill.

——I'd take a small revenge at them later. For sure!

『Then begin!』

When the announcer proclaimed the beginning of the duel, Brad took a spear on the back of his armor——a cone shaped lance that was specialized for thrusting and he rushed toward me.

I backed down while deflecting his thrust with my axe.

『There is still moreeeee!』

Brad got really into it and repeated his thrust. I dodged them or deflected them.

「He can move better than I thought.」

Brad was weak in close quarter combat in that otome game. He had really given me a hard time.

After all that was it for him if an enemy got close.

It was nostalgic how I formed various tactics in order to allow him to fight from long range.

I moved the control stick and stepped on the pedal to make Arroganz advanced forward.

I made a big swing with the axe and deflected the spear that Brad was holding.

Brad backed down and pointed his finger at me.

『Not bad. But, playing time is over!』

When he said that, the spears attached on the back of his armor floated in the air and pointed their tip at Arroganz.

The spears were floating in the air by themselves, and then they flew like missile.

Arroganz flew close to the ground, but the spears followed behind him.

Arroganz seemed surprised.

『Homing function. Arroganz, shocked.』

「Amazing huh. Now then, let's show them a struggle.」

I had cut off the mike so that our conversation wouldn't be leaked out, so I could say whatever I like.

I dodged one of the homing spear, then I swung my axe to another one to slap it to the ground and destroy it.

Then the third one grazed Arroganz's shoulder, while the spear that should have been dodged changed direction and hit the backpack on Arroganz's shoulder.

Once that happened, the spears kept flying around Arroganz and repeated their attacks many times.

Brad seemed convinced that he had won. He began to talk in delight.

『Dance to amuse me even more. You will just keep getting whittled down if you can't dodge the spears that I controlled with magic.』

Arroganz's armor became covered with scratches. Even so I moved my index finger with composure.

Tap tap, I tapped the control stick several times.

「Has the number of attack surpassed a hundred? It should be fine already isn't it?」

『One hundred and twenty!』

Arroganz had kept track of the attacks accurately. He corrected my words as though in complaint.

「My bad. Well, things goes just as planned.」

I stepped on the pedal and charged at Brad's armor. Then Arroganz swung down the axe.

By forcefully closing the distance with such overbearing movement, Brad's armor fell on its butt.

The blade that was swung toward the fallen Brad stopped just a few centimeters before it hit.

I turned on the mike.

「A splendid battle. I would be in danger if things continued like that.」

Brad muttered in frustration, but──.

『N-not yet. It's still not over yet!』

『No, the fight's over. Get back already Brad.』

『Your highness!?』

──His highness Julius stopped him. Brad accepted his defeat.

◇

「Yosshaaaaaa!! You see that, that's Arroganz's power! No. I mean, that's Leon's power.」

Marie was the one who acted the happiest when Arroganz won.

She thrust her fist high toward the sky.

As for the atmosphere at the audience seats, although the audiences were sending chilly gaze toward Marie, they were praising the duel just now.

「Even though Brad-sama would win with just a bit more」

「Brad-sama is weak in close quarter combat isn't he?」

「But, the next fight will be the last won't it? Bartfalt's armor is already battered like that.」

Marie folded her arms hearing that and sat back down roughly.

(Realize that they are holding back down there. Well, it'll be bad if they notice though.)

◇

Julius felt slightly relieved looking down at the battered Arroganz from his seat.

(I'll be troubled if you lose here.)

From a glance, it looked like Brad would win seeing that his armor was still not even scratched.

But, from Julius's perspective, he would be troubled if the match was already decided at this early.

The next one fighting Greg entered his armor in high spirits.

「I'll finish him in my turn! Olivia, watch my fight carefully from there.」

Greg gave a thumbs up at Olivia. Olivia saw him off while joining her hands together as though she was praying for him.

「I'll pray for your victory Greg.」

「Ou!」

Greg boarded a mass produced type armor. He acted like his victory was assured.

Julius and others made a bitter expression seeing that.

They were competing with each other as rivals to become Olivia's number one.

Julius folded his arms and looked down at Arroganz that was facing Greg on the arena.

「At least keep winning until you reach my turn.」

Julius thought that it didn't matter even if the other four were defeated in order to get Olivia to like him more.

◇

『The hero who has challenged numerous dungeons and fought at the forefront of the volunteer army! His name is Greg Fou Seberg! The herald of our saintesssss!!』

The arena was enveloped in cheers. Greg in his armor pointed his spear at Arroganz.

『Bartfalt, I'm glad you didn't lost against that weakling Brad. After all I'm going to be the one who defeat you!』

I was thinking what kind of victory I should perform against Greg inside the cockpit.

「I'm also not planning to lose at this stage.」

『Just what I'm asking for!』

The announcer proclaimed the start of the duel and Greg charged right at that instant.

He launched a combo using his spear, but his movement was several levels above Brad.

I used my axe like a shield to endure Greg's fierce attack.

「Aa～, I should have prepared a shield. Ah, but I'll look like I'm struggling hard with this won't I?」

I turned off the mike and cracked a joke inside the cockpit, but Arroganz replied to me seriously.

『Should I make a shield in Partner? Creation possible.』

「No need. I won't even need any shield against these guys if we get serious anyway.」

While I was focusing on defense, Greg seemed to get into a good mood in his fighting.

I would attack back once for every ten attacks that Greg made, but each time I would calculate it so that he could dodge my attack.

From the perspective of the surrounding, it must look like Greg was cornering me.

「Yosh, Arroganz. Purge the fake part.」

『Purge!』

It was a show so that the shoulder part was blown away when Greg's spear hit there.

The part that had been prepared beforehand to make it looked like Arroganz was heavily damaged fell on the ground. Cheers burst out from the audiences.

Greg jumped back for the moment and rotated his spear around while making a pose.

『I'll keep shaving you off just like this!』

I clapped inside the cockpit.

「It's great that you are getting into the mood. Then, it should be enough already.」

Greg started attacking fiercely once more, but I pretended that I was somehow defending against it and continued to fight.

And then, when Greg showed his fatigue——I pretended to land a hit on his armor that looked like a coincidental counter.

The axe's flat side instead of the blade hit Greg's armor and it fell down.

There I held his armor down to give a show of a lame victory.

I turned on the mike and played my act.

「Oh man～, you are really strong. I think I win only because of how tough my armor is. If not for that, it would be you who emerged as the winner. Well, perhaps I would be the one who got defeated if only you are riding a slightly better armor.」

He would win if his armor was better.

After being told that, Greg squeezed out a voice that was brimming with frustration.

『D-dammit!』

Your chance of victory against me would still be hopelessly low even if you prepared a state-of-the-art armor though.

Reflect a bit on yourself who didn't care of what kind of tool you were using.

The match was decided and Greg left. The next one who appeared was Chris in a blue armor.

There were several swords of different type on its back, but the armor's right hand was holding a large sword.

Chris threw a cold sentence at the withdrawing Greg.

『That was unsightly.』

『You bastard!』

The two were about to get into a fight, but Olivia-san calmed them down from the audience seat.

『Both of you stop! Greg, I'm glad you are safe. Chris too, do your best. Also, don't tease Greg like that. Okay?』

The two of them reluctantly stopped after being told that. Chris came to in front of me.

The announcer started Chris's introduction. As expected, it was also filled with passion like before.

『Our next representative is Chris Fia Arclightttttttt!! He is the successor of the sword saint and there is nobody who doesn't know about the strength of this young sword master from

his accomplishments in the volunteer army! This is the entrance of a fierce warrior who has obtained as much war gain as that Greg!!』

Chris pointed the tip of his large sword at me.

『Here I come.』

◇

The audiences were getting heated up.

「Aa~a, I never thought that Greg-sama would lose because of a lucky blow like that.」

「That was really unlucky of him.」

「But, it's also the end for Bartfalt with this. His armor is already in tatter like that.」

Although Greg managed to corner his opponent, he lost due to a fluke.

The audiences still believed one hundred percent on the victory of Julius and others because of that.

Marie was irritated listening to that.

(The prince is going to win at the end anyway. That's how it will end. But you know——Leon and Arroganz are actually far stronger than this okay)

Marie could understand Leon's thinking that it would be fine even if he lost, but she still couldn't accept it.

Their comrades from the same group, Daniel and Raymond were praising Leon, saying that he had done well.

「It's already enough that he manage to keep winning until this far.」

「He has fought hard. If it's like this then he can still save face even if he lose.」

Leon would be able to make excuse even if he lost against a master swordsman like Chris.

But, a girl stood up hearing those words.

「It's fine even if he lose you say? Don't screw around! This is a duel to decide the country's future! Defeat won't be allowed. Win——he has to win so his highness can be separated from that witch, if not I——I!」

Angelica's atmosphere was abnormal. Daniel and Raymond averted their face seeing that.

Marie hurriedly pulled at Angelica to make her sat down.

「S-sit down. Look, the next match is starting.」

「This is a duel! It's not a match!」

「R-right. I get it already so sit down!」

Marie somehow made the agitated Angelica to sit down again. She felt really tired.

While that was going on, the sword that Chris swung down severed Arroganz's arm.

Earthshaking cheers erupted from the audiences.

◇

『Left arm lost.』

I whistled while sweating coldly inside Arroganz's cockpit.

「As expected from the swordsmaster-sama. Did he get stronger from experiencing war?」

Chris was stronger than I expected.

No, all of them were stronger than I expected.

It seemed their strength had improved from participating in the war as volunteer soldier.

Chris's blue armor took a stance with its large sword and immediately slashed.

『Got you!』

That attack targeted my cockpit. I wanted to question him whether he was planning to kill me.

「I have given you my left arm. So it should be fine for you to quit here.」

Originally I planned to lose that arm at further point than this, so it should be fine to end this here in exchange for that. I made Arroganz stepped forward.

I swung down the battle axe. It severed the two arms of Chris's armor that were holding the large sword.

「You can't hold a weapon with this right? It's over.」

I turned on the mike and told Chris that. Chris showed bewilderment in respond.

『W-what was that attack just now? Don't tell me, were you holding back?』

He almost noticed the fact that I was holding back, so I pretended that it was a coincidence.

「No way. I only stepped forward because I wanted to make my last attack.」

『You're saying that the attack just now was just a coincidence?』

「I too am a man who survived fighting that black knight even if only by chance. Besides, I'm also someone lucky.」

Was my luck good or bad? If I was asked to answer that honestly, I wouldn't know how to answer it.

But, I believed that my luck wasn't bad.

『To think that I'll have to concede this achievement to Jilk or his highness』

Chris withdrew with a bitter voice. I saw off his back while turning off the mike.

「You guys are strong. But, that black knight old man was even stronger.」

Arroganz looked damaged all over, but the duel wasn't over.

『It's amazing that you managed to win until this far. You are strong. You are worthy of respect.』

The one who appeared from the sky while showing off with such line was Jilk in a green armor.

When he landed, he made a pose that excited the audiences.

「This guy's next huh.」

I turned on the mike and responded to Jilk's address to me.

「My armor is already battered like this though.」

『It seems so. But, I still won't hold back.』

He said that with much enjoyment in his voice, for me something like this wasn't enjoyable at all.

While I was thinking that, Jilk talked to me with a volume that couldn't be heard by the audience.

『Bartfalt-kun, how about we make a deal?』

「A deal?」

『Look at it from my point of view. Simply winning easily here won't become something that can appeal to Olivia-san. You too want to have a good fight where both of us are showing everything we have aren't you?』

That was my plan from the start, but it seemed this guy wanted to be the one who defeated me.

「I'm already planning to lose right from the start though?」

『No, please lose against me. There is no need to bother his highness for this.』

「That's──」

『I'm asking for a favor here. After all unlike the others, I am somewhat falling behind in my relationship with Olivia-san.』

「Falling behind?」

Jilk talked about what he meant by that.

But, that was something unacceptable for me.

『I mean Claris Fia Atlee. She is my former fiancée, but she has caused a lot of problems. She was also the main culprit who assaulted Olivia-san. It makes me feel guilty toward Olivia-san because of her fault.』

「──Guilty?」

『She has really done something uncalled-for. I have cancelled my engagement with her, so she should just withdraw without making any fuss. And yet she got in the way of my relationship with Olivia-san──even though I would be able to be in a romantic relationship with her, just the two of us if not because of her.』

I recalled the extremely haggard figure of Claris-senpai.

When I saved her, she had become really thin.

The man who she loved to such degree was this kind of man. That was just too pitiful.

「I, hate someone like you.」

『──I guess I don't mind either way. Then, you don't mind if I don't hold back anything against you right?』

The announcer began to introduce Jilk.

『To think that we will reach the fourth match! Is there a goddess of fortune accompanying Bartfalt today!? But, our next representative is Jilk Fia Marmoria! The foster brother and best friend of his highness Julius! He is a rifle expert and no enemy who entered his scope in the battlefield managed to get away! How long will Bartfalt be able to last against him?』

After the start was announced, Jilk flew up to the sky.

『Lose unsightly.』

You see──I had decided that you were the only one I wouldn't lose against for giving me that strange mask.

◇

Olivia was looking up to the sky.

After Jilk's armor flew to the sky, Leon's Arroganz chased after it.

Arroganz was already damaged all over and even lost its left arm. It was painful to see.

Jilk took position in the sky and attacked Arroganz with his rifle from afar.

Arroganz's armor was whittled off by the bullets. It was in disadvantage in everyone's opinion.

(What a farce.)

Olivia know that this duel's result had been decided from the start when she saw Arroganz's movement.

When she turned her gaze to her surrounding, she saw Julius following Arroganz's figure with a heated gaze.

「Dodge that one! Win this no matter what and then fight me!」

He spoke like he wanted Jilk to lose.

And then the other three were also the same.

Brad looked like he still couldn't accept the result.

「Even though I'm the one who dealt the most damage on Bartfalt」

Greg folded his arms and denied his words.

「You would still lose even if you continued the fight at that time. I'm the one who got lost just because of a lucky punch. No way in hell I can accept that.」

Chris scoffed at Greg's opinion.

「It's me who dealt the most damage to Bartfalt. You two only managed to scratch his armor, but I took his left arm.」

It seemed they were talking about who managed to obtain the most accomplishment, but Olivia only averted her gaze.

(They don't even notice that their opponent went easy on them. So unsightly. However, Leon is also a disappointment. If he is Lea's descendant, I thought that he would amuse me a little bit more but──I guess he only has the same surname by coincidence.)

If he was someone who descended from the bloodline of her beloved Lea, then she wished he would show a bit more backbone.

The duel would be prolonged until Julius's turn anyway, and then he would lose there. That was Olivia's prediction.

In fact, Leon was showing a figth to make Jilk looked good.

Jilk had run out of bullet and switched weapon, then he assaulted Arroganz and the two of them fell until the arena.

(What a boring man. It seems that he wants to meet with me, but his worth is only as a disposable pawn.)

While Olivia determined Leon's value in her heart, Jilk's armor was thrown on the ground.

Arroganz wrenched victory through a battle that was like a mud fight. Most of its armor was battered.

There was even a spot that was smashed and the inner mechanism could be peeked from there. There were also many cracked spots.

Seeing that, Julius threw off his mantel and headed to his armor.

「Now it's my turn! Olivia, I'll offer a victory to you.」

Olivia joined her hands and smiled just like Julius wanted.

「I'm praying for your victory Julius.」

(Make this farce flashy at the very least.)

She was completely exasperated in her heart, but she didn't show any sign of that at the slightest at the surface.

Julius tensed his expression to look really serious, then he expressed his feeling to Olivia.

「Wait for me Olivia. I'll become a worthy man for you.」

Olivia saw off Julius entering the cockpit. Then she turned her gaze toward Arroganz with the mask of smile still pasted on her face.

「Now then, I wonder how he will lose.」

◇

A beautiful white armor descended in front of Arroganz that was damaged all over from the consecutive battles.

It was an armor that was mainly for show. It was even wearing a mantel. It also had a sword and a shield.

The announcer made the introduction. It was even more passionate from before seeing that this was the last match.

『Bartfalt has advanced until this far, but it's finally the end for him! The last fortress and shield that protect the saintess! The crown prince of Hohlfahrt Kingdom and the leader of the volunteer army in the battlefield, it's his highness Juliusssssss!! Just how many enemies has he consigned to oblivion with that shining white armor!? The crown prince of Hohlfahrt Kingdom has make his entrance to face the traitorous masked knight!』

His highness Julius intentionally opened his armor's hatch to show himself. The audiences shrieked shrilly in response.

「Princeeeee~!」

「Defeat that trash Bartfalt~!」

「Ah, his highness waved his hand to me just now!」

And then after he finished giving service to the audiences, his highness Julius looked at me with a smile that was filled with slight implication.

『Bartfalt, I'm pleased that you manage to win until this far. Though it seems that it has taken a lot out of you. Do you need a break first?』

「Please allow me to continue just like this.」

『Very good! That aside, where did you get that mask from?』

It seemed that he was curious with the mask I was wearing.

「It's something that Jilk gave me. So this mask isn't due to your highness's instruction?」

『If it was me then I wouldn't give you such tasteful mask. However, why did Jilk choose such mask?』

Tasteful? It seemed that his highness Julius's sense differed from the society at large.

More importantly, you wouldn't give me a tasteful mask? That meant you would hand me a distasteful mask instead? The way he said it was really bothersome.

His highness Julius took a stance with his sword and shield in preparation for the duel.

『——Well, it doesn't matter. More importantly, let's us have a "fair and square sacred duel".』

It was amazing that you could say that.

Asking for a fair and square duel in a fixed game, that was just funny.

But, it was something that I suggested from my own initiative, so let's held back from laughing.

「May the best one win, or something.」

The announcer declared the start of the match. At the same time both of us stepped forward and exchanged fierce blows with each other.

Weapons clashed and sparks scattered, but the one armed Arroganz was in the defensive.

I turned off the mike and took a deep breath.

「The only thing left is to lose huh.」

Doing this much was enough.

If I lost after putting up a good fight, surely his highness and the others would also feel satisfied.

But, his highness Julius got into a good mood and talked to me.

『You are skilled. I'll permit you to join us after this duel is over. I'll even allow you to join my royal guard.』

I turned on the mike and talked to him.

But, our talk wouldn't reach the audience with this volume.

Because of that, his highness even talked about something that other people mustn't hear.

「Thank you for the fofer. But, I'm just a countryside noble, so please allow me to decline about the matter of the royal guard.」

『No need to hold back. Work as my knight from here on. I recognize that you have skill.』

So persistent.

Well, guess this was also a period of time where he wanted to have a pawn of his own.

After all, Redgrave House's faction that was supporting his highness Julius until now had been disbanded.

It was also unknown how much Marquis Frampton's faction would cooperate with him right now, so no wonder he wanted a fighting strength that he could personally control.

「You were too hasty in dissolving your faction huh.」

『——I guess. But, just that much is a cheap price if it's for the sake of obtaining Olivia.』

「Eh?」

We locked swords. During that time his highness Julius chuckled.

He let out a dark voice as though he was discarding his image as a good young man.

『I'm thankful to you. After all you give yourself to become my achievement like this. With this Olivia too will see me in better light than the others. You served as a really good bait.』

I lifted up my axe and took distance. His highness held his shield on his front and tackled me.

I intentionally allowed myself to be hit. However it seemed that Arroganz couldn't fully endure the impact and got pushed back.

Cheers erupted from the surrounding.

「That armor isn't as strong as it look.」

「his highness's armor is cutting-edge. Bartfalt's junk can't be compared to that!」

「Your highness, finish him off just like that!」

The cheering of the audiences who didn't know anything and the way his highness Julius talked made me felt complicated.

His highness Julius who you guys put your hope on was a man who carried out everything until now just for love. I wanted to tell them that.

He dismantled his own faction, expulsed a lot of students from the academy, and participated in war leading the volunteer army just to play hero.

I should be allowed to at least say something back.

「I myself cannot say anything about other person, but still, you are the worst.」

『So what! I wouldn't be able to obtain her if I didn't do that! It doesn't matter even if I'm called the worst, I've obtained Olivia!』

I blocked the sword that was swung down on me with Arroganz's axe, but then his highness Julius kicked Arroganz's undefended body.

Arroganz shook and stepped back. His highness spread open the arms of his armor.

『This is love. Can you understand it, Bartfalt? Love cannot be replaced by anything else——that was what Olivia taught me.』

「Then, please cancel your previous engagement more kindly. Thanks to that it become a ruckus like this.」

I wouldn't say to do it in a smarter way, but he should at least talk it out with Angelica-san too beforehand.

If he did that, it shouldn't become a ruckus that led to duel like this──I think.

Well, from Angelica-san's perspective, she got her fiancée stolen.

It was only natural for her to get enraged.

From there it led to something like this duel commotion. Just what were they doing?

「At least go talk to here when this is over.」

Arroganz swung the axe to the side with enough room for his highness to dodge easily.

His highness avoided my large swing with a dancing like movement from his white armor. Such movement charmed the audiences.

His skill in controlling the armor was also excellent, but it was doubtful whether such showy movement was practical for real battle or not.

『You mean Angelica? That woman doesn't have that much worth.』

「Ha?」

『Compared to Olivia, everything else is just garbage. She is the one and only, an absolute existence.』

Was he this kind of man who would say something like that? As a capture target in otome game, shouldn't he be an ideal person for woman to a degree that should be impossible?

My selfish expectation was betrayed. His highness Julius then continued talking as if he was possessed.

『She is the only one I need. There is nothing else I need other than Olivia. If it's for that──I'll do anything!』

The white armor rapidly approached. It used its shield to smash away Arroganz's axe and thrust the sword toward the torso.

The audiences screamed seeing that attack that targeted the cockpit, but I had prepared countermeasure for that after the fight against the black knight.

The area around the cockpit was surrounded by tough material as armor. It couldn't be pierced by a blade.

The sword broke, but the white armor kicked Arroganz flying until the wall. Arroganz crashed and fell sitting down on the ground.

——It was over with this.

I turned off the mike.

「Arroganz, you did great.」

『Arroganz worked hard. Master also worked hard.』

「Something like this can't be called as hard work though.」

When Arroganz stopped moving, cheers burst out from the audiences. Then applauses welled up and after that the announcer announced the victory of his highness Julius with a volume that was even louder than before.

『The winner is his highness Juliusssss!! It was a battle that was truly worthy for a crown prince!! Even though his opponent is the masked knight who defeated that black knight, his highness still showed us such magnificent fighttttt!! Overwhelming! Truly an overwhelming victory!』

——I had already faced four people before this who looked like they were cornering me, but in the end only the winner who gained the spotlight.

Arroganz picked up the voices of Olivia-san——and the other four at the audience seats.

Brad was talking in vexation.

『Even though I was the one who cornered him the most.』

Greg was resentful from losing due to a fluke.

『It would be over already at my turn if only that lucky punch didn't happen.』

Chris also looked like he couldn't accept the result.

『His highness is helped by the order of turn. Bartfalt has also gotten really exhausted after facing me.』

Jilk was smiling, but he must be really irritated at the inside.

『There is no need for his highness to even come out. The smartest way to end this duel should be with me as the one defeating him.』

The four couldn't accept the result. In respond Olivia-san was talking kindly to them.

She was smiling. It looked like she was really happy.

『I know that the four of you have done your best. That's why, please don't look that discontent. Everyone was really wonderful out there.』

The four got embarrassed and blushed at Olivia-san's words.

「──She doesn't look possessed but, I wonder what's the truth?」

I returned my gaze to his highness Julius. He was making his white armor's hand to wave at the surrounding.

It looked like he was getting absorbed in giving service to the audiences.

And then, he began to talk about his love with a voice that echoed through the arena.

『I'm thankful for everyone's support. With this, there is nobody else who object to my relationship with Olivia isn't it? I believe there is nobody else but, allow me to say one thing. I──love Olivia! I love Olivia more than anybody else! It's not because she is the saintess. I love Olivia herself. This is the first time in my life I feel like this.』

He extended his armor's hand toward Olivia-san at the audience seat. She also waved her hand back in respond.

『I also love you──Julius.』

『Thank you Olivia.』

I could hear cheers「His highness banzai! Saintess banzai!」from the audiences.

Hearing that made me thought.

「I'm the one who did it, but still, this just look like a farce to me.」

『This is a farce. Arroganz has remembered it.』

「Aa~, so you're memorizing that word in this situation. I don't think it's good for your education to learn this.」

Also, this must be very hard for Angelica-san right now.

After all, the prince he loved was singing about his love to other woman in the presence of so many people.

When I considered that, I was unable to keep listening to this love confession.

「But, this is just like in the scenario. This is fine──it should be fine.」

I tried to persuade myself to accept the situation, but I couldn't erase this murkiness in my chest.

Unlike me, his highness Julius was making a dramatized speech in a good mood.

『Angelica, the representative you prepared is defeated. It's a fitting result for someone without love like you. Now you cannot make any excuse anymore. Now, apologize to Olivia right here!』

──What was this guy talking about?

This wasn't in the plan.

I turned on the mike and talked with a volume that his highness could hear.

「This is enough already. There shouldn't be any need to go that far.」

But his highness didn't stop.

He heard my voice, and yet he ignored me and continued talking.

『The birth of the saintess is an auspicious event for the kingdom! And yet you denied that and clung on your engagement with me for your own selfish interest. You are the one who is a disaster for this country. You insulted Olivia as witch in the party didn't you? That word is only fitting for you! You pitiful cursed witch imprisoned in your own greed!』

「Oi, I'm telling you to stop already!」

His highness Julius turned his armor's head toward me only briefly.

But, he immediately returned his gaze back to Angelica-san at the audience seat.

『You are an ugly woman who only think of yourself. But, I shall give you just one more chance. Come down here and apologize to Olivia. Kneel and bow your head in regret of your own sin and repent!』

The arena that was enveloped with shrill cheers before this instantly got enveloped in hysteric shouts chanting「Apologize!」.

When I looked at the audience seats, I could see Angelica-san looking down.

And then Marie who was beside her stood up.

「What is that idiot doing」

Even though it would be better if she endured it, Marie stood up and getting angry.

『T-there should be a better way to say that!』

Angelica-san was defeated. To be more accurate, her defeat had been determined from the start.

And yet, his highness Julius was acting as though he had wrenched victory by his own effort.

『She need to show her sincerity now that she is defeated. I will report the particulars of this event to the palace. Angelica's apology will greatly affect how she will be dealt with at that time. ──If she apologize and beg for her live unsightly, then her crime will also be slightly lightened at that time.』

I frowned hearing that.

Not only she had to apologize, but also begging for her life? Besides, for this matter to get reported to the palace──that would be a violation of the promise with me.

「What happened with the promise to keep this thing within the academy?」

I spoke to his highness Julius with a volume that couldn't be heard by the surrounding.

『It's your fault for trusting a verbal promise like that. I'll reduce Redgrave House's power using this chance in consideration for after the war is over. Have you gotten smarter from this, country bumpkin noble-kun?』

「──Yeah, thanks to you.」

Somewhere inside, I couldn't forgive myself for trusting these capture targets.

I should be more vigilant.

No——it was my own fault for suggesting something like this so thoughtlessly.

Arroganz consoled the frustrated me.

『Master, you angry? Arroganz, can still work hard.』

「——No, not yet.」

I didn't move Arroganz and observed the flow of the event there.

「Calm down. It's not like it's my business whatever happen to Redgrave House. What's important is whether Olivia-san is still sane or not. As long as I understand that, who cares whatever happen to whoever. That's right, it's fine like that. I'm just making use of Angelica-san.」

Thinking back now, I became her representative in order to lose.

「I myself am also a liar. I have no right to blame his highness.」

I acted like I was giving up. Arroganz asked me.

『Really? Master, you liar. Lying isn't good. Master, is angry.』

「——」

I quietly observed the situation without answering Arroganz.

No matter what happened here——it wasn't my business.

I just needed to achieve my own objective.

◇

『Angelica, apologize to Olivia! Cry and beg for forgiveness!』

Angelica shed tears at how the man she loved had changed completely.

「Is Olivia really that much better? Do you love that saintess——that witch to such degree? I love you. Even though I love you」

She was grabbing the handrail and broke down crying, but the surrounding didn't stop showering her with insults.

「You witch!」

「Go down and apologize already!」

「This is a fitting end for a villain.」

The worried Marie approached Angelica and helped her stood up.

「Angelica-san.」

「──Your name is Marie right? I'm sorry that it ended like this after I borrowed your fiancée. I thought that I'll surely win with the knight who defeated the black knight as my representative.」

If even Leon was defeated, then Angelica had no more way to stop what was going on.

Angelica stood up and held her head high. Then she answered with dignity.

「Apology? I'm not going to apologize. I believe that my action is right. I'm not that obsessed to live that I'm going to lie just to get through this. ──This is my answer, your highness.」

She wouldn't apologize.

Even if she died because of that, Angelica didn't intend to concede that.

The surrounding got enraged by her defiant attitude. Marie casted her gaze down.

「Why. It will be better if you apologize and ask for forgiveness. At this rate things will become really bad for you.」

Marie was worried for her. Angelica expressed her feeling at her.

「You're right. I myself think that I'm being stupid. But, if I yield here, that will mean rejecting everything that I am. My feeling to his highness, my loyalty to the country, and──that saintess. No, that witch, I won't tolerate her even if I have to fall into hell.」

The feeling that was like a black flame blazing inside her was aggravating her hatred toward Olivia.

For some reason Olivia who was far away from here looked like she was smiling in her eyes.

「──I'll definitely take revenge on you someday」

◇

While the surrounding was feeling righteous indignation toward Angelica, Olivia was the only one who was impressed by her spirit.

(Is it instinct? Or perhaps love? It's amazing that she can be so hateful at my existence. She can even resist the ability of this Olivia girl. Her willpower is really powerful.)

Olivia's mysterious ability.

It was an ability to send her feeling to other people's heart.

It didn't care of logic. No matter what she said, her words would shake the other side's feeling.

Even if someone was hostile toward her, everything would be over as long as she could have a talk with that person. It was such excellent ability.

Angelica repelled that ability and still showed the will to fight even now. That was a proof of her excellence.

(But, everything is already too late. Your words can't reach your beloved Julius. Too bad for you, daughter of Redgrave House. You can curse your own bloodline for that.)

She smiled to herself and enjoyed Angelica's defeat.

She imagined what kind of future was awaiting Angelica in delight──then Arroganz stood up.

『EXHIBITION MATCHHHHHHH!!』

Just when she thought what he was going to do, the battered Arroganz started saying that it could still fight.

The arena that was raining down insults at Angelica fell silent and focused on Arroganz once more.

The surrounding was bewildered.

「What is he saying?」

「Does he want to do an informal fight?」

「Oi, did that guy get hit on the head? His armor is already damaged like that.」

Olivia was surprised by Leon's yell. She felt nostalgic in her heart.

(What is he saying out of nowhere? But──what is this feeling? It's nostalgic. Also, it's making my heart pounding.)

Arroganz moved to the center of the arena and stabbed its axe to the ground.

『There are representatives who think that their turn order is bad right? If there is anyone who think that they can win against me right now, then come at me. This chance won't come again you know! If you want then you all can come at me simultaneously. It's a race to see who can defeat me!』

Those words were directed to the other four than Julius.

The four had lost against Leon, but they didn't think of their defeat as valid. The corner of their lips were raised and nasty grin formed on their face.

Leon spoke more to push the back of those four.

『Is it alright that his highness Julius is getting further ahead like this~?』

For the four those words became the trigger. Greg rushed toward his armor.

「Yeah. There won't be any more fluke! I'll defeat you and show everyone my true strength!」

Seeing that, Brad also broke into a run.

「You cheater! I'm the one who is going to defeat Bartfalt!」

Chris and Jilk also ran after them. They got into their armor and descended to the arena.

It seemed only Chris was riding a spare armor.

Olivia was looking down at the arena.

「What is he planning?」

When she noticed, Julius's white armor was drawing near to Arroganz.

『What are you doing! The match is already decided!』

『That's why, I'm thinking to heat up the place with an informal match. It's just too pitiful for the other four if your highness becomes the only one to show off your coolness isn't it?』

『Don't screw around! Defeating you is my achievement! It's mine alone!』

『I don't deny that. But, it looks like the other four are fully motivated though.』

Leon conversed with Julius flippantly. During that time, the other four who responded to his sudden proposal had descended with their armor.

Arroganz was surrounded by five armors. It lifted up its axe and stored it into its backpack.

It seemed that it was planning to fight barehanded.

The four rushed toward Arroganz with weapon in hands.

『This time I'm going to beat you up thoroughly!』

When Greg rushed forward in full speed, the other three were also heading toward Arroganz.

Comrades were competing with each other over achievement. That was what they were showing.

Anybody who watched saw that the thoroughly damaged Arroganz had no chance of victory.

Rather——wouldn't he get killed if the four got carried away?

The four's momentum was so energetic that it made everyone considered that.

But——.

「I see. As I thought you are going to do that huh, Lea!」

——Nobody heard Olivia yelling like that.

Everyone's gaze was focused to the arena. The right arm of Greg's armor got grabbed and crushed with tearing sound that reached everyone's ear.

Greg's armor was lifted with one arm and swung around to be thrown at Brad's armor immediately.

The two armors got blow away. Then Arroganz approached the armor of Jilk who was taken aback by what occurred.

『W-what's going on——』

He immediately raised his rifle and pulled the trigger, but Arroganz's armor deflected the bullet.

Arroganz didn't stop and caught Jilk's armor. Then without pause both flew until the wall. When Jilk's armor crashed on the wall, Arroganz started running along the round wall of the arena while dragging the armor.

A lot of sparks scattered from Jilk's armor.

『S-stop. This is different from what we-!?』

『I can't hear youuu!』

Jilk's armor that was scrapped by the wall was thrown. Then this time Arroganz turned toward Chris's armor that was rushing to attack.

Chris's armor was just about to swing down its large sword at Arroganz.

Everyone must be imagining the scene of Arroganz getting split into two.

『This is the endddddddd!』

The slash should become a full powered attack, but it was smashed by Arroganz's right arm.

The blade was broken into pieces. Chris was so shocked that he couldn't even say anything.

Arroganz grabbed his armor and slammed it onto the ground, then it stomped it roughly.

It kept stomping and stomping until the armor's arms and legs were crushed. Then it turned toward Julius's armor.

Unbelievably, the four armors were turned to pieces in an instant by the rampaging Arroganz.

It seemed the four had fainted. There was no sign their armors rising up.

But, the audiences got really quiet as though they had been frozen by that one-sided slaughter.

Leon talked to the remaining Julius.

His voice was low. It contained anger somewhere in it, but he was forcefully acting cheerful.

『Now, only your highness remains.』

『Y-you, do you understand what are you doing!』

『This is just a friendly unofficial match you know? Let's enjoy it more.』

『Don't screw with me. The duel should end with my victory.』

『You're right. But, this is just an unofficial match! The duel end with the victory of you guys. There is no changing that fact!』

Arroganz walked closer. Julius backed away.

The guests seemed to realize the strangeness of what was going on from that.

「Why is his highness fearing Bartfalt?」

「His highness just need to defeat him again.」

「Forget about that──how can that armor still fight with that much damage?」

The armor had lost its left arm, its body was also battered all over.

It was strange that it could still move.

However, Leon who heard the voices of the audiences moved.

『Oops, I guess I should take off everything soon. Arroganz──remove the parts for the show.』

After those words were said, there was a small explosion and Arroganz got enveloped in white smoke.

Arroganz's cracked parts were scattered on the ground around it.

And then, when the white smoke was blown by the wind and Arroganz's figure showed up, what appeared was Arroganz's undamaged form.

The left arm was still gone, but it looked as though it had been cut off from the start.

Julius clearly looked shaken. Olivia was desperately holding back her laughter seeing that.

「You already fulfilled your end of the deal by letting them win the duel, so there won't be any problem even if you beat them up afterward. Is that what you are thinking? That's great. You are really the best, Leon!」

Leon's action made the nostalgic image of Lea to overlap over it. Olivia cleared her throat slightly before talking to Julius.

It was her form of support to make the hesitating Julius decided to fight Leon.

「Julius──please offer victory to me one more time. Surely you can do it if it's you.」

(Now you have no choice but to fight after I say that aren't you?)

Olivia laughed inside her heart. Just as she expected, Julius regained the willingness to fight once more.

『Olivia!? G-got it. Someone bring me a weapon!』

When he demanded a replacement for the weapon that he lost, a new weapon was brought to him.

Julius received that and took a stance with his white armor, but Arroganz didn't carry any weapon.

Julius was doing nothing but backing away. Perhaps he was scared of Arroganz that didn't have any weapon.

Before long, his back hit the wall──Julius stepped forward as though to oppose his fear and swung down his sword on Arroganz.

Arroganz dodged that with its large body and kicked the leg of Julius's armor. It made him stumbled and fell.

Olivia recalled the nostalgic past after seeing Julius's pathetic figure.

(Leon, you are really similar with Lea. Perhaps you are really descended from Lea's bloodline. Or perhaps──you are his reincarnation?)

Suddenly Leon whose figure she couldn't see inside the armor felt lovable to her.

She touched her blushing cheeks with both her hands. She was staring down at Arroganz like a maiden in love.

Arroganz grabbed the head of the fallen white armor and lifted it up. Then it crushed the head in its grasp.

After that, it slammed the white armor of the ground many times.

The audiences screamed seeing that sight, but Leon was laughing.

『You guys are really small fries! It was the right decision that you guys didn't participate in the war against the principality. If you guys are only this strong, you would already get cut down by that black knight bastard and go to that world! You guys narrowly escaped death!』

The white armor Julius was riding got battered. At the end Arroganz threw it until it crashed and bounced several times on the ground.

When the five armors stopped moving, Arroganz slowly floated up to the sky.

『That's all, the exhibition match is finished! Don't forget that the winner of the duel is his highness Julius and others! Then everyone, have a nice day!』

After Leon finished saying that, he laughed loudly while flying away.

When Olivia hurriedly sent her gaze toward Ange and others, there was nobody there anymore.

「——What a dashing retreat. It makes me recall the past.」

Was it really dashing? Even Olivia wasn't sure of that, but she was happy that Leon was acting like Lea.

Olivia overly evaluated Leon's action because of nostalgia and affection.

However even though she was in such a mood, her gaze became terribly cold when it turned toward the five armors on the ground.

「It's good that I can see Leon's true nature from this. Even you guys can be useful, so I won't abandon you yet. ——But, you guys are really unsightly.」

Olivia turned around and walked away from that place. She gave an order to the bewildered guards.

「Call Bartfalt-dono to my room immediately. Absolutely don't lay a hand on him at all. I won't tolerate any discourteous act toward him.」

The female knights regained their senses after being given such order and saluted.

「As you command! B-but, his action toward his highness the crown prince is problematic. We have to report it to the palace immediately.」

「No need. That's just an informal match. The duel ended with Julius and everyone's victory. Report only the victory to the palace.」

「But, Bartfalt's action is unforgivable!」

「——You will bring him to me immediately won't you?」

When Olivia smiled, the disobedient attitude of the female knight just now softened.

Her cheeks reddened and her anger toward Leon who had behaved so outrageously toward a royalty vanished without a trace.

「Y-yes. I'll immediately bring him.」

「Don't do it forcibly okay? Treat him with decorum——just like how you would treat a royalty.」

Olivia only said that and left the arena.

◇

「I MESSED UPPPPPPP!!」

「YOU IDIOTTTTTTT!! There is no need to go that far!」

When I returned to Partner, I held my head in my wits' end while Marie slapped my head with a paper fan.

I planned to endure it at first.

However, his highness Julius's attitude and the surrounding's atmosphere——anyway, there were a lot of things that made me unable to endure.

The bastards who got full of themselves just from winning a fixed match really touched my nerve.

Also——they broke the promise so I wanted a payback.

There were also a lot of other problems.

The biggest one was Angelica-san.

「Forget about that, is Angelica-san angry? She is angry right?」

Marie slapped me with her paper fan again.

Marie slapped me with her paper fan again.

「She is angry, or rather, enraged? She is already furious now, she said that she absolutely won't forgive you when learning that you lost in purpose.」

From Angelica-san's point of view, I joined the duel while holding back, so no wonder she was angry.

「She has nothing but enemy on all sides.」

「It's your fault!」

「I'm sorry!」

Bam! The paper fan hit me. I could only laugh dryly.

Then a guest that we had been impatiently waiting for appeared at Partner.

◇

「Don't screw with me. A fixed match in the sacred duel? Bartfalt, even you are toying with me! So you are only a man at that level!」

Angelica who was locked inside a cabin was venting her fury at the furniture inside.

When the door of the ransacked cabin opened, she glared at the intruder──and immediately got flustered.

「B-big brother.」

The one who came to check on her was her big brother Gilbert.

「Good grief, I'll need to compensate for this. I'll send him the apology and the reparation for the damages.」

He looked over the cabin and let out a small sigh, but then his expression immediately turned grave.

「I heard that you challenged the saintess to a duel?」

「Please listen to me. She is the only person who we have to do something about. There's no doubt about that. Please, gather the troops. That woman isn't a saint or anything──」

「That saintess is acknowledged not only by the temple, but also by the palace. And you are telling me to gather soldiers to attack her? What are you saying? I sympathize with you that his highness abandoned you, but are you planning to destroy Redgrave House?」

「Big brother?」

Gilbert was looking at her coldly. Faced with that, Angelica crumbled on her knees.

Gilbert dispassionately explained the position of their family to her.

「Redgrave House is supporting the saintess. We have also accepted the annulment of your engagement with his highness. We aren't protesting at all.」

「No way!」

「If only you didn't cause anything, we would be able to obtain a great amount of reparation from the palace. But thanks to you making a ruckus with this duel, even that talk has vanished. Good grief──just what are you trying to do, really.」

Angelica looked down and shed tears when she realized that she had caused a great bother to her family.

「I wanted to save his highness. It was just, for that person's sake.」

「And this is the result? I had also consulted with father who is currently in recuperation, we decided to send you to the countryside. After all the palace also wouldn't accept it unless you get married off to an ugly man at the countryside.」

Angelica who was once engaged with the crown prince would be wed with a countryside noble──furthermore an ugly one. That was a punishment in itself.

Perhaps the palace's side also felt some responsibility about this incident, because they didn't bring up any talk of execution.

Angelica listened to Gilbert's words without saying anything.

Gilbert left the room.

「It has been decided that you would be left at Bartfalt House for a while. Don't give him any more trouble than this. That's all I have to say. ──Angelica, this is my advice for you as a brother. Rest for now.」

After Gilbert left, tears spilled down from Angelica's eyes.

「Why am I──so powerless like this.」

◇

Thank god I explained the situation to Redgrave House.

I wanted them to take off Angelica-san from my hands, but for some reason things developed to me taking her back to my family home. I couldn't wrap my head around it.

I was talking with Gilbert-san on the deck.

「Thank you for the help.」

「Your family saved my father in the battlefield. I'm just returning the favor.」

It was a sincerity that I hoped a certain stupid prince somewhere could learn from.

The duke house was far more proper than I thought huh.

Gilbert-san told me the reason why she entrusted Angelica-san to me.

「I'm sorry but, please take care of my little sister. It's a bit hard shelter her right now, not only in the capital, but even in Redgrave House.」

「It's not a problem but, is the marriage talk really true?」

I thought it was horrible that she would be forcefully married off like that. But when I said that, Gilbert-san looked at me with narrowed gaze.

「The family of your fiancée was crushed right?」

「Well, yes.」

「Then, let's move the talk of marriage to be done with you. I'll be able to buy time with that.」

「Time?」

It seemed that he had no intention of actually marrying Angelica-san with me. But, if there was a marriage talk like that with me, would it fulfill the condition of her marrying with an ugly man at the countryside?

Certainly I got a scar on my face, so it couldn't be helped even if I got called ugly but──somehow I couldn't just accept it.

「I won't break off my current engagement though.」

「I won't ask you to go that far. But, I want you to protect my little sister. My family has too few ally right now.」

In addition to the engagement cancellation, there was also the change of family head and various other things happening at the same time. It caused the strength of Redgrave House to greatly fall.

It looked like Gilbert-san also had it hard.

「Also Leon-kun, there is a summon from the palace to you. It seems that the saintess want to meet and talk with you directly.」

「The saintess is?」

I myself wanted to meet with her, but it was actually the other side that summoned me?

Gilbert-san headed toward the ramp.

「Take a good care of my little sister.」

「Aren't you going to tell her that you are worried for her?」

「She might run wild again if I carelessly give her even the slightest hope right now.」

——Certainly it was worrying after witnessing the way she ran wild like that.

◇

Marie and Ann were waiting when I returned to the cabin.

「You used your ability to look at my card aren't you!」

『I-I'm not.』

Seeing Marie playing card with a mass of resentment made me admired how unflappable she was.

When I came, Marie discarded the match that was heading to her lose and ran to me.

「How is it!?」

『You run away at this point!? You run away because you almost lose!』

This resentment too, she was getting too heated up in her game with Marie——well, it's fine I guess.

「Rejoice, I get a summon from the saintess. I can meet her openly.」

「Doesn't it smell like a trap?」

「Don't say that. After all I'm also thinking the same.」

Perhaps I should make a preparation to escape.

Ann approached us and asked about Olivia-san's condition.

『And, what do you two think about the saintess in your opinion?』

Marie couldn't make any judgment, but she was thinking in negative direction due to her instinct.

「She is being possessed I think? Or perhaps her personality has been bad since the beginning? There is also the current situation, isn't it just too horrible right now? Things are still similar like in the scenario but, I also feels like it's not.」

The whole academy was wrapped in a strange atmosphere. Even though we were winning the war, it felt like things were moving to a bad direction.

If the objective of Saintess Ann was to destroy the country, then was she succeeding in a sense?

But, my opinion was different.

「I think she isn't possessed though. In the first place, will she get engaged with the descendants of the guys she resented if that's the case? Besides, this flow of event is just like that otome game right? Rather than Olivia-san, isn't things worsening because the idiots around her are too horrible?」

I was considering that perhaps she wasn't being possessed?

No, that was what I was hoping for.

Even though things became like this, wasn't it just the result of the people around Olivia-san running wild?

After all the capture targets were more horrible than I expected.

Marie wasn't convinced and spoke about her opinion in more detail.

「How should I say it, that girl's words sounded flimsy.」

「Her words sounded just like her lines in game right? Besides, do you think she will get engaged with the descendants of the guys she resented? What Saintess Ann wants to do is taking revenge.」

「If it's me than it's impossible but, what if it's you?」

Marie asked for Ann's opinion. She gave an unexpected reply to that.

『If I can destroy the country by doing that, I'll do it. I'll do it thoroughly. Even though I resent them, hate them, if it's for the sake of destroying this country then I won't hesitate.』

I shuddered at that opinion that was filled with resentment. I also gave up thinking any further about this, in the end we couldn't judge the situation just with the information we had right now.

Marie asked me.

「More importantly, what happened with the information gathering robots that Luxion lent to us?」

「I have them investigating but, checking all the information they gathered is really time consuming.」

They brought me a lot of information, but it was tiring checking them all with just Marie and me.

Also it was difficult to control them.

It would be great if we could monitor everything for days and nights, but even we had our own things to take care of.

「As I thought, we need AI to manage them. This would be easy if only Luxion is here.」

Ann muttered.

『So in the end, it's still difficult to make the judgment huh. We can only leave this to Leon then.』

◇

One day had passed since the duel commotion.

Olivia was waiting in her residence inside the academy. She was alone with even Kyle being sent out so she could dress herself.

Her attentive preparation since the morning was an expression of her expectation.

「Now then, I have to ask various things to Leon Fou Bartfalt. First I have to clearly confirm whether he really descended from Lea's bloodline or──tsu!」

Olivia was looking forward to the meeting, but her expression suddenly turned grave.

「Olivia, why are you suddenly coming out──no, stop!」

Olivia suddenly looked pained, but then a knocking sound could be heard.

『Saintess-sama, Leon Fou Bartfalt-dono has arrived.』

Olivia tried to tell the guard to make Leon waited for a while, but her mouth opened on its own.

「Se──send him in. I permit it.」

When Olivia tried to cover her mouth, the resentment of Saintess Ann who was inside Olivia got sealed temporarily.

◇

It was the day of my meeting with Olivia-san who had become a saintess.

When I entered the room, I found Olivia-san looking at her own hands.

She looked terribly surprised──no, more like she was shaken I guess?

Her breathing was also a bit rough, and her hair was slightly messy.

When she noticed me entering the room, she came running and leaped on my chest.

「Saintess-sama!?」

I was shocked and stiffened without giving my greeting but──Olivia-san was shedding tears.

「Sir knight, please save me.」

「Eh?」

She called me sir knight and lifted her face while sobbing.

「Save me! Please save me. At this rate, I'm going to vanish completely. Sir knight, I'm begging you please save me. Please save me! I──I!」

Olivia-san tried to plead about something to me desperately. I grabbed her shoulder, but then the guards who noticed the abnormality opened the door and entered inside.

「Saintess-sama, what's wrong! ──Y-you bastard, how dare you touch saintess-sama!」

The female knights unsheathed the sword on their waist and they were about to slash me.

「No, this is!」

While I was pondering of how I would get out of this situation, Olivia-san stepped forward to cover for me.

「Don't lay your hand on sir knight!」

「Saintess-sama?」

The female knights were shocked by Olivia-san's action and stepped back.

Olivia-san hugged me.

「I'm begging you. Please take me away from here. If not, I'll really──vanish」

Olivia-san was asking me for help, but her gaze suddenly turned hollow and her body crumbled down.

When I caught her body, the female knights came running and forcefully separated us.

And then they pointed their sword to me.

「You should leave here for today. Also, don't say a word about this to anyone else.」

I was forcefully dragged outside and thrown out of the house.

「W-what the hell?」

◇

A few hours later.

Olivia──no, Saintess Ann woke up from her unconsciousness.

She was lying on a bed with doctors and healing magic users surrounding her.

「Oo! The saintess has opened her eyes!」

The surrounding were making expression of relief. It was only Olivia who was feeling frustrated at the inside.

(──Olivia, I never expected for you to wake up at that timing of all time. What was the trigger?)

Even though she should have taken over this body, Olivia's consciousness was awakened due to some kind of impetus.

Saintess Ann told the people around her「I'll rest for a bit」and closed her eyes.

She sent her consciousness into her deep psyche. Olivia was there locked inside a prison.

And then Saintess Ann had the appearance of her form when she was called as saintess in the past.

Her appearance──looked really similar with Angelica with a white robe wrapped over her body.

She was looking down with a freezing expression on Olivia who was hanging down her head.

『Bad child. How did you slip out from here? Because of you my meeting with Lea was wasted.』

Olivia kept her gaze casted down.

Her arms and legs were chained. It didn't look like she could get out of this prison.

Tears were spilled out from her eyes.

「──Sir knight.」

When Olivia muttered sir knight, a hazy figure of a man appeared inside this deep psyche.

『Is this your knight?』

The she reached out to touch that illusion, that figure vanished.

『Fuh──it's pointless regardless of who you ask help from. I'll have you accompany me till the very end.』

Then Olivia lifted her face and showed a strong-willed gaze.

「I won't let you do as you please. I swear that I'll take back my body and stop you.」

She declared that she would stop Ann's dearest wish to destroy this country.

Ann narrowed her eyes.

『You still haven't given up? You are really a strong child. But──if you get in my way, I'll make you unable to oppose me thoroughly. Let's see──for the start, perhaps I'll try to make a bloodbath with this sir knight who act as the support of your heart? Now, tell me the name of that person.』

「N-no」

『It's pointless even if you oppose me. This place is inside your heart. The identity of that person will become clear to me sooner or later. I'm looking forward to that, Olivia.』

Ann then vanished from that place. Olivia bit her lower lip.

She recalled Leon's figure when he helped her during the field trip.

「Sir knight, please──stop that person.」

◇

「A lot of things happened.」

It was spring break. I returned home after so long. I was at my wits' end with how many problems were cropping out.

My family got really panicked and busy because I came home with Angelica-san, and there was also the matter with Olivia-san.

Marie was also at her wits' end.

「What does she mean help? Just what does she want to be saved from? In the first place, is she being possessed or not? Make it clear.」

Which state Olivia-san was in at that time?

To me she didn't look like she was being possessed. It looked like she was seriously asking me for help.

「Is she asking me to save her from his highness Julius and others?」

「She didn't show any sign like that during the duel though.」

In the end we still couldn't make the judgment. Ann made her conclusion while we were worrying about that.

『——It's also possible that her body still haven't gotten taken over fully. If she is a girl who can even become the saintess, it won't be strange that she can oppose it somewhat.』

In other words, it could be that she was almost getting taken over completely?

「Then I guess we should save her immediately.」

Marie tilted her head when I said that.

「How?」

「——I-I'm going to think how after this.」

「You are really unreliable. How about calling Luxion back?」

「He won't answer even when I call him! That bastard, just where is he and what is he doing right now?」

While we were being noisy *gyaa gyaa* inside the room, the door opened and Korin entered inside.

「Nii-chan, Marie, welcome back! Where is my souvenir?」

Korin had just returned from outside. It seemed he came running to our room when he learned that we had returned.

Ann had vanished before we realized it. Marie took a box of candy from the piled up mountain of souvenirs and handed it to Korin.

「Don't address me without honorific! Call me Onee-san(sister-in-law). You get it?」

「Ee~, the only one I'll call Onee-san is just Claris-san.」

I got a headache at Korin's misunderstanding.

I should correct him quickly.

「Korin, don't say Claris-senpai's name so openly like that. Also, I'm not going to marry with that person okay?」

「Eh? Then, who is Nii-chan going to marry?」

Korin looked genuinely surprised. That made Marie's hair to stand on end angrily.

「It's with me! Just what do you think I am huh!?」

「Marie got angry. Run~」

「Wait you little brattttttt! You absolutely won't get awayyyyy! There is nobody who can get away from me!」

Marie chased after the running Korin and got outside. I saw her off and shook my head.

「She is getting teased like that because their mental age is close.」

Ann showed herself again with the two gone from here. She was showing skepticism at me.

『If you say that, that means you also have the same mental age with them with how you always quarrel with Marie every time. Are you fine with that?』

「——Eh?」

◇

In a room inside the palace.

Julius was lying on a bed with bandage wrapped all over his body.

「Unforgivable, Bartfalt. How dare you shamed me in front of Olivia.」

Julius's anger toward Leon was stoked up. A part of it was also because he had just woken up.

It was fine and all that Leon lost in the duel just as planned, but them getting into that informal match after that was bad.

Leon displayed an overwhelming strength and won there. Now they were being suspected of holding a fixed match.

Certainly Leon kept his promise to lose in the duel, but his action after that was unforgivable.

Julius forgot that it was him who broke the promise first. He continued resting while seething with anger.

It was at such timing that a wounded Jilk who was using a crutch entered Julius's room.

But, from his expression he didn't come just to visit.

「Your highness, there is someone who I wish you to meet.」

「──Jilk, you look really unsightly.」

Julius didn't hide his irritation and vented his anger. Jilk frowned at that.

「Your highness is in the same state you know? More importantly, I come with an interesting person. ──Enter.」

Jilk was showing his disgruntle toward Julius by inviting a man to enter the room without even asking Julius for permission.

Julius was about to chase away the guest, but he felt doubtful when seeing the person who entered.

「Who?」

「Lutoart Fou Bartfalt. He is an elder brother of that Leon, the eldest son of Bartfalt House. It seems he lost in the struggle for the family headship and ended up being chased away from his house.」

Julius observed Lutoart after hearing that.

Lutoart was showing a servile attitude. He had the same smell like the unpleasant bunches who always tried to curry favor with him.

「He lost the family headship despite being the eldest son? Why?」

Jilk's eyes when looking at Lutoart was also cold. It seemed that like Julius, he was also evaluating this person poorly.

「Even though he is the eldest son, he not only refused to participate in the war, he even did various other things like forgery of documents. There should be a limit in how foolish one can be──but, the information in his possession has some worth.」

Julius glared at Lutoart.

「What information?」

Lutoart straightened his back, and then he acted ingratiatingly to butter up Julius.

「This information that I have is simply amazing your highness! After your highness heard it, your highness will definitely realize how beneficial it will be for you. After all this is information about that Leon's weakness!」

「Say it already!」

Julius shouted threateningly at Lutoart's useless preface, so Lutoart spoke in fear.

「Hii! It's Claris. I saw Claris of Atlee House in my family house. T-that guy, Leon is sheltering Claris in Bartfalt House.」

Julius's eyes widened hearing that.

「Claris of Atlee House you say? That woman, she is still alive?」

Even though it was a matter about his former fiancée, Jilk was talking as though it wasn't his business at all.

「I considered the possibility of him mistaking the person, but he heard that person got called Claris when he was in his family house. Her appearance is also really similar.」

Julius narrowed his eyes.

「This isn't a fake information?」

Jilk's lips twisted into a malicious grin.

「Even if that's the case, it'll be just a destruction of a single countryside baron isn'tit? We're just going to erase a single countryside noble who opposed the kingdom by sheltering a criminal.」

Julius hesitated to reply because that sounded too forceful to do, but then all expression vanished from Jilk's face.

「Your highness——that Leon has met with Olivia-san. According to the report that I heard from a female knight who I'm close with, it seems that she saw the two of them embracing each other. Apparently Olivia-san forbid everyone to say a word about it, but that's just even more proof of how much she thought about him.」

Something snapped inside Julius when he heard that.

「He laid his hand on Olivia? Why haven't the palace heard anything about it?」

「It's because of Olivia-san's order. But, if we keep leaving him alone like this, he will settle in to be the sixth person sooner or later. Even your highness won't be able to tolerate that correct?」

Jilk──wanted to crush Leon now that a possibility of him marrying Olivia appeared. Because of that, he suggested to Julius to crush Bartfalt House.

Lutoart's information was simple an excuse for that.

Julius made his decision.

「Very well. But, take care of this matter carefully. Kill that guy without fail. Don't cut any corner at all for that.」

「As you command!」

Jilk left the room. Then Lutoart who was left behind raised his hand.

「Y-your highness? Um, about my reward?」

Julius glared at Lutoart, and then he gave him a verbal promise.

「After Leon is killed, I'll give the remaining territory to you. Any complaint?」

「N-no!」

Lutoart left the room. Then Julius pressed his right hand on his face.

「I'll remove any fool who dare to lay his hand on Olivia. Olivia──is mine alone.」

◇

Marie and I entered the hot spring to heal our fatigue that had accumulated recently. After that we walked outside.

「Aa～, I want to drink sake.」

「You speak like a middle-aged uncle. I prefer shochu highball myself. I can't drink with this body though.」

「Haa? We are already adult in our world you know? Just drinking sake shouldn't be any problem at all.」

「I'll refrain until I'm twenty years old. Or rather, in the first place I wasn't really a heavy drinker.」

I almost never drank alcohol even in the previous world.

Sometimes I would, but it was only when I got invited to drink.

Marie was exasperated at my story.

「You are really similar with my big brother in the previous life. Big bro also didn't drink much alcohol and did nothing except playing gal game.」

「Don't group me with your big bro. But, it feels like I'll be able to have some talk with him. Though I also played other game than gal game.」

Marie's big bro in her previous life was apparently a dangerous man who might do something messed up if he got angry.

I didn't want to be confused as such guy, but if he liked to play game than I guess we might be able to have something to talk about at least.

——Even so, Marie was completely the same like my little sister.

Marie was thinking of what she was going to drink when she returned to the mansion.

「I want to eat yakitori today. Ah, beer might be better for that!」

「You are also really similar with my little sister you know? That girl, she would drink every night once she got a taste for an alcohol.」

Marie made a really disgusted face when I talked about my little sister in the previous life.

「Stop that. Leon's little sister in the previous life was like that wasn't she? A woman who liked to play innocent right? Don't group me with that kind of detestable fellow. But, if she also like to drink than she might become a good drinking partner. I'll punch her if she is just a hypocrite woman though.」

「Then it would surely become a fist fight. You two are completely the same after all.」

「I'm telling you're wrong! If I could live skillfully like your little sister, I would be able to enjoy my life even more mon!」

Mon! She said. You, how old were you again at the inside?

We were walking on the road at night. The robot that was floating in front of us was illuminating the path.

Marie turned her gaze toward the idyllic scenery of the floating island.

「Ah, firefly.」

「It's a bug that looks similar with firefly. It's not an actual firefly.」

The insect that was radiating light was only flying around. It gave a very tasteful feeling to the scenery.

Marie kicked at pebble on the road with her sandal.

「Even so, everything is really troublesome isn't it? The saintess's items are actually cursed items, then the saintess might be possessed.」

「If only the world is more fantasy like and full with sweet dreams. Or a worl like in gal game, that will be far better.」

「You are stupid. There is no convenient world for man like that. The woman that is in man's imagination is just a fictional creature.」

「It's 2D so it's accurate to call them fictional, but that statement can stab back at you. From a man's perspective, otome game is also just a bunch of nonsense after all.」

「I can differentiate between fiction and reality.」

「As the result of that, you went out with the ideal man in game while meeting failures in reality. Ouch!?」

Marie kicked my butt when I laughed at her.

The pain reverberated until my bone. Marie glared at me while I was holding my butt.

「Don't put on air you virgin. You were also a virgin at the previous life right?」

「W-why are you baselessly accusing me as virgin!? I'll sue you!」

「Your reaction is the proof.」

We were glaring at each other. Then I got tired and averted my face.

「Let's stop this unproductive argument. None of us will get out unscathed from it.」

「Guess so. Let's refrain from saying anything that just pour salt on each other's wound.」

We decided to stop talking about the past because we would just gouge out each other's wound.

We walked on the road at night alone.

The path was only made from hardened soil. Marie then quietly stretched out her hand.

I grabbed that hand and walked while pulling Marie behind me.

The short Marie fastened her pace to catch up with me.

I slowed down my pace in consideration to her.

「——There are a lot of troubles, but we will surely manage somehow, right?」

Marie muttered that uneasily, so I cracked a joke to reassure her.

I wanted to reassure her, and also to persuade myself.

「This is a world of that otome game right? The last boss is also gone already, so how can it get any worse than this. At the end we will get at least the better ending.」

The last boss had been dealt with.

What was left was just to solve the problem with the saintess.

I told myself like that.

What was important for me was——to protect my current environment.

Marie strongly gripped my hand.

「You're, right. Surely it will be fine won't it?」

「What's more can happen after this? We will get busy in dealing with the saintess at the new term, so let's rest for now while we can.」

「Yeah! Ah, I'm hungry. Let's get back quickly and eat.」

「That's the only thing in your mind huh.」

We walked on the road while laughing and returned to the mansion at night.

◇

「We're back~. What's for dinner?」

When we returned home and I made such lighthearted remark, Claris-senpai wearing a maid uniform came running.

Behind her there were also the male seniors who were Claris-senpai's followers following her.

It seemed that they were helping out in my family's mansion every day.

But, everyone was making a grave expression.

「Leon-kun, it's trouble.」

「Is there some kind of accident?」

I got a bad feeling wondering what happened this time. From Claris-senpai's expression, surely it wasn't good news at all.

It seemed that Claris-senpai's family, Atlee House was still in contact with her even now through master.

Because of that, it wouldn't be strange for her to get some kind of information.

I had enough already in my plate without anything more happening, but then Claris-senpai said something that I didn't expect at all.

「Alzer Commonwealth is destroyed.」

「——That's a lie right?」

When I turned my gaze to Marie, she looked dazed and couldn't make any voice.

According to Marie, that place was「the stage of that otome game's sequel」, but that country that would become such a stage was destroyed?

Claris-senpai was getting a fright.

「It's true. The palace is also in commotion right now like a poked beehive. Also, there is a bad rumor spreading.」

There was still more!?

「This is an uncertain information but, it seems the palace is having dissatisfaction with Bartfalt House, no, with Leon-kun. There is a rumor that they are moving to subjugate you. What did you do?」

Unpleasant cold sweat covered my body even though I had just gotten out of hot spring.

Marie also froze with a pale face.

My gaze swam around while I said what came to mind.

「——I beat up his highness Julius after the duel.」

Claris-senpai put her hand on her forehead. The seniors behind her also made a face that seemed to say「Just what the hell are you doing?」.

Eh? Could it be, I would get subjugated by the country?

Short Story — Marie Route the Sixth

◇

Sounds of cannon shot reverberated in the sky without pause.

Smoke came out each time gun or cannon are fired. That smoke spread to the surrounding and making the scenery smoky.

Screaming voices that are mixed with noise and angry yells can be heard from the communicators.

It's extremely clear to an unpleasant degree that the surrounding is in confusion from what's going on in front of them.

「How did it turn out like this when the mission is just for investigation!!」

I, Leon Fou Bartfelt cursed inside Arroganz's cockpit. My finger can't let go of the trigger of my control stick.

The barrel of the gatling gun Arroganz is carrying rotated and spewed bullets.

The bullets shot through a swarm of monsters that numbered more than several thousands.

The bullets always hit no matter where I shot.

The monsters that got shot by the bullets would burst and vanished as black smoke.

That smoke will spread and worsen the surrounding's visibility.

When I checked the rear, four ships including Partner are continuously firing their cannons without pause.

The armors that sallied out from the ships are facing the swarm of monsters.

『Master, enemy reinforcement confirmed.』

An image is magnified at the corner of the monitor. In it are two ships of the kingdom being led by Partner protecting a single flying ship.

The flying ship is flying the flag of Arzel Principality. Its floating in the air without being able to move anywhere.

The damage on the ship is horrible. In that state it's unfeasible for it to be able to escape from the monsters.

Partner is taking in the passengers, but the process is taking time.

「Looks like we picked up something troublesome.」

How did things turn out like this──everything can be traced back to several days ago.

Around the time when spring break has just started.

That day, I came to the royal capital together with my fiancée Marie Fou Rafan.

「Why do we have to come to the capital again even though we had just came home huh.」

Marie is complaining, but her expression is showing anxiety and nervousness.

We got down on the flying ship harbor at the nearby sky above the royal capital. From there we immediately started walking and got into a line to board a small boat.

「It can't be helped. If we want to get detailed information then it's more convenient to be at the capital no matter what. Besides, there is no way we can just ignore the matter of us getting designated as subjugation target.」

There are two reasons why we returned to the capital.

First──to confirm the veracity of the information that the neighboring country Arzel Principality was destroyed.

Inside the letter that was sent to Claris-senpai who I am sheltering in my family home, there was an account that Arzel Principality that will become the stage of that otome game's sequel was destroyed.

But the letter only mentioned that and didn't write any more detail than that.

The one who sent that letter must also be unable to obtain any more detail than that at that time.

We intentionally came to the capital because we judged that there is high possibility that there is new information about the matter in here.

Unfortunately information will only reach the countryside after much delay.

「This will be easy if only Luxion is here though.」

When I muttered the name of Luxion who isn't here, Marie grabbed my wrist.

Her expression looked even more uneasy than before.

「Is that guy really alright? He is moving around as he pleased after all. He seems suspicious somehow. You know, there are a lot of development of AI turning traitor in movie or manga right?」

It seemed Marie is uneasy with how Luxion is moving around as it pleased.

Certainly Luxion is acting too selfish recently.

He is ignoring me even when I gave him order, and it weighed my mind how he is secretly taking action outside of my knowledge.

Just what in the world is he doing?

「He can't go against me his master.」

「There isn't any guarantee of that!」

「Don't worry. If he is planning to betray me, then he would have already do just that since a long time ago.」

We won't be alive if Luxion seriously betrayed us.

Marie reluctantly agreed when I told her that.

「T-that's true. But, he is moving around as he pleased too much. You should just order him more strictly.」

「I'll do that when he return. ——More importantly, let's take care of the more pressing trouble first.」

The second reason of us returning to the capital is the information that Bartfalt House is getting considered as enemy by the palace.

Marie is observing the surrounding fearfully.

「We came to the capital without thinking much but, are we really going to be okay? We aren't going to suddenly get caught aren't we?」

For some reason I'm reminded of my sister in my previous life when looking at how scared Marie is. It made me wanted to tease her.

I laughed flippantly and lightly joked at Marie.

「I wonder. I beat up his highness Julius after the duel, so it's highly possible that they are holding a grudge to me. In the worst case perhaps I might get executed.」

「How can you laugh about that huh!」

Marie hit me repeatedly with her hands. It's a bit painful.

「That hurts so stop it! Your fist is heavy. It resounded until my bone.」

Marie has a frail appearance, but her fist is heavy.

Luxion said this before, that Marie has highly dense bones and muscles so she is heavier than she looked.

I mustn't get tricked by her appearance.

She is a woman who is strong both physically and mentally──that's Marie.

I stopped walking and turned around. I turned my gaze toward my huge flying ship Partner.

「Arroganz and others are going to do something if push comes to shove.」

Even Marie's anxiety softened when I mentioned Arroganz.

「Even though his parent Luxion is that willful, Arroganz is really a good child isn't he?」

The AI loaded inside Arroganz is an inferior version of Luxion.

He is inferior ability wise, even so his desire to learn is high and he also follow order obediently, so Marie's impression of him is「good child」.

He is also unreliable in many things, but Arroganz's strength can be called as overwhelming in this world.

Just a little while ago we got cornered into a difficult fight against that black knight old man, but it's unthinkable that there is still that many enemy of that level, or rather I don't even want to think about it.

In fact there is no combat force in Hohlfahrt Kingdom that can possibly rival Arroganz and Partner.

The exception might be the royal family's ship I guess? But even that is a trump card of the kingdom that won't be dispatched so easily.

It's unthinkable that it will be send out in order to capture us.

We embarked to a dangerous place like the capital also because we have a guarantee that we would be able to return back safely.

「I hope it's just a bad rumor.」

Bartfalt House got designated as an enemy of Hohlfahrt Kingdom——we entered the capital in order to investigate that rumor.

I visited a mansion in the capital.

The owner of that mansion is the head of Atlee House who served as a minister until just a little while ago, Barnard Fia Atlee.

He lost his position due to the incident that Claris-senpai caused and after that it seems he is living quietly in his mansion.

The man with small body build and mild-mannered expression welcomed our visit without any reluctance.

The former minister Barnard guided us into a reception room where we talked.

「Many of the servants in this mansion has resigned. Right now it's difficult to even take care of this mansion, but thanks to me having nothing to do my life here isn't that bad.」

Minister Barnard said that while smiling, but to other people who heard it, his words would sound like an unwillingness to admit defeat.

In fact Atlee House that lost the minister post is ruined after all.

Marie and I drank the tea that the butler who remained in the mansion brewed while listening about the detailed information from former minister Barnard.

「Looks like there are a lot of troubles brewing.」

「The inside and outside of the palace are also in chaos right now. Thinking back, it was fortunate of me to be dismissed from my post. ——Is what you want to ask about the movement in the palace?」

When Marie and I nodded, it seemed former minister Barnard guessed what we wanted to ask him.

He told the butler to leave the room before starting to speak in detail.

「His highness the crown prince and his surrounding are spreading the rumor that Bartfalt House is planning to rebel. The source of the rumor is several hot-blooded youngsters running their mouth impertinently about forming a subjugation army.」

Marie's shoulders slumped in relieve hearing that.

「Thank god. In that case we won't get subjugated right?」

「It doesn't change the fact that his highness is holding a grudge to us though.」

I let out a small sigh and sent a gaze to Marie who is sitting beside me that the situation is still one where we can't let our guard down.

「Ugh! W-well that's true.」

What we heard just now sounded like a bad joke but, the situation is the worst if the crown prince his highness Julius is spreading bad rumor about us.

「Perhaps it's just a matter of time until the kingdom's military move.」

「So in the end it's no good isn't it!」

After all the future ruler of the country is hating me and my family.

——As I thought, I overdid it at the exhibition match.

However former minister Barnard denied that worst case in my imagination.

「About that matter, the saintess is denying that rumor.」

「The saintess is?」

What came to mind is the saintess's figure when she asked me for help during our meeting. Her figure at that time left a deep impression in me.

It still tightened my chest when I recalled it right now.

For some reason there is always an uneasiness bubbling somewhere in my heart, as though I'm forgetting something important, like I have suffered an unexpected defeat.

「Yes, it seemed the saintess remonstrated his highness the crown prince and the people around him. His highness also can't go against the saintess and apparently they are doing their best to erase the rumor.」

Marie looked at my face from the side uneasily, but we can't talk about the saintess here.

I changed the topic after knowing that my family is safe for now.

「I'm relieved to hear that. One more thing, is there any new information about Alzer Principality? I heard that country got destroyed.」

Former minister Barnard shook his head.

「Unfortunately the information that the palace obtained isn't much. In the first place, this information came from the kingdom's merchants who escaped from the principality. It seems that the palace will dispatch an investigation team soon, but apparently they can't gather enough manpower, and the movement of the dukedom is also concerning.」

「I see. Even so it's amazing that Barnard-san know that much about this.」

Even though he shouldn't be a minister anymore, how can he obtain this much information?

Former minister Barnard smiled to us.

「It's only natural to have one or two connections after working as long as I was in the palace. I wonder if I can be of help to my daughter's savior with this?」

Former minister Barnard was asked to take responsibility for his daughter and resigned from his post, and right now he is waiting for the palace's verdict, but I can see composure from his attitude.

Or perhaps, he has completely resigned himself in regard to everything?

「You have been a really big help.」

「That's great. And, what are you planning to do now?」

「My family is also worried about the situation. So we are going home right away after this t tell them about this news.」

When I told former minister Barnard that I want to reassure my family quickly, he made a meek expression that differed from his composure until now.

「About that, can I ask you to wait for a bit? I will send a letter to your family to explain this. There is someone who I want you to meet no matter what.」

「Someone?」

I rode a carriage just as former minister Barnard told me and headed to a very large mansion.

The someone that he mentioned is a teacher in the academy and also my tea ceremony master, that person.

Marie isn't close with master, so she refused to come together with me.

It seemed that she isn't good in dealing with master because of his title as mannerism instructor.

The mansion has an atmosphere that made felt its age, but it's being cared for very well.

As I stared at the mansion thinking of how tasteful it is, former minister Barnard got down from the carriage and called out to a gardener.

That gardener is a man past middle age with a straight and firm back.

「You haven't changed at all.」

Mister Barnard seemed familiar with the gardener. No——he is acting like he is talking with someone of higher status.

I hurriedly got down from the carriage and ran toward the gardener.

「Master!」

「Mister Leon, so you are back in the capital.」

「W-why is master doing gardening work!?」

「I'm entrusted with the maintenance of this old mansion. Sometimes it feels good to do gardening work by myself, because with that I can enjoy tea in a garden that I have tended by myself.」

Master smiled brightly. Even though he isn't putting on airs, he looked like he is overflowing with elegance.

「I'll also help!」

There is no way I can let master do the gardening work by himself. But when I offered my help, master refused me gently.

「I can't possibly make Mister Leon to help me with this. Besides, I want to ask for your help with a different matter.」

「A different matter?」

Master looked toward Mister Barnard. Both of them nodded to each other and spoke of the reason why they called me here.

「You are aware about the matter of Alzer Principality yes? The palace can't even confirm the fact that the country is destroyed.」

The kingdom is busy with the war against the dukedom, so it can't even dispatch an investigation team for this matter.

From the way master said it, it seemed that he wanted to personally request me to investigate.

「The kingdom still has combat force remaining isn't it?」

「There are many people who desire to participate in the invasion into the dukedom's territory though. The military also doesn't want to join the investigation team because they won't be able to participate in the battle with guaranteed win.」

「The military is?」

So the military officers are reluctant to get dispatched as investigation team because they wanted to obtain achievement in war? Then former minister Barnard explained to me about the circumstance surrounding that.

「Before the invasion to the dukedom, the military is gathering combat force from every place. Because of that the forces assigned to the borders are thinned down, so the military doesn't want to assign combat force to other place unnecessarily.」

Hohlfahrt Kingdom has a lot of enemies around it, so when war broke out, there will be other countries that started moving to take advantage of the opening.

The kingdom military that were stationed at the borders and the feudal lord nobles wanted to gather as much combat force as possible.

It seemed that they have no leeway to dispatch investigation team in the middle of such situation.

「If Mister Leon lead an investigation team under the kingdom's order, the people who harbored needless misunderstanding toward you will also fall silent. This task won't bring any disadvantage for your family.」

Master gave me an offer that he wanted me to lead the investigation team.

「So it's to show that my relationship with the kingdom is going well?」

There is bad rumor about me circulating, but if I led an investigation team because the palace ordered me to, the surrounding will also think「So it's just a rumor huh」.

Personally I wanted to go home right away, but earning point from here also isn't a bad idea.

「I don't mind. I'll send a letter to back home.」

Master grabbed my hand with both hands and displayed his gratitude.

「Thank you. I too can feel relieved if Mister Leon is taking care of this matter.」

I'm also happy that I can be useful for master.

But, master explained the current situation to me with a sorrowful expression.

「To be honest, the present situation isn't good.」

「Eh?」

「If you are forced to make a decision, what will you do at that time Mister Leon? No, what's important is what do you want to do.」

My fickle mood vanished when master talked about making decision.

When I looked at how serious master is, even I realized that this isn't an atmosphere where I can joke around.

「Is the situation that dangerous?」

「Can you understand the seriousness if I say that the situation is like a powder keg? We don't know when the fire will be lit.」

Just for a moment I wondered if it would be better for Marie to be here so I can feel healed, but there is also a part of me that think that it's better instead that she isn't here.

Now then, what should I do?

I thought for a bit before the conclusion came out right away.

Sadly, the current me doesn't have any choice.

When I turned my gaze toward the former minister Barnard, he is smiling but his eyes are radiating seriousness.

Master said that he will respect my decision.

「──I see. Although, for me there is almost no choice at all that remains an option for me.」

──And so, I ended up leading an investigation team toward Alzer Principality.

Other than Partner, I'm only bringing two flying ships of the kingdom that were prepared for me.

It seemed that even this number was gathered after much effort.

Because the purpose of the team is for investigation, at first nobody was concerned with gathering combat force.

We just need to run if it get dangerous──when we were thinking that, we found a flying ship running away from Alzer Principality and rushed to help. That was what started this.

Monsters are swarming the flying ship, so I boarded Arroganz and launched to help.

「Why is there no end to them!」

I opened the container on Arroganz's back and dozens of missiles are fired from there. They exploded and destroyed many monsters at the surrounding.

The monsters that got swallowed by the explosions vanished, but the next monsters advanced forward as though to plug the opened holes.

I can only stay here and faced the monsters until the rescue is finished.

In the middle of such situation, a happy notification came from Arroganz.

『Rescue finished. Beginning the withdrawal of Partner.』

「Yosh! Let's run away immediately.」

『Firing missiles.』

Multiple missiles are fired from Partner. They headed toward the swarm of monsters and caused explosions.

The scale of the explosions are bigger than Arroganz's missiles. A lot of monsters are scorched into black smoke.

「We're running away before enemy reinforcement arrives. Ain't no way I'm going to accompany them forever.」

I spat out that parting line and we ran away.

In the end, we are unable to obtain detailed information from Alzer Principality.

「I don't want to fight anymore!」

Arroganz landed on Partner's deck and I got down from it. There I realized how sweaty I am.

My sweats are dripping on the deck.

Maintenance robots gathered around Arroganz and began to service it.

When the armor panels at various spots are opened, the heat locked inside became steam that burst out.

If it wasn't for Arroganz, I would have gotten swallowed by the swarm of monsters in the middle and died.

I felt scared for a moment when I imagined that.

I walked with unsteady steps and grabbed the handrail. When I looked back, I can see the swarm of monsters are heading this way.

But, it looks like it's impossible for them to catch up to us who are running away wholeheartedly.

I let out a deep sigh in relieve, then I crumbled down on the spot and sat down.

「It's finally over.」

Marie came out from inside the ship toward me who is completely exhausted.

「Leon! It's awful!」

「Is it enemy?」

I grabbed on the handrail and stood up. Marie shook her head several times to me energetically.

「That's not it. Anyway just come with me!」

Marie grabbed my hand and dragged me inside the ship.

When we arrived at the sickbay, there is a blonde girl lying down on the bed.

She is muttering something with a blank gaze.

I immediately turned my gaze to Marie and asked her the situation.

「Can she be treated?」

Marie looked down and shook her head.

「Impossible. It's too late already.」

「She is still alive! She is also still breathing and muttering something like that!」

「Normally she would have died since a long time ago already!」

The girl is muttering something.

She doesn't look dead at all, but Marie grabbed the girl's right hand.

The crest on the back of her right hand is shining faintly.

But, the crest is getting thinner and thinner.

「This is the cause. This is just my guess but, I think this is the sacred tree's crest. This thing might be what is barely keeping her alive.」

「The sacred tree's crest? Is it something from the sequel?」

I mentioned the sequel because I recalled the story about the crest that Marie told me.

The stage of that otome game's sequel was Alzer Principality.

I was also told that the crest of the sacred tree is an important factor in the story.

Marie pulled me closer to the girl and then she stepped back to leave the rest to me.

「Anyway listen to her story. If it's this person then she should know about the situation in detail. I──have to go healing the other people.」

In other words, Marie can't save this person.

There are also still a lot of other injured people. It seems that Marie is prioritizing them.

I could see Marie making a regretful face when leaving the room.

I approached the girl and grabbed her hand, then I brought my face closer and talked to her.

「Can you talk? What happened at the principality?」

I carefully talked louder than usual, but not so loud that it will startle the girl.

When the girl opened her eyes, she looked at me with lightless eyes.

「I-I'm──Louise Sara Rault. The daughter of Rault House that is serving as the chairman representative of the six great no──bles.」

The girl──Louise-san is trying to convey something to me even while looking pained sometimes.

Speaking of Rault House, according to Marie it should be the great noble who would become the "last boss".

Is Louise-san related to that person?

「N-not long ago──a very large flying ship appeared at the sky. It was a mysterious flying ship that was never seen before. Right after that, the sacred tree became strange.」

「Mysterious flying ship?」

For an instant, Luxion's ship body flashed in my mind.

From the perspective of this world's human, that ship will look like a lump of metal to them.

「It was very large──and, the army of the principality was helpless before it. There was nothing we could do before that overpowering enemy.」

Alzer Principality is a powerful country that boasted to be unbeatable when it came to defensive battle.

Such country was destroyed so easily. I wished this is just a joke.

「Your country was unbeatable in defensive battle wasn't it?」

「We were powerless before that flying ship. The flying ship fired lights. Our allies that got pierced by those lights sunk one after another. Otou-sama and others tried to do something using the sacred tree's power──cough」

Louise-san coughed painfully. She coughed out blood.

Looking closer, the radiance of the crest on her right hand is getting weaker.

「Looks like I don't have long.」

Louise-san looked at her right hand while muttering sadly.

I urged her to continue. A part of me wanted her to not force herself, but right now I wanted to get as much information as possible.

「──What happened with the sacred tree's power?」

Louise-san seemed to guess my feeling. She resumed talking even while feeling in pain.

Louise-san is also desperate in order to tell about the situation of her motherland.

「They failed in fusing with the sacred tree. My parents──died at that time. I was told to spread the news about this──if only that girl didn't show up」

Louise-san's expression turned grave. Tears of mortification spilled out from her eyes.

「If only the survivor of Lespinasse House didn't get in the way──that detestable fellow」

「Lespinasse House got in the way?」

「If only that girl didn't get in the way, things wouldn't turn out like this.」

The survivor of Lespinasse House, a destroyed large noble house──in the sequel the survivor of that house should be a girl who is the main character.

Why did the main character got in the way? Besides, Rault House was the antagonist house wasn't it?

Rather, shouldn't they be at the side doing the destruction of the country?

While I'm confused because questions without answer are coming up one after another in my mind, Louise-san wiped her tears of frustration and continued her story.

「The priestess calmed down the rampaging sacred tree. But, the sacred tree turned into a sinister form and absorbed her. Even now she is suffering in our homeland. Please, I don't know who are you but, I beg you──please save Noelle」

By priestess, did she meant the main character of that otome game's sequel?

Certainly Marie said that the female of Lespinasse House can become the priestess.

In that case, there is a discrepancy with what she said just now.

「The priestess is a member of Lespinasse House right? Didn't she betray your country?」

Her explanation is inconsistent.

Louise-san too isn't in a state that is fit to give explanation. The accuracy of her information is doubtful.

It seemed that Louise-san can't hear my voice anymore. She is mumbling in regret.

「Noelle──I should have properly talked more with you」

Louise-san's consciousness is getting hazy. She became unable to even answer my question.

But, at the end she muttered.

「Leon, I'm sorry. Onee-chan, couldn't protect anything.」

「Eh?」

Why did my name come out there?

No, she must meant someone else with the same name like me.

But, it strangely bothered me.

Then, Louise-san looked at me and reached out with her hand.

When I grabbed her trembling hand, Louise-san smiled.

「So you came to pick me up huh, Leon.」

「No, umm」

「I'm sorry. I'm really sorry. I'm sorry that Onee-chan, is really a useless Onee-chan. Even though I wanted to protect──I couldn't protect anything. Everyone did their best to stop the sacred tree but, we didn't make it in time. I'm sorry, Leon.」

Marie who was treating the injured found a terribly scared girl around the same age with her among them.

That girl had bright pink hair. She was holding her head while crying.

Marie approached and called to her.

「It's fine now. I'll treat your injury too immediately.」

「──Someone like me should just die.」

「What are you saying when you managed to survive until this far!」

Marie got angry by the girl's words, but the person herself was continuing to talk to herself.

「I should die in that place. No, that's wrong. I should have never been born. Everyone died. Because of my fault everyone──both Emile and Sergey died to protect me. Because I did something unnecessary, a lot of people died. I pushed off everything to big sis, I──everything is my fault.」

The trembling girl yelled with a loud voice that everything was her responsibility.

Then one of the injured who heard it stood up.

「Are you a survivor of Lespinasse House?」

The man was seriously injured. He was standing by using a sword as a cane replacement.

His gaze that was filled with naked hatred was pointed toward the pink haired girl Marie was treating.

「Wait a second, this is a medical room! Put down your weapon!」

Marie stood between the two to intermediate.

(Lespinasse House? Could it be, this girl is the main character of the sequel? She mentioned Emile and Sergey, come to think of it they are the names of the sequel's capture targets. Could it be, she failed and entered a bad end?)

Marie never thought that Alzer Principality would meet a bad end.

The injured knights and soldiers inside the medical room forced themselves to stand up one after another.

Even some women wearing maid uniform forced their injured body to stand up and grabbed nearby weapon.

The atmosphere inside the room was starting to turn dangerous. The other injured people were only watching in confusion.

The people who stood up were apparently related to Rault House.

「This is for Alberck-sama.」

The man who stood up first was a man in his forty.

He had good body build and from his appearance he seemed to be a knight of high standing.

That strong looking man with splendid beard on his face was pointing his sword to a girl.

「I told you to stop!」

Marie spread open her hands to protect the girl, but the knights wouldn't back off.

「Move aside! That woman destroyed our homeland! She is the one who killed Alberck-sama and his wife! And even the princess too!」

「T-this is our ship! I'll drive off you guys if you don't listen to me!」

「I'll jump off this ship right away after killing her. That's why, move aside!」

The other injured people tried to stop the armed knights and soldiers, but they wouldn't listen.

「What's with the commotion?」

Marie saw Leon finally coming to there and felt relieved. She dragged the girl until the entrance.

She hid behind Leon's back while explaining the situation.

「The people of Rault House are angry. They insisted to kill this girl and won't listen to me. It looks like this girl is a survivor of Lespinasse House. Because of that the people of Rault House are angry at her.」

When Leon learned that the injured people who were standing up were from Rault House, he immediately told them to move to another room.

「I need to tell you guys about your princess.」

Hearing that, the knight with the highest rank in this place lowered down his weapon and walked toward Leon.

The way he was dragging his feet to walk forward was painful to watch, but that knight approached Leon with his eyes opened wide.

「──Leon-sama?」

Marie was bewildered by the knight's reaction, but Leon himself only scratched his head with a complicated expression.

The people of Rault House are surrounding the bed of Louise-san who is almost completely unconscious. All of them are crying.

「Princess, please open your eyes!」

「Why is our princess is-」

「If even the princess died, then Rault House will-」

Louise-san's right hand is shining with faint green light.

It seemed the sacred tree's crest is anchoring its owner to this world, but even that light is gradually weakening.

At this rate it will be just a matter of time until she died.

The knight of Rault House──a man at his forty who introduced himself as Oliver crumbled on the floor with tears streaming from his eyes.

「I couldn't protect my master, and now even the princess」

The injured maids are holding Louise-san's hands while continuing to call out to her.

I hesitated for a moment seeing them like that, but I can't put the cart before the horse and asked Oliver-san.

「I want to know what happened. Can you tell me what happened at Alzer Principality?」

「——Very well. I'll tell you everything.」

Oliver-san started talking with his shoulders still slumped down. What he told me is mostly the same with what Louise-san said.

A large flying ship suddenly appeared and destroyed the principality.

After that it seemed the sacred tree ran wild.

It seemed that the ship that was taken down by the monsters was an evacuation ship that Rault House prepared.

No wonder a lot of the passengers are people from Rault House.

It seemed the ship retrieved refugees at the harbor and departed, but after that they were chased by monsters and ran around all over the place.

We appeared at that timing and now we are here.

After hearing his story, I asked him about what Louise-san said.

「I have one question though. Louise-san called me Leon when she saw me. And it's true that my name is Leon. Do you have any idea about it?」

The people of Rault House who gathered here made a shocked face when they heard my name.

Olvier-san lifted his head and looked up at me, then he talked about Leon of Rault House.

「It's the name of our deceased young master. It was something that had happened more than ten years ago. He was five years old at that time. His atmosphere is similar with you.」

「A young master of Rault House is similar with me?」

「If he is still alive, surely he will be a splendid youth like you. I myself was also surprised when I first saw you.」

It seemed that Leon of Rault House died when Oliver-san was still young.

It's strange being told that a five years old boy is similar with me after they saw me.

「So because of that she mistook me as her little brother huh.」

「What did princess said?」

「──She said sorry that she couldn't protect anything. It seemed that they tried to stop the sacred tree, but failed.」

Oliver-san and the people of Rault House here shed tears when they heard what Louise-san said.

「──So it was impossible even for Alberck-sama. ──If only that girl of Lespinasse House didn't get in the way」

「Is this daughter of Lespinasse House the girl just now?」

It seemed they are really holding a grudge, but please don't cause any bloodbath inside Partner.

「Aa~, then who is Noelle?」

When I asked about the name that Louise-san mentioned in order to divert their focus, Oliver-san made a complicated expression and averted his gaze from me.

「She is that girl's twin. Her elder sister's name is Noelle. She lent her help to stop the sacred tree's rampage but, it ended in failure.」

「Twin?」

「When Alberck-sama and others risked their life to stop the sacred tree's rampage, they got in the way and destroyed Alzer!」

So one of the twins of Lespinasse House was cooperative, while the other one got in the way. This is complicated.

I sighed and surveyed the room. The people of Rault House are looking sad because their master and family died in vain.

It looks like they are really looking up to their master and his family. It will be pointless even if I told them to not hold any grudge if it's like this.

I exited the room.

Waiting outside is Marie who has finished the treatment of the injured for the moment.

She is wearing an apron and gloves, but all of them are soaked with blood.

「How is it?」

「I heard their story but, I still don't know what is going on in Alzer Principality right now. I learned that the sacred tree is still rampaging even now though.」

「I see. ──What are we going to do now?」

「Our job will be finished if we go back and report this.」

There isn't any need to force ourselves to go until Alzer Principality.

Or rather, the force that we have at hand isn't reassuring.

Certainly Arroganz and Partner are strong, but it will be a bit dangerous to face an army of more than ten thousand monsters with just them.

It's not impossible but, there is no need for us to go that far.

When I looked inside the room, I saw the unconscious Louise-san.

「I want to just go back and finish this job though.」

While I'm talking with Marie about our plan going forward, a maintenance robot for the ship's interior approached while floating up and down.

When it found us, it started moving its body and hands to desperately explain something to us.

「What?」

The maintenance robot is pointing at the direction of the passage that is leading to the hangar.

In the hangar where Arroganz is being serviced.

When I came here with Marie, there is Arroganz with its armors stripped off. He is in the middle of maintenance.

Its internal parts are exposed and its basic frame is laid bare.

It was Arroganz who called us here.

『Luxion found. He is nearby.』

「That guy is here!? Where? Call him here right away!」

If Luxion is here then we will be able to obtain detailed information too.

I wanted to call him right away, but Arroganz said that it's impossible and pressed us to make a choice.

『He is in an area with a lot of magic particle. Can't contact. But, perhaps he is there.』

「Then let's head there right away. With Luxion, then perhaps we will be able to heal Louise-san too.」

『But difficult. Luxion is at the sky above Alzer Principality.』

「Ha?」

『The place where a great swarm of monsters are living. To meet Luxion, we need to break through the monster swarm. What to do master?』

What to do, he asked. Should we forced our way through a swarm of monsters to meet Luxion, or should we return to Hohlfahrt Kingdom just like this?

If we go back then there won't be any danger, but Louise-san will die.

If we forced our way, there is a possibility of Louise-san getting saved, and the situation will also become clear.

But, the most concerning thing here is Luxion.

It couldn't be helped that Marie's suspicion toward Luxion is deepening.

「Wait. The talk about a mysterious ship appearing in the sky, could it be Luxion? That guy, he destroyed Alzer Principality!?」

Why is Luxion at Alzer Principality?

To learn that, we have to meet with Luxion no matter what.

「Arroganz, can we do it?」

Arroganz answered my question.

『──Recommending a switch to heavy armament assault mode.』

「Permitted.」

When I gave my permission, the maintenance robots inside the hangar gathered.

They took out the new armor and weapons of Arroganz from the containers and then they began the switching work.

Marie grabbed my cloth seeing the heavy atmosphere.

「Wait! What are you planning!? There is no need to be reckless. We can just call for Luxion later!」

「I'm going to question him right away.」

A large backpack is attached on Arroganz.

It's a large booster that is also packed with weapons to the brim.

Orbs of AI are attached to various places on Arroganz.

It seems that he is planning to entrust all the other functions except frame control to other AIs.

Thick armor plates are prepared and large weapons that aren't usually used are put into Arroganz's hands.

His form became something that is worthy to be called as fully armed.

The meaning of heavy armament assault mode is just as the name suggested, it's a mode for charging into enemy territory and fired heavy weapons like there is no tomorrow.

It's a level up for physical attack.

It's unclear whether the concept of level up existed in this world though.

Around that time.

At Hohlfahrt Kingdom, the saintess Olivia was in the palace's office.

It was a room that was prepared for Olivia. Everything inside like the furniture was all extravagant.

Because Julius and others kept bringing extravagant things even if she didn't say anything, the room was turning really gaudy.

However, no matter how many expensive presents she received, Olivia's heart wasn't moved at all.

It was only her hatred toward Julius and others that got fanned up, while her fixation toward Leon who was away from the kingdom was getting stronger.

「I wonder who was it who dispatched Leon away in the investigation team.」

She threw away the report that she had finished reading. Kyle who was standing by inside the room immediately picked it and tidied it up.

Recently Olivia was always in a bad mood.

She used all the authority that she had and planned to invite Leon to the palace.

She intended to place him on her side as her knight. As for his title, she could just appoint him as royal guard or elite guard or whatever.

Anyway she wanted to put him at her side.

And yet, the person himself was going to Alzer Principality leading an investigation team.

If it was like this, even Olivia was unable to call Leon here right away.

Kyle fearfully asked the irritated Olivia.

「A-are you really going to appoint that person as the saintess's knight? I don't think that his highness will approve it though.」

In fact Julius was desperately protesting when Olivia mentioned that she was going to make Leon into her personal knight.

But, for the current Olivia a protest at that level wouldn't hinder her at all.

「It's not Julius who can decide that but me. My decision means everything.」

「B-but」

「Kyle, I wonder, whose servant are you?」

「──Olivia-sama.」

Kyle trembled in fear, then he immediately closed his mouth and returned to work.

Olivia turned her gaze to outside the window.

「Perhaps it's time.」

She didn't said any more, and Kyle also didn't ask.

But, the plan inside Olivia was moving to the next stage.

「This cannot be!」

Julius was throwing around his things in anger inside his room in the palace. He looked at a piece of paper and ruffled his hair roughly.

It was a royal edict that appointed Leon as the saintess's knight.

Olivia gave her counsel and the king Roland agreed to give the official command.

For Julius who wished to consign Leon to oblivion, this was an unforgivable development.

However, it was Olivia who gave the counsel. Even Julius couldn't deny her.

Inside the palace, Olivia's influence was getting stronger than even Julius.

A large part of it was also because Duke Redgrave had lost his standing and Margrave Frampton who gained power in his place was strongly supporting Olivia.

What Julius couldn't forgive wasn't about him losing influence, but that Olivia was getting obsessed with Leon.

Jilk was also inside the room, but he didn't criticize Julius's behavior.

「Your highness's anger is just. But, Olivia-san has accepted him. If we show a careless action here, we will lose Olivia-san's trust.」

「I already know that!」

Julius also understood that logically, but his heart couldn't accept it.

「──Jilk, is it possible to assassinate him?」

And then, Julius sought for a way to kill Leon secretly from his foster brother.

He was Julius's foster sibling because he was a retainer who had been raised together with him since they were children like brothers.

In the future Jilk would obtain the position as Julius's close aide.

Because of that, he was also taught about ways that couldn't be done openly.

「It's possible but, there will be those who suspect us if he die in this timing. It doesn't matter even if the rabbles suspect us but, there is a possibility that Olivia-san will suspect us.」

「T-that's no good. That's the only thing that can't be allowed to happen.」

Julius feared getting hated by Olivia.

Olivia was the only meaning of life for Julius right now.

「Why it has to be him, Olivia. Why won't you look at me?」

The fully equipped figure of Arroganz can be seen on Partner's deck.

It got put outside the hanger in order to sally out, but its figure is too different from normal.

A catapult is prepared on the deck. There a lot of injured people are gathering to see what's going on.

They are looking this way like onlookers, but I have no time to bother with them.

Marie held down her hair that are messed up by the wind while confirming with me who is going to enter the cockpit.

「So you're really going to do it!」

Talking normally in this strong wind will cause the voice to be drowned out, so both of us are talking loudly.

「Obviously! I'm going to see what's going on with my own eyes! I'll also give Luxion a punch on his face!」

Marie looked conflicted and turned her gaze to Arroganz and me.

「Still, why is the armor's color over the top like that huh? There is even rocket attached on the back.」

「Because it's cool.」

「Which part!? Somehow it looks like it's bundled up with too much clothes!」

It looks like a girl can't understand a boy's romance.

Boy loved over the top armor that is packed full with weapons.

The current form of Arroganz is truly the dream of any boy.

Arroganz is shouldering a large rocket booster, added with all the extra armors and weapons, now he looked a size bigger.

Making use of this equipment is extremely simple.

Arroganz will travel in high speed toward the destination, and after he arrived he will annihilate the enemies with all the firepower he has.

Arroganz will cut across the monsters that we are estimated to encounter on the way.

This is the best way to get closer to the sacred tree.

Unfortunately the rocket booster will be used up and detached when we arrived at the destination, so it will be hard to return back.

If we are unlucky we might get isolated in the middle of nothing but enemies, but I estimated that we will manage somehow.

I got into the cockpit and closed the hatch, then Arroganz's electronic sound talked to me.

『Preparation all green.』

Arroganz moved his large body and started preparing to launch.

Arroganz that is fixed in place with wire floated up.

『Ignition』

The rocket booster's nozzle spouted flame with Arroganz's ignition signal.

The wires got disconnected from the momentum and the iron plank that is prepared behind blocked the flame.

A thunderous roar that is like an explosion reached until inside the cockpit. My ears and body hurt.

「It's hard to carry out romance in reality huh.」

『Master, you will bite your tongue if you talk.』

After Arroganz warned me, the view in the monitor looked like it's streaming backward with great speed.

My body got pressed on the seat and even just holding the control stick is difficult.

Why am I doing something like this?

This too is all Luxion's fault.

I'll really punch him on the face when I find him.

After Arroganz flew away, Marie was watching Leon who was at the front of the rocket smoke with worry from the deck.

「That guy, he keep acting recklessly.」

Why was Leon going this far? Marie couldn't understand──that was what she wanted to say but, she could somehow understand.

Oliver came to deck with a cane supporting his body. He asked her about Leon who was flying away.

「Just what is Leon-sama, no, Leon-dono is planning to do? Also that armor, it's just too different.」

Oliver was astonished by Arroganz's performance. Marie gave him a vague answer.

「I also don't really know, so how about asking Leon when he came back?」

「I-is that so? And, what is the reason for Leon-dono going there?」

Marie sighed at Oliver's persistence and answered him.

It wasn't like she was feeling displeased by Oliver. It because she felt like Leon got troublesome things pushed on him.

「He said that he is going to Alzer and defeat the sacred tree.」

「Just by himself!?」

「That will be enough if it's him. Let me tell you, he is really strong after all.」

Marie explained while hiding the matter of Luxion, then Oliver looked toward the direction where Arroganz was flying away.

From the direction there was no doubt that Leon was heading toward the principality. He made a surprised face before tears dripped down from his eyes.

Marie rushed toward him in panic seeing that. She supported Oliver who was about to sit down on the deck.

「Wait, are you okay!? If you're feeling pain then go get some rest.」

「That's not it. That person who has the same name like the young master is heading to stop the sacred tree. It feels like fate.」

「Fate? Sorry but, Leon isn't related at all with this matter.」

「Perhaps that's right. But, there is a relation to us. The dream of the young master who died young was to become the guardian who protect the sacred tree.」

Marie recalled that otome game's sequel when she heard the guardian mentioned.

Her old memory vividly revived in her mind. She even recalled the game setting that she had forgotten.

「Guardian? That's the number one big shot in the principality isn't it?」

The sacred tree's guardian. Originally that was the role that would be obtained by the male capture target who got chosen by the main character of that otome game's sequel.

「Alberck-sama, madam, and princess──young master is going.」

Oliver spoke of his master and his family while sobbing.

Leon wasn't their young master.

But, it seemed that to Oliver and others, their young master's image had overlapped with Leon.

「──Everyone is expecting too much from that guy.」

Marie felt like Leon's responsibility was getting heavier each day and spoke with a displeased tone.

And then, she was getting doubtful toward this world that wasn't progressing like in the scenario of that otome game.

(Just what in the world is going on? In the first place, I never thought that a bad end would happen. If only that girl called Lelia can speak in detail about what's going on.)

When Arroganz arrived at the center of the principality, there is a strange sight unfolding.

「Disgusting-!」

A gigantic and sinister looking plant that is dyed white is moving meanderingly.

Insect type monsters are flying around in its surrounding. They are like black beads whirling around what was once the sacred tree to protect it.

The monster with sinister form that cannot be called as the sacred tree has many red large eyes all over its body.

Those eyes noticed Arroganz's approach.

「You are too late in noticing!」

『Purging booster.』

The booster on Arroganz's back is detached and fly toward the monster like a missile.

When the monsters tried to protect the tree monster from the missile by tackling it, it caused a great explosion and a lot of the monster vanished as black smoke.

「So it won't let itself get defeated easily huh. Arroganz, you can do it right?」

『Yes, master.』

The weapons attached on Arroganz started moving.

The insect monsters are approaching, but the interceptor gatling cannons that are attached on various parts of Arroganz shot them and they vanished.

「Don't think you guys can approach so easily. The current Arroganz is invincible!」

When Arroganz charged toward the tree monster, the insect monsters on his way got blown away.

Like that Arroganz clung on the tree monster, but it was far bigger than I imagined.

「It really look like a mountain.」

I landed on the monster's branch, but I'm shocked with how large it is.

Even its branch has enough space for Arroganz to stand on.

Arroganz is categorized as huge among all types of armor, but when I looked at the surrounding scenery, it made me felt like I have been turned into a midget.

「Now then, what are we going to do now?」

『Firing missiles.』

After Arroganz announced, a part of the armor was blown away and missiles showed themselves.

They have drill attached on their tips. The missiles scattered to the surrounding and stabbed the tree monster, then their drill tips rotated and invaded inside.

After a while the missiles explosded from the inside and caused cracks at the surrounding.

Red liquid spurted out from the cracked places. It looked like monster blood.

「Is this thing really a monster?」

『Investigation required.』

「You're really serious huh. You don't need to answer seriously like that every time.」

Arroganz strangely serious side is really similar with Luxion.

Arroganz raised the large rifles his hands are holding and started shooting at the fragile looking spots of the tree monster.

Optical weapon severed the monster's branches and live bullet weapon caused explosion when it hit and spread out the damage.

The tree monster is too gigantic that it's unable to deal with the small Arroganz.

「So it's only at this level when we manage to get this close to it. There is nothing to worry about if it's like this.」

『Insect type monsters are approaching.』

The insect type monsters are converging to defeat Arroganz.

Our gatling guns fired. The insect monsters aren't allowed to get closer.

But, at this rate our ammo will immediately run out.

「The analysis?」

『Twenty percent remaining.』

「Then let's run around to buy time.」

『In the middle of analyzing. Arroganz can't provide support.』

Arroganz can't control the armor because he is in the middle of searching for the enemy's weak point.

If Luxion is here, I'll be able to leave everything to him. It's too bad.

But, I'm not worried.

「No problem. I'm good at running around.」

『Master is good at running away. Master is amazing. Arroganz committed it to memory.』

「——You don't need to praise me for that, you also don't need to remember it.」

I'm losing my stride if he praised me so sincerely like that.

I wished that he would say something like「Your specialty is running away? Don't you have any other special skill?」when I made that kind of joke.

If it's Luxion then he definitely will say that.

I operated the control stick and pedal to move Arroganz.

I passed through between the branches to run from the enemies. The insect monsters chased after us seeing that.

I flew around weaving between the branches. I only shoot down the monsters that were approaching near.

The gatling cannons and missiles that were controlled by the AIs matched Arroganz's movement to kill the enemies.

Arroganz who is defeating enemies one after another just by running around is peerless.

But, sadly the enemy's number is too many.

There is no sign of the enemies running out of reinforcement.

The gatling cannons are spouting out bullets without pause. The bullets are shining from the heat and drew a line at the direction where they were fired.

Each of those lines pierced through multiple monsters and they turned into black smoke.

I will find a spot where there is no enemy and flew there, and sometimes I will break through an enemy swarm and run around. After a while of doing that a happy news came from Arroganz.

『Enemy core found. It's judged that the enemy will stop functioning or perhaps weakened if that core is destroyed!』

「Great job!」

『Displaying the shortest route. It's predicted that touching the enemy and attacking its inside is a valid method.』

There is no guarantee that the enemy will definitely be stopped by destroying this core, but in the first place it's within my expectation.

Besides, Luxion too will surely show up if this monster can't be defeated with that.

「Purge the unusable weapons and unnecessary armors.」

『Roger. Purging parts.』

After Arroganz announced the purging, the weapons and armor parts that are judged as unnecessary got detached one after another.

If seen from the side, perhaps it will look like we are getting disassembled midair?

The armor frame is gradually getting lighter.

Arroganz ended up in a form with fewer armor than usual, and in addition it's carrying a small backpack on its back.

It doesn't carry the usual container.

When the backpack engine that is less reliable than usual spouted fire, the lightened Arroganz accelerated and approached the enemy core.

We ignored most of the approaching enemies and something we kept pushing forward by crashing on the enemies.

The armor frame would shake each time we crashed on a monster, but I gritted my teeth and looked forward.

『Enemy core in sight.』

「Hit it with all of our bullets!」

Arroganz obeyed my order and readied the rifle with both hands.

The rifle fired laser until the barrel became a slag from the heat. Arroganz also fired out all the remaining live bullets.

The last missile pack that was loaded in the backpack is also fired. Now we have no more missile.

When both weapons are not usable anymore, Arroganz threw away the weapons.

And then when the monster's surface got gouged, an object that looked like a koala finally showed itself.

Arroganz landed near the reddish black core that is beating like a heart. Then white tentacles appeared from the surrounding and wriggled around us in order to protect the core.

「This thing, it even has regeneration ability huh.」

When Arroganz stepped forward in order to defeat the monster right away, the tentacles stopped moving for some reason.

The tentacles are convulsing. They looked like they can't move even though they want to.

When I'm about to take a distance because of the suspicious movement, I heard a voice.

『Wait. Please. There is no more time.』

「Who!?」

I heard a female voice inside the cockpit. I looked left and right to search for the girl's figure.

But I can't see anyone nearby. However, I certainly felt like there is someone beside me.

I'm surprised, but strangely I'm not scared.

And then a from my left side, a girl's arm reached out and pointed forward.

『Defeat it quickly. If not, this child will really become unstoppable.』

I obeyed the girl's pained voice and grabbed the control stick while stepping on the pedal.

「Arroganz!」

『Preparing shield pile bunker.』

Arroganz broke into a dash toward the monster's core and pointed the tips of his shields on both hands forward.

Six stakes are loaded inside them.

I said toward the monster.

「Drop dead!」

The shields are loaded with pile driver.

The sharp stakes are fired with a loud sound. They pierced deeply into the monster's core.

But, it doesn't end with that.

『Impact!』

Arroganz yelled with his electronic sound. The six stakes that were fired simultaneously radiated shockwave inside the monster's core.

The monster's core shook violently. Then it can't endure anymore and cracks entered it with fluid spurting out from there.

I saw the fluid turned into crystal when it got exposed to air and muttered.

「How's that?」

Will the enemy move again or not? As I'm trying to judge the situation, there is a gentle voice of a girl from my left side.

When I turned there, I can see a half transparent green silhouette of a girl.

『Thank you. With this, this child too can sleep peacefully.』

「Just who are you?」

Could it be a ghost? As I thought that warily, the girl looked as though she is smiling.

『I'm Noelle. Also, if by some chance you meet my little sister, I want you to tell her something for me. My little sister's name is Lelia. Lelia Jil Lespinasse. My twin little sister.』

Evening.

Partner finally arrived at the sky above the principality. It's located right above the defeated monster that was the sacred tree in the past.

Arroganz is standing on the deck. It looked slimmer than usual with its armor plating and weapons removed. Vapor is drifting around it from the internal heat.

The maintenance robots are blowing something that looked like white smoke in order to cool the frame.

A lot of people are crying on the deck seeing their completely changed homeland.

Marie is holding the handrail and looked at the scenery below. The scenery spontaneously made her felt chilled on her back.

「How horrible.」

A burnt field is spread out with the sacred tree at the center.

The buildings were blown away into rubbles. There are no sight of people moving below.

It's suspicious if there are even any survivors there.

Oliver who is near Marie is patting down his chest seeing the monster that was formerly the sacred tree lying down unmoving.

「Alberck-sama, everything is over. But, Alzer is already…」

The scenery that they saw on the way here was how the whole continent got turned into a burnt field.

The outrageous sight caused Marie to reconfirm that they are living in an absurd world.

A girl appeared from inside the ship to the deck that is wrapped in such atmosphere.

「The princess, she-!」

Seeing the crying maid, Oliver hurriedly returned to inside the ship.

Marie supported Oliver who is walking unsteadily and she also accompanied him heading inside the ship.

(The bad end really isn't funny at all. Something like this, is just too much.)

Inside Partner.

When I arrived at Louise-san's room, her eyes are opened.

The crest of the sacred tree is vanishing from her right hand.

The power that is tethering Louise-san to this world has already left.

That girl is looking at me.

She is making a very calm expression. Is it the effect of the painkiller——or perhaps, is she unable to even feel pain?

I told her the course of events while carefully choosing the information that I conveyed to her.

「The sacred tree has stopped moving. It doesn't look like it will start moving anymore.」

「I see. Thank you very much. Can you tell me your name for the last time? I wish to remember the name of the hero who saved our country. I can't see anymore, so please let me hear your name at the very least.」

While I'm hesitating for a moment seeing how weak she is, Oliver-san who is being supported by Marie entered the room.

Oliver-san rushed to Louise-san's side and crumbled on his knees beside the bed.

「Princess!」

「Oliver, I'm sorry but I leave the rest to you. It looks like this is it for me.」

Seeing Louise-san's smile, the people of Rault House who gathered around her are sobbing.

Because the people around are also watching, I decided to tell her my name.

「My name is Leon.」

Louise-san looked surprised and tried to lift her upper body, so I approached her and held her hand.

「Leon? No way, really? U-umm」

I can't say anything more to Louise-san who is in shock.

She can just think that her little brother came to help.

Louise-san's hand caressed my face.

「Aa, Leon. So you kept your promise. Onee-chan, can meet you in the end.」

It seemed her consciousness is getting hazy. She is thinking of me as her little brother.

When I kept holding her hand without denying it, Louise-san's hand on my face moved away.

Louise-san are shedding tears happily before she drew her last breath just like that.

I entered a single room in order to keep a promise.

A pink haired girl is inside.

「You are Lelia of Lespinasse House right?」

Lelia who is sitting with her back on the wall is hanging her head down without saying anything.

Marie who also came together with me to visit Lelia let out a small sigh and talked to her.

「There is a message from your big sister.」

「Eh?」

Lelia raised her head. Her face looked terribly haggard.

There are dark circles under her eyes. There is no vitality that can be felt from her.

The incident this time must have really affected her.

「When I touched the sacred tree, I heard the voice of someone who called herself Noelle. She was the priestess wasn't she? She was worried about you.」

「——Lies」

Lelia's eyes moistened and tears spilled out.

I told her Noelle's words.

「She wanted me to tell her stupid little sister. It felt like she got a lot of complaints for you, but she want you to live. Also——she said that she won't be able to help you out anymore, so take care of the rest by yourself somehow.」

The anger of the people from Rault House is genuine.

From the story that I heard from them, there is no doubt that Lelia was involved with the incident.

The huge flying ship appeared in the sky and turned Alzer into a sea of flame.

After that an abnormality occurred with the sacred tree and it released out a ton of monsters.

Unexpectedly it was Rault House that tried to stop the sacred tree.

But, it seemed that Lelia and her friends got in the way.

Louise-san and others said that if only they didn't get in the way, the situation would become manageable with just a bit more.

Marie demanded to Lelia to tell everything.

「Can you tell us everything? We are dispatched from the kingdom to investigate what's going on here. We aren't trying to back any side here.」

Marie tried to emphasize that we are a neutral party, but instead large drops of tears spilled out from Lelia's eyes.

「You're wrong. Everything is my fault. I got a mistaken impression from the start that Rault House is the bad guy and thought that this commotion was also their work. That was why, I asked Sergey and Emile to get in their way. And yet, that cheat battleship showed up in the sky.」

Marie and I looked at each other hearing her muttering the word cheat.

We are also curious with her perspective of the incident this time but, why was the word cheat came out from her mouth?

The answer immediately came out.

Marie grabbed Lelia's shoulders.

「You, could it be you are a reincarnator!?」

「Eh? H-how did you…」

It seemed that Lelia's thinking capability dropped from her fatigue. She doesn't understand the situation right now.

「We are also reincarnators. More importantly, was it Luxion who you saw in the sky?」

If she knew about that otome game, then surely she also knew about Luxion──that was what I thought, but Lelia shook her head.

「I don't know its name. But, it wasn't a normal flying ship. I thought that perhaps it was the type of paid item in the second game. That thing suddenly showed up and attacked. I didn't understand what was going on anymore and just run around like headless chicken──and then, in order to protect me Sergey and Emile…Clayman also sacrificed himself in order to let me escape.」

It seemed that the ship was the paid item of the sequel.

I realized the possibility that there might still be other space ships with equal capability like Luxion existing in this world.

Various troublesome information just kept coming.

It seemed that Lelia is opening up her heart a little toward us. She began to talk haltingly.

「Because I'm an idiot, I caused troubles to my big sis Noelle. I reincarnated as twin little sister of the main character and got carried away. Because of that I kept troubling my big sis and everything ended in failure. I never expected that my actions that I thought as good would all came back to bite me in the ass.」

Lelia is talking about her mistake while tears are dripping down from her eyes.

Marie asked Lelia what she had done while keeping her tone as calm as possible.

「Weren't you able to set up everything well using game knowledge? You also knew about that otome game right?」

Lelia wiped her tears with her sleeve and nodded several times.

I can't believe that she failed despite having the game knowledge.

「At first I thought that I was doing well. No, that's wrong. That was just my mistaken impression. Because I knew about the future development, I thought that doing this and that would be good and did as I pleased. Because I thought that I know the future, I kept doing stupid things. That's why everything became hopeless like this. Because I didn't notice! Why was the last boss risking his life to protect the country huh? Even though he was the enemy! And yet──」

She spoke as though to divert the responsibility to other, but she was surely also feeling confused that the person who she thought as enemy was actually in the right.

But, Lelia is recognizing her own mistake.

「──In the end, everything is my fault. I ruined everything like this because I decided things one-sidedly. Even though my life has no worth, and yet, big sis told me to live. This is just strange. ──Even though big sis should be the one to survive」

Lelia was crying while regretting her past actions.

We learned that Alzer was destroyed because of Lelia, but we are unable to blame her.

Marie looked up to me.

「Leon, this is」

「──The worst.」

I saw how we would end up just like Lelia in the future.

Olivia and Marquis Frampton were having a meeting in the palace of Hohlfahrt Kingdom.

The two were talking while drinking wine in the luxurious visitor room, but the two of them weren't even looking at each other's face.

Marquis Frampton was standing beside the window as he looked at the scenery outside.

Olivia was leaning down deeply into her sofa as she crossed her legs.

But she threw her wine glass when she heard what Marquis Frampton said.

The glass crashed near Marquis Frampton and glass fragments scattered, but the person himself didn't look bothered at all.

Olivia asked him with a forced tone.

「I didn't hear what you just say. Can you say it one more time?」

Even with Olivia clearly being angry, Marquis Frampton explained to her once more while still turning his back on her.

「We signed a cease-fire agreement with Fanoss Dukedom. From here on they will be under our rule.」

「The plan is to destroy the dukedom right? The army is also being formed for that. Do you think the military will agree if you tell them to stop after coming this far?」

Olivia was dissatisfied by Marquis Frampton's decision. She tried to change his decision with a sound argument.

But, it seemed that Marquis Frampton had been doing negotiation outside of Olivia's knowledge.

「The kingdom has also become extremely weary. We should take reparation from the dukedom and let the military rest for a while. Fortunately her highness Heltrude is within our grasp. We can just educate her so that she can become a splendid queen.」

Marquis Frampton planned to make Heltrude marry with a man who was convenient for his faction and ruled the dukedom like that.

Olivia narrowed her eyes as she stared at Marquis Frampton's back.

「So you are going against me.」

Marquis Frampton turned around and smirked.

He was talking about the plan going forward, but his tone became condescending as though he was talking to a little girl.

「Right now I'm the leader of the biggest faction. Don't think that even the saintess can just have everything going her way.」

Marquis Frampton who was already planning to obtain the kingdom didn't even try to hide his ambition.

He was acting as stronger than Olivia position-wise.

「Be careful to not offend me from here on. You have a wonderful talent as the saintess, but putting it another way that's all there is to it. I can prepare as many replacements as I want to take your place.」

Marquis Frampton who had put the palace under his rule was thinking that discarding Olivia and preparing a puppet saintess to take her place would also be simple.

It seemed that he planned to prepare a saintess that would follow every single order from him without regard of the puppet's capability.

Marquis Frampton gave Olivia a warning.

「You should refrain from acting too willfully from here on. Besides──you will be troubled if I expose all of your wicked deeds until now correct? If you want to live in the palace as the queen, it will be wiser for you to not go against me.」

Marquis Frampton left the visitor room while laughing loudly.

Olivia's body trembled after she was left alone──then she began to laugh with a loud voice after a while.

She wasn't trembling from frustration.

She was simply holding back her laughter of how incompetent Marquis Frampton was.

「What a fool. Did he think that I'll obey with just a threat? It seems that he is thinking to discard me but, it's too bad. ──I have been planning to discard you from the start.」

Olivia had been planning to betray Marquis Frampton from the start when she joined hand with him.

She had also been making preparation for that.

The only difference was whether she would do it sooner or later.

「It's unfortunate, you would be able to live slightly longer if only you are obedient.」

Olivia stood up and began taking action.

「Let go! Who do you think I am!!」

Marquis Frampton who was dragged toward the execution place was showing a desperate resistance.

But, he only resisted in vain and ended up getting fixed onto the chopping block.

It was Marquis Frampton's retainers who dragged him until the place of execution.

The one who was leading the retainers was Julius.

Julius stood in front of Marquis Frampton and looked down on his with a severe gaze.

He unsheathed the sword hanging on his waist and pointed the tip toward Marquis Frampton.

「Your retainers has informed all of your wrongdoings to the palace. I never thought that you were colluding with the dukedom behind the scene even though all of my comrade in arms risked their life to obtain victory. Furthermore, a cease-fire agreement? You damn traitor」

The sword's tip poked Marquis Frampton's hook nose.

Marquis Frampton grimaced from the pain and yelled toward Julius while forgetting his place.

「What victory you youngster! How much damage do you think the war is causing? How much the kingdom will benefit even if we continue the war like this? You fool who don't even understand that and simply rejoice in victory! This ceasefire is for the benefit of the kingdom──」

「──Do it.」

Marquis Frampton continued to talk, but Julius coldly ordered his execution.

There was a thudding sound when the beheading blade came down.

Julius sheathed his sword and spread out his arms as he looked up to the sky.

「Olivia, I did as you said. This time you're going to look at me aren't you?」

The one who ordered Julius to execute Marquis Frampton was Olivia.

Leon's master who was watching the last moment of Marquis Frampton at the execution place shook his head seeing Julius laughing while looking up to the sky.

「This flow cannot be stopped anymore by the looks of it.」

He showed an expression of resignation, but then it changed to a look of determination.

And then he turned his back toward the knights and soldiers who rejoiced of the death of evil and left the execution place.

「Saintess Olivia, I won't allow you to do as you please.」

At that time Olivia was making her way to the mansion where Heltrude was confined.

A comfortable room was prepared as her prison because she was a royalty.

Olivia narrowed her eyes seeing the room.

「This is a really nice treatment for a criminal. I hope you can tell me how do you feel about it.」

Heltrude behaved courageously toward the hateful gaze that was directed at her.

「What an improper way of acting for the saintess. Also, I wasn't the one who asked to be given this room. More importantly, has my treatment been decided already? Marquis Frampton mentioned that I will be able to get out of here soon.」

Olivia opened the door and entered inside. She placed the wine bottle and a glass that she brought on the round table in the room.

And then she smiled kindly.

「I'll be troubled if you live. I need the dukedom to fight till the end you see. That's why, will you become a tragic princess for me? If you die, I think that the dukedom will continue shedding a lot of blood for this pointless war.」

Heltrude was getting cold sweat, but she wasn't agitated. It seemed she had anticipated this.

「So you plan to fight until the dukedom is destroyed.」

「That's almost right.」

「Eh?」

「I have no intention of ending this as a mere war. I'll have the dukedom vanish literally. That country and also its people are unnecessary.」

Heltrude was shocked by Olivia's words and made a disbelieving face.

「You will go that far? Do you hate the dukedom to that degree!? They said that you are a saintess who is filled with love──」

「──Don't misunderstand little girl.」

Olivia's wrath boiled up instantly. It made Heltrude's words to get caught up in her throat.

Olivia corrected Heltrude's misunderstanding.

She felt like expressing her true intention toward the girl who would die after this.

「I hate everything. Whether it's this country, and your country, and also all the nobles and people who are living carefreely there, I loathe them all. I'll destroy both the dukedom and the kingdom. I'll destroy everything related to Hohlfahrt, and then I'll make a new country here together with Lea. That will become the correct form of this country.」

Olivia's wrath only dispersed at the moment when she muttered Lea's name.

Heltrude finally speak out.

「What are you saying? Even though you are the saintess」

Heltrude couldn't hide how shaken she was by Olivia's objective.

She surely never even imagined in her wildest dream that the saintess would say that she wanted to destroy her own country.

Olivia made a dark smile and told her that the dukedom's role was over.

「Both you and your country has fulfilled your role. Thank you for your hard work until now.」

「Just what made you to be like this?」

「There is no need for you to know.」

Olivia said that there was no need to tell her anymore than this and closed her mouth.

Heltrude considered pushing Olivia aside to run away from her prison, but she immediately gave up and shook her head.

It seemed that she didn't think that she could win against Olivia.

After realizing that, Heltrude poured the poisoned wine into the glass.

Olivia praised Heltrude who accepted her defeat with grace.

「Good girl.」

But, Heltrude gulped the poison without replying.

She drank up the whole glass in one gulp. Then she looked down and muttered her little sister's name.

「Rauda, live.」

Olivia who knew that Heltrude was referring to Heltrauda spoke cruelly to Heltrude who was going to do after this.

「You don't need to worry, your little sister will soon follow after you. Around this time, the internal of the dukedom should be falling into civil war as they pushed responsibility to each other.」

Olivia covered her lips with her hand and left the prison.

「I hope you can have a good dream at the end.」

In the prison that Olivia just left behind.

It became for Heltrude to stand and she sat down on her bed.

「What a bad taste. Couldn't she prepare a kinder poison?」

Her breathing became short and her chest was feeling pain.

Her body collapsed on the bed and her little sister's face surfaced in her mind.

「I have told Rauda what I should tell her. That's why, if it's her then she will surely be fine. That girl is more dependable than me, so surely with her even the country──」

Heltrude bit her lips and her tears soaked the bed sheet.

「Rauda, I'm sorry. Onee-chan can't protect you.」

The wellbeing of her little sister who would be left alone weighed her.

And then, at the end she wished to see her little sister's face just once more.

Before she departed, they were being monitored so Heltrude could only push Rauda away coldly.

「Please at least allow Rauda to be happy──」

Heltrude was suffering, but her eyes snapped wide open when a powerful impact shook her room.

「Kyah! W-what!?」

When she noticed her room was filled with sand and dust. It blocked her sight.

But, she could see light shining in from the outside.

When wind blew inside and cleared the sand and dust away, there was a gray armor before her gaze.

『──So I didn't make it in time.』

She heard a young man's voice muttering in frustration.

The armor held its hand forward.

『I'll bring you out from here.』

Heltrude somehow lifted up her upper body, but she shook her head.

「It's no use. I don't have long to live.」

『My role is to send you back to your country. Isn't there anyone who you want to meet back home?』

Just who was the one asking this person to do this? Heltrude questioned that, but because she had no composure she spontaneously answered who she wanted to meet.

「I want to meet──my little sister. I want to meet with Raudaaa」

Tears flooded out.

If it was possible, she at least wanted to meet with Rauda. She conveyed her feeling.

After Heltrude desperately conveyed it with her body that was violated by poison, the young man promised her.

『I'll definitely bring you to her.』

The large armor took out Heltrude from the room and flew to the sky.

「What the hell! Really what the hell!? Suddenly saying that you want to rescue a princess of the enemy country, spare me from something like this!」

Marie is protesting while half crying, but her hands don't stop healing Heltrude-san who is lying on the bed.

The gentle and warm light of healing magic enveloped her and delayed the poison's progression.

If possible I wanted her to be healed but, it's impossible for both Marie and me to do that.

I turned my gaze to Luxion who is observing the situation from a little distance away.

「Can't something be done?」

『It's already too late. Her life is being tethered down using magic right now, but it won't be strange even if she die anytime now. Good grief──new mankind is really obstinate.』

Luxion's words conveyed his feeling of annoyance.

For Luxion, Heltrude-san is a descendant of new mankind and not a subject for protection.

「So she is really beyond saving?」

When I confirmed just to make sure, Luxion averted his red lens from me and answered.

Is it just my imagination that it looked like he is feeling some guilt?

『The problem is the type of poison. The poison is created from magic and I'm in the middle of investigating it right now.』

It's impossible even for Luxion to cure the poison because it was created with magic.

I stopped talking with Luxion and asked Marie how much time Heltrude-san has remaining.

It's to check whether we will make it in time or not regardless of whether she could be saved or not in the end.

「Can she make it to meet her little sister?」

Marie shook her head. Her blonde hair was disheveled.

「I don't know! More importantly, why did you accept this request huh? We will become wanted men in the worst case.」

「Because it's a request from master.」

「Are you stupid!? This is a crime!」

「Then, would it be better to not save her?」

「I also don't want that! But──just what should we do here.」

Before we returned to the capital's harbor, an urgent notification came to the Alzer investigation team.

I received a letter from master and then we hurriedly headed to save Heltrude-san.

I was asked to do two things.

First is rescuing Heltrude-san and bringing her back to the dukedom.

──I didn't make it in time though.

「I was too late for everything. Whether it's for this princess, and also with Alzer……」

After I muttered that, Marie spoke of her uneasiness with a meek expression.

「Have we, committed some kind of mistake? As I thought, wouldn't it be better if we didn't do anything? Because we got involved──that's why」

We got involved with that otome game's scenario.

But, partly it was also because we got dragged in.

Was it a mistake to help Olivia-san in the field trip? Would nothing happen if at that time I just watched without doing anything? I also don't think that's the right answer.

That's exactly why I'm troubled. ──Just what was wrong?

Recently I often thought about Lelia who failed in Alzer.

Because I can't say that we aren't committing the same mistake.

I can't find any answer and feel troubled. It's at that timing Luxion told me that we have arrived to the principality.

『It looks like we made it in time. But, it seems there is civil war breaking out.』

「Ha?」

『A part of the nobles caused a rebellion. It will be troublesome to allow Heltrude to meet with Heltrauda in this situation.』

When Marie and I turned toward Luxion, he told us that currently there are civil war between the royal family and the nobles in the dukedom.

The palace of Fanoss Dukedom was surrounded by the airships of the rebel nobles.

The cannons of the battleships were pointed toward the palace and fired cannon shells one after another.

The nobles called themselves as the revolution army and there was the figure of Count Gerard in the flagship.

He was giving order to the knights and soldiers while acting as though they were in the side of justice.

「Fanoss royal family is responsible for the war! Who was it who pushed the war that had no chance of victory!? It was the royal family that pushed for war even though we were at peace with the kingdom. Make them take responsibility! We have to show justice to them for the sake of our compatriots who died in war too!」

Gerard was lining up words like justice and responsibility, but what was going on inside his heart was something horrible.

(Someone has to take responsibility. The royal family exist for this kind of time. Those little girls were only useful as decoration, but now let's have them be useful for me.)

Gerard was one of the pro war faction who pushed for war, but when the situation turned bad he blamed Heltrauda saying that everything was the royal family's responsibility.

He didn't feel any guilt at all in regard to that.

(I'll purge away everyone who is in my way and become the leader of the new dukedom. Marquis Frampton is arranging things for me in the capital. So it won't matter at all for me no matter how much the dukedom got harmed.)

The other nobles and knights and the military officers who joined this rebellion were also in the pro war faction.

At this rate the kingdom military would come attacking and they would lose their life.

Before that happened they would make Heltrauda took responsibility and presented themselves as obedient vassal to the kingdom. That was the purpose of this rebellion.

「Justice is at our side!」

(Now that Bandell is also gone, I can act as I please. After all until now I couldn't move freely because of that guy.)

The one who just barely reined in the pro war faction from doing as they pleased was Bandell.

But, even that Bandell had died in battle.

There was almost nobody in the pro war faction who would stop Gerard and others.

Inside the palace.

The people protecting Heltrauda were gathered inside a room that was solidly made.

The general in charge of the defense was sweating coldly by the reports that were coming in one after another.

「The magic wall won't hold!」

「The damage to the palace keeps increasing!」

「The armor's number isn't enough. We won't last if we got infiltrated like this!」

The general who got stubble on his face swung his fist on the desk. He cursed the nobles who rebelled.

「Those damn traitors! How dare they try to sacrifice her highness so they can escape responsibility by themselves!」

The relatively decent knights and soldiers are remaining, but they couldn't deal with the sudden rebellion and were forced into a hard fight.

Heltrauda who was sitting on her chair stood up and gave an order.

「It's over. Announce my surrender.」

The anxious general persuaded Heltrauda to not surrender.

「Please stop! At this rate your highness will get killed.」

Heltrauda shook her head.

「You have fought well until now. Besides, there is still Onee-sama who is being captured in the kingdom. Even without me, the dukedom will remain.」

「Your highness」

The surrounding people are shedding tears, and then the palace was rocked fiercely.

Heltrauda almost fell, but the maids caught her and the general yelled.

「Have they broken through!?」

And then, a sildier rushed in to report about what happened outside.

「T-trouble!」

「Open the path you bastards!」

「I'll shoot anyone who get in the way!」

I walked in the corridor of the palace while carrying Heltrude-san.

We forcefully infiltrated the palace with Arroganz and made Luxion showed the way.

『Please follow this path forward.』

「It's really convenient with you here huh.」

『Why yes, thank you.』

Marie walked in front of us. She was holding a shotgun in her hands and threatened any knight and solider who approached.

Walking in the castle with the three of us like this made me recalled the night when we obtained the magic flute.

The palace is being shaken by bombardment from outside. Sand and dust are falling from the ceiling.

In front of us there, Heltrauda appeared with guards protecting her.

「Onee-sama!」

Heltrauda-san came running. Heltrude-san noticed her and opened her eyes.

Her complexion was bad and her lips were also turning pale.

She looked at Heltrauda-san with lightless eyes and smiled.

——Recently this kind of thing kept happening. I'm sick of it.

Louise-san's face flashed in my mind. I shook my head to clear my mind.

Heltrude-san held up her hand.

「Rauda, I'm sorry. Onee-chan, couldn't do anything」

Heltrauda-san strongly gripped the lifted up hand.

「That's not true! That's not true at all. That's why──don't leave me alone. I don't wanna. I don't want to be alone.」

The big sister Heltrude-san made a troubled smile seeing her sobbing little sister.

「I'm sorry that I'm leaving you alone. But you see, there is something that I want Rauda to do.」

「Onee-sama?」

「Stop the saintess. She is dangerous. The kingdom is already half controlled by the saintess. She is planning to destroy this country and also her own country.」

「Something like that」

「It's true. That's why Rauda, put this country in order. And then protect the people. Even for a mere puppet, that's still the responsibility of the royal family.」

「──Yes」

The knights and the soldiers around us who are regarding us warily opened their eyes wide hearing Heltrude-san's words.

It seemed they couldn't comprehend how could the saintess plan to destroy her own country.

Even Marie and I are the same.

It's too shocking that I interrupted the two's conversation.

「What do you mean? Did Olivia-san say that? Really!?」

Then Marie pushed me back.

「Hey, this isn't the time!」

「S-sorry」

I got in the way of the sisters' farewell in this life. When I apologized, Heltrude-san spoke of the truth with a pained smile.

「The saintess Olivia certainly told me. That she is going to destroy everything related to Hohlfahrt. The dukedom too was descended from Hohlfahrt royal family's blood if you traced back our lineage. For her we are also her enemy.」

Olivia-san said that she will destroy everything?

Blood left Marie's complexion.

I recalled Olivia-san when she yelled for help during our meeting.

Really──just how did things turn out like this?

「Rauda, become the queen. And then, fight the kingdom, protect the people.」

「B-but, the dukedom doesn't has the strength for that.」

Heltrauda-san understood that it's impossible to oppose the kingdom with her country's military strength.

That's why, Heltrude-san looked at me.

Master's second request.

It's to join hand with the dukedom.

I came to this place as the envoy for that.

「It seems that the nobles of the kingdom also don't intend to obey the current royal family. They promised to lend us a hand for that. The one who saved me is the knight who defeated Bandell.」

The gazes of everyone who gathered here turned toward me.

Heltrauda-san's gaze on me turned grim.

「──The rumor that there is a masked knight who defeated Bandell has spread even in the dukedom. I never imagined that such person actually exist.」

Just for an instant I thought to correct her for calling me masked knight, but I don't want to get in the way of the two's conversation so I helplessly stayed quiet.

Besides, I can't keep calm from being looked at with gazes of shock and hatred by the surrounding.

Heltrude-san continued talking even while being in pain.

「First put this country in order. Rauda, there is no one else but you who can.」

Heltrauda-san pressed her forehead on Heltrude-san.

「It's impossible for me. Onee-sama should be the one who become queen.」

「Don't ask for the impossible. I won't last long. I will watch over you from here on.」

「Onee-sama.」

「I'm glad I can meet you at the end. I always love you forever, my beloved sister──Heltrauda」

Heltrauda-san started crying. Then Heltrude-san turned her gaze to me.

「Leon-dono, can you listen to my request?」

「──Is it the guys outside?」

I thought that she was going to ask me to defeat the traitors outside, but Heltrauda-san powerlessly shook her head while smiling.

「There is also that but, what's important is Rauda. Please protect this child in exchange of the dukedom's support.」

「No, I」

When I'm about to say that I can't hold that much responsibility, Heltrude-san stared at me with eyes that has lost their light.

「I hate you who killed Bandell.」

「──Of course you are.」

I killed the black knight who was the hero of the dukedom.

It's only natural for her to resent me for that.

Even so I'm bewildered that she is suddenly speaking out her true feeling like that. Then Heltrude-san cursed me.

What's more that's an extraordinarily nasty curse.

「That's why I curse you. Because if a strong and kind knight like you hear my last wish, you will surely make it come true.」

「I'm kind? Also this talk about curse doesn't sound peaceful at all.」

「It's a wish. It's a hope for me but a curse for you. What I believe in isn't your country or the nobles. It's you yourself.」

「You're overestimating me. Even so──you are a more horrible person than I expected.」

That's certainly a curse.

「If it's for my cute little sister, I'll put one or two curses to other people. ──Please, save my little sister Heltrauda. I'm begging you. Kind──mister knight──」

Heltrude-san ran out of strength.

After I entrusted her to the knights of the dukedom, Marie grabbed my arm.

「You're going to accept? Stop that! You're really going to break one day. This isn't like you isn't it? Doing something like this isn't in your character at all.」

Marie who is worried about me is looking terribly frightful for some reason.

「Joining hand with the dukedom isn't a bad plan at all.」

「But!」

「There is also my responsibility of neglecting things until now. Besides, I have Luxion with me so I won't lose.」

I naturally turned my gaze at Luxion.

Luxion replied with an electronic voice that doesn't let guess his feeling at all.

『Defeat is impossible as long as I'm here.』

Marie let go of my arm and muttered in frustration. Looks like she still can't accept this.

「That isn't it. That isn't it at all.」

The nobles who were holding the advantage until just now around the palace were running around trying to escape.

Gerard who was riding the flagship was frightened seeing the armor that appeared from the palace.

He ordered the flying ship's crews to run away quickly.

「What are you doing! The opponent is the guy who defeated the black knight!」

The flagship reversed direction to escape. From its bridge, they could see the allied flying ship flying beside them slowly falling toward the ground with flame enveloping it.

The allied armors flying around were being chased around by objects that looked like a cylinder.

When the cylinders hit they would explode and the target would fall toward the ground.

The flagship that was a huge flying ship was slow in reversing direction.

Gerard was leaking out cold sweat and trembling because they would end up as a mere target like this.

「Bring us away from here quickly! This is an order!」

「We are trying!」

In this chaotic battlefield, a lowly sailor could speak rudely toward a count like Gerard.

Both Gerard and the people around him were so panicked that no one could criticize such rudeness.

The cause of that was also because everyone her somehow managed to sense it.

Someone yelled.

「Hih! The monster came!」

Their allies were being shot down one after another in this battlefield. Before they realized it the flagship had become the last survivor.

What appeared and peered into the bridge was an armor with black and grey coloring.

The armor looked boorish and fiendish. It swung down its battle axe to the bridge.

The armor's hand reached in from the slashed spot and forcefully widened the opening.

The armor looked down on Gerard and others and gave a demand of surrender.

『Give up already.』

The entrance of the kingdom's armor that defeated the black knight caused everyone in the bridge to lose any will to resist and they fell down on the floor.

Only Gerard understood that he wouldn't be saved even if he surrendered here, so furiously protested at the armor.

「Why is the kingdom's knight is here!? So her highness is connected with the kingdom! This is an alarming situation. That traitorous princess has to explain the situation properly──」

Gerard desperately questioned the princess──Heltrauda's crime in order to survive, but the armor forcefully stopped him from continuing with a swing of its fist.

The armor's fist was swung down in front of Gerard and the floor dented greatly.

Surely Gerard would have died if the fist got just a bit closer to him.

Gerard weakly crumpled down on the floor. Seeing that, the kingdom's armor flew up to the sky.

What appeared after that were the knights of the palace.

They boarded the flagship one after another and captured Gerard and the nobles of pro war faction.

Around the time Leon was rampaging in the dukedom.

In the palace of Hohlfahrt Kingdom, Julius eltrude heard about the matter of Heltrude and rejoiced.

「Is it true!? It was definitely Arroganz!?」

Julius grabbed the shoulders of Jilk who brought the report and shook him strongly from how happy he was.

Jilk forcefully removed Julius's hands and tidied his messed up hair and outfit while continuing his report.

「It's true. The people working in the confinement mansion said that they saw Arroganz. That armor has unique appearance, so there is almost no mistake.」

Leon rescued Heltrude.

But, from the kingdom's perspective it was definitely a traitorous action.

Julius rejoiced because Leon himself gave him the justification to attack him.

With this even with Olivia's back up, few people would defend Leon.

Julius laughed at the carelessness of Leon who wasn't here.

「What a foolish thing to do. This is a failure that cannot be excused. Bartfalt, it's over for you now.」

Julius started laughing loudly, but Jilk was refraining himself to only smile.

Jilk himself wanted to laugh at Leon, but he was an imprudent person.

He cautioned Julius to not criticize Leon openly.

「Forgive me for disturbing your highness's happiness, but we shouldn't criticize him too much.」

「Why?」

Julius turned a sharp gaze toward Jilk.

Jilk shrugged and taught Julius the problems.

「It's Olivia-san. No matter the reason, she would definitely become sad if we move openly in regard to this.」

「Y-you're right.」

Julius too turned weak when Olivia's name was mentioned.

But, his wish to kill Leon was also strong.

Jilk gave a suggestion to such Julius.

「Let's use Lutoart.」

「Does that guy has any use? An unreliable fellow like that?」

Julius recalled Lutoart's unreliable figure when he met him and became uneasy.

Could that guy really defeat Leon?

He could only imagine how it would end up in failure.

「Let's make Lutoart expose Bartfalt House's wicked deed. With the situation like this, let's exaggerate the accusation somewhat and make him a complete villain. With that, the people who ask for the subjugation will also increase.」

Jilk suggested to unite the opinion inside the palace to agree with the subjugation, so later they would also be able to participate while pretending to be reluctant.

Julius agreed with Jilk's suggestion.

「That's a good idea. And then what about Lutoart?」

「Let's dispatch him as the commander of the advance unit. He will lose anyway, but it will make a beautiful story of a young knight who fight for justice.」

「Lutoart is more useful than I imagined huh.」

The two smiled and left the room.

A few days later.

Lutoart was appointed as the commander of the subjugation army against Bartfalt.

The number of flying ships he led was ten ships.

All of them were old type ships, but from Lutoart's perspective, commanding ten flying ships was a great promotion for him.

Before his departure, his mother Zora and his elder sister Merce came to the harbor with dressed up appearance.

Zora praised Lutoart who became a commander.

「This is excellent, Lutoart. You have obtained great success. As expected from my son.」

Merce also rejoiced from Lutoart's success because they would also receive the spillover from it.

「All the wealth of that baron house will become ours if you succeed. Lutoart, do your job properly.」

Lutoart slapped his own chest.

「Leave it to me. With this many ships, that kind of hick countryside will turn into sea of flame right away. No matter how strong Leon is, he won't be able to do anything against this number.」

Lutoart was scared of battle and never experienced real fighting even once. He was underestimating Leon's strength.

No matter how much the people around him explained just how great Leon's achievement was, he only thought that they were rumors that got embellished in the battlefield anyway.

He got into cloud nine by the number of ten flying ships and couldn't see reality very well.

「His highness Julius has told me. If I succeed, I will be appointed as a court noble with the rank of count.」

Court noble didn't have territory, but they could live in the royal capital. And becoming a court noble with the rank of count could be considered as a great success.

Both Zora and Merce also rejoiced hearing that.

「Do your best Lutoart!」

「Make this a success no matter what!」

Lutoart made a salute that he wasn't used to make to answer the two's expectation on him.

「I'll definitely come back with good news.」

Lutoart promised the two that he would succeed and boarded his flying ship.

The fleet was heading toward Bartfalt territory.

Inside the bridge of an old flying ship, Lutoart was wearing a ceremonial military uniform with excessive decoration.

The military personnel scoffed in ridicule when they saw Lutoart's appearance and behavior, but the person himself didn't realize that and acted like a big shot.

「Oi, we still aren't there yet?」

Lutoart kept asking when they would arrive every one hour. The crews in the bridge were fed up from it.

「Still not yet. How about taking a rest if you don't have anything to do?」

The crews didn't respect Lutoart.

The reason was because Lutoart was an amateur.

Lutoart hadn't done anything since he graduated from the academy. Originally he wasn't someone who could become a commander.

The military personnel who got this person pushed on them due to the order from above only had dissatisfaction.

Lutoart refused to rest.

「No way I can rest. It's a chance that I finally grasped.」

For Lutoart, this was the great chance to overturn his situation.

In the past Lutoart got scared and ran away from the battlefield. Because of that he was treated as coward in noble society.

In contrast Leon and Nicks performed wonderfully in the battlefield and obtained success.

Due to that Lutoart got mocked as someone inferior than a mistress's sons and tasted a horrible humiliation.

For Lutoart, this was a justified revenge even though it was nothing more than his unreasonable resentment.

「I'll kill them and take away everything they──」

Lutoart chewed on his thumbnail while mumbling to himself, but he couldn't finish his sentence.

「Flying ship sighted! Their crests are──Redgrave House and Count Bartfalt House's crests! They numbered thirty ships!」

Lutoart raised his waist from his chair.

「Why!?」

Why were Redgrave House and Nicks here?

Lutoart who originally intended to destroy his family with the violence of number was flustered because the enemy appeared with three times his number.

「They fired!」

The military personnel yelled.

「Deploy the shield quickly!」

「No good. This ship's output won't be able to endure that!」

Lutoart's flying ship was bombarded with cannon shells unceasingly. It immediately got enveloped in flame.

「No! I don't wanna to die in this kind of placeeeeeee!!」

Nicks who annihilated the subjugation army was looking down at the sea from a flying ship's deck.

A fragment of Lutoart's destroyed ship was floating on the sea and swaying due to the waves.

Standing beside that Nicks was Gilbert who was leading Redgrave House's fleet.

Gilbert thanked Nicks who was a count.

「Thank you for Nicks-dono's cooperation.」

Nicks made a conflicted expression due to the thanks that he received.

He wasn't used with an eldest son of a duke house treating him politely, but even more than that his heart's composure couldn't keep up with the current situation.

「I have no other choice but to lend a hand after hearing that my parent's home would be destroyed. I'm amazed that Dorothea and Roseblade House allowed this. It should be safer for them to hand me over to the kingdom.」

When he heard that a subjugation army was dispatched to his parent's territory, Nicks thought that he would be immediately handed over to the kingdom.

But, that didn't happen.

He was confused by that. In respond Gilbert made a meaningful smile and explained the situation to him.

「Roseblade House isn't a house that cannot read the trend of the times that they will wag their tail to the current royal family.」

「──Are you really planning to talk directly to Leon? My family is just a baron house. Is it really necessary for the eldest son of a duke house to personally head out?」

Gilbert came here in order to invite Leon.

「He has been taking care of my little sister. Besides, I have high hope to all of you.」

Olivia let out a deep sign at the palace.

She crushed the report she was reading in her fist and threw it away.

「Man's jealousy is always unsightly no matter the era.」

She spat out that sentence. Kyle who picked up the report asked her in fear.

「I heard that Bartfalt House will be subjugated but, is it alright for Olivia-sama to not do anything? Err, Leon's──」

「I had told you to attach the befitting honorific didn't I?」

Olivia narrowed her eyes with killing intent at Kyle's rudeness toward Leon.

Kyle hurriedly corrected himself.

「Is it alright for Olivia-sama to not save Leon-sama!?」

Olivia showed an expression that was tinged with sorrow.

「It's pointless. Julius and others are going to act on their own anyway. It looks like they have used Lutoart as a disposable pawn.」

Arroganz that Leon piloted was amazing, but taking Bartfalt House's battle strength into consideration too, Olivia judged that Lutoart had no chance of victory.

In fact the news that they had been defeated would soon arrive.

There was something more unforgivable than that.

Olivia let out a thin smile.

「I wonder if it was Lea's blood in him that made him sometimes did crazy things? Like how he lent a hand to the dukedom's princess. It's a detestable act but, it's great.」

She was rejoicing while also angry.

Kyle was unable to understand that complicated feeling of Olivia.

「U-umm」

「There is no way Leon will lose against just this much. In fact Lutoart will definitely lose. Even so, Redgrave House also moved huh.」

Even though it was a chaotic situation, Olivia was feeling happy that the obstacles were vanishing one after another.

Redgrave House rebelled.

It seemed that nobles were gathering one after another to lend them a hand.

In order to oppose those nobles, the kingdom planned to intercept them with Julius as the supreme commander.

Olivia felt unbearably happy.

「Now then, I wonder who is going to vanish next.」

(As long as Lea and I are the last one surviving, then the others don't matter at all.)

Partner returned to the port of my family home.

And then I am facing father in my family's mansion.

Father is injured and lying down on bed. He is making a conflicted expression hearing my story.

Does he want to be angry, to feel shocked, or cry?

His expression keep changing rapidly before it settled in resignation at the end.

He must have a lot of things that he want to say, but it seems he is prioritizing the important matter for now.

He is really a capable father.

「That's a really heavy responsibility for a countryside noble.」

「Agreed.」

After I finished telling father what happened at Alzer, the matter of me lending a hand to the dukedom, and the information that I obtained at the capital, father made his decision.

「Leon, I can't make the decision. I have also talked with Nicks and Gilbert-dono, but I can't make heads or tails of the situation.」

Big bro and Gilbert-san visited here just a bit before I returned.

It seemed that big bro immediately went back, but it seemed that Gilbert-san checked on Angelica-san first before returning.

More importantly, I was more surprised by the talk that Lutoart came attacking here.

If it was that guy then it was certainly possible though.

「It's troubling if father can't decide though?」

I pressed father to make a decision, but he put the decision making on hold.

In exchange he made a different decision.

「Become the house head in my place. It's not even the time to ask the kingdom for permission anymore, so I'm making you the house head by my decision.」

「Ha? No, that's no good right!?」

「You're the one who is no good! By what kind of mistake you could end up getting into a fight with the kingdom hum!? Actually I want to yell at you for acting as you pleased, I even want to sock your face.」

Father showed his injured arm and said「You are lucky I'm in this state」before telling me the true reason he is handing the house head position to me.

「I can't make the decision. Besides, you will be able to manage this situation better than me somehow.」

「Father」

When I exited the room, I ran to Marie who came bringing food for father.

「The scolding is finished? From your look, it seems that you didn't get punched.」

It seemed that Marie thought I would get scolded by father because of my action.

Certainly it would only be natural for father to get enraged by what I had done.

「Father is injured so he can't punch me.」

「Considering what you had done, it won't be strange even if you get punched.」

I rescued Heltrude-san on my own and lent a hand to the dukedom.

Certainly I was acting too selfishly.

Marie looked worried for me.

「There is really no going back now. What are we going to do now? Are you planning to ask Luxion to manage this situation somehow?」

If I requested Luxion than ultimately everything will be resolved──or even if that's impossible, he will still manage somehow using brute force.

But, a part of me don't want to go that far.

「Using that guy's power to go into a rampage is a bit, you know?」

「You're saying that now after you have rampaged as you pleased in Arroganz?」

「It will be a massacre if Luxion get serious. I don't want that.」

We are talking while walking through the corridor, then the topic moved to the people under the care of this house.

Starting from Claris-senpai and others, the people we saved from the principality are now also under the care of this house.

The reason is because we couldn't hand them off to the capital, so our only choice was to bring them to here.

「What are we going to do with the people of Alzer? That person called Oliver is managing them right now, but how long are we going to shelter them here?」

「I want to hand them over but, there is a possibility I'm a wanted man right now.」

「You're definitely a wanted man now! That was why I objected! Man is really stupid, they kept shouldering needless things. My big brother also had a side like that in him.」

「Your big brother did? Didn't you say that he was quick to snap and underhanded?」

「──Sometimes he acted rashly. It was also a problem how he acted like it was no trouble at all for him. Something like that was troubling for the people around him.」

Marie talked of her memory about her big brother in the previous life. She looked nostalgic.

Her expression looked happy but lonely.

「That's why, you too shouldn't be reckless.」

「Then you don't need to worry. In the first place I don't have many options to choose from.」

「What do you mean?」

「——You remember that I talked with master before this?」

「You mean when I wasn't there?」

I told Marie everything about what I learned at that time.

「It seems the saintess is talking about recruiting me to enter her elite guards.」

「Haa!?」

「The palace was in chaos because she started talking about recruiting me with a special treatment. After all his highness Julius and his friends have a grudge at me. They couldn't possibly allow a man like me to be at the side of the woman they love.」

「What the hell. Could it be things are getting strange because of their jealousy? This is the worst.」

It would be great if this is just a joke, but for his highness Julius and his friends I'm becoming someone who should be killed.

I don't know how much authority Olivia-san held, but a large part of her influence came from her status as saintess——and as the lover of his highness Julius and others.

Marie is furious.

「She is taken over just as we thought! If it's like this let's ask Luxion to do something about the saintess.」

「I also considered that, but it's too late already.」

「Why?」

That day, I heard from master——.

「──It seems that the influential nobles of the kingdom have given up on the palace. They are making preparation to rebel behind the scene. There will be civil war soon.」

Marie stopped walking. Her complexion turned white.

「No way」

I who walked several steps ahead of Marie also stopped walking and looked back with only my upper body.

「It's true. Master told me. At this stage things can't be solved with just a talk anymore.」

It seemed that master was taking action to avoid civil war if possible.

But if even that master have thrown in the towel, what will start after this is a civil war that doesn't exist in the game scenario.

How long I'll have to fight I wonder?

Even though I had spilled a lot of blood in the war against the dukedom, it seems that this country still doesn't have enough of battle.

「It's the worst huh. In the end we are also the same like Lelia.」

When we realized it the situation is heading toward the worst direction compared to that otome game's scenario.

Perhaps it would be better if we didn't do anything unnecessary and simply watched things unfolding quietly.

The result of us carelessly interfering invited a situation where there is no turning back.

Marie looked down and asked my plan from here with a dark expression.

「What are you going to do? You're going to fight again?」

「──Maybe.」

「Why!? That's just strange!」

Marie raised her head in disbelief at my answer. She began trying to persuade me.

「You will happily go to war just because your master told you to? You can just ask Luxion to solve everything! If it's him then surely he will take care──take care」

Marie who doesn't fully trust Luxion is hesitating to rely on him.

If it's him then surely he will solve this matter with tough measure.

It's scary because he might seriously blow up the capital.

「I'm doing this not because master told me. I decided it by myself.」

「Why!」

「Because I was the one who thoughtlessly got involved and neglected things.」

「Tsu!」

Marie also has an idea of what I meant, so she can't say anything back.

Things wouldn't become like this if we were more on the ball.

We considered everything with simple thought, as the result the country is almost getting destroyed just like with Lelia's case.

「Marie, I'll move seriously until this matter is resolved. I'll also borrow Luxion's strength and end the civil war.」

「By that, you means going against a country isn't it?」

Considering my standing, I can't stand at the kingdom's side.

After all his highness Julius and others hate me.

After I nodded quietly, Ann who listened to our talk showed herself.

『I heard a nice talk.』

I jerked in surprise. Marie looked around while yelling angrily.

「Come out you eavesdropper!」

『I apologize for eavesdropping. But, if you two are going to fight Hohlfahrt and his gang, then I too shall lend you my help with my all. After all my objective is to destroy them all.』

My heart is thumping loudly in surprise.

Ann showed up by passing through the wall. Black smoke is wavering around her.

The humanoid black mist is approaching us.

No matter how I looked at her, she only looked like evil spirit or ghost, in fact she is the resentment of the saintess.

As I'm trying my best to not let my fear showed, Ann informed us of an emergency situation.

『More importantly head to your floating island quickly. Angelica is going to run wild at this rate.』

「Eh?」

『I told you right? That girl is similar with me. It's not just her personality. In the worst case that girl might be an existence who is as dangerous or even more than Olivia.』

Angelica was living in Leon's floating island.

The mentally unstable Angelica was living in a tower that was made from piled up stones.

There are iron bars attached on her window and a tough door that was locked from outside.

Originally Leon and others also didn't want to imprison her, but they had no other choice because of Angelica's strange state.

Gilbert who was worried about his little sister came to visit.

Behind Gilbert there was Cordelia who had the role of taking care of Angelica.

「Long time no see. Cordelia will stay with you from now.」

Cordelia bowed her head to the haggard looking Angelica, but she didn't show any reaction.

Cordelia pressed her hands on her mouth seeing that. She muttered「What a state」tearfully.

Gilbert sighed seeing Angelica's state.

「Accept the situation already.」

(His highness's betrayal must be very painful for her.)

Gilbert knew that Angelica loved Julius, but he never expected that it was to this degree.

He had to tell that Angelica the truth.

「You won't even reply? But, I'm going to talk about what's going to happen. Because originally I'll have you work as my liaison with Bartfalt House.」

In her current state Angelica didn't look like she would be able to fulfill her role.

But, Gilbert held an important talk with her in order to not let her do anything rash too.

「Redgrave House has rebelled against the royal family.」

Angelica lifted up her face.

Her face was haggard, but her eyes looked like they were shining eerily.

「The influential nobles are siding with us. Because the current royal family isn't worthy for their loyalty.」

The actions of Julius and others until now had been making the nobles to be dissatisfied.

Besides, the movement inside the palace was also suspicious.

If Redgrav House is going to stand up then I'll lend a hand──there were a lot of nobles with that stance.

「Angelica, Redgrave House shall take the throne. Because this country will fall apart if we don't do that. Can you understand what that means?」

He meant that they would dethrone the current royal family and sat on the throne themselves.

Not only the king and the queen, even Julius and other royal family members would all get executed.

Angelica stood up with a weak swaying.

「And his highness? What will happen to his highness?」

「You are still worried for his highness Julius even now? It seemed that when he heard of our rebellion, he vigorously proclaimed that he will personally subjugate us. It seems he is thinking that he can still win. Even though the military is also gradually coming to join us. ──It's too bad for you but, give up already. His highness Julius──that man knew that you are here and yet he still dispatched a subjugation army to here. Do you know what was the command given to the subjugation army? It's to burn everything here. For him, your existence only worth that much.」

Gilbert was convinced of his victory because that was just how many allies that he had obtained.

And then he talked about how much Julius was making light of Angelica.

It was in order to make her to give up, but what he did was pouring oil to fire.

Angelica began to smile sinisterly hearing that story.

「Aha. Ahahaha! Is that so! I only worth that much for his highness! ──This too is completely the fault of that woman who called herself a saintess and tricked him!!」

Flame appeared around Angelica. The flame was whirling.

Gilbert protected Cordelia who was standing behind him while creating a magic barrier in front of them.

「Angelica, stop!」

Angelica was laughing while crying. The ribbon tying her hair and other articles of clothing got burned.

Her beautiful long blonde hair wasn't burned even with the flame touching it.

What was burned was only Angelica's outfit.

No matter how much the flame touched Angelica, her skin didn't get burned.

「──I'll burn everything. Yes, everything. I'll incinerate that woman, and also everything that deceived his highness.」

It was suspect whether Angelica was in possession of her sanity. Gilbert and Cordelia were dumbfounded seeing that.

「Stop!」

「Angelica-sama, please stop it already!」

The two desperately kept calling in order to stop her, but Angelica pointed her left hand toward the two.

The flame assaulted the two. The two broke through the wall and got tossed outside.

They got somewhat burned, but they were safe.

Gilbert looked at the building from outside where flame was whirling high to the sky.

Angelica's laughing voice could be heard from there.

「Everything should just turn into ash!」

Angelica's sorrowful laugh resounded to the surrounding.

When Marie and others came to the floating island, a tornado of flame was dying the cloudy sky red.

A girl's laughing voice was coming from inside the flame.

To Marie, that voice sounded extremely sad.

「How can even Angelica do something like this?」

This was outside the domain of magic that human could handle.

Ann appeared beside the dumbfounded Marie.

She didn't stand out because everyone's gaze was attracted to the gloomy flame tornado.

『That girl is descended from the same bloodline like me.』

「Haa!? That's the first time I heard that!」

『You and Olivia are my descendants, but Angelica might be the descendant of my little sister.』

「I never heard that you had a little sister!」

『I didn't tell you because you didn't ask. In the first place, my little sister and me were sisters in name only and more like a stranger to each other. Perhaps, she became my replacement as the saintess after I left.』

It seemed that her relationship with sister wasn't particularly good, although they also held no resentment to each other.

Marie was curious with Ann's story, but it wasn't time for that right now. Right now the priority was Angelica.

Marie felt the heat when she took a step forward.

The surrounding's temperature was increasing even without the flame touching her directly.

「Hot! How can we save her like this huh?」

She wanted to save Angelica, but she couldn't think of any idea to do it.

Ann offered her cooperation to Marie.

『I can meddle with her mind to make her stop.』

「You can do that?」

『If I can get closer. As expected I don't want to rush into a flame that is created with magic.』

「It's no good then!」

Just like what she did with Marie, Ann could meddle with Angelica's mind and stopped her rampage.

But, for that she needed to break through the flame and touch Angelica.

Marie couldn't do anything.

Marie and others could only watch, but there Leon appeared riding Arroganz.

「You can somehow manage if you get closer to Angelica-san right?」

Leon opened the chest hatch and peered out. Ann nodded to him.

『It's possible if I can get close but, are you planning to rush into that flame?』

Leon lightly tapped Arroganz with his fist.

「Don't look down on Arroganz's heat resistance.」

Arroganz himself replied to the smiling Leon.

It seemed that he himself was confident.

『Arroganz can endure that flame. Luxion also said that.』

Luxion appeared in this place when his name was called.

His electronic voice was the same like usual. Marie couldn't feel any motivation from him.

『There won't be any problem. Even with just master's pilot suit, he will be able to endure that flame for several minutes.』

Leon invited Ann into the cockpit.

「Come on, stand over here.」

Ann hesitatingly entered into Arroganz's cockpit.

Usually Leon was scared toward Ann, but now he wasn't showing any fear perhaps because of his uneasiness.

Next Leon turned his gaze to Luxion.

「What are you going to do?」

Are you coming into the cockpit too? Leon invited, but Luxion turned it down.

『I decline. I can give my support even from here.』

「——I see. Marie, take some more distance from here.」

「R-right」

Leon entered the cockpit and closed the hatch.

But, for some reason Marie was feeling uneasiness in her chest.

(Why is it? I got the feeling that I shouldn't let him go.)

For some reason it felt like her heart was yelling that she couldn't allow Leon to go.

She clenched her hand, pressed her chest, and swallowed back her words.

In exchange she put out words of encouragement.

「Go save her without fail!」

When Arroganz's hatch closed, Leon's reply came from the speaker.

『Leave it to me!』

When Arroganz flew into the tornado of flame, Marie felt nothing but bad premonition.

Luxion who remained beside Marie expressed his inability to understand Leon's action.

『I'm baffled. Is there really any worth to go as far as that to save Angelica?』

For Luxion, Angelica's worth was only that much.

Furthermore, for Luxion even Hohlfahrt Kingdom and this situation were simply triviality.

Marie grasped her own chest and clenched her hand on her clothes.

「Of course there is. There will be a lot of problems if Angelica die.」

『——Everything will be resolved instantly if we blow away everything though?』

「Don't joke around at this kind of situation!」

『My apologies.』

After Luxion fell silent, Marie looked toward the flame that Leon flew into.

She knew that if it was Leon then he would return safely, but for some reason she thought that she had committed a mistake.

(Why is my chest feeling this painful?)

Leon's action of saving Angelica should be correct.

And yet Marie was feeling an indescribable anxiety.

It was as though a wrong choice had been chosen. Her chest tightened from a regret that had no going back.

Short Story — Marie Route the Seventh

A girl was crying while laughing inside a flame.

「Burn. Everything must burn——anything and everything should just burn to ash, disappear!」

The clothes she was wearing burned into ash, but there wasn't any burn on Angelica's skin.

Rather, the flame was clinging on Angelica like a garment.

She was wearing a dress of flame made from magic power. Her eyes congested with blood and her tears changed into tears of blood.

The rampaging Angelica produced a great vortex of flame and burning her surrounding.

She yelled toward the sky on that place where nobody could approach.

「Why——your highness——didn't you promise to protect me!」

She lost herself in sadness and rage because the promise Julius made to her in their childhood was discarded. Her magic power exploded.

The building where she was put under house arrest was blown away without any trace by the flame storm Angelica made.

Nobody could approach her anymore.

Nobody could stop Angelica——or that should be the case.

A storm of flame. Wind of flame was becoming a wall that was protecting Angelica, but a black armor broke through that wall.

A normal armor should become unable to move before it could reach Angelica's location.

Even if the armor managed, the pilot inside wouldn't last.

But, that armor wasn't normal.

Angelica glared at the black armor while crying tears of blood.

「Arroganz——Bartfalt, this damn fool!」

Angelica swung her left arm from right to left. With that six red magic circles manifested in front of her.

What was created from there were spears made from condensed flame──Fire Lance.

One magic circle was creating more than ten shining red fire lances.

There were six of those magic circles.

The formed fire lances were fired. Explosions blasted off when they hit Arroganz.

Arroganz planted its feet on the ground and endured, but it was gradually getting pushed back by the blasts.

Every single one of the lances possessed high destructive power, but Arroganz's impossible armor was enduring them.

Angelica imagined that the pilot inside was still safe because the armor was still moving.

That was really annoying for her.

「Even though you have that much power, you don't safe his highness and easily act to benefit that witch. You're really an incorrigible fool.」

The powerful Leon held back in his duel against Julius and others.

Angelica couldn't forgive that.

The magic circles supplied new fire lances and fired them again.

There wasn't any sign of the attack running out of steam.

「Let's see how long you can keep that up. ──Don't think that you will die painlessly.」

Angelica wanted to kill Leon slowly, but Leon inside Arroganz talked to her.

『What a shrew. Perhaps your highness threw you away because you are too stubborn like this?』

Leon who was only defending before Angelica's fire lances provoked her with a light tone.

The surrounding flame intensified from Angelica's hatred.

The flame storm became even bigger.

「I'll admit you have courage that you can still joke around eve now.」

Leon realized that his provocation was effective from hearing the quiet fury in Angelica's bitter voice. He took heart in it.

『Looks like you're unexpectedly composed. I thought you would be more hysteric.』

「I want to turn you bastard into ash right away here.」

The magic circles that were making fire lances turned bigger when Angelica saw Arroganz's toughness──and then, its rate of magic power condensation was also increasing.

The attack of fire lances with their power heightened caused explosion that fully covered even Arroganz's frame when they landed.

「Let me hear you scream.」

Angelica's smile that distorted from hatred, coupled with her beauty made her looked excessively ominous and terrifying.

Leon seriously grieved seeing that.

『It's unfortunate. Even though I thought that you're unexpectedly cute when we talked during the school festival.』

「──Shut up」

Angelica's shoulders twitched.

She recalled the donut she ate at the school festival.

When she was so busy that she couldn't even make time for lunch, she encountered Leon who was eating some failed donuts.

Angelica showed interest to the donuts that she normally had no chance of eating.

After that Angelica reflected that she was acting improperly. Now that memory was resurrected inside her.

Angelica's right hand clenched on her chest. Her face distorted in pain.

『Even a noble lady's stomach can rumble like that huh! At that time, you looked age-appropriate──no, you looked cute like a kid. And yet now, hahh』

「Don't speak!」

Kid, cute.

Those were words that usually would be never mentioned about Angelica.

Angelica who had a side that was harsh to herself had been treated like someone older by her surrounding since her childhood.

It was something only natural for someone of her status, but if she could be honest it also made her felt lonely.

Even Angelica harbored the same feeling like her surrounding of wanting to be pampered.

The fire lances of the flustered Angelica were weakening drastically.

『What? You aren't used to getting praised?』

Angelica's anger strengthened before Leon's teasing.

「Don't get cocky! No matter what someone like you say──」

『And yet your attack's intensity is dropping. You're really not honest at all. Are you a tsundere?』

「Kuh」

The intensity of the flame around Angelica was declining as though to project the inside of her heart.

But, even so the storm of flame was still menacing.

Angelica's chest was getting painful. Her breathing started to become ragged.

「Don't speak. ──You──someone like you──don't dirty my treasured memory」

『I don't know what is this memory you're talking about.』

Angelica fell on her knees and started sobbing. Leon's attitude also changed seeing that.

He spoke calmly and admonishingly.

『Do you think that everything would go well if I won the duel? Even if I won──everything was already too late.』

Leon's bitterness seeped out when he spoke "too late".

Angelica laughed while crying.

Even without Leon telling her, she already noticed that it was too late.

「Fair. Certainly, even if you won at that time, this flow of event can't be stopped. Rather, it would only become even more troublesome.」

『Then isn't it――』

Isn't it enough already with this? Angelica stopped Leon from continuing his words.

Angelica stood up. Her cloudy eyes were shining with ominous redness.

「So what?」

『Huh?』

「I'll take back his highness from that witch. I'll do anything for that.」

Angelica's flame was regaining its intensity after she spoke out her will.

「I'll turn everything into ash and restart from zero. I'll burn anything and everything.」

The storm of flame was changing shape.

The flame was forming the shape of a giant man.

『This blockhead!』

She heard Leon's anxious voice. And then there was the voice of another person.

――A woman's voice.

『I understand your feeling but, I can't possibly let you burn everything.』

◇

Inside Arroganz's cockpit.

Ann's spiritual body is swaying beside me. She is sympathizing with Angelica.

『What a passionate girl.』

「She want to burn the world for her former fiancée, there should be a limit even in being overly passionate.」

After all Ann was also planning to destroy Hohlfahrt Kingdom for the sake of her beloved Lea.

After all she sealed her own will and power inside the sacred tools──that are actually cursed items. What a terrifying person.

She must be seeing herself from Angelica-san.

『Leon, I'm going into that girl's mental world. You come too.』

「Eh, me too? We need to go that far?」

『It's impossible to persuade her. Things won't become like this if it's possible. Besides, she might really turn a country into a burnt field if we just leave her alone like this.』

The giant made from flame only has an upper body, but it's a cluster of preposterous amount of magic power.

It's surpassing the scale that a human can control.

Angelica-san is already stepping into inhuman territory.

「Guess there is no other way.」

『Resolve yourself.』

I tightly grasped Arroganz's control stick and advanced into the raining down fire lances.

「Endure it just for a bit, Arroganz!」

『Arroganz, enduring!』

Arroganz replied energetically with halting words, but he stepped firmly on the ground and advanced step by step.

And then, he reached out toward Angelica-san.

But, a wall is created by flame that burst up from the ground.

Alarm is ringing inside the cockpit.

『Melting on a part of the armor confirmed』

I felt a chill on my back hearing Arroganz's report.

「This isn't a human feat.」

『But, if it's at this range』

Ann's swaying black body shook and connected to Angelica-san's mind.

『Next is you, Leon.』

「Ah, wait. I'm still not mentally prepared!?」

『──You're really exactly like Lea.』

Ann wrapped around me in slight exasperation and I got swallowed into the swaying black body.

◇

「──Eh?」

I'm standing in a dark place when I came to myself.

I can't see anything around me. is it night? But there is no doubt that I'm somewhere.

But I'm more concerned with my appearance rather than that.

I'm not wearing my pilot suit. I'm enveloped in the comfortable sensation of my casual wear.

But, inside this darkness where I can't even see myself, I can't check my own appearance.

『This is the state of Angelica's heart right now.』

I can't see anything here but, my hand touched something when I moved my body.

It's something like furniture.

I groped around to carefully check my surrounding while turning my body toward the voice below.

「It's dark here that I can't see you.」

『──On the contrary I can see you well. I can really see you clearly.』

It seems she can see me even within this darkness.

「And, what should we do now? We will be able to persuade Angelica-san right?」

『I have a lot of experiences taking advantage of a heart's opening to lead people astray until now but, this is my first time trying to save a heart.』

「Thanks for the unreliable answer.」

I'm thinking hard of what to do inside the darkness while cracking joke.

As I'm continuing to grope around, I managed to touch something that felt like a wall.

「Are we somewhere inside a room?」

『A lot of people reproduced the place where they can feel the calmest as their mental scenery. This place──it looks like a storage room.』

「Storage room? A storage room is a calming place!?」

If it's me then my room from my previous life might become my mental environment, but I never expected that a rich noble lady will have a storage room as her calming place.

『If it's Angelica then she is also here.』

「No way!?」

I got on my guard after being told that Angelica-san is in this dark place where I can't hear or see anything.

Although it's not the real world, I can't keep calm after recalling the event just now.

She displayed a magic that pushed back even Arroganz, so it's possible that she can display outrageous power even inside her heart.

Ann told me the location of Angelica-san.

『Turn left. And then go forward slowly.』

I moved just as instructed.

『Stop there. ──She is in front of you right now. She is sitting and leaning on the wall.』

I managed to arrive in front of Angelica-san, but the problem started from here.

「Oi, what should I do now?」

『Talk to her. Although, she is closing her heart. It won't be easy to persuade her.』

「Still, there is no other way.」

Giving up after coming this far is out of question.

The damage will keep increasing if she isn't quickly stopped from rampaging.

It's Ann who talked to her first.

『Angelica, reply if you can hear.』

Angelica-san doesn't respond to Ann's words.

But, Ann who can see that Angelica-san is there continue to talk to her.

『It was painful right? Tell us about that feeling too. What pained you?』

「Oi, will she talk to us about something like that so easily?」

Normally this kind of talk can't be called as persuasion, but it seemed that Ann is thinking that it's fine like that.

『No problem. This is inside her heart. It's a place where she can't lie and will speak her honest feeling. The problem is that Angelica is closing her heart but――』

Angelica-san isn't saying anything.

It looked like it would be pointless even if Ann talked to her, so I scratched my head.

「No good huh? What to do――hm? There is a sweet scent.」

I thought that this scent seems familiar, then I recalled the conversation before this.

「Donuts?」

I recalled the donuts that came up in my conversation with Angelica-san. A light is lit when I spoke of it.

The lighting hanging on the wall is emitting unreliable light inside the darkness, but underneath it there is a girl sitting while hugging her knees.

The girl lifted up her face.

「──Donut person.」

「Angelica──san?」

Angelica-san called me donut person. That fact alone is already shocking but, the most shocking thing is her appearance.

The girl with dignified appearance that made her looked older than her actual age, for some reason is there with the appearance of a little girl that looked far away from her actual age. She is wearing a dress with a lot of frills and red shoes that glinted from the light. It really left an impression.

Angelica-san looked up to me. Unlike usual, she looked fleeting, or frail.

She is looking like she is going to break crying even now.

「I want──to eat donuts.」

「Eh!? No, sorry. Right now it's」

When I'm going to say that I don't have any, black shadow stretched from beside me and handed her donuts.

Ann whispered into my ear.

『She manifested sweets inside her heart when she noticed you here. Give her this.』

I took the donuts as advised and handed them to Angelica-san right away.

Angelica-san happily accepted them with both hands and started nibbling on one.

「Ehehe, donuts. ──I want to eat them together with his highness.」

Her happy expression immediately turned cloudy with loneliness.

「Do you like his highness?」

I'm getting curious with Angelica-san's reason for getting fixated with his highness.

I thought love doesn't exist in political marriage, but at the very least Angelica-san loved his highness Julius.

「Yep! You know, you know! His highness is really kind. He promised to protect me.」

「Protect?」

When I asked about the promise between the two of them, the inside of the room mysteriously got illuminated by the light of a spotlight.

Standing there is another small Angelica-san.

When I hurriedly looked in front of me, there is also an Angelica-san there.

Two Angelica-san appeared in this place. The inside of human's heart is amazing. While I'm having such a common impression, the voices of many people spoke inside the room.

But, there isn't any sign of people.

「You're really a strong child Angelica. That's why you can endure can't you?」

「She is stronger and more dependable than boy. Angelica is amazing.」

「You're really reliable. Keep it up okay, Angelica.」

A lot of the voices coming from the surrounding are praising Angelica-san.

But, tears are dripping from the eyes of the small Angelica-san each time she heard those words.

「Not strong. I'm not strong at all! Anyone is fine──please help me! Even I want to be pampered by someone. I want to be protected.」

She is crying with the figure of a little child.

When I looked at Angelica-san who is near the wall, she is looking down on the ground.

And then her true feeling started to spill out.

「I have to endure.」

「Eh?」

「Everyone called me a strong child. So, I have to work hard.」

She was responding to the expectations from her surrounding?

She was unable to rely on anyone even though she actually wanted to be pampered?

I thought she was a strong-willed noble lady, but hiding deep in her heart was a little kid who wanted to be pampered?

And then someone is approaching the Angelica-san under the spotlight.

His highness Julius when he was a kid wearing high quality children's clothing appeared.

Angelica-san ran toward his highness Julius with a smile. She grabbed both his hands.

「Your highness!」

「Angelica. It must be hard for you. I'm going to protect you from now on.」

「Yes, your highness!」

──Just what in the world I'm looking at here?

Is this the beginning of romance between Angelica-san and his highness Julius in the past?

I'm not interested at all with their romance story but, I'm staring firmly at the two of them if with this Angelica-san will open her heart.

They looked like two children who got along well with each other.

But, the spotlight vanished.

When I looked back toward Angelica-san who is sitting with her back on the wall, she is looking down sadly with a donut in both her hands.

「Even though his highness said that」

I'm flustered when Angelica-san started crying. Then Ann summarized the important point.

『She must be deceived by the sweet words of Hohlfahrt's descendant when she was about to be crushed by all the expectations around her.』

「You're harsh against his highness.」

『I also hate that guy.』

「I-I see」

She hated them because they are descendants of people she hated.

But, I wish his highness actually took responsibility.

Why did he push her away even after promising to protect her?

The crying Angelica-san is waiting for his highness even now.

「He said that he will come running when I'm in trouble. Even if everyone become my enemy──I alone will be your ally. He said that.」

It's amazing that a kid was able to say that kind of line.

Ann got totally exasperated by his highness Julius at his childhood.

「He must be just repeating a favorite phrase that he read from a story somewhere. And Angelica has been remembering those words all this time.」

「──I see.」

I'm thinking of what to do here──in the end no answer came out, so I sat down beside Angelica-san.

Angelica-san is confused seeing me sitting beside her.

「I'm lacking in everything to be a replacement for a prince on white horse but, I'll protect you in his place so don't cry anymore.」

「──No way. I want his highness.」

「You aren't going to back down from that huh.」

My heart almost broke from Angelica-san's sullen and honest reply.

So someone like me can't be a replacement for Prince Julius.

Ann consoled the despondent me.

『Don't mind her. I think you're better than that guy.』

「In your case it's just because of your bias right? My heart won't be healed even if I'm told that by someone like you.」

『You're also just judging from appearance right?』

I'm not good with ghost.

Revengeful ghost, spirit──anyway anything ghost-like. Being liked by a ghost like Ann just troubled me.

「Rather than appearance, it's more the existence. You're a ghost aren't you? It's scary instead to be liked by a ghost isn't it?」

『Can you say that even after looking at my true appearance?』

Ann seemed to be worked up for some reason and her form of black mist changed into her form when she was alive.

A blonde haired girl wearing white attire of priestess. She looked somewhat similar with Angelica-san.

Ann who is wearing a strong-willed expression put her right hand on her splendid breast.

『How's this?』

「If only you're alive, it'll be the best.」

I let out a long sigh that made Ann irritated.

『Even your unpleasantness is similar with Lea. It irritated me even more.』

「Even my honorable ancestor will be bewildered if a ghost take a liking to him.」

I heard a small snicker while we are making such an idiotic talk.

When I turned toward the voice, I saw Angelica-san laughing.

Perhaps she found our conversation amusing. It seems she is opening her heart slightly to us.

Another light inside the room lit up, then another one.

I can hazily see the inside of the room that seems to be a storage room.

There is furniture here but, there are too many things here and there isn't any sign of this place being lived-in.

I can understand why Ann said that this is a storage room.

「Why are you in here?」

When I asked Angelica-san that, she hugged her knees while answering.

「——I came here when I want to cry. Because nobody will come here.」

Usually she held back her feeling in order to answer the expectations of the surrounding. When she wanted to cry, she came alone to the storage room to cry.

That's the reason why a small storage room became a calming place for a noble daughter.

What a sad reason.

But──this room is more spacious than my apartment room in my previous life, and although there are a lot of things placed inside here, there is still quite some space remaining.

This place feels like an unused room somewhere inside a large mansion that ended up being used to store unused items.

But, for a boy like me, this room suited my preference with how it looked like a hidden base.

「This room is like a hidden base. I like it.」

「It's not a base.」

「I mean that it's a secret place.」

The lightings inside the room are getting lit up one after another while we are continuing our rambling.

Ann narrowed her eyes fondly at us seeing the change in the room.

『You have opened her heart quite much. This lady-killer.』

「Don't joke. I'm a late bloomer and naïve boy when it came to romance.」

『Say whatever you like. More importantly, looks like it's good enough.』

When I returned my gaze from Ann to Angelica-san, her appearance has returned to the same age like in the real world without me noticing.

She is sitting beside me wearing the school uniform. She is still holding the half-eaten donut.

She looked at me and smiled thankfully.

「I haven't paid you back for the donuts haven't I? I'll curb down my anger here.」

「Is that alright? That doesn't sound balanced for just some donuts.」

I never expected she will stop rampaging just for donuts.

When I asked her that, Angelica-san looked embarrassed.

「Because it was a large debt for me.」

She said that and put on a lonely smile.

「──Even though I already understood that there is nothing that could be done anymore, just how stupid I could be.」

I'm about to speak up when Angelica-san talked self-depreciatingly like that, but she glared at us.

「I have one last request. I want you to save his highness.」

「That's」

It's impossible to save his highness Julius at this point.

While I'm deliberating whether I should prepare a dummy to replace his highness when he is executed, Angelica-san told me the actual meaning of saving she meant.

「At the very least, I want him to be released from that woman's control. It's just too pitiful for him to keep being controlled like a puppet.」

Hearing Angelica-san's earnest request, I turned my gaze toward Ann silently.

After all she is the person who controlled his highness──or rather that person's offshoot.

Ann nodded a little.

『We will do as much as we can.』

Angelica-san made a relaxed smile.

「──I see.」

◇

The flame storm vanished.

The heat and scorching smell at the surrounding still hadn't vanished fully.

From inside there, Leon was walking toward Marie while carrying Angelica who was wrapped in a towel.

Arroganz was walking behind Leon with stiff movement due to the damage he had accumulated.

That was just how hard it was to talk Angelica down.

「Leon!」

Marie came running. Leon gave her a tired smile and cracked a joke with his usual tone.

「That was hard. I'll never do something like that again.」

「Was it really okay?」

Marie looked worried. Leon turned his gaze toward the unconscious Angelica.

「His highness Julius is also a sinful bastard huh.」

「What do you mean?」

「It's nothing. More importantly, the cleanup will be a pain.」

Leon looked at the damage around them and sighed. Luxion approached him.

『Damage of this level can be repaired quickly. Fortunately there is no loss manpower wise.』

Marie felt coldness from how Luxion used the word manpower.

「You, isn't there a better way to say that?」

『──I'll be careful next time.』

Luxion didn't sound like he was reflecting. Marie felt really dissatisfied hearing that.

But, the important one right now was Leon.

「Leon, you better rest for a bit. You're looking tired.」

The situation kept changing continuously in short time that both Marie and Leon were left exhausted.

Marie saw that Leon was really tired, both physically and mentally from forcing himself.

「I'll rest after taking care of some things. It feels like I have repeated life multiple times.」

He had gone through turbulent times where dramatic occurrences happened in succession.

Marie also agreed.

「I thought that life will be better if it's fun but, we should always remember to do everything in moderation huh. ──But, it really will be better if you rest.」

「If only I can rest.」

Leon put on a thin smile. He must be imagining the gloomy future that was waiting ahead of them.

To Marie, he looked really sad.

When she was going to speak up to Leon, she was cut off by two people running toward them.

「Ange!」

「Milady!」

Gilbert and Cordelia approached Leon who was carrying Angelica.

The two of them were worried for Angelica. They checked Angelica's condition and felt relieved to see her alive.

And then Gilbert apologized to Leon.

「My thanks for saving my little sister's life. Also, please allow me to apologize for the damage she caused to your territory.」

Gilbert expressed his gratitude and apology. Leon responded to him with a wry smile.

「There were injured people but, nobody died. It's a small mercy.」

「I promise that I shall repay this debt without fail.」

Marie closed her mouth, thinking that she couldn't disturb the talk of the two of them.

Ann secretly approached such Marie.

『──Marie, we need to talk.』

◇

Marie went to a bush that hid her from other people's eyes. There she listened to Ann's talk.

Ann talked about what they saw in Angelica's mental world.

『You noticed didn't you? Why did you stay quiet?』

「——Stop it. I don't want to hear that kind of talk.」

『What are you scared about? I'm not blaming you or anything. But, you——』

Marie raised her voice to the worried Ann.

She cut off Ann's talk because she didn't want to hear it.

「I'm telling you I don't know! More importantly, why did you make Leon say something like protecting Angelica? You know how much he is forcing himself right?」

Marie didn't want to increase the burden on Leon any more than this.

She was thinking that Leon would act recklessly again after knowing that he had promised to protect Angelica.

In fact he had been acting recklessly.

「Everybody is relying on Leon. That guy isn't someone that amazing. And yet, everyone keep bringing heavy talks to him.」

Seeing Marie worrying for Leon made Ann lost her intention to question her further.

『You're kind. ——But, you can't run away anymore after coming this far.』

「That's really the worst.」

◇

I returned to the mansion of Bartfalt family and discussed with Marie about the plan going forward.

I invited Marie to my room where I sat on my bed.

Marie is sitting on a chair while facing me.

「I didn't expect that Angelica would rampage. What's more, it was that intense. That was just cheating.」

Marie's legs dangled back and forth as she complained. Ann is beside her.

『That was why I said it. She is similar with me. Even that girl would literally burn at least a country to ash.』

I didn't expect that other than the heroine, even the villainess is also a cheat character.

I talked about my action proudly.

「In that case, I'm a hero who saved a country huh.」

When I intentionally talked cockily like that, Luxion who is floating near me responded with sarcasm.

『In that case, master should have saved Hohlfahrt Kingdom before it reached a terminal stage like this.』

「——You're right.」

『Oh? Master doesn't argue back? You're very dispirited this time. Can't be helped.』

Luxion gave a suggestion with slight annoyance seeing me unable to even make a joke after he touched a sore spot.

『I'll investigate the kingdom in detail.』

Luxion suddenly spoke that he will help out. It made both Marie and me looked at him skeptically.

He wouldn't help until now no matter how much we asked him.

It's unbelievable that now he is saying that he will help without getting prompted.

「What's your intention?」

『The survival of master and Marie is my wish. I judged that the present situation is dangerous. I'll put a part of the investigation on new mankind's relic on hold and put effort to solve this problem.』

How reassuring. ——It's a bit unbelievable though.

There is also how Luxion has been acting until now. It made Marie emotional.

「Things wouldn't become like this if only you help out earlier!」

『I wonder about that.』

「What? Do you have any excuse?」

Marie took a stance of listening to Luxion's excuse at least, but with the way she acted, she won't be convinced no matter what kind of excuse is given to her.

She must be planning to argue back no matter what Luxion said.

But, Luxion turned his red eyes toward Ann.

『Both master and Marie didn't know that the saintess's items are cursed. If we acted to protect the game scenario, in the end Olivia would still obtain the saintess's items. If in the small chance her body doesn't get stolen——it means her current self is her true nature. Whether I was here or not, the result wouldn't change.』

「T-that's! ——That might be true, but still」

If we only looked at the result, then certainly things might still ended up the same even with Luxion here.

But, is that really true?

I can't agree fully with Luxion's talk because my opinion is almost the same with Marie's stance.

「If only you were here, we would be able to deal with things quicker right? We would be able to solve the problem before it became like this wouldn't we?」

『Affirmative.』

Marie is enraged by Luxion's affirmation.

「You!」

Marie almost jumped at Luxion, but Ann cut into our conversation.

『Even if we took the initiative to act, Olivia would also act in order to deal with it. In the end, this country will perish because it's the natural course.』

Ann whose stance is Hohlfahrt Kingdom should just perish! apparently doesn't plan to criticize Luxion.

Rather, it's the opposite, because things are moving to the direction that Ann wished because of it.

「You yourself, what are you thinking?」

When I asked her, the fierceness that was inside her when we first met is vanishing.

『I don't care as long as Hohlfahrt Kingdom perish. The other me must be planning to ruin the people too but, the me here isn't planning to go that far.』

「I'm relieved to hear that.」

——The problem is there.

At this point, we can't stop the war.

We will be able to stop the war forcefully by using Luxion's power.

Perhaps they might surrender if they are shown overwhelming power but——how many will Luxion need to kill to reach that point?

I don't have the resolve to shoulder the sin of genocide.

「It's the unrelated people of this country who are bothered by all these. ——I want to keep the damage to them to the minimum. Luxion, gather as much information of the capital as possible.」

I borrowed Luxion's strength, so that the ordinary people won't be harmed at least.

But, Luxion noticed my indecisiveness.

『Everything will end if master order me to destroy them. Then the noble alliance will be placed under master's rule and a new country will be born. That way will be more effective.』

「I dislike that kind of thing.」

I refused but, Luxion criticized me.

『The two options are them dying from war or from being killed by me. If I destroy them, the damage to our allies will be shockingly light. Master is making light of your allies' lives.』

If I borrow Luxion's strength, a lot of my allies will survive.

I know that but, I can't choose that option.

「You're making light of life itself though. The enemies are also living humans.」

『──New mankind, isn't categorized as mankind in "our" data.』

That's why, anything is allowed against them──Luxion who said such thing is terrifying. At the same time he looked pitiful to me.

「That was why you guys were defeated.」

『There were various factors that caused our defeat but, master said that we lost because we didn't pity our enemy? That's a funny joke.』

Marie spoke loudly seeing the place's atmosphere worsening.

「Enough argument! Luxion, go gather information quickly. It'll be great if the damage is reduced with that.」

Luxion obeyed Marie's forcefulness without any objection.

『──Very well. Well then, I shall take my leave.』

Luxion flew away from an open window. He immediately vanished from view.

◇

At the capital of Hohlfahrt Kingdom.

Olivia was reading a report in her room that was prepared for her in the palace.

There was only one candle lighting inside the completely closed room.

Olivia gloated inside the dimly lit room.

「So the kingdom is isolated just as planned with the nobles giving up on it. The order to use that will come out soon with this.」

There was a flying ship that was a lost item that they found in the past.

Right now that ship was called as the royal family's ship. It made Ann inside Olivia to feel bitter.

「That ship won't be able to move now that Lea isn't here.」

She discarded the report and sat down on a nearby chair before she crossed her legs.

「Now then, I'm looking forward at how the descendants of Hohlfahrt and others will move. Will they die grandly, or will they die pathetically──I can't wait.」

With this her revenge was moving to the next phase──Olivia thought that but, she felt a presence and stood up from her chair. She took a book that was nearby.

She looked around her and threw the book in her hand.

「Who?」

Olivia realized that there was someone inside the room. She unsheathed the knife hidden under her clothes.

The book she threw hit the wall and fell, but a strange sphere appeared near it.

The floating metal sphere had an eye that looked like red glass.

「A familiar?」

She muttered so seeing the non human existence, but surprisingly the existence before her talked in human language.

『How surprising. I'm amazed you managed to notice me here. Oops, pardon me. I am Luxion──I'm not anything related to magic. I'm created from the crystallization of mankind's wisdom, science.』

「──Science ehh. We once discovered that term in the documents from some ruins. I see, so you're a lost item.」

Ann inside Olivia recalled the dungeons that she had explored in her previous life.

Inside the books that she obtained from there, there were mentions about science.

(That gloomy girl was showing interest to it wasn't she?)

Gloomy girl──Ann referred to her little sister.

She was someone who was related to her by blood but, she was no different than a stranger for Ann.

In contrast to Ann who loved treasure, her little sister Mary harbored interest toward the ancient knowledge.

Mary sought knowledge rather than gold and silver, but Ann couldn't comprehend her.

Luxion seemed interested to Ann who had some understanding about science.

『You're really interesting. But, I'll have to dispose of you now that you know about my existence.』

It seemed from the start Luxion planned to erase her————that was how it felt like.

This only looked like he was intentionally showing himself in order to erase her.

「Who sent you here?」

Ann slowly walked inside the room. Luxion's red eye never moved away from her.

『I won't tell you.』

But, Ann sensed that Luxion was interested with her.

To her, it felt like Luxion was pondering if there was any way for him to use her before he killed her.

「What's your objective? If you want to kill me, you should be able to do it without showing yourself in front of me. You intentionally showed yourself to me must mean that there is something you're curious about right?」

『You are a very gutsy person.』

「I won't be able to be an adventurer if I'm surprised just from this much.」

Ann wouldn't be able to survive as an adventurer being the only woman surrounded by nothing but tough men if she wasn't strong mentally.

Rather, she was enjoying this situation.

「Should I try guessing who your employer is?」

『I don't think you'll hit the right answer though?』

「No, I already know who. ——Bartfalt. It's Leon right?」

Luxion fell silent for several seconds before he praised Ann's brain.

『I'm surprised. That's correct. But, with this I have even more reason to have you disappear here. It is unfortunate. You might be able to survive if only you are someone who is a bit duller and easier to handle.』

Ann chuckled from being told that she would be killed from being too smart for her own good.

「You should be a bit more composed. How about we probe at each other's intention a bit more? What's your wish?」

Luxion could kill her anytime but, he intentionally showed himself in front of her.

That was the same like telling her that there was something he wanted.

Furthermore, he admitted that her guess about his employer was correct despite being an assassin.

Luxion must be planning to contact her from the start.

『——Do you want to make a deal with me?』

◇

While Luxion is investigating the capital.

I got summoned to the territory of Duke Redgrave.

It seems they are holding a kickoff party for the nobles who revolted against the kingdom.

To put it simply, this is a drinking party of「Let's take down the kingdom together yeah!」.

It felt like they are being carefree for holding this kind of party but, it's unexpectedly important.

After all, it's Duke Redgrave who held that kickoff party.

I'm standing near the wall while staring at the hall that is the party venue.

I hid my face's scar with a cloth instead of eye patch. This is me being considerate so that the people who saw my face won't feel discomfort.

「Big bro also got dragged here huh.」

Count Bartfalt──Nicks who is also attending this party is being greeted by many people due to his relationship with Count Roseblade.

Nobody is approaching me.

「If only Marie is here, I'll at least have someone to talk to.」

I'm not bringing Marie to here.

We haven't married formally, and most of all this place is filled with disquieting atmosphere.

This is a gathering for those who are going to betray the kingdom after this.

There is no guarantee that there won't be any traitor among these people who will betray the nobles here to the kingdom in order to sell favor.

That's why I left Marie behind at home.

She was dissatisfied by my decision, but she obediently stayed behind after I told her that the party would be filled with political talk anyway.

To be honest, I also want to leave everything to big bro and just go home.

However, it seems that the achievement of defeating the Black Knight can't be underestimated.

It will be bad if I decide to not attend the party, because the invitation for us came directly from Redgrave House. Perhaps they are counting us as a prominent fighting force in their side.

While I'm staying still near the wall, the new queen of the dukedom, Hertrauda Sera Fanoss has just finished making her round and walked toward me.

Midway she ordered her knights to stay in a distance and came to my side alone before talking to me.

「Oh? You aren't wearing a mask.」

Because I have been receiving treatment as a masked knight before I realized it, it seems she is thinking that I'm always wearing a mask.

「I also didn't wear a mask when we met before right?」

When I replied curtly like that, Heltrauda-san stood at my side. With the wall on her back, she is looking at the same sight with me.

「Looks like Redgrave House will ascend to the throne next.」

「Looks like it.」

Redgrave House invited Fanoss Kingdom here.

In other words, they are showing that they are the one uniting the nobles.

Anyone who isn't a total idiot will realize that Duke Redgrave will be the next king.

I turned only my gaze toward Heltrauda-san.

「You aren't going to come forward? If it's the dukedom then you also might be able to take the throne.」

Other than Redgrave House, only a force like Fanoss Dukedom has the capability to unite the nobles.

But, Heltrauda-san shook her head and said that it's pointless.

「The current dukedom doesn't have enough influence. Though if Bandel is alive, there might be a bit of dispute about it.」

Heltrauda-san looked at me with a condemning gaze. She laughed when I averted my gaze.

「I'm joking. I'm resentful but, I understand that it was war.」

Even though she is younger than me, she is acting really mature.

Did she become stronger after overcoming her sister's death?

——It would be impossible if it was me.

「So in the end you're resentful huh.」

「Obviously. Bandel himself wasn't really in the right but, he still protected us in his own way.」

Is she referring to how Bandel belonged to the pro war faction and involved with the assassination of the previous king?

I'm amazed that she forgave him.

That's what I thought but, looking at Heltrauda-san's conflicted expression, it seems she hasn't forgiven him completely.

Even though she is younger than me, she is placed in a complicated position.

「——If only Onee-sama is alive, she would be able to unite the country better than me. And then, we won't need to obey Redgrave House.」

I let out a small sigh seeing Heltrauda-san's frustrated look.

It's a thinking that I can't understand.

「Did you want to become king?」

「If it was Onee-sama, she might be able to become the queen.」

Her trust for her sister is deep.

She doesn't say it with words but, is she thinking that it should be her sister who live instead of herself?

「That big sis wished for you to live though.」

Heltrauda-san looked dubious at first when I brought out that topic out of nowhere.

But, she seemed to notice my intention and smiled self-depreciatingly.

「I guess.」

The nobles in the party venue surrounded the duke while showering him with praises.

They must be buttering up the duke thinking of after the war is won.

A maid approached us who are standing near the wall.

The maid who is wearing glasses is Cornelia-san.

「Baron Bartfalt, milady wished to talk.」

「Angelica-san did?」

◇

「Sorry for calling you like this.」

「Don't mind it.」

Angelica-san was taken back to her home after rampaging on my floating island.

For Redgrave House, that judgment must be created because they didn't wish to trouble me anymore than that.

Also, the person herself having regained her composure was also one of the reason she was allowed to go home.

Right now Angelica-san is looking a bit haggard, but she is calm.

「Both father and big brother are busy dealing with all the nobles. And so I'm the one keeping you company.」

I was called to a reception room.

Angelica-san isn't participating in the party, partially because of the case of betrothal annulment.

Now here she is saying that she is keeping me company, but what does she want to talk about?

「What do you have to discuss with a country bumpkin noble like me?」

When I talked to her with such informal tone, Angelica-san turned a serious gaze toward me.

「——Father is wishing for a short decisive war.」

「Short decisive war?」

「We received report from the capital. Fighting forces are gathering there. It seems they're going to focus in defense.」

「In the capital, not at the surrounding? No, that's a bit」

「For some reason father is also in a hurry. A long protracted war is a bad move but, he is rushing too much.」

Both camps are aiming for a short decisive war?

At this time, I recalled the existence of the royal family's ship sleeping under the capital.

Perhaps, the duke know about that ship's existence?

I fell into thought while putting my hand on my chin. Then Angelica-san told me what Redgrave House wished from me.

「It seems father is going to ask you to also participate in the war. After all your Partner is formidable.」

Naturally I'm going to participate.

It will be bad if I incurred the displeasure of the next king by deciding to not participate in the great war that will decide the fate of the country.

「That's what I'm planning.」

「——I have a personal request.」

「Personal request?」

After I affirmed my participation, Angelica-san's eyes darkened and she glared at me.

「Father is also looking to secure the saintess, perhaps even her life. I'm also the same.」

「Eh!?」

Angelica-san ignored my surprise and brought her face closer.

「I also want to join the war. Let me on board Partner.」

「That's」

「Father and brother absolutely won't allow it. But, I want to watch everything with my own eyes.」

If I refuse her here, it feels like she will look for another way to go to war.

Thinking that will be more troublesome, I permitted Angelica-san to come on board my ship.

◇

Luxion returned two weeks later.

The capital had learned about the nobles' revolt. It seems his highness Julius has gotten appointed to be the supreme commander and he is preparing for war.

Before I realized it, the gathering of the nobles has gotten called as the noble alliance but——it seemed that the capital held a speech in order to face us.

Luxion played the recording of that time to us.

『The cowardly masked knight Leon Fou Bartfalt has joined hand with the ambitious Redgrave House to revolt against the royal family! That guy is a traitor who is connected with the dukedom!』

The citizens of the capital were greatly excited by the speech of the handsome prince.

There were shrill cheering voices, and there were also cheers and jeers from the men.

The jeers like「That traitor masked knight!」「Defeating the black knight must be a lie too!」「What hero, that masked asshole!」were addressed to me.

For some reason his highness Julius who named and accused me could only smile bitterly.

「Did they think I wore mask because I liked it? Every single one of them, treating me like a masked knight as they pleased.」

Marie shook her head beside me.

Perhaps she can't bear to watch the recording. She ignored the speech and talked to me.

「Looks like they're also preparing to fight over there. Is it really going to be okay? If Leon's story is true, Olivia might bring out the royal family's ship.」

The royal family's ship ought to be called as the ultimate weapon in that otome game. Right now it should be still sleeping underground the palace.

There is no way the royal family doesn't know about its existence.

It will be troublesome if they use it as a trump card.

——After all the duke is also wary of that possibility.

「It'll be great if Partner can shoot it down. But more importantly」

I looked at Luxion who is projecting the image on the wall.

Recently he is really obedient to us, but it felt eerie for him to act like that.

「Before this, there was a kickoff party held by Redgrave House.」

『I wasn't there but, I know about the result. It looks like most of the feudal lords have given up on Hohlfahrt Kingdom.』

It's Marie who looked dissatisfied by this tlak.

「I still haven't heard anything. Leon also isn't telling me at all.」

I soothed down the sulky Marie while talking about the plan going forward.

「There is nothing to tell. At most I can only tell you about what Redgrave House is planning for after the war? It was decided that the kingdom will be Redgrave Kingdom next.」

「The dukedom is stronger isn't it?」

Then why is it the duke house that is taking command? Marie can't understand it and tilted her head.

Luxion explained in a way that even Marie can understand.

『The military strength of Fanoss Dukedom is greatly decreasing. Considering their present influence, they are inferior compared to Redgrave House.』

I let out a deep sigh.

「The saintess——Olivia-san will also get captured and executed. Even though she is only being possessed, she's so pitiful.」

I sympathized with Olivia-san. Then Marie confirmed with Luxion.

「Olivia is really just being possessed right? Is there any chance that you're wrong?」

『Yes. There is no doubt about it.』

Olivia-san is being possessed by the grudge residing inside the items of the saintess.

Knowing that, my heart is heavy when thinking of what is going to come from here on.

Even though I won't need to feel like this if that person is simply a wicked woman.

「Also——Angelica-san will come along in Partner.」

Marie looked at me with her eyes widening like saucers.

「Ha? Why?」

「She want to watch everything with her own eyes. Rather than letting her riding on other flying ship, it will be safer for her inside Partner right?」

「T-that might be true, but still」

Marie disliked it for some reason.

Putting that aside――

「――I guess I'll also work hard.」

◇

At the port of Bartfalt territory.

My family came to see off Partner's departure.

They are waving their hands from the port.

I'm watching them from the deck, then I looked at my side.

「――Why are you also coming? It'll be dangerous.」

For some reason Marie forcefully came on board Partner. She looked up at me with a glare.

She looked really thuggish.

「Are you saying that my presence here is bothersome?」

「That's not what I mean.」

I glanced at the deck. The crews are busily running around.

Other than them there are also the armor pilots.

Among them, there are also Oliver-san and others who we rescued from the principality.

The knights of Rault House had offered to support me.

Marie looked conflicted seeing them.

「I also can't understand those people. Why are they risking their life to help Leon just because Leon look similar with their acquaintance?」

There are also those whose injuries still hasn't healed fully, but they volunteered after hearing that I'm going to war.

I can't really understand their feeling but, I can somehow guess.

「——They're looking for a place to die. Rault House is already gone, and there is nobody to continue its bloodline. They want to die.」

「Something like that!」

She must want to say that throwing away their life is no good.

But, there is no use saying that.

「Don't worry. I don't plan to let them die.」

「——You, are you planning to be reckless again?」

After I said that I won't let them die, Marie is angry at me this time because she is imagining that I'm going to act recklessly.

What should I say to reassure this girl?

「I'll just finish everything with Arroganz. ——This really will be the last time.」

Everything will be really over with the demise of Hohlfahrt Kingdom.

The ending will be completely different from that otome game though.

I leaked out my true feeling to Marie.

「This is the bad end huh. The country will perish because of me.」

「——I wonder what should we do to get the happy end.」

For us who knew about that otome game, this situation is a bad end.

Among the bad ends there was no end with the country perishing, but this result is far from a happy one.

The conquer targets got deceived and walked a path of ruin.

The main character Olivia-san got possessed by some cursed items and she'll have to take responsibility.

Where did we go wrong?

Marie looked down.

「Is this our fault? Because we did unnecessary things──」

「That's wrong. Obtaining the saintess's items was in accordance with that otome game's scenario. It didn't matter what we did, Olivia-san would──」

The result wouldn't change no matter what we did.

After all things had been wrong right from the start.

Anyone who had played that otome game would never even imagine that the saintess resented the kingdom.

Things like betrayal at the founding of the country, or Bartfalt House's involvement──even I who was born in this family didn't know.

If I'm asked what did I do wrong, I can only answer that I was misunderstanding everything from the start.

Who can possibly imagine that there is this kind of background setting behind that happy go lucky otome game.

「──If only we can reload just like in game」

Although there is on/off button in life, there is no reset button──was there saying like that?

Marie looked exasperated hearing my wish to redo things.

「Your brain is filled with too much game, wanting to redo life like that. ──You, if you can reset everything, it feels like you're going to aim for the big breasted Angelica or Olivia rather than me.」

Is this girl jealous with those two's breasts?

「Are you thinking of me as that kind of person? The villainess and the protagonist are too awe-inspiring for someone like me. There is no way I'll try anything with them.」

「By that you mean that I'm just a plain person?」

I rubbed Marie the wrong way no matter how I answered her.

「——Well, there isn't any redo in life. It's pointless to even think about it. For now, let's put the effort to somehow settle this problem peacefully.」

「Just don't be reckless no matter what. You——y-you feel like my big bro, a type who failed after doing reckless things.」

「Your big bro, that guy has a screw loose in his head right? Don't group me with him. After all I'm more of a planning type and a gentleman.」

Partner has departed when I noticed. The port has vanished from view.

◇

At the sky above Hohlfahrt Kingdom's capital.

Many flying battleships were floating there.

The citizens are looking up from the ground at the flying battleships lining up in awesome formation.

The capital was enveloped in cheers.

Olivia was watching that from the tall tower in the palace. She was crossing her arms expressionlessly.

The wind was blowing in because the window was opened.

「So pitiful.」

She spoke with a cold voice. Then the room's door was knocked.

Olivia turned around and replied. The one who entered inside after that was Julius.

「So you're here.」

「Yes, I can see the capital clearly from here after all.」

Julius was dressed in military uniform that was decorated with silver and gold.

There were several medals notched on his chest.

He decorated himself to make his influence looked bigger. That appearance looked comical to Olivia.

(A pathetic man——decorating his own chest with achievements that doesn't even exist.)

The reason it was comical because Julius had never accomplished anything.

Even though he only had two or three medals at most in actuality, he put on six medals in order to make himself looked good.

In addition, Julius's current appearance──it was the very picture of someone who was clinging on power that he himself hated in the past.

The honest young nobleman who hated clique lost sight of himself because of a woman and got reduced into something that his past self hated.

It was unbearably funny for Olivia.

「More importantly, what's the matter?」

When Olivia asked what was his business here, Julius's expression turned pained.

「──F-forgive me. Even though things wouldn't turn like this if only you and me can move the royal family's ship」

Olivia approached Julius who was blaming himself and kindly hugged him.

「It's fine. It's not Julius's fault.」

Julius put his hand around Olivia's back and strongly hugged her.

「I'm really sorry. If only I can more──」

「It's fine.」

Julius's tearful eyes couldn't see Olivia's face.

Olivia was thinking about the matter ahead with a terribly cold expression.

(Now then, I wonder what kind of conclusion this war will have. Show me an entertaining comedy, descendants of Hohlfahrt.)

◇

Above the capital.

A small ship was approaching one of the flying battleships.

The officers saluted to welcome Julius in his military uniform.

Julius got down on the deck. Jilk who had boarded the ship ahead of him greeted him.

「We have been waiting, your highness. No, commander-in-chief.」

「Is the preparation finished?」

Julius sent a serious gaze toward Jilk, the his face turned toward the flying battleships floating around him.

「A lot of the nobles turned traitor, but the four houses that has been supporting the royal family since the founding of the country until now are still going strong.」

Seberg House, Field House, Arclight House──and then Mamoria House.

Other than them, the nobles whose territories are adjacent with the capital were participating in the kingdom's side.

But, in all their number didn't even reach thirty percent.

Julius scowled.

「Only this many? The traitors are too numerous.」

「There is no problem because they are just some riffraff. But, it's painful that we can't mobilize the nobles at the border.」

「Other countries might take advantage of this chance to interfere after all. Let's finish this quickly and shift the kingdom to a new order.」

「Yes, your highness.」

The two began walking toward the bridge. They entered inside the ship.

Jilk checked that there was nobody around them and began to talk about a matter that he didn't want anybody else to overhear.

「Originally his majesty should be the one to take command as the commander-in-chief. I made up some reason to refuse him.」

「Father's selfishness is really troubling.」

The king didn't move even though the country was in a serious trouble.

In exchange it was Julius who became the commander-in-chief both in name and reality.

The two of them thought of it as a honor but, it was troubling them that the position was too heavy and caused them unable to move as they pleased.

「It's too bad, if I can move a bit more freely, I will be able to finish off Bartfalt with my own hands.」

Julius muttered in frustration. Jilk shrugged.

「Even if your highness isn't the supreme commander, you won't be allowed to fight personally. It's too bad but, let's yield that achievement to those three.」

Greg, Chris, and Brad planned to sortie in armors to take Leon's head.

Julius also whispered to Jilk in a small voice.

「——I'll remove everything that get in the way between Olivia and me.」

Jilk couldn't see the face of Julius who was walking in front of him.

Jilk didn't notice that face that was putting on an ugly smile.

◇

Near the capital.

The fleet of the noble alliance that gathered there has approached until a distance where they are visible from the capital.

Marie and I got out to the deck to take the sight. I'm irritated at the enemy fleet that won't move from above the capital.

「Those guys, are they planning to fight right above the capital?」

「They're going to drag even the people living there? We aren't going to attack them there right?」

What Marie is worrying about is the noble alliance's fleet attacking the capital and starting the war.

Luxion who is floating between us said that won't happen.

『Duke Redgrave plan to obtain the capital. After all the underground there contain a dungeon that is a mine for magic stone. He must wish to keep the damage at minimum.』

It seems that the duke doesn't want to have the war happened right above the capital, for the sake of the future too.

That's convenient for us, but the problem is in case the enemies bring out the royal family's ship.

I hope that Partner will be able to shoot it down.

I turned my gaze only at Luxion.

「In case the worst happen, use your main body. Make the preparation for it.」

『This will be over already if master used my main body right from the start though.』

「If I do that the capital will turn into a sea of fire. I still haven't heard if master has left the capital or not.」

Having power that is too great is also a source of worry.

Marie tilted her head.

「That teacher, he still hasn't escaped? Why?」

「Master has sent me letters several times but, he was only telling me that he still has works remaining. But he wouldn't tell me the detail. I'm really worried.」

「——Why are you worrying for a man?」

Marie is exasperated but, that person is my important teacher in the way of tea.

——I hope he is safe.

◇

The palace was quiet with all the men going out.

The civil officials were going out in order to evacuate the citizens. Only the minimum amount of personnel was remaining in the palace.

Olivia was running through a corridor of that empty palace.

「I messed up!」

Olivia muttered in frustration. She pointed the staff she was holding to behind her.

When she stood still, a magic circle formed in front of the staff.

「O blade of wind, slash apart mine enemy!」

Blades of wind were fired from the magic circle that was shining with pale green color.

The blades damaged the floor and pillars in the corridor while heading toward the two men chasing Olivia.

One of them swung his sword and cut through the magic, while the other one was holding a sword called rapier that specialized in small thrust.

The two cut down the magic with their supple blades and walked toward Olivia.

The one holding a sword was a man wearing a funny mask.

He was also wearing a mantle. His appearance was overly dramatic.

「What a coarse way of talking. It looks like that is your true nature. I like wild woman but, I can't feel any charm at all from you.」

The other man was a gentleman in a suit.

There wasn't any wrinkle on his clothes even after running in a pursuit.

He was looking at Olivia sadly with a rapier in his right hand.

「This is my oversight. I couldn't teach you. No, it was my fault believing that all of you would grow together if I left you to them.」

That man was the person who Leon looked up to as teacher in the way of tea.

The academy's manner instructor.

Ann inside Olivia didn't know that the manner instructor was someone this strong.

It seemed the masked man knew the manner instructor really well.

「You keep making mistake because you are trusting too much like that. It's the proof that you haven't learned anything from the time with me.」

「——Your son is also among the youngsters who I trusted though?」

「I understand very well about my son──no, my foolish son. If only I knew, I would stop him no matter what. This woman isn't a saintess like what you're thinking. Thanks to that the situation devolved into like this. As expected I never saw it coming.」

Olivia calmed down her rough breathing while the two said whatever they pleased about her.

(This body has high aptitude for magic, but its training is lacking. I'll be in disadvantage in close quarter combat.)

She calmly gauged the true strength of the duo while thinking of a method to overcome this deadlock.

It was then.

The manner instructor took several steps forward and lowered his fighting stance.

The masked man clicked his tongue from that.

「What're you thinking? We should have decided to finish off this woman here in our planning though?」

Olivia felt annoyed knowing that the two came here to kill her.

(These two can repel this girl's "power" with their willpower. How troublesome.)

There were two truly powerful people in front of her.

As Olivia was pondering of how to survive them, the manner instructor talked to her.

「It was me who invited you to the academy. Originally, I should give you more support.」

A commoner girl could enroll into a noble's academy because of the manner instructor's recommendation.

Ann inside Olivia smiled hearing that.

「I'm thankful to you then. After all I managed to obtain this body thanks to that.」

「──As I thought, you're being possessed.」

「You noticed? Unfortunately, it's already too late.」

After being told that he was too late, the manner instructor talked to the possessed Olivia.

「Are you fine with that? You were more serious when you were little and told me that you want to study magic. How long are you going to let yourself being possessed?」

「What are──tsu!」

Seeing Olivia's pained look, the masked man passed beside the manner instructor.

He pointed his sword to stab Olivia. The manner instructor yelled.

「Roland!」

「You're too soft!」

A magic circle manifested the instant the masked man's blade almost reached Olivia.

The magic circle that manifested between them stopped the masked man's blade.

And then Olivia's pained expression changed completely.

「I-I'm back. My body can move!」

Olivia rejoiced from being liberated from the saintess's resentment. The masked man pulled back his sword seeing that innocent expression.

「She responded to your call?」

The masked man hesitated in front of the changed Olivia.

Olivia raised both her hands in order to solve the misunderstanding.

「I-I'm not that person, umm──」

「You regained your body in this timing? But, in that case──」

The masked man suppressed his killing intent after sensing the atmosphere that was like a different person from before──the manner instructor yelled.

「Get back!」

The manner instructor broke into a run. He pushed away the masked knight when a blade of ice formed from the staff that Olivia was holding.

The pushed away masked man looked at the manner instructor who took his place.

And then, he glared at Olivia who couldn't understand what had just happened.

「You bitchhhhh!!」

Olivia looked at her own right hand in respond to the masked man's furious scream.

「W-why!? I-I'm──」

Olivia who thought that she had regained her body was holding the staff tightly.

The manner instructor who was pierced by the ice blade that materialized from the staff glared at the saintess inside Olivia.

「This craven」

The manner instructor tried to thrust with his rapier, but Olivia's right hand mercilessly reacted with enlarging the ice blade.

The rapier fell from the hand of the manner instructor whose chest was stabbed.

「──regret」

The manner instructor expired.

Olivia looked uncomprehending as she shook her head.

「No. I didn't. I didn't do this!」

Tears flooded out.

Seeing her like that, the masked knight talked lightly at Ann inside Olivia.

「The damage will be keep at the minimum as long as I can defeat you. Thanks to that I ended up pushing even the unnecessary troubles to Vince.」

Olivia's confused face gradually turned emotionless.

「So you two are the traitors inside the palace? I never expected the traitors to be someone this strong. But, I'll definitely win in one on one fight.」

Olivia pointed her staff to the masked man. The masked man also took a fighting stance.

「It's too bad──Roland Rapha Hohlfahrt. You should have noticed my existence a bit quicker.」

The masked man smiled fearlessly at Olivia's cold words.

「There is never being too late in anything. If I can defeat you here, even this worst development will become a slightly enjoyable tragedy. The last king of Hohlfahrt defeated the evilest saintess──something like that. You never know how things will go in a fight till the last moment!」

The masked man slashed at Olivia.

「──Fakes are always introducing themselves as the king of this country huh.」

◇

Together with Olivia's words that contained no emotion in them, magic was fired at the masked man──blood splashed.

Short Story — Marie Route the Seventh

The dawn arrived.

The flying battleships of the nobles revolting against the royal family were gathering at the outskirts of the capital of Hohlfohrt Kingdom.

The army introduced themselves as the noble alliance. The leader was Duke Redgrave and his flying battleship was designated as the flagship.

Partner's figure was also among them.

Inside one of its room——in the guest room that was lent to her, Angelica put the leather travelling bag she was carrying on the table and began taking out its contents.

What were placed inside the travelling bag were ornamental rifle and bullets.

Angelica took out the rifle that should be only for decoration without any practical utility and then she put it together with practiced hand movements.

She was doing it expressionlessly, quietly.

When she finished assembling the rifle, she turned her face toward the full-length mirror in the guest room.

She watched her figure that was reflected on it and muttered.

「What a chillingly hideous figure even for me.」

She thought that she was being expressionless, but when she realized it there was a faint smile forming on her face.

That was a smile that was forming from imagining about what she was going to do after this. If there wasn't anyone here to see it then they would surely get shocked.

Angelica raised her rifle toward the mirror and pulled the trigger.

There was no bullet loaded in it, so there was only the sound of firing hammer clicking resounding inside the room.

The pattern on the decorated rifle emitted faint light at that moment.

The morning sunlight was shining in from the window, but because the light wasn't turned on inside the room, even the faint light was noticeable.

Angelica put down the rifle seeing that.

What she took next was bullet——a bullet that was filled with mana.

Each piece of magic bullet was expensive. Usually these items were decoration in Angelica's room.

They were mainly for decoration but, both the rifles and bullets were magic tool——weapons that could endure actual usage.

For the influential nobles of Holfort Kingdom that respected adventurer, even decorative weapon was required to be usable.

The rifle that Angelica possessed was also the same.

The rifle that was strengthened with mana could fire special bullet that was strengthened with mana.

Its power could pierce through even armor.

Although only influential noble with surplus fund could prepare and use such quality item.

Angelica's hand tightly clenched the bullet.

「Bartfort, you betrayed me. That's why——this is payback.」

Angelica's red eyes emitted enchanting light inside the dim room.

***

At a dim corridor of the palace.

Two men were lying down at that place that was freshly damaged from battle.

Looking down on the bleeding and unmoving two men was Olivia who was smiling with a hollow gaze.

Olivia had her body controlled by the saintess Ann, but right now she could move only her mouth.

Olivia looked down on the fallen manner instructor with regret.

「——Teacher」

She once met this teacher when she was little, but she didn't know that he was a manner instructor.

Thinking back now, she had met and talked with him many times inside the academy.

The frequency of their conversation decreased since she went out with Julius and others, even so he would still talk to her sometimes.

(Even though I would be able to consult with him more if I only I remember.)

Olivia who was getting isolated inside the academy also became paranoid toward the gentle manner instructor and couldn't bring herself to ask him for advice.

After all it wasn't just the students who were cold toward her, but also the teachers.

She was under the impression that this person would also be no different.

If only she opened her heart more——if only she remembered of when they met.

Such regret was surging up.

Ann moved the mouth in Olivia's place.

「It's too late to regret it now. Besides, from the moment you obtained me——obtained those cursed tools, the ruin of this country became inevitable. No, this is fate.」

Fate.

Ann declared that it wasn't a coincidence that Olivia obtained the saintess's sacred tools, but inevitability.

But, there was something that bothered Olivia.

(Cursed tools?)

She became slightly dubious hearing the sacred tools being called cursed.

Ann didn't reply and walked toward the window. She looked outside while telling Olivia.

「Olivia, can you see all the flying ships covering the whole sky above the capital? Let's watch the end of this country together from here. I guarantee you it will be the greatest spectacle ever.」

Olivia strongly resisted inside her heart.

(I don't want anything like that! I don't want something like war——something like murder!)

She didn't want anyone to die or kill anyone.

But, Ann told this to Olivia.

「You just killed on your own before this.」

Olivia recalled the two men who she killed with her hands.

It was Ann who killed them but, the vivid sensation of killing them was remaining in Olivia's hands.

(T-that's not, I'm!

She denied it, but the remaining sensation cornered her mind.

Ann didn't overlook that.

「You have done really well to hold out until this long. But, your body already belong to mine. Just sleep inside me. ——But, I'll show you the destruction of this kingdom before that. After all it'll be the great achievement of our bloodline after so long.」

The voice of Olivia's heart couldn't be heard anymore. Ann sighed.

「Everything is in place with this. Lea's ideal will also come true.」

In order to realize the world that the man she loved in the past dreamed of, Ann planned to burn the whole Holfort Kingdom to the ground.

When she looked at far away outside from the window, she could see the fleet of the nobles.

The number surpassed the number of the ships at the kingdom's side.

Ann glared at both her ally and enemy in annoyance.

「Go crush each other to your heart's content.」

***

On the Partner's deck.

I got into Arroganz's cockpit, opened the hatch, and waited for the signal to sortie.

When I looked around, the armors that Luxion had prepared were lining up.

They were kneeling to make it easy for the pilots to board them, but that stance looked like a knight bowing his head.

They were lined up in two lines at the sides while facing Arroganz. It made me felt like a big shot——no, am I actually a big shot?

The me right now, Leon Fou Bartfort was the head of Bartfort House and a baron after all.

Even if I ignored the thing about being a big shot or whatever, there was no denying that I'm in a position with responsibility.

Boarding the lined up armors were the knights of Bartfort House as well as the knights that I rescued at Alzer Principality.

Most of them were knights of Rault House.

They came volunteering after hearing that I was going to participate in war.

Oliver-san took the role of managing them in my place but, to be honest I couldn't understand them.

Why are they so motivated to participate in other country's war?

「Being in charge of this many lives just make me feel depressed. Besides, even the knights of the principality are joining in too.」

『They volunteered on their own initiative. There isn't any need for master to feel troubled.』

「I'm still bothered. ——I wished they would just wait quietly back at home.」

——They lost their home country, the house they served, and now they were looking for a place to die.

Is this the so called chivalry thing that I can't understand?

But, Luxion seemed to be really interested with it.

『Fighting not to live but to die——I find it difficult to understand but, it's truly an interesting behavior.』

Ann was exasperated toward Luxion.

『Both of you don't understand human's heart at all.』

I shrugged in respond to those words.

I don't understand human's heart? That's only natural.

「I don't have any method of mind-reading so it can't be helped.」

Luxion too gave a back scathing reply toward Ann.

『I don't feel any need in guessing the feeling of the new mankind.』

Ann shook her head in exasperation toward our reply.

『They don't just want to die. They want to die fighting for the sake of Leon who resemble the eldest son of Rault House. That will be their atonement to the master they couldn't protect——or a substitution of one at least. They're planning to fight for their own sake. ——Leon, you don't need to worry your head off for them.』

It seemed that Ann is also worrying for me.

「Could it be, you were worried for me?」

『You have a delicate heart despite your boorish behavior after all.』

There is something that I can't stop myself from asking seeing how kind Ann is acting.

「Why did you turn into a resentful spirit when you're actually so kind?」

There was a pause for a moment before Ann answered.

『Because losing your beloved is just that heavy. At that time I was under the impression that he was killed from the betrayal. ——I wanted to clear Lea's regret.』

——My ancestor who was loved by Ann to such degree was still living after that on a countryside floating island.

It was a really horrible story with that taken into consideration.

I wished that he would at least tell Ann that he was still alive.

Then Arroganz's right arm moved.

It seemed Arroganz detected Marie's approach and moved his right arm as foothold to make it easier for her to look into the cockpit.

Marie got on Arroganz's right arm and showed her face to the cockpit.

「Hey, when is the war going to start? It has been some time since dawn breaks, but it's going to become noon at this rate.」

The war in this world wasn't something that could be done at any time as people pleased.

Because of that, originally the fleet should start moving when dawn arrived but——there wasn't any signal to start attacking from Redgrave House.

「Don't ask me. The duke must have all sorts of plans.」

Marie turned her gaze toward the flying battleship of the duke house at far away.

The ship's hull was painted deep red. It was a flying battleship that was decorated flashily with gold color.

It looked more magnificent than any other flying battleships around it, but its size wasn't a match against Partner.

Then Marie asked me about the plan from here on.

「And——are you really planning to save Olivia?」

My objective is to rescue Olivia-san who is being possessed by the saintess's cursed tools.

If things stayed like this, she would end up getting executed in the end. That was just too much. It would give me nightmare.

「The priority for now is rescuing Olivia-san. Even for me it will be too cruel for her if the war just end without her knowing anything.」

Marie couldn't understand my action——no, she wanted to stop me from acting reckless.

She looked down and criticized me.

「You said that you won't act recklessly anymore.」

「I told you that this will be the last time. ——I promise, so don't sulk like that.」

Marie's sulking felt similar with my previous life's little sister. She raised her face when I made fun of her like that and blushed red.

「I'm not sulking!」

***

Redgrave House's flying battleship.

The duke Vince could be found in the bridge.

He was sitting on a particularly extravagant chair while staring at the pocket watch on his right hand.

More than one hour had passed since the promised time. He gave up after confirming that.

(So Roland failed.)

And then he let out a short sight before closing the lid of the pocket watch.

Vince didn't give the order to attack and putting his fleet on standby because of his promise with Roland.

(That idiot king, he failed when it really mattered. He had put me into a lot of tight spots and gave me many headaches until now but——it makes me feel lonely now that it has come to this.)

The relationship between Vince and Roland was of a duke and the king.

Roland had given him a lot of hardships until now as his superior.

But, the plan failed——Vince guessed that Roland might have died now. He closed his eyes for a minute to lament Roland's death.

「——It has gotten really late but, we're going to start our attack on the kingdom's fleet over the capital now.」

The fleet commander at Vince's side gave his reply to those words.

「Sir-!」

The knights and officers in the bridge started moving busily. Vice watched them while glaring at the fleet that was visible above the capital.

(No child knows how dear he is to his parents, huh. Roland, sorry but I won't overlook your son. But, as promised, I'll overlook the queen, concubine——the princess and the infants.)

Roland's promise.

It was the promise to kill the saintess and pushed the kingdom army into chaos.

It was a convenient offer for the noble alliance, but in exchange for that Roland demanded that he overlooked the queen, concubine, princess, and the children who weren't of age.

Roland and Julius weren't included in that.

Even after taking down the saintess, Roland planned to take responsibility and accept execution.

(I wish that I can keep the damage to the capital at minimum but, guess that'll be impossible.)

The order to start attacking from Vince was sent to the allies, then the surrounding flying battleships started moving one after another.

The armors that were lined up on the deck floated up and headed toward the capital.

(I heard from Roland that the saintess and her men can't move the royal family's ship but——I still have this bad premonition. Let's end this as quickly as possible.)

***

『The order to attack is given. Moving Partner forward.』

I received the order from Redgrave House and gestured to Marie to get down.

Marie got away from the cockpit before the hatch closed.

Marie looked worried but, she is doing her best to act strong while making a smile.

「Come back quickly, you useless bastard.」

「That's insulting. Just what is useless from me?」

「It's the way how you won't lay your hand on me even now!」

The hatch closed completely before I could argue against Marie's opinion.

Luxion confirmed that Marie had left the deck before informing me.

『We can launch anytime.』

「——Let's take care of this swiftly. We're going to be the first one in the palace no matter what.」

『I don't mind but, are we really going to rescue Olivia? Even if master claim that she was possessed by the saintess's grudge, few people will believe it.』

Luxion's prediction was right on the money.

Most people wouldn't believe how the saintess actually held grudge toward the kingdom.

Even if they actually believed——.

『It's just as the ball said. Besides, even if the truth is accepted, that girl's future will still be tragic. What the nobles are looking for is the saintess who ruined the kingdom. They would still send that girl to the execution block even knowing the truth.』

——It's just as Ann said, she will still die in the end if I just saved her normally.

Then, I just need to save her not in the normal way.

「I just need to give her shelter after rescuing her, just like usual. If it's you Luxion, you can also do something like changing Olivia-san's face right?」

Luxion's red lens looked at me with the ring inside it moving.

『I have one question.』

「What?」

『What benefit master will get from helping Olivia?』

Benefit? That's obvious.

「It will be beneficial for my feeling. I'll feel good if I can save her. I'll be able to bask in self-satisfaction with that.」

『——Incomprehensible.』

Luxion averted his red lens from me. Next Ann took his place and laughed at my words.

『That's fine isn't it. It's a good thing that you know clearly what is it you want to do. As I thought, the way you act is similar with Lea.』

I'm troubled how to react even if she said that I'm similar with my ancestor. I smiled a little.

「Besides, I also want to save master.」

The black mist swayed as though Ann was troubled.

『I, I see.』

While I was making Ann troubled, for some reason Luxion wasn't turning toward me.

He only gave his report dispassionately.

『——The allies are coming into contact with the enemies.』

「So it begins.」

The flying battleships fired their cannons one after another. The armors started their aerial battle.

Then a red armor that shot down the allied armors one after another appeared.

「Greg huh.」

***

Outside the wall that was surrounding the capital.

The kingdom army that was deployed to protect the capital was courageously fighting against the moving noble alliance.

「This is——the ninth!」

Greg was standing out even in the middle of that.

He piloted a red armor and flew around the sky while leading an armor squad.

The red armor was carrying a spear, while around it was armors equipped with rifle accompanying it as bodyguards.

『Greg-sama, you're too far ahead!』

『The enemies will shower you with concentrated fire like that!!』

The bodyguards gave warnings. In respond Greg swung around his spear and cut down the noble alliance's armor that was attacking him.

Then he yelled at his timid escorts.

「Our number is inferior, so we'll only get whittled down if we fight conservatively! We gotta raise our ally's morale here even if it's reckless and dampen the enemy's fighting spirit.」

Greg was thinking ahead on his own way.

He intentionally left the wall behind and brought the fight to the enemy in order to keep the damage to his side at the minimum.

If he fought at the sky above the capital, the falling flying battleship and armor would cause damage to the city.

He was fighting to raise the morale of his side while avoiding that. He desired such visible result.

『So you personally rush out ahead for that!』

『As expected from the eldest son of Seberg House that is famous for their military prowess!』

The bodyguards and the armors they were leading were also getting high spirited when they learned that Greg wasn't going off with half-cocked plan.

「Follow me! We're going to be the one offering victory to Olivia!!」

That gallantry of Greg and his men——the way they were fighting without knowing any fear led them to take down the armors of the noble alliance one after another.

And then Greg landed down on the deck of a hostile flying battleship and stabbed his spear using his momentum.

Flame spurted out from the spear's tip and it spread inside the ship.

「You guys won't be able to take even a step forward as long as this Greg Fou Seberg is here!」

Greg's voice resounded through the battlefield.

Right after that, the flame from the spear jetted out even stronger and caused explosion inside the ship after burning through everything.

One of the enemy ships was sinking in flame.

「——With this it's one more battleship in my score.」

The kingdom army's morale was heightening even further seeing Greg raising such great achievement right after the battle started.

***

In a different sector of the battlefield, a purple armor was giving orders to the armors and flying battleships around.

「That muscle-brained showed off ahead of us, but I won't charge off unthinkingly like that.」

Brad who was riding the purple armor was giving instruction to his allies and shot down the enemies one after another.

「Third squad draw back and regroup. Ninth squad close the hole the third squad left. If the enemy armors assault your position, withdraw and surround them with other squad.」

The allies moved exactly like Brad instructed and they raised achievements in succession as a unit.

Several ships of the noble alliance were sinking. Brad watched that while boasting that he was assuredly the number one.

「I'm raising achievement this great, so I'm definitely the biggest contributor in this battle. Olivia, you will recognize that I'm the only knight fitting to protect you won't you?」

***

In a different sector, armors equipped with sword were fighting ferociously.

They were receiving support from battleships and other squads while assaulting the enemy armor squads and shooting them down one after another.

They were a squad of armors with uniform blue color.

Chris was piloting an armor that was standing out even among them all. His kill count was twice of the other pilots.

He slashed at an enemy armor, but it seemed the opponent was a very skilled knight.

「So you can block my attack.」

The opponent seemed to be bewildered after blocking Chris's attack.

『You——no way, are you the sword saint!?』

He must be reminded of the sword saint from Chris's swordsmanship.

However Chris didn't correct him.

「That's right. I'm the sword saint "right now".」

He sent the enemy armor flying and his sword slashed through the armor while its stance was disturbed.

The cockpit was destroyed and the armor fell toward the ground.

Chris didn't even glance to that and searched for the next enemy.

「Brad doesn't matter, but I have to avoid losing against Greg no matter what.」

They were competing against his own allies.

But, the three were producing great achievements even while doing that.

A subordinate armor approached him.

『Chris-sama, it looks like the enemy fleet is withdrawing to regroup themselves for now.』

The corners of Chris's lips rose seeing the enemies starting to withdraw.

「Chase after them. We'll be able to increase our kill count further with this.」

He held no feeling at all toward the enemy. His mind was completely filled with increasing his kill count.

***

In the flying battleship that was serving as the kingdom army's flagship.

Julius was watching his allies' strenuous effort from the bridge. He was praising his comrades' achievements even while feeling vexed.

「Our superiority is proven the moment the battle begun. So it turned out that this noble alliance is nothing more than a disorderly mob.」

His allies were dominating the noble alliance that was attacking the capital from four directions.

Floating around the flagship to protect it was flying battleships and a squad of armor led by a green armor.

The one piloting the green armor was Jilk. It was carrying a rifle for sniping purpose.

Even Jilk was sallying out as a bodyguard to protect Julius who was the supreme commander of the kingdom army.

Inside the bridge, a military officer who was acting as an advisor was talking to the supreme commander Julius.

「But, we are at disadvantage numerical wise. Besides Redgrave House also excelled in military matter, so this battle won't end just like this.」

「——Redgrave House. They are always getting in my way.」

The duke house was once the main supporter of his faction. Julius was harboring unpleasant feelings toward them.

But even Julius had his own reason to justify that.

Putting aside Angelica, her father Vince was an ambitious man.

He had the tendency to manipulate the young Julius and wield his authority over the kingdom.

To Julius who was someone upright due to his youth, what Vince was doing looked terribly unsightly.

The head of the duke house of Redgrave.

He was an influential noble who looked powerful to Julius in the past, but the current Julius had experienced war and held the conviction that if it was him then he could win.

「An ugly fellow who is enthralled by power. I can't possibly lose against him as Olivia's——as the saintess's knight. Notify the whole army. The future of the kingdom is hanging on this battle. No matter what——」

The moment Julius was about to rouse his allies in order to increase his side's morale.

The four sides of the capital——a commotion was occurring at the side where none of the deployed trio wasn't positioned.

It seemed that the capital had been breached and his ally was in chaos.

「Your Excellency! The traitor the masked knight has showed himself!」

「So you came, Bartfort.」

***

「I'm first!」

I yelled inside Arroganz's cockpit. I was drenched in cold sweat because a lot of enemies surrounded me.

There are only enemies wherever I'm looking.

In other words, these guys came to kill me——to get in my way.

Arroganz forcefully broke through the enemy formation and arrived at the sky above the capital.

I'm getting shot constantly from all around, but Arroganz's armor deflected the bullets.

Ann at my left side stretched her arm that was made from black mist to point at the palace.

『Head to the palace just like this. ——I sensed me from there.』

Luxion informed me of the surrounding's situation.

『The enemy's defense force is rushing in. Master, permission to counterattack.』

My hand that is grasping the control stick is slightly trembling.

All of them were comrades from the same country if traced back to the past.

However, I can't allow myself to hesitate here.

「Do it.」

『Roger, master.』

Luxion's red lens emitted faint and ominous light.

Right after that, the container hatch in Arroganz's backpack opened and missiles are fired from there.

The fired missile headed toward the armors and flying battleships that are swarming Arroganz.

They chased after the scattering enemies and exploded when hitting. The enemies are getting destroyed one after another.

The dozens of armors and multiple battleships at the surrounding are being enveloped in flame and falling.

The falling wreckages destroyed the buildings of the capital and spread fire around.

I grimaced seeing the capital getting damaged. Then I heard Ann's happy and eerie laugh from my left side.

『Burn, burn. Everything shall return to ash——』

I glared at Ann who is getting pleased from witnessing the tragic scene. She looked awkward from that.

「Oi」

『I, I'm sorry. But, something like a long time grudge can't be erased that easily. It was my bad so don't be angry like that.』

Ann apologized. I sighed while piloting Arroganz toward the palace in full speed.

I stepped on the foot pedal. Blue flame burst out from the backpack's jet nozzle.

It felt like my body was getting pressed on the seat as I rapidly approached the palace. My nervousness was climbing up as the distance closed.

「Let's finish this quickly.」

I'm going to end this stupid war and take it easy at the countryside——.

***

The masked knight broke through the kingdom army and charged into the capital.

Vince received that report and laughed in the bridge while clapping his hands.

「As expected from the one who took down the black knight. Let's call him the next black knight if he survive.」

It was Bartfort family who took down the dukedom's black knight that had thoroughly troubled the kingdom in the past.

The victory came from the joint fight of the father and his two sons, but such thing didn't matter.

What was important for Vince was that he would have his own black knight as his pawn.

The ship captain beside Vince asked him for instruction.

「Our allies are asking for instruction. Baron Bartfort managed to break through the enemy line but, our force is having a hard fight in the other sectors.」

Vince fell into thought for a bit before he brought his right hand forward.

「No more going easy to those brats. Send out our main force. Tell Gilbert to do it.」

「Is that alright?」

The captain looked a bit surprised. After all he was ordered to dispatch Gilbert, the heir of Redgrave House to the frontline.

Vince informed his surrounding expressionlessly.

「If my son can't overcome something at this level, it simply means that he doesn't has the caliber to be king.」

Those words felt cold to be said by a father toward a son, but even Vince was worried for Gilbert in his heart.

But, considering Redgrave House's——the country's future, it was necessary for Gilbert to obtain a clear achievement.

For that some recklessness like this was needed.

(Even Gilbert will need some prestige to enable him to lead the nobles when many of them have adventurer spirit. This is an unavoidable path for the sake of the future.)

One of the reasons why Holfort Kingdom got harassed by the provincial nobles for many years in the past.

It was because the nobles felt proud of their adventurer ancestor and had stronger adventurous spirit than other country's noble.

There would be no problem if it only resulted in simple adventure but——many of the kingdom's nobles recklessly challenged Holfort Kingdom in order to become king themselves. Such thing had occurred many times in the past.

War would break out to replace the royal family if the royalties caused even the slightest problem.

Holfort Kingdom was also greatly troubled by this. As the result of racking their brain to solve this problem, they built the academy, the learning place for the nobles in order to show off the kingdom's power to them.

It decreased the number of the nobles who recklessly revolted compared to in the past, but there was no guarantee that no noble would be awakened to an ambition to build their own country by taking advantage of this chaos.

Even if none of that occurred now, what about the future?

In the end, as Vince's heir, Gilbert had to show to the nobles around him that he would be a strong king.

(Really——this country is a giant pain to lead.)

***

The kingdom army's flagship.

Julius was giving order with angry yell at his surrounding inside the bridge.

「Stop him no matter what!」

But, the surrounding didn't answer Julius's expectation.

The communication officer turned toward him.

「The masked knight broke through our line and approach the palace!」

「Kuh! So his target is me.」

The flying battleship Julius was boarding was the kingdom army's flagship.

If this ship was shot down, the kingdom army would lose leadership and fall into chaos.

It would directly lead to the defeat of the kingdom army.

The officers around him were trembling in fear toward Leon's Arroganz.

「Just a single armor manage to come this far!?」

「I thought that he isn't just a mere upstart but, to think that he's actually this powerful」

「Move the flagship immediately!」

The flagship that was floating near the palace moved away in order to escape from Arroganz.

But Julius stopped that.

「Don't leave the palace! Olivia is still staying behind there!」

「B-but」

Arroganz was shooting down their allies one after another while approaching. Their allies that were fighting at other locations were also panicking.

They couldn't fight without worry knowing that an enemy had broken in.

In addition the enemies' momentum was strengthening and their allies were starting to get pushed back.

The officer who was observing outside shouted toward Julius.

「The masked knight is at the palace!」

***

Arroganz charged toward the palace and infiltrated inside through a smashed wall.

As expected I can't ride Arroganz inside the palace, so I opened the cockpit's hatch and go outside.

Luxion is at my right.

Ann is at my left.

They're accompanying me who are wearing the combat outfit that was prepared for this day.

I'm wearing a thicker pilot suit and a helmet.

The rifle I'm carrying is an object that deviated from the technological level of this world.

All of them were prepared by Luxion by my order.

「Where is the saintess?」

I asked Ann. Then the black mist took human shape and pointed at a direction.

『This way.』

「Hey, the royal family's ship really won't come out right?」

The royal family's ship that the saintess boarded in the past. That flying ship came out in the endgame of that otome game.

It had high performance and became the main force in the final stage of the endgame.

It would be extremely troublesome if that ship came out to the battlefield.

『——There is no need to worry, master.』

「Haah?」

It wasn't Ann who answered my question.

『It won't be a match against Partner even if it come out. Besides, my main body is also on standby. I will immediately shot it down the moment I judge that there is danger.』

The royal family's ship——it was treated as an ultimate weapon in that otome game but, it seemed that doesn't matter to the paid item Luxion.

「That's really reassuring. ——And, is master in the palace?」

『I cannot detect any living reaction. It seems he is not in the palace.』

「I see.」

There won't be any problem even if get a bit extreme if master isn't in the palace.

I turned toward Arroganz.

「We're going to rescue Olivia-san, so go fly around here and cause havoc among the enemies. But no matter what don't destroy too many enemies. You understand Arroganz, keep the damage to the minimum.」

It will be better if the damage to both ally and enemy is kept to the minimum.

——That way will be kinder to my conscience.

Arroganz went outside and withdrew from the wall. His twin eyes flashed.

『Running around, damage at minimum! Arroganz, remember.』

「Good boy.」

I broke into a run with Luxion and Ann following behind.

***

Around that time, Marie was running into the hangar.

The maintenance robots were floating behind Marie.

They made a gesture that pointed to a section of the hangar.

「Over there huh!」

Pipo pipo The robots replied with electronic sound and followed behind Marie.

They advanced through a passage that was formed from containers and found Angelica ahead.

She had changed from her dress into an outfit that was easy to move in. Her hands were holding a rifle.

There were also a knife and handgun on the belt around her waist.

「What are you doing over here!」

Marie called out while breathing hard. Angelica stopped moving and turned her face toward her.

And then she averted her gaze while talking to Marie.

「——I know this is reckless but, I wish to witness everything with my own eyes.」

In front of Angelica was an air bike.

It was an air bike that was previously used by Clarice's underlings.

Marie shook her head.

「Are you stupid? You'll die if you head out to the battlefield.」

It was a natural reaction. Angelica placed her rifle on the bike with Marie in front of her.

She showed that she had no plan to attack while starting her persuasion.

「The masked knight has opened a hole in the battlefield. The enemy army is collapsing from there, so it should be possible to at least ride into the palace.」

「We'll be in trouble if you die you know? Didn't you promise? That you won't trouble us any more than this!」

It was already problematic for them just from bringing Angelica to the battlefield. But Marie and Leon's responsibility would become even heavier if they allowed her to die.

Angelica made a slightly troubled look due to Marie's natural reaction.

And then she stared into Marie's eyes.

「There is a hidden passage that leads into the palace.」

「Eh?」

「I found it in the past——when I was playing together with his highness. When I told father, he warned me strictly that I absolutely mustn't tell anyone about it. It's connected to a place outside the capital, so I'll be able to arrive until the palace safely.」

「B-but, there will be enemies inside the palace too won't it? Besides, that guy——Leon will do something somehow, so you can just wait here.」

Marie tried to keep Angelica here somehow but, without realizing it herself, her face turned worried when she mentioned Leon's name.

Angelica saw through that completely.

「You yourself are worried for your fiancee's safety right? Then, how about coming with me to the palace?」

「Eh?」

Angelica closed her distance with Marie and begged to her while grabbing both her shoulders.

「There are also robots as bodyguards in this ship right? If you come with me, we'll be able to enter inside the palace safely. What do you think?」

「B-but」

「——You're worried for your fiancée right?」

Angelica's words made Marie imagined Leon acting recklessly.

She got the feeling that at this rate, Leon would break himself one day——Marie clenched her hands and nodded wordlessly.

Angelica smiled.

「Then let's depart immediately.」

***

Greg was making a grave expression inside his red armor.

「The power decreasing at this point is just bullshit.」

The sweaty Greg was grasping the control stick inside the cockpit tightly.

However the armor's response was bad.

Greg's armor was painted red, but despite its flashy appearance, quality-wise it was no different than a customized mass produced armor.

Greg put more importance to his own skill rather than the armor's performance. He didn't like exclusive armor that had outstanding specs.

Because of that the specs of Greg's armor weren't as high as the exclusive armor of his friends.

But, there was also an advantage with this.

Greg who put importance to real battle knew that repairing or giving maintenance to mass produced item was easier to do.

He knew that exclusive armor that only had its specs as its sole good point was very troublesome to be transported to the battlefield. Because of that he chose mass produced armor that had excellent maintainability.

Certainly he wasn't actually wrong with that choice but, the problem was——.

『The result might be different if you're piloting a better armor.』

——How Greg's armor was currently lying face down on the ground.

Around him there were floating armors with the crest of Redgrave House painted on them. Lying on the ground were the armors that Greg and his subordinates were piloting.

Their armor's performance had deteriorated from the burden of going through fierce battles in succession.

Appearing at the timing when their armors' performance dropped from forced use were the elites of Redgrave House.

The armor that seemed to be the commander's machine looked up to the sky. There a flying battleship of Redgrave House was floating.

The conversation between the commander's armor and the ship could be heard under the shadow that was created by the ship.

『Gilbert-sama, Greg Fou Seberg is captured.』

Angelica's big brother, Gilbert talked to Greg after hearing the commander's words.

『You have displayed a praiseworthy achievement despite being an enemy but——you have taken care of my little sister before this. I'm thinking of giving you a payback as her brother.』

Gilbert's voice was chilling when he thought of what his sister had gone through.

Greg put on a tough front.

「——Heh, is that so.」

Right after that, the armors that were being piloted by the knights of Redgrave House turned their blade toward Greg's armor.

Greg vomited out blood after several blades stabbed into his cockpit.

(Sorry, Olivia——looks like——this is it)

Greg fell on the battlefield while thinking of Olivia until his very end.

***

「Surround and hit them! Don't get into close quarter combat when facing a group of master swordsman.」

In another sector, Nicks was leading his subordinates in battle.

He was putting a united front with Roseblade House——the house of his wife, but from the start many of Nicks's retainer came from Roseblade House.

Because of that they were displaying splendid teamwork.

The knights who were led by Chris who was a sword saint now possessed the title as master swordsman.

Nicks wasn't that stupidly naïve that he would fight the armors of such formidable enemies head on in close quarter combat.

That was why he was strictly ordering his subordinates to attack only from long range.

The soldiers around Nicks praised him for his decision.

「I don't dislike the way the lord count prioritize safety over a knight's pride or honor.」

「Is that sarcasm? Sorry but I simply understand myself well. There's no way I'm going to face the sword saint in a fair and square fight.」

「No, this is a praise. After all my lady——no, the madam gave us the order to bring back my lord alive no matter what.」

「I, I see.」

A communication soldier shouted while they were having such conversation.

「The armor that seems to be piloted by the sword saint is rushing to here!」

When they looked at the front, a blue armor was charging forward while weaving through the barrage of cannons and bullets.

The armor had lost its left arm and also its right leg.

Nicks sweated bullet seeing the enemy charging his way with a single sword even though in that battered state.

「It's breaking through this kind of barrage!?」

A voice that was filled with noise——Chris's voice resounded.

『I'll destroy all enemies for Olivia's sake! I will-!』

Chris's charge paid no heed for his own life. Bullets rained down on his armor without pause——then he swung down his blade to the bridge of the battleship Nicks was boarding.

——But, that attack had no strength in it. It couldn't pierce through the armor plating.

Chris's armor stopped moving before falling to the deck.

The soldier sighed in relieve.

「Oh man, that was real close.」

Nicks was looking down on Chris's armor from the bridge.

「Yeah, that was really terrifying. As expected from a master swordsman——no, a sword saint. I don't want to face someone like that again, ever.」

Nicks watched the enemy that had inflicted a lot of damage to his side even just by his lonesome with a complicated expression.

***

In the capital's underground sewer.

Marie and Angelica were riding an air bike through the dark passage while wearing gas mask.

The robots that were brought along from Partner were floating around the two to protect them.

The robots were moving forward while staying vigilant to the surrounding.

Marie was hugging Angelica from behind while she was driving the air bike. The shaking that occurred sometimes would make Marie feel disturbed.

「I wonder how is it going above?」

Dusts and pebbles were falling down from the sewer's ceiling. Perhaps it was caused by the armors and battleships that fell to the ground above.

Angelica was composed.

「A place that would collapse just from this much wouldn't be chosen as an escape route. But, it looks like the battlefield has moved from the capital's outskirt to the interior. We better hurry.」

The noble alliance was advancing toward the inner area of the capital.

In other words, it meant they were closing in to Olivia's location.

Marie who was hugging Angelica's waist tightened her arms' hold.

It was an action that came from anxiety.

「That guy is still safe isn't he?」

「If it's your fiancée then he must still be alive. ——After all he's a fierce fighter who defeated even the black knight.」

Marie felt concerned by Angelica's wording that contained some implicit meaning, but right now her mind was fully occupied about Leon.

The two continued their halting conversation, and before they realized it they seemed to have arrived at the entrance.

Angelica readied her rifle.

「We're going outside. Be careful against the enemy.」

The robots surrounded the two and readied their weapons to protect them.

Like that the two drove outside on their air bike. They came out to the palace's courtyard.

Marie tossed away her gas mask. Her ears were pained by the sound of the explosions at the battlefield.

When she looked up to the sky, the blue sky looked dirty from the rising smokes.

Armors were flying around through such sky, but she could see Arroganz running around in the middle of them.

「Arroga-!」

Marie raised her hands and opened her mouth to yell, but Angelica hurriedly covered her mouth.

「You idiot! Don't make a ruckus in the middle of enemy territory! ——Anyway, let's move quickly.」

Marie nodded with her mouth still being covered.

As expected it would be bad to make a ruckus in the middle of enemy territory. Marie reflected and Angelica moved toward the interior of the palace.

When Marie followed behind her, the robots also moved forward in order to protect the two of them.

Multiple gunshots rang out and bullets pinged on the armor of the robots.

「Enemy!?」

Marie looked at the direction the sound came from in panic. Angelica was also readying her rifle.

「——Brad huh」

There Brad was leaning on the wall with his hand pressed on his injured left side.

Smoke was coming out from the muzzle of the handgun in his right hand.

He had pulled the triggers over and over, but the gun ran out of bullet and couldn't shoot anymore.

He lowered his arm. The handgun fell on the ground. It seemed he didn't even have the strength to hold the handgun anymore.

「You, that wound」

What bothered Marie was the wound of Brad who was sweating heavily with pale face.

Bandage had been wrapped roughly over his stomach, but blood was still seeping out from it.

He looked like he hadn't received any proper medical care.

Brad was glaring at Angelica with a trembling voice.

「This is the passage for Olivia to escape. I got to secure its safety——cough」

Brad coughed out blood from his mouth. Then he collapsed on the spot.

Marie ran toward him and used healing magic, but then she immediately realized.

(It's already too late.)

Even healing magic wasn't omnipotent.

Even if it could save a downed ally like in the game, it couldn't revive someone who was really in the verge of death.

It wasn't like there wasn't a way to revive someone, but the current Marie couldn't use such high level magic.

Angelica pointed her rifle's muzzle toward Brad while approaching Marie.

「It's pointless. He's beyond saving. Besides, he's an enemy.」

Marie understood that Brad was an enemy, but she was unable to abandon him.

She wanted to help her not because this was Brad.

「Certainly he's an enemy, and he's also an unpleasant and hateful person but——even so」

Brad was one of the capture targets in that otome game.

For Marie, he was someone that she knew although one-sidedly.

She applied healing magic to him even knowing that it was pointless. Brad was staring at Marie who was doing that in a daze.

His gaze was hollow. His sight might be not working correctly anymore.

「T-thank yo——my——god——dess」

He still spoke pretentiously even at his last moment. Marie shook her head to that.

「You mistook me for someone else.」

Marie thought that he surely mistook her as the saintess. She stood up with that understanding and wiped her tears.

Angelica sighed a little in exasperation and urged Marie to hurry.

「We don't have much time. Let's hurry.」

「Yes.」

***

Strangely I didn't encounter any enemy while I'm running through the palace's corridor.

There isn't any knight or soldier who should be standing guard inside the palace.

I thought that perhaps they were sent out to the battle, but this is still strange even if that's the case.

Is it really possible for this place to be completely empty?

「Why isn't there anybody here?」

I can't wipe away my discomfort. Luxion answered me.

『They must be sent out to join the battle.』

「Even so, it's strange that there isn't anybody at——」

I stopped speaking in the middle and felt the chill drifting in the corridor.

The chill is radiated from ice that was created with magic. It's lowering the surrounding's temperature.

And yet my body was sweating heavily.

「——This can't be, master」

My trembling body headed toward master who is lying on the floor.

I approached master and looked down on him. Ann guessed what had happened here from the condition of the surrounding area.

『There's also the king, though he's wearing a strange outfit. ——It looks like my offshoots had finished them off.』

There are weapons lying around near both master and his majesty.

I leaned over master's corpse and closed his eyelids.

「——So master also planned to stop the saintess.」

Tears came out.

I wiped it away. Then Luxion spoke some insensitive words.

『It's incomprehensible why they faced the saintess with just the two of them in this timing. Even though we would resolve the problem if they just waited quietly——what a futile thing to do.』

「——What do you mean?」

I turned around and glared at Luxion. But the bastard averted his red lens from me.

『That was very rude of me. This person was someone who master really looked up to wasn't he? Let's recover his body later for a suitable burial.』

New mankind——the whole human race that can use magic is considered as false human by Luxion.

For Luxion, even master is nothing more than an enemy's descendant.

I silently stood up.

「Please wait master. I'll bring an end to everything.」

***

In the palace's audience hall.

What was waiting in there when I arrived was Olivia-san sitting on the chair of the queen that was placed beside the king's throne.

She's wearing a pure white dress. She stood up and spread out her hands when I arrived.

The way she smiled when seeing me looked beautiful——and repulsive at the same time.

「I have been waiting, Leon Fou Bartfort——the descendant of my beloved Lea.」

I pointed the rifle I'm holding toward her. Then Ann moved forward from my left side.

When Olivia-san saw Ann's form, her expression turned blank and she tilted her head.

And then——.

「Why is my other half is at Lea's side? Ah, could it be you brought him until here? ——Even so, this is a bit unforgivable I think.」

Her other half.

There is no doubt, Olivia-san's body is being taken away by the saintess's grudge.

I pulled the rifle's trigger. Several bullets hit the ground near Olivia-san's feet.

I fired as a warning shot, but Olivia-san doesn't even stir an inch.

「Wait for a little bit, Leon. Right now——I'm going to absorb myself to examine the situation.」

Olivia-san stretched her right hand toward Ann. It caused Ann's black mist to get sucked in.

Ann resisted while,

『My offshoots, listen to me.』

Offshoots——she talked to the grudges that filled the saintess's bracelet and staff.
Olivia-san lowered her right hand.

It seemed that she will at least listen to what Ann has to say.

「What?」

Olivia-san expressionlessly waited for Ann's words. She looked so scary that I got a chill.

『Let's stop this already. Our revenge is over. Our descendant is now together with Lea's descendant. Through the passing of time and generation, our wish has been realized.』

Ann talked about Marie and me. She said that she wanted the revenge to stop.

『Lea's descendant also doesn't wish for revenge. Besides, Lea had lived a decent life. That guy didn't wish for revenge or harbor resentment. Laughable right? Our revenge is over.』

She thought that the man she loved died, but he was actually alive.

And then he lived quite a fun life at the countryside.

——That sounds horrible when put into words.

Honorable ancestor, if only you at least told Ann that you were safe.

If you did that, this worst development wouldn't come to be.

「Lea was alive?」

Olivia-san was expressionless, but then tears spilled out when she heard that my ancestor survived after the betrayal.

She covered her mouth with both hands and sob leaked out.

「——I'm glad. I'm really glad. Lea is alive.」

No, he had died a really long time ago though.

Even so, I felt relieved seeing Olivia-san crying in happiness from knowing that my ancestor was alive.

It would be simply nothing but trouble if she becomes enraged and goes out of control instead.

I let out a small sigh and pointed my gun down.

「Do you understand? Then this revenge is over. Give back Olivia-san.」

Then Olivia-san wiped her tears while smiling. She said to me.

「I can't do that.」

「——What?」

I heard what she said, but the reply that wasn't what I wanted to hear left me bewildered.

Olivia-san is looking at me with a gaze that is filled with affection.

「Thanks to Lea survived, I was able to meet with his descendant Leon. By some miracle we are able to meet like this, how can it doesn't make me don't want to spend life together with you.」

「I'm telling you, I'm not Lea——」

Right after that.

『Master!』

Luxion moved in front of me and deployed a magic barrier.

Spreading around the barrier is thorny blades of ice.

Olivia-san was pointing her right hand toward us.

She talked to us while still smiling like before.

「You're Lea. Lea's reincarnation.」

「Haa? Are you in your right mind?」

「The way you ask me that is exactly like Lea. ——I also don't hate your rebellious attitude but, I won't be able to endure it if you get away from me again. You need a little disciplining.」

Olivia-san's tone changed. She frowned and her gaze turned sharp.

She grabbed the staff that was leaning against the throne and waved it toward us.

This time the audience hall is filled with flame.

Ann desperately called out to me.

『She can't hold herself back just as expected.』

Ann told me before.

She would prioritize her desire to be together with me if it was her who has obtained a body.

Even though there was already her own descendant Marie, she would wish for herself to marry me even if she has to eliminate her own descendant for it.

『We are resentment. We're nothing more than the excess feeling that remained inside cursed tools. We should just remove ourselves, for the sake of the descendants who're living in the now.』

「Shut up!」

Olivia-san was enraged. This time she fired lightning from the staff.

I'm being protected by Luxion's magic barrier, but some of the large pillars inside the audience hall got cracked.

「I wanted to be together with Lea! I asked that woman to seal myself inside tools for that. ——Do you know how long the time I have endured until this point? Even you who resided in the necklace will change your mind once you obtain a flesh body. I'll never let go of this chance that I obtained after hundreds of years!」

Olivia-san's tone is rough.

The audience hall is reaching its limit due to the magic that is getting fired in succession.

At this rate the palace will get blown away won't it? The audience hall's large door got blown away while I'm harboring such anxiety.

A familiar voice came from there.

「You dare running your mouth as you please just because I'm staying quiet!」

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In the audience hall.

Marie destroyed the door and entered inside. She was radiating mana due to her rage and her voluminous long hair was swaying ominously.

The magic power that Marie had diligently trained spread around her and protected her against the attacking magic.

「You ran your damn mouth as you pleased just because I stayed quiet! Don't think you can get away after trying to lay your hand on my man you lowlife!」

Marie was also thinking about her own shortcoming「Though I also once tried to make a move on the five capture targets before」inside her heart, but she ignored it and kept running her mouth.

After all someone was trying to steal away her important person.

Her mana was more overflowing than usual because her emotion was running high.

That mana wasn't inferior even compared to the current Olivia.

Though what caused Marie's talent in magic bloomed at this point of time——was her rage to someone trying to steal her man.

Olivia was taken aback, but her expression immediately turned grave and she pointed her staff toward Marie.

She looked very flustered. Her instinct might be detecting danger to herself.

「Lea is my man!」

A huge spear of ice was created right above Olivia and that was fired.

The robots around Marie moved forward in order to protect her but——.

「Stupid. The one in front of you is Leon. Your man has already bit it since a long time ago.」

「Shut up!」

「You shut up! Open your eyes already. It's over already for you. How long are you going to stay clingy!」

「I told you shut up!」

Marie slipped between the robots and walked toward Olivia.

She pointed her right arm toward the fired ice spear, then the necklace decorating Marie's neck——the saintess's necklace started to shine faintly.

The ice spear shattered without piercing the magic barrier protecting Marie.

Olivia swung her staff. This time wind blades attacked Marie.

The walls and pillars of the audience hall, and also the floor were getting gouged while the wind blades headed toward Marie but——none of them reached her.

Leon was watching her fighting like that. He never thought that Marie was actually this strong.

His eyes were wide open in shock.

Marie was also irritated by that reaction.

「You too, don't just stay quiet and reject her right away! This woman is getting carried away because you showed her that indecisive attitude!」

「No, but」

「Just tell her I can't because I have fiancée already! Or what? You're planning to let yourself get burdened even by a revengeful ghost?」

Leon was criticized with a coarse tone. His gaze wandered around in panic.

A part of himself was considering of accepting the burden, not in romantic sense but because of sympathy.

Surely he would accept the burden again.

Marie loved Leon who was like that but——she also hated it at the same time.

「Don't put your hand on other woman when you can't even satisfy me!」

「——I, I never plan to do anything like that.」

Marie ignored the bewildered Leon and turned her gaze to Olivia next.

And then she pointed her finger.

「Don't try anything with my man. I don't care even if you're my ancestor, I won't show any mercy.」

Marie threatened with a low and thick voice. It caused Olivia's cheeks to twitch.

「This little girl」

Then——.

『It's none other than this little girl who is a descendant from our bloodline.』

——Ann resumed her persuasion.

『My offshoots. This Marie and also Olivia whose body you stole are descendants of our blood. That descendant is together with Lea's descendant. Isn't that enough already? Our——my wish has come true like this.』

Olivia still swung her staff even after Ann said that. It seemed that she couldn't accept it.

This time a storm blew violently in the audience hall. The glass windows cracked, the walls were shaved, and then the palace was blown away from the inside.

「Shut up! I——I——wanted to live together with Lea. I only wanted to live together with him, and grow old together. I wanted to be at his side forever, and yet」

Olivia started crying. In respond Marie moved to execute the plan that she had been thinking since some time ago.

It was a plan to make it so there wasn't any need for Leon to be burdened by anything.

If she spoke about it, Leon would surely get worried for her and stopped her. Because of that she couldn't tell the plan to him until now.

Marie advanced through the raging storm until where Olivia was breaking down crying.

And then when she arrived at the distance where her hand could reach, she——slapped her with all her strength.

SLAP The dry sound echoed through the audience hall. Marie's slap was heavy and strong.

Olivia got sent flying for nearly one meter. She fell and slammed on the floor.

The storm vanished in that moment. The sunlight was shining in from the blown away ceiling.

Wreckages were scattered around the audience hall. There wasn't even any place left to step on.

「You are so damn clingy! Didn't that Lea guy run away from you because your feeling is that heavy?」

Olivia lifted her upper body and glared at Marie. She was shedding tears.

「Don't say that! You can't understand how I'm feeling!」

Olivia lamented that there was nobody who understood her. Marie looked at her with a face that looked disgusted from the bottom of her heart.

「There ain't no way anybody can understand! It's presumptuous of you to expect other people to be able to do that much!」

Olivia couldn't find anything to say in front of such instantaneous rejection.

Marie placed her right hand on her chest.

「Actually we planned to seal you guys somewhere far away but, I changed my mind. If you envy me that much, I'll keep you inside my body.」

「——You」

Olivia was bewildered, but Leon was even more bewildered.

「Don't decide such thing on your own! Do you understand what's that going to mean for you?」

The resentment of the saintess Ann would dwell in Marie's body.

Who knew when her body would get stolen away, and yet Marie wanted to test that method. Leon tried to stop her.

It might still be okay if it was just a single offshoot, but Leon judged that it would be too dangerous if a completed version of Ann entered into Marie's body.

Marie too was happy for Leon's worry for her but,

(This guy, he really doesn't rely on me at all.)

Marie wouldn't back off.

「I'm totally impudent. You three——no, you all are offshoot so combined there is just one person isn't it? Anyway! I'm not scared at all with this saintess's grudge or whatever. I'm going to tame you all and show off my happy life with Leon to you.」

Marie laughed loudly. Olivia shook her head seeing that.

Seeing that Ann was also looking exasperated while also looking somewhat happy.

After all, although Marie was bluffing here——a part of it also came from genuine kindness of wanting to carry the grudge of the saintess Ann and allowed her to live together with Leon who resembled Lea very much.

『This girl is that kind of woman. She's strong and kind——a descendant who I take pride in.』

Marie became shy from Ann's praise but, she hid it and continued speaking.

「I'll take care of you all inside my body. If you think you can hijack my body then just try it. But, if you really try it——I'll make you regret it for sure.」

Olivia hanged down her head while standing still. Then she started laughing——and spilling tears.

「This is the first time someone accepted me since I became a grudge. I had tried taking over the body of many people until now but, all of them resisted me.」

「I'm going to let you stay at Leon's side so be thankful.」

「You're really a strong girl.」

Olivia extended her hand. Marie grabbed it and helped her stood up.

Olivia——the saintess's grudge reached out toward her remaining offshoot from the necklace.

「I somehow understand why you're at her side.」

『I see.』

「Come. Let's become one and sleep inside this girl.」

『Yeah, indeed. This time it will be a real sleep for our whole life——』

The black mist got sucked into Olivia.

This time there was no resistance and they became one inside Olivia——.

「N-no way」

——Olivia put her own hand on her neck and began writhing in pain.

「How dare you tricked me, MAARYYYYYYY!!」

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I felt relieved because it looked like thing has ended safely and I wouldn't need to use any forceful method. But even that only lasted for a brief moment.

Olivia-san——Ann yelled the name of an unexpected person.

「What happened!?」

I ran toward Marie in panic and grabbed her hand before forcefully pulling her away from Olivia-san.

Marie too is unable to understand what's going on.

「Eh? Ehh!?」

Our mind is in chaos.

Angelica-san who came together with Marie to the audience hall came to our side and raised her rifle.

She looked like she would pull the trigger without hesitation, so I grabbed the rifle's barrel in panic and pushed it down.

「What are you doing!?」

「——I'm simply going to finish her off because the situation seems strange.」

Angelica-san answered me expressionlessly.

In the first place, why are the two of them here?

But there's also no time to press them for answer, so I turned my eyes toward Olivia-san who is in agony.

「Oi, Ann!」

When I called her name, Ann's eyes opened wide even while in pain and she focused her hatred toward someone.

「That dour underhanded woman! She tricked me! She prepared this kind of mechanism at the very end——why——this is——DAMN IT ALLLLLL!!」

Dour? Mary?

I had heard that name from somewhere.

It's the name of Ann's little sister who she treated like a stranger even though the two of them were siblings.

When Olivia-san is freed from her agony, strength left her hands and they dangled down listlessly.

And then she looked up to the ceiling. This time she stretched out her hands toward the sky.

The light that is shining from the hole in the ceiling illuminated Olivia-san.

Olivia-san who is stretching her arms toward the light shining in from the ceiling in the middle of rubbles has a different atmosphere than before.

Ann's aura that engendered a captivating sex appeal has vanished.

Olivia-san——no, someone we don't know slowly turned her gaze toward us. She smiled in front of us.

And then Olivia-san——.

「Pan pakapaaan! Here is Mary~!」

——Her mouth widened like a crescent moon. Her eyes opened wide and she began to laugh in joy.

Olivia-san is laughing but, I can't help but feel that she looked even more repulsive than Ann who was a lump of grudge.