

Volume 1 Prologue

Translator: Tenshi

Within the dense growth of a primeval forest, several men were walking.

Despite the hour being slightly past noon, the vicinity was dim and shrouded in shadows. The area could not exactly be called ‘dark,’ but it was as if everything was being hidden behind a thin film of some sort.

The light from the midday sun was supposed to fall evenly, but it was being blocked by the numerous branches and leaves stacked on top of each other in the canopy above. What was illuminating the inside of this sea of trees was literally only *komorebi*—sunlight that managed to filter through and, in a sense, overflow through the gaps between the plants.

As far as the eye can see, the place was surrounded by trees, trees, trees, and more trees.....

The stripes of light that jumbled together into all sorts of shapes and sizes seemed like an optical illusion. Any unwary viewer would easily have their sense of distance thrown into disarray, causing them to feel like they’re hallucinating. Just by carelessly turning around for a few seconds, one would immediately lose any idea of where they were facing before.

There were steel posts hammered into the ground at set intervals, and rope that wound around each post and connected them all in a row. These two were the only manmade things in that place. At the same time, they were also the lifeline of the men.

Aokigahara Sea of Trees.

Also commonly known as the Mt. Fuji Sea of Trees, it was located at the foot of Mt. Fuji.

Since long ago, this place has been known for being a “Famous Suicide Spot” and “the demonic forest which you can enter but never leave from,” but in actuality, it was a bona fide tourist area, outfitted even with a promenade. There was a park and a camping area nearby, and the number of people who come here for forest therapy or to just enjoy being immersed in a forest was not small.

There are ores that display magnetic properties in the surroundings, so rumors like “compasses don’t work” and “electronic devices would go haywire” are spread around in whispers with seeming truth. The reality, though, is that compass needles only deviate slightly, so it’s not like they can’t be used at all. As for electronic devices, most everything nowadays is durable enough to not be broken by such weak magnetic fields. However, as a result of novels and movies exaggerating this phenomenon so much, this rumor has apparently taken off by itself and become accepted as general knowledge.

“Even so.....”

Fujita Keisuke muttered to himself in amazement.

“Visitors nowadays sure are fearless, eh?”

At his feet, there was a white piece of something on the ground.

It was a used sanitary product——a condom.

“To come all this way..... to do it?”

Apparently, there were people up to leaving the promenade and diving this far into the forest to do “that kind of thing.”

“Must have been youngsters.”

The colleague who was walking beside him answered in a casual tone.

Though this too was a part of the job, this chore was just depressing.

Fujita threw the used sanitary product into the plastic trash bag that he had brought, then sighed.

Currently, aside from their well-worn navy blue uniform, Fujita and his colleague were also wearing gray work clothes, a vest, and a hat. Naturally, their hands were being protected by working gloves, and they had on their feet climbing shoes. Furthermore, dangling from each of their belts was a torch, sturdy nylon rope, a water flask, and other similar items. Inside their pouches woven with synthetic fiber were compasses and other things, such as a map, a portable wireless radio, and assorted sundries.

On their vests, which served to indicate the organization to which Fujita and his colleague belonged to, the words “Yamanashi Prefecture Patrol” were clearly displayed.

Incidentally, Fujita and the colleague currently with him were the only people wearing the vests. Everyone else wore armbands colored with fluorescent dye.

Fujita and the organization to which he belonged to were a patrol squad.

As stated earlier, this Aokigahara Sea of Trees was well-known as a “Famous Suicide Spot,” so people from all over the country do purposely come here with the intention of committing suicide. Though the place was a proper tourist area with a promenade and all, in the first place it’s still a gigantic forest. It would only be natural for anyone without any equipment or information or experience who leaves the promenade and wanders into the forest haphazardly to become lost.

Therefore, the local Yamanashi Prefecture Patrol grouped up with volunteers from all over the country to patrol the area, with the aim of discovering and protecting suicidal people, and the discovery of the corpses of people who’ve already committed suicide. They periodically make their rounds inside the Aokigahara Sea of Trees.

These tasks were established practice from long ago.

However, recently, trash retrieval has also been added to their list of duties.

Despite the place being so dangerous, there would always be people who would come *because* of the danger. There were those who would leave the promenade and go into the primeval forest because of a dare or a test of courage. Furthermore, there are empty cans, cigarette butts, and other trash strewn all over the place. But that was not all. There were also manufacturers taking advantage of the place being far from prying eyes who would try to dump their industrial waste here. Year after year, Aokigahara Sea of Trees just keeps getting polluted more and more.

“More like, if this place was truly a “Demonic Forest,” then it wouldn’t get dirtied so much.”

“I know, right?”

Fujita spat out this comment in disgust, to which his colleague nodded in agreement.

At that moment——

“Ah——!!”

A scream suddenly resounded throughout the forest, causing Fujita and his colleague to turn around.

“What happened?!”

In the first place, all of the civilian volunteers were participating in the regular patrols at their own risk, so only people with experience in climbing mountains and maneuvering through forests were accepted. However, when something actually happens, it was necessary to inform the nearest police officer. Fujita and his colleague set a quick pace

towards the direction from which the scream originated.

“Kawamura-san was.....!”

“He fell, he fell down!”

The place where the owner of the scream in question——apparently it was a ‘he’ and his name was Kawamura——had fallen into was now surrounded by other volunteers talking on top of each other. There were some who were pointing their torches toward the ground, and there were also those hastily lowering ropes down.

“The ground gave out, then.....!”

Fujita pushed through the crowd of civilians standing around to reach the front.

There, he saw——

“What is this.....”

His colleague’s dumbfounded exclamation reached Fujita’s ears.

What lay before the eyes of everyone present was——a crevice.

Its width was roughly 20 meters.

The distance to the other side was the farthest where he stood, measuring slightly short of 3 meters. Although the form was that of a crevice, the surrounding leaf mold had collapsed in a basin-like pattern, such that when seen from the upper rim, the impression being given off leaned more towards that of a “hole.”

Its depth——was unknown.

The edge of the crevice did not go straight down. Rather, there was an incline lower down, so the beams of torchlight could not reach the

bottom. There was no way to determine exactly how deep the crevice was just by looking. Needless to say, it was therefore impossible to ascertain the well-being of Kawamura Somebody, who had fallen into the crevice.

(T/N: Fujita didn't hear Kawamura's first name, so he's just calling him "Somebody" in his mind.)

Most likely, there had originally been a cavity inside the rock layer, but the ceiling collapsed for whatever reason, causing the leaf mold to also slide into the newly-made hole. It was a natural pitfall devoid of any malice.

“Ooi~! Are you OK?”

Fujita raised his voice to call out into the crevice.

However, there was no reply.

Was the crevice so deep that his voice couldn't reach the bottom, or was it——

“With this depth..... It's already.....”

Very quickly, a hopeless atmosphere was spreading throughout the volunteers.

However, Fujita lowered a rope while shaking his head.

“No——it's too early to give up. I'll go in person to confirm.”

Promptly, Fujita affixed a lifeline to himself, then looped the other end of the rope around a sturdy-looking conifer. Back in his university days, he had been a member of the Mountain Climbing Club, and even now he still went mountain hiking as a hobby, so he moved with a practiced hand. After confirming that the rope was firmly attached to the tree trunk, he nodded once at his colleague, then slowly walked backwards

and began lowering himself into the crevice.

“.....*Fumu.*”

The inclination of the wall face was gentler than he had expected.

While supporting himself with the rope, he continued descending while stepping backwards.

If the slope was only to this degree, then the probability that Kawamura Something was still alive after slipping down was high.

“Ooi~! Are you OK?”

Fujita periodically called out downwards while making his way.

However, there was still no reply from Kawamura Something.

.....

If he had to put it into a number, he would estimate that he had already descended more than 20 meters.

The depth was beyond what he had expected. As Fujita began to consider going back up temporarily to report and get more proper equipment, suddenly——

“.....?!”

He felt a strange feeling.

It was as if he was floating inside water.

His foot slipped. Up to this point, his foot had always been firmly dug into the cliff wall, but the sudden floating feeling made him lose his footing. The reason was not clear. The rope went slack. Abruptly, it was as if Fujita's body weight had vanished——no, that was not it. It was

as if top and bottom had been reversed.....

“Uwah?!”

Fujita screamed in confusion.

His hands and feet grasped at empty air. His body rolled by itself.

He was falling——upwards?!

“Aaaaahhhh?!”

His sense of top, bottom, left, and right had been thrown into complete disarray.

And then——

“——?!”

Fujita felt like he had been ejected out of something.

Something soft cushioned his fall. After rolling two, three times, he realized that the thing that was growing so densely on the ground was grass.

Still staying on the ground, he blinked a few times. What projected into his eyes was the scene of a meadow that flowed on without end.

It was a sea of green that stretched from horizon to horizon.

Bathing in the white sunlight and feeling the wind gently ruffle his hair, the scenery evoked a strong sense of nostalgia in him——

“..... Eh?”

An idiotic-sounding voice escaped his mouth.

Wasn't I just underground and heading downwards?

In a fluster, he raised his body. Immediately, he noticed a middle-aged man sitting on the ground next to himself. Judging by his clothes, he must be the Kawamura Something who had fallen earlier. He was also staring dazedly at the grassland spread out before them.

This can't be happening.

There was no way that there was such an open area inside Aokigahara Sea of Trees.

“Impossible——”

Fujita's mutter to himself sounded like a moan.

Where was this place.

Without thinking, his gaze began to roam around, searching for the sacred Mt. Fuji. However, the mountain was not on his right nor his left. Completely puzzled, he turned around to look behind himself when——

“.....”

He immediately froze in place.

For a mere instant——he couldn't identify what he was seeing.

No. He had knowledge of it.

It's just that his deep-rooted standards of 'common sense' were hindering his mind from acknowledging its reality. It was impossible for this thing to exist. Even if it did, its place was only inside myths and legends and made-up stories. Or so he thought with a wildly beating heart.

However——

“D.....”

Gasping for breath, Fujita’s mouth struggled to put a name to the sight.

Kawamura Something, who had been sitting next to Fujita, noticed his strange behavior and turned around also..... and then froze the exact same way Fujita did.

The thing that had caused two grown men to be petrified.

Its identity was——

“D.....”

Calming standing still behind Fujita’s back was a gigantic, turquoise-colored——living creature.

It had its wings folded back, limbs crooked in posture, and a gigantic body proportional to a house. Every single breath was a warm wind that shook the grass. It was a humongous, fantastic-looking——

“.....Dra.....gon.....?!”

As if to affirm Fujita’s words, this monster that was only supposed to exist in fictional worlds opened wide its mouth, displaying rows and rows of sharp teeth all lined up.

Volume 1 Chapter 1 Part 1

Chapter 1: A Parallel World Before I Knew It

Translator: Tenshi

Everything in my sight was dyed in the color of the sinking sun.

The slowly darkening scenery looked like an old, faded photo, evoking a strange feeling of nostalgia in me.

Like the feeling one has for something previously lost, something that one's hands can no longer reach, this sense of deep yearning——this sense of nostalgia that is constricting my chest is welling up inside me. For no reason, in contrast to the impatience that was building up, I was seeing everything in slow motion, making me feel like this moment was going to continue for eternity..... Such ridiculous thoughts were running in some corner inside my head.

“..... I love you.”

This was a usual, regular confession scene.

Inside the school building dyed with madder red, the two of us were facing each other.

There was nobody else around. Standing still, our shadows stretched long on the ground.

The voices and sound of the baseball club members' practice in the schoolyard sounded.....kind of far away. Aside from the two of us, everything else felt unreal, like they were part of the backdrop of a play. Rather, it was as if we were the only ones left behind in this never-ending world of twilight. In this strange atmosphere, I was struggling.

“Please go out with me.”

These were straightforward words of courtship.

They were the embodiment of my determination.

If I did not tell her my feelings and locked them up inside my own chest, then we could continue having the relationship that we've always had. It was a familiar relationship with a comfortably ambiguous distance. It would be only natural to leave things as they were for fear of losing everything.

However, that would merely be an endless state of stagnation.

Feelings are alive. If you shut them in for too long, they will eventually die.

“.....”

The words that were released with all of my resolve dissolved into the silence.

The girl blinked twice, then thrice.

After that, the girl——

“No way.”

answered thus.

..... Eh?

“Just now.....what did you say?”

“I said, ‘No way.’”

Towards to my question, which had been delivered in a trembling voice, the girl responded in an indifferent tone.

Then, as if to make doubly sure, she continued to speak, as if to drive

home the killing blow.

“I have no intention of going out with Shin-chan.”

“.....!”

I moaned while feeling like all the blood in my body was flowing in reverse.

The unimaginable refusal. The unimaginable failure.

I had strongly believed that she would accept my confession.

The two of us were childhood friends. As we lived close to each other, our families were well acquainted with each other, and the two of us knew each other well ever since we were small. I had confessed while thinking that I understood her better than anyone else. It's a policy of mine to not make bets with poor prospects.

“Eh.....but.....”

I shamelessly pressed on doggedly.

A different me inside some corner of my head whispered to me that this was unsightly. Even now, I could make it in time. The voice warned me that if I laugh it off like “Ahaha, I know right, that was a joke, just a joke,” then the wound would not get exacerbated. At least, if I settle this as a joke—even tomorrow, I can continue being this childhood friend's classmate, and everything can be resolved without any awkward feelings.

However, my lingering affection pushed my back.

I tumbled down the path towards the more disastrous ending.

“How come.....?”

Was it because I was not hot?

Was it because my grades weren't exemplary?

Was it because my athletic reflexes were dull?

Was it because——

Worthless conjectures spun inside my head in circles.

“That's because.....”

The girl blinked her eyes in surprise.

She looked completely surprised. Almost as if she wanted to ask “By this time, why would you even need to ask this?”. I was so lovestruck that I even thought that expression on her face was lovely.

Then——

“Shin-chan is an otaku.”

——So she said.



When I opened my eyes, my everyday ended.

And that was without any notification either——in two, three different meanings of the word.

(T/N: The word 断りもなく here can mean ‘nothing notifying him about his dream ending,’ ‘his everyday life being over without any

warning' (ie. cus he got rejected), or simply 'he got rejected without any warning.')

“WHAT’S WRONG WITH BEING AN
OTAKUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUU!!”

I wake up due to my own shout.

“.....”

In about the time it takes for me to blink three times, I loosen all the muscles in my body, which had gotten stiff.

It isn't like today is the only day with a bad dream, but due to having shouted with all my strength.....my head somehow hurts. It feels like a large lump of lead had been embedded inside my brain.

“It was a dream, huh.....”

Despite the incident having occurred more than a year ago, the recollection dreams are still as vivid as something that had happened yesterday.

On the other hand.....it is as if some fragment of the dream is still entwined around my consciousness, causing my mind to be unable to turn. I feel too groggy to think about anything.

Still in a face up position, I absentmindedly look straight upwards.

What I see there is——

“.....An unfamiliar, ceiling.....?”

On the spur of the moment, I plagiarized a line from episode 2 of that famous anime. Even I think I'm a pretty sinful otaku myself, but let's put that aside for now.

(T/N: He's referring to Evangelion, btw. The title of ep 2.)

I wasn't joking though. The ceiling over my head really is an unfamiliar ceiling that I'd never seen before.

More like, it feels strangely close. Or strangely low.

“.....Where.....is this?”

What is being reflected in my eyes is not the ceiling that I had seen so much of to almost get tired of.

More like, if this was my room, then what I should be seeing is a ceiling graced by a life-sized poster of Madoka, the heroine from the masterpiece magical girl anime *Rental ☆Madoka*, towards whom I hold everlasting love for. But on the ceiling that I'm currently staring at, the bright smile of the magical girl who continued working hard without losing sight of hope despite having been hired by a black employment agency is nowhere to be seen.

In its stead, what is being reflected in my eyes are some engravings of strangely elaborate design.

More like.....in the first place, this is not the ceiling of my room.

This ceiling is not flat, but rather a sloping depression similar to a hemisphere. Furthermore, all four corners are supported by four fine pillars that rise from the edge of the bed that I am currently lying on.

This must be a canopy bed.

Indeed. This is one of those devices used in anime and manga and games and light novels as a symbol to indicate a “rich” character. A commoner like myself who isn't part of such a work should not have the opportunity to even set eyes on such an article.

Such a high-class furniture. And for some reason, I was sleeping in it.

How come? Holding such a question in mind, I raise my body.

When I look around.....I see a strangely spacious Western-styled room.

As for its size, it is roughly three times the size of my own room——around 20 tatami, then. (T/N: About 348.7 square feet.) However, there is almost no furniture. It is almost a waste of space how the large canopy bed is ostentatiously placed right in the center of the room. The room is dim, most likely because of the heavy curtains covering the windows. However, there is a crack that is allowing some white light to shine through, such that the room is not covered in total darkness.

“.....Seriously. Where the heck is this?!”

I muttered to myself in a groan.

In contrast to the lack of furniture, the wallpaper is decorated with very detailed patterns, the curtains are embroidered, and detailed craftsmanship can be seen on the window frame and the pillars jutting out slightly from the walls. On the wall are lamps decorated with an incomparable amount of ornamentation.

Every single article are things that I had only ever seen in anime and manga and games and light novels. Everything is giving off the feeling of a traditional Western-styled residence. To put it bluntly, this *is* a “Western mansion.”

That’s why.....there must be.....

Standing so still as to almost fade into being a part of the scenery inside the room has caused me to be late in noticing that existence.

“_____?!”

My gaze accidentally sweeps too far to the side, so I hastily turn my head back.

That humanoid silhouette standing close to the wall.

“M.....”

In the instant of realization, fireworks runs through my brain.

That is.....

Black one-piece.

White apron decorated with frills.

A headpiece similarly decorated with frills.

In addition, a collar adorned with a dark red ribbon with a jade green clasp.

Ahhhh, that is.....that is!

That moe trope that appears again and again in games and anime and manga and light novels that so many people love! That costume that, despite having a relatively low amount of skin exposure, has managed to cause so many people to go crazy with moe that it has been nicknamed the “Wearable Aphrodisiac”!

That is unmistakably——

“MAID-SAN キタ——!!!!!!”

(T/N: キタ is read ‘kita.’ It means ‘it/he/she is here’ or ‘it/he/she has arrived,’ but please go Google ‘densha otoko kita’ to fully understand the feelings packed into these two simple characters.)

“.....?!”

Reflexively, I tightly gripped my hands into fists and shouted out loud in excitement, but it seems to have caused the maid-san standing next

to the wall to start trembling.

More like.....I'm getting the feeling that she has been taking refuge against the wall to put distance between the two of us in the first place. Well, if a sleeping person suddenly shouts out loud, then anyone would draw back.

But really, to think that the day would come when I would have the honor of beholding, with my own two eyes, a 3D, real life maid-san!

“*Oou.....*”

I am so very deeply moved.

Those who would say “But there are maid cafés, aren't there?” know nothing.

The so-called ‘maids’ at maid cafés are mere cosplayers, mere fakes, and mere pretenders. The true calling of being a maid-san cannot be found in those places. Those girls are mere imitations——inside, they're normal high school or university students. In other words, of the three elements necessary to reach the highest mysteries of the maid-san way——heart, technique, and physique——the most important one, ‘heart,’ is missing!

However, the maid-san currently in front of my eyes does indeed possess it.

I can tell. There's no deceiving my eyes.....!

More like, when you compare someone who's wearing the costume as a cosplay against someone who wears the costume as a part of everyday life, the difference is obvious. This girl's body is completely accustomed to the maid clothes that she is wearing.

Furthermore, when I take a second look, I realize that she is not a Japanese.

I can't see the exact colors because the room is dim, but I am at least sure that she does not have black hair or black eyes.

Her long hair is in twintails, which means that it is tied up and hanging down from a pretty high position behind her head on both sides. Her large eyes look like she is perplexed—or rather, like she is scared, and are blinking furiously. Even with the dim lighting, I can see that she has white skin as smooth as porcelain, and that her facial features are prominent without being showy—she is the very image of ‘neat, trim, and sweetly cute.’ Her neat and trim side is further accentuated by her slight plainness, making her a good example of how even plainness can be inverted into a plus.

(T/N: The actual word used to describe her is 清楚可憐, which is read as ‘*seiso karen*.’ *Seiso* means ‘neat, clean, tidy, and trim.’ *Karen* means ‘touchingly lovely, sweet (the way young girls and flowers blooming are sweet), and cute.’)

Her age looks to be similar to my own—in other words, somewhere in her late teens.

And from what I can see, her body, which is concealed under her maid clothes, appears to be slender and delicate.

‘She looks like she would snap if she was hugged too hard’ is a description often used for slender women, but——this girl truly looks like if I carelessly approached her the wrong way, she would get hurt, just like a delicate piece of glasswork.

She is almost perfect. If I was to give a score as a judge that grades maids, I would be fine with giving her 90 points. By the way, I would give her the remaining 10 points on the spot if she is holding a broom. The broom is a definitive item for any maid-san. It's on the same level as the club is for all oni. Without it, it is as if the critical final touch is missing.



But well, let's put that aside for now.

The maid girl who is pressed against the wall is speaking up in a voice trembling with fear.

“.....*Re.....Retosamu?*”

What? What did she say?

“*E.....Efasu, uoi, era, retosamu?*”

Seeing me stare at her in a stupor, the maid girl is repeating her question—I think. Her sentence ended with a rising tone, so I think it was a question. That's all I understood, though.

It was undoubtedly not Japanese. Based on the pronunciation, it's not English either. Exactly what language was it? It did not sound like German nor French nor Chinese either.

In any case, I haven't the faintest idea what she just said.

“This is problematic.....”

I muttered to myself.

I am finally blessed with the opportunity to get closer to a real, living, 3D maid girl, but if it's like this, then we can't even make small talk.....!

I know, I know.

Some people without dreams might be shouting “Before that, ‘Where am I?’ and other such questions should be your first priority!” at me. However, that is such a boorish and unsophisticated thing to say. This is an encounter where I can become closer to a moe character, a feat only possible in the 3D domain, through the interface called ‘reality.’ When faced with such a situation, which is so rare that it can even be

called a miracle, one has to keep in mind the idiom ‘lose a fly to catch a trout.’ Small sacrifice for a great cause.

“*Retosamu.....*”

The maid girl sounded at a loss too.

Apparently, I’m not the only one feeling bothered about the fact that we can’t understand each other’s words.

“_____!”

Abruptly, she looks like she has just realized something and nods to herself, after which she begins to hastily pat her maid clothes all over. For a second, I wonder what she is doing, but.....clearly, she is looking for something that is supposed to be in her clothes.

“*Sou, tei!*”

The maid girl suddenly smiles brightly, then takes out some sort of box from one of her pockets.

She timidly makes her way towards me, opens the box from the middle like it was a shellfish, then shows me what is inside.

It is a small——silver-colored ring.

“Eh? What’s this?”

From what I can see, the ring is somewhat on the large side, and gives off a ceremonious feeling——there are tiny letters etched onto its surface.

It seems like a “magical ring,” one of those things that always come up in manga and anime and games.

Again, I wonder what kind of letters are those. It isn’t the English

alphabet and, of course, neither is it kanji nor kana. I've also seen the Hebrew alphabet, like *aleph* and *zayin*, appear in games and anime of the fantasy genre, but it isn't that either.

“Retosamu, regunifu, ruoi, shisu, ete, tsupu.”

So saying, the maid girl holds it out to me——then stops moving, staying in that pose and staring straight at me.

Is she perhaps telling me to put it on.

But from my point of view, it looks like a very questionable item——I can't help but to hesitate. It gives me an uneasy feeling. The moment I put it on, my magical power would be controlled, or something similar happening is a common plot device. Well, I know that there aren't magical rings in real life, though.

At that moment——

“Retosamu.”

The maid girl shows me her own hand.

A ring that looks exactly the same——a ring with the same design, as far as I can determine, is on the ring finger on her left hand. She takes off that ring, exchanges it with the one that she had been offering me before, then shows me herself putting it onto the same finger.

What is this.

The gesture seems to me like poison tasting..... She is probably trying to demonstrate to me that it is alright to put on the ring by exchanging the two.

But like this, now it feels like we're getting engaged or married, so I feel a little bashful.

I gained another reason to hesitate, out of character though it is.

“.....*Retosamu?*”

An anxious expression appears on her white face as she calls out to me again.

Nuwa.....She’s so cute! But her cuteness only makes me feel that much more guilty!

The maid girl looks troubled at the fact that I am not making any move to put on the ring.

“Aah dammit..... Fine.”

I, too, am a man. And furthermore, also an otaku.

When a maid girl that fits my ideals so perfectly is making an appeal with such sad-looking eyes, there is no way I could ever decline. Having had my fill of kyun kyun moe, my heart is urging me to quickly put on that ring.

“Here goes.....”

I fearfully put the ring onto my own ring finger. There is no flash of light nor any hair-raising sounds, nor is the ring suddenly changing shape and digging into my finger..... It slides on without any resistance and merely settles into place.

“Is this what you wanted?”

When I asked this, the next moment——

“Yes! With this, we can finally understand each other, Danna-sama.”
(*Sei, shisu! Moufu, donatosuredonu, uoi, naku, retosamu.*)

“*Nuwa?!*”

I unconsciously shouted in surprise.

It is because I have suddenly become able to understand the maid girl's words.

Furthermore, it isn't because the girl is speaking in Japanese. She herself is still speaking in whatever tongue it is that she's using, but something like multiplex broadcasting or simultaneous interpretation is occurring, so that inside my head I'm hearing the Japanese meaning of what she's saying superimposing over her actual words.

(T/N: Multiplex broadcasting means transferring different videos and audio channels simultaneously over the same frequency channel.)

How exactly is this happening?

Actually, never mind. Let's put that aside for now. More importantly, what did the girl just say?

“Danna-sama”? Who's that? Me?

(T/N: For those who don't know, *Danna* is one way to call ‘Master’ in Japanese. *-sama* is a suffix added to indicate respect. It is my policy to leave monikers and suffixes untranslated, as different characters use different things and you can tell who is speaking through those differences.)

“*Oou.....!*”

I am so deeply moved that I can't help looking up towards the ceiling and sighing blissfully.

旦那様! だんなさま! ダンナサマ! DANNASAMA——! Listen to this sweet sound! When a maid calls her master, the standard is to use “Goshujin-sama,” but being called “Danna-sama” has its own charm and I love it!

(T/N: Yes, he says ‘Danna-sama’ four times. First in kanji, then in hiragana, then in katakana, then finally in English. All four are read the exact same way.)

Ahhh. To think that the day would come when I get to be called “Danna-sama” by a maid girl.

I’m so glad to be alive. More like, if a time machine exists, then I want to go back to the me from a year ago and tell him that “It’s a great thing that you’re alive. As long as you’re alive, the day will come when a maid-san will call you ‘Danna-sama’”!

.....And things like that.

I am thoroughly savoring this happiness, but now that things had progressed to this point, I can no longer ignore the baffling situation in which I am finding myself.

Exactly what had happened and how did it happen?

Where is this place, who is this girl, and why am I in such a situation?

“*Mumu.....*”

Due to a dull pain, my brain cells feel very sluggish but I mentally chastise them while trying to trace my memory back.

I believe I had been in Akiba for a job interview.

In the middle of the interview, there had been a small break time. There had been a drink dispensing machine in the interview room, from which I had taken a cup of oolong tea that I had promptly drunk.

As for any memories after that..... my mind is blank.

Hmm? These memories completely don’t match up with my current

situation, though.

“.....Danna-sama?”

Seeing me freeze up, the maid girl called out to me in a puzzled voice.

I still don't understand the exact words that she was saying, but even I could tell that the “*retosamu*” that she had repeated so many times earlier means “Danna-sama.”

“I'm fine. Umm.....”

I turn towards the maid girl and speak to her.

“Sorry, may I ask you something?”

“Of course. Anything you'd like.”

Perhaps due to the fact that we can finally communicate, she nods with a happy expression that also seemed slightly relieved.

“For starters, who are you? What's your name?”

“Miusel——My name is Miusel Foalan.”

She answered with a cute bow of her head.

“.....Miusel.”

It's a cute name. It suits her really well.

Mistaking my mutter to myself as me calling her name, she responds with “Yes?”

“Ummm, what is your position here?”

I had been savoring this trance-like happiness for a while, but even I

am not a hopeless enough idiot that when I'm suddenly called "Danna-sama" I would go "Oh I see, so I'm a Danna-sama" and be satisfied with that. Without any context, there is no way that I would have a maid girl waiting on me.

"From this day forth, I have been entrusted with taking care of Danna-sama's everyday life."

"No, I mean..... 'Danna-sama'? Who are you referring to?"

".....Eh?"

She blinks in surprise at my question.

"Ah.....Did you perhaps wish to be addressed in some other way?"

Miusel lowers her head, looking apologetic.

"Kanou Shinichi-sama....."

Kanou Shinichi.

Indeed, that is my name.

In other words, the 'Danna-sama' that this girl is talking about equals me.....!

"I, I am the 'Danna-sama'.....?"

"Yes."

She tilts her head quizzically, as if to ask, "Why are you asking something like this by this moment in time??"

I don't get it. What on earth is this situation?!

"Ummm——"

Well alright, let's put aside the issue of why I'm a Danna-sama for now.

I decide to change the topic of conversation to where this place is instead.

When I trace my memories back, I remember that I was in the middle of job hunting in the sacred land for otakus, Akihabara——and that is where my memory suddenly cuts off. Wherever this place is, if I'm not suffering from memory loss or multiple-personality disorder, then I did not come here by my own will.

“Where.....is this place?”

“Inside the Ratatos Forest on the outskirts of Marinos, the capital city of the Holy Eldant Empire.”

So answered Miusel——or not.

“.....?”

Turning towards where the voice had come from, I see a single lady standing there.

It is a young lady wearing a dark green colored uniform——no, a military uniform.

Well, I say military uniform, but it isn't combat gear, and seems more like what a person would wear normally at a workplace—the JSDF's so-called “service uniform.” Up above is a jacket, and below is a tight skirt. On her collar are the characteristic rank insignias and medals indicating her occupational category. She also has on a necktie.

However.....above anything else, what first draws my eyes is the place with a lot of cloth.

To put it frankly, it is her breasts.

(H.....Huge!)

Their overwhelming presence overshadows her necktie and her medals and her rank insignias.

These two huge, huge mounds.....!

Probably F——no, they look to be G. Magnificent. Uniforms are known for being costumes with a high concealing attribute, but in this case, even her uniform cannot conceal those ripe, heavily laden white peaches. Despite the efforts at concealment, the sense of volume that cannot be concealed struck me down in an instant. To think that such large breasts truly exist! So the photos of idols are not all Photoshopped?! Amazing, Laputa is real after all! (Due to the excessive stimulation, I became a bit incoherent.)

“.....Are you alright?”

Towards the me whose gaze is almost strong enough to bore a hole through her breasts——that lady calls out to me in a dubious voice.

“Are you listening to me? Kanou Shinichi-kun?”

“Eh? Ah——yes.”

As one could expect, even I would come back to my senses when called by name. I sever my lingering affections and stop staring——after expending an enormous amount of willpower, I am finally successful in raising my line of vision towards the other person’s face.

Although my eyes had automatically turned towards her breasts, her face also turns out to be quite beautiful.

She appears to be in her early twenties.



Short hair. Wait, no——guessing by the fact that there are no hair ends around her collar, although a first glance from the front might give the impression that she has short hair, her hair is most likely actually tied up behind her head in a chignon style or something similar.

The presentation of her clothing is very orderly, and she herself seems to be giving off a faint feeling of having a chink in her guard.....a feminine softness can be felt from her facial structure. The fact that she is wearing glasses only serves to further mellow her appearance, giving an overall round and gentle impression.

She can be said to be one of those kind, healing-type onee-san characters.

Both her way of speaking and her expressions give off a relaxed atmosphere.

Despite all that——what she is wearing is a military uniform after all.

By the way, in contrast to Miusel, this lady was properly speaking Japanese, and her looks are clearly East Asian, so most likely, she is a member of the JSDF——more specifically, she probably belongs to the Women’s Army Corps, or WAC for short.

“I understand why you’d feel surprised.”

The lady smiled gently while saying so.

“But before anything else, first calm down. Otherwise, from here onwards——it might be difficult to last.”

(T/N: The last part had no subject. She was saying that *he* won’t last, but he thought she was saying that her *breasts* won’t last.)

“Is.....Is that so?”

I am so shocked that my expression involuntarily stiffens up.

“I see.....Won’t last, huh.....I’d heard that it was easy to sag, but.....Understood, I’ll calm down. I’ll be calm, you can bet on it. If by calming down, I am able to preserve those treasures of all humanity, then I’ll calm down as much as you need! Leave it to me!”

I ball both hands into fists and speak with great vigor.

But to think that I can help prevent her breasts from sagging just by calming down, I wonder exactly how does that work? Did I have such a hidden superpower? The name of the superpower would be “The Buster.” This superpower enables me to prevent girls’ breasts from sagging when I calm down and concentrate!

(T/N: ‘The Buster’ is the provided rubii reading; the kanji itself reads as “The Emergency Savior of Breasts.” It’s ‘Buster’ because ‘bust’ = ‘breasts.’)

“.....Errr, Kanou Shinichi-kun?”

A dubious color seems to be slipping into the WAC’s smile.

“It seems that some sort of misunderstanding might be happening here, but.....By “easy to sag”What are you talking about?”

“Eh? Aren’t we talking about your boobs?”

“.....”

The WAC’s smile freezes.

As if she had a Stop button that was pressed, she continues looking at me with a smile that remains unwavering to the point of being unnatural——

“First of all, I believe I should introduce myself.”

The lady once again adopts an easy-going smile, forcibly changing the topic of the conversation back to the proper track.

It seems that she is going to act as if the exchange about breasts had never taken place. As expected of a government employee. Her ability to ignore things is first-class indeed.

“My name is Koganuma Minori.”

She places her white gloved hands onto her abundant breasts.

Just that alone is enough to slightly change the shape of her breasts. Uwah. Looks really soft.

“I’m a Private First Class belonging to the 1st Division of the Ground Self-Defense Force Eastern Army. My mission is to be your escort.”

So said the JSDF lady, or rather, Koganumi Minori-san.

The family name ‘Koganuma’ sounds a bit too stiff, so I’m going to decide here and now to call her ‘Minori-san’ inside my mind.....Wait a second.

“ESCORT?!”

A terrifying word was suddenly brought up.

If I was assigned an escort, then there must be a threat to protect me *from*. In other words, I am in a position where I am being exposed to some sort of threat.

“E-e-e-exactly, what from?!”

I don’t remember having anyone who would come after my life.

I don’t think I do, but——never knowing when you’ve inadvertently earned someone else’s resentment is part of what it means to be human.

Could it be that someone grew to hate me to the point of wanting to kill me after our bidding war over that bishoujo figure on Yahoo Auction?

“That can’t be!I admit that I did continuously make some pretty outrageous bids right before the end of the auction closing time, but, but, Kuuko is a such a rare treasure that I would even sell my soul to get my hands on her figure and she even has cast-off clothes and the degree of reproduction of her breasts was said to be absolutely perfect and if I didn’t get my hands on her I’d regret it for the rest of my life——”

“I’ll say this again, but calm down! More like, what are you even talking about?”

Minori-san inquired while knitting her eyebrows.

“.....Isn’t someone who lost to me in a bidding war for a figure targeting my life?”

“There’s no way the JDSF would be tasked with your protection for something like that!”

““Something like that”?! It’s the limited edition Kuuko figure, I’ll have you know! Although it’s true that she’s not the main heroine, and she doesn’t have large breasts like Minori-san does, but she has her own virtues!”

“.....Why are my breasts being brought up in this conversation?!”

Minori-san replied while grasping her breasts with both hands, as if to cover them up.

Such an action is only serving to emphasize how large her breasts are, but is she not aware of that? This person.

“Anyways. If it’s something related to crime, then it would be the

jurisdiction of the police, wouldn't it."

".....That's true. But if that's the case, then why.....?"

In the first place, if one were to talk about what the JSDF fights against, then that'd be foreign troops or calamities or Godzilla.

I can't really think of any situation that would require the JSDF to protect a single civilian.

"My escort mission is just a precaution, really. If there's a clear and imminent threat, rather than just a single WAC like me, they'd be sending an entire squad of JSDF members decked out in full combat gear to your side, right?"

"I see your point, but....."

The very fact that a JSDF member was suddenly dispatched without providing any explanation is already unnatural.

"We do feel sorry about suddenly bringing you along without providing any explanation. But it was because several things related to highly classified information was involved. That's why we had to take such high-handed measures. We are truly sorry for that.."

"Classified information?!"

More terrifying words are coming up.

'Classified information' is one of those ultra-alarming words that causes people to die left and right like it's the most natural thing in the word. Furthermore, the fact that the JSDF is involved naturally means that it's a national secret or something similar. Most likely, it is on a completely different dimension from some mere corporate secret.

No, wait a second. Before any of that, she just said "bringing you along," didn't she. In other words, it was the JSDF that had kidnapped

me and brought me to this incomprehensible place?

“No way.....”

I tremble with fear at the realization of my current position.

“I got infected by a developmental bacteriological weapon and as a result turned into a mutant soldier that had awakened to newfound superpowers, and am therefore being targeted as a living military secret?!”

“.....What on earth are you talking about?”

“Or perhaps a spaceship with super-technology fell from space and its control system took the form of a bishoujo and chose me from among all humankind and wishes to form a contract with me?”

“.....”

“Or a three thousand-year seal came undone, allowing the resurrection of a demon lord, but the sole tribe capable of resealing it has been long extinct, so our country used all available resources and identified me as the person whose blood that is the closest to what that tribe had?”

“.....”

Minori-san remained silent.

Although she is maintaining the warm smile on her face, I feel like her eyes alone are growing colder and colder by the moment, so for now let's put a lid on my chuunibyuu dreams.

“.....Are you satisfied?”

“Well, for the time being.”

“Of course, I had intended on fully explaining the situation to you.”

Minori-san spoke while walking over to stand beside the windows.

“But most likely, you wouldn’t be able to understand, no matter how many words I used. Even if you did understand, I don’t think you would believe me. It was so for myself.”

“.....?”

The strangely roundabout wording made me knit my eyebrows.

What on earth is this WAC trying to say?

“That’s why, first look with your own eyes. The explanation will come afterwards.”

Minori-san opens the curtains.

At that moment——white light floods into the room.

Most likely, it is currently morning. The light is cool and refreshing.

The sudden increase in the amount of light causes my eyes to squint up. I wait for them to grow accustomed.

And then——

“.....Uwah.”

What I see is an endless scene of greenery.

Trees and shrubs decked with leaves seem to extend without end, effectively serving as a wall around the estate. I can’t grasp an exact number, but there are less than a hundred meters in between. Apparently, this room is on the second floor.....our point of view is high up, but the towering trees still almost completely block our field of vision.

The words previously said by Minori-san, “outskirts of Marinos” and “Ratatos Forest,” resurface in my mind.

And also, “Holy Eldant Empire.”

It is a name that I’d never heard of before.

More like, I’d let it slide the first time, but isn’t that clearly a different country altogether?

I was just job hunting in Akiba, but when on earth did I leave the country?!

As expected, it didn’t take much for me to start panicking, but——

“.....Eh?”

What I am truly having trouble believing isn’t that.

“What was that just now.....?!”

Abruptly, something had crossed by outside the window.

It was something unbelievably huge.

It wasn’t a bird. Birds don’t get that huge. Though it was only for an instant, that something had completely blocked my field of vision——that was how huge it was. In other words, it was at least larger than this window that I’m standing behind.

On top of that, it had bat-like wings.

On top of even that, it also had a ridiculously long tail.

The clincher was the fact that instead of feathers, its entire body was covered with blue scales.

“Dragon.....?!”

That flying body composedly flies in an arc, then once again returns to my field of vision.

Above the wall of greenery, that fantastical appearance is flying gracefully. No matter how you look at it, that thing has a wingspan of at least ten meters. If I remember correctly.....according to paleontologists, the largest species of the pterosaur, the Quetzalcoatlus, is speculated to have had a wingspan of up to twelve meters. In terms of size, what I'm looking at is on the same level as that. Back in middle school, I had seen a replica at a dinosaur exhibition.

“A dragon just.....it's a dragon, isn't it?!”

“That's right.”

Minori-san nods in response to me, who is on the verge of panicking.

“Wha-What on earth is this place?!”

“As I said before, inside the Ratatos Forest on the outskirts of Marinos, the capital city of the Holy Eldant Empire.”

Minori-san repeated herself with a faint smile.

And then——as if to confirm my guess, she adds one more line.

“To put it into simpler terms, this is a ‘parallel world.’”

Volume 1 Chapter 1 Part 2

Chapter 1: A Parallel World Before I Knew It

Translator: Tenshi

I, Kanou Shinichi, am a so-called ‘home security guard.’

If ‘home security guard’ is too hard to understand, then ‘neet’ or ‘hikikomori’ or the blunt ‘deadbeat’ would do. Generally, I’m in a position that can be summarized with those words. But then again, my name is still on my school’s register, so it might be more correct to call me a ‘truant student.’

Actually, no. If we are to aim for correctness, then we must use past tense and say I am a ‘*former* home security guard.’

My lifestyle of living while holed up inside my room that had lasted a year.....was suddenly brought to an end by my parents’ forceful measures.

For slightly over a year, I was a hikikomori.....my younger sister, who is much smarter than me, was studying for her high school entrance exams, so my parents focused on supporting her with that and mainly left me be.

But after my younger sister got accepted into her school of choice, as one may expect, even my parents would begin to feel bothered by their oldest son acting like this. With their daughter entering a top-notch local high school after so much effort, their son being a home security guard for an indefinite extent of time certainly did no wonders for appearances.

And thus.

Unfortunately for me, my parents are pretty extreme people.

Although they’re usually quite happy-go-easy, when they start something, they are utterly thorough with it.

Furthermore, when they think of something, they put it into motion the very same day—they're so impatient that if there was a war, they would press the launch button for the nuclear missiles immediately after the war declaration. They're people who would skip steps that other normal people would take one at a time while accessing the situation, and thrust ultimatums at the other side as an opening move. Husband and wife both have such unreasonable personalities.

As a specific example, the door to my room was suddenly split into two on a certain day.

The door had stayed shut as a symbol of my obstinate decision to reject any and all contact with the outside world—well okay, I did open and close to it go to the toilet and take baths and stuff like that—but of all things, those two used a chainsaw to literally cut it open.

Please imagine it.

I was in the middle of working hard on leveling up when, without any prior notice, the sound of an engine starting was accompanied by the scene of the door being bisected. Furthermore, my parents were fastidious about the weirdest things. Spouting bullshit like “this is the proper thing to wear when using a chainsaw,” they were even wearing hockey masks. Frankly speaking, I want to be commended for not having pissed my pants.

As if that wasn't enough.....

“Well then, Shinichi. Here's a question. What is it that you should do from here on? Please select a choice from the following three options. One, return to school. Two, find a job. Three, leave our family registry.”

“.....What is with that impossibly hard game.”

“What's an impossibly hard game! Because you're our son, when you

said ‘I’m going to be a hikikomori’ after something sensitive happened to you, we decided to wait and see for a while. But just because we went easy on you, you started to get carried away and got on the highway towards being a neet! To make matters worse, you started to use cash on delivery to mail order a stupid amount of manga and games——whose earnings do you think you’re burning, you deadbeat!”

“Adults always use such cruel words to hurt us children.”

“You’re not sensitive, you’re just lazy, right?”

“Even Mom too.....More like, it’s freaking scary so for now please take off those hockey masks, please?”

“In any case, both your dad and I are reaching the limits of our patience. For now, either go find a job or go back to school. Choose now. Otherwise, the pictures inside the 〈Landscape Images〉 folder that you’ve been stockpiling devotedly will start disappearing one by one, OK?”

“Wha-.....?! How?! Just in case, I gave it a safe name and buried it under several levels of folders! More like, when the heck did you touch my computer?!”

“It’s not good to underestimate a former ero illustrator. It’s not that rare for someone in a rural small game company to be the scenario writer and the programmer and the graphic artist all at the same time.”

“You HACKED my computer?!”

“In the first place, how many ero images have you hoarded to make the file a whole terabyte! I peeked at the contents of some of the sub-folders, but got pretty turned off by the time I got to the fourth one.”

“GYAAAAA!! You looked inside?!”

“So you follow what I’m saying, Shinichi? The treasured collection of 1 TB that you’d diligently built up while going around the internet, the seven game accounts that you have, and a few other things, will all be erased along with the contents of your HDD. If you don’t want this to happen, either start working or resume your studies. ASAP.”

.....And well, it was a conversation that pretty much went like that.

My life as a home security guard was forcefully brought to a close in the fifteenth month without any chance for an appeal.

“——*Hohou*. So that’s why you’re now looking for a job.”

The middle-aged man on the other side of the foldable conference table nods.

The very next day after my parents carried out the ‘forceful entry into my room’ strategy——I am in Akiba.

Not having been exposed to direct sunlight for so long, I have no choice but to endure the torture of the sun relentlessly burning my eyes and my skin like as if I am a vampire. The reason why I am finally back in the sacred land of otakus after an absence of longer than a year.....it is because I have chosen the second option from among the three presented by my dad.

In other words, to find a job.

To be blunt, by this point in time, I cannot bring myself to feel like going back to school. More like, if it had been that easy for me to go back, I wouldn’t have turned truant and holed up inside my room. Just by being an otaku, I was already often made the target of bullying and teasing, but.....after not showing up for more than a year, going back now would only make me the laughingstock of the entire school, no doubt about it. My nerves are not stout enough to be capable of

withstanding something like that.

In that case, then I might as well go straight into becoming a member of society——is what I am thinking.

This, too, is not easy either. That's only natural, though.

In the first place, the world is not so lenient that a high school dropout cum former home security guard can find a job as soon as he thinks of looking for one. It would be a different story if I have a special skill or ability of some sort, but there is no way that I do. If I have to name something that I can be proud of, then it would be the otaku knowledge that I'd accumulated over such a long time——well, it's not exactly something to be proud of, though.

However, if one were to list workplaces where having otaku knowledge would be an advantage, they would realize that such places are very rare and limited in number.

The only two kinds of choices are creator-side jobs like what my parents hold, or sales-side jobs like being a store clerk in a store that deals in otaku goods. At least, all I can think of are these two choices.

But then again, being a creator brings with it numerous problems unique to creators. The fact that just by going up to one of those companies and saying "Please let me be a creator" would get me nowhere is only made all the more apparent when I look at my own parents.

Therefore, there is only one road for me to take——to be a clerk in a bookstore, DVD shop, computer shop, game shop, figure shop, toy store, or some other otaku-related store.

Lately, online job hunting support sites are pretty well-stocked with requests, and many stores also have their own "Job Offers" page. Just by searching "Job Offer" along with some otaku-related words, I can easily find the information that I need.

And thus, while looking for job offers on the internet, I came across that page.

Across the top of the page were the words ‘Looking for an Otaku’ in big letters.

More like, that was the only hiring requirement written on the page.

There was none of the usual numerous qualification requirements, such as relevant work experience, licenses held, degree of education, ‘above 18 and under 30,’ or anything like that. The only requirement was to be someone recognized both by self and by others as an otaku, someone with an abundance of knowledge in that field.

Furthermore.....surprisingly, the remuneration was really good.

In this time of recession, the monthly salary was, can you believe it, 300,000 yen. (T/N: USD\$26500). And depending on results, that amount could be raised even higher. In addition, the company will provide furnished housing. This was clearly not a request for a part-timer, but a request for a full-time employee.

Near the bottom of the page was written ‘General Entertainment Company AmuTec.’

Of course, there was the possibility that this is a black company looking to trick innocent sheep ignorant of the ways of the world—I’m talking about myself, by the way—into becoming a corporate slave, but well, I will still have time to start worrying about that *after* I take the interview.

(T/N: ‘Black company’ is a term used by Japanese to describe companies that exploits employees, such as by demanding very long hours of unpaid overtime.)

For starters, I decided to click the ‘Apply Here’ button at the bottom of

the page.

When I did.....a new window with the title ‘Check Your Otaku Level’ popped up. To my surprise, the employment exam was online.

Speaking of which, there used to be some sort of otaku official certification thing in the past. I wondered if this was something like that. When I was thinking such things, a timer suddenly popped up from the side of the page.

Turned out, there was a time limit.

Well.....just think about it and you can understand why.

Otaku knowledge is something that you can search up on the internet. If there wasn't a time limit, anyone could get a full score on the exam. In other words, the time limit was to prevent applicants from looking up each and every question—the allotted time was enough to allow a few quick searches, but to pass, the applicant must already have a certain amount of basic knowledge.

Frankly, I was slightly on fire. There was some expectation that the test could possibly be a chance for me to find out where I rank in my otaku-ness relative to other people.

However.....when I actually started, I felt so let down.

So easy. So freaking easy.

Anime. Manga. Games. Novels. Figures. Doujinshi. And a few others.

One way or another, the test covered famous works from each and every medium, and asked how much the applicant knew about the contents of the works, what their selling points were, why they became famous.....and other similar questions, in detail, one by one.

However, the test was in multiple choice format.

During my time as a home security guard, I'd already seen all the works covered in the exam, read all the sites laying out each work's sales strategy, and also gone to all the bulletin boards where people held heated discussions about the works.

Therefore.....I would have felt troubled if asked to write up all that information in an essay, but selecting the correct answer from multiple choices was extremely easy. More like.....I understood this from actually taking the test, but most likely, the person who wrote this test was not an otaku himself.

How do I put it.....something felt “off,” like an article written by a reporter about a place without having gone there in person.

There were no large mistakes, but somehow, the impression that I got was that of the questions being slightly off the mark, or the examiner not quite understanding what he was asking about. Almost as if—the examiner was not an otaku, but was instead an anthropologist or an economist. And instead of thoroughly reading the work, he read only the outline and instead looked at the number of copies sold and pictures of the lines on the release date and referred to other “objective data from the outside perspective.” The questions on the exam gave off such an uncomfortable feeling.

I wondered who it was that wrote this test, and for what purpose.

With such thoughts in mind, I continued to breeze through the exam, answering the last question before even half of the allotted time was up.

At that moment, along with the words ‘Congratulations. You’ve passed.’, the page refreshed to another one where the time of the interview the next day and a map to the location were displayed.

The indicated interview location was in Akiba—and it was in a building right next to the Manseibashi Police Station, to boot.

Although this recruitment ad was suspicious as heck, but I really didn't think swindlers or solicitors to new religions would base their operations right beside the police.

Having come to this realization—I decided to show up for the interview to this 'General Entertainment Company AmuTec.'

“——I see.”

The middle-aged man in charge of the interview nods deeply.

The namecard that he had given me earlier names him as “Matoba Jinzaburou.”

In contrast to his weirdly traditional-sounding name, the person himself looks extremely normal.

He is a person who feels like one of those salarymen that can be found anywhere. A few white hairs are mixed in with his hair, which is carefully split into a 7:3 hairstyle. His body is of medium build, and he is wearing a suit the color of dried leaves. His eyes are as thin as threads, causing him to look like he is permanently smiling——more like, after getting used to that smile, I've become unable to imagine any other expression on his face. For starters, he looks like a pretty nice person.

Then again, swindlers all look like nice people at first glance. If this AmuTec company is truly a black company, then it would be dangerous to make a judgment based on first impressions.

“By the way, what are your parents' occupations?”

This is after I'd given him the complete picture of my current circumstances. Without holding anything back, I have spoken at length both about the fact that I used to be a home security guard and also that it was my parents who had coerced——err, I mean, convinced me to go

job-hunting. Honestly, I do not expect to get accepted at my first interview at the very start of my job-hunting, so I am more in this for the experience. My attitude towards this interview is that if I fail, then I can just move on to the next one.

“My parents? My father is a ‘lanobe’ writer, and my mother is a full-time housewife. She used to be an ero ‘genga,’ though.”

“‘Lanobe’ writer?”

“It means he writes light novels. Well, light novels are kind of like mangas, but in text form.”

“I see, I see.”

Matoba-san is nodding while writing something onto some documents.

What do my parents’ occupations have to do with my own job application? Or perhaps, is this the so-called recruitment discrimination? Doesn’t look like it, though. Not that I know anything about it, though.

“Then——ero ‘genga’?”

“Refers to being the illustrator for eroge.”

“.....Eroge. Illustrator.”

Matoba-san knits his eyebrows while muttering to himself.

It is as if these are foreign words that he’d heard for the first time and that he is repeating them to himself to commit them to memory.

Seeing as the ad had said “Looking for Otakus,” I’d clearly thought that this is a company with that sort of people. But wait, maybe it’s because they *don’t* have that sort of people that they expressly went to the trouble of posting a recruitment ad like that.

“Ummm. ‘Eroge’ means an adult game for 18 and over. She used to draw the illustrations for those.”

“Ahh! Ahh, I see.”

Matoba-san nodded vigorously with a look like he’d just learned something new.

“I see, I see! So you are an otaku thoroughbred, aren’t you?”

“‘Thoroughbred’well, I guess that way of putting it, is not exactly wrong.”

I answered with a wry face.

Although it’s true that ever since I can remember, my house has been choke full of manga and anime discs, and that this has undoubtedly been a huge influence on me becoming an otaku, but my younger sister does not have that kind of interest at all, and summing up my otaku interests with the single word of “DNA” feels quite dissatisfying.

“Nevertheless, you almost got a full score on the online test.”

“Those questions were on the level where any otaku worth their salt could answer immediately. They were just numerous.”

I answered thus.

There was a bit of modesty mixed in, but.....in actuality, those questions truly weren’t that difficult.

“*Fumu.....*”

Matoba-san quickly flips through the documents that he had on hand.

“Spendid. To be honest, we had half given up, but——to think that someone who matches our needs so perfectly would show up.....!”

“.....Excuse me?”

I am doubting my ears.

Just now, this ossan, what did he say?

“Your knowledge is more than enough. In addition, you’re a former hikikomori, and you wish to live by yourself.....! Truly promising.”

“Eh.....? But.....”

Although I did indeed breeze through the exam questions, but.....

Despite that—I am finding it extremely hard to believe that the words “promising” and “splendid” are coming from the side who would be hiring a high school dropout cum home security guard. Perhaps they are completely basing their evaluation on actual results, and any otaku would have fit their bill.

More like, in the first place, this company——exactly what kind of company is “AmuTec” anyway?

At the start, Matoba-san had introduced it as a “general entertainment company,” but that doesn’t really mean anything. “General” and easily be interpreted to mean “anything goes.”

This interview room too.....whichever way you look at it, it gives off the distinct feeling of being a temporarily rented room in a multi-tenant building. There is absolutely nothing here that would tell me anything about the function as well as the corporate culture of the company AmuTec. Inside the room, there is literally only a table, some chairs, and a drink machine. There isn’t even a single poster on the walls.

In other words, this company’s usual functions must be taking place in some other location.....

“Alright. I have to confirm a matters in regards to your resume in the room at the back, so please take a seat and wait a white. Oh, do feel free to help yourself to the drink machine.”

So saying, Matoba-san takes the documents that he has been writing memos on since a while ago and leaves the room.

“I wonder what’s up.”

Muttering to myself, I take up Matoba-san’s offer and walk towards the drink machine.

For now, I press the button for oolong tea, and set the paper cup.

The cup fills up almost immediately, so I take it and sip it while taking a second look around the room.

There really is nothing here.

Rather than that.....it feels like a place that could be packed up and abandoned at any moment.

“Could this company possibly be a really dangerous place?”

Right outside the window, I can see the Manseibashi Police Station standing imposingly. I can’t imagine any criminal activity happening this close to a police station.

Wiping away my worries by draining the oolong tea, I go back to the chair and sit down again.

How long is it going to take until Matoba-san comes back?

He said that he had something to confirm, so did that mean that he is now comparing what I have just said in the interview against what I had written on my resume?

But are normal job applications this strict?

Well, I've heard that when applying for a government job, they do a background check on you, but.....

“Unexpectedly, could this be a government job?”

Speaking of which, one of the former Prime Ministers did say that he wanted to build a museum for anime, if I remember right. He said something about us being a world leader in the entertainment industry, and wanting to promote anime as a national policy. But well, as always, the oh-so-great government officials were almost indifferent to the actual contents of the works, and in the end came up with a project that completely missed the mark—are they perhaps thinking of making changes to that project, and are therefore trying to hire personnel who knows about this stuff?

“Lol, no way.”

If that is the case, then the recruitment would be happening on a much larger scale.

Smiling wryly at my wild idea, I yawn really widely, then——

“.....”

My memories cut off right there.



And thus——end of recollection.

The time is now the present.

In other words——

“Ohh.....?!”

I raise my voice in admiration.

Taking a step outside the entranceway and turning around, I behold a large mansion.

Completely filling up my field of vision, the brickwork building extends to my left and right.

This is one of those so-called ‘Western-styled houses.’

However, unlike its usual run-down and antique-looking appearance in games and manga and other such, this one feels strangely brand new. Of course, it is not like a stage prop, where if you look closely you can see the details being fudged over. This mansion was built properly, and therefore gives off an overwhelming sense of presence that weighs down heavily on me.

In other words, this is a real mansion.

And furthermore, it has most likely been completed only recently.

I had grasped the general idea from the bedroom in which I had been sleeping in, but now that I’m seeing the building again up close, I still feel very much overwhelmed. The fact that this place is not Akiba, that it isn’t even Japan, is being impressed upon me very strongly.

However.....honestly, what I am surprised about is not the mansion itself.

It is the thing behind it.

“That’s freaking huge!”

It is so gigantic that despite being on the other side of the mansion, it is still so prominent that it can be considered part of the landscape or part of the geography—it is a majestic architecture on the level of a mountain.

“That’s the Holy Eldant Palace.”

Minori-san answered while standing next to me and also looking up at the palace.

As for its shape, it is giving off a medieval European feeling, just like the mansion that I was in. Castle gates huge enough for elephants to pass through in a pack? Check. Sturdy castle walls? Check. Pinnacles that look like watchtowers? Check. Yep, nothing out of the ordinary.

However.....

“It’s a castle with the same name as the country. In other words, it’s where the imperial throne is. They gouged out the mountain that used to be there to build that castle—but well, even I don’t know the exact details.”

That palace is more massive than any other architecture that I’ve ever seen in person.

For comparison, even the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building, which I personally think looks like a Demon Lord’s castle, looks tiny in comparison to this. Leaving the height aside, the breadth and thickness are completely different. If placed next to this Eldant Palace, the Government Building would only come across as being thin and flimsy. This palace wins not only in height, but also in the size of its base. It is larger in all three dimensions.

Naturally, in games and anime and manga and novels and other created works, even more gigantic constructions have been featured—like space strongholds the size of an entire planet—but when I see it with

my own two eyes, the sense of presence that I feel on my skin is.....profound, if I have to summarize it into one word.

At the foot of the mountain-sized palace are numerous medieval European-styled buildings packed densely together, and several roads paved with flagstone run throughout the entire thing like blood vessels. The mansion that I was at is at the very fringe——in other words, it is located in the suburbs of the castle town. Around the castle is a gentle slope, such that from my current position, I have to look up to see the town.

“This really is a fantasy world, eh.....”

“It is indeed.”

Minori-san smiles wryly at my impression.

“May I go visit the town for a bit?”

“You sure are fearless, aren’t you.”

Minori-san responded in a slightly impressed tone of voice.

“I had thought that you’d hole yourself up inside the mansion and refuse to take even a step outside. I’m saying this again, but this is not simply a different country, alright? Parallel world. Another world. This is that kind of place.”

“.....I’m not exactly proud of it, but.....”

The corner of my mouth curls up in a self-deprecating smile.

“To me, this scenery feels very familiar.”

I am a hardcore otaku. For people like me, the fantasy genre in games and anime and manga and light novels is considered an extremely mainstream taste. The only difference here is that 2D has become 3D.

Another way of putting it is that the realism has simply gone up a notch. All I feel from this place is a sense of nostalgia, like as if it is my actual hometown.

Hole myself up in the house? Absolutely unthinkable.

“Although I do concede that just now, I did panic a little bit when that dragon popped out in front of me .”

“That’s the normal reaction, though.”

So said Minori-san.

Incidentally, if I squint my eyes, I can see two or three dragon-like shapes flying in the sky above the palace. Apparently, dragons are considered mountable beasts the way horses are.....When I take a second look, I realize that the dragon from just now is also wearing a saddle near the base of its neck.

“To be specific, what you just saw was a wyvern. The wild dragons are much larger and much fiercer, apparently.”

“Truly living up to the fantasy genre, isn’t it.”

Dragons and wyverns. At this rate, there might also be sea serpents. It wouldn’t surprise me if people here ride chocobo instead of horses.

“Anyhow, you might have to put off visiting the town to tomorrow.”

Minori-san is squinting her eyes while looking in the direction of the town.

“Because the person who is going to explain everything in full detail has arrived.”

“.....?”

I follow Minori-san's line of sight and look toward the town—I stare at the paved road that stretches from the mansion.

Immediately, I see something absurd that is jarringly out of place in this setting.

Colored deep green, same as the skirt that Minori-san is wearing as part of her uniform, the thing is.....an automobile.

At first glance, its angular frame clearly identifies it as a military vehicle—and I know this model. Commonly used by the JSDF, this is a Light Armored Vehicle, or LAV for short. It has played an active role even when dispatched overseas, and appears often in works featuring the JSDF.

Inside this medieval European fantasy scenery runs the JSDF military vehicle.

Rather than calling it a mere mismatch, this is something that clearly does not fit in this place.

Before long, the LAV comes up in front of us, then stops.

The person who opens the back and steps out is.....someone I have recollection of.

With his seven three hair and his dried leaves colored suit, the man has an extremely ordinary appearance.

“——Ah. The interviewer?!”

If I remember correctly, his name is Matoba Jinzaburou, isn't it.

I had expected a JSDF member wearing field uniform, or someone with an appearance that shouted 'fantasy!', but the reality is beyond my expectations.



Rather, his figure seems to be shouting “I’m a salaryman~” instead, and looks as out of place as the LAV that he had arrived in. Well, that’s probably also true for Minori-san and myself, though.

“How are you doing, Kanou Shinichi-kun?”

Matoba-san spoke with a calm-looking smile.

“Welcome to the Holy Eldant Empire. Or rather, to the parallel world.”

His speech was so easygoing that I almost feel like a tourist who has just arrived at some attraction.

But then again, if I hadn’t seen that dragon, I might believe it if someone tells me that this is a tourist attraction someplace in the West.

“.....Exactly what kind of situation is this?”

I knit my eyebrows while responding.

“Why was I brought to this kind of place from the interview location in Akiba?”

“*Un.* I am going to talk about that with you. That’s why I quickly wrapped up the talks at the palace and came back here.”

So answered Matoba-san.

“Talks at the palace?”

“No worries, I’ll tell you about that too. For now, let’s head back inside.”

So saying, Matoba-san begins walking towards the mansion.



“Alright——”

Matoba-san spoke up while holding a teacup in his hand.

We are inside the mansion——inside the parlor, to be exact.

The room is almost as big as a banquet hall, and has a round table almost three meters in diameter. Matoba-san and I are sitting on the chairs arranged around the table.

Incidentally, Minori-san is sitting on a chair that she had placed in a corner of the room. Clearly, she has no intention of participating in the conversation. Beside her is a service cart with a complete tea set on it, with Miusel standing next to it. The cup that Matoba-san is drinking from, as well as the steaming cup in front of myself, are both filled with tea brewed by Miusel.

“Before the explanation.”

Matoba-san shoots a quick glance at Miusel while speaking.

“Kanou-kun. Would you mind taking off your ring first?”

“.....Eh?”

Oh right, I’m wearing a ring.

I look at the ‘magical ring’ that is on my finger. The one that I had exchanged with Miusel.

This thing apparently has a translating function, which allows two people wearing one to be able to communicate their own intentions to each other even while speaking different languages.

“Since there are some things that might be easily misunderstood. And there are also some things that we don’t want people on this side to know.”

When I look again, I realize that Matoba-san has already taken off his own ring. Turning around to glance quickly at Minori-san, I confirm that she has also done the same. I am pretty sure that she still had it on until just now, though.

“.....Hah. Is this fine?”

For now, I take off the ring.

“Good.”

Nodding in response, Matoba-san then places both elbows on the table and laces his fingers together.

“Everything began a year ago—a mysterious ‘hole’ was found inside the sea of trees around Mt. Fuji.”

“.....‘Hole’?”

He has only just brought it up, but by ‘sea of trees around Mt. Fuji,’ didn’t he mean that infamous Aokigahara primeval forest? That place with shady circumstances like being a famous suicide spot and having strange magnetic fields that cause compasses to go haywire?

“To be exact, it is something closer in form to a crevice. It’s just that everyone’s gotten used to calling it a ‘hole.’ The scientists tell us that it’s a ‘hyper dimensional passageway.’”

Hyper dimensional passageway.

All of a sudden, a word completely lacking in any sense of realism is being brought up.

“Upon further inspection, we learned something strange about this ‘hole.’ This ‘hole’ apparently penetrates three-dimensional space and connects with a parallel world, but.....well.....”

“.....”

“You don’t look very surprised.”

Matoba-san can’t help making a wry smile.

“Mmm. Or rather, the story couldn’t get more standard than this.”

Worm holes. Warp gates. Shift portals.

A hole that is actually a hyperspace construct that connects to another world.....from ancient fairytales to the latest SF fantasies, this plot device has been used so much that it is now a staple of the genre.

“Anyways——when we tried to go through the hole, we discovered land that we had never seen before. Furthermore, in that place, creatures that we’ve only heard of in fairytales and myths were living naturally, and there were even ‘humans’ similar to us who had ‘civilization.’ Their culture turned out to be a bit different from that of our own, though.”

“A different culture.....is that because they have magic?”

“.....Exactly.”

Half expecting to be repudiated, I said what I said as a joke——but of all things, Matoba-san actually nodded deeply in affirmation.

“.....”

I look at the rings lying on top of the round table.

So that instant translation phenomenon is really because of some magic in the rings?

“Those are one of the things brought about due to magic.”

Almost as if he had read my thoughts, Matoba-san spoke up.

“Basically, Japan suddenly sharing a land border with such an unrealistic world.....is what has happened.”

“.....Land border.....”

I kind of feel like that’s not exactly the right word to use here.....if the only way to go to that other world is by this ‘hole’ that’s floating off the ground somewhere, then I don’t really think you can call that a land border.

“Our Japanese government put scout parties into organizations and dispatched them. Their mission was to come into contact with the authority that ruled over the area which the ‘hole’ was in.....in other words, the closest ‘nation.’ That turned out to be this Holy Eldant Empire. As this ‘hole’ is within their territory, it technically belongs to them.”

“I’m surprised it didn’t turn into a war.”

When two different worlds or two different cultures suddenly meet, there’s a high probability that a war develops——this pattern often happens in mangas and novels. I believe that there are many examples of this in actual history too.

“Even we’re not that stupid. And the other side also had their wise men.”

Matoba-san shrugged his shoulders while answering.

“Both sides moved cautiously while confirming each other’s intentions, then before long, we were able to find a compromise that benefits both parties and signed a mutual cooperation agreement.”

Well, indeed it’s true that as long as someone knows the ‘frequently

used pattern' and understands that 'heedless actions lead to war,' all they have to do is to move cautiously. This is a good example of how the well-used material in mangas and novels could come in handy.

“Are you following me so far?”

“Well.....somehow, yes.”

Frankly speaking, I am still having trouble believing that this is all real—the palace, the dragons, and the unnatural state of affairs around me. And currently, the only person who is able to explain everything, without leaving any information out, is Matoba-san alone.

However——

“However, how does discovery of this other world relate to myself?”

Even if what he is saying is true.

What does any of it have to do with a former home security guard like me?

A giant discovery like this that could shake the entire world would normally have bigshots in foreign governments moving around and doing various things, but what's the point of bringing along a normal citizen like myself if they have to go to the trouble of even assigning a JSDF soldier as escort?

“Don't tell me that I was actually born as a prince from this side who was sent to our world but due to my inescapable fate I've been summoned to help this side eradicate a demon lord. Seriously, it's not a plot device like that, right?”

“Calm down. It's nothing as cliché as that.”

Matoba-san smiled wryly.

“I’m currently serving as the Bureau Director of the ‘Far East Cultural Exchange Promotion Bureau,’ which is under the direct control of the Cabinet Office.”

“Eh? Sorry, what?”

Suddenly, a lot of complicated-sounding words are coming up.

“Well, the official name aside, the ‘Far East Cultural Exchange Promotion Bureau’ is an organization in charge of exploring ways to strengthen the relations between Japan and this other world. As for General Entertainment Company AmuTec, it is a semi-governmental corporation affiliated to this Far East Cultural Exchange Promotion Bureau. In other words, it’s a joint venture by Japan and the Holy Eldant Empire, and it’s also the very first corporate entity in this parallel world.”

“.....What?”

“And you, you are——”

Matoba-san pauses for dramatic effect.

“You are the person who has been hired as the General Manager of AmuTec.”

“Wai.....?!”

The very first corporate entity of this parallel world?!

General Manager?!Me?!

What karma is this?!

“Wasn’t I hired as the odd jobs guy or even as a regular employee?”

“That’s the part you’re surprised at, huh.”

Matoba-san smiled wryly.

(T/N: Matoba is basically just wryly smiling in response to everything Shinichi says. He was described as having a calm smile, but I have only seen him make wry smiles lol.)

“You can call yourself the Director or the CEO or whatever else you like. In any event, the person standing at the top and directing everything will be you.”

So said Matoba-san in a composed manner.

“Your job as the General Manager of AmuTec is to export Japan’s anime and manga and games to this country.”

Anime and manga and games are Japan’s prided exports.

Well, any otaku can tell you as much.

It’s indeed true, but.....

“It seems that this world’s entertainment culture is lagging far behind our own. Therefore, the plan is to get along with this side by exporting our own entertainment culture to them—we’re hoping that this will be a catalyst to deepen friendly relations between both sides.”

“WHAAATTT?!”

A few steps seem to have been skipped here.....seriously, generating international goodwill through anime and manga and games?!

Even someone as stupid as me understands that when government officials say “let’s get along,” they don’t actually mean it. This is a diplomatic issue. Furthermore, the other party is not even a foreign country on the same Earth. The degree of complication here is, frankly speaking, unprecedented.

In that kind of situation, how on earth did they arrive at the conclusion of exporting animanga.....?

“Indeed. I understand what you want to say.”

Matoba-san smiled wryly.

“Of course, at the very beginning, we thought of using goods related to traditional culture, such as porcelain and cloths. That was what we worked hard on for the first few months. But in the end, they didn’t really seem right.”

So at the very least, they weren’t completely rejected by the people of the Holy Eldant Empire.

However, these differences in culture are based on having different histories and geographic features, so it is hard to say anything about it. Especially, a large part of traditional Japanese culture revolves around the idea of ‘*wabisabi*,’ which even foreigners on Earth find hard to understand.....Perhaps it is the same for the Eldant Empire.

(T/N: *Wabisabi* is the “aesthetic sense in Japanese art emphasizing quiet simplicity and subdued refinement.” Courtesy of zKanji.)

“Therefore, the talk turned towards the fact that Japanimation is a prided part of Japanese culture too. And also what, TV games? You know, like how the release of a new game causes really long lines or how there are cases of blackmail and extortion for the sake of limited edition goods.”

“That’s——”

“What we want to see is that kind of vigor characteristic of the younger generation that can trigger such a social phenomenon. In actual fact, we showed the Eldant people a few anime series, and the reception was quite good.”

“You never know about that kind of thing though——”

Lately, many anime are being exported overseas. Or rather, some are being made with the premise that it will be exported.

In other words, they plan to completely bypass the differences in culture and national traits by capitalizing instead on the other side’s primitive entertainment industry. However, for things like noh and kabuki, the prerequisite knowledge and taste are too high. In comparison, this ‘ease of understanding that crosses national borders and ages’ that has caused even young boys and girls in other countries to become engrossed could indeed be said to be a characteristic of entertainment works.

“It’s just that when it comes to that sort of art and entertainment.....when government officials get involved with that sort of thing, everything somehow seems subtly wrong. You can say that we don’t have the refinement or style, or that our buttons get pressed by the strangest things. You know, like how public building construction projects continuously get shutdown due to breakdowns in management. By thinking of other similar government-spearheaded initiatives to develop cultural affairs, you can understand what I’m saying here, right?”

“.....Well, yes.”

The contents of that test come to mind. Though they weren’t wrong, they were indeed subtly off-point——many questions felt like they had been posed by an outsider who hadn’t taken a direct look at the referenced works.

“Therefore, someone raised the suggestion of placing a ‘live otaku,’ someone who actually knows what’s in and what’s out, into the position of General Manager. In any event, because there is no precedence of any sort, government officials, who have been disciplined into becoming absolutely useless without rules and

conventions and operating manuals, are entirely unsuitable for the position.”

Matoba-san is speaking in a self-deprecating tone of voice.

“Be that as it may, why me?”

I do indeed admit to being a pretty hardcore otaku.

However, if they combed the entire country, they would find that otakus number in the tens of thousands.

Out of all of them, why employ *me*, who was a former home security guard who had only just begun looking for a job? Isn't that strange?

“.....”

Matoba-san remains silent.

“.....”

With a start like as if he had thought of a good idea, he turns toward Minori-san—but she merely has an ambiguous expression on her face.

Half smiling. Half pitying. Or at least, that's what I am interpreting it as.

.....Wait, pitying?

“Well, that's.....You know.”

Matoba-san started to speak haltingly.

“The existence of this ‘hole’—and also the cultural exchange with the Eldant Empire—are both confidential matters that will have enormous effects on Japan's future.”

“I’m following so far.”

“That’s why we were looking for someone who could protect these secrets.”

So said Matoba-san.

“So you guys determined that I am tight-lipped?”

Were some of the questions from the interview actually for the sake of determining how well I can keep a secret?

“Not exactly. Whether your lips are loose or tight is of little consequence.”

Matoba-san seemed to be having more and more trouble with his words.

“After all, you’ll be living in anyways, so it’s not like you will have anyone to blab to.”

“.....Eh?”

Living in. Here.

In other words——inside this mansion that stands inside the Holy Eldant Empire. In this parallel world.

That means.....

“Wai-Wait a second.....”

“That’s, you know. Even if you suddenly disappeared, the people around wouldn’t question it.....and that makes everything a lot more convenient, so yea.....”

“OOOOIIIIIII?!”

I raised my voice in what bordered on a shriek.

So, in other words, that was what he was getting at?! Even if a home security guard suddenly went missing, everyone would go “ah, as we thought” and no one would make a fuss?!

I feel a trickle of sweat run uncomfortably down my back.

National secret.

For the sake of such a just cause, many things can be overlooked. In order to steal national secrets, causing human casualties is only considered normal. Especially when it comes to an unprecedented situation like an exchange with a parallel world, it is only natural that other countries would go into a frenzy and desire to meddle however they could——

“Ummm. May I go home?”

In response to my request, Matoba-san smiles wryly and answers with his own question.

“Do you know how to?”

“.....”

My words clogged up inside my throat.

He has a point. I have no idea where is the ‘hole’——the hyper dimensional passageway. If I am left alone in a parallel world like this——I’m not proud of it, mind——I won’t last even three days without collapsing. I could not be more sure of this.

Actually, no. It’s not just that. Now that I knew so much of this national secret——even though I was forced to listen to it, there’s no way that

the government would just go “oh, if you don’t want to, then there’s no helping it” and let me safely go back. Worst case scenario, there is also the possibility that they would chase me down to ‘erase’ me even if I do manage to escape.

“Don’t worry.....we won’t go to such extremes.”

Almost as if he could read the fears inside my heart——more like, I was probably displaying them on my face——Matoba-san continues speaking.

“If you can bring about a certain amount of results and get AmuTec started on track, then we wouldn’t mind letting you go. And of course, we will also be paying you from the national budget——well, the Far East Cultural Exchange Promotion Bureau’s budget, to be specific. From the Eldant Empire side, too, you will be receiving treatment befitting a state guest, so overall, I don’t think you’ll be treated badly at all.”

“Ev-.....Even if you put it that way.....”

“Don’t worry. I will take care of all the office work and paperwork.”

Matoba-san lightly struck his own chest.

Let’s leave aside the fact that up to this point, I haven’t felt a single shred of dependability from him. If the Bureau Director himself is going to do the paperwork, then——could it be that this Far East Cultural Exchange Promotion Bureau actually doesn’t have anyone on it?

“You can rest assured, all you have to do is popularize different kinds of otaku culture in this Eldant Empire. Ummm, what words do you youngsters use? Akiba? Magical girls, tsundere, moe, that sort of stuff.”

“.....”

Even while completely at a loss, all I can think is that this venture is hopeless.

This is something that has already been decided and set in stone by the various related parties. Even if I complain and raise a fuss, there's no longer anything that can be done. This will be forced labor in the true meaning of the word.

“Well then.....Is there anything else that you want to ask about?”

So asked Matoba-san, still speaking in a tone of voice as carefree as it had been from the very start.

Volume 1 Chapter 1 Part 3

Chapter 1: A Parallel World Before I Knew It

Translator: Tenshi

A few hours later.

I am moaning while holding my smartphone in one hand.

“*U—n…….*”

Though some might ask why a home security guard like myself would have something like a smartphone, it is something that I’ve had since before my hikikomori days. After all, it is one of my beliefs that as otakus, one of our duties is to be the first in line to buy products like these and be the guinea pigs.

Well, let’s leave that aside for now.

Currently displayed on the liquid crystal screen is a list written by me. Both as a means for me to gain a better grasp on my situation and also as a way for me to sort out my feelings, I wrote down everything that happened to me today into a brief list—in other words, I am thinking of starting a diary.

Frankly speaking, I am a bit leery of using an electronic device in a world that does not seem like it has electricity. However, according to Minori-san, the battery from the LAV is more than sufficient to supply electrical current of that level, so for now I’m using my smartphone as a notebook.

My current location is the room that has been assigned as my office.

This mansion has a uselessly large number of rooms, but the main ones that I will use are my office, which is situated in the central part of the 2nd floor, and its adjacent room, which is my bedroom. There are also other bedrooms and guest rooms, so it became that Minori-san, who is in charge of protecting me, will be staying in one of those rooms.

And thus.....

“Danna-sama.”

Following a few knocks on the door, I hear a cute voice like the ringing of a bell.

It is Miusel——that maid girl’s voice.

“Umm.....I’ve brought you.....some tea.”

“Ah. Thanks.”

So saying, I stand up, with my smartphone still in my hand, and walk towards the entrance to the room and open the door. At that moment——

“Eh.....”

“.....?”

In the hallway is a service cart with a set of tea utensils on it, and Miusel standing frozen next to it.

“What?”

“Ah.....Excuse me. Thank you very much.”

“.....? You-You’re welcome.”

I don’t understand what I am being thanked for, but for now I move back to make way for Miusel and the cart to enter the room.

“Come on in.”

“Eh? Ah, ummm, p.....pardon the intrusion.”

Bowing timidly, Miusel pushes the cart into the room. For some reason, she seems very bewildered, and is sneaking glances at me while casting her eyes down in a manner that is making me really uncomfortable.

(.....Ah. So that's why.)

At that moment, I finally understand.

Thinking about it, I'm her 'Goshujin-sama,' so there's no need for me to go to the trouble of opening the door for her and greeting her like a guest. That's also why she is not carrying the tea set on a tray, but on a cart. From her point of view, the door that she was supposed to open by herself was arbitrarily opened by my hand instead, so she is bewildered and at a loss as to how to react.

"Is it fine if I place it here?"

"Ah, yes."

She indicates the top of the office desk, and I nod.

For a while after that, I zone out for a bit and gaze at her readying the tea, but——

"Ah.....ummm.....is something the matter?"

After finishing with all the preparations, she looks over at me in a frightened manner.

"The matter with what?"

"No, I mean.....You've been staring at me the entire time, so....."

Miusel spoke with a perplexed expression on her face.

"Oh, no! It was just so strange, I——"

Not counting the instance from this afternoon——if I also don't count the instances inside games, this is the first time in my life having a maid-san go to the trouble of brewing and pouring tea for me. As it is my first experience, everything about this scene is astonishing to me. That's why I'm feeling a bit nervous.

“Strange, you said.....?”

Is it my imagination?

I kind of feel like Miusel's face had turned into a deeply terrified expression.

It wouldn't do if she misunderstood me somehow, so I quickly rephrase my words.

“Because I've never had the experience of having a maid-san pour tea for me, I couldn't help staring.”

“Ah. So that's why.”

Miusel shows me a relieved smile.

Uwah. This girl is seriously cute.....!

As she normally shows a hesitant and timid expression, these smiles of her become all the more conspicuous. Conscious of my quickly beating heart, I formally give her my greetings again.

“So, umm. Miusel Foalan-san, is it?”

“Yes. I'm Miusel Foalan.....!”

The maid girl——Miusel——smiles delightedly.

How do I put this? She looks so innocent. Or rather, she looks extremely, extremely moe.

“Well then——once more, formally.”

While speaking, I straighten my back and lower my head a little.

“My name is Kanou Shinichi. *Yoroshiku onegaishimasu.*”

“Y-Yes, from my side too, that’s, I have the honor of taking care of your everyday life.....Ummm, I do think that there are many places where I’m still inadequate, but please, *yoroshiku onegaishimasu.....!*”

Speaking in almost a shout, Miusel-san deeply bow towards me.

How do I put this, she looks extremely nervous.

It even feels like she’s slightly scared of me.

I am indeed overjoyed at the chance to get close to such a cute maid-san, but if she continues to be this nervous whenever she interacts with me, it’s very tiring for me. Well, judging from what Minori-san’s side said, I’m being treated as a state guest——as a super important person by this Holy Eldant Empire, so it’s not like I don’t understand this reaction.

“.....Huh?”

With a start, I realize something and blink a few times.

It didn’t come to my attention in the afternoon as she had been acting normally and the hair hanging from both sides of her head had been covering them, but——

“Miusel. Those ears.....”

“.....Ah.”

In a fluster, Miusel presses down both sides of her head as her facial expression stiffens.



And then——

“I.....I’m terribly sorry.....!”

Her voice almost sounded like a shriek.

“——Eh?”

I haven’t the faintest idea what she’s apologizing about.

In response to an expression which can only be called tragic, all I can squeeze out is an incoherent reply.

“I had no intention, at all, umm, of deceiving Danna-sama, I mean, I was hiding them, but, that’s.....”

“No wait, calm down. I don’t know what’s made you so terrified, but perhaps, could it be that Miusel is an elf, or some other different race?”

Indeed. When she had taken that deep bow earlier, her ears had become visible.

They are sticking out a little and are pointed at the tips.

“.....Yes, I am.”

Miusel——finally nods despondently.

“I.....am a cross between an elf and a human.”

“As I thought!”

Half-elf!

This too, is a standard moe character type from the fantasy genre. Possessing the beauty of an elf combined with the friendliness of a human, they are such high-spec characters that they can almost be

called OP.

But seriously, she is a half-elf on top of being a maid-san?

How many traits does this girl have. Is she supposed to moe me to death?

“However....never, ever did I ever intend to deceive Danna-sama.....”

“That’s absolutely perfect!”

I clench my fists tightly and yell loudly.

“.....What?!”

Looking shocked, Miusel stands frozen in her place.

In contrast, I draw closer towards her and continue speaking.

“Maid-san plus half-elf! Magnificent! I, at this moment, truly believe that it is no exaggeration to say that I have been born for the sole purpose of meeting you!”

“.....Eh? Eh?”

“Miusel, Miusel, once more, please allow me to see those ears of yours one more time!”

“Eh? Ah——Un-Understood.”

Giving in to my fierce look, Miusel holds back some of her hair and bares her ears.

They are indeed the elf ears described in fantasy works.

“Uwah~.....They’re real elf ears.....!”

I am feeling so moved.

But it seems like Miusel cannot understand my joy at all.

“Da.....Danna-sama.”

With her cheeks bright red, Miusel struggles to speak up.

“Ah, I’m sorry. And thank you.”

I speak while drawing my body back.

Thinking about it, it’s only obvious that as a girl, having a guy close enough to feel his breath and having a part of her body stared at so ardently would naturally cause her to feel embarrassed.

“Incredible. Thank you for allowing me to pay my respects to something so absolutely wonderful.”

As I continue to thank her profusely, Miusel’s expression grows increasingly confused.

“You.....You will not scold me?”

“Eh? Why should I?”

“That’s.....I mean, for being a half-elf.....and for hiding it.....”

“What about it?”

“.....”

Miusel’s expression is frozen, as if she is even more puzzled than before.

Seeing that——a lightbulb goes off inside my head.

“I don’t know anything about this side, but could it be that half-elves are not well thought of by humans, by elves, or perhaps even by both sides?”

This is a common setting in fantasy works.

“.....Yes.”

Miusel nods imperceptibly.

Using the milder expression of ‘not well thought of’ was my way of being tactful. Most likely, the reality is that they are being discriminated against. So severely so that just the fact of being a child of mixed race is reason enough to be persecuted against.

I’ve finally discovered the reason why Miusel had been so strangely timid the entire time.

She must originally have a personal history rife with discrimination and persecution.

“Ummm. Miusel-san?”

“.....Eh? Ah.”

For a moment, Miusel had a loose expression on her face and looked out of it, but she quickly responds in a fluster.

“Danna-sama, please call me Miusel without adding the suffix!”

“Eh? But.....By the way, how old are you, Miusel-san? You’re not older than me, are you?”

According to fantasy, elves are a long-lived species.

In that case.....Even though Miusel looks like she’s in her teens, there’s the possibility that she’s actually older than me.

“My age? It’s.....sixteen.....I’m sixteen years old.”

Miusel-san looks startled and replied hesitantly.

“Oh. You’re younger than me. In that case, then I’ll take you up on your offer and call you Miusel from now on.”

“Thank you.”

Miusel-san——or rather, Miusel, nods in affirmation.

“With that settled, I will now say this clearly.”

“Ye-Yes?”

“I am not bothered at all by the fact that you’re a half-elf. Rather, for me, ‘What am I getting rewarded for?’ is what I feel about it.”

“.....Hah?I see.....”

“As such, it is something that I’m extremely happy about, so I will never get angry at you or be disappointed with you for being a half-elf. Understood?”

“.....”

For the briefest of moments, she stared at me blankly in puzzlement, but then——

“Thank you so very much!”

She gives me another deep bow.

In so doing, her pointed ears become visible again.

“But seriously.....it appears that there are a lot of things that I’m going

to have to confirm before I do anything else.”

I mutter while crossing my arms.

If I’m to go by SF staples, then there might be silicon-based lifeforms, octopus-like aliens, or other lifeforms that share even fewer common features with humans. I’ve known from the start that it’s only natural for these other lifeforms to have a different value system or common sense, but I do need to be aware that this would be so even with human-looking parties. Due to this place having so many similarities to medieval Europe and the fantasy worlds that I know, it seems like it would be very easy for misunderstandings to occur.

“I’ve only come to this side recently, and I’ve finally heard my full circumstances a few hours ago. Miusel, what have you heard about me?”

“That Danna-sama is a very, very important guest of the Empire, that you will be staying here for a while, and that Blük-san and myself will be responsible for taking care of everything in Danna-sama’s everyday life.”

“Blük-san?”

I blinked in response to this name that I’d never heard of before.

“I will make the introductions later. He’s currently out patrolling and cleaning the premises.....”

Apparently, there is another servant who has been exclusively assigned to me.

In which case, it means that there will be a total of four people living inside this mansion. There will be me as the Danna-sama, Minori-san as my escort, Miusel the maid, and Blük-san (I still don’t know what kind of person he is, so I’m temporarily affixing a -san to his name).

I feel like this place is way too big for four people to live in, but according to Minori-san, this mansion is already among the smallest in comparison to the mansions of the Eldant Empire's nobility. You heard that right. Nobility. As a state guest, I am apparently being likened to a noble in the kind of treatment that I'm being given.

“Do you know what I've come to do?”

“For the sake of *friendship* between the Empire and Japan, as well as *mutual prosperity* and *development* between the two countries, you have come to do *commerce*.”

(T/N: The italicized words are words that are supposed to have a kanji, but Miusel is saying them in hiragana, which implies that she's just memorized the syllables but doesn't actually understand the words. As the author explains in the following lines.)

All the important parts were in monotone.

In all probability, she does not actually understand what she's saying, but is just parroting what she had been taught.

“Ah—.....‘*commerce*’? Oh, commerce, right.”

I nodded while smiling wryly.

“Danna-sama, you are someone who has come here from a foreign country far away, is that true?”

“Yes, that's true.”

Well, a foreign country is not really incorrect.

“It's a foreign world too, you see.”

“Foreign——world, is it?”

Miusel tilts her head quizzically.

That gesture is so pure and innocent, and so much like a little bird that somehow, I just, there's a moe moe feeling overflowing from deep within my chest and it's taking everything I have to keep it down.

“It's not a foreign country?”

“It *is* a foreign country, but it's in a foreign world.”

“.....?”

Miusel's expression tells me that she is seriously having trouble understanding.

Ahh. That's right.

I came to a realization. Minori-san and Matoba-san had said it—that this country's entertainment industry is almost nonexistent.

Magic aside, if I use the Middle Ages as a standard, then the printing press probably doesn't exist, so books are most likely considered an extremely expensive luxury good. Nobles are one thing, but for the average citizen, books are completely beyond their reach.

Therefore—the only way for the masses to enjoy “listening to stories” is through “oral tradition.” In other words, the only ways that stories can be passed on is through unreliable and limited methods such as from parents to children, or from minstrel or court storyteller masters to their disciples.

Actually, I wonder what the literacy rate is in this country?

In any case.....in an environment like this, there's a possibility that the very concept of ‘parallel worlds’ might not exist. Although it's very familiar to an otaku like me as a staple in stories, it's entirely unknown territory for her. It is the same way how people in the Middle Ages also

could not comprehend the idea of ‘space,’ that there is something beyond the sky that they see.

“I’m terribly sorry.”

Miusel looks quite discouraged——actually, she looks more scared than anything else.

“I’m a stupid person who is lacking in education, so.....”

“No, it’s only natural that you don’t understand. I’m sorry.”

“No, I’m the one who’s in the wrong, so please don’t apologize!”

Miusel shakes her head in a fluster.

The pointed ears visible in the gaps between her hair, in combination with her quivering figure——it’s like she’s a cat or a dog, and her ears are even moving up and down.....omg this girl is just way too cute!!

“It would be great if I could draw something like a conceptual diagram to explain it to you, but——”

I fiddle a bit with my smartphone in search of an appropriate image.....then I realized it.

‘Connection to the network cannot be established.’

It took me this long to notice, but.....this is only natural.

This is a parallel world——there aren’t any network carrier base stations on this side. However, somehow it seems that Aokigahara Sea of Trees is technically connected, so there’s the possibility of getting a signal by being extremely close to that hyper dimensional passageway.

“Ahh, dammit. No internet access for the near future?!”

The information sites that I check regularly, the bulletin boards, and even my many accounts on the net.....I won't be able to access any of that. As I had thought. I need to get a relay antenna set up ASAP as a countermeasure, or else I'm going to suffocate to death, from lack of information.

While I'm thinking such things——

“.....?”

Tilting her head in puzzlement, Miusel is peering at the thing in my hand.

“Danna-sama.....That's.....?”

“Eh? Aah, this——Well, it's my, or you could say it's my country's, magical tool.”

With a wry smile, I show her the screen with the memo app that I had been fiddling with.

“Those are——words, are they?”

“Yep. In my country's language.”

“.....”

Miusel is staring intently at the smartphone with her eyes wide open.

For some reason, that expression seems so very earnest——

“What?”

“Ah, nothing, I'm sorry.”

Miusel bowed her head in a fluster.

“So Danna-sama is able to use such complicated-looking words.....!”

“Eh? Aaahh~, ah, oh right.”

What she is looking at are Japanese characters.

In other words, a combination of kanji and kana. As a Japanese, it's been with me ever since I was born, so I'm not really aware of it, but there are very few cultures on Earth that handle such a large variety of characters. There are only 26 letters in the English alphabet, but in the case of Japanese, there are about 50 sounds. Kana alone is already twice that number, but if you include kanji, then I wonder how many folds that makes.

With a start, I got curious, so I bring up the dictionary on my smartphone. According to the JIS classification system, there are already almost 3,000 characters in Level 1 alone. If you include everything up to Level 4, then there are more than 10,000. The only people capable of using such an enormous number of characters are only those in kanji cultures..... And when you combine kanji with other types of characters, everything becomes even more complicated, as all Japanese and Koreans can attest to.

That's why.....in the eyes of foreigners, it's all incomprehensible.

“Speaking of which, are there a lot of characters on this side?”

“Ah.....I'm very sorry.”

Miusel cast down her eyes while replying.

“I.....can't read or write, so.....”

“.....Ah.”

Speaking of which, one of Japan's distinctive characteristics is having an abnormally high literacy rate. I've read somewhere on the internet

about how foreigners were surprised at seeing even homeless old men reading newspapers.

I see, from the perspective of someone who can't read nor write, being fluent in kanji and kana together might seem like being a great sage. For us, it might be similar to someone being fluent in 5 different languages, maybe?

“.....Oh, by the way, is there paper here?”

I return to my office desk and open the drawers.

Inside——although a bit stiff, there are indeed several sheets of paper. The paper making technology here must not be very developed, as these are quite crude in comparison to the paper that I'm so used to seeing. However, it's not like I can't write on these.

Just like the smartphone, I'd also brought a ballpen over to this world, so I take it out and begin to write a list onto a sheet of paper.

A I U E O. Ka Ki Ku Ke Ko. Sa Shi Su Se So. Ta Chi Tsu Te To——

Basically, the 50 sounds from hiragana.

I meticulously write them all out onto the paper, then hand it to Miusel.

“Here you go.”

“.....Eh?”

“If I said ‘as a token of our acquaintance’would this be too cheap?”

“Eh, you're.....giving this.....to me.....?!”

Miusel's eyes grow as round as saucers.

“This is a table showing the most fundamental and basic characters of

my country, called 'hiragana.' As for how to read them, I'll teach you another time."

After saying this much.....with a start, I turn the paper over, and write 'Miusel' on the back.

"This is how it looks when your name is written in our language. You can compare it with the table later on if you like."

".....Danna-sama.....!"

As if it was the first time in her life receiving a certificate of commendation, her voice is thick with emotion and her hands are stiff and clumsy as she reaches out to accept the hiragana table.

For a split second, I think "what an over-reaction," but.....I change my way of thinking immediately.

Because printing technology is still undeveloped, all books in this world are basically hand-written manuscripts. Therefore, as mentioned before, they are extremely high-class luxury goods that only nobles and a portion of rich people can get their hands on. When you add the fact that it's a table of the characters from a parallel world to the equation, then its rarity drives its value even higher.

Though it is only a single sheet of paper, from Miusel's point of view, she has just received something incredible.

"....."

For a while, she just stares at the table in a daze—Eventually, her face grows increasingly loose before ultimately widening into a delighted smile.

Rather than the worth of what she had received, it feels like what she is happy about is the fact of having received something. As if hugging a piece of treasure, she is using both hands to press the table against her

chest——Then she speaks up in an almost inaudible voice.

“Tha.....Thank you so very much.”

Perhaps due to being so excited, her cheeks are dyed rose-colored, and a bashful smile has stolen onto her face.

Uwah.....what the heck, this girl is seriously moe. To be blunt, I had never imagined that there would be a 3D girl who would make me feel moe so clearly. To the degree of making my chest squeeze up, this girl is somehow really, really cute.....!

And this is how I received plenty of moe from Miusel.

“——Ah.”

Miusel suddenly turned back towards me, looking as if she'd just noticed something.

“It seems like Blük-san has returned.”

“Is that so?”

It seems that her large ears are not just for show. I didn't hear anything at all, but she had obviously heard the noises generated by that person coming back.

“I will bring Blük-san here.”

“Ah. *Un*, thanks.”

At my nod, Miusel begins running in a fluster——

“——Ah.”

She tripped.

“Hyau?!”

She had fallen over in a scene that can only be described by the word ‘splat.’ However, before I can ask “Are you OK?”, she quickly gets back up in a fluster, bobs a quick bow towards me, then runs off again, still in a fluster.

Uumu. So she’s also a dojikko-san. Furthermore, she’s not the calculating type, but the natural type.

(T/N: Dojikko means a clumsy character. Like how maid and twintails and ojou-sama are all character types, dojikko is one too. Thus, I’m leaving it untranslated.)

She’s the maid-san who will be taking care of me.....If that’s true, then we’ll at least be seeing each other around during my stay at this mansion. Furthermore, my position is as her ‘Danna-sama,’ so unlike my classmates and my childhood friend, Miusel probably won’t make fun of me or scorn me for being an otaku. Neither would she readily shoot down something like a confession packed with every bit of my resolve with a simple “No way.”

But I’m starting to tear up from remembering that incident, so let’s move on.

Anyhow, because Miusel is here, I think I’ll be able to enjoy this bizarre position at least a little.

“*Ufufufufufu.*”

Even I think that’s a disgusting laugh, but I’m so happy that I can’t help it.

At that moment——

“Danna-sama.”

I hear a few knocks on my door.

“I have brought Blük-san here.”

“Ah, come on in.”

I tried to make my voice sound as sociable and good-humored as possible.

Speaking of which, I wonder whether Blük-san is also an elf. In the first place, is Holy Eldant Empire a country of elves?

No, wait. This is a parallel world. The common sense from our world might not necessarily apply here.

Therefore, there's the possibility that Blük-san is actually a bishoujo! Even though Blük-san is a pretty masculine-sounding name, there's no reason why it can't be a girl's name, and if it's actually a last name then it can totally work—I'm having such thoughts while walking towards the door.

“Excuse me.”

Along with those words, the door is opened.

The person standing there is——

“I'm Blük Darwen, your manservant. I mainly take care of the gardening, but please feel free to assign all the physical labor to me.”

The one giving a self-introduction in a bass voice that sounds like scraping gravel is a large figure of a person——a person?

I'm assaulted by a feeling like all the blood in my body is curdling up.

It is the same feeling from whenever I got up close to something like a tiger or an wolf while at the zoo. I had thought myself so accustomed

after seeing it so many times in videos and images that I wouldn't be scared. However, now that I'm face to face with the real thing, that realistic largeness, and the intensity of the impression of 'a carnivore' emanating from every part of his body is very nearly overwhelming me.

The figure standing next to Miusel is towering over two meters in height.

What he is wearing is a slightly dirtied tunic frayed all over, and a pair of trousers in a similar state.

If that is all, then I wouldn't be frozen in place.

Problem is——although he is humanoid, he can't really be called 'human.' His face, his neck, his hands, the stomach visible from below the hem of his tunic, the feet visible from below the cuff of his trousers, and generally every part of his bare skin——every place is covered densely by dark blue scales. His head is protruding forward in a manner eerily similar to how a snake raises its head.

Standing right in front of my eyes, at a distance almost close enough for our breath to overlap, is a living creature conventionally known as a lizardman.

I don't really know about 'gigantic kaiju' like Godzilla and Gamera, but this 2 meter tall body is more than large enough to slam home the intensity of the phrase "I'll catch you and eat you."

Speaking bluntly, he is freaking scary. At this moment, I am in a state where I really want to run away with all I have, and I'm not ashamed to admit it. However, even if I really intend to do so, that lizardman is standing in the only entrance to the room.



“Danna-sama?”

Miusel tilts her head in puzzlement.

For her, this lizardman is apparently not surprising nor scary.

“.....I’d forgotten.”

This place is a parallel world.

In the first place, my common sense does not apply—it is a world where it wouldn’t be strange for anything to happen.

That’s why it isn’t strange for a lizardman to be a gardener. It’s not strange, but still.

“*Yoroshiku onegaishimasu, Danna-sama.*”

So saying, the lizardman——Blük bends over and peers into my face.

The red, two-pronged tongue that keep flickering in and out of my vision adds to the vividness of the image, making him seem that much scarier.

He’s scary, but——

“*Yo.....Yoroshiku.*”

For some unknown reason, I was able to maintain a smile on my face and respond appropriately.

Volume 1 Chapter 2 Part 1

Chapter 2: An Imperial Majesty's Punch

Translator: Tenshi

I return the manga that I'd finished reading to the green rucksack by my feet.

On the name tag sewed to the side of the rucksack is a name written in wobbly handwriting.

『Year 2 Class 3 Kanou Shinichi』

The sky is refreshingly clear.

The location that I'm at is a corner in a nature park. It's very big. For small-bodied primary school kids with a limited area of activity, the place seems like a boundless land where the greenery extends, without end, to everywhere and anywhere.

The corner that I'm at is in the shade under the foliage reaching out from a large tree.

I'm sitting on a bench made of stone that seems like a natural rock that had been sculpted into its present shape. The figures of my classmates are nowhere near me. Everyone seems to be playing baseball or dodgeball or whatever, but me—I'm the only one who's not joining in, but instead reading the manga that I'd brought from home.

Anyone looking on might only see a gloomy, introverted kid.

I've been an otaku ever since the first few years of primary school.

“*Oi*, Kanou.”

Having been called, I raise my face.

In front of my eyes, a woman wearing a white tracksuit is standing with

a resigned look on her face.

She is the teacher in charge of my class. Apparently, she used to be a dignified and imposing beauty, but now that she's in the latter half of her forties, there are obvious wrinkles near the corners of her eyes. With a spirited and mannish personality, she is well-known throughout our school as a scary teacher, who for example would yell loudly at those she finds running in the hallways.

"I'm going to be scolded!" is what I thought.

I quickly hide the manga tank behind my back in a fluster, but——of course, that action was way too late.

Sensei speaks to me with a sigh mixed in with her words.

".....I thought that I haven't been seeing you around, but it turns out that you were reading a book in a place like this, huh."

"....."

I hung my head with heavy feelings.

In any case, her next words will be any one from among "Don't be reading manga after coming all the way here," "This is why you'll become an idiot," or "Go play with your friends." The other teachers have said these things to me so many times already. That's why this teacher will definitely also say the same things.

As I bite my lips while staying silent——Sensei speaks to me in a slightly resigned tone.

"If you stay too far away from everyone else, you won't make it in time when we have to go back. If you want to read, might as well do it someplace close to the gathering point."

"——Eh?"

I blink a few times and look up at Sensei.

“Umm.....you’re not going to confiscate my book?”

Sensei raises one of her relatively thick eyebrows (for a woman), and smiles wryly.

“Of course, if this was the classroom, and we’re in mathematics or Japanese language class, then I would. But right now, we’re on an outing, and this is the free time of the outing.”

“.....”

“Kanou. What do you think is the purpose of class outings?”

“They are events to promote teamwork and nurture the spirit of cooperation.”

I give her an immediate reply.

It is what the other teachers have told me so many times during the previous outings that I’ve grown calluses on my ears.

(T/N: The author uses a Japanese metaphor here that translates as “to be told or made to hear something so often that you (metaphorically) get calluses on your ears.”)

Despite that——

“That goal is not wrong, of course. However, they are also occasions to study the things that are not covered in the normal classes at school.”

“‘Not covered’.....?”

“Addition and multiplication. How to read and write kanji. Life cannot be made fulfilling with just those alone.”

“‘Fulfilling’.....?”

With my mind unable to follow such a deep concept, I tilt my head in puzzlement.

After being born, I haven’t lived even ten years——for a child that hasn’t yet fully understood the structure of society, the word “life” doesn’t quite feel real. For a child who has led a carefree life under the protection of his parents, the concept of “fulfillment” feels like something to be taken for granted, and it is a challenge to tangibly imagine a situation without it.

“*Fumu.....*”

After thinking for a while, Sensei asks me a question.

“What is it about manga that you like, Kanou?”

“Umm.....I like that the protagonist stands up to the evil guys and wins.”

“Is that easy to do?”

I shake my head.

In order to defeat the bad guys, the protagonists have to work hard and work out sure-kill techniques, and they have to fight battles that they have no hopes of victory for, and they stand up again and again even when beaten so badly.

“That’s right, isn’t it.”

Sensei nods.

“Even manga are books. It means that if you read them properly, there are things that they can teach you too.”

“.....Even manga.....are books.....”

Speaking of which, Father and Mother have also said something similar.

Father and Mother’s bookshelves are tightly packed with manga and light novels, and I often borrow several volumes at a time from there to read. However, the way Father and Mother put it, these are “necessary materials for our jobs,” so in my eyes, they are “things that adults use for their jobs,” and never have I considered them as “things from which children can learn lessons from.”

“This is.....”

Feeling like scales have fallen from my eyes, I take a long, hard look at the front cover of my manga.

“My.....textbook?”

“Or at least something that has the potential of being a textbook. It all depends on you, though.”

The smile on the face of the Sensei who told me this—even to this day, I still vividly remember it.



I feel my consciousness gradually stirring.

As I slightly open my eyelids, a white light slips in between the crack. I hear the twitter of birds from somewhere, and air that seems to be saying “hey, it’s morning” is floating around. In other words, it is

exactly an “*asa-chun*.”

(T/N: *Asa-chun* is a technique used in anime and manga to signify the passing of a night (oftentimes to imply that sex has occurred in the previous night). *Asa* means ‘morning,’ and *chun* is the Japanese onomatopoeia for how sparrows chirp. Because sexual acts cannot be directly depicted due to Japanese laws, they are common represented as a screen fadeout followed by an *asa-chun*.)

“*Nn.....*”

For now, I continue blinking a few more times.

In order to clear away the drowsiness that seems to be clinging to my eyeballs, I get up from my bed.

I don’t know how else to put this, but today’s waking up feels really good. Back during my home security guard days, my waking hours had been quite unstable, which caused the border between sleeping and waking up to feel quite blurred. As a result, whenever I woke up, I would still be quite out of it for a while. Yesterday, due to being tired after the numerous surprises, I was apparently able to sleep deeply and peacefully, such that I have now woken up with a clear mind.

In the middle of such thoughts——

“——Good morning, Danna-sama.”

I hear a voice as cute as the ringing of a bell from the other side of my door.

“May I come in?”

“Ah——give me a moment.”

I hurriedly pat my head to make sure that I don’t have any strange bed hair standing up.

For now, I think I'm fine. My sleepwear is also fine. My morning physiological phenomenon is——well, I'm covered with the bedsheets so it should also be fine.

“It's fine now.”

“Please excuse me.”

The person who comes into my room in response to the reply that I'd thrown across the door is Miusel.

The maid girl with elf ears. On top of which, she has a slightly clumsy streak.

She is a bishoujo worthy of the question “What is with all those traits?” When someone like that, who normally only appears in imaginations and games, turns out to be so close to me in real life, her extravagant character trait lineup makes me really nervous.

No. Even leaving aside all that talk about traits and whatnot, she really is cute.

Her hair, which is split and tied up on both sides of her head, is flaxen in color. Her skin is as smooth and white as porcelain, while her eyes are like blue jewels with a high degree of translucence. Her soft and full lips glisten faintly with the color of sakura petals. Sheer perfection.

Her facial structure is neat, trim, and sweetly cute——not in a showy way, but in a modest and reserved way. Her cuteness is such that just by looking at her, I feel like I'm being healed.

However.

I didn't notice this yesterday, with all that was happening, but——though the body underneath her maid costume is indeed slim, I can now tell, even over her clothes, that her body shape has curves and

bounces in all the right places. She is not voluptuous in an aggressively erotic sort of way, but how do I put it, her figure has this simple feeling that makes me want to hug her.

Aahh *mou*. This girl is seriously cute!

I am so moe-ed by Miusel that I can barely hold myself back from hugging my pillow and rolling back and forth right here and now. Regardless of whether she is or is not aware of these feelings of mine—well, most likely it's not even passed her mind—Miusel shows a faint smile on her face while speaking up.

(T/N: Apparently, 'moe' is now also a verb.)

“I have finished the preparations for breakfast.”

Oou. “I have finished preparations for breakfast.”! A maid-san said that! To me!

I nearly turned towards overmorrow to release a full-chested roar.

(T/N: 'Overmorrow' sounds cooler than 'the day after tomorrow'.)

When it comes to maids, this line is the most standard out of all standards. I've always imagined this situation enviably, but—as someone who's actually living out this situation, it's actually quite embarrassing.

“I'm sorry for always troubling you so.”

I was so flustered that I gave a completely irrelevant answer.

Of course, as a resident of this world, there's no way that Miusel would know to reply with “Papan, we promised not to talk about that,” so instead, she's just looking blankly at me with her head tilted.

(T/N: The reference here is from a variety show called “Shabondama

Holiday” (Soap Bubble Holiday) that aired from 1961 to 1972. This dialogue (there are a few more lines) is like a staple for the show, and most episodes start with some variety of it. You probably won’t look it up anyways, so that’s all you need to know. Moving on!

“‘Always’?”

“Oh, umm, sorry, I just had to.”

“‘Had to’?”

“Well, it’s like, a monologue or, oh yea, it’s something like a greeting in my country.”

I said something random to gloss it over.

It seems like Miusel somehow managed to swallow that. She resumes making her way towards the windows, and opens the curtains. While letting in more and more morning light into the room, she turns towards me and asks a question.

“Will you partake here? Or perhaps in the dining room instead?”

“Eh? Here? You mean, right here?”

“If you wish so, I shall carry it here.....”

“Hmm. No, I’ll go to the dining room.”

I’ve already quit my job as a home security guard, so let’s not do things like having meals in bed. More like, I simply want to eat breakfast together with Miusel. I can’t exactly do that and say “let’s eat together here.”

I get off the bed and start unbuttoning my nightclothes——

“.....”

Then I freeze.

It is because Miusel has come to my side and placed a hand on my shirt, as if it is the most natural thing to do.

“Umm.....”

“Yes?”

“What are you doing?”

“Eh.....?”

Her large eyes blink a few times in surprise, and she tilts her head.

“What do you.....mean? Have I perhaps made some sort of blunder?”

A fearful look quickly comes over her face.

“No, that’s not it. I am going to change now.”

“Yes.”

“.....Going to change.”

“Yes.....?”

Miusel gazes at me with a troubled expression.

No. I’m going to change now, so I want you to go out——

“I am going to change. What are you going to do?”

“I am to help Danna-sama with changing——”

“Please don’t!”

I involuntarily let out a voice that bordered on a shriek.

I only have on a single pair of underwear underneath my nightclothes. Furthermore, *that* bodily phenomenon is still going strong, so if I take off my nightclothes—it is going to get very, very embarrassing for me.

“I-I’m terribly sorry?!”

With a start, Miusel is now drawing her trembling body back.

Looking like as if she had made some terrible mistake in that moment, she topples over in what seems to me an exaggerated manner.

“*Hyau?!?*”

“Are you alright?”

In a fluster, I quickly move towards Miusel and take her hand to help her up.

“I, I’m fine——s-, sorry.”

With nothing but shame on her face, she quickly draws her hand back.

Uu. I’m a bit hurt. She didn’t have to draw back so quickly, as if she was about to touch something really dirty.

“I’m truly, terribly sorry. Without thinking it through, I carelessly tried to do something disrespectful.....for someone like me to directly touch Danna-sama’s body.....”

“Eh.....?”

Due to hearing a response completely beyond my expectations, I let a silly voice slip through my lips.

What is this girl saying.....?

“No. It’s fine to touch me, like accidentally touching our fingertips together to trigger some *doki doki*, which would lead to a flag——that is NOT what I meant to say.”

I came to my senses after going that far.

In summary, Miusel had interpreted my sudden shout of “Please don’t!” as if touching me is a transgression in and of itself——and thus she thought that I hated being touched by her. That’s why even when I took her hand to help her up, it became “I touched Danna-sama again, even though he hates it” inside her mind.

In the first place, I am a foreigner the likes of which she has never seen before——on top of which, the values of the country called Japan are almost completely unknown. She could not determine my exact “social status,” and therefore, when I rebuffed her efforts at helping me change, she came under the impression that I am a noble of such high class that she is not allowed to touch me.

Which is all complete rubbish, of course.

Knowing that I now have a misunderstanding to clear up, I sigh before talking to her.

“You see, Miusel.”

“Yes, Danna-sama.”

Probably expecting to be yelled at, Miusel looks like she’s preparing to endure something.

“I don’t know what is considered “normal” in your country. But in my country, there is no one who would get angry just from being touched a little.”

Well, there might be girls who would hate being touched by an otaku like me. But that will just complicate the conversation, so I choose not to mention it. I explain to her that for example, a situation where a maid merely brushes against her master and gets berated for “insolence”——that kind of situation won’t occur in my world, as such extreme differences in social status do not exist.

“Is.....Is that how it truly is.....?”

“Indeed it is. That’s why, don’t worry about it anymore.”

“But then.....”

“Which is why.....”

I continue speaking, but now with a frown on my face.

“That’s, when I told you to stop, with helping me change I mean, that’s, in my country, we don’t have girls help out with that, because it’s embarrassing.”

“.....Yes?”

Miusel’s eyes are round and dazed.

It seems like she’s not quite comprehending what I’m trying to say——

“OK, let me ask you instead, then. What would you do if I’m the one who offers to help you change?”

“Ho-How could someone of such high stature deign to help someone as lowly as myself?!”

In a fluster, Miusel is furiously shaking her head.

“No, that’s not what I mean. What if, for the sake of argument, the two

of us are of the same position and social status. Won't it be embarrassing for a boy to help you with changing your clothes? He'll see you wearing nothing but your underwear, you know?"

"That's....."

Gazing at me with upturned eyes, slowly her cheeks turn faintly red and she nods.

Oh man, even when she's so nervous, she's still so exceptionally cute.

"It's the same as that. At any rate, changing is something that I can do myself, so you can head to the dining room first, Miusel."

"Yes.....I understand."

Finally feeling reassured, Miusel throws me a smile before nodding and leaving the room.

".....This might turn out a bigger mess than I had expected."

This sort of thing will most likely arise again. While considering all the various kinds of cultural clashes that will occur, all I can do is sigh.



After finishing changing, I walk down the hallway in the mansion that leads to the dining room.

Although this is a parallel world, its inhabitants are human just like us, so the structure of their basic buildings are the same. Under the common pursuit of convenience, it is only natural that both sides have ended up quite similar. This is the so-called 'parallel evolution'——the

phenomenon where two places that start off with similar conditions would develop in very similar ways.

Even this hallway that I'm walking through has a facade that is completely giving off a "Western mansion" feel.

Its width is enough for two adults to pass by each other with both hands spread out. There are windows positioned at set distances from each other, and the floor is covered by wooden tiles fitted together in complex geometrical designs.

By the way, what I'm currently wearing is apparently the standard clothing for this Eldant Empire. Most likely also affected by parallel evolution, this set of clothes is composed of the shirt and pants combination that I'm so familiar with. However, because I'm being treated as a noble, ornamentation like elaborate embroidery have been added to places like the collar and cuffs.

"But still, seriously, so cute."

I'm talking about Miusel.

For good or for bad, my preferences are pretty wide. Loli characters and warm onee-san characters with glasses and large breasts like Minori-san are a given, but on top of those, miko-san, female nurse, and a large variety of others—with the exception of imouto characters, I can be moe-ed by most character traits that exist.

However, all things considered, I am weakest against balanced characters without any major weak spots, such as a cute maid-san like Miusel. Especially the trim yet touchingly lovely aura that she emanates is what has completely grabbed hold of my heart.

Maid, elf, and dojikko.

Because such a girl is trying so bravely to serve me, there's no way I can sit still. I'm so happy that I cannot calm down at all.

Partly due to this.....when I came back to myself, I realized that I had wandered into a weird place.

This place looks like a shed or storage place of some sort, and despite the fact that it is still morning, the interior of this place is quite dim. There are a few windows near the ceiling for ventilation, but there are no other places for sunlight to come in. Limiting exposure to sunlight to prevent things from being negatively affected by ultraviolet rays or temperature change is the concept behind storage areas like warehouses. Despite knowing that, however, it is as if the sun has not yet risen on this place alone——frankly speaking, it's giving me the creeps.

Feeling something cool along my back, I try to turn back and retrace my steps.

At that moment.....

“.....?!”

Something deep inside the room is wriggling around with a rustling sound, causing me to unconsciously freeze in my tracks.

Right after that, there's an intermittent *petari*, *petari* sound (T/N: a slapping or flopping sound), like something is clinging to something, then being peeled off. Clinging, then peeling. It's similar to the sound of someone walking with bare feet, but that does not explain why I'm also hearing what sounds like hard claws scratching the ground.

Speaking of which, there used to be this bio and hazard horror game that I used to play. What I'm feeling right now is exactly what I felt back when I was attacked by dog zombies. Their claws scratched the floor intermittently with *tsuccha*, *tsuccha* sounds, and they slowly grew in size when they got close——I remember being extremely scared.

Sound is something that is more than enough to instill fear by itself.

This is especially true in a place like this, where the darkness severely limits vision.

“This place is.....”

Furthermore, this is a parallel world.

It’s a world where dragons and elves naturally exist. It wouldn’t be strange at all for zombies to also exist.

With such thoughts in my head, I am shaking by myself—the very next moment.

“—Oh.”

A grotesque face suddenly appears from the shadows.

It is a grim-looking head with a long snout. Its mouth, which runs sideways, looks capable of swallowing small children whole. The tightly packed scales covering its skin are not emanating any body heat. An inhuman-looking pupil, with what seems to be a knife cut running through it, moves in a mechanical way before finally settling on me.

“UWAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA?!”

Due to sheer terror, I let out a scream and raise my hands overhead.

I take my fists to the side of the head—the part that is probably its cheek—with full intention of crushing it, but all I get is a dull feedback. A few seconds after I punched the scale-covered target, I notice pain and a burning sensation on the surface of my fists. Wait a second, what on earth could I hope to achieve with my bare hands against such a monster?!

On the internet, I’ve read stories about employees of haunted houses being suddenly assaulted by customers that they’ve scared. Never have I thought that I, too, would one day hit someone else out of reflex.

There's really no telling what humans can do when pressed into a corner.

Either way, I didn't choose the option to run away.

It's too late for any regrets. I have a feeling that if I carelessly expose my back, I'll get my head bitten straight off, so I can't run away. If my current situation is an RPG and I select the "Run away" command, I'll definitely get the "However, your path has been cut off! You cannot run away." message.

Which leaves fighting as the only option.

“WAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA——!!”

Still in a confused state, I hit my opponent's face once more.

It hurts. It hurts a *lot*. In the first place, I've never trained my fists, and the other side is a grim, scale-covered reptile, so of course I'm the one who'll be hurting myself. But if I can successfully scare my opponent, there might be a window of opportunity for me to slip away.....Wait a second.

Wait a freaking second.

Reptilian face?

The moment after I threw my third punch, I abruptly realize it.

In the amount of time that it took me, whose reflexes aren't that good, to land three punches.....the other side did not indicate any intention of moving. Neither is it counterattacking nor is it trying to run away. It's just standing where it is.

“.....Eh?”

I unconsciously tilt my head.

In response, the strange head also tilts, then speaks to me in a dubious voice.

“Are you alright?”

“.....Eh?”

“If you wish to hit me, then please use this.”

With both scale-covered hands, the other side offers me some sort of stick. Just like a “Wooden Stick” that would appear in RPG games as a new character’s very first equipment, this stick also has cloth wrapped around the part that’s supposed to be gripped.

“That side was used to open holes in the flowerbed to plant bulbs only just now. Your hands will get dirty if you hold the stick there, so please hold it from this end.”

“Aah. Thank you for your thoughtful guidance——okay, that is NOT what I was supposed to say.”

After obediently accepting that stick that was being offered to me, I shake my head furiously.

This is no specter nor monster of any sort——it is this mansion’s manservant. He is a lizardman named Blük, if I remember correctly. He had been introduced yesterday, but because we’re in a dark place and our eyes suddenly met, I couldn’t help but be afraid——more like, I let a misunderstanding get to my head.

“S-.....Sorry!”

Flustered, I quickly apologized.

“I couldn’t help punching you because of the surprise, but are you hurt anywhere?”

“No. As you can see, I’m covered with scales.”

His manner is as nonchalant as his words.

At the very least, it doesn’t seem like he’s bleeding from anywhere, and neither is there swelling anywhere. As for whether there is any internal bleeding due to the scales, I cannot tell at all.

“Rather than that, Danna-sama’s hand.....”

“Eh? Uwah?!”

When he said that, I looked at my own hand.....blood is oozing out from cuts here and there.

In the first place, I have no experience at all with barehanded martial arts. Having thrown punches packed with all my strength, the result is that I ended up hurting my own hand instead. The cuts are most likely because of the scales.

Speaking of which, I’ve read that it’s possible for the bones inside a person’s finger to be broken if a punch is thrown with the fist held in an improper way. I should probably be glad that all I got were mere cuts.

However, Blük is the one I don’t understand.

Exactly what is he thinking? Just because he’s employed, to quietly allow himself to be punched——after which, to then hand over a club while saying “If you wish to hit me, then please use this.” My reason cannot follow at all.

“——Danna-sama?”

Hearing a sudden short scream, I turn around.

Standing there in shock with hand pressed to mouth——standing there

is Miusel with an ashen face.

The direction of her gaze is towards my right hand. The expression on her face draws me to follow her gaze. That hand is holding a club as if to say “this is a blunt weapon” and “I hit him with this.” I am currently standing right in front of Blük. I wonder how my current figure is being reflected in her eyes——

“Thi-This is not what it looks like!”

I throw away the wooden stick, and speak up in a flustered way.

“Miusel.....This is some sort of misunderstanding!”

Although the truth is that I really did hit him, and there is no misunderstanding at all.

However, because everything happened so suddenly, it can be explained as legitimate self-defense——or maybe not, but I really didn’t do it with any malice. In any event, even including my feeble attempts at an excuse on the spot, ten out of ten people who witness this scene by itself would think that I had been hitting Blük.

Despite that.....

“Danna-sama! Your hand is bleeding!”

“.....Eh?”

Running over with small steps, with an appalled look on her face, what Miusel grabs——is my hand.



Taking out a white handkerchief from one of her skirt pockets, Miusel presses it against the wounds on my hand. After that, in a completely flustered state of mind—her gaze roams left and right as if she’s looking for help, then she speaks as if she’s finally come to a realization.

“The medicine box is——no, we must contact the doctor-sama at a medical treatment center!”

“No, wait, there’s no need to go that far.....”

She’s so agitated that it’s making me feel apologetic.

“More like——calm down, Miusel. These cuts aren’t very severe.”

“B-.....But.....”

“More like.....both of you are acting strange!”

I take a step back to hold both Miusel and Blük in my line of sight.

“Strange? How so?”

“I, I’m terribly sorry. I don’t really understand, but I’m really sorry.....”

Blük tilts his head, and a frightened expression comes over Miusel’s face, as if she is expecting to be yelled at.

“No, I mean——I was the one who suddenly punched Blük, right? Even if it didn’t hurt, quietly letting himself be beaten is strange. As for Miusel, rather than me, shouldn’t you be worrying about Blük first?”

No matter how anyone puts it, I’m the one who’s supposed to be reproached.

Despite that.....both of them exchange blank glances with each other.

The way they are acting is as if they cannot understand what I'm saying.

What is with these reactions?

“As I'm saying.....Blük didn't do anything wrong, right? But I still punched him, so I'm the one who should be reproached, and my injuries are merely what I deserve.”

“However, Danna-sama.”

Blük speaks in a dubious voice——well, he's a lizardman, so I cannot read his facial expression at all.

“Noble-sama hitting demi-humans is normal, though?”

“.....Hah?”

I unconsciously let slip an idiotic sound.

Indeed, I had heard from Matoba-san and co. that due to my status as a state guest of the Eldant Empire, I am being treated as a noble. But.....

“‘Normal’? Even without any reason?”

“Because they are noble-sama.”

So said Blük.

The conversation still seems a bit disjointed, but——in summary.

In the Eldant Empire, difference in social status is absolute, and due to that, nobles have authority over the life and death of their servants. In short, the servants are slaves——no, this treatment is as if they are mere livestock.

Therefore, nobles hitting demi-human servants for no reason

whatsoever is an everyday occurrence.

Just like how there are no humans raging against every single natural phenomenon like typhoons or earthquakes or floods, being hit by a noble is just “something that happens” for them.

.....*Oi oi oi oi?!*

“Doesn’t it upset you?”

“Upset us?”

“That’s.....Don’t you feel like you want to hit back, or something like that?”

I asked timidly.

If he says “Oh I see, you’re right!” and hits me back now, that is going to be scary.

“Demi-humans cannot oppose human-sama, so.....”

The one who answered so was Miusel.

“What do you mean?”

I drew my eyebrows together and asked her to elaborate.

After looking deep in thought for a short period of time, Miusel opens her mouth.

“We do not know how things are in the country where Danna-sama lives, but.....in this country, races are ranked in terms of superiority.”

“‘Superiority’”

I muttered to myself in a daze.

After that——what I heard from Miusel, were words that I found extremely offensive.

In this world, the established governing system places humans at the very top, and all demi-humans below that.

On the individual level, “humans” are inferior in terms of physical strength, magical ability, and a variety of other standards.

However.....elves have strong magical ability, but their fertility is low.

Lizardmen have robust bodies, but their mana pool is almost zero, on top of which their disposition as reptiles causes their strength to go up or down depending on the atmospheric temperature, making it an unstable asset.

It seems that there are various other demi-human races in this world, but in the end, due to the well-rounded human race’s lack of any specific weakness, and also due to them being the most populous race, they are able to develop civilization and culture, and gather in large scale groups and then establish governments.

Rather than seeking to adapt to the surrounding environment, these groups are large enough to alter their surrounding environments instead.

By developing agricultural techniques, the amount of harvest can be increased. With larger harvests, society as a whole can be maintained at a larger size. This surplus of people do not also have to pursue agriculture, but are free to to pursue and stimulate development in other fields. This is the foundation for specialized jobs, such as being a career soldier or a scholar.

Consequently——the agricultural industry becomes more sophisticated, stock-farming and manufacturing arises, and more military power is accrued to protect the citizens from external enemies. The larger the

community, the more affluent each individual's lifestyle becomes, giving birth to even more surplus.

In contrast—the powerful demi-humans who prefer instead to live alongside nature can only make small-scale communities easily susceptible to natural disasters and famine and invasions by external enemies.

“And that is why humans are such a superior existence.”

So concluded Miusel.

“.....But.....”

I understand the logic. I understand, but——

Having this harsh reality suddenly thrust before me, I am at a loss for words.

I am indeed very familiar with the idea of discrimination against demi-humans, as it is a frequent setting in games and manga and other such.

However, I'm also very familiar with the perspective of the side being discriminated against, so when I see with my own two eyes a society in which discrimination is an accepted system.....I cannot help but to feel chills about it.

The Blük who had quietly let himself be beaten.

The Miusel who had been more concerned about her “Danna-sama”'s hand over her beaten colleague.

I am all too aware that the fault does not lie with either of them, but——with this complicated mood in the room, all I can do is sigh.

At that moment.....

“——What are you guys doing?”

An astonished voice is raised.

When we turned around, we see Minori-san standing there.

“I didn’t see you guys, so I came looking.”

“Ah.....umm.”

Seeing me looking hard-pressed for a good explanation, Minori-san continues speaking.

“After breakfast, it’ll be time for work. Matoba-san is waiting for us over at the palace.”

Volume 1 Chapter 2 Part 2

Chapter 2: An Imperial Majesty's Punch

Translator: Tenshi

The castle town——this, too, seems like a medieval European town that I might have seen somewhere before.

Stone paving and brick buildings. Every single house has a chimney or two sticking up prominently, some of which are belching out smoke even now. Probably their fireplace or kitchen furnace. And on the lanes, of course, there are no automobiles, but rather, several rickshaws and horse carriages coming to and fro.

No——they are similar to horse carriages, but aren't exactly horse carriages.

Perhaps I should call them 'bird carriages' instead?

The car that Minori-san and I are currently riding is the same. For some reason, in this world, carriages are not pulled by horses, but by something similar to ostriches——in exchange for not being able to fly, these large birds can instead run very fast. However, instead of having long necks like the ostriches that I'm used to, these birds are round and stout, and basically look like sparrows enlarged to 2 meters in height as is.

To be it in simpler terms, they are chocobo.

Even though they looked really cute and charming on the screen, when there is a bird taller than a human within arm's reach in reality, it is quite——scary. I feel like they might tear off my head with their beaks. They are apparently herbivores, though.

“Aren't we going to use the car——the Light Armor?”

“I'm surprised you know our pet name for the LAV.”

Minori-san smiled wryly.

“Apparently, the hyper dimensional passageway is a pretty difficult thing to handle. Its width cannot be expanded.”

According to Minori-san——right after the discovery of the hyper dimensional passageway, they quickly brought an excavator over to dig around it, but all they got was dirt and rocks, and the passageway did not expand even when given more space.

“After all, if we get too careless with the enlargement construction work and the passageway suddenly closes as a result, then we would be very troubled. That’s why all we did was reinforce the place with concrete and resin. There is a limit to the amount that we can bring over at a time——the maximum capacity is about one truck’s worth. The LAV, too, we had to bring over in its disassembled state, and reassemble on this side. Due to this limitation, things like gasoline and other consumables are relatively scarce.”

“.....Hah. I see.”

Apparently, this fact was one of the factors that led to the conversation of “commerce with otaku industry products.”

Having accepted that it is impossible to transport a large amount of goods, it is only natural for attention to turn towards data. Just by bringing in a single high efficiency copy printer, manga and light novels can be mass produced on this side, and there is much greater flexibility in bringing over paper-based goods.

As for anime, it can be made available to the public in a setup similar to a movie theater, and the only things needed would be a single projector and a screen. An amusement park can be built around it, and after also bringing in game consoles, visitors can be attracted and charged for admittance.

“Rather than that.”

Minori-san once again looks into my face and speaks clearly.

“Just in case, I will repeat myself. Do not do anything unnecessary. Do not say anything unnecessary. Understood?”

“I get it already.”

Right now——the place that we are heading towards is the Eldant Palace.

In short, just as Minori-san had already explained yesterday, it is the place where this country’s ruler lives. Like what the Imperial Palace and the Official Residence are for Japan, and like what the White House is for America, the Eldant Palace is where a ton of super VIPs are.

Furthermore, this time we are going there for an audience with the country’s Imperial Majesty——even I understand that in such a situation, any careless behavior may lead to grave consequences.

“Matoba-san actually wanted you to become more familiar with this world and its basic etiquette first before an audience, but.....the Eldant Empire side insisted very strongly that they wished to see you immediately.”

“The Empire?”

“More likely their Imperial Majesty’s idea.”

So said Minori-san.

“To this day, the Eldant Empire is still in tense relations with the neighboring countries——to be more exact, border disputes on the level of small skirmishes are still happening every day. In other words, the country is in a state of perpetual war.”

“.....Hah.”

I nod while looking outside through the window.

To be honest—the landscape of the town looks relatively carefree, to the degree that I can't really see any traces of the country being at war. I wonder if it's simply because this place is the capital. Or else is it because I simply don't know what to look for.

“That is why they are imposing a powerful system of government centered around their Imperial Majesty. As they are in a state of war, the concentration of national power becomes a just cause. But that makes it all the easier for the ruler and any close associates to pass unreasonable decrees.”

It is quite usual for rulers to gradually go out of control when they no longer have anyone nearby to act as a stabilizer and say “no, you can't do that” when needed. Generally, when it comes to medieval European worlds like this one—just like Miusel's case, the citizens' literacy rate is low, which makes it impossible for them to acquire information about their own country's government and military matters above a certain threshold. Even if there is vague discontent against the country, the number of people who can actually put words to those opinions are extremely limited. Furthermore, the majority of such people are on the ruling side anyways.

This is a path that leads towards dictatorship, though.....

“*U-mu.....*”

When speaking of dictatorships, what comes to mind is definitely that country or that country or that country.

The first image that comes to mind is that of a middle-aged man with a sordid vibe wearing a costume that looks like working clothes who is waving his hand placidly at the masses from somewhere high up. Or perhaps.....like a certain middle-aged man from WWII who had a small mustache and gave speeches in a hysterical manner.

“We’re almost there.”

So said Minori-san while retightening the necktie around her collar.



The palace——seems like a masterpiece which no words can do justice.

Looking from afar, the size of the palace gives off an overwhelming feeling, but when seen up close, this effect feels even more intense. This is true for almost all buildings big enough to completely fill out a viewer’s line of sight, but this sense of heaviness is seriously no joke. If this was a manga, there would be a “*don*” SFX all over this scene.

The door opens to reveal a stone-tiled path stretching on endlessly, lined with the figures of knights in armor, knights riding birds, and knights riding dragons with folded wings. Speaking of which, Matoba-san and I are both being treated as state guests, so that explains this kind of reception.

The orderly lineup of people and things, combined with my excitement at seeing a certain race, is giving off an amazing pressure, but when the fact that everyone is fully armed is added on top of all that, the sense of intimidation is incredible.

Carrying the nervous two of us, the bird carriage pulls up alongside what looks to be a side entrance.

“Please.”

Someone who looks like a coachman opens the carriage door and respectfully prompts us.

After we nervously enter the palace——the heavy doors on our left and right shut close with a dull sound.

I'm getting the feeling that we've passed a point of no return.

“If this was a game, this would be the part where a mid-boss comes out, eh?”

“.....You sure are relaxed.”

Minori-san smiled wryly.

“If I don't say something silly, I can't calm down.”

I sighed.

At that moment——

We see Matoba-san waiting for us deeper within the palace.

To his sides are, as expected, two people wearing swords who might be soldiers or knights.

“Are you wearing your magical ring?”

“Of course.”

I touch the ring finger on my left hand and nod.

Incidentally, both Matoba-san and Minori-san also have the magical ring on. Apparently, it functions not only as an interpretation machine, but also serves as a proof of identity in this Eldant Empire. Miusel was given one so that she could serve me, but normally, it is not something given to commoners of low social status.

In other words, if I lose it, instead of only worrying about not speaking the language, there is also the possibility that nobody would even talk

to me no matter where I go. It is something equivalent to a lifeline for me.

“Well then, let’s head to the audience with the Imperial Majesty, shall we?”

Inside the spacious, spacious castle, we reach where Matoba-san is and continue walking together in silence.

The palace is also a building, so technically the word “indoor” applies here, but.....the scale here is like that of a baseball stadium. The ceiling is high, and the hallways are wide—they’re so wide that I think a tennis court or volleyball court can fit inside. Simply by walking from one end to the other seems like it would be a really time-consuming thing to do. Without a guide, the sun would definitely set before we ever reach our destination.

Eventually——

“.....Well then. This is it.”

Matoba-san stops and turns around to face us.

At the end of the hallway——there stands a double door remarkably huge for being indoors.

“From here on, we will be granted an audience with their Imperial Majesty. Any careless mistake could become an international problem. Everyone, but most of all you, Kanou-kun, be extremely careful.”

Matoba-san just casually said something really scary, didn’t he.

“Emissaries hailing from the country of Japan, three persons——have arrived!”

As the two soldiers on Matoba-san’s both sides raised their voices, the gigantic doors automatically scrape open with heavy sounds——most

likely, there is some kind of mechanism installed——and reveal to us the interior of the audience chamber.

“.....*Oou.*”

I involuntarily let my voice slip out.

The audience chamber, too, is excessively huge.

It is on a completely different dimension to what I usually associate with the word “room” or even the word “indoor.” The only places that I know of that can rival the size of this room are indoor stadiums. There is enough floor space to easily fit 4 tennis courts. In order to support this vast space, there are several thick stone pillars standing in rows.

From the appearance of this medieval European-looking palace, everything here was made with manual labor——at the very least, it was done without any of the heavy machinery that I saw being used for public works back in Japan. I get a little dizzy thinking of all the labor that must have gone into all this. Or perhaps for this parallel world, this kind of construction work might be surprisingly easy with the help of magic.

Then I turn my eyes towards the audience chamber——to its very end.

In the red-carpeted depths, there is a place especially higher than the rest of the room.

That is most likely where the throne of this Eldant Empire’s Imperial Majesty lies. On both sides of the carpet leading there, ranks of knights with swords on their waists are lined up in orderly rows. The reason why these knights’ attire is different from the guys at the castle gate and the ones who guided us earlier is most likely because these guys are the Imperial Guards, purposely tasked with the protection of the royalty.

“Kanou-kun, all you have to do is stay silent and follow our lead.”

So said Minori-san while walking next to me.

“Basically, just keep your eyes down. Also, don’t say anything unnecessary. Once we appear before their Imperial Majesty, stay silent and bow once like Matoba-san and I will do, then go down on one knee. For now, if you do that, then you won’t accidentally do anything disrespectful. Although this is a parallel world, they don’t have any really strange customs, so don’t worry about it.”

“Hah.....”

I nod while feeling the focused gazes of all the Imperial Guard.

To be honest, in this situation—even without all the warnings, I won’t do anything careless. It is all too clear to me that any offense could immediately cause these knights to descend upon me and lop my head off.

Ever since a while ago, unease and nerves have been steadily enveloping me.

“Announcing!”

Once again, a knight, one close to the throne this time, formally raised his voice.

As if to match that shout, Matoba-san gets down on one knee on the carpet, and Minori-san and I imitate him. My face has been facing the ground the entire time, just as I’ve been instructed. Therefore, I still don’t know what the Imperial Majesty looks like, nor do I know what face he or she is looking down on us with.

“Emissaries hailing from the country of Japan, three persons——have arrived!”

“They have arrived!”

The knights shouted together in chorus.

“Bureau Chief of the Far East Cultural Exchange Promotion Bureau, Matoba Jinzaburo— as well as Private First Class Koganuma Minori of the WAC, together with AmuTec General Manager Kanou Shinichi. The three abovementioned have hastened over by the command of the Holy Eldant Empire’s Imperial Majesty Eldant the Third. Please grant us permission for the audience.”

Matoba-san spoke loudly and clearly.

After that——

“So you and your company are the people who have newly come to this country from a strange land.”

A voice descended upon us from above the throne.

“.....?!”

I am so startled that I unconsciously raise my head, but Minori-san’s hand shoots out from beside me and quietly presses it back down. Thank you. She had most likely anticipated that I would raise my face. But if that’s the case, then they should have just told me from the start.

The voice that I’d just heard was completely different from my expectation.

High-pitched and small. Way too young.

More like——that was clearly a child’s voice.

Don’t tell me.....!

“Raise your faces.”

The voice of a child gave us a command in a haughty tone.

I glance towards Minori-san for confirmation, and she gives me a small nod, so I timidly raise my face.

Upon the dais is a throne wide enough to have space leftover even if a bear sits on it.

The back of the throne and the armrests are both covered with dark red satin. There is plenty of gold leaf and silver leaf all over. From the parts not covered by cloth, detailed carvings of plants twining around each other stand in sharp relief. Even without words, the throne's assertion of being an exquisite work of art can be heard loud and clear through the extravagant ornamentation.

As expected of a throne.

And as for the person sitting on the throne——

“LITTLE GIRL キタ——!!!!!!”

(T/N: Second time now, so I'll leave the T/N from the first time here: キタ is read 'kita.' It means 'it's here,' but please go Google 'densha otoko kita' to fully understand the feelings packed into these two simple characters.)

Before I knew it, I've raised both hands gripped as fists into the air, and have jumped up while shouting that line.

Indeed. Settled upon the throne——is a girl who looks like she's in her early teens.

(T/N: Yes, I can FINALLY use pronouns for her! I'm really sorry about the slightly awkward adherence to “Imperial Majesty” before this, as I was trying to convey the author's intention of keeping the Empress's gender unspecified up until this point.)



She is wearing a blue dress, and her long, silver hair that is devoid of any wrinkle or curl is framing her white face. She has thin, sakura-colored lips, and her bold nose looks faintly upturned. Her large blue eyes are sparkling, while she herself keeps on fidgeting like a cat. In general, she gives off a cheeky vibe—but of course, that is what makes her cute.

Let's speak frankly here.

Her Imperial Majesty is an extremely cute girl.

There exists a phrase “just like a doll,” and she is the very illustration of it. To be blunt, I can't even wrap my head around the fact that she is supposed to be a human just like me. There is almost none of the earthly smell of flesh and blood coming from her. The small, golden tiara on her head only added further to her image as a “doll of a princess.”

How irresistible. If this was a manga or anime, then I would want to protest to the creator for so blatantly playing to the audience, but unfortunately, I think this is reality.

But still.....

“Wh——Who is a little girl!!”

“.....Hah?!”

Seeing the loli Empress's white face flushing and her shouting loudly, I come back to my senses.

In a fluster, I look to my side, but Minori-san is just facepalming with an “oh he's gone and done it” look on her face. I thought this is the part where the knights rush me, but——I think they're all shocked at what just happened, because they're all standing frozen, with dazed looks on their faces.

“I am no longer a child!”

So shouting, she jumps up with indignation, and *zutatatatatata!*, descends the dais with loud steps, and——before anyone else could stop her, she stops right in front of me.

After that.

“This insolent fellow!”

The next instant, the little girl Empress’s fist explodes against my face.

“*Uwah?!?*”

I unconsciously bend backwards from a very nice straight unbecoming of her small stature.

While glaring daggers at me——her height only reaches around my chest——Her Imperial Majesty continues speaking, with anger in her voice.

“I just turned sixteen the other day! I am already a proper adult!”

“Eh? For real?”

Whichever way I look at her, she still looks like she’s in her early teens. Even if she wears a *randosel*, I don’t think it would look out of place on her at all. She’s small and even has a baby face——is what I almost retorted out loud, but I barely managed to avoid that slip of the tongue. It is because her Imperial Majesty had sunk a second punch into my chin.

(T/N: *Randosel* is the standard schoolbag for all kids in primary school. Traditionally, all kids are not allowed to use any other bag, so for the Japanese, the *randosel* is a symbol of primary school. More liberal schools nowadays are relaxing that convention.)

Nuu. Despite being a child, what a nice uppercut.....!

“You doubt my words?!”

The Empress is shouting with tears in her eyes.

Uh-oh. Could it be that she has a complex about it?

Such thoughts are running through my mind as I topple over, face up.

Right then——

“——Your Majesty!!”

I see a *jii*-san with his face in a strange color running over by himself.

(T/N: *Jii* is ‘grandfather.’ *-san* is the usual suffix to indicate respect.)

“How could you do such a thing to the ambassador?!”

He is an old man wearing a robe with long sleeves. There are wrinkles all over his face, and the beard and mustache that covers his mouth is entirely white. Somehow, I think “sage” when I look at him. On second thought, for this stage, “wizard” might be more apt.

“It is because this one is saying disrespectful things!”

The loli Empress sharply turns her face away.

“Just remembering it makes me angry! *Eei!* You, kneel down right there! I’ll cut off your head for you! Someone, someone lend me a sword!”

“Your Majesty!!”

The old man who had rushed over is now trying to hold her arms behind her back.

“Please restrain yourself!”

“Let go, Jii! How could I be calm after having been mocked so?!”

She is wriggling around and waving both hands all about.

“Please remember, he is someone from a foreign country, and his customs are different from that of our own! His words were definitely not uttered with the intention of mockery!”

“It is exactly as he says.”

Matoba-san, who is still kneeling with one knee on the floor, spoke up to support the old man.

“In our country, one becomes an adult only after turning twenty. Therefore, everyone before that are equally considered children. His words were by no means meant to mock, but rather were an expression of how touched he felt upon beholding Your Majesty’s beautiful countenance. I beg of you, I humbly beg of you, to show mercy.”

As expected of a government official. His explanation flowed as smoothly as water does off a slope.

More like, his usual work probably involves a lot of finding the appropriate words to pull the wool over his opponents’ eyes, but it’s a secret that I’m having such thoughts.

“*Mu.....muu?*”

Her Majesty frowns and looks my way.

“Is this true?”

“Eh? O-Of course it is, of course.”

I shake myself and quickly nod my head.

If I don't express my agreement here, then events will naturally flow towards me seriously losing my head.

“.....*Mu. Mu. Mu.*“

Her Imperial Majesty moans for a while, but——eventually, she looks like she's calmed down, and she releases a short sigh and nods.

“T-.....Then it's fine!”

So said the loli ruler-sama while crossing her arms.

“The ability to let insignificant things slide is an indication of the caliber of a monarch.”

“That is indeed correct, Your Majesty.”

So said the old man while backing off a step.

Her Imperial Majesty's steps back up the dais still sound a bit angry——when she reaches the top, she plunks her body onto the throne.

Thanks to Minori-san and the old man who had helped me, I recover and get back down on one knee on the carpet. For now, I guess we get a fresh start. The old man takes a few steps backward to take some distance from us, then nods deeply and smiles.

“Thank you for traveling here from a foreign land so far away. Kanou Shinichi-dono. The Eldant Empress, as well as her subjects, welcomes you to our empire.”

“We am honored by your generous words.”

The words were directed towards me, but it is Matoba-san who

immediately answered.

Well, it was probably his way of telling me to not speak anymore. Soz.

“That girl is the Empress Petrarca An Eldant the Third. That old man is Prime Minister Zahal.”

On her knee next to me, Minori-san surreptitiously whispers in my ear.

“And also.....”

She secretly points to the edge of the dais.

Taking a second look, I notice a young male knight standing there.

This young knight seems different from all the other knights. His armor is something else altogether, and I’m interested in why he’s allowed to stand at the same height as the throne. It probably means that he’s also royalty, or at least has the same standing as royalty——

“Galius An Koldbal. Serving as a knight of the Eldant Empire, he is also a distant relative of Petrarca’s. As one of the Cabinet ministers, he holds almost all of the power over diplomatic relations. Our magical rings were also issued in his name.”

In other words, he is very influential, and is someone with whom we have deep ties to.

When I take one more look at that Galius somebody——I realize that he is a picture-perfect handsome man.

As for his age, probably early twenties.

Silver hair flowing down to his waist. Slim lips. Deep intelligence shines in his long-slitted eyes, implicitly divulging the fact that he is not a simple battle maniac who cares only about physical strength.

His outfit is sheer elegance——his tall and lean body that doesn't have even 1 milligram of unneeded muscle is wrapped up in a costume with the color white as a base. Furthermore, his handguards and shinguards are fringed with gold. Most likely, this outfit was made to emphasize showiness over usefulness in combat.

Around his waist are two belts, and from one hangs a sheathed sword decorated with beautiful patterns, the scabbard of which is fixed in place with metal clasps. The smooth, long mantle hanging down from his shoulders is almost touching the floor.

Unlike the other Imperial Guard, what he is wearing is not really armor——his appearance gives off a feeling exactly like that of a conventional hero knight straight out of a heroic saga.

“.....Umm. Minori-san.”

“Quiet.”

“That Galius person, for some reason he's been staring at me for a while now.”

I am acutely aware of the fixed gaze that is pointed not at Matoba-san nor Minori-san, but me——it's a bit scary. But then again, as he is a close aide of Her Imperial Majesty, he's most likely still mad at me for suddenly calling Her Majesty a little girl.

“Just remain quiet for now. Accidentally having another outburst again is a big no-no.”

“.....Understood.”

Her voice sounded like she's still feeling a bit sulky.

When I return my gaze to the throne, Her Majesty——Petrarca is looking down at me.

“Having heard that an evangelist had arrived, I was wondering what kind of fellow he would be, but this one is still a child!”

I really want to return those words right back to her, but I still have reason enough to exercise self-restraint on myself before those words pass my throat.

The other party is an Empress, and any careless comments might indeed bring danger to myself. However, my main reason is because I simply don't want to say something that I know would hurt the other party.

This Imperial Empress is apparently quite distressed over the fact that her appearance makes her look younger than her actual age. I, too, have been on the receiving end of unpleasant words used to carelessly sum up the entirety of another person.

“As you have beheld, there might be a few peculiarities in his behavior, but——he is a person well-versed in the “otaku culture” that you seek, and the breadth and depth of his knowledge can make your eyes open in amazement. He will surely be of help in relieving Your Majesty of your boredom.”

So spoke Matoba-san in mediation.

“*Hou*. Is that so?”

Petrarca leans forward on her throne.

It seems that Her Majesty has acquired quite an interest in otaku culture.

Furthermore——

“Among those excelling in scholarship or in the performing arts, there are many with peculiarities——is this the same in that country of yours also?”

So said Prime Minister Zahal as a follow-up to Matoba-san's words. The way he worded himself is a very favorable interpretation. Most likely, this jii-san is an advocate of the exchange with Japan. We are very thankful for his follow-ups and good teamplay with Matoba-san.

“I, for one, am not so sure.”

Having remained stiffly silent the whole time, the knight Galius opened his mouth and spoke in a leaden manner.

“It seems to me that Zahal-jii is interpreting things in a favorable light, but I have not yet decided to trust you people. Our side still does not fully understand what “otaku culture” entails exactly, but if it is something that can be mastered by someone as young as he, then I find it doubtful whether it can truly bring conducive change to Eldant.”

Thorns can be felt from every word of his diatribe.

It is blatantly obvious that he does not think pleasantly of Japanese people.

“If we carelessly let it in and only find out afterwards that it is a harmful poison, then it would be too late to undo its effects.”

Galius's voice is loaded with wariness.

The same blue eyes as Petrarca's is piercing me with a stare.

I feel cold sweat pouring out from all over my body.

Despite that——

“.....Harmful. Harmful, you say?”

My moan was almost completely instinctive.

This is bad.

Even though I know that, I can't stop myself.

What Galius said was right. It was a sound argument. Unknown things brought in by foreign parties are not necessarily good. As for the topic in question here, "otaku culture," those who conclude that it is "harmful" without any hesitation——self-styled experts, university professors, politicians, critics, human rights protection groups, and a variety of others——there are many of them in our own world also.

Despite that——

“Even medicine can be a poison when taken in a large dosage.”

I feel Minori-san looking at me in startlement from my side.

But after having opened my mouth, I can no longer stop myself.

“Even poison can be a medicine when taken in a small dosage. That's how things are. There are no clear lines indicating whether anything would turn out harmful or harmless. Being able to make these sorts of decisions is what it means to be an adult, someone who can take responsibility for themselves. There is absolutely no relationship to one's age.”

I am willing to admit that I am a youngster.

I am also willing to admit that I am a fool.

However, I cannot forgive someone who would judge my beloved manga and anime and game and light novels as “harmful” or “vulgar” or “childish” without knowing their contents. Even if this is a parallel world, or even if the other party is a person of power. At the end of the day, being the hopeless otaku that I am, that is the only line that I will never back off from.

“.....”

Galius has one eyebrow raised in surprise.....for a brief moment, the entire place is filled with tension.

The heavy, strained air flows throughout the audience chamber.

I feel Matoba-san looking at me with surprise.

Most likely, that Galius person is someone with a lot more power in this country than I had thought. Enough so that no one ever opposes him. The reason why I was able to argue against him is because I don't fully know about that sort of thing. If I knew the existent power relationships like I was supposed to, I would probably have been too afraid to advocate a different opinion from his.

But it is way too late to realize that sort of thing at this point in time.

And then——

“*Fu.....*”

What broke the frozen atmosphere was a young girl's laughter.

“*Fuhaha.....hahahahahahahaha!*”

Bursting forth as if she could hold it in no longer, Her Majesty Petrarca's laughter rings across the audience chamber.

“Interesting! Truly interesting, Kanou Shinichi!”

“.....Eh?”

Never in my wildest imagination did I expect her to react in such a way, so I whipped around to face her, with my eyes round with surprise. Looking like she'd just heard something extremely funny, she is slapping the arms of her throne repeatedly. She then speaks with a

smile.

“To think that you would raise a rebuttal against Galius!”

“Your Majesty——”

Prime Minister Zahal and Cabinet minister Galius raise perplexed voices, but she ignores them and grandly proclaims:

“I am pleased! I, Petrarca An Eldant the Third, shall personally grant full permission for the activities of your AmuTec! You may do as you please!”

“Ah.....”

For a second, I simply look up at this baby-faced Empress in a daze.

Immediately afterwards——while feeling a little triumphant, I flourish a bow like the ones you see at theatrical plays.

“We are ever so thankful.”

I responded with a little bit of a self-satisfied look on my face.

Volume 1 Chapter 2 Part 3

Chapter 2: An Imperial Majesty's Punch

Translator: Tenshi

——I am so tired.

For now, that is all I have to say.

After finishing the conference with the Eldant Empire's Empress Petrarca and her aides——to be honest, it was more of a meet-and-greet——we got back onto the bird carriage that had carried us here, and are currently going back to my “boarding house” together.

In other words, the house where Miusel and Blük are waiting.

“.....You sure gave me the chills.”

The person who said that with a wry face was Minori-san, who is sitting right beside me.

“All because you back talked to that Lord Koldbal all of a sudden.”

“Please don't remind me. I am profoundly regretting it right now.”

My shoulders are completely drained of strength.

At the time, I couldn't help myself and had simply snapped, but.....depending on the situation, he might have gotten even more enraged and it would not have been strange for him to sentence me to death. As Petrarca is still a child, there is no doubt that the real power of the country is being held by that knight Galius and Prime Minister Zahal and the other adults in their circles. To be honest, I am still unaware of exactly how much power they hold and the extent of what they can make happen.

Even though we are being treated as ambassadors of a foreign country, this place is still the Eldant Empire. If they really wanted to, they could

make up any reason they wished to kill us for.

The moment I fully realized this——rivers of cold sweat ran down my back.

“He just continued staring at me the entire rest of the time.....”

I spoke in almost a moan.

Up to the very moment when we left the audience chamber, Galius’s eyes never left me for a moment. His expression had been calm, but.....it felt to me like his stare was stabbing into me, and it made me extremely uncomfortable.

“He sure did.”

Minori-san nodded.

“It seems like he’s taken quite a fancy to you, Shinichi-kun.”

“.....Hah?”

I frowned and raised my voice in doubt.

“How come? I’d understand if he took a dislike to me and started to detest me.”

“But somehow, there was a strange sort of heat in his gaze, wasn’t there?”

“It did, but.....”

I had attributed that heat to anger, though.

“Most likely, there has been no one like Shinichi-kun in his life so far, so the exchange must have felt quite fresh to him.....”

“What are you.....

What are you getting at——is what I wanted to ask, but I understood before I finished asking.

It is something that I sort of regret understanding.

“.....Wait, don’t tell me.....”

In manga and anime and light novels and games, there are many stories in which the line “they have never met anyone like that before” is a flag for a certain kind of love.....in other words, it is a common trigger for someone to fall in love with someone else. Well, it’s true that someone fresh would seem attractive, and those emotions can naturally develop into romantic feelings, but——

“.....Minori-san.”

I stare at Minori-san with reproachful eyes.

From among the people around me, this person is near the better end of the spectrum. More like, she’s the first person who I should rely on. ‘Should’ being the operative word here. But I’m starting to feel slight qualms about that.

“Minori-san, are you possibly a fu.....”

“Whatever are you talking about.....?”

This WAC tried to cover up my words with her own while playing dumb.

No good. This person is rotten. Isn’t this too soon——

——or not. As I’d thought. Minori-san has apparently been a fujoshi from the start, and is completely in the midst of fermentation.

There is a genre centered around gay relationships between handsome men that is called “yaoi,” and the girls who are fond of that genre are called “fujoshi.”

(T/N: The word for fujoshi is made up of *fu*, which means ‘rotten,’ and *joshi*, which means ‘girl.’ That’s why Shinichi says she’s rotten. Not because she’s a terrible person, but because she’s a fujoshi. So, fermentation means she’s way beyond just being rotten.)

From what I’ve heard, these fujoshi have pretty remarkable imaginations

For them, material is not limited to only human guys, but also includes anthropomorphizations of countries and buildings and trains and whatever have you. Furthermore, they can also instantaneously decide on which side is the *seme* (the male role) and which side is the *uke* (the female role), after which they start panting from their own imaginations. For such fujoshi, interpreting the unending stare that a young, handsome, male knight directed towards me in a sexual way, even if the gaze is actually filled with anger or contempt, is a mere walk in the park.

“Please spare me from imaginations towards strange directions.”

“I don’t think it was my imagination.....according to rumors, the knight Galius swings that way from the start, which was a strong reason for why he was allowed to become one of Her Majesty’s close aides.”

“Eh? Ah——could it be.....”

A person of the opposite gender in a position so close to a girl of marriageable age.

Between people close to each other both in public and in private, it is especially easier for romantic love to blossom. However, when the two are both powerful people, then things can get troublesome. One merely has to peruse our world’s history to find clear examples of this.

Therefore, the “clearly over as a man” Prime Minister Zahal and the “not interested in girls” Cabinet minister Galius were able to firmly establish themselves as Petrarca’s left and right hand men. It is a very natural and easy-to-understand composition.

“Generally, throughout history, homosexual love has been relatively common, you know.”

So said Minori-san.

Somewhere deep behind Minori-san’s glasses, I see glitters of a weird anticipation. It’s very troublesome for me.

“I already knew that, but regardless, I have absolutely no interest in that direction!”

To be honest, I am a relatively conservative otaku who can’t even handle trap characters——male characters crossdressing with female clothing.

For the briefest of moments, I imagine myself in a “rosey” relationship with the knight Galius, then I sigh. More like, I think I felt my gastric juices backflowing along with that sigh.

(T/N: More fujoshi trivia. Roses are the symbol of the whole yaoi genre, so the word here is not “rosy,” which means “bright/promising,” but “rosey,” which is a word I just made up which means “with lots of roses.”)

“So.....”

For now, I forcibly change the topic of conversation.

“I suppose this means the royal audience part is over and done with. So, what specifically am I supposed to do for this job?”

All the talk about spreading otaku culture in a parallel world seems too vague, and I can't see the goal at all.

“*Nn*—.....”

Matoba-san, who is sitting across from us with his back to the coachman, tilts his head. When we headed to the Eldant Palace, he was already there before us, but it was because he was there to make the necessary arrangements to ensure a smooth audience. Where he is actually staying at is, apparently, the mansion, which is currently serving as both AmuTec's employee dorm and company head office. In other words, he is currently going back together with us.

“——Koganuma-kun.”

“Yes?”

Matoba-san and Minori-san both look at each other.

At the same time, they remove their magical rings——then they look at me.

Those looks seem to be urging me to do something.

“.....”

Are they telling me to take off my ring too?

In the first place, we can communicate with each other just fine even without the rings, so there's no problem with taking them off. Thinking about it, not taking them off might actually cause problems instead——

(Oh right. The coachman.)

They probably don't want the coachman from the Eldant Empire side to hear what we'll be talking about.

What is with this dangerous atmosphere?

But then again, there's no point in me digging in my feet here. I take off my ring and make sure that they see me putting it into my pocket.

“Thank you. After all, it's not wise to let the Eldant side know our full position. Of course, that includes the fact that we have no cards at all in our hand.”

So said Matoba-san.

No, wait a second. Did this guy just casually say something of extreme importance?!

“Frankly speaking, even we have no idea.”

“Wai-.....What on earth does that mean?!”

After being dragged all around the place, now I only get a “we don't know”?!

Lowering the ends of his eyebrows with a troubled face, Matoba-san continues.

“We have a clear idea of the goal that we're aiming for, but the methods to be employed towards that goal have not been decided, so we're kind of being driven into a corner. After all, there has been no precedent.”

“.....”

Here it is. Government officials and their overdependence on manuals.

Well, it's not like I don't see where they're coming from, but this is a very intractable position for me to be in.

“I believe I've said this before. No matter what, we also start from the

appearances. So we write up the laws, we set up the organization, we buy the land, we secure the budget, then we just have continuous meetings about what to do next. This is the model timeline for most public works projects.”

“Please don’t say it like you’re bragging about it.”

“This is self-mockery. Anyhow, it is because we are self-aware about this, that we decided at the beginning stages of the project that it is better to not do anything unnecessary. In actuality, the traditional arts that we tried to introduce were not received favorably.”

Matoba-san shrugged his shoulders.

According to what he said after that, this “Far East Cultural Exchange Promotion Bureau” was created because the government didn’t know what to do with the question of a parallel world and needed an entity to shove all the responsibility onto.

It stands to reason.

If this was a project with the full weight of the government behind it, then there is no way that someone like me would get hired for it.

Exchange with a parallel world is a situation that the country of Japan has never confronted before. No. Strictly speaking, I believe it is a situation that has never confronted before in the entire history of the human race. Originally, this would have called for a grand announcement so that this situation can be tackled together as a collaborative effort with foreign countries.

But apparently, the Japanese government is thinking of on monopolizing this “exchange with a parallel world.”

If exchange with this “parallel world” goes well, there is the possibility that the Japanese government could pay back, in one go, the tremendous national debt that had accumulated over repeated seasons

of deficits. Ever since the past, international commerce has always been the best method to enrich a country. There are those who assert that the success of Dubai, which is now famous for its rapid economical growth, is in part due to it properly maintaining its harbors, as motivated by its understanding of the importance of maritime trade.

However, if the existence of this “parallel world” is accidentally publicized, other countries would most likely find all sorts of faults with Japan to allow themselves a foothold in.

If that happens, then Japan’s “slice of the pie,” as it were, would become only one among several, one among tens, or perhaps even one among more than a hundred.

Either way, “we could possibly profit greatly from this so we cannot just leave it alone” so “if possible, we want Japan to monopolize it and not let the other countries know about it” are the decisions that were made.

And yet.....the current government is a certain political party that had been on the opposition party side up till last year.

This being the first time they’re in power, these politicians have yet to fully understand the current state of the government. Bureaucrats being bureaucrats, all they’re doing is order absurd system reforms and budget reallocations, causing utter pandemonium. In such a state, there is no way that they have the spare energy nor time nor money to properly handle the incomprehensible issue of a parallel world.

In the end, the Far East Cultural Exchange Promotion Bureau, with limited authority and budget and personnel, must explore for a way to establish commerce with the Eldant Empire by itself—it’s a terrible situation all in all.

“Your job is, in short, to manage AmuTec, which has already been established here for the purpose of cultural exchange with this world. With that said, however, I will take care of all the documentation and

routine tasks and duties, as well as the various negotiations with the Eldant Empire. What is expected of you is to bring over and sell entertainment works that the people of this world, be they citizens of the Eldant Empire or even people of other countries, can become passionate about. That is all you have to do.”

I already knew all that.

It’s just that the scope of the conversation is so large that I’m at a complete loss.

“Regardless of how much of an otaku I am, I am not a proper critic, nor am I a pro in the sales industry, nor am I a creator. You know that, right?”

“Well, to be blunt, part of our attitude in hiring you was ‘let’s give this guy a try as we have nothing to lose.’”

Matoba-san readily acknowledged it.

Well, as the annoying stuff is being shoved all around, and as the project itself is top-secret, there won’t be anyone reproaching or criticizing us for small mistakes here and there. Other government officials would be leery of commenting, for fear of being told “oh, then we can leave this project in your more capable hands.” The citizens, well, what they don’t know about, they can’t complain about. So, to some degree, we can take things at a rather carefree pace, according to Matoba-san.

“There is no need for you to think too deeply about it. Continue bringing in more and more of what you like and what you find interesting, and all will be well.”

“.....*U-n.*”

Even if I’m told that, I’m still not sure exactly where to begin.

More like——

“This magical ring.”

I took out my own from my pocket.

“Putting this on still won’t enable the wearer to read written Japanese, am I right?”

“So it seems.”

Matoba-san nodded.

“This is apparently some sort of telepathic equipment.”

“.....Ahh. I see.”

In other words, it is not that “words are getting through.” In actuality.....we are speaking in Japanese, while Miusel and the others are speaking in the language here. The reason why we can understand each other is apparently because it is our thoughts, and not our words, that are being transmitted.

“But if that’s the case, then games and anime are completely out, right?”

If mutual understanding is happening due to telepathy, then it wouldn’t work if one side is a machine without a mind. In other words, if I play anime DVDs, because the DVD player doesn’t have a mind, Miusel and the rest wouldn’t be able to understand it.

“I see. That is indeed a problem.”

“In the first place, didn’t you say that their reception to anime was pretty good?”

If I remember correctly, he had told me that among the several kinds of

Japanese culture introduced, it was otaku culture that was the best received.

“You are indeed right, but.....Isn’t anime relatively easy to understand even without the lines?”

“Anime is hardly children TV shows. There are anime that go into philosophical debates in the middle of war, you know.”

Like Gundam, for example.

“Well, it is still true that among the several things that we brought to them, they showed the most interest in anime.”

Originally, the concept of movies did not exist in this world. Therefore, it is only natural that their interest would be perked when shown “moving pictures.” Even if they didn’t fully understand the content of the anime, the beautiful art and the cute characters were attractive enough in their own right.

“Even manga and light novels would be rather impossible. I believe the literacy rate here is quite low, isn’t it? How can we tell them to read the works from a foreign country? What resources and personnel do we have for translating?”

“It’s proving to be a challenge.”

Matoba-san shook his head with a troubled expression on his face.

“For now, because communication is possible thanks to these magical rings, translating has been put on the back burner. There would be a lot of problems if a famous linguistic professor disappears out of the blue, after all.”

“.....”

Yea, yea. A former home security guard youngster disappearing out of

the blue would cause no problems, no need to rub it in.

“Even so, to make any progress at all, we must secure a translator before anything else.”

“*U-mu.....*”

Matoba-san groaned in response to my words.

I feel like we are seriously lacking in both budget and human capital.

The completely indiscernible future is, as can be expected, only giving me a sense of unease.



“.....”

After opening my eyelids, I stir from my laid down position and sit up on my bed.

The inside of the room is as dark as if ink had been poured in. It is because the sun has set quite a time ago.

However, I am having a bit of trouble falling asleep. Part of it is due to the audience in the afternoon having been too stimulating for me. The other part is that when I think back on various things, I keep getting cold sweat. Either way, I can't calm down at all.

“.....Might as well go grab some water, I guess.”

Stretching out my hand towards the chest right beside the unnecessarily large bed, I grope for a small article that had been placed on top. Grasping an antique made of shakudo forged in the shape of a hanging

bell flower, I use a weakly curled fingertip to give the hanging bell part a light flick.

(T/N: Shakudo is a gold/copper alloy, typically 4-10% gold, rest copper.)

At once.....accompanied by a quiet whoosh, a flickering flame comes to life inside the hanging bell, gently pushing back the surrounding darkness.

This is a kind of magical tool that gives off light for a while after receiving a small physical jolt. It is apparently a very common lightning tool here in Eldant. A spirit of light has been locked up inside or something like that.

Speaking of which, even in our world, there are sea-fireflies. If you put those into a cup and shake it, they'll get surprised and give off very bright light. The logic is probably the same, with the only difference being that spirits are used here instead of plankton.

“I'm sorry.”

After apologizing to the spirit or spirits inside, I let down my feet from the bed, wear my shoes, and start walking while using the light to illuminate my path.

I go down to the first floor, and go through the dining room.

Where I'm heading towards is the kitchen deeper within. According to Minori-san, in this world with neither water treatment facilities nor waterworks, every single cup of water must be boiled for purification. Supposedly, water that had been drawn normally would start to spoil if left alone for three days——

“.....?”

All of a sudden, my feet stop.

The reason is because I've noticed light spilling out from the door gap.

I frown while musing over who it would be this late in the night—but there's no point in only thinking about it, so I take the metal doorknob in my hand and push the door open.

The entirety of the kitchen is made with bricks. The room stretches to the left and right, and the floor is completely covered with ceramic tiles. At one end of the room is the kitchen counter. Of course, there is no gas stove. Instead, there is what looks to be a kitchen hearth with a large pot hung above it.

In the middle of the room is a table made of wood. At its edge are kitchen knives and chopping boards and other tools. It is probably the place where all the pre-cooking preparation is done.

And at that table.....

“Danna-sama?!”

.....Miusel is sitting there.

She had turned around while looking quite startled.

“This late at night.....has something happened?”

“Not really. I just wanted to drink some water.”

“I would have brought it up if you'd only called for me. I will prepare it immediately.”

“No, no, no.”

I raise a hand to stop Miusel, who is in a fluster and was about to rise from her chair.

“I’m not really that thirsty at the moment, and I thought you’d already gone to sleep already. Rather than that, what were you doing?”

Thinking that perhaps she’s doing the preparations for tomorrow’s breakfast—I look towards the table, but all the cooking implements have been pushed to the side, and in their place are a pen and a sheet of paper that I recognize.

It is the hiragana table that I had given Miusel.

“Eh. Could it be.....you were studying?”

Looks like I’d hit the bull’s-eye.

As if an embarrassing part of her has been seen, Miusel’s face turns slightly red and looks downward.

“As Danna-sama had deigned to give this to me.....”

Her gesture seems so innocent that my heart is going doki doki!—but let’s leave that aside for now.

When I look at the other piece of paper to the side, I see hiragana transcribed densely on it. The number of characters on that other paper is not normal at all. Most likely, this girl is literally being sparing with her sleep for the sake of studying.

“Staying up late is bad for your body. It’s already late, so how about you continue tomorrow?”

“The majority of my day is occupied with work. Furthermore, this is something that Danna-sama had seen fit to give me, so.....I really want to learn it.”

Uwah. Why would this girl say something like that with upturned eyes. Is she trying to moe me to death?

But when I give it a second thought——during almost all my waking hours, Miusel is close by and serving me in all sorts of ways. There is cooking and cleaning and laundry and miscellaneous tasks. I had the understanding that this is what maids do, so I hadn't thought much of it, but it's normally impossible for a single person to maintain an entire mansion. Blük seems mostly in charge of the outdoors too.

Apparently, the time when Miusel can be free to do whatever she wants is extremely limited.

Knowing that she is devoting her precious time to study, my chest now feels a bit hot.

(T/N: 'Hot' in a "passionate teacher" sort of way, as her motivation and diligence makes her "worth teaching.")

"In that case, then I'll accompany you."

Pulling out the chair next to Miusel, I sit down.

"N-, no, how coul-! For Danna-sama to give up precious sleep time to help me study, such a thing....."

Miusel furiously shakes her head in a very obliged manner.

However, I lightly tap the chair that Miusel had been sitting in earlier, indicating for her to sit back down.

"I'm now wide awake anyways. Come on, take a seat."

"But.....is this truly alright? It would already be more than I can hope for if I can receive your guidance only when you're not busy!"

"No. For this sort of thing, being reserved would only make it really hard for me to stay....."

I laugh wryly with the ends of my eyebrows drawn downwards,

but——for a moment, I see a perplexed expression on Miusel’s face as she blinks a few times.

She looks like she doesn’t know what to do.

Was what I said really that strange?

“.....Danna-sama is...”

Slowly, a smile blooms on Miusel’s white face.

Just like how a flower blooms——might be a bit of an old way of putting it, but that is how it truly looks to me. Her usual clumsy and hesitant self is also really cute, but it is cute the way a bud is cute, and is not all of what this girl has.

Ah seriously, this girl is just way too cute!!

Furthermore.....

“...a slightly unusual person.”

.....she even went and said something like that.

Seriously, if this is a game, then that’s definitely a flag! What? I’m already very close to the Good End with this girl?! Choices, where are my choices?!

(T/N: As in, so that he can choose the choice that brings him to the Good End. He’s not trying to opt out of this situation.)

And other such agitation is sweeping throughout my brain, but I do my best to suppress it and not let it show on my face.

“Is, is that so?”

“Yes. Only a tiny bit eccentric.”



Oh man, those words are making me so itchy with embarrassment!

Miusel plops herself down on the seat next to mine, and gives me a slightly bashful smile.

“Well then.....may I truly take you up on your offer?”

“If you’re fine with someone like me, I’d be glad to be of service whenever you wish.”

Captivated by her, I gave a slightly theatrical and pompous answer.

Oh no, did I try too hard to show off? Feeling uneasy at doing something I’m not used to, I sneak a peek at Miusel. However, the half-elf girl is pouring an enthusiastic gaze towards the hiragana table, with a somewhat delighted expression on her face.

Volume 1 Chapter 3 Part 1

Chapter 3: Liberty and Equality and Fraternity

Translator: Tenshi

I am Kanou Shinichi.

I am the first ever General Manager of the General Entertainment Company AmuTec in this parallel world.

.....Well, even if I act cool and introduce myself in such a self-important manner, I can't change reality.

The truth is, I'm here as a substitute for those oh-so-great government officials who went "we don't really know what would sell~" and had given up. In short, I was brought here to wipe their asses.

But let's leave the detailed story of how things became this way for another time.

In short, my job is to, for starters, bring in a variety of things that might cause the residents of the Holy Eldant Empire to think "oh, this might seem interesting." Instead of aiming for a sudden big hit, what I'm doing is tilling the soil in order for a big hit to happen in the future.

To that end, research is essential.

Therefore.....

"Let's start close by."

Muttering to myself, I circle around the office on the first floor.

This place has already been transformed to the point where the name "reading room" would be a more accurate moniker.

I had compiled a very long list of otaku goods, then given it to Matoba-san. Therefore, manga tanks, anime DVDs and Blu-rays, game

discs, and all other manners of things now filled the bookshelves to the brim. Of course, in regards to the printed material, I did not order only the manga and light novels themselves, but also included the reference materials and document collections. I had also ordered a large number of posters.

(T/N: A brief note about manga. Since the word ‘manga’ usually refers to the magazine form, the author adds the word ‘book’ behind to specify that he’s talking about manga in their compiled volume form, which are called ‘tankoubon’ in Japanese. Thus, ‘tank’ for short.)

Thanks to that, the office now gives off an impression similar to that of an ota-style bookstore or DVD shop in Akiba. Whatever the contents are, when everything is gathered and lined up this way, the scenery is spectacular, to say the least.

“In a way, this is my dream room.”

In a slightly ecstatic trance, I spoke to myself.

After all, all of these purchases are considered as “necessary expenses.” Instead of only being tax-free, the entire bill is being shouldered by the Far East Cultural Exchange Promotion Bureau. Matoba-san’s eyes did widen when he saw the list, but apparently the most annoying part is the inter-world transportation, so as long as everything is within budget, then all’s good.

Incidentally.....due to some strange magnetism or some such occurring within the hyper dimension passageway, wireless connection is completely impossible, and even a wired connection would be tainted by a large amount of noise. As such, my request of “please give me internet connection” was turned down.

Well, this is something that can’t be helped, so I made a list of “Information Websites That MUST Be Visited” and am having people on the other side periodically recording all new content and sending it to me through hard drives. Although this method makes me not so

up-to-date, this is something that can't be helped.

As such——

“This is the thing called 『otaku culture』 , Danna-sama?”

Standing next to me and looking around the room in surprise is the lizardman Blük. As always, his face is completely covered with scales and his physique is different from that of a human, which makes it hard for me to read his expressions, but——I am starting to be capable of getting a general read of him through his tone and bearing.

He was the one who had been tasked with bringing the boxes and containers from the outside of the mansion to this room. Therefore, only after everything has settled down is he finally getting a proper look at the contents of what he had brought in.

By the way, the work of placing the books and DVDs onto the shelves had been undertaken by Miusel and myself.

Despite having started early in the morning and devoting an entire day, the current progress is still only around sixty percent.

“Indeed. Well, nothing would start if you don't actually take them into your hands and look at the contents, so Blük-san, if anything catches your eye, please do feel free.”

“Are you sure? Is it fine for a manservant like myself to touch these?”

Blük tilted his head.

“Fine or not, you being a manservant is unrelated. These are things that I had brought over in the hopes of reaching as many people as possible. As reference, I also do want to hear your impressions and thoughts about them.”

When I said so in a laughing manner, Blük stared at me unblinkingly

with his glass-like eyes.

It seems like he's a bit surprised, but——

“If you still have qualms about it, then let's do this. ‘Take anything you wish into your hands.’ This is an order.”

“Yes sir.....”

Drawing in his shoulders and scratching the back of his head with a finger, Blük heads toward the display cases with a “If you say so.....”. To be honest, I had already gone through a similar conversation with Miusel earlier, who had then taken several manga tanks off the shelves and is now engrossed in flipping through them.

It is about ten days after the day when I'd given her the hiragana table.

She has already completely memorized all hiragana, and can also read katakana. Furthermore, as a result of me helping her to study every night, now she also knows one or two hundred everyday kanji. It turns out that she's actually really smart.....as such, despite the language being from a different world, she seems to be really delighted at “being able to read and write,” and is learning Japanese at an astonishing rate.

Perhaps the fact that she's living together with us is also playing a part in her growth.

As mentioned before, the function of the magical rings is “simultaneous interpretation,” so she's hearing our actual words too. Just like watching a movie with subtitles, after hearing something over and over again, perhaps it's helping her with learning Japanese itself.

Of course——with just that alone, she still can't read kanji, but a lot of manga have rubi added next to the kanji, and the art in manga also conveys a large portion of the content, so if it's something simple, then even she can get the general gist from reading.

(T/N: Rubi is the small hiragana or katakana written right next to a kanji to inform the reader of how to read the word.)

The reason why I ordered Blük to read the books is something similar.

He and Miusel are my most readily-accessible research subjects.

In the midst of such thoughts——

“.....!!”

I am hearing voices of some sort.

People arguing about something.....is the impression that I’m getting from the voices coming from the direction of the hallway. I don’t understand the contents of the conversation, though. The voices are speaking the Eldant language, so it’s only natural that I don’t understand. The interpretation ability of the magical ring is not all-powerful. If the other party is out of sight, or if there is too big of a distance, then there are times when the ring cannot exert its function temporarily.

With that——abruptly.

“Kanou Shinichi!!”

The door is opened with enough force to be described as “having been kicked in.”

My eyes grew round with surprise as I behold the person who had come into the office.

“The Eldant empress?!”

“*Umu!*”

The Imperial Majesty with the figure of a loli is throwing out her chest

in response.

“So this is where you were, Kanou Shinichi. I have come in person to see what your evangelism is about.”

Petrarca is standing there arrogantly, almost as if saying “You should be crying with gratitude” in a really high-handed tone of voice.

Apparently, she had heard about me bringing in a large amount of otaku cultural goods, and thus come to check things out.

Even though this is the town at the foot of the castle, is it fine for the Empress to come here without bringing a single escort?—and other similarly *lèse-majesté* tsukkomis are running through my mind.

“Your.....Your Majesty.....!”

Appearing a few seconds behind, with his shoulders painfully heaving up and down while gasping for breath, is an old man who looks like a dried tree—Prime Minister Zahal, namely.

“Your, Your Majesty.....the Empress running down the hallway, is something that must not happen.....F-Furthermore, the door is not something that should be handled in such a violent manner.....!”

In the intervals between gasps of air, Prime Minister Zahal is lecturing in a voice that had gone hoarse.

In games and manga and anime and light novels.....when one mentions “Prime Minister,” what comes to mind is “someone who’s appropriating the authority of the king to throw his weight around” or “a black-hearted person who’s holding the real reigns of power after turning the king into a puppet” or “someone who is really obsequious to the king but is actually plotting a rebellion and turns out to be the last boss” or other similar characters.

However, it seems that this jii-san is not just pampering the Empress,

but is a true retainer who is also trying to give her a proper education.

(T/N: Jii is a general term for old men like ‘grandpa’ where even if the old man is not your own grandfather, you still address him so. It can be used for both strangers and for family members. For strangers, you normally add the -san both to indicate distance and respect.)

But sadly——his loyalty is not properly getting through to Petrarca.

“So noisy, Jii. I wasn’t running, I was just walking quickly.”

“Ahh. Such sophism again.....”

Prime Minister Zahal is covering his face with both hands while moaning in a lamenting voice. From that, I can tell that he has always been led around the nose in such a manner. My condolences. He probably also has work from being a Prime Minister to take care of.

“*Uumu!*”

Her Majesty Petrarca looks around the office which had been turned into a smaller version of Akiba, and raises her voice in excitement.

“How mysterious! So this is the “otaku culture” that you people preach!”

Saying other similar things, her very big eyes are shining with expectation.

Yep yep. This expression fits loli girls well, as expected.

Or not.....isn’t this person also 16 years old, the same age as Miusel?

As a conservative, I am someone who has a relatively wide range of tastes, so I’m feeling a different kind of moe from her than I do from Miusel.

“With such vivid colors, and a charm different from paintings and murals, this is all so unusual!”

Unlike Blük, Petrarca heads straight towards the bookshelves without asking for permission, with Prime Minister Zahal accompanying her. As if in a trance, she takes down manga one after another and opens them while making wondering exclamations like “*ohh!*” and “*uumu*”. For now, she still can’t read a single Japanese character, but—as if that isn’t a problem at all, her general first impression appears to be a rather favorable one.

More like, the figure of her stretching to her limit to reach the books on the higher shelves is almost criminal in its cuteness.

“.....*Umu?*”

While I am gazing at her flipping her way through books, she suddenly moans.

“I can’t understand!”

“.....Well, I mean, I’m sure that’s true.”

I can’t help but to smile wryly in response.

Miusel is clearly in entirely different conditions and circumstances.

In actuality, that thing that Blük seems to be gazing at with such great interest, he most likely doesn’t understand a single bit of its content. Incidentally, right after Petrarca’s entrance, both Miusel and Blük have been pressed against the wall and are currently frozen in that position.

It’s a pretty natural reaction that even I can understand.

Having the Imperial Majesty appear all of a sudden, anyone would be surprised. This is especially true in this Middle Age Europe-like world, where the absolute monarch is an existence considered equivalent to

that of a god. Any careless words uttered in front of the Empress could lead to an immediate end to their lives. As such, anyone who tells them to not be nervous would be the weird one here.

However——

“*Umu*. Even though all these pictures look so interesting.....”

Petrarca moans regretfully.

I feel sorry towards this girl who is sensitive about her childish face and small build, but her current appearance is just so amazingly adorable that I can't think of her as the ruler of an entire country. Rather, I'm feeling an urge to do whatever I can to help her out.

“.....Oi. Kanou Shinichi.”

“What is it, Your Majesty? But first of all, my name is Shinichi. Calling me Kanou Shinichi every single time is like me calling you Your Imperial Majesty Petrarca An Eldant the Third every time.”

“*Fumu*. So it's fine if I call you 'Shinichi'?”

After tilting her head for a moment, that is what she said.

“That is indeed right.”

With a hand on my chest, I make a butler-like bow.

“*Fumu*. After all, there is the maxim “When in the land of Camara, eat the Camara cuisine.” In order to fully enjoy this otaku culture——I shall abide by your customs.”

Her Majesty Petraraca nods while laughing in a magnanimous manner.

I don't know anything about Camara and all that, but most likely it's an aphorism similar to “When you enter a village, you listen to the

village.” The English language also has the proverb “When in Rome, do as the Romans do,” so this concept is most likely an idea common to all humankind.

“Shinichi.”

The loli-like Empress approaches me with all smiles on her face.

“What may it be, Your Imperial Majesty?”

“I shall make an exception and grant you the privilege of calling me by ‘Petrarca.’”

“Your Majesty, I’m afraid that’s a bit too——”

Prime Minister Zahal’s face is displaying a multitude of colors.

“In each and every place, there are unique citizens living while embracing unique values. To disregard and override those customs without due consideration would only breed discord, and thus I, as the ruler, must at times take in and emulate the worldviews of my populace. This is something that you yourself has taught me, is it not?”

“T-That’s indeed true, but.....”

“Worry not, this privilege is limited to this mansion alone. This mansion is, so to speak, a place that I have given Shinichi the dominion over, see. Shinichi, continue calling me ‘Imperial Majesty’ when outside. It is not hard to imagine that if word gets out that you’re calling me by name, then there will be those who will misunderstand.”

“Misunderstand?”

“Normally——”

Prime Minister Zahal takes a cloth out of his breast pocket to wipe the sweat on his forehead before answering.

“Only royalty may call other royalty by name. They have to be related either by birth or by marriage. As such, the conclusion that people would draw is that you have become her marriage partner.”

“..... Umm.”

I feel cold sweat running down my back uncomfortably.

“Is it fine?”

“Is what fine?”

Petrarca tilts her head.

“Nothing. I guess.....it’s fine.”

Since she doesn’t seem bothered by it, then it would be strange of me to get hung up over the issue.

It’s that. If only family members are allowed to call Petrarca by name, then doesn’t it mean that I’m now allowed to treat her like family? So even if I start thinking of her as a little sister——

“.....”

“Is there a problem, Shinichi?”

Petrarca inquires while looking puzzled.

“No, it’s, nothing at all.”

There’s no way that I can tell her I’m almost about to get a nosebleed from imagining the scene of her calling out to me with “Onii-chan♪.”

To be honest, I do have a little sister in real life, so I don’t fully understand little sister moe, but.....if it’s someone like Petrarca, who seems like a “picture perfect cheeky and impertinent little sister”

straight out of 2D, then even I would feel something.

“Rather than that, what was that you were saying, Your Majesty—I mean, Petrarca?”

“*Mu*? Ohhh, right. Shinichi. If things remain this way, then I cannot enjoy all this otaku culture that has been brought over after so much hard work. The magical ring too, is something that can only enable two wearers to understand each other’s intent, and cannot aid me in reading.”

“That is true.”

“Therefore——”

Petrarca is all smiles.

That face is, as I thought, extremely cute, but——why is it that I’m getting a bad sense of foreboding again?



How did things end up like this.....?

To be honest, I’m at a complete loss.

To my immediate right is Miusel, sitting with her face in a somewhat frightened expression.

To my immediate left is Petrarca, sitting with her face the very illustration of the word ‘serious.’

Pressed in between two girls, I am frozen stiff with nervousness.

After all, I am in a position where my shoulders are touching their shoulders—to be more blunt, I am almost close enough to smell their personal odors. Furthermore, as if this is still insufficient, both of them are trying to press against me even more.

Stuck in between two girls, I am currently barely keeping my sense of reason in balance.

It feels like if I accidentally say something wrong, something is going to be broken forever.

“.....”

Sweat drips off my cheek. My entire body is petrified. I whisper in a trembling voice.

“P-.....’Please don’t kill me.””

“.....”

“.....”

Miusel and Petrarca both stay silent.

I almost raise a scream under the weight of the silence, but——

“*Eei!*”

In a very impatient manner, Petrarca murmurs to me in a low voice.

Aaah. Her breath. Her breath. The breath of the loli-like Empress is touching my ear!

Despite me almost going mad with moe in this way, Petrarca continues speaking.

“Won’t you turn the page already! I’m so curious about what’s next!”

Just like before, we are still inside the office in the mansion.

In a space that seems like an impromptu Akiba branch store, the three of us are sitting in a row on the same sofa.

And opened upon my knees is a manga tank. It is an adventure fantasy packed with action, one that I had picked in the hope that it would be easier for Miusel and Petrarca to understand. Most likely, in their current selves, they wouldn't understand SF hard-boiled action stories even if I showed them, and this is even more true for slice-of-life 4-koma series.

Therefore, for the sake of these girls who can't read Japanese, I am reading this manga tank out loud.

Incidentally, only Petrarca and Miusel are left inside the room. Blük had left on the pretext of having to tend to the garden or some such, and Prime Minister Zahal had left the house together with Minori-san. Even though I'm the one reading the manga aloud, Petrarca had been the one who'd chased him out, saying that his presence distracted her.

As for why Miusel is also here, it is because I had asked her to stay. After all that stuff with "I permit you to be on a first-name basis with me," I feel like it wouldn't be a good idea for Petrarca and me to be alone together. Since Miusel is studying Japanese, I told her to follow along the text as I read aloud.

However.....

(Normally speaking, this kind of situation is supposed to be a reward, but.....!)

While feeling the body heat from the two girls on my right and left, I swallow back a scream that had almost slipped out.

The thing with manga is, most of the situational explanation is carried out in a visual way.....as in, with the art.

So, now that all three of us are trying to read the same tankoubon at the same time, both of their foreheads are naturally drawing closer and closer to the book. Indeed, that is what has happened. Consequently, though the two of them do not appear to have realized it yet, we are now glued to each other with abnormal closeness.

Every time I turn the page, my elbow touches Miusel's soft mounds of you-know-what, while my other hand is pressing down on Petrarca's modest mounds. Furthermore, the really soft-looking hair from both sides are wafting sweet, flower-like scents that are wrapping around me. As a healthy male in my late teens, I feel like I'm being forced to participate in an endurance race with no time limit.

What kind of eroge is this?!

I am now thoroughly regretting my decision in choosing a manga.

If I had chosen a light novel, which only uses words to paint its story, then I would have been able to avoid this situation, but.....it's too late. The two of them are now immersed in their first exposure to another world's stories, so if I now say "alright, let's turn to a different story," Miusel aside, I feel like Petrarca would kill me. That's how engrossed into the work she looks right now.

And then——

“.....Ah.”

When I turn the page, Miusel lets out a happy voice from next to me.

“This is about Danna-sama, isn't it? I can read it.”

So saying, she points at the rubi next to the word 『可能』 .

『可能』 and 『加納』 .

Well, it's true that they're both read the same way.

“Ah.....the sound is the same, right. But the meaning is a bit different.”

“Is that so?”

“This kanji has various meanings of its own.....we came across this one by chance, but there are many cases where two words have the same reading, but completely different meanings.”

“I see.”

Miusel blinks her eyes in admiration.

“But really, Miusel really is a quick learner.”

Putting together the 50 hiragana and the 50 katakana gives a grand total of slightly under 100 characters, but it is not easy to learn all those just by studying at night after finishing all her duties. As I thought, this girl must be really smart.

(T/N: There are actually only 46 of each, so the total is 92. He's rounding.)

“That's not true. All of it is due to Master staying up late with me every night to accompany me in my studies. To think that the day would come when I can read.....I had not even dreamed of it.”

Miusel murmurs in a very earnest manner.

Even if the language is one from a different world, the feeling of “the joy of being able to read and write” is what is fueling her incredible learning rate. As for me, seeing a cute girl like her being this happy is making me feel like the time spent teaching her was time well spent——

“What meaning do these notations have?”

“Those are called onomatopoeias, and are a bit more difficult——”

——And thus, because of this, I completely forgot about the presence of the girl on my other side. Though this didn’t go on that long, I had failed to notice the displeased glare that Petrarca was giving me.

“Shinichi!”

Speaking in a tone clearly conveying that she has reached the limits of her patience, Petrarca stands up from the sofa.

“Eh? Ah——Oh right, sorry about that, Your Majesty.”

“Have I not told you to call me Petrarca?!”

“Ah, I’m sorry, Petrarca.”

In a fluster, I responded quickly, but apparently that was not enough to appease her. Wordlessly, Petrarca grasps my shoulder with one hand to pull herself up, after which——of all things, she casually sits in the place where I’d been placing the manga previously.

In other words, on my knees.

Eeeeeehhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh?!

“Wait a-.....Petrarca?!”

Forcefully, she snatches the manga from the fingers of my flustered self, then brings it around and places it on her own knees.

As a result, Petrarca is now sitting on top of my knees, and both of my hands are extending from behind her back like I’m hugging her. Even though she’s small, our current position is one where if I’m to continue reading the manga, I’d have to do it while placing my chin on her shoulder.



What on earth is this ridiculous situation.

Having the chance to hug a loli-like girl definitely makes me really glad in an embarrassing sort of way, but any third party who sees this would undoubtedly come to various misunderstandings.

“W-W-W-We can’t do this——!”

“Silence! Looking from the side makes my neck tired!”

“Even if that’s so.....”

“It’s fine, so continue reading like this! Otherwise——the maid over there!”

She glares at Miusel.

“Pour me a new cup of tea! I don’t need this cooled down stuff, go boil a new pot!”

“Eh? Ah, y-yes, I’ll do it at once!”

Miusel bows so quickly that it seems like something had slapped her back.

“Servants should act like the servants they are and just work.”

Petrarca narrowed her eyes and spoke arrogantly.

Sharp words spoken as if she had just won some sort of competition. With a frightened expression and stiffened body, Miusel bows once more, then leaves the room almost as if running away in escape.

“That’s.....umm. Your Majesty?”

“Petrarca.”

“Sorry. Petrarca. Are you perhaps.....angry?”

“I am no such thing!”

Said she in a shout.

The word for ‘shout’ has the word ‘angry’ in it, but.....no matter how I look at it, you’re angry, aren’t you.

(T/N: The word for ‘shout’ used here is 怒鳴る. The first character, 怒る, means ‘to be angry.’)

.....Though she said something like that, I was the one who had forgotten about her in the first place, albeit only for a short while, so I’m not in the position to say anything.

“This beast. Going into heat the moment you see a girl.”

“Wha-.....?!”

Heat?! What heat is she talking about?!

For a girl to use such words, it’s going to make Onii-chan cry.

Rather than that, I’m now being treated like a beast, am I. Well, it’s because I’m not being treated as a human that she’s calmly sitting on my knees and letting herself be hugged by me. If it’s an animal, then it doesn’t feel repulsive, right? I understand.

When Petrarca had gotten onto my knee, it had made me strangely excited for a brief moment, but.....this is all reality amounts to.

While sighing deep inside my heart, I resume reading aloud.

Volume 1 Chapter 3 Part 2

Chapter 3: Liberty and Equality and Fraternity

Translator: Tenshi

It has been a few days since Petrarca's sudden visit.

The day when we'd finished the first part of the office organizing—I finally get to go see the town.

I'm making this trip because I feel the necessity of understanding the Eldant Empire's existent culture. Of course, if I ask Matoba-san, I can get a copy of the reports from the first group of scouts who'd investigated the Empire, but reading those stiff, formal reports will only give me a headache. Furthermore, I wish to show my face around the shops in person and introduce myself as a "future potential customer."

If otaku culture is to take root in the Eldant Empire, then it is not enough for it to be accepted only among the nobility and Empress's family. Otaku culture is, to be frank, a melting pot of many cultures. It is a world where anything interesting goes, and nothing is truly forbidden.

For this very reason, in otaku culture, the people who bring out money to buy the works—in other words, the customers who support the creators and distribution companies—are 'justice.' No matter how much money is poured into the production of a large-scale anime, if the producers don't show respect to the otakus, then the work is guaranteed to crash and burn in glorious fashion.

In other words, if I am to spread otaku culture in this land, then all will be meaningless if I am not accepted by the commoners, who make up the overwhelming majority of the population.

Simply importing otaku works and flinging them at the masses will never work.

In the future, it might become necessary to build an electricity supply network, but if the commoners' literacy rate is still low, then it will all be for nought. If we are to spread not just books but also anime and games, then for now we probably have to set up something like a cinema and make do.

Going this far, this is already Sim City.....no, Sim Akiba.

And therefore——

“.....Hahaa.”

I am walking through the castle town together with Minori-san, who is my escort, and Blük, who is both my guide and luggage bearer. The horse carriage——I meant, bird carriage, is something that I've only seen that one time I was going to the palace. I am finally allowed to get down for my first walk around the castle town.

Most everything is exactly what they've looked like from my previous vantage point inside the carriage, but.....actually being on foot enables me to notice many small details that I had missed before.

For example, the smell.

Faintly permeating the air, at a degree not quite strong enough to be unpleasant, are the smells of things burning and things rotting. Most likely, the former is from people's kitchen hearths and fireplaces, while the latter is from trash and waste.

Speaking of which, the palace of Versailles used to have no toilets——is a bit of random trivia that I'd read somewhere.

On top of not having a proper water and sewer system in place, because being a privy contractor is not profitable enough to suffice as a job, no one has a toilet inside their house, as doing so would merely cause the smell to linger inside the house.

Letting the waste run away with a river, or collecting it in a tank to use as fertilizer, or even directly doing one's business on a field.....are all ways actually used by people here, apparently. I've heard that back in olden Europe, some people would also spread it throughout their own house and direct a free-roaming pig to eat it up.

Most likely, things are similar here.

By the way, for my mansion, Blük is the one who is in charge of gathering all the waste. He brings it to a far away shed, where he turns it all into compost. That way, I can freely use the toilet without worrying about it, but——commoners living inside the town have no such service.

“.....Well, since they're not some 2D characters, things that have to come out really do come out.....”

Though this world is fantastical, it is a place where actual people are living actual lives.

On a different topic——I also notice that a lot of the signage is picture-based.

In all probability, the literacy rate here is low, so there's no point in making word-based signs.

Of course, to draw truly realistic images, a high degree of artistic ability is required, so most of the signs that I see are merely on the level of symbols. Thanks to that, even though I can't read this country's language, I can still make out the different buildings, like “this is the liquor store” and “this is the blacksmith” and “this is the bakery.”

But above anything else, the thing that is occupying my attention the most while walking through the town is——

“Is something catching your interest, Danna-sama?”

Having been walking a step ahead of me, Blük turns around and so inquired.

At first, it was, how do I put it——when standing face to face within arm’s reach, I found him quite scary, but now that I’m getting more used to seeing him, I find that he has a surprising kind of charm, with his round eyes and his large mouth that makes him look like he’s constantly smiling. I believe the number of people who raise lizards as pets aren’t that small——I wonder if this is the reason why.

“A lot of things are catching my interest. There is so much that’s making me think.”

“Is that so? As for me, all I see is the boring, same-old scenery.”

Blük spoke with the same face as ever, but judging from his tone and the way his tongue was flickering, I can somehow tell that he is wryly smiling.

“Our country doesn’t really have lizardmen or elves, after all.”

The amount of variety and how drastic the differences are among the residents on this side makes the distinction back home between white people and black people and yellow people seem silly in comparison. Of course, humans still make up the large majority here, but at least 1 in 10 are either elf or lizardman. Therefore, no one is looking at Blük like he’s someone strange.

“If you wish to see more non-humans, I propose that we make our way to the training ground near the castle.”

So spoke Blük.

“Training ground?”

“Well, it is something like a military base.”

It was Minori-san who had cut into our conversation.

“Along with the common soldiers’ lodgings, that place is also where the military training facilities are at. Us, too——a small JSDF squad is also borrowing some space there. In this country, apparently the military is the easiest job for non-humans to find.”

“I see.....”

Speaking of which, I had indeed wondered where the other JSDF members that I’d seen on the LAV normally stay. Guess now I know.

For now, we decide to make our way there.



The appearance of the parade ground turned out to be, in short, something like a very large school campus.

In the corner, I see buildings that look like dormitories and warehouses, but otherwise, the place is literally just an empty lot. Incidentally, the JSDF have set up tents between the warehouses across from the dorms. Upon the dark green tents are the words “Ground Self-Defense Force,” but as expected, they look completely out of place in this fantasy world.

Setting that aside.

“.....That’s.”

I look at the practicing soldiers——I think they’re soldiers——and my eyes grow round in surprise.

Several tens of humans. Several tens of elves. Several tens of lizardmen.

“Aren’t those children?!”

“They are indeed children.”

Blük answered me with a confused look on his face like “What’s this person so surprised at?”

“But.....that’s.”

According to Japanese law, I’m still underage, but.....however I look at it, there are some children in their mid-teens, or perhaps even younger than that, among the soldiers.

Furthermore, half of them appear to be practicing sword techniques with wooden swords, while the other half are making complicated gestures and holding out their right hand in front like——

“——Uwah?!”

Bo ga ga ga gan! Along with explosive sounds a little on the quiet side, the ground——a row of fireworks goes off.

For a second, I think I saw something like balls of light shooting out from their hands.

“That’s.....”

“Magical practice.”

Minori-san completed my sentence.

“Apparently, those kids are still a ways off from the more destructive spells.”

“.....Something like fireballs or the like?”

“Most likely.”

Are you serious. I'm just standing here dumbfounded from seeing real offensive magic.

Speaking of which, I'd heard before that lizardmen have almost no magical power at all, so they can't use magic properly. Within the group practicing magic, I indeed only see humans and elves.

But still, even if that's the case.....

“This place is, in the end, a military training ground after all.”

So spoke Minori-san with a slight grimace.

How rare. It seems like she doesn't like this sight very much.

“The core is made up of children employed as soldier apprentices. As I said earlier, for non-humans in this country looking for an occupation, joining the army is the easiest way.”

According to Minori-san, non-humans by default have no citizenship.

However, if they enter the military, and work there for a specific period of time, they will be granted citizenship. After that, regardless of whether they choose to stay in the army or retire to take up another occupation, the easiest way to continue living in this human country is to have completed some military service.

“In this way, I have also served in the military before.”

So said Blük.

“Is that so?”

“Otherwise, there’s absolutely no way that I’d be allowed to work in the mansion of a noble.”

When one mentions “manservant,” the image is of a very labor intensive job, but from the perspective of a lizardman, apparently it is a rather desirable occupation.

After having military service on his record, it serves as his proof of identity, so it greatly increases his chances of becoming hired. Blük is also wearing a magical ring, but he tells me that it is not something that was given him when he began working at my place. Rather, it was given when he entered the army.

“I believe Miusel has also served in the military for a while.”

“.....You serious?”

I mean, it’s not that I’m doubting Blük’s words, but the mental image of that delicate and timid-looking Miusel having experience in the army seems to lack any sense of reality. But then again, there are various jobs inside the army, so she wasn’t necessarily a combatant.

“I understand what you’re thinking, but.....”

Minori-san spoke up.

“It’s best to not probe too deeply into something like that. Even in our world, there is still social stratification, and there are societies still running along fine without seeing anything wrong with such distinctions. For example, the caste system in India. Despite it having been technically abolished by law.”

“.....Well, receiving citizenship after serving in a campaign is something quite typical in America too.”

More like, in this world with so many different species——purposely using “species” instead of “races”——it might indeed be too high an

order to insist on things like absolute fairness and complete equality. The differences aren't merely on the level of skin color——there are species who look blatantly different, like the lizardmen. It would be like trying to weigh dogs against cats.

But with that said.....

“Oh. Looks like they're entering their break time.”

There's a bell clanging noisily.

Just like what Blük said, it's probably break time now. The children who had been working hard at training just previously are now breaking up into small groups and spreading out over the training grounds. Among them, a group of three elf children begin heading our way.

“What are you doing?”

With their eyes practically sparkling with inquisitiveness, they questioned us.

This sight makes me realize that they really are children after all. Seeing something out of the ordinary, they just can't hold back their curiosity.

“You seem different from the Jay Es Dee Ef, but what are you guys here for?”

“*U-n.*”

For a brief moment, I wrack my brain for a good way to explain my presence——then I beckon Blük over.

From the container on his back, I retrieve a manga tank and show it to the elf children.

“I’m someone who’s come to let everyone know about this.”

“What is it?”

It’s an adventure manga with the picture of a young boy holding a sword on the cover.

Perhaps due to being so used to the signs all over town being symbols or simplified pictures, most Eldant citizens have no resistance at all to manga drawings like these. More like, it seems to have made them even more receptive.

The children begin turning the pages with anticipation in their gazes—but.....

“What’s written here?”

They ask me with troubled looks on their faces.

Despite successfully creating an attention-grabbing impression, I can’t hold their attention if they can’t read the lines. As I thought, I really need to arrange for a translator as soon as possible.

No. Wait. Remember back to Miusel.

Even if I get all my manga translated, these children can’t read this country’s language either in the first place.

More like, the education system on this side——

“You kids, what do you normally play?”

“We don’t play.”

The children puff out their cheeks while replying.

“On the days when there’s no training, we help out with harvesting the

farm. We also help take care of the livestock, and also help plow the fields.”

The children speak rapidly while looking to each other for confirmation. It seems like they think I’m making fun of them.

“Wai-Wait a second. That means.....”

In other words, these children do not have time specifically set aside for ‘playing.’

For us—the children in Japan are granted more than enough free time, which they can occupy with anything that strikes their fancy. Some develop a sense of aspiration while watching the patrol car introduced in children’s TV programs, while some who enjoy collecting insects dream of becoming a scholar one day.

However, the children in this world do not have such spare time.

When they look around, all they see are adults silently carrying out jobs decided for them by someone else, and they also ask the children to help them out like it’s only natural. There is too little time and no means to “broaden their horizons.” With this kind of experience—the children become convinced that “this is just how the world is.”

This is, in all practicality, brainwashing.

The figure of Miusel studying hiragana late at night floats into my mind. She had been so shocked at my willingness to teach her the characters without demanding any remuneration.

I realize once more how warm and protected my upbringing—and that of the children in modern-day Japan—is. It isn’t simply a difference in the education system. There is also the difference in national polity, the difference in economical strength, the difference in social structure.....it is with the overlap of various conditions that

makes possible such a fortuitous result.

Even though otaku is said to be Japan's culture.

Otaku culture can only be born in Japan, or countries similar to Japan.

“Do you not read books?”

“There's no way we could. They're expensive, and the only people who can read are nobles and scholars anyways.”

The children pouted while answering.

“Is there no one willing to teach you? I mean——reading and writing.”

“Where would we find a noble who would teach commoners how to read and write?”

The young elves replied calmly.

“.....I see.”

All those interesting manga.

All those light novels that can get your blood pumping and set you trembling with excitement.

All those arousing anime and games.

These kids do not know them. They don't even have the ability to learn of them.

I——

“.....?”

I pat the heads of these little elves who're looking at me with

wondering faces.

Before I knew it, from within my chest, the desire to provide some sort of entertainment that these kids can enjoy even in their limited time is spontaneously welling up.

Since I've come to a fantasy world, after so much trouble.

In that case, can't I at least bring some excitement to their hearts with an action adventure story or two.

Volume 1 Chapter 3 Part 3

Chapter 3: Liberty and Equality and Fraternity

Translator: Tenshi

After making a complete round through the town once, we return to the mansion—it is now roughly 3 in the afternoon.

Of course, this is according to my watch, not a clock from this side. According to Matoba-san, however, it seems that the length of days and years here are not that different from our own world, so he said that there is no need for me to re-adjust my watch.

There is, of course, a proper reason why we've returned at a relatively early hour.

It is to entertain a certain guest who has been dropping by every single day lately.

In other words——

“*Umu.....*”

Peering at a manga while on top of my knees, completely settled in as if she's claimed the spot, is Her Imperial Majesty of the Holy Eldant Empire, Petrarca-sama.

“To think that the troubadour would stand up to the Danger Designated Species, the Crimson Dragon. He cannot win with merely song and bow, what is he going to do.....Shinichi, hurry up and read the next page!”

The one who's gazing at the manga in high spirits is Petrarca.

Ever since the first visit on that day, she's been coming to my mansion everyday around the same time and ordering me to read manga to her. The lively voice with which she gives me this order conveys to me her honest enjoyment of manga.

.....More like, is it fine for the head of a country to slip out of the palace so frequently to come play?

So far as it goes, a few escort knights and Prime Minister Zahal are currently outside the room, but that still seems too glib, in my opinion. But well, most likely the people who actually carry out the governmental affairs are Prime Minister Zahal and the knight from that time, Galius.

However.....although from an outsider's perspective this situation might seem like an extremely enviable one to the degree of asking "what are you being rewarded for?", hugging a cute girl who's sitting on my knees for a long time is surprisingly tiring.

Of course, if I get any funny ideas, a very troubling place will quickly wake up. As Petrarca is sitting on my knees, it'd be detected immediately. If that actually happened, I'd definitely get beheaded for lèse majesté.

Even though I would probably be forgiven if I apologized earnestly, this task is quite tough in and of itself. Petrarca is light indeed, but my legs would still become numb after she sits on my knees for longer than an hour. Furthermore, reading the lines and onomotopeia aloud nonstop causes my throat to get parched and my voice to go hoarse.

I think I'll call it quits today soon.

Right when I'm starting to think about taking a break like I usually do——

"Your Majesty. Danna-sama."

Accompanying the knock on the door is Miusel's bell-like voice.

"Please excuse me."

With that simple phrase, Miusel opens the door and pushes the service cart into the office.

A faint, sweet smell wafts into the air and reaches my nose. Some sort of Western confectionery that looks like choux creme is being served on the silver platter. Not sure what's going on, my eyes are round with surprise. Miusel gives us a slightly bashful smile.

“I have prepared tea and some *creme lunt* to go along with it.”

I involuntarily throw several glances at her.

“I didn't ask for this though.....”

“Indeed. However, I had thought that it was about time for you to grow tired.....”

So said Miusel.

As expected of a maid-san——she's such a considerate person. She even brought something sweet for my mental fatigue.

“It's a great help. Well then, how about let's stop here and take a break?”

“What are you saying!”

The expression on Petrarca's face is one of outrage.

“Right now, we're at such a good part of the story!”

“My throat is so parched that it's getting hard to read. Let's have tea, okay?”

With a gentle smile, I spoke in a tone like that of someone trying to admonish a child.

However, this turns out to have triggered the opposite effect.

This is something that I only learned later, but——Petrarca is indeed quite sensitive about her child-like physique, so she hates being treated like a child. Although I know that she's 16 years old, aside from her appearance, her almost unreasonable willfulness and half-baked sophism also contributed to my impression of her as someone childish.....and thus the attitude that I involuntarily took with her is like one that I would a child.

And boy did that make her displeased.....

“.....”

In complete silence, the loli Empress finally lowers herself from my knees.

My relief lasted only a brief moment. Abruptly changing the direction that her body is facing, she turns to glare at Miusel.

“What is up with you! Every time, every time.....how dare a mere maidservant get in my way!”

In a very annoying and provocative way, Petrarca begins to rail at Miusel.

Perhaps she's been bearing with things in her own way. As if trying to release all of her pent-up resentment, she continues shouting in a berating tone.

“This time, too, you were timing it on purpose to force your way in just when it was getting good!”

“I was.....I was just.....”

Being suddenly yelled at, the blood quickly drains from Miusel's face.

I mean, of course it would. Despite her loli appearance or whatever, the other party is still the Imperial Empress.

“It’s just.....I thought Danna-sama would be getting tired.....”

Miusel’s words made logical sense. They did, but.....

Against a person holding absolute power, the effect was like pouring oil onto a fire.

“You dare talk back to me?!”

Looking like she had been insulted, Petrarca is now red to her ears and her voice is trembling.

“You——you mere mutt!!”

“I, I’m terribly sorry.....!”

So said Miusel while throwing herself prostrate on the floor.

From Petrarca’s manner of speaking, it is almost as if Miusel’s sin is being a half-elf. Unable to give a proper rebuttal, all she can do is to beg for forgiveness.

As for me, having this composition of discrimination thrust before my eyes all of a sudden, I am dumbfounded with blank amazement.

I have to stop this. I’m not exactly sure what’s going on, but I have to stop this.

Despite such thoughts, I know that against the conflagration of Petrarca’s rage, anything I say would only fan the flames.....I am merely flapping my mouth open and closed without actually doing anything.

In the middle of this scene of carnage——

“What is this uproar?”

From the direction of the door that is still open, an astonished voice carries our way.

“Ah——”

I unconsciously stiffen my body.

The person who showed up was a silver-haired handsome man——the knight called Galius.

Previously, due to our first meeting at the royal castle when I couldn't hold myself back from raising an objection to his words, and also due to Minori-san's speculation as a fujoshi, I know that I'm bad at handling this person. I'll also say this, but he seems pretty inflexible and has an overly serious vibe, and he gives off the impression of being one of those “accomplished guys” who's good in both the literary and the military arts——to be even more blunt, he seems like a complete riajuu.

(T/N: 'Riajuu' refers to those who are living fulfilled lives, have lots of friends, are outgoing and popular, and are interested in 'real life things.' The term is often used by otaku to refer to 'everyone who is not an otaku.')

“Having heard that her Majesty had come here, I came to see the state of things, but.....”

Drawing his eyebrows together into a frown, the knight Galius looks around the office.

If it's the Galius who's always giving off this “conventional knight in shining armor” vibe, then perhaps he would remonstrate Petrarca for unreasonably rebuking Miusel. After all, when one thinks of knights, the image is, of course, that of someone who protects the weak and

brings down the strong.

“Petrarca.....Her Majesty, she’s.....”

“*Fumu?*”

After a single glance at Petrarca, who is still raving against Miusel—he sighs heavily. Then he begins walking towards Petrarca.....

“Wait a.....Galius.....-san?”

Of all things, he continues walking and passes by Petrarca, heading towards me composedly, before finally sitting down on one of the sofas facing the table. It is as if he has no intention whatsoever of stopping Petrarca—more like, his attitude is as if he can’t even see the shouting Petrarca and the Miusel prostrate on the ground.

“You’re not going to stop her?”

“Every time her Majesty loses her temper, it takes a while for her to calm down. Don’t worry, we simply have to bear with it until she tires herself out.”

The knight Galius nonchalantly gave me such an explanation.

He’s completely giving off this feeling of “an elder brother who’s used to his little sister’s temper.” Aah. If I remember right, this handsome guy is Her Imperial Majesty’s blood relative, isn’t he.

“No, no, no, no, let’s stop her right now!”

“Stop her? Why?”

Looking completely mystified, so asked the knight Galius.

Is this guy for real.

“If you find it too noisy, then you can just plug up your ears.”

“That’s not the point. I mean, Miusel is——”

“*Fumu?*”

As if he has just noticed the presence of Miusel, the knight Galius blinks a few times before turning to look over at Petrarca’s position.

“By ‘Miusel,’ are you referring to that half-elf servant? What about her?”

“Even though she didn’t really do anything wrong, she’s being berated so severely.”

“The servant got on her Majesty’s nerves, so it can’t be helped, right?”

His tone of voice seemed to imply “what is this guy talking about?”

“It’s not like she’s killing her. Something like a mere beating is compensated for within her wages. In the first place, she’s a half-elf, so her social status is not that of someone who’s normally allowed to be the servant of a noble. Therefore, this is to be even more expected as part of her job. She herself has the resolve to bear this——if she does not, then it only means she’s not worthy of being a maid.”

“Wait a……?!”

Struck completely dumbfounded, I am in a daze.

Even up to this very moment, over something that she has no responsibility for——being showered with ridicule simply because of her birth, unable to raise any sort of rebuttal, only allowed to curl up in terror.

『If you wish to hit me, then please use this.』

I recall Blük saying that while handing me a stick, and Miusel worrying about my fist before the Blük who hadn't done anything wrong.

All this is to be expected. After all, this country called Eldant Empire is——

“*Ku*.....”

Uncharacteristically of me, rage is bubbling up from the bottom of my stomach and filling me.

“.....What happened to your knight's code?”

“Knight's code?”

The knight Galius raises one eyebrow in surprise.

He is a picture-perfect knight-sama who emanates dignity and refinement without even having to do anything. Despite that, the words that come out from his mouth are literally dripping with discrimination and prejudice. I simply cannot stand it any longer.

“In what way is the knight's code related to this situation?”

Does he really not understand? This bastard.

“The nobles who claim to be part of our Eldant Empire's honorable knights are those who join the army and thoroughly study etiquette and the duties that they must perform. That is our knight's code.”

The matter of crushing the strong to protect the weak is not within the knight's code that he described.

Speaking of which, the bushido that has been often equated to the knight's code is something established during the Edo period. There are

scholars who hold the view that such idealism had not existed during the Sengoku period. They argue that the idea of ‘bushido’ is merely something thought up by martial artists who could no longer gain fame on the battlefield nor acquire actual results at a time when the very concept of ‘martial arts’ was becoming obsolete.

(T/N: The Japanese word for the ‘knight’s code’ mentioned here is ‘kishido,’ which literally translates as “the path of a knight.” Similarly, ‘bushido’ literally translates as ‘the path of a bushi.’ The similarity in the naming also contributes to the two concepts being equated. ‘Knight’s code’ sounds cooler and is more well-known than ‘path of a knight’ so that’s what I’m sticking to.)

Following such logic, because the Eldant Empire is still in conflict with neighboring countries over national borders, the prevalent ideology is utilitarianism, which basically means survival of the fittest—something like “saving the weak” would be nothing more than an empty slogan.

“It seems that you have some misunderstanding in regards to what it means to be a knight. No matter, I’ll tell you. A ‘knight’ is an existence whose duty is to protect the country that is ‘the Eldant Empire,’ and is someone who embodies this country’s laws and general principles. If there is an element that acts contrary to these truths, then we must volunteer our lives to fight that element. However, we do not have the authority to intervene in affairs that are properly following those principles.”

“By ‘following those principles,’ you mean——”

“That thing over there is not even an elf——she is a half-elf with impure blood, while Petrarca is this Eldant Empire’s Empress. The Empress holds the authority to decide her life and death.”

“.....”

I am——extremely pissed.

People in the surroundings completely accepting certain values with “it’s always been that way” as the only reason, not sparing even a single thought for those hurt by such principles.

Aah, that’s right—I am struck by a light dizziness as I come to a sudden realization and remember something.

The label that people had stuck onto me of their own accord.

『This is how these things are.』

『This is how this guy is.』

Seeing something, or someone, from only one perspective and making up assumptions based on that narrow view.

Because he’s an otaku.

Because they’re people from a parallel world.

Because she’s a child of mixed blood.

I hate people who would sum up an entire person with a single easy-to-understand word, then act like they’ve understood everything about that person. Even in the case of otakus, there are many different kinds. There are good people, and there are bad people. Even in the case of lolicons, who are often spoken of with almost the same words used for criminals, the single word is not capable of fully representing every single person that it is applicable on. Of course, there are those idiots who would abduct little children to sexually abuse them, but on the other hand, there are respectable ones who wouldn’t hesitate to sacrifice themselves to protect little children when something happens.

Despite this.....again and again, people tie everyone else up with simplified common prejudices and abandon all efforts towards any deeper understanding.

Because that guy's an otaku, it's fine to ridicule him.

Because that girl's of mixed blood, it's fine to discriminate against her.

Because that person's——

“In the first place, how can I even drink the tea poured by a half-elf!”

Petrarca's harsh words are continuing even now.

“I've heard that bastards like you aren't welcome in elf settlements, and that you had to live crawling through the mud in the swamplands! What are you going to do about it if the smell of mud rubs off on me!”

The barrage of verbal abuse that can only be thought of as false accusations.

Due to an overload of terror and despair, Miusel's mind has apparently shut down, and I can see from the side that her face has gone completely blank even while her body is maintaining the prostrate posture.

That——is me.

The me who confessed to my childhood friend but was rejected with “because you're an otaku” as the reason. She based her evaluation criteria solely on public opinion, and thus refused to look my way.

Even I'm not exempt from this, by trying to sum up my childhood friend with random nonsense like “girls of this generation are cold and indifferent.” Trying to get by with that prejudiced paradigm alone.

Unable to raise a single word in protest against an insult built upon logic without a basis, I simply gave up while telling myself “this is how the world sees things.” In the end, all I can do is revisit that scene again and again in my dreams to shout out the words that I couldn't give

voice to at the time. What a miserable thing to repeat.

I really wanted to become one of those awesome and cool protagonists from manga or anime or games or light novels.

You may even call it chuunibyou, but what I wanted is a power that gives me the strength to blow away all irrationality—I wished to become an amazing person who is capable of boldly giving word to what I believe in, even if I had to turn everyone around me into an enemy.

My textbooks. What manga and anime and games and light novels have taught me.

That is——

“Petrarca!”

Before I knew it, I’d come up from behind and grabbed her wrist.

It was a capricious act. Therefore, even the knight Galius has only half risen from the sofa in shock.

The entire place has frozen up, like as if the air has turned into ice.

I had intended on shouting at Petrarca. I had intended on letting her experience what it feels like to be insulted with discriminatory words like what she’s doing to Miusel. After all, she’s probably never been shouted at before in her entire life. What do I care that it’s an immature thing to do!

That’s what I had intended.....but.

“.....Shinichi.....?”

In the hand that I’d grabbed, she is still holding aloft a choux creme—I meant, *creme lunt*——that she was about to throw.

However, when she turned around, what I see in her face isn't anger, but rather a dazed look that gave off a silly impression.

She's surprised. Furthermore, she even looks a little scared.

“.....”

When I see her face, which is looking like that of a child being scolded—I feel all my anger dissipating, just like a balloon with a hole poked into it. From the hand of the girl whose eyes have turned round and whose body has stiffened up, I take away the confectionery that was about to be wasted, and for starters, threw a wry smile.

“Ummm.....well.....how do I put this.....”

This is no good. I can't come up with a cool line on the spot.

In these kinds of situations, what do protagonists say? I rapidly browse through the library inside my head, but I can't seem to find the appropriate words.

As I continued to hem and haw, Petrarca's face turns into a scowl and she glares at me.

“Shinichi, what is your intention in covering up for such a vulgar thing?!”

“My ‘intention’? I simply couldn't bear the sight any longer.”

I decide to try putting my thoughts into words.

“I, too, have been arbitrarily condemned and persecuted against.”

“‘Condemned and persecuted’? What are you talking abo——”

“You see, Petrarca.”

I speak quietly.

Not in a way like I'm admonishing her, but in a way like I'm appealing to her.

“In our culture, there's no such thing as a difference in social status.”

“*Muu?*”

The girl Empress tilts her head, indicating that she doesn't fully understand.

To be honest, my back is now extremely itchy from the embarrassment, but.....I tell myself to endure it, and I continue speaking.

“Ideas like liberty and equality and fraternity.....those are the foundations of the culture where I'm from.”

(T/N: Fraternity means 'brotherhood,' or 'love for fellow humanity.' I'm keeping fraternity here, even though it's not an oft used word, because the original French motto is “Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité.” Look up the French Revolution if you want to know more.)

Speaking of which, I'd heard that France is comparatively receptive to Japan's otaku culture. Perhaps it's because it is a country that touts such principles as national policies. Well, such a thought has suddenly flit through my mind, but that's completely unrelated to what's going on here, so let's put that aside.

“In order to properly enjoy the culture that I'm bringing in, Petrarca, you don't have to actually adopt such values, but you must at least understand them.”

“.....”

Petrarca's eyes are round with surprise, like she's hearing a new language for the first time. Suddenly deciding to gauge the reactions of

the other people in the room, I notice Galius——and of all things, even Miusel herself——looking dazed.

I can't tell if this silence that's filled up the office is heavy or light.

And then——

“.....Shinichi.”

The one who spoke up first is Petrarca.

“What is this ‘ee-kwa-lee-tee’ that you speak of? Is it the name of some philosopher or something?”

“.....”

Oh right, sometimes, when conversing through this magical ring, meaningless words get mixed in. Apparently, in the cases when both sides do not both understand the concept being spoken of, the interpreting function cannot handle it and lets the word through as is.

In other words, Petrarca, you don't even know the concept of equality?!

Perhaps because she's been raised as an Empress, no one's ever taught her about it?

Her words made me shudder with foreboding.....and the knight Galius fulfills my foreboding by raising a question in a puzzled tone.

“‘Liberty’ means ‘not bound by anything’ and ‘refusing all restrictions,’ right? In other words, Kanou Shinichi, you are speaking of conduct that deviates from the law?”

Omg wait a freaking second. How the hell did he come to that interpretation?!

Furthermore——

“Umm.....”

With a timid and trembling voice, even Miusel raises a question.

“By ‘fraternity,’ are you perhaps speaking of romantic emotions.....?”

“.....I have to start from all the way there?!”

I unconsciously shouted out in a voice that bordered on a shriek.

Unlike my usual self, I had become indignant at witnessing a graphical composition of discrimination.

This is——not even on the level of it being anyone’s fault.

For Miusel it’s only natural, but even those on the ruling side, namely, Petrarca and Galius, are imprisoned by prejudices and have made no effort towards trying to reach the view from outside. The way of ruling that relies on social castes is very deeply ingrained in them.....more like, their entire worldview has been built upon such a system, so they haven’t even considered questioning those views. Just like the frog stuck inside the well, or someone who’s never seen an ocean being unable to imagine one.

“Oh man.....”

I hold my forehead and let out a soft groan.

For things like electricity and literacy rate, I had the resolution that I would need to set up a certain amount of infrastructure before I can bring in otaku works, but——does this mean that I will have to start from abstract concepts?!

As otaku works are made in modern-day Japan, they are mostly based on individualism and equality, and concepts such as totalitarianism and discrimination are being presented as enemies within many of them.

Therefore, without understanding individualism and equality, the reader will not be able to empathize with the main characters.

I'm moaning while at a complete loss, but then——

“.....Interesting.”

The knight Galius suddenly said something like that.

Eh, wait, “interesting”? Did he just say “interesting”? This person?

“Here I was, thinking that you'd let your anger take its course and reproach Her Majesty, but.....is this the spirit of the “liberty, equality, and fraternity” that you speak of? At any rate, the fact that you were able to curb her Majesty's anger with words alone is of great interest indeed.”

“.....Ah.....yes.....”

This reaction from the knight Galius is completely beyond my expectations.

“To be frank, the culture of our Eldant Empire has been stagnating for the past half century, and has been said to be declining on a road with no return. As a result of prolonged war, there has been no room for new culture to arise, nor any space for new culture to be imported.”

“.....”

I feel like I can somehow understand.

Culture——especially a culture with diversity, is a product that matures as a result of surplus and bountifulness. Of course, culture still happens during wartime, and it still matures, but somehow it is always much more limited than it is during peacetime. More like, it is only allowed to exist as in limited amounts. Japan during WWII and China's Cultural Revolution are both very vivid examples of this.

“There are learned men who, even from a while back, have raised the view that this is due to the citizens’ dynamism being worn down. However, this is not something that can be directly seen with the naked eye, so countermeasures somehow keep being forestalled.”

“.....Well, I can imagine.”

As I had thought, this knight is actually really sharp.

Though still rough around the edges, he is capable of thinking in a way very similar to sociology. It must be because of the special perspective of his position as someone overlooking society as a whole. Of course, this way of thinking might just be something that he’s parroting from someone else, but the fact that his upbringing has enabled him to think in such a way in this medieval-like world is already a praiseworthy thing.

“That is why Prime Minister Zahal and others are so actively advocating commerce with your side. I held doubts towards such thinking, but I shall now alter my attitude a little.”

The handsome knight stands up and is now walking towards me.

His face, which is so beautiful that I would have fallen for him already if I was a girl, draws so close that our noses almost touch.

Too close, too close, WAYYY too close! What the heck is with this distance?!

Furthermore, he takes my hand with a smile on his face. And he’s doing it like a knight taking the hand of a lady——GYAAAAAA?!

“I had thought you a delicate and undependable youngster, but.....braving the danger of being charged with lèse majesté, all to save a mere maidservant, you——I mean, your culture, is very much tickling my fancy.”

Wait a freaking second omg did you just almost say “you are very much tickling my fancy”?!

“I shall lend you my aid. I believe that you might be the one who will smash open the prison that we have been locked into.”

Speaking in an almost-whisper makes his words somehow sound obscene.

I am feeling chills which are making every hair on my body stand on end, but——

“Galius!”

Petrarca’s voice thankfully scatters the scent of roses that was quickly increasing in density.

(T/N: Again, roses represent the yaoi genre. Too bad Minori-san is not in this scene.)

“Do not act beyond the boundaries of your authority!”

“——Ha.”

With a “ha,” the knight Galius lets go of my hand and makes a bow.

(T/N: “Ha” here is like a more refined form of “oops,” or whatever you say when you suddenly come back to your senses.)

“I have behaved discourteously, your Majesty.”

“That kind of decision cannot be made by you alone. It must be properly passed through me.”

Petrarca raises her voice as if in indignation.

Then, she turns around to face me.

“Shinichi. Today, as Galius has said, in light of your mettle that enabled you to remonstrate myself even at the risk of lèse majesté, I shall excuse both you and the maidservant over there.”

“I.....see. Thank you.”

“However, I shall order you once again.”

With a great, big smile, Petrarca continues speaking.

“Teach us also that Japanese of yours. I cannot stand the fact that there is something that even the likes of a maidservant knows that the Empress that I am do not. I shall be the first to master the Japanese language, so that I can personally make sure of whether this otaku culture that you wish to bring in will truly bring relief to my country’s cultural stagnation or not!”

.....You are saying such grand and exaggerated things, but you just want to be able to read manga by yourself as soon as possible, right?

But well, I’m of course not stupid enough to actually say such suicidal words. All I can do is nod.

“Galius. We are returning to the castle immediately. Also, call Zahal. From this day on, we will be coming to this mansion as a part of official business, so, you explain to him the purport of these visits!”

.....Which means, just as I had thought, you’ve been sneaking out of the castle to come here this entire time, haven’t you.

“Make space in your schedule starting from tomorrow, Shinichi!”

“Umm.....around the same starting time and duration as today?”

What ‘starting from tomorrow’.....these past few days, you’ve already

been coming daily.

“That is fine!”

Nodding in satisfaction, Petrarca then turns to throw a glance at Miusel and fixes her in her gaze.

Towards the girl who has unconsciously ducked her head—the girl Empress haughtily makes a declaration.

“Furthermore, you. Your name is Miusel, right? I shall not forgive you if you steal a march on me.”

“Eh? Ye-Yes.”

Without having been given any time to consider Petrarca’s words, Miusel nods reflexively.

“Don’t go sneaking private lessons with Shinichi on the side.”

“Ye-Yes.”

Miusel nods again earnestly.

It seems like I’ve somehow stopped Petrarca from demeaning Miusel any further, but.....in exchange, a strange sense of rivalry seems to have sprouted. I feel a rare sense of foreboding, but if I try to confirm it here, then it would only unnecessarily cause the conversation to roll downhill in a heedless direction, so it is fear that is holding me back.

“Well then——see you all tomorrow. We’re leaving, Galius!”

“Yes. I shall accompany you, your Majesty.”

With that——the Empress who is like a typhoon and her knight withdrew from the room together.

And after that.

“.....Ummm.”

A queer silence has been left behind in the office.

When Miusel and my eyes meet.....I speak first while scratching my cheek.

(T/N: Anime characters scratch their cheek or the back of their head when they're confused, not because those places are itchy.)

“Miusel. I'm sorry, but can you brew a new pot of tea for me? I think the previous one has probably cooled down by now. After you went to the trouble of making these pastries, I want to properly enjoy them together with some hot tea.”

“Ah. Yes.”

Getting up, Miusel smiles at me in happiness.

“I shall bring it at once, Danna-sama.”

After seeing her out as she pushes the service cart——I sigh with relief.

But at this time.....I was not yet completely aware of the exact effects on the entire country of this Eldant Empire that will take place because of what I am trying to do.

Volume 1 Chapter 4 Part 1

Chapter 4: Thy Name is 'Invader'

Translator: Tenshi

On a warm early afternoon, I find myself in a hilly area near the mansion.

The slopes of the hills have apparently been turned into a pasture, as I can see sheep that look like clumps of wool grazing here and there. This is a pastoral scene in the full meaning of the word. I feel like I might even hear a yodel anytime.

However.....just by looking a bit upwards, everything changes.

The reason is because there is a school of fish flying there.

“.....What is that.”

Umm, I think they're fish. Are they?

At least, they look nothing like birds. Their basic shape is similar to that of scabbard fish. Wrapped in silver scales glittering under the sunlight, undulating their thin, long bodies through the gaps between clouds, they look like horizontal swords much more than birds. The thin, wing-like membrane gracefully extending from their caudal and dorsal fins is the sole part that gives credence to their identity as “living creatures that can fly in the sky.”

“Those are *'heshiv icht's*.”

Miusel informed me while by my side.

“They are a variety of wind sprites that doesn't travel in any set route, but rather goes wherever there is wind. They feed on wind and grow wind-eating grass. This area has been turned into a pasture for sheep.”

“.....*Uumu*.”

‘Wind sprites’ and ‘wind-eating grass,’ eh?

As expected of a fantasy country. Miusel is most likely teaching me an extremely common piece of common knowledge here, but my ears can only register it as a fairy tale.

“In my country, grass is something that grows with sunlight, water, and nutrients in soil.”

“Is there no wind-eating grass in Danna-sama’s country?”

“Not to my knowledge, no.....”

“Wind-eating grass feeds on the mana released by wind sprites. Even if you go to a desert, you can see it floating on the wind.”

(T/N: So the wind-eating grass doesn’t eat wind? Lol.)

“.....the desert.”

In that case, can it technically be called afforestation?

That aside.....the grass is not exactly dandelion seeds, but for it to float in the wind.....this is a scene that is unimaginable back in our world. But that’s only natural, as there is no such thing as mana in our world. Another way of putting things is that it is because there is mana on this side that there is vegetation that has evolved thus.

Speaking of which.....I’ve read that if the color of the sun is even slightly different, the pigments inside chloroplasts would make plants red rather than green. I suppose that is something like this.

“Same, but also different at the same time.”

I smile wryly while walking.

Indeed. This is a parallel world. Even the maid-san currently at my side is an elf girl who has elf blood and pointed ears that become visible when her hair sways.

“That’s why I don’t quite know exactly how effective my way of doing things will be.....”

The place that we are heading to is a close by building.

To some it up in a word, it is a gigantic windmill.

No. It’s gigantic, so it probably shouldn’t be called as such.

(T/N: The word for ‘windmill’ in Japanese is 風車小屋, which can be broken down to pinwheel (風車) little house (小屋). He’s thinking that due to its size, ‘little house’ is not quite apt.)

Its height is like that of a five story building. Just like a cone stacked on top of a cylinder, the building’s appearance is similar to that of a stubby pencil, with enormous green vanes mounted near the top. Due to the wall being built with bricks, numerous black raindrop-like stains running vertically can be seen, hinting at the building’s significant age.

All around this building, a large number of people are moving about.

With metal trowels in their hands, they are painting what looks like plaster or concrete over the cracks and holes on the wall. For the particularly large places, they first pack some rocks, reinforce the part with lumber, then finish with some painting work.

What is going on here is, in other words, renovation construction.

Originally a disused windmill, this is something that the Eldant Empire has lent me—to be more exact, to the parallel world joint entertainment company AmuTec. The working force is also lent by the Empire—humans are a given, but there are also elves and lizardmen and even red-faced stubby people that I think are dwarves. All of them

are currently working to fix this windmill.

These people actually are a combat engineer unit belonging to the Eldant Empire.

Although they are very unsuitable for delicate and neat work like building a noble's mansion, their usual workplace is the battlefield——top speed construction is commonplace for them, and they are such reliable craftsmen that they can slap together a fort or two within three days. When I said “don't sweat the details, just somehow repair this building to the degree where it is usable,” they all nodded with full confidence.

When I take a peek inside, I see that progress is smooth there too.

It's just that the main labor force here isn't soldiers from the Eldant Empire, but the JSDF.

The restructuring of the interior of the windmill involves clearing away the majority of the original installations, which were gears that relied on wind power to turn and mill grain, and installing instead electric cables and a small converter. Yes, we are turning this disused windmill into a wind power station.

The thing with using wind power to generate electricity, though, is that the output is unstable, as it depends on the strength and direction of the wind. However, this area has wind sprites flying around twenty-four seven, so I wonder how it's going to turn out.

As a supplement to this wind power station, the JSDF has also brought over several solar panels. For now, all this electricity is available for AmuTec to freely use.

“Miusel, this way, this way.”

I go up a few steps of the spiral-shaped staircase installed against the wall, and gaze out through a window.

From this place above the soldiers, I can clearly see my mansion. And in a place slightly removed from my mansion, there is a building that was previously used as a grain warehouse. Of course, that is also currently being renovated.

“So you will be building a ‘school’ at that place.....”

Miusel looks deeply moved.

Indeed. The grain warehouse is currently being renovated into an educational institution for the purpose of having otaku culture permeate into this world. This wind power station, as well as these solar panels, are both for the sake of supplying electricity to this ‘otaku training school.’

It has been about a month since I first came to the Eldant Empire.

For otaku culture to spread, a certain standard of foundational education is indispensable.

After having determined so, I made a request to Matoba-san and Petrarca to arrange these facilities. My attitude while asking had been “oh well, I’ve got nothing to lose anyways,” but to my surprise, both of them easily gave me the green light. Thanks to that, I was able to smoothly make a start upon my ‘otaku training school.’

To be frank, it’s a little scary how smoothly things are going.

Although I got all enthusiastic thinking “it’s Sim Akiba!”, I’ve been a home security guard only up till recently, so I feel slightly apprehensive when my decisions are moving so many people and so much resources.

(T/N: Sim Akiba -> Sim City)

In the midst of such thoughts——

“——Shinichi!”

My name was called.

That cute voice that I’ve already grown familiar with is——

“Ah. Petrarca.”

Before I knew it, a single magnificent carriage had stopped right next to the windmill. The carriage’s overall base color is white, and even the birds pulling it are white. And standing beside that carriage is the small bodied Empress vigorously waving her arms.

With her silver hair gently dancing in the wind, that figure of hers is, of course, extremely cute. If I told her that, then she’ll probably get mad and yell “don’t treat me like a child!” though.

Miusel and I go down the staircase in a hurry.

“So you were in a place like this.”

Drawing over to us, Petrarca spoke first.

“You weren’t in the mansion, so I came looking.”

“Eh? We were supposed to be on break for the study group today, weren’t we?”

“So I’m not allowed to come when there’s no study group?”

Speaking with upturned eyes, Petrarca sounded slightly reproachful.

“*Hau?! Upturned eyes are, upturned eyes are cheating, Your Majesty!*” is something that I can’t exactly say out loud, so for now I press down my moe-moe feelings and cover them up with a smile.

“That’s not the case, of course.”

“Then it’s fine.”

Petrarca nods with a somewhat relieved expression.

Ahh geez this Imperial Majesty is just so cute!! Every single gesture she makes gives off the lovable impression of a child trying her best to do something beyond her abilities. Furthermore.....

“Today, I really wanted to show you this.”

Petrarca holds out one hand. At that moment, one of the knights that I think is accompanying her steps up, takes out a single book from somewhere, and places it onto her hand.

The book has the words “Kanji Study Book” written in hiragana on the front.

When I take the book that is being offered to me and open it, I see earthworm-like characters packed tightly within each and every page. How do i put this, every single kanji in here are simple ones taught during the early years of primary school, and the handwriting is terrible, but the quantity is quite impressive.

“This.....is pretty amazing.”

When I gave my honest opinion as such, Petrarca’s face breaks into an enormous smile and she sticks out her chest—flat though it is—and holds her head high.

“I grant you permission to be amazed at my intelligence!”

“No, I am seriously surprised.”

That was not flattery nor exaggeration.

In the first place, this Kanji Study Book is something that I had ordered

through Matoba-san. Of course, as a teaching material for the otaku training school. I then gave one book each to Petrarca and Miusel, but.....

“I’ve read through the reports written by the coat of arms scholars that I had recording and researching the shapes of these ‘Japanese characters.’”

Uumu, as expected of an Imperial Majesty.

Such a large commotion for learning a single character. More like, whichever way you look at it, that’s cheating, isn’t it.

Because of that——Petrarca turns towards Miusel, who is standing beside me, and makes a declaration with a challenging face.

“I can’t lose to the likes of a mere maid, after all.”

“Eh? Ah, no, that’s.....”

Of course, Miusel became flustered and incoherent. Well, being acknowledged by an absolute monarch as a rival in studying Japanese would leave anyone at a loss.

“This is a good opportunity. Comparing which of us has attained a higher level of proficiency in Japanese should serve as a bit of amusement.”

“Eh, th-, that’s.....”

“Here I go!”

So saying, Petrarca drops into a stance like she’s just started a martial arts match.

Should I say this forceful pushiness is as expected of an Imperial Majesty? Suddenly having a match sprung on her, Miusel is completely

flustered. But of course, there's no way Petrarca would wait for her. Instead, Petrarca carries on all by herself.

“*Namamugi namagome nama tamago!*”

(T/N: Yep, a Japanese tongue-twister. It means ‘raw wheat, raw rice, raw egg.’)

“.....”

I unconsciously stumbled with surprise.

No. Self-study is well and all, but why are you bringing that up here, Your Imperial Majesty?

“*Au.....au au, na, nama, namamoge, tamago moge.....?!*”

Miusel agitatedly tried to repeat after her.

It sounded like her tongue had gotten twisted up, and she couldn't say it at all.

Actually, this is wonderful as is. Even I cannot suppress shivers at the natural airheadedness of this maid-san half-elf dojikko Miusel who already has too many moe traits. Miusel, what a frightful child.....!

“What's wrong? If you can't even do something so basic, then a maidservant's learning ability must not amount to much!”

Petrarca laughs heartily with her nose in the air.

Well, duh. After telling Miusel to “not steal a march on me” but then assigning scholars to research Japanese and receiving supplementary lessons from those scholars herself, short of Miusel being a genius, of course Petrarca would pull ahead.

At this time——

“Shinichi-kun. And even Your Majesty.....why are both of you here? Inspection?”

Minori-san called out to us.

Apparently, she is among the JSDF currently working on the windmill.

So this is why I haven't seen her all morning, even though she's supposed to be my personal escort.....

“What about you, Minori-san? What's up with that outfit?”

“There's no 'what's up' about it. This is my actual everyday uniform.”

The Minori-san who's saying this is currently not wearing her usual tight uniform.

Dark-colored pants made with plenty of cloth, as well as durable black boots. Moreover, covering her upper body is a white tank top that is liberally exposing her shoulders and chest. On top of her head is a helmet with the words 'JSDF' printed on it.

Although this is the Minori-san with the gentle and calm aura, this get-up totally makes her look like the muscle-type contractor nee-chan. Clothes really do have a huge impact on visual impressions.

With that said.....there are things that stay the same, regardless of clothes.

Rather, with even less fabric concealing her body, her physique stands out that much more. Especially worthy of note is her plentiful breasts, which are being pushed up by the tight-looking fabric. A splendid valley can be glimpsed from her collar. The overall outfit makes me quite troubled as to where to look.

“.....*tte*. No staring, alright?”

Turning her body, Minori-san has her breasts take refuge from my line of sight.

“Shinichi. Are women with large breasts your preference, Shinichi?”

“Well, large breasts *are* one of the best appeal points that a character can have.”

“Don’t call me a character.”

Minori-san is glaring at me with slightly reproachful eyes.

“*Fun.....*each and every one of you. It’s just having extra meat stuck onto the chest, is it not?”

With half of my consciousness stolen away by Minori-san’s breasts, I finally recognize who just said those words in a grumpy tone.

It was Petrarca.

“Eh? Ah, no, but, being big is not the be-all and end-all. Smaller breasts have their own unique charms too.”

I spoke while in a fluster.

There isn’t a single thing to injure Her Imperial Majesty’s mood.

I clench my fists and iterate with great passion.

“All breasts in the *tsurupeta* category, such as tiny breasts, small breasts, and washboard breasts, are of course, of great worth due to their reserved yet undeniable assertion of womanhood. Just like a hidden flower, or a flower bud on the cusp of full bloom, they possess a sense of purity and innocence that, when unveiled, engenders a truly perverted sense of eros. Having yet to be touched by anyone, *tsurupeta* breasts are the very exemplification of sensitivity, and are beautiful like

untrodden snow is beautiful, which is a beauty that cannot be attained by any other types.....”

After saying that much—I come back to my senses. All of the girls are looking at me with difficult eyes.

More like, to be blunt, all three are slightly drawing away from me.

.....Even Miusel?!

“Ah! No, that’s! It’s because I was asked!”

“Talking about perverted and eros and all that. If this wasn’t Eldant, I would have sued you for sexual harassment, Shinichi-kun.”

“That’s not it. That’s not it, I was just——”

“Shinichi is indeed quite lewd, eh?”

So commented Petrarca while crossing her arms.

“And you even have an excessively large strike range, being fine with big breasts to small breasts.”

“As I’m saying, I was just giving an answer because I was asked!!”

“With this, I now know that I have to keep a sharp eye out, or else he will lay his hands on his maidservant and knock her up before I know it.”

“Kn-.....Knock.....?!”

Miusel lets out a moan with a crimson face.

“I won’t!! More like, girls shouldn’t say things like ‘knock up’——ugh?!”

“Alright, alright, be quiet for a moment, you.”

So said Minori-san as she suddenly grabs my head in a lariat and slowly drags me away from Petrarca and Miusel.

After that——

“That aside, Shinichi-kun.”

Minori-san’s tone has completely changed.

“Do you fully understand what it is that you are trying to do?”

“No, I really had no intention of sexual harassment.....”

“Not that.”

At the edge of my vision, I see Minori-san taking off her magical ring before speaking again.

“This right here is a completely feudalistic society, remember? There’s no way they would accept ideas like freedom and equality.”

We sneak a glance towards Miusel and Petrarca, and see Petrarca saying something to Miusel. Judging by the fact that there’s no fear in Miusel’s face, Petrarca is most likely not rebuking her like last time. Then Minori-san continues.

“Many things are different from they way they are in our world. Right now, everything about us is still new and novel and mysterious, so the Eldant Empire side is in approval, but.....to put it into words, you are trying to build an educational institution that will deny the very structure upon which the Eldant Empire is built upon.”

“.....Could it be that a complaint came to Matoba-san?”

This past fortnight, I’ve barely seen Matoba-san.

After the establishment of this ‘school’ was confirmed, just as promised, he’s been taking up all of the detailed administrative and management paperwork and duties, which has made him travel between the Eldant Empire and Japan several times. Apparently, he doesn’t have much time for anything else.

“No, not really. Well.....”

Minori-san’s face suddenly clouds over.

The resignation that I see harbored in her smile weighs on my mind.

“Shinichi!”

I turn around at Petrarca’s voice.

She points at Miusel and shouts.

“What on earth have you been feeding her?!”

“——Hah? ‘Feeding her’——just the same things we ourselves are eating.”

Such was my answer.

Incidentally, all meals are eaten together with Miusel and Minori-san and Blük. Whichever way you think about it, that way’s easier on Miusel, and since we’re living together in the same mansion after all, the food is definitely more delicious like that, so I was the one who suggested it.

At first, Miusel and Blük were being a bit reserved, but after receiving my ‘order,’ by now, they’re basically eating the same thing at the same place.

“‘Same things’?”

“*Un.* Same things.”

Astonished, Petrarca responds thus.

“Not dishes made from the leftovers?”

“Wouldn’t it be such a bother to make a second round of dishes?”

“Leaving aside it being a bother or not, *muu*.....is that why?”

“What do you mean?”

“You peon, your breasts are bigger than I thought. It’s normally hard to tell by the ribbon around the collar though.”

“Y-.....Your Majesty?!”

“Eh? It’s really as I’d thought?!”

“Danna-sama?!”

Miusel raises her voice almost in a shriek.

Damn, before I knew it, I carelessly——

“I understand now, Shinichi. You bastard, you’re making her consume nutritious foods with the intention of growing her breasts!”

No, it’s not the same as growing vegetables or fattening pigs.

Ah——but I think she does have a point?

Before my order for Miusel to eat together with us, her meals have apparently been quite plain. It was the same for Blük. Consequently, now that their diet have been bettered so, their complexions have visibly improved——well, in Blük’s case, he’s simply shed his skin

though. It's just that the molting happened a bit earlier than it normally would, which is apparently an indication that his metabolism has gone up.

As for Miusel, as she is still in the middle of her growth spurt, there is indeed the possibility that her breasts would suddenly grow in size.

Well, even though they're both around the same age, and even though I'm sure Petrarca is taking in better nutrition of the two, when I look at the part of her that's not growing.....what can I say, all I can do is chalk it up to a difference in latent potential.

“Damn you, Shinichi.....to think that you are that obsessed about breasts! Oi, half-elf! You better record down your menu! Find out what is it that you are eating that is making your breasts grow——”

“Not obsessed at all, not obsessed at all’——is something that I can't really say, but not to that extent!!”

In a fluster, I quickly tried to defend myself.

I am not patient enough to actualize such a lightbulb idea.

Despite that——

“Ah, umm, Danna-sama.”

Miusel speaks to me timidly.

“That's.....if bigger is your preference, then I'll, um, work hard to grow them.....”

“Don't you take this conversation into another ridiculous direction!”

My voice is starting to border on a shriek.

Am I currently being made out into a pervert who's obsessed with

growing Miusel's breasts for the sake of indulging in them later?

.....But it's a secret that from today onwards, I'm thinking of requesting cooking that uses a lot of milk-based cream, alright?



Well, with this and that, time has passed.

My 'job' as the General Manager of AmuTec is slowly starting to get going.

But perhaps I really should give more thought to my 'job.'

As is often said, the thing called entertainment is a gamble. There is no 'if you do this-and-this, you will be guaranteed success.' It is not rare for the same staff and methodology that produced a hit series to create a major flop next. I have seen mountains of such real life examples.

Which means——this can also be said.

If I tell myself 'Well, no need to work so hard on it' and 'For now, let's take a wait-and-see approach,' some work or other will catch on all by itself in a place I don't know. There have been too many such examples to count.

In the case of my 'job,' if asked whether this is a fortunate or unfortunate thing, I would have to pick the latter.

In other words——

“Come on. Shinichi. Hurry up.”

Petrarca is rushing me.

Today, too, we are having ‘class’ at the mansion.

Well, this hasn’t changed much in the past two months.

What *has* changed though, is the roster of participants.

More like, to be blunt——it’s multiplied.

“.....”

“.....”

In the usual Western style living room, there are roughly twenty young nobles—I think they’re all in their teens—sitting on improvised chairs alongside the wall and looking my way.

How do I put this? I feel like the room’s suddenly gotten a lot more cramped.

Incidentally, the current number is a result of us screening through all the ‘matriculation applicants.’ If we accepted all the applicants, I think there would now be more than a hundred people. Including the servants and attendants and what not, the number would be three times that.

Somehow, ‘the private in-house school that Her Imperial Majesty visits frequently’—referring to my mansion, in other words—has become a hot topic among the nobles. Leaving aside the time when she was still coming over incognito, now Petrarca comes to my place under the purport of ‘official business,’ so of course the other nobles of the Empire would come to know about my place. Discerning that ‘from now on, the Empire is going to proactively adopt this foreign country’s advanced culture as a national policy,’ and not wishing to be left behind in this ‘flow,’ those nobles decided to send their own young people to attend this ‘private school.’

Moreover.....under this Holy Eldant Empire’s system of government, how well acquainted one is with her Imperial Majesty has become a standard to distinguish winners and losers. This being the case, getting noticed by Her Majesty is also another aim motivating the nobles to send their young ones to this ‘foreign culture private school.’

To be frank, this is one of the contexts behind why the construction of the school can be carried out at such a quick pace.

Of course.....I do not intend on making otaku culture ‘something only for nobles.’ As my aim is ‘prevalence,’ I wish to get it to the point where the entire country, and depending on circumstances, perhaps even the surroundings countries, gets wrapped up in it.

However, at the moment, there’s just no room in this ‘private school’ for commoners to gain a foothold.

Not to mention the sharp difference in upbringing between noble children and commoner children. The fact that commoners do not know how to read and write means that they don’t even know how to properly use paper and pen and other such stationery. On the other hand, nobles and those on that side have sophisticated culture and are blessed with refined magical techniques, so even the way they think is completely different.

In the current situation, where this ‘private school’ is dependent on my own ability, nothing more can be done.

This is the very reason why having a physical building, as well as creating the school’s administrative organization, is so paramount.

Well, because of this.

“Alright, alright. So, for today——”

Having been urged on by Petrarca, what I am now opening is—a new publication.

The number of manga that Matoba-san has brought over per my requests has long reached the thousands. Even if I read aloud one series per day, we have enough to last a while more. Furthermore, we are currently bound to easy-to-understand fantasy works for Petrarca's sake, but eventually, when she becomes more familiar with Japanese culture, we can move onto the school life genre, or perhaps even the romantic fiction genre.

While thinking such things——

“*Fua.....*”

I couldn't help letting out a yawn.

For the past while, I've been consulted for my opinion and asked to confirm so many things related to the construction of the school and the setting up of the organization that it's been quite hectic. Fatigue is piling up, and my sleeping hours have been slightly decreasing.

“Shinichi.”

Petrarca is looking up at me with reproachful eyes.

By the way, after the first time I ever showed her manga and read aloud to her, Petrarca has apparently claimed the top of my knees as her personal seat.

As can be expected, this is quite embarrassing in front of the other 'students,' so I've pleaded to Petrarca to spare me, but she stubbornly refused. Rather, she's continued to sit on top of my knees, almost as if she's purposely showing off to Miusel and the other students.

Therefore, at this very moment, Petrarca is pushing her head against my shoulder to look up at me, but that action is just—if I say this out loud, she'll definitely get angry—so much like a child that it's quite adorable.

“Is it so boring when I am here?”

The question was delivered in a whisper of a voice.

More likely, the other students, who are against the wall, did not hear it.

“No, su-, such a thing is unthinkable, of course.”

I quickly shake my head in a fluster.

“But you know, Your Majesty—I mean, Petrarca—I’m just a little bit tired.”

“*Muu.*”

“More like, if it’s just reading aloud, even Minori-san or Matoba-san——”

“No.”

Petrarca instantaneously shot down my opinion.

“Shinichi’s lessons are good as they are. It’s fine listening to Shinichi read aloud, just like so.”

So she said while squirming and moving her butt on my knees to readjust into a more comfortable position.

Alright seriously, Your Majesty. Doing something like that too much will be kind of bad for me. I’m glad that that place hasn’t woken up yet, but I feel like it might wake up soon, you know?

“Do you truly love this manga of yours?”

“Eh? Well, of course I do.”

That's why I'm doing this kind of work. Isn't it obvious?

".....You know, I've previously met with evangelists and missionaries and their like, many times."

Petrarca is speaking in a slightly serious tone of voice.

"The majority of the lot had blatant ulterior motives. If they were accepted by my empire, then they would gain gold or renown—those sorts of intentions. There have been so, so few who would bring in entertainment as entertainment....."

"....."

I am at a loss for words.

Indeed, I am bringing otaku culture into this Eldant Empire as entertainment for its own sake. However, that's probably not the case for the people behind me, namely, the Japanese government. There is surely some sort of profit within their calculations. I am not stupid enough to believe that a government would move because of a pure sense of good will.

However——

"You.....really read like you're enjoying it."

Petrarca laughed a little while speaking.

"I-.....is that so?"

"*Umu*. When I'm here like this, your breathing, your pulse, and things like that, are all conveyed to me. I can tell that you are truly enjoying this thing called manga. When the protagonist is in a perilous situation, your heart goes pit-a-pat. Your heart also goes doki-doki for the protagonist's romance. Sitting here, I can feel all that. And I find it all

so enthralling.”

So said Petrarca in a whisper.

“If I get careless, I might find it even more so than the manga itself.....”

“.....”

I feel like I’ve been stabbed through the chest.

This girl is the Imperial Majesty.

I have yet to hear the full details, but if she is the Imperial Majesty at this age, then it either means that her parents are both dead, or that they’re in a situation where they are unable to be installed onto the throne.

In other words, they are not by her side.

There are very few who could fly past the ‘Imperial Majesty’ part of her to interact with her as a girl named Petrarca. Or perhaps, there isn’t anyone at all.

Therefore.....in all likelihood, there is no one for her to exchange true feelings with.

Even those ‘classmates’ of hers currently against the wall, they’re only thinking of getting close to Petrarca the Imperial Majesty. As for Petrarca the individual, they most likely—have no interest whatsoever.

The difference in status between the Imperial Majesty and her retainers means that the *honne* and the *tatemae* is always present, and that there is almost zero chance for Petrarca to be in touch with that *honne*. It’s almost as if every single person around her is an actor or actress.

(T/N: *Honne* and *tatemae* are words that describe the contrast between

a person's true feelings and desires (本音 *honne*) and the behavior and opinions one displays in public (建前 *tatemae*, "façade"). ~Wikipedia)

From her point of view, it is as if there is a glass wall isolating her from everyone else. Now if Petrarca was stupid, she wouldn't care about this, but for better or for worse, she clearly has a sharp mind. Which is why——

“Shinichi?”

Petrarca raises her voice in puzzlement.

Aah geez, how do I put this, I feel an urge to give this girl a really big, tight hug bubbling up from deep within. But that sort of thing is probably completely NG.

While I'm wrestling with an over-abundance of these vexing feelings——

“I have brought tea.”

Miusel comes in without knocking, instead announcing herself in a small voice.

Coming in with a small voice instead of knocking is to not interrupt my reading aloud. Incidentally, she needs to prepare servings for myself and Petrarca and all twenty 'students,' so she's pushing a large service cart.

“Excuse me.”

This was also said in a small voice that was almost a whisper, after which she began preparing.

“Thank you.”

In response to my thanks, Miusel gives me a short bow——having

finished lining up the tea utensils, and having finished pouring the tea, she bows once more before leaving the room.

As I gaze silently at that figure——

“.....*Fun.*”

For some reason, Petrarca sniffs with displeasure from where she’s sitting on top of my knees.



It goes without saying, of course, that Miusel is not participating in this ‘private school,’ aka the study group.

Since all of the participants in this study group are youngsters from noble families, it is all too obvious that Miusel joining in would be a sore thumb sticking out. Then again, as she and Blük are in charge of managing this mansion, she has to do the cleaning, the laundry, the cooking, and a gigantic heap of tasks—she herself doesn’t have spare time during daytime to join the study group.

Therefore——

“Alright, shall we begin?”

Sitting in one of the sofas in my office, the one who spoke was me.

“Yes, please.”

And the one who smiled while opening a notebook was Miusel.

I am giving Miusel one-on-one lessons before sleeping at night.

Well, when I think about it, Miusel was the first person that I met after coming to Eldant, and also pretty much my very first student. No matter how busy I'm getting, I would feel very uncomfortable abandoning her education.

To be honest, the study group in the daytime does tire me out quite significantly, but the sight of Miusel delightfully absorbing knowledge of Japanese from me is just so cute that I can't help but be motivated to work harder. Petrarca did tell her to 'not steal a march,' but it's just that Petrarca studies in the day and Miusel studies in the night, so it doesn't count as stealing a march—that's the way I see it.

However.....

“Umm, Danna-sama.”

That day, Miusel abruptly raised this proposal.

“For a bit.....just only a bit, can you take off your magical ring?”

It was a very sudden request.

“Why?”

“Please, only a short while is fine.....”

When asked in such an earnest manner, I couldn't really find it in me to say no.

Well, the magical ring is something that I put on and take off really frequently anyways—to have secret conversations—so I felt no reluctance in doing so. I grasp the golden ring on my left ring finger and smoothly pull it off—then I leave it on the tabletop.

“Alright, I've taken it off. Where do you intend to go with this?”

Only after speaking did I realize it.

Of course, my words should no longer have been comprehensible to Miusel.

The magical ring's function of translating each other's words—'interpreting' is more correct—only activates when both sides are wearing one.

“_____”

With pronunciation like the sound of a rolling bell, Miusel was trying to say something.

Having lived in Eldant for about three whole months, even I can somehow understand that the words being spoken are in the Eldant language. I can't catch the actual details of what is being said, but I've remembered at least a few words. For example, like *retosam* (Danna-sama) and *sei* (yes).

“_____shi”

Opening and closing her mouth like a goldfish, a husky voice escaped Miusel's lips.

“Shiniti.....Shini....chi, sama.....is.....dis.....gud? Is, co-.....corekt?”

“——Eh?”

I involuntarily doubted my ears.

Though spoken falteringly and with a lisp, that was undoubtedly Japanese. It was quite hard to catch, but it was definitely my name. No. Being able to say my name wouldn't have been that surprisingly, as Minori-san and Matoba-san and Petrarca have been pronouncing it so often. Being able to put it into a conversation, now that's a completely different dimension altogether.

Of course, I had no memory of having taught her this far.

Did she cram in some self-study in order to give me a surprise?

By sacrificing her already diminished amount of spare time.....?

“Uwah.....”

Her exceeding studiousness made my chest a little hot.

“Shiniti.....sama.....?”

Most likely still lacking in self-confidence, Miusel raised a questioning voice while looking at me with upturned eyes.

I nodded deeply and answered thus.

“*Un*. It’s correct.”

“.....glad.....to heard.”

Looking relieved, Miusel gave me a broad smile.

Even though she always seems flustered and hesitant, at this moment she looks somewhat proud of herself. I believe it’s due to the joy of knowing that her efforts have paid off. That appearance was just so cute that I was spontaneously struck with a powerful urge to hug her tightly.

Kuh.....subside, both arms of mine!

While such evil eye pretensions were unfolding inside my mind, I returned the magical ring to my own finger.

“That’s amazing. To think that you have become capable of holding a conversation in such a short amount of time!”

“Ah.....Did it actually sound strange?”

That was said by Miusel.

“Well, if I really had to answer whether it was strange or not, there were indeed some parts that didn't sound natural. But it was still a proper conversation. At least it was to the point where even without the magical rings, I could understand what you were trying to say.”

“I'm so glad to hear that.”

So said Miusel while pressing down her chest and looking bashful.

I dare say that she's already able to use hiragana and katakana without much trouble. As can be expected, mastering the detailed grammar rules and the changes in particles within half a year is not possible, but.....if it's just getting intentions across, then she can likely make do.

“You've really worked so hard.”

“Since Danna-sama's gone to the trouble of teaching me.....And also.....”

Miusel slightly casts her eyes down.

“The language of Danna-sama's country.....I wanted to become able to speak it.”

“Well, being able to speak the language would enable you to watch anime and things like that without needing a commentary.”

Incidentally, I am showing Miusel and Petrarca anime DVDs every now and then, but of course with me performing simultaneous interpreting. Since it's impossible to use the magical ring on a DVD player.

“That’s not it. What I meant is——”

Turning her face increasingly downwards, to the point where she’s almost hanging her head, Miusel spoke in a near-whisper while hunching her body up in an embarrassed manner.

“When Danna-sama returns to your country.....Please bring me along with you.....”

So said Miusel with a crimson face.

I totally screamed.

Actually, no. Don’t be deceived, Kanou Shinichi. This is one of Koumei’s traps. In the first place—it is because she is treated well while working for me that she said that, not because she wants to be by my side or something like that. Do not hold any strange anticipations. Anticipations would only blow up in my face, just like with my childhood friend.

While wordlessly opening and closing my mouth and being very conscious of my increased pulse rate.....that was what I told myself for the time being.

Tenshi Translations

 tachibanachinatsu.wixsite.com/tenshitranslations/obc-vol-1-ch-4-part-2

Volume 1 Chapter 4 Part 2

Chapter 4: Thy Name is 'Invader'

This is about twenty days after the last observation.

Our 'otaku training school'—the school, in other words, has been completed.

It's not like I actually took part in the construction work, but when I gaze upon the finished project, I somehow feel a sense of accomplishment welling up.

After which——

“Ohh.....”

“This is the place that, from tomorrow onwards, will become our——”

While admiring the brand new school building, I hear my students raising voices filled with marvel and wonder. By the way, there wasn't supposed to be a study session today. These guys are just gathering here on their own accord.

To take a look at their new place of learning.

For some reason, although the concept of 'private in-house schools' exists, the concept of 'schools' doesn't. In other words, study groups are basically held by borrowing a room from somewhere—there isn't a place built for the express purpose of serving as a school facility. For them, the thing called a 'school building' is an extremely novel idea.

On top of which——

“Hey guys, those are noble-samas.....”

“Is this really fine.....”

A bit of a distance away from where we are, standing separately from the usual students, there is a group of young boys and girls gathered together staring at the newly finished building—and also at ourselves.

And also, within their number, a certain percentage are non-humans.

Those elf children that I met at the military training ground are also among them.

(What a relief. It looks like the notice did properly reach the commoners.)

Indeed. My purpose in creating a school is, above anything else, for the sake of this.

To cause otaku culture to become widespread enough to cause a social phenomenon, only interacting with the nobles is not enough. If it doesn't permeate through the commoners—in other words, this country's large majority—then there's no point.

Therefore, I did not establish any requirements for matriculation into this school.

The tuition is also basically all covered by the Eldant Empire and the Japanese government.

With this, anyone can enter this school to become a student, be they a commoner or anything else.

This school is for the sake of spreading the 'fundamental education required in order to enjoy otaku culture' to as many people as possible. It can be thought of as a capital investment, so to speak.

"As expected, seeing it all completed does fill one with emotion, doesn't it."

"It sure does."

The person who nodded with a wry smile in response to my comment while walking through the interior of the school building is my current colleague Minori-san, the JSDF member who had joined in with the construction workers.

Of course, the other students are currently following along behind us. Leaving a significant time window and distance from us, the commoner kids and non-human kids are also entering the school building, albeit in a very timid manner.

The interior of this school is fundamentally the same as the schools in Japan.

The Eldant Empire being in charge of the exterior and the Japanese government being in charge of the interior was how things went down. In actuality though, there are crossovers here and there. I spot many things that I'm used to seeing at a school, such as blackboards, clocks, desks, chairs, fire extinguishers in the hallways, and a variety of other things.

That's probably why the students are curiously staring here and there and everywhere.

And then——

“Danna-sama.”

Suddenly called by a voice, I turn back.

As I do so, I see a Miusel wearing street clothes holding a package and coming towards me from the direction of the entrance.

“Miusel? Is something the matter?”

“You've forgotten to bring your lunchbox.....”

So said Miusel while smiling.

“Eh? Ah, now that you mention it——”

It had slipped my mind. When I told Miusel that I was going to check out the new school building today in the afternoon, she had said “I'll make you a lunchbox.” Although I always eat her cooking at the mansion, for some reason she considers lunchboxes something different, and was working on it last night with an unusual amount of enthusiasm.

“You even went to the trouble of coming all the way here to deliver it?!”

“Yes I did. Umm, am I being a bother?”

She has abruptly adopted an anxious expression.

“No, no, no!!”

I vigorously shake my head.

“I'm extremely happy about it, yes!”

More like, to think that the day would come when I would get to enjoy the golden setup of ‘forgetting my lunchbox, and having the girl that I'm living together with bringing it to me’!!

While I'm thoroughly basking in this sense of bliss——

“.....”

The surrounding atmosphere suddenly changes.

The students, as well as the other onlookers, become astir all at the same time, and the entire hallway is enveloped in silence. Wondering what had happened, I turn around and see——

“Ah. Petrarca.....I mean, Your Majesty.”

“——Umu.”

Looking all self-important while standing smack dab in the middle of the hallway is Petrarca. On top of which, there are two Imperial guards wearing swords following along behind her.

Right behind that brief moment of silence—the people become abuzz with murmurs.

“Her Majesty has arrived.....!”

Leaving aside the noble children who have been studying together with her everyday at the study group——for the commoners and non-humans, Petrarca is an existence higher than the clouds. When she shows up out of the blue like this, of course they would be beside themselves.

Almost everyone quickly opened a path for her. Retreating to the walls of the hallway, the humans get down on one knee and bow their heads, while the elves and dwarves get down on both knees and express their respect.

All at once, the school hallway has become wrapped in a solemn and majesty air.

Actually, although I had discourteously almost forgotten it, but she really is the supreme ruler over an entire country.

With that, Petrarca walks among the kneeled masses without getting worked up. Stopping in front of Miusel and myself, she nods with her usual cocky attitude.

“Looks like all's well.”

“All thanks to you.”

I responded while smiling wryly.

Petrarca's eyes quickly slide over towards Miusel.

"Miusel."

"Y-, yes, Your Majesty."

"How far have your studies come?"

"Eh? Ah, that's——"

"I've already finished 'Kanji Drill 2' in its entirety! There's no way you can catch up! However much you get to serve Shinichi by his side and receive his personal tutoring, be not full of yourself!"

"Ah, yes, o-, of course....."

Miusel is bobbing her head up and down.

Petrarca frequently picks fights with Miusel on Japanese proficiency. Although the feeling of disdain and contempt from before is gone—above all, she's willing to call Miusel by name now—how do I put this, she now displays a strangely antagonistic attitude, to the point where I get nervous just watching it. Which is why.....I cut in between the two of them, and attempt to placate Her Imperial Majesty.

"Come, come. Miusel has to take care of me, so her time for studying is quite limited. Even today, she's been preparing since yesterday to make a lunchbox for me——"

I unconsciously loosened my expression while showing off the box that Miusel has just handed to me.

"In any event, Miusel is working very hard, which is why I——"

Right after that, I was about to say "I'm not teaching her Japanese because I'm showing her favoritism."

"....."

But Petrarca is drawing her lips together and has gone quiet.

Both of her hands have been balled into fists and, for some reason, are slightly trembling. As if some sort of gauge is being filled up, it looks to me like something dangerous is being charged, causing my expression to stiffen up.

“You—You’re always taking her side!!”

Right after that, as if she’s crossed some sort of limit—she starts shouting with the force of an explosion.

Ehhhhhhhhhh?! Who, me?!

Well, between Petrarca and Miusel, it’s true that I’m the only one who’d cover for the latter. But Petrarca is always being protected by everyone because she’s the Imperial Empress, so the difference in their circumstances are——

(——Ah.)

After my train of thought went that far, I finally understood.

It is precisely because she is the Imperial Majesty that everyone makes a fuss over her.

In actuality, she had enjoyed it that much while sitting on my knees and giving voice to her honne.

(T/N: Honne is something like 'true inner voice.' It's a Japanese concept of keeping up a socially acceptable facade, called the tatemae, while hiding one's true inner voice. There's a whole Wikipedia article about it.)

“I’ve built this ‘school’ for you! I’ve also lent you soldiers to build this place! Despite all that, why do you continue to slight me and only care for her?!”

“No, I’ve never slighted——”

“Silence! Have you been seduced by her?!”

“Seduc—How did you get to that conclusion?!”

“Eei, Miusel you peon, get out of Shinichi’s mansion this instant!”

Petrarca suddenly said that.

On the other side, Miusel’s face has turned pale as a sheet, and her body has become stiff.

“That’s.....!”

Should I call this too abrupt or too high-handed?

But how do I put it, is this possibly a scene where I’m getting girls fighting over me?

Oou. Never in my wildest dreams have I ever——

“This is bad.”

——As I lost myself in rapture, Minori-san whispers in my ear.

“Shinichi-kun. You have to stop this immediately.”

“Eh? Nah, it’s not really——”

That big of a problem, is it?

Even though ‘leaving the mansion’ was mentioned——‘leaving the mansion’?

“Don’t be silly. That mansion is only something that is being lent to us by the Eldant Empire. Miusel calls you ‘Danna-sama’ for convenience’s sake, but her true employer is the Eldant Empire. In other words, Her Majesty.”

“No but, even so, she’s only being dismissed as a maid.”

I mean, if that’s really the case, then I can just hire Miusel at the school.

She can already handle conversation at a beginner class level, so having her as a teacher——

“It will be a dismissal with a direct ‘I am displeased with you’ from the Eldant Majesty, you know? What kind of treatment do you think she will get from everyone around her?”

“.....Ah.”

Finally comprehending, I turn pale.

Exactly. This country does not have a constitutional government like Japan does. Here, a single word from the person of absolute authority is akin to a proclamation from a god—at least, it is so for the subjects.

As an extreme example, if Petrarca felt like it, she could kill every single person here, for no particular reason whatsoever, and have no one blame her. Having been told ‘I dislike you, so you’re fired’ in front of a whole crowd, nobles and wealthy merchants would all be too afraid of Petrarca to hire Miusel. If that happens, most likely the same fate would befall us, who are spearheading the Japanese government’s efforts to deepen ties with the Eldant Empire.

“Your Majesty, please have mercy——”

Miusel is staggering like she has just received a death sentence.

However, it seems like this sight is only making Petrarca more and more irate, until she stamps her foot and shouts.

“Make the best of that body of yours that seduced Shinichi and go be a prostitute or something!”

“Wai—Wait a moment, Petrarca, I mean, Your Majesty!!”

Whatever the circumstances, that’s definitely going too far.

“You be silent!”

Petrarca glares at me with her face all crimson.

It seems that the brunt of her anger has shifted over to me. I unconsciously put myself on guard. But if this could mitigate some of the anger against Miusel and make Petrarca change her mind about the dismissal, then——

“.....Gugah?!”

Abruptly.

Without any relevance whatsoever, that voice barged into the distance separating us.

It was clearly a cry of pain, and it had come from behind Petrarca.

When we turn around, wondering what had happened, the sight that greets our eyes is that of one of the knights accompanying Petrarca falling to his knees. Wait, no. He’s continuing the motion and, oh, he’s fallen facedown.

And from his back, from a crack in his light armor, there is something that appears to be the handle of a knife sprouting upwards——

“——?!”

I am so stunned that I can't even scream.

From underneath the body of the knight that had fallen over, a dark red liquid is slowly oozing out.

“.....Blood?”

With my mind unable to catch up with this sudden happening, I give voice to a befuddled mutter.

When I turn my eyes toward the other Royal Guard who is still standing, I see a curved, thin piece of something twinkling silver as it is sprouts from his chest.

It is a large, curved——sword.

In a moment that feels like time has stopped, a single drop of the red liquid coating the sword blade slowly detaches itself and falls towards the ground.

The Royal Guard is looking down at the sword growing from his own chest with an expression like he isn't comprehending what has just happened. He had most likely been distracted by Petrarca's tantrum. When he finally realizes the current situation, his hand reaches towards the sword hanging down at his waist——but at that moment, he loses all strength and his knees gave way.

“Wha-.....wha-.....”

Standing there behind where the Royal Guard used to be——is a group of three men who had approached before anyone noticed.

They are all wearing a robe with so many layers that it conceals their body contour. It is the native dress of traveling merchants from the West. In the Eldant Empire, this outfit is not rare at all.

In contrast to that, what they are holding in their hands are curved swords 50cm long with blades shaped like croissants. These weapons are small enough to be easily concealable within those heavy robes.

“Hi-.....”

Someone comes back to their senses and lets out a choked-up voice.

“Hiyaaaahhhhh?!”

Immediately—just like a broken dam, screams erupt from all around. The students and children present in the hallway fall into panic and scramble towards the exit.

However, the men who had surreptitiously entered the place are now standing in the way, almost as if intending to hold back the rush. One after another, they draw out swords that they had hidden on their bodies.

“Don’t move! We will cut down anyone who defies us!”

The threatening command caused more screams to go up.

What on earth. What on earth is going on?!

Instead of screaming, I’m just standing in place, dazed. Beside me though, as expected of her true profession, Minori-san responds promptly. Unholstering the 9mm handgun usually hanging from behind her waist, she holds it in both hands and raises it up to point straight at the closest intruder.

However——

“We told you not to move!”

Moving at exactly the same moment as Minori-san, one of the men wearing the native dress reaches one hand out, wraps it around Petrarca’s waist, and roughly draws her body to his. Leaving aside whether this man knows about guns or not, judging from Minori-san’s movements and facial expression, he was apparently able to understand that what she’s holding is a weapon.

“Oh no……!”

Along with a frustrated mutter, Minori-san averts her gun downwards.

In her line of fire, Petrarca's and the man's body are overlapping. If she shoots now, there's a chance that she might hit Petrarca.

"Wha-.....What do you think you are doing, you insolent fellow?!"

Having finally come back to her senses, Petrarca begins clamoring and struggling.

"If we see any sign of resistance, then Her Majesty will die!"

The man presses his blade to the young Empress's white nape of the neck and raves.

Petrarca immediately snaps her mouth shut and becomes docile at this immediate danger to her life.

Before we knew it, we have become sandwiched by the hoodlums in both our front and back. With our escape route cut off, we are all standing in place, dumbfounded. The man who took Petrarca hostage now makes a declaration in a loud voice.

"We are—the patriotic order Baydona!!"

Everyone present gasps with fear.

In their midst—I'm the only one whose mind has yet to catch up to what is happening, and I let slip a stupefied exclamation.

".....Hah?"

The name that just screams 'We are terrorists!' feels so much like something out of a Z-grade movie that there's no sense of realism at all. Actually appearing in front of me was so unexpected that it's not quite striking home.

However——

"....."

The bodies of the dead Royal Guard lying on the floor before my eyes are, without a doubt, very real.



To be honest, I don't really remember much of what happened in the next half hour or so.

Most likely, my mind had become half-paralyzed by this shocking development. The fact that I haven't been this dazed ever since coming to this parallel world must mean that being suddenly forced to witness someone's death up close is that much of a shock to me.

Actually, no. That's not exactly true. Even I have had prior knowledge of death.

When my grandfather and grandmother died, I also did participate in the funeral.

However——this time is a bit different from that.

For the sake of self-profit or self-advocacy, someone has killed someone else. That is the difference.

That is, in other words—the horror instigated by the fact that the man standing there is someone capable of saying “if it's for the sake of my own satisfaction, I don't care who I kill.” The horror instigated by having the exact antithetical value system shoved in front of me, who has always been taught again and again that “life is weightier than the earth.” The horror instigated by this demonstration that seems to say that everything I've ever believed in can be easily refuted with a single stab of a blade.

“Shinichi-kun.....Shinichi-kun?”

I finally come back to my senses at Minori-san's insistent calling.

“Ah.....ughh.”

“Are you alright? You’ve been out of it for quite a while.”

“Ah.....y-, yes. I’m fine.”

I nod. There’s naught else I can do but to nod.

“This place is.....”

I furtively examine our surroundings.

We are in the school’s library, which also serves as a self-study room.

To be exact, that is the intended use for this room. All of the bookshelves have already been set up, but they’ve only been filled up around half way. The plan is to gradually bring more over from my mansion and from Japan. Due to that, there are empty spots here and there, emanating a strange sense of vacancy.

The view from the window is stained with orange, signifying that the day is nearly over.

And right beside that window are the ruffians wearing native dress.

Indeed. That so-called ‘patriotic order’ is currently in the same room as us.

According to Minori-san, the school grounds have become occupied by the patriotic order Baydona.

With that said, though—the grounds being as large as it is, there’s no way the order has the entire place under watch.

The group which named themselves as a patriotic order have a total of 9 people. Apparently, they are all humans.

It is physically impossible for such a small number of people to manage the entire facility, which is why they’ve gathered all the hostages in one place—the library—and bound everyone’s hands behind their back with rope.

Aside from ourselves, there are five other students and children who could not escape in time.

Opinions may differ on whether this is a lot or this is not many, but most likely, this is more than enough for the patriotic order. After all, the students are all children from noble families, and the country’s most important person, the Imperial Majesty, is within the number.

Incidentally, all of the hostages, including myself, Miusel, Petrarca, and Minori-san, are all lined up on the wall opposite the patriotic order members. If we were all grouped together, it would be like a crowd, making it hard to see what we might be doing, so this setup is for easier guarding.

“Ie, aresshio.”

One of the patriotic order members opened their mouth in a bewildered tone of voice.

“Odo, eu, tsuppu, rereppume, teiu, re-to, seno? Shi, shisu, retebbu, odo, tsuppu, ni, re-to, egarupu, teiu, e-to, re-chau?”

If anyone is wondering, yes, Minori-san’s and my magical rings have both been taken away.

Due to this, we can’t really tell what those guys are saying. I do recognize a few words here and there though—for example, ‘rereppume’ means ‘Majesty,’ so that’s Petrarca.

“Majesty and, other people, together, should?”

Miusel starts whispering to us.

So she’s going to translate into Japanese for us.

“Watching people together, another place, should?”

Ahh. In other words, that person is questioning the propriety of keeping her Majesty under watch together with all the other hostages. The value of the hostage that is Her Majesty is on a completely different level from all the others. Thus the man is asking whether she should be handled with preferential treatment.

“Eu, era, o-to, etaru, oto, ini-to, guni-teirebe, on, eu, evua-, on, ratoguse, rekurou, rofu, uin, narupu! Ti, shi, retebbu, oto, e-tagu, rua, egatoso-, ni, eno, ekarupu, rufu, gini-kau.”

The one who answered in an annoyed voice was the blond-haired, blue-eyed man who originally took Petrarca hostage.

The man who is being called ‘Alesshio’ by his comrades is apparently the leader.

According to Miusel’s halting interpretation——Petrarca’s visit was beyond even their expectations, so they were troubled with how to handle her presence and finally decided to lump her together with the rest of the hostages. Although having the Imperial Majesty as a hostage is extremely advantageous for them, looking at things from another point of view, this could cause the Empire side to react in a way different from their own expectations.

As an extreme example—for the sake of rescuing Her Imperial Majesty, the Empire side might employ the battle strategy of completely killing off everyone else. In that case, splitting up the hostages would work against them instead.

It seems like Alessio is saying something along the lines of “Stop thinking about unnecessary things at this point in time, as we don’t even have the room to split up the hostages and guard them separately.”

From what I gather, the 9 people here comprise the entirety of this ‘patriotic order,’ but——

“Ta, ina, eu, evua-, ta-to!”

So saying, Alessio points towards the center of the self-study room.

Lying there is a strange clump of metal that seems to give off a ‘den!’ SFX.

To be more exact, it is a metallic sphere with a roughly shoulder-width wide diameter, held in place by a wooden stand. Furthermore, there are several layers of overlapping rings around the sphere.

All it looks to me is an old-fashioned model of the death, but from the expression of the patriotic order members, this is apparently a very important device.

“Shinichi, -sama.....”

“Rego-bu.....”

What was uttered in almost a groan came from Petrarca, who has been made to sit next to me.

Miusel also translates her words for us.

Following that, Petrarca says this.

That “They’ve brought in something unbelievable.”

“Do you know what that is, Petrarca?”

Miusel translated my question for Petrarca.

With an aggravated expression on her face, Petrarca nods.

“〈Imarufue Bisurupeguse〉.”

It is apparently a flame-type magical weapon with a name that means ‘flame of annihilation.’

A fuller explanation requires the usage of some technical jargon, so Miusel couldn’t fully translate everything, but the gist is that it is something used by armies, and in our words, is akin to a ‘bomb.’ To put it broadly, it releases a large number of extremely aggressive fire sprites, and is more than enough to blow away the entire school building.

“.....For something like this, can’t magic easily take care of it?”

I asked in a low voice as a last thread of hope, but—Petrarca immediately shook her head.

“Ku-ru, ta-to.”

Petrarca jerked her chin towards Alessshio.

According to her—the azul crystal amulet hanging from Alessshio’s waist is what makes things tricky. When it senses magic in the surrounding area, the speckled patterns deep within would move around. In other words, no matter how quietly the chant is uttered, it would still be noticed by him immediately.

Naturally, if our side uses magic, he will interrupt it before the chant is finished—or in the worst case, he will just cut down whoever is doing the chanting.

No matter how excellent magic is, when there isn’t the time needed to use it, there’s no meaning at all. Even guns are mere lumps of metal when they cannot be fired. Incidentally, Minori-san’s 9mm handgun was seized long ago. With the way she was posing with it earlier, anyone could tell that it is some sort of weapon.

“Ahh.....”

I sigh.

A mere half day earlier, everything was going so smoothly. How did things come to this?

“Doh, shi, ta-to.....”

“However, it’s strange” is what Petrarca said.

This patriotic order Baydona is a minor party even among all other anti-Empire organizations, and has no economic nor political clout to speak of. Despite that, they were able to get their hands on a 'flame of annihilation,' a weapon that even the Empire's army cannot easily procure. Something is not adding up.

".....In other words, you're saying that there must be a third party that possesses the financial ability, or the manufacturing expertise, or the weapon itself, or even all of the above, who offered the weapon to them?"

"Supa-reppu....."

After Miusel translated Minori-san's words, Petrarca nods.

This is something that even I understand.

"....."

The side of Petrarca's face that I can see is looking extremely austere.

This is most likely her original face—the face of an 'Imperial Majesty.'

How do I put this.....it feels like the Petrarca who happily enjoys manga from above my knees and sulks every now and then has suddenly become a terribly far away existence. I thought I had been fully aware of the fact that she is the Imperial Majesty, but now I realize that I had never been conscious of what that specifically entails.

Unlike me, Petrarca is speaking about these terrorists so naturally that it seems almost like this is a common thing. For her, manga, or perhaps otaku culture and the chats with us, are maybe something to help her forget the savage world that she lives in, if for only a brief moment.

"——le."

Suddenly, Alessio turns his face towards our direction.

He has eyes filled with so much hostility that I can feel it stabbing into my skin. I stiffen my facial expression with a gulp.

"E-, shi, donimuretosamu. Gunirubu, mi-, donuora, emu."

Alessio is speaking while pointing straight at me.

“Eh? What, what?!”

“Shinichi, -sama.....”

Miusel translates with a look of despair on her face.

“‘That guy, person in charge. Bring to me.’ is what he is saying.”

“Ehhhh?!”

What?! Eh? I’m—the person in charge?

Well I mean, it’s true that I’m the company president of AmuTec, but still!

Without being enlightened as to what is going on, I am seized by the collar by the men, and forcibly made to walk over.

“Shinichi-sama!!”

Worried about me, Miusel raises her voice in a grievous tone.

But of course, the men pay her no attention whatsoever. As for me, I am violently thrown, as if I am a mere piece of baggage, before Alesshio, who is standing with his back towards the flame-type magical weapon.

“Wai-.....”

When I look up, I see that I am surrounded by the terrorists.

A fresh sense of danger crawls up my back. Any moment now, I can be stabbed through with a sword. Unlike guns, naked blades are very easily to understand, and give off a great feeling of oppression.

One of Alesshio’s underlings begins doing something with one of my fingers.

Wait, no. It’s not ‘something,’ it’s actually——

“You bastard, so you’re the ringleader?”

——the magical ring.

I can understand Alessshio's words.

However—I might have been better off not understanding.

“Ringleader’?!”

That word sounds even more belligerent than just ‘person in charge.’

Almost as if I am someone who is spearheading some particularly insidious plot—

“I’m the ringleader? What—”

“After all this time, you intend to feign ignorance?”

Alessshio raises one eyebrow in a displeased manner.

“We don’t have shit for eyes. This abominable facility is itself the very symbol of your sin!”

“Heh.....?”

Completely not following, I knit my eyebrows together.

I don’t know how he took that, but he is now twisting his face.

“Teaching letters without distinguishing between races, and furthermore forcibly having impressionable youngsters worship a foreign country’s culture! Not only that, you put demi-humans and human nobles in the same room and have them line up in the same line?! Inexcusable—this is an invasion of our hearts!”

“.....Eh?”

For an instant, I couldn’t comprehend Alessshio’s words.

“Indeed! For what reason do you think the distinction between races exists? Every single race has designated roles, and these designations are decisions handed down by the gods. Elves have strong magical power, but to prevent them from overpopulating, they have been given low fertility. Dwarves have frightening physical strength, enough to easily wave those gigantic battleaxes with a single hand despite their child-like height. To prevent them from establishing a rule based upon pure violence, the gods have given them their short stature as a handicap in battle.

And finally, although the humans are inferior in both magical power and physical strength, we excel in the power to rule. The purpose for our race is to unify and provide supervision over all other races!”

Alesshio clenched a fist while saying all that.

Uwah~.....

Rather than fear, what I’m feeling right now is more astonishment.

Never in my wildest imaginations did I expect to get a front-row seat listening to such a stereotypical and easy-to-understand speech on racial discrimination.

Actually, that’s not quite right. These are arguments that I’ve seen many times on the internet, but it’s just that they were all in a place of anonymity, posted carelessly and without any sense of responsibility whatsoever. Pretty much the same level as graffiti in toilet stalls. These are comments that can be uttered only because of the high anonymity of the internet. There are probably very few among that number who would be willing to shout out those views in the middle of town, standing among an unspecified large number of people.

The reason why he returned the magical ring to me is, in all likelihood, because he wanted to blame and disparage me for the crime of being a ‘destroyer of correct cultural values’ to my face. Naturally, he has no intention of holding a debate with me. It’s just that if the other side (me) doesn’t even understand what is being said and is just sitting in place with a blank look, the pleasure of ‘performing’ this speech would be halved.

.....I think I accidentally let those thoughts show on my face.

Alesshio narrows his eyes and glares at me.

“What is with that face? You got something to say?”

Ah, ummm, it’s nothing.

That’s what I should have said. For self-protection’s sake.

But I, Kanou Shinichi, who has been persecuted before for being an otaku, apparently have a switch that causes me to say the most unnecessary things at the most unnecessary moments.

“What a stereotypical spiel of ‘superior race’ ideology.”

I actually blurted those words out loud.

Uwah, what on earth am I saying?!

“What did you say?”

“Justifying things afterwards is something that even children can do. In short, what you guys want to say is ‘I’m great, because I am me,’ right? Sure, elves and dwarves aren’t humans. But based on that single point, you belittle them. Have you given any thought at all to how much you’re being blessed by their hands?”

Because I’m a guy. Because I’m a girl.

Because I’m Japanese. Because I’m a foreigner.

Because I’m from this certain place.

Because I’m from this certain university.

There are mountains of people who bring up a single point to make themselves seem better in comparison to deride others. And we otakus happen to be a minority who is particularly easy for such people to pick on.

That is why I absolutely hate people like that.

“It’s because you are a foreigner.”

The displeasure in Alessio’s eyes deepens.

“I have no idea where you people come from, but.....It is indeed true that today’s prosperity may have been due in part to the presence of demi-human races. However.....it is the humans who, after so many years, formed the organization called a ‘country.’ This is a great enterprise that no other race has achieved. While receiving the benefits of this blessing, is it not only natural that they should show humans respect in return?”

“.....”

The words that Miusel said a while ago resurface in my mind.

Demi-human races with low fertility are lacking in the ability to manage and maintain large groups, and are susceptible to sudden onslaughts of famine and natural calamities.

In contrast, humans, having a far larger absolute number, store up surplus food from agricultural harvests, can

maintain standing armies to fend off external enemies, and possess a strong resistance against extinction.

In other words, by entrusting their lives to the human-created organization called a 'country,' demi-humans can live much safer lives. That is why demi-humans obey humans, and put up with their position as inferiors. This is the current state of the Eldant Empire.

“The culture that you people are bringing in is, from the very root up, denying the history that our ancestors have built up, as well as the prosperity and privilege that naturally follows from that! You foreigners are destroying our value systems, which are based on our history. You people are invaders!”

“.....”

Even I am dumbstruck for a moment, with my words stuck in my throat.

Indeed. Previously, Minori-san has also warned me about this.

This is a 100% feudal society.

What would happen if concepts like 'freedom' and 'equality' are suddenly introduced.....

He is correct in that the otaku culture that I am trying to introduce is, by definition, a complete denial of feudalistic values. Another way of putting things is that characters like him that spout discriminatory views and support stratification of society are very nearly always the antagonist in animanga. Except for gag or satire works, no series would have a protagonist saying something like “if the commoners would just work diligently under my thumb, then all will be well.”

What otaku culture promotes is a rejection, or a rebellion, if you will, of the very fundamentals upon which feudalism stands on. If there is an outbreak of otaku works, then the people's minds would naturally be overwritten by concepts such as 'freedom' and 'equality.'

For a portion of people, this can indeed look like a 'destruction of the existent moral system.'

Moral hazard.

No. If this is being carried out on purpose, then it is not even a 'calamity' anymore——

“We have to protect our ancestors' culture and system of government from the hands of the demonic invaders.”

Alessio draws the sword at his waist.

My body unconsciously stiffens from the chill of the blade suddenly touching my neck.

“Before it is too late, our patriotic order will send a warning towards the Eldant Empire that allowed you people entry of the foolishness of doing so!”

“.....”

“And for starters, I’ll begin by killing you!!”

“Danna-sama——Shinichi-sama!!”

I hear Miusel’s scream from the direction of the group of hostages.

At this moment, right before my throat is about to be sliced open.....

“Will you stop it.”

The half incredulous and half pitying voice that saved me belonged to Petrarca.

“I am amazed. Did you fools do all this just to kill Shinichi? If so, then it was a complete fool’s errand. That one is a mere ‘accessory.’”

Those words proved even more effective than any entreaty or verbal abuse at shaking the men.

“.....What do you mean?”

Alessio and his men turn toward Petrarca.

She displays a wry smile while continuing to speak.

“That one is a hire from the country Japan. A gopher, if you will. Of course, so is that woman.”

Petrarca jerks her chin in Minori-san’s direction as indication.

“These two are neither Japan’s ruling authority nor even nobles. As such, the country Japan would feel absolutely nothing even if you kill them. All they would do is merely send a new person in. Actually, no——if it was up to me, I would raise up the killed man as a ‘martyr’ to rile up the citizens. ‘These diabolic people murdered, in cold blood, a

peaceful envoy who brought over mountains of entertainment. Let us never forgive these unscrupulous patriotic order bastards!—or something like that.”

“.....!”

The men exchange looks.

After a brief hesitation, Alesshio clicks his tongue with a very annoyed look on his face and removes the blade from my neck. He releases me roughly and shoves me back towards Miusel’s side.

“Are you alright, Danna-sama.....Any injuries?!”

When I see Miusel’s face, which looks like it is about to break into tears at any moment now, it finally registers that I’d just escaped a life-threatening situation, causing all strength to leave my body. I turn around to survey the terrorists, and see them all grouped up and whispering furiously to each other. They’re most likely having a conversation about their plans from now on.

For now, I’ve been saved. That thought is strong in me, but——

“How are you holding up, Shinichi-kun?”

Minori-san calls out to me.

But I——I am unable to look her straight in the face.

It is because I’ve realized something from Alesshio’s and Petrarca’s words.

Could it be true that I——

“Shinichi-kun? Are you alright?”

“.....I’m fine, thank you.”

No, this is not the right place to bring up such questions.

For now, I shelve away my budding misgivings and ask about something else.

“Umm.....Can you not request a mobilization of the special forces?”

I don't know how it is in Eldant, but I know for a fact that the Japanese government side definitely has professionals of that nature. However, Minori-san expression turns sour as she answers me.

"It's a problem of authority."

According to Minori-san, Japan's JSDF, being as highly trained and well equipped as they are, are bound all the more by laws and red tape and what not, such that their mobilization responsiveness is extremely low.

Furthermore, this parallel world exchange is not a public affair.

Even if the special forces are to be deployed, they very likely will not arrive in time.

"Which is why we have no choice but to do something about this by ourselves."

So said Minori-san right before saying something ridiculous.

"Shinichi-kun. Would you bury your face in my breasts for a bit?"

".....Hah?!"

I involuntarily began doubting her sanity.

What is she saying in this situation! I'm really happy about it, though!

"Li-, like this?!"

"Yes, yes—oh, show some self-restraint, won't you?!"

"I'm sorry."

While apologizing, I realize that one of my cheeks is touching something really hard.

This is——

"Nnn....."

“Na hya fua fua hii fuo fue fuo fua fuan fue fu fua fuai (please don’t let out erotic moans).”

I was trying to speak with the object in question inside my mouth.

“Shinichi?! You peon, exactly what are you doing in this time of emergency?!”

“Danna-sama……?!”

It seems like Petrarca and Miusel are having some kind of misunderstanding, but for now, there is no time to vindicate myself. I keep my head down with ‘that item’ in my mouth, and slowly drag myself behind Minori-san—uwah, doesn’t this totally look like I’m trying to bury my face in her ass right after her breasts?!—before opening my lips after feeling my cheek touch her fingers.

“Thank you.”

Minori-san smiles.

What I had just transferred from my mouth to her hands is……a fountain pen.

However, there’s no way that what she hid inside her cleavage was a normal fountain pen.

My own body is blocking the way, so I don’t think Alessio and his gang can see it, but Minori-san’s fingers are now working the fountain pen—when she takes off the cap, the part of the pen that was supposed to hold ink turns out to actually be hiding a small blade slightly under 10cm long.

It is a so-called pen knife. I can’t imagine this being a JSDF-issued item, so it’s most likely her own.

“Where did you……such a thing……”

“Fufu. In preparation for circumstances like this, I took a page from Fujiko-chan and hid it between my breasts.”

“‘Page from Fujiko-chan’……”

I think this is a reference that the younger generation, even if they are otakus, wouldn’t get.

(T/N: Reference here is to Fujiko Mine, a professional criminal and burglar (with large breasts, coincidentally) from Lupin III. Her character debuted in 1967, thus Shinichi’s comment here.)

In the first place, having already taken measures to disguise the knife, going so far as to even hide it—it's gone past practicality into being more of a personal hobby.

“.....Quite, um, tasteful, yes.”

“What do you mean by that?”

While continuing this banter, Minori-san uses the knife to cut a deep notch into the ropes tying my hands together. Rather than completely cutting through them, she's only making a notch so that Alessio and co wouldn't find out.

“.....”

Petrarca's and Miusel's eyes are round with surprise while looking on, but of course they do not raise their voices and draw the patriotic order's attention.

“What do you intend? Even if you get the ropes off, you've got nothing else.”

Petrarca lowered her voice and spoke quietly.

“.....You're not wrong, but.....”

We are unarmed. The other side is armed.

They even have a bomb.

Furthermore, I'm not even a normal citizen; I'm only a former hikikomori. I'm not proud of it, but my hand-to-hand combat skills are nonexistent, and I don't think I have any special powers that would conveniently activate at this time. Minori-san is a member of the JSDF, but one person against nine opponents at once might be a bit impossible.....if only we had something, anything, that could be used as a weapon.

(T/N: Anyone here watched Ip Man? :P)

“——Ah. Which reminds me.”

Abruptly, something comes to mind.

“There is a way of fighting that can only be utilized in this kind of situation, isn't there?”

“.....What?”

Petrarca frowns in puzzlement.

Volume 1 Chapter 4 Part 3

Chapter 4: Thy Name is ‘Invader’

Translator: Tenshi

My eyes turn towards the view outside the windows.

At a slight distance away, there are campfires giving off light and pushing back the night’s darkness.

The figures of soldiers wearing helmets and armor are visible from the fires erected a set distance off. Without even looking at the crest on their flags, it is obvious that they are from the Eldant Empire’s army.

The school grounds have already been surrounded by them.

However, they are merely monitoring the situation from afar, and have shown no actions beyond that. Well, with the Empress a hostage, they most likely can’t take any aggressive measures.

As for us——for now, things have relatively calmed down.

For a while after they began barricading themselves up, the terrorists reacted to every single sound with threats, but with the passage of time after the situation fell into a stalemate, their vigilance appears to have started to flag. The amount of time they spend glaring at us has decreased, and some of them have even put their swords back into their sheaths.

Humans are apparently not very good at maintaining a high degree of tension for an extended period of time. This is how our bodies are naturally—I seem to remember having read in a book that this is due to some sort of secretion inside our brains.

“I wonder how much longer they’re going to continue doing this.”

I am the one who voiced that naive question out loud.

I wasn't aiming to get an answer from anyone in particular, but Petrarca gives an answer to my muttered words.

"The custom is that the side who had someone taken hostage will, together with the coming of dawn, dispatch an emissary, but.....as a display of their resolve, it is also common for the side who took the hostages to execute one of the hostages in front of the emissary."

"Uwah....."

In other words, we have to do something about this before dawn breaks.

It is not yet halfway through the night, but that's not reason for us to take our time.

"Um.....excuse me.....!"

The person who timidly called out to our guard was Miusel.

"What?"

"May.....May I go.....to the washroom please.....?"

Miusel's cheeks are all red and she is looking downwards in a very embarrassed manner.

To be honest, ever since the start of the siege, no one has been to the toilet. It is only natural that she's reached her limit. The other students are also now giving the guards expectant looks.

"No."

The guard immediately denied her request.

"You may soil yourself here. It would suit you, being the half-elf that you are."

“.....That’s.....! I beg of you! Please.....”

“Shut up! Like I care!”

The man indifferently threw that line while turning his back to Miusel as an indication of his intention to ignore her.

“In that case.....what about me?”

All eyes in the room gather on me.

The guard turns toward me and spits out his reply.

“Did you not hear me? Soil yourself here.”

“Didn’t you say ‘It would suit you, being the half-elf that you are’?”

I repeated his own words.

“I’m human, though.”

“Don’t you screw with me. Even if you are a human it doesn’t——”

“Then I am confused. The half-elf would be one thing——”

Petrarca now butts into the conversation.

“——you are treating Shinichi, who is a human, the same way. The ‘traditional feudalistic society’ that you people advocate is starting to sound like random ideas made up on the spot, you know?”

“.....!”

The man’s face is growing redder and redder by the moment as his words visibly get stuck in his throat.

“Regardless of our positions, the logic of you guys’ arguments would eventually arrive at the conclusion that ‘humans’ are existences most worthy of esteem and respect, am I not correct? Then telling a human to soil himself in public, like a mere livestock.....you understand what I’m getting at? In the end, when you conveniently twist your beliefs on the spot without any hesitation, it turns you into a superficial person.”

As expected of this loli Imperial Majesty.

When it comes to verbally belittling people, there is no one superior to her. Her childish appearance only adds to the sting of her words. There are probably masochistic people in the world who would enjoy being on the receiving end of her berating, but these terrorists do not belong in that category. I think.

“*Kuh.....*”

The guard’s face distorts with vexation.

“——Take him.”

The voice had come from the other side of the entrance to the room.

It was Alessshio. He glares loathsomely at us while continuing to speak.

“It’ll be problematic if they start making a fuss, and it’d also be depressing to have shit in the room.”

Alessshio indicates with his chin. The guard, looking extremely reluctant, wades through the crowd of hostages, grabs my arm, and roughly drags me upright.

“Come. Do anything stupid, and I’ll kill you.”

I stumble along while being pulled like a piece of luggage.

When the man brings me away from the wallside and towards the door

of the classroom—I stop my legs.

“What do you think you’re doing! Hurry up and.....”

Showing great irritation, the man turns around to yell at me—it is at that moment.

~~~~~!!

With enough force to smash the silence inside the room, melody and singing blares vigorously from a pocket on my clothes. My smartphone is currently playing *Rental*☆*Madoka*’s opening theme song at maximum volume.

“\_\_\_\_\_?!”

All of the men, including Alessshio, are startled.

When our guard’s attention was somewhere else, Miusel had set a timer on my phone. Even modern people used to the conveniences of civilization would be startled when a phone starts ringing in a place as quiet as a library. The surprise of the patriotic order, who have no idea what a phone is, can be easily guessed.

“What is that!!”

“Some strange music suddenly came from this guy’s body?!”

As if suddenly realizing that what he had been holding is actually a poisonous snake, the guard releases my hand in a panic. They’re frightened, they’re frightened. This is good.

“Don’t move.”

With those words, I try my damn hardest to adopt an impudent expression.

This is a critical moment. I'm not very good at acting and the like, though.

“The magical chant has already been completed. I can tear you guys apart anytime I like now.”

“——?!”

The singer's voice that had accompanied the melody.

Not knowing rock nor pop, and not even knowing Japanese nor English, these guys have no basis to deny my claim that ‘it was a magical chant.’ On top of which, I'm from a parallel world——they already know that I've been bringing in unique items that do not previously exist in this world.

“No, that's a bluff!”

Alessio confirms with the crystal hanging from his waist before calling me out.

“There's no magical power being activated!”

“I'm from a different world, don't forget.”

I do my best at sounding like I'm scoffing.

“Did you expect my magic to get picked up by this world's magical detectors? Furthermore, did you even check all the various things that I'd brought over?”

“.....!”

Unease runs through the terrorists.

For now, all is going according to plan, but——

“K——Kill him! The Imperial Majesty is here! His spell should not be an AoE attack!”

So shouted Alesshio.

This is bad. This guy has an unexpectedly quick mind.

As I witness the men unsheathing their swords, I feel cold sweating spurting from every pore on my skin.

Uwah?! Nononononono, don't look this way!

And then——the very next moment.

“——*Fu!*”

With a brief exhalation, Minori-san moves.

The rope that she had undone earlier—to be more exact, that she had made notches in—comes off with only a little bit of strength. Shooting upwards, she reaches out and grabs the arm of our guard, who happens to be standing the closest to her.

“——?!”

The guard freezes with shock. The next instant, his face is smashed in and his knees have already given way.

The hand-to-hand combat style of the JSDF is fundamentally different from any other kind of martial arts——or at least, that's what I remember having read before. Completely unrelated to mental cultivation, their style focuses purely on practicality. Forgoing the deliberate movements of taking a stance, stepping in, and punching, their style finishes everything with a single move.

In the same movement of pulling the guard towards herself, Minori-san plants her elbow in his face. On top of breaking his posture with the

pulling, her attack was only a single move, which made it almost impossible to defend against, and she even used her elbow, which deals double the damage. Not to mention that she had struck the area between the nose and lip, which I remember being a vital point called the ‘philtrum.’

Whatever the details, she had incapacitated the guard in a split second.

Unable to catch up with the development, the patriotic order members are frozen in place. In that interval, Minori-san has taken the sword from the man’s waist, and circled around his body while holding it up with her left hand as a shield.

“*Kuh*——Kill that woman!”

Being the first to return to his senses, Alesshio turns and raves at his subordinates.

However, there is still hesitation in his men. Exactly. It is due to my existence. If they carelessly show their back to me, they would get hit in the back by magic—is what they are thinking.

That’s a complete misunderstanding.

I cannot use magic at all, of course.

The one that they should be wary of is actually someone else.

“Alesshio!”

One of Alesshio’s subordinates points at his waist.

It seems that he has noticed that the magic detection crystal around Alesshio’s waist is shining.

“Who, who is using magic——?!”

They have no idea when I'd release my magic.

Minori-san has a sword in hand and has taken a fighting stance.

Due to these things, they were late in noticing the crystal's glow.

“That girl!”

One person points at Miusel.

Correct. While continuing to look downwards and giving off a dejected appearance, she had begun chanting quietly. My role at the start is to draw everybody's attention, then Minori-san will move to back me up, with her own actions also acting to draw attention away from Miusel's chanting——such was our two-step preparation.

The men turn again towards Miusel——but it is too late.

“〈*Teif Mrotz*〉 .....!!”

Along with the final words indicating the completion of the chant, intense power bursts towards the men.

Some invisible power, a whole clump of power, has materialized out of thin air and crashes into the terrorists. I have no idea what magic it is that Miusel has just used, but it was most likely a shockwave-type that slams into the opponent (T/N: *Fus ro dah!*). Two of the men are easily blown away, slamming against the wall——after being held up against the wall for an instant, they slowly slide down the wall before eventually falling to the ground.

The whites of their eyes are visible. Seeing as they are still twitching, they are probably not dead.

“Shit?!”

“Don't move, if you move, this guy will.....!”

One of the men, being in a confused state, reaches a hand towards the nearest noble child.

But before a single fingertip touches the noble child—that hand of his is halfway cut off by the sword being wielded by Minori-san.

“*Gyah!?*”

As copious amounts of blood spout from his arm, the man throws his head back and screams.

Minori-san’s elbow to his face was the clincher—he readily fainted.

With that, four of the men, which means a third of the terrorists, have become incapacitated.

(T/N: I re-checked the last part, and the author really did say that there were only 9 terrorists. No idea when the number became 12.)

However——

“Thou art that which burns, thou art that which scorches, thou art that which destroys with fire.....!”

There is a single person standing next to the wall, with his hands gathered to his stomach in the pose of someone holding a ball, who is chanting furiously. With that, a certain something floats up from both of his outheld palms while giving off a red light, floating in mid-air as if in denial of all laws of physics.

Even a complete novice to magic such as myself can tell. The very sight is shouting ‘fire-type attack magic.’

This is bad. Most likely, the chant is already over——at that very moment, when my presence of mind has completely left me——

“Such foolishness.”

So said Petrarca.

Of all things, she calmly stands up, and walks toward the man who is even now still trying to release that magic. The man is surprised, but it’s too late to cancel his spell, and with his back against the wall, he also cannot back up anymore.

“〈*Imarufu Mürup*〉 !”

With desperation more than halfway tainting his tone, the man chants and releases his magic.

It flies straight towards Petrarca——but.

“*Gyah!*?”

The next instant, just like a thrown hand grenade returning back to himself, the magic retraces its trajectory.

As I had thought, it was a fire-type magic after all, as proven by how the man, as well as one more terrorist standing next to him, both immediately go up in flames. While screaming, the men roll around on the ground, trying to put out the flames currently coiling around them head to toe. After a few seconds, the flames do go out, but both of them are no longer in any condition to fight.

“An amulet?!”

Alessio groans.

“Being a member of the royal family is a position with a lot of enemies, after all.”

Petrarca responded in a murmur.

“Ranging from enemy countries to political enemies.....assassinations and the like have already been taken into consideration.. As such, it is only normal that various preparations have been made for my personal protection.”

“But you weren’t in possession of any magical tools——”

“Of course, if I was flaunting a magical tool around, it would have been taken away. That’s why I have one that never leaves my skin——no, to be exact, I have one that *is* my skin.”

“.....!”

Alessio is shocked.

More like, I’m shocked too. Petrarca’s actions are not in the plan that we had discussed.

But still, ‘I have one that is my skin’——that’s just.....

“That magic detection of yours is, in the end, something that reacts to magical power actively leaving a person’s body, is it not? Otherwise, it will respond to every single bit of magical energy within every person’s body and become completely useless.”

In all probability.....Petrarca’s body has been tattooed with some sort of charm or crest. A simple ruffian wielding a sword can be somehow taken care of by the knights, but magic—especially mid- to long-ranged surprise attacks—is something that they cannot do anything against. Therefore, her body is constantly clad in a spell that reflects offensive magic.

“.....Well then.”

Petrarca shoots a glance towards Minori-san’s direction.

Minori-san has already incapacitated two more terrorists.

“You are the last one.”

So speaking, Petrarca now turns towards Alessshio.

However——

“St——Stop right there!”

Alessshio’s voice sounds like that of someone who’s bragging about a victory.

At the same time, a dull sound like that of metal pieces meshing together rings out.

“〈*Imarufue Bisurupeguse*〉 .....!”

Alessshio is standing right next to the fire-type magical weapon. In his hand is something akin to a metallic card, which is inserted into a place that looks like a slot.

That is apparently the ‘key’ for the detonation.

“Now, this thing is only a single word away from exploding. You have no time to use any techniques, and I can just activate it if you get close. If you don’t want everything to be blown away, everyone do as I say!”

The reason why he didn’t fight at all so far is probably to get his hands on that.

As can be expected, since he is using a bomb as a shield, no one can make any move. Even Petrarca’s magic probably can’t neutralize a magical weapon of this size.

“Ha.....Haha.....!”

Laughing in the manner unique to someone driven into a corner,

Alessio smiles madly and looks around the room.

Abruptly——his expression freezes in the very next instant.

“Oi, where did that parallel world brat go?”

So, he’s finally noticed it.

The fact that I’m no longer there.

Well I mean, I’m actually in the hallway, separated from him by a single thin wall.

“Well, no matter. As long as I have the Empress, the negotiations can continue on.”

“Sorry, that’s not gonna happen.”

Having set eyes on what I was looking for, I grab it and return to the room while speaking.

“You bast——?!”

Startled, Alessio opens his eyes wide.

I mean, anyone would doubt the sanity of a hostage who manages to escape but nonchalantly comes back.

Naturally, I am no hero, nor am I the protagonist of a manga. I definitely do not have any powers that would allow me to flip the heavens and the earth, and my motor nerves are completely rusted.

However——

“Oi……”

Alessio stares at me.

“What is that thing that you are holding in your hands.”

“Oh, this?”

I lift the item that I’d been dragging along with one hand up to around waist high.

It is a cylinder-like mass of metal that has been painted red, and also has a black plastic lever mounted on top. From there, there is a tube that extends like a snake before ending in a trumpet-like nozzle. In other words, it is——

“This thing is called a fire extinguisher.”

As I had mentioned earlier, the JSDF had installed disaster prevention supplies here and there throughout the hallways. A part which was supposed to be present, the safety pin, has already be removed.

“Hah.....?”

I aim the nozzle towards Alessshio’s slack-jawed face——then I powerfully grip the lever. The next instant, the pressurized-type extinguisher that boasts a maximum discharge distance of 7 meters spits out extinguishing agent in a cloud of white smoke tinged with red.

Those who have used one of these even once before would know this.....rather than relying on chemical agents to put out the fire, this kind of extinguisher uses high-speed expulsion to blow away the the origin of the fire together with the flames. Naturally, even though he is standing a distance away, he is still within the discharge range, so eating the blast in the face is going to hurt.

Falling into consternation, Alessshio lets out a short scream, then covers his face with both hands as if he’s been hit with poison, leaving the side of the fire-type magical weapon in the process.

“Expl-.....’ *geho!*?”

Of course——there is no way he can continue chanting in that state.

The entire room is clouded with the color white due to the extinguishing agent, which is also clogging up everyone’s throats with every breath. Including Alessshio, everyone is coughing violently.

When used in an airtight room like this, the extinguishing agent has nowhere to go and thus chokes people, so this is actually a very dangerous thing to do——but well, desperate times calls for desperate measures, so this is no time to be worrying about that.

Having been hit in the face straight on, Alessshio is very visibly suffering, as he is holding his throat and painfully trying to take deep breaths. Anyways, with this, he won’t be able to continue the activation chant for quite a while. Keeping a cool exterior, I quickly pull out the key, and breathe a sigh of relief——then I too begin coughing violently.

Uwah, that’s so lame.

By the way, the reason why I went to the trouble of bringing a fire extinguisher is as countermeasure against the *⟨Imarufue Bisurupeguse⟩*.

I don’t know how effective the extinguishing agent would be against these ‘fire sprites,’ but if the actual effect turns out to be the ‘combustion’ phenomenon, then I thought that there is a good chance that the extinguishing agent would be able to suppress it. In actuality, the situation ended before the activation though.

“Everyone——this way!”

Minori-san promptly goes towards the window and opens it.

This room is on the first floor, so it is possible to escape through the window. Minori-san has yet to retrieve her magical ring, so there’s no

way her words are being understood, but——in this situation, there is probably no one who did not understand the meaning of her words. The hostages manage to get out one after the other.

There is indeed the way of thinking that ‘because all of the terrorists have been taken down, everything is now alright,’ but because not all of them were killed, there is no knowing when any of them might get back up. It is much safer to have all the hostages escape outside as soon as possible.

Fresh air comes in from the opened window, and our vision gradually returns.

At a slight distance away from me——there Alessio is.

“.....”

He is completely dazed.

Well, it’s not like I don’t understand.

From his point of view, he must have made quite a lot of preparation and resolved himself before taking action, so it must have been completely beyond his expectations for everything to come undone so easily. And not by the Empire’s soldiers, but by the hostages themselves.

Eventually——on his face, from which the extinguishing agent has been wiped off with his sleeve, despair sets in.

Almost all of the hostages have gotten away, and there are only a few people left in the room.

Even at this very moment, the most important hostage, Petrarca, is being pulled by Minori-san, who had gone out first, and is trying to climb over the window frame. Everything should be fine now. I heaved a sigh of relief.

However.....reality is different from manga and anime.

Real life terrorists are far more vicious than those within stories.

“*Kuh*——”

Alessio picks up a sword that had fallen to the ground, and bellows in a voice that had gone hoarse.

“Like this——like hell I’ll let things end like this!”

Holding the sword aloft, he throws it. With his muscle strength bolstered to the limit by desperation and insanity, the 50cm long steel weapon flies with the force of an arrow.

Straight towards Petrarca’s back.

The amulet prepared on her body is something only effective against magic. If she is slashed with a blade, she will get hurt. Originally, there were supposed to be Royal Guards around to take care of all the physical attacks.

In other words——

“.....!!”

The wet sound of a blade burying into flesh resounds loudly throughout the room.

I am frozen in the position of having one hand stretched out. My position is not at a distance from where I could have done something about it on the spur of the moment. The sword has pierced through fabric, piercing deep into her body.

The body of Miusel, that is.

“.....?!”

Petrarca whips back in astonishment.

Despite not having witnessed the moment the sword pierced through, seeing Miusel standing right behind herself with both hands stretched out is enough for her to understand what had happened.

“U.....”

With her well-featured face distorting from intense pain, Miusel collapses in place as both of her knees give out.

“Miusel!!”

Between Petrarca and myself, I wonder which of us was faster in calling out.

The next instant, a thunderous roar is accompanied by Alessio’s body jerking backwards. When did she even retrieve it—from the other side of the window, it was Minori-san who had shot him with her 9mm handgun.

“Miusel!”

I draw beside her.

Miusel is on the floor, breathing erratically.

On her other side—with a dazed look on her face, Petrarca is looking down upon this half-elf who is gasping with pain.

I kneel down beside Miusel. The lethal weapon has pierced straight through her abdomen. The maid uniform, which was supposed to be white in color, has soaked up some of the blood and is now stained red. Even though the sword didn’t hit her right in the middle, there is no proof that it has missed her organs. The tiny amount of knowledge that

I had gleaned from manga and novels whirls furiously inside my mind. Any damage to internal organs would be very bad. This is definitely not on the level of stopping superficial bleeding. Abdominal surgery will definitely be needed.

All I want to do is pull out the sword, but if I remember correctly, pulling it out badly would only cause even more bleeding.....Aaaaahhhh, I'm too flustered to think straight!

“Why, did you.....”

Sinking to the ground, Petrarca murmurs in blank amazement.

“.....I.....to you.....”

Her hoarse voice is almost too soft to pick up.

However, I mostly understand what she wants to say. Right before the start of the incident, Petrarca had sentenced her to an abrupt and unreasonable dismissal, even going as far as to say that she should be a prostitute.

Having being persecuted so, there is no reason for Miusel to cover for Her Imperial Majesty.

“Y-.....You-.....”

Seeing Petrarca so desperate for an answer, Miusel moves her lips, which are slowly losing color.

“.....Did I not look cool.....”

“——What?”

“In Danna-sama's manga.....it was there.....so I.....wanted to act it.....out.....”

Ahh. Speaking of which, in the very first manga that I had read aloud to those two, there was that kind of scene. Miusel must have remembered it. Most likely, so did Petrarca.

“You——Are you crazy?!”

Petrarca is yelling.

“What do you mean ‘wanted to act it out’?! What do you mean ‘look cool’?!”

Petrarca reaches out both hands towards Miusel’s body, and grasps her clothes while paying no mind to her own hands being dirtied by blood.

In a gesture akin to a spoiled kid trying to wake her sister up, Petrarca shakes Miusel’s arms repeatedly.

“Such a reason, such a——AHHH, AHHHHHHHHH!!!”

Petrarca stops shaking Miusel and starts screaming.

“THE BLOOD, THE BLOOD IS, AHHHHH, SOMEONE, ANYONE! COME TO ME!”

I don’t think they were waiting for her summons, but it just happens that with perfect timing, a few pairs of footsteps and clanging armor can be heard quickly drawing near. The next instant, several knights and soldiers rush into the room with cries of “Your Majesty!”

“Your Majesty, what a relief that you are unharmed——”

“Hurry up and have a doctor examine this girl! Wait, no, drag that doctor here! Right now!!”

Petrarca’s shout drowns out the knights’ words.

“Your Majesty? This girl is……”

“Go! Now! This is a direct order from Your Majesty!”

In response to her agitated voice, several soldiers jump as if shot and dash out at full speed.

After that——

“Don’t die.....”

Turning around, Petrarca’s voice almost drops to a whisper.

However, there is no more response from Miusel.

“I will not forgive you if you die——don’t die, it’s an order, Miusel!!”

Witnessing the figure of their Majesty sobbing like a baby, the remaining knights and soldiers could only stand around with bewilderment.

Facing the Miusel who is no longer moving, Petrarca continues to, in haughty words uttered in a begging tone, repeat the order “don’t die” again and again.



Footsteps echo loudly in this stone hallway.

The chirping of a bird someplace far away can also be heard.

It is a refreshing morning. Or at least, such is the appearance of things.

“.....”

I am walking through the Eldant palace.

Minori-san is also walking together with me, but staying a few steps away. After all that had happened, she is now also holding a duralumin suitcase in addition to her standard issue 9mm handgun. At first glance, the suitcase looks like a normal bag, but inside it is a 9mm machine gun—in other words, a small machine gun—and the suitcase itself can also be effectively used as a shield. This equipment, normally used for escorting VIPs, was ordered in a hurry.

Several days have passed since the patriotic order incident.

However, just because all of the criminals have been caught, it's not like everything has gone back to normal. There are still all sorts of aftereffects here and there. With my surroundings as an example, Miusel not being here anymore means that the mansion's housework is in a state of neglect. For the moment, Minori-san is working hard to cover the meals—I think the distribution of rice in an emergency as part of disaster relief is one of the JSDF's fortes—and laundry, but the very absence of her presence seems to have halved the cheerfulness of the entire mansion.

“.....”

Having reached my intended destination, I stop walking.

In front of me is a massive, heavy-looking door. To its left and right are two knights bearing the sigil of the Royal Guard, both of whom are giving off an amazing sense of pressure. This, too, is an aftereffect of that incident. Normally, the emphasis is on formality, but right now they are both in full armor, as if on a battlefield. In all probability, there is also a mage hiding somewhere nearby. The very fact that the Imperial Majesty was taken hostage, albeit only for a short while, has caused several top brass of the Royal Guards to lose their necks, or so I think I heard.....

Suppressing my hesitation—I tighten my expression and knock on the door with the back of my fist.

“Petrarca.....I meant, Your Majesty, it’s me. May I——come in?”

The reply comes only after a slight pause.

“.....Come in.”

With the Imperial Majesty having given express permission, I slowly push open the door.

This is——a very magnificent room. The ceiling draws an elegant arch, and there is complicated and detailed woodwork all over. It is connected to a terrace large enough to enjoy sunbathing, from which sunlight is currently pouring through to illuminate the room’s thickly carpeted floor.

The huge bed placed in the center of the room is, of course, a canopy bed. Several layers of heavy-looking high quality red cloth are hanging down in an overlapping pattern.

And then——

“You’re late, Shinichi.”

Petrarca is sitting in a chair placed in front of the fireplace.

The sunlight being reflected from her silver hair makes her hair itself look like an extravagant accessory.

She is as cute as ever, but how do I put this, after that incident, her expression seems to have matured a little. Instead of doing so only rarely, she has her natural face on more often, I think. Before, she was forcing it a bit too much.

“When I call you, you should come immediately. Now the tea’s gone

all cold.”

“Sorry.”

Smiling wryly while apologizing, I take the empty chair next to her.

“However, Your Majesty.....Shinichi-sama’s mansion is a bit of a distance away.”

The girl who covered for me is wearing white sleep-wear and sitting up in the bed.

“Is it fine for you to be up?”

“Yes.”

Miusel smiles.

“This is all thanks to Her Majesty.”

The smile that Miusel is showing us is beautiful enough to make flowers bloom.

Well, that’s, in short——Miusel did not die.

Due to Petrarca’s peremptory command, she was carried into the royal private medical treatment center located inside the palace. Magic is a given, but expensive medicines and other things were also used liberally, and renowned doctors were called to give her treatment. This royal private medical treatment center is supposed to be reserved for only the royal family and nobles of great authority, and is a place that a commoner such as Miusel would never have even heard of. However, this was forcefully pushed through due to Petrarca’s special authority as the Imperial Majesty.

All thanks to that, Miusel managed to hold onto her life.

After that, she is now spending her days recuperating in the royal private treatment center.

This extravagantly made room, too, is actually a sickroom. As it is for the exclusive use of nobles, it ended up like that. I don't think hygiene was a factor in the deliberation—it's more that the high class personages wouldn't be able to rest comfortably if it was any less fancy.

“Your Majesty was quite amazing, seriously.”

I am grinning wryly while speaking.

“Saying ‘The one who lets her die shall be sentenced with treason and executed summarily!’ and all that—all of the doctors went so pale in the face.”

“Th-, that was——!”

Petrarca is looking very flustered.

Her face is all red. So cute.

“That bunch are used to treating mostly aged royalty and nobles, so, that's, with a young girl as a patient, not to forget themselves, or cut corners, and——that's, I, er, I was giving them a slap on the back to remind them to fulfill their duties properly!”

“*Un.* Of course you were.”

I nod while smirking widely.

Petrarca's face grows redder and redder——

“I-, in the first place, having the Eldant Empress's life be saved in exchange for the likes of a mere maid would, um, set a very bad example to the retainers!!”

“*Un*. Of course it would.”

“~~~~~!”

Seeing me laugh, Petrarca is consequently writhing around with embarrassment. I get the feeling that if she stands up now, she’ll definitely be stamping her feet. What is up with this classical display of tsundere-ness.

“But to be honest, Petrarca, I want Miusel returned to the mansion as soon as possible, you know~”

Well, my true feelings are that I want Miusel to slowly take her time and fully heal up. But there’s a reason why I had to say that, see. Since we’re in a bit of a pinch, see.

“Without Miusel around, the laundry somehow just keeps piling up.”

“I’m terribly sorry, Danna-sama. I will return as soon as I can.....”

Miusel looks very ashamed——but at that moment.

“.....Eh?”

She must have realized it after saying that much.

Puzzlement causes her face to freeze up.

Ahh, as I’d thought. That topic has still yet to come up between the two of them. Well, Petrarca’s personality being the way it is, it must be hard to take back something that she’s already said——it would be quite impossible, unless someone gives a good enough nudge.

“Did I not say that I would arrange for a replacement?”

Petrarca’s face puckers up into a scowl.

“The one who declined was you. In the first place, her stomach was pierced all the way through. There’s no way she can return to normal within a few days! You are someone who lacks common sense, Shinichi!”

“I understand that much. But it’s just that if a different person settles in, then it’ll become really hard for Miusel to come back.”

“Even without all your worrying, Miusel will return as soon as she heals.”

“I am truly thankful for your concern, Your Majesty.”

“*Fun*. Deprecating yourself only when it suits you.”

Petrarca snorts at me. Okay, that’s bad manners. More like, what does it say about an Imperial Majesty that she snorts at people?——is what I’m thinking, but let’s not say any of that out loud.

“Umm.....in other words.....”

On the other hand——it appears that even Miusel’s finally caught on.

Petrarca and I had been talking under the premise that Miusel would return to the mansion as a maid——in other words, her ‘notice of dismissal’ has been shoved so far under the carpet that it has pretty much been revoked.

It’s just that due to Petrarca’s standing as the Imperial Majesty, as well as her own personality, she couldn’t say outright “sorry, I take that back,” no matter how much she might be regretting it. With the intent of clearing away Miusel’s anxiety, I am indirectly telling her that “that talk is over now.”

“Your Majesty——”

“.....”

Being stared at by Miusel, Petrarca reflexively turns her head towards the side, as if she is pouting.

You are just so easy to read, you know?

“Th-.....Thank you so very much.....”

Miusel is moved to tears.

Even though what started all this in the first place was Petrarca’s unreasonable and false accusations, it is still an extremely uncommon thing for the Imperial Majesty to concede to a commoner, and a single individual at that. Miusel looks very touched, and although Petrarca still can’t be honest, there’s definitely been some progress.

It seems that the problem here has been resolved.

After that, the two of them continued talking with each other in high spirits—they’re sort of ignoring me and even starting to generate a faint lily atmosphere, which is giving me very complicated feelings. But with this, one more source of altercation has been put out, which I am really glad about.

(T/N: The word *yuri* means ‘lily.’ Don’t know what yuri is? Oh, you summer child.)

“Well then.....I’ll come visit again.”

After leaving get-well wishes and greetings once more, Minori-san and I leave the room.



Within the depths of the long hallway is a face that I know.

Matoba Jinzaburou—the Bureau Chief of the Far East Cultural Exchange Promotion Bureau.

“.....It seems that Her Majesty is in high spirits.”

When he saw me, that’s what he said.

Both his slightly graying seven-three hair and the suit of the color of dried leaves are the same as usual. That dime-a-dozen look that seems to embody the phrase ‘harmless to man and beast.’

“Well, pretty much.”

I responded brusquely in what was almost a mutter.

For a split second, Matoba-san looks at me with a puzzled expression, but he immediately changes back to his usual ambiguous government official smile and continues to speak.

“About those terrorists from before. Apparently, the Empire side’s anti-Imperial faction were the ones backing them. And it was also the same guys who arranged the procurement of the magical weapon in secret.”

“.....”

“Oh? You don’t seem surprised.”

Matoba-san tilts his head.

As for me——

“Matoba-san.”

Ever since that incident——there’s been something that’s been on my mind.

“I…… Am I an invader?”

“……”

At the corner of my eye, I see Minori-san’s expression stiffen.

“……”

Matoba-san smiles ambiguously.

In exchange for not replying in the affirmative, he is also not replying in the negative. He doesn’t even look surprised at the question. Rather, he is totally giving off a ‘within expectations’ vibe.

It is as I had thought.

Cultural exchange is just merely a front. For a variety of reasons, the Japanese government is unable to bring their military might to bear, so a different strategy was needed. And this, this method of cultural invasion is the policy that they have decided upon.

A military invasion would cost a large amount of money, and the loss of both men and equipment would be considerable. If the aim is to simply destroy the other side, then nuclear weapons or carpet bombing should easily do the job. However, public opinion would be vehemently against such methods, and above all——dead wasteland is of no use to anyone.

In contrast, there are many benefits to a cultural invasion.

For starters, this method will enable the invader to control not only the country’s territory, but also her citizens. If done well, the entire country can be hijacked from the inside. I’ve heard that this was one of the

reasons motivating the spread of Christianity during the Middle Ages. Now, whether the Christian evangelists themselves had such intentions or not would be an entirely different question altogether.....

However, for better or for worse, there is no such ‘highly addictive’ religion in Japan in modern Japan.

Even if there is, the large majority of them are emergent religions with strong cult-like tendencies, making them very hard to handle.

If such is the case, then——let’s go with otaku works.

All it means is that there was at least one person in the Japanese government who followed this train of thought.

For the sake of buying doujinshis, there are young people who would gladly throw away one to two hundred thousand in a single day. For the sake of buying a game, there are those who would start a riot. The addictiveness of these otaku products do indeed bear resemblance to a religion. By taming the inhabitants of this parallel world with such products, it induces them to become dependent on Japan, the place of origin for all anime and manga.

I now understand the reluctant looks on Minori-san’s face that shows up every now and then.

She is a fujoshi. Though slightly biased, she, too, is an otaku. Seeing something that she loves being used as a tool for conquest is not amusing at all. However, her being a JSDF member means that she is not allowed to oppose policies decided by the Japanese government.

“Kanou Shinichi-kun.”

Matoba-san is smiling while speaking.

“Our jobs are to further Japan’s national interest.”

Mere sophistry.

However——

“The definition of things often change drastically depending on the way it is looked at. If you yourself think that you are an invader, then that is what you are. If not, then you are not. I recommend that you not torment yourself too much over it.”

These words that Matoba-san is uttering in a gentle tone.

“All you have to do is take it easy and focus only on how to popularize otaku culture in this country.”

To my ears——they sound exactly like a threat.

# Tenshi Translations

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 [tachibanachinatsu.wixsite.com/tenshitranslations/copy-of-obc-vol-1-ch-4-part-3](http://tachibanachinatsu.wixsite.com/tenshitranslations/copy-of-obc-vol-1-ch-4-part-3)

Volume 1 Afterword

Greetings, I am the light novelist Ichiro Sakaki.

I am an unfaithful novelist who has been writing for many places here and there, but this time is my first time writing for Kodansha Bunko——well I mean, this book is on the first issue lineup, so that's only natural lol.

Well then, about this Outbreak Company ~The Moe Invader~.

The basic premise for this story was actually already on my mind quite a long time ago.

It's a pretty twisted spin on the usual fantasy projects, but then again, I do have a slightly twisted self, which has caused me to have a habit of thinking “what would be weird if it was in a fantasy world” before thinking about normal ‘adventures with swords and magic.’

In my case, my debut work, where I explored ‘dragons that get revered as last boss characters in fantasies being easily ripped to shreds by concentrated rocket fire by the military when they come to the modern world,’ brought me to thoughts about ‘then let's think about a story about a dragon living in the modern era.’

In such a way, I thought at length about things that would be weird to have in a fantasy world, and eventually ‘companies’ came up in my mind.

It would be so weird to have a public company with elves and dwarves and dragons and lizardmen in it. It would be even weirder to have that public company handle manga and such. Those thoughts are what led to the birth of this story.

Even in the real world, as well as in history, there are many examples of a ‘chemical reaction’ occurring when elements that are not supposed to meet actually do meet. And the majority of these develop beyond expectations. What would happen when our world's entertainment products are brought into a parallel world——most likely, there will be a lot of disorder and craziness on the horizon, but my dear readers, I would be very blessed if you would follow down the path of this chemical reaction along with my protagonists.

27 October 2011  
Ichiro Sakaki