

# Episode 1 - Suddenly a Baby Thanks to a Fall

EDITORS : Samuel, rei\_hunter, maxofsteam, MadDavid, Meteor

“Waaait, Sou-kun!”

That voice rang out from behind as clearly as the clear skies themselves, and Asakura Souji turned around in response to it.

Over there was the unmistakable everyday sight that was her face. Her black hair that was so thoroughly dark as to seem painted in ink was done up in a ponytail that, as she came running towards him, was exactly like a horse’s tail as it swished about every which way.

And the expression she wore on her face was dazzlingly cheerful, to the point flowers in full bloom would’ve been taken by surprise.

“Fuu~, I finally caught up.”

She was visibly out of breath from that sprint. Her small mouth kept breathing out in short bursts as she held her chest.

“There’s no need to run, you know?”

Upon Souji saying that, she puffed out her cheeks and glared at him.

“Geez, then it would’ve been better if you’d waited for me! We *are* neighbors after all!”

This girl by the name of Amakawa Mayuki had lived next door since she was little -- the so-called childhood friend relationship. Being 146cm in height, she was a bit on the small side compared to the 176cm Souji. She had been determinedly trying to get past 150cm herself by drinking milk everyday, but unluckily enough she had instead ended up growing in a different regard.

Each step she took saw the two masses attached to her chest bounce up and down.

*(Hhmm, they sure have grown...85? No, maybe 90? Hey now don’t tell me...)*

Souji, demonstrating the sort of self-constraint that’d leave even top-class pitchers astonished, moved nothing but his eyes with tremendous speed to get a visual on his target. This was something he called the Flash Peek.

Those bountiful tracts seemed to just spontaneously take one's breath away, and it wasn't just Souji; the other male high schoolers walking nearby were showing poor attempts at restraint themselves.

However, the person in question, Mayuki, didn't notice these signs at all. To be more precise, Mayuki wasn't conscious of the fact that she basked in attention from the male students.

Along with having huge eyes, her skin had a baby-like smoothness and complexion to it. Add to that the radiant, charming smile that was the most striking of her features, and you could confidently call her a first-rate beauty.

At Amakawa Academy, where Souji and her attended, she even had her very own fanclub. And on that note: as the very name of Amakawa Academy may have already indicated to some, this Amakawa Academy had infact been founded by her relatives. They may have been distant relatives, but the current board chairman was a much closer relative, so none of the guys were brave enough to do something as crazy as confessing to her.

But of course there were also those among them who hadn't been able to hold back the tide of their feelings and *had* ended up confessing to her, only to be shot down in spectacular fashion. And additionally, regardless of how shaken they were by the damage received, her rejections had only seemed to keep getting ever more sharply worded as the rejected kept growing in number. All that was further reason no one dared to confess to her anymore.

That Amakawa Mayuki received the utmost care and admiration from everyone was a fact Souji was well aware of. He could bet all that stuff was what had led to it. Mayuki certainly wasn't too concerned about all these admirers, but Souji knew that if he was seen walking to school with her, these guys would definitely give him hell for it.

This being the situation, he had purposely headed out earlier than her, and had made sure to avoid direct eye contact as well; but he could only sigh now that she'd ended up running after him like usual anyway.

*Well, getting to see these things sway since morning is a plus and all but...*

A glance at his surroundings made him sense both the killing intent and equally murderous gazes aimed his way. Of course, with there being that much combined envy from the other guys, it pretty much felt like spears stabbing him all over.

*This not happening sure'd be best wouldn't it...?*

The way that boob monster kept smiling happily as they walked on prompted him to glare at her until...

“Hm? What happened?”

She adorably inclined her neck as if she truly didn't understand the situation.

“\*sigh\*, nothing at all.”

*Just let me be a shellfish. Having a childhood friend like her in my life is too much.*

It was the fourth lesson, and then it was the long awaited lunch break.

“Wa~, Asakura-kun's lunch is as colorful as ever~.”

“Ah, can I get something today too?”

“Me too me too!”

One way or another the female students always ended up crowding around. Cooking was certainly Souji's hobby, no, housework as a whole was, but among that cooking was his main specialty.

Souji had made this lunch as well; from the looks of things, it had been this situation ever since the girls had once said his lunch looked good and he'd responded along the lines of “How about a bite?”

As it was apparently a hit with the girls' tastes, this exchange of side dishes and the like happened frequently since. Once again, Souji was happy to have his own cooking praised and so kept this situation going by not saying anything.

It hurt seeing the glances Mayuki would give him on these occasions, but he completely ignored it. He ignored it because he didn't want to get caught up in anything complicated from now on.

The classroom's door suddenly opened (or at least he found it sudden), and the girls' gazes immediately set about focusing that way. Why? Because their own school idol whom they called the Academy's Prince had now appeared.

He was perfect to the point it wouldn't be strange at all if he normally appeared on TV. Extraordinary reflexes, a very sharp mind, great looks; one could tell the girls were paying attention to him.

The name of this person was Ninomiya Kazuto. He was a senior from the second years.

The clicking of tongues could be heard from the guys, while the girls positively burst into adoration as they approached him. Nearly every girl was blushing as they looked at him. In fact, he too seemed to be getting every bit the admiration Mayuki did.

Now Souji was a guy as well. And how the other guys felt was something he knew clearly. At the very least, he certainly wanted to ask God how and why such a perfect human being had even been created. They said all men were created equal, but that was definitely just a load of hot air floating ever upwards, likely lacking even a single grain of truth.

Unlike Mister Perfect there, Souji's reflexes were... average, his brain... average, his looks... average, his specialty... housework. Just where would any of that make him popular, exactly...?

*Aaahh-ah, every guy this perfect can just go disappear...*

If his stats were at least even just slightly above average, he could've expected a bit more high-pitched cheering from the girls, but the only words the girls ever drowned Souji in were demands for the side dishes in his lunch. He couldn't possibly help but let out a sigh at that could he now?

But even among the girls, there was just one girl who kept stuffing her mouth and looking at Souji even now. She was...

"Hey there Amakawa-san, I came again to ask about lunch together but, do you mind?"

Ninomiya Kazuto wore a bright, ladykiller smile as he shot Mayuki that question. However, this went unnoticed by Mayuki to an honestly impressive extent. One of her friends proceeded to let her know, and then as if she finally noticed his existence,

"Eh? Ah... Ninomiya-senpai? What's the matter?"

"... Well, I'm sure I was asking about lunch together."

Ninomiya Kazuto had a somewhat stiffer expression now due to Mayuki's attitude while still keeping his smile and facing her regardless. And so Souji, at the very moment Mayuki's glance turned away, picked up his lunch and began getting out of the classroom. He wasn't particularly up for getting involved in bothersome things. If Mayuki

happened to ask him for help or anything at all here, Perfect Guy would surely consider Souji a complete enemy, and with how things were going there was a good chance he'd challenge him to some contest to see who was worthy of her or the like. He wanted to be spared that.

Souji left the classroom while carrying his lunchbox, climbed up the stairs that led to the rooftop built on the side of the building, and then saw a girl leaning against the fence that had been set up there to prevent falls.

She seemed to be talking about something on her phone. Judging from the words that had made it to his ears, it appeared her mother was on the other end. He opened the door at the end of the stairs, and the music room was pretty close by. When they wanted to use it, either the chorus club or the light music club would make a call in advance and have the place reserved for noon; but it was possible that they'd gone out today.

He quickly set course for the roof in the middle of that thought, and the moment he walked past that girl, it happened.

As he suddenly thought he heard a sound come from the fence the girl was leaning on, it went ker-CLANG and began to fall outwards.

*Eh...?*

From there it felt somewhat like time had just condensed at his very core. The angle between fence and floor was steadily widening, and the girl who'd been leaning on that fence was falling further outwards with it.

Souji ran the instant he noticed. Of course, that girl wasn't anyone he knew. She was pretty much a complete stranger. But at that moment it felt like she'd end up falling to her death at this rate.

Feeling like that yet still running, he desperately tried to reach out and grab the girl's arm; but feeling like he wouldn't make it, although Souji himself didn't know why he did what he did next, at that instant, he dived and wrapped up the girl in a protective embrace, and together the two of them plummeted headfirst towards the ground.

*... Where exactly am I?*

That was the first thought that entered his mind. His consciousness was being oddly clear. Then he let out an exasperated breath through his nose at having done something so stupid.

As he still had his consciousness, he knew that he hadn't died after having fallen from those stairs. But now his body couldn't move freely at all. It was like he was slightly paralyzed, no, that wasn't it... The sensation he felt was like his whole body had gotten weak.

He did find it obvious that he wouldn't be uninjured, but he had to wonder why his body wasn't hurting at all then.

*... .. Just what happened?*

But not a moment later, he encountered something that brought his thoughts to a halt.

“Alri~ght, Souji~, itsh time for lunchies now~”

A woman he didn't recognize appeared before his eyes, her arms seeming to reach towards him; and suddenly his body had begun to float. The characteristic softness and scent of a woman was now tickling his senses.

As confusion set in, this woman gradually exposed all of her chest, and then...

*BOING!*

He didn't know what was what anymore. With his body not really listening to him, and with the beautiful woman before him having suddenly acted in a very unreserved manner - confusion; a wholly transcendent level of confusion had now stopped his mind completely.

“Huh? I wonder what happened today. Even though he always gets hungry around this time...”

While the woman now had a troubled expression on her face, Souji was the one who was really troubled here. Souji was still a guy. To be frank, if boobs were out right in front of his face, he'd naturally be driven by an urge to reach out for them.

But with this being way too sudden, he had absolutely no idea what to do with those boobs.

*A... dream? Y- yeah, a dream! I mean this is a lot like I'm actually a baby now!*

If this was a dream, then it couldn't be helped. Thinking that, then convincing himself this was all possibly just him dreaming out of some corner of his mind having secretly wanted baby-play, he decided to reach out for now.

*... ... Soft.*

*Fuyon* was probably the right sound effect for it. This being his first time touching a breast, Souji concentrated every single nerve on the feeling in his hand. But somehow the impassioned urges that he'd expected to feel from this weren't firing up. Instead, upon him touching that breast, he was somehow enveloped by a sense of comfort and security that was every bit as warm as a sunny day.

*This is almost like...*

Right as his mind was going "Isn't this straight up *being* a baby?", his mouth was naturally going towards the center of the woman's breast. It felt to him like he was moving to peck it on instinct.

And then a peculiar feeling caught his attention.

*Wh- Why am I getting a taste?*

Yes, that was the sensation that quite clearly pointed this out to be reality. The woman's warmth, the breast milk actually having taste; it all broke through to his mind and told him this couldn't be a dream.

*Wha... What exactly happened to meee...?!*

## Episode 2 - Encountering Yoyo

(EDITS IN PROGRESS NOW. THIS'LL PROBABLY TAKE A FEW WEEKS/MONTHS)

It would appear that Asakura Souji had somehow become a baby.

Yeah, that was probably the right impression. It had been a few days since he'd become this... age?... and had gotten the embarrassing experience of drinking breast milk. Souji now finally comprehended what it was that had happened to his body.

But wondering *why* he'd fallen into this sort of situation, once again, he tried to recall everything that had led up to this. After waking up early to prepare his lunch as well as make breakfast for his family, he'd headed off to school.

Then having passed time without incident till noon, as he was climbing the stairs with the idea of eating his lunch on the roof, an unfamiliar girl had ended up in the process of falling from them thanks to a broken fence; and the result of protecting her with his own body... was this.

*It's a dream it's a dream* he kept telling himself, but time flowed slowly, and he wasn't returning to his own world or anything no matter how long it flowed.

And having to *also* suffer such indignity as needing another person's help for eating, excreting and everything else, he'd finally accepted the reality of it all.

Yes, Asukara Souji, having died there, had now been reborn here.

It was really just that simple. That meant dealing with this was the only option. He did still have an attachment to his previous life, but having died, it wouldn't change anything if he kept thinking about it.

Then, he'd take this new life he'd gone to the trouble of attaining, and make it a more constructive one. But if there was one thing still on his mind, it was that he wanted to apologize to his family and to Mayuki, and hoped that the girl he'd tried to save had made it out unharmed.

As he thought of stuff like that, he decided he'd just figure it had ended well enough, and stop thinking about it already. Being reborn had been very unexpected, but he was now set on living his new life. But even with that settled, it would seem this world had yet more surprising things in store for him.

Just the other day in fact, the red-haired woman who seemed to be his mother, seeing an insect that looked a bit like a roach appear on the walls of his room, let out a scream that was ear-splittingly loud, and then killed the insect in question.

But it wouldn't be worth mentioning if that's all it was. Souji; no, it seemed he was called something like Soji in this world. Soji certainly had experience with something as simple as killing a roach.

*T/N: The Japanese text spelled the original Souji's name in kanji (想二) and is now spelling this reborn Souji's name in katakana (ソージ). To try and reflect this, I'm spelling reborn Souji's name in a different way.*

But just how did she kill the thing by straight up *burning it*?

He couldn't really make out whatever it was she'd said, but the very instant she'd suddenly turned her hand toward the insect, a fireball had materialized out of the palm of that hand, and the merely 3 centimeter long insect had gotten toasted along with the wall.

The shock of that moment made him regard the unreserved woman he'd suddenly met as being something far greater.

It was appearing that this world he was now in was one enveloped in magic and fantasy.

From that moment on, Soji felt an excitement that would not go away. To put it simply, he wanted to quickly use magic himself.

But as for actually using it; with Soji not knowing even the slightest bit about how things worked in this world, there were no means by which he could presently do so.

No matter how many times the now infant Soji held his breath, braced himself, and let out a spirited, forceful yell of "Chaa!," empty results were all he got out of it.

Indeed, it was unlikely he'd be able to do anything without waiting for growth to kick in and let him start walking on his own two legs first. But since he did have the mindset to keep waiting and waiting, he settled in and let these wholly irritating days pass him by.

After turning two years old, he became capable of saying words to some extent.

Soji Alkassa. That's what Soji's name was. He had red hair just like his mother Kaina. Soji did think it looked a lot like cosplay, but that it possibly also looked surprisingly good on him was a thought he kept all to himself.

His face somehow bore a resemblance to what the previous Souji's had looked like. It felt like he had a face with more neutral features now. He'd have honestly preferred having a more handsome, manlier face though.

But still, having his new face be made just like the one he'd had for sixteen whole years; he had to admit that his attachments were strong after all.

Turning three years old, he was strongly wanting to learn something about this world already, and he got some answers after asking Kaina a bunch of things.

Now it goes without saying that asking anything too outlandish, would *definitely* not have seemed very natural for a small child, so he only gave her questions that wouldn't have been the least bit odd for a child to ask.

The results: The first thing he understood was that Kaina's occupation was as a maid. Apparently his father wasn't here. Asking about his whereabouts made her say "Hmmm, wherever did he go, I wonder?" like she was trying to dodge the question, so he didn't dare inquire any further.

Following that was the large mansion where Kaina worked. That was where both Soji and her lived. Kaina appeared to be something of a head maid, and she seemed to have permission to be quite free in her conduct and remarks.

The other maids had great trust in her too; she was someone they could rely on at work. Because she was raising Soji right now, her workload had been going down; but since she'd apparently been working to the point the maids were saying her *usual* level of work was too much, it seemed the maids were now relieving her instead.

The person concerned had responded "Is that so?" and, to their approval, had then fully taken them up on their offer and gotten herself some time off; and she certainly seemed to be enjoying it as she went "It's been so long since I could relax like this~, I could get used to it~." She also felt just a bit of concern that she might just get too used to it. This concern of hers would later become a reality to put one at wits' end, but there was no way Soji would have known at the time.

This world was known by the name of Orb, and just as previously mentioned, it had all the signs of a world where magic was common.

According to Kaina, Soji would learn to use magic as well once he got older. He wanted to learn magic *right now*, whatever it took; but as saying something that unreasonable would only sound suspect, he began to think of other possible ways instead.

On one particular day, Souji was basking in the sun alongside Kaina in the mansion's huge garden, when there came a girl around his age walking closely behind a middle-aged man. The middle-aged man's face was one that he'd somewhat caught glimpses of in the mansion from time to time. However, the young girl in question was someone he'd never seen before.

With Kaina promptly standing up and bowing her head, he was able to tell that these were some very important people before him. He began to get the idea the man might even be the master of this mansion.

But his guess there was slightly off. This man's identity was the head butler serving in the mansion: one Balmunc Dizarte who was also often referred to as Bal-san. Indeed, he was certainly wearing a tailcoat, if one looked carefully.

And as for the young girl, she was the daughter of the mansion's master and was called Yoyo 八繼(Yatsugi) Crowtail.

That left him with one new question. Why was it that kanji like 八繼 were being used there? That was due to this world having a country by the name of Hinokuni with culture and customs uncannily similar to those of Japan, and this Hinokuni being the same land that Yoyo's mother had hailed from. Hence her name having kanji within it.

*T/N: Hinokuni (日ノ国, or Hi no Kuni if you really want to spell it like that) literally means Land of the Sun. Guess what Japan is known as?*

Upon hearing of that, he became driven by an immense desire to go there that was perhaps just natural for a man once born-and-raised Japanese.

Having now heard their introductions, Soji became determined to introduce himself and do so *without* messing it up in the process. If he were to do anything impolite here, Kaina's reputation as the head maid would be stained as a direct consequence.

Straightening his back like "pling!", he bowed from the hips as he aimed to behave his best.

'Pl- pleased to meet you! I'm- I- I am Soji Alkassa, at your servish!"

Damnit! Botched that right at the end!

But since he'd sufficiently lowered his head; feeling like he at least wouldn't be thought of as lacking in manners, he slowly raised his head and looked at Yoyo to be met with...

"....."

It was a stare that could bore holes into a person. He hurriedly began to wonder if he'd somehow carelessly caused offence after all.

Four year old Yoyo was by all means only a year older, but she was already capable of clear speech, and she seemed like an elite who'd be proficient in magic too. Along with her beautiful golden hair, she possessed eyes so pitch-black they seemed to draw you into them.

As he was thinking of how the blonde hair and black eyes were a rather unusual combination, he got this sense of her having an adult's insight despite her age of four.

Seeing this mood from her, a cold sweat ran down his back as he wondered if he'd *really* messed up that greeting of his, but...

"..... Bal, do I hold possession of this child?"

"Quite so, my mistress."

"Hmm."

Yoyo's eyes scanned Souji all over as if to check for something. Then apparently getting some sort of idea, she drew close to him and swiftly touched his forehead. His body inadvertently stiffened in response as he became thoroughly puzzled.

"Mm, every bit Kaina's child I see. So this child shall now be ... very own, I take it?"

*What* were those words just now? "So this child shall now be..."? Soji hadn't quite managed to catch that last part, but this girl's attention was clearly and unmistakably focused on him in some way.

Not knowing *what* was going on, he was looking to Kaina in a way that just screamed he wanted help. And that somehow just made her signal "good job!" with a thumbs-up.

*You couldn't understand that!?*

Seeing his mother's gesture, Soji tilted his head as he now wondered if he'd done something *right*. His hand suddenly emitted a warmth right then. Yoyo took hold of his hand upon seeing that.

"We're going. Come along with me."

"... Eh?"

She dragged him by the arm before he could resist and began taking him somewhere with her. Behind them, Balmunc was now following, but Kaina was...

*Just say "good job" already!*

...still maintaining that gesture even now. So he somewhat got a little angry.

However, if he tried to shake his arm free with all his might now, he'd most definitely end up putting her in a bad mood. She was the daughter of this mansion's owner, so he had to be courteous here no matter what. Her hating him would be the end.

Gathering up the combined 18 years of experience from both of his lives, he began considering just what it would take to have Yoyo like him.

Thinking of that as he kept walking, Yoyo's stride suddenly came to a stop.

"Look there."

"Huh?"

Doing as told, he turned his head to where the girl was pointing, and a mansion of immense size entered his field of view.

"All of what you see here will become mine before long."

Soji found it difficult to understand what she was even saying. The father of this girl should surely be the present master of this mansion. But the girl continued on.

"Papa and Mama will be leaving for Hinokuni shortly."  
"... Will the master not be coming byahc?"

Goddamnit! Tongue-tied again! Just get a grip already!

Though Soji's ears were going red on their own from the embarrassment, Yoyo looked like she simply didn't care at all, and showed a smile that seemed far beyond her meager age of four before replying,

"That is so. It will be me who becomes the master. So I ask..."

Yoyo now looked straight into Souji's eyes.

"Become a butler who serves just me alone, Soji. Lend me... your strength."

*T/N: As much as I'm aware that the actual word for a personal butler like this is "steward", I'm sure most people would have no idea what the hell a steward is, so I'm not translating it as such.*

He had to wonder why, at that moment, he felt a sensation like that of current running through his whole body. Seeing the imposing figure cut by this seemingly haughty girl, his heart quivered deeply.

And then noticing the loneliness that lay deep within the girl's eyes, feelings of wanting to bury that loneliness gushed forth within him too. The girl seemed to shake somewhere within her small frame as well.

And so Soji, at that moment, bowed his head with nary a conscious thought and muttered thusly.

"With certainty, Mistress Yoyo."

## **Episode 3 - Manifesting Magic**

(Edits in progress now. Will take a few weeks or months)

When turning four years old, he heard how he would spend his life from now on from mother Kaina. At that time, the day he became Yoyo's butler, his road was already formed, but he heard it again from mother.

四歳になった頃、自分が今後どのような生活を送るのか母親カイナから聞かされた。あの時、ヨヨから執事になれと言われたあの日、自分の道は形作られたようなものだが、改めて母から聞かされた。

Mother was the head maid of this mansion. Following that, her son, Souji's indicated road of life was to serve Yoyo as her butler.

Although normally it was unpleasant to ride on the rail paved by someone else, Souji already thought that his life-calling was as a butler when he was still in Japan.

母は屋敷のメイド長。そしてその息子であるソージは、ヨヨに仕える執事として生きていく道を示される。

本来なら誰かに敷かれたレールの上を走るのは嫌だとか言うのだろうが、ソージは執事という職業が自分の天職ではないかと日本に居た時に思ったことがある。

Cooking, washing, and cleaning, since he was small, was always done by himself because his house was dual-income so his parents always worked . Because of that, his housework skills already reached the top and surpassed the average housewives.

炊事、洗濯、掃除、幼い頃から両親が共働きのせいで、一人でずっとこなしていた。そのせいか、家事スキルが並みの主婦を凌駕するほどの高見に登りつめてしまっていた。

After all, Souji was originally the type that concentrated on what he did, so with that ability he might be suitable for housework that needed to be done with great detail.

Thanks to that, the person in question was relieved he was able to raise himself as a strong househusband that could do the housework. That was coupled with how he was happy to be able to improve his skill at cooking and cleaning. That's why, there were times where he was seriously worried that he couldn't make use of these skills in the future.

それはひとえに、ソージが元々凝り性であり、細かい作業も得意で要領が良いという非常に家事に向けた能力を宿していたことに既存するのかもしれない。

本人もそのお蔭か、家事をしていると心底安心するという主夫心を強く育てることができていたようだった。それに料理にしる掃除にしる、自分の腕が見る見る向上していくのは楽しくもあった。だからこそ、将来的にこのスキルを活かした職業に就けないかと本気で悩んでいた時期もあったのだ。

But, he couldn't just simply apply to work as a butler, in addition it wouldn't work well in current society, so he could only give up on it.

Because of that, for such chance to appear, everything worked as he desired. Even his reason as he answered Yoyo's demand, was probably also included in these desires.

だが執事という職業が簡単に募集されているはずもなく、世の中は上手くいかないことばかりなんだと達観した思いで諦めつつあった。

そんな矢先に、まさか絶好のチャンスが訪れるとは、願ったり叶ったりだった。ヨヨからの要求を一言で返事した理由も、そんな理由が多分に含まれている。

By the way, the Crowtail mansion called 【Moriath】 was the largest mansion in this town.

Yoyo's father's job, simply put, was an information broker. His information networks were vast, and a lot of people, from commoners up to nobles, seek the information held by Crowtail. He wasn't only dealing with information but also put his hands in rare crystals and magic tool businesses. Having obtained high quality information, he sold the materials obtained from it. With his results admitted even by the country, the father quickly climbed to a noble.

ちなみにクロウテイルの屋敷は【モリアート】と呼ばれる街の中で一番大きな屋敷である。ヨヨの父親が手がけている仕事は簡単に言えば情報屋である。その情報は幅広く、平民から貴族まで多くの者たちがクロウテイルの持つ情報を求めてやって来る。また情報売り買いする

だけでなく、希少な鉱石や魔法具などの 商売などにも手がけている。高質な情報を得て、それを元に手に入れた素材を売ったりしているのだ。その実績は国にも認められ、父親は成り上がり貴族として 馳せたのだ。

At the day Souji turned five years old, he got a book related to magic as a present from mother Kaina, after he requested it.

From then on, for the sake of not being defeated by the current master's daughter, he desperately memorized how to read and write. Although everyone in the mansion was surprised because a five year old child was capable of reading and writing, Yoyo only said, "It's only a natural thing for my butler." Having seen her relaxed and proud face, Souji felt somewhat happy.

ソージが五歳になった日、母親であるカイナからは、かねてから頼んでいた魔法関係の本をプレゼントしてもらった。

当主の娘であるヨヨに負けず、あれから必死で読み書きを覚えた。屋敷の者は五歳なのにもう読み書きができるとはと驚愕していたが、ヨヨは「わたしの執事なのだから当然よ」と言っていた。その顔は誇らしそうに緩んでいたのを見て、ソージも何だか嬉しかった。

Having turned five years old, he was going to be taught the fundamental attitude of how to work as a butler. Even so, Souji was able to choose the one that'd teach him.

Just like an arrow with a white feather, he chose Balmunk. When Balmunk had time to spare, he taught him about the mansion and Yoyo.

五歳になってからは、本格的に執事としての心構えや仕事などについても教わることになった。というよりも教えてほしいとソージから申し出たのだが。

そこで白羽の矢が立てられたのはバルムンクである。執事長のバルムンクに、時間が空けば屋敷のことやヨヨのことなどを教えてもらっていた。

Because Yoyo had gone out in formal dress with her father nearly every day, he didn't have the chance to come in contact with her, but when she had the time to spare, she'd shout, "Please study properly."

ヨヨはほぼ毎日礼装して父親とどこかへ出かけていたので、ほとんど触れ合う機会は無かったが、たまに時間が空くと足を延ばしては、「しっかり勉強なさい」と発破をかけてくる。

Although this girl was still six years old, she was great at social intercourse such as having dinner together just like her father, and he heard she spent her days busily. Without even letting out an displeased look, she kept a firm attitude.

彼女もまたまだ六歳なのに、父親とともにお偉いさんなどとの会食などの社交で、慌ただし日々を過ごしていると聞いた。嫌な顔一つもせずに、毅然とした態度を保っている。

However, in front of Souji, she showed her unexpected childish side. Talking about her father, grumbling about people from her previous work, and smiling as she talked about the invention of a new kind of playing, this might be the real Yoyo or so he thought.

しかしソージの前だと、意外にも子供らしい一面しか見せなかったりするのだ。父親や、その仕事先の者たちの愚痴や、新しい遊びの発明などを話し笑顔を振りまいている姿は、コッチの方が本当のヨヨなのだろうと思わせた。

Previously, at the time he and Yoyo studied arithmetic, he inadvertently used a formula he learned as a highschool student, and when Yoyo saw that, an awkward atmosphere flowed around Souji. No matter how excellent Yoyo was, as expected it was a calculating formula she never seen before, so Souji tried to think of something as he looked at the unusual sky.

以前、ヨヨと二人で算術の勉強をしている時、つい高校生で習う計算式を使って答えを導き出してしまい、それを見たヨヨとソージの間にえもいわれぬ空気が流れた。それはそうだろう。いくら優秀なヨヨでも、さすがに見たことも聞いたこともない計算式を、自分よりも一つ下のソージが編み出したと思ったら変な空気にもなる。

Having thought of making an excuse, he regretted that shallowness, but Yoyo immediately laughed and said, "That's nice, teach me more of that method," as she somehow didn't pursue how he came to know that formula. Having thought it was strange, Souji was relieved while thinking someone else was reincarnated just like him.

どう言い訳をしようかと思い、自分の浅はかさを後悔していたが、ヨヨはクスリと笑って「いいわね、その方法もっと詳しく教えなさい」と何故自分がそんな計算式を知っているのか追求してはこなかった。不思議に思ったが、ソージとしてはまさか転生してきたんですとは言えずホッとしていた。

But, Yoyo didn't say anything until the studying was finished, and although she said, "Someday... right?," he could only be stupefied and said, "Eh?," only to be replied with, "That's face is a masterpiece, Souji," as she laughed. It was Souji's secret to have thought her smile was lovely as he admired her.

だがヨヨが勉強を終えた時に一言、「いつか.....ね」と意味深な言葉を投げかけたので、意味が分からず「え？」と呆然としていたり、「その顔傑作よソージ」と言って破顔していた。その笑顔が見惚れるほど可愛かったと思ったのはソージだけの秘密だ。

A certain day after he spent days as usual, he thought it was the time to practice his magic, and he set his feet towards the mansion's backyard alone.

Souji had read the book about magic and was taught various things by Kaina, Balmunk, and even Yoyo. So, he began with the basics, sensing magic power.

そんな日々を過ごしていたある日、そろそろ魔法を使ってみようと思い、一人で屋敷の裏庭に足を踏み入れていた。

魔法の本を読んだり、カイナやバルムンク、そしてヨヨにもいろいろ教えてもらっていたソージは、まずは基本である魔力を感じることから始めた。

First of all, magic power was the necessary power used to conjured magic, and it seemed magic power was extracted from the 《Magic Core》 inside the body.

まず魔力というのは、魔法を使うために使用する力であり、体内の《魔核(まかく)》から魔力を抽出するらしいのだ。

It seemed to exist on the other side of the heart, and the earthling Souji could sense his internal organs had increased. Well, it was a usual thing for this world.

ちょうど心臓と隣り合わせに存在しているらしく、地球人だったソージ的には内臓が一個増えているという感覚なのだろう。この世界では普通の事であるようだが。

By the way, those who use magic were called magicians. Because magic was a strong power, the ones who are capable enough to use it received preferential treatment in various ways. With his eyes closed, Souji concentrated to sense the 《Magic Core》 that surely existed in his right chest. However, he could feel nothing.

ちなみに魔法を扱う者のことを魔法士と呼ぶ。魔法は強力な力であり、使える者は様々な面で優遇されたりするという。

目を閉じてソージは右胸に存在しているはずの《魔核》に意識を集中させる。しかし何も感じられなかった。

(Nn~ how odd~ although it was written in the book....)

(ん~おかしいなあ~本には書いてあるのに.....)

First, after sensing the 《Magic Core》 which existed inside his body, magic power was squeezed from there or so it was written.

まずは自分の中にある《魔核》の存在を意識して、そこから絞り出すように魔力を捻出すると書いてあった。

(... anyway, let's just try it again)

(.....とにかくもう一度してみよう)

Although he had tried it several times, he felt nothing at all. And a certain thought appeared and his face became pale.

何度か試したが、やはり何も感じなかった。そこである考えに行き渡り顔を青ざめさせてしまう。

(D-Don't tell me, I do not have talent in magic... something like that?)

(ま、まさかオレには魔法の才能が無い.....とか?)

Actually he had heard about people who didn't carry a 《Magic Core》 inside their bodies. Moreover, there were also those who had a dysfunctionality of that. He was shocked when he thought he was either of the two.

実は中にはそもそも《魔核》自体を持たない人もいるとのこと。また持っても機能不全の者もいる。もしかして自分がその枠に当て嵌まっているのではと思いショックを受ける。

(N-no no! That's still unproven!)

(い、いやいや！ まだ分からないじゃないか！)

After that, Souji repeatedly meditated every day. However, he was in a resigned mood because there was no development at all. Although he kept training because he wanted to surprise everyone by suddenly being capable of using magic, having thought those would end in vain, that created a lump in his throat that was filled by feeling more than just regret.

それからソージは毎日瞑想を繰り返していた。しかし何の進歩も感じず徐々に諦めムードが漂っていた。いきなり魔法を使って皆を驚かせようとサプライズで訓練しているのだが、それももしかしたら徒労に終わるのかもしれないと思うと、悔しさよりも情けなさが込み上げてくる。

“What happened Souji? Is it that your magic training didn't go well?”

「どうかしらソージ？ 魔法の訓練は上手くいってるの？」

On a certain day, Yoyo asked him that, and immediately he asked back with “I wonder what are you talking about?” Then, the girl laughed, having seen right through him.

ある日、ヨヨにそう尋ねられ、咄嗟に「何のことでしょうか？」と聞き返した。すると彼女は見透かしたように笑うと、

“If it's a hidden training, then do it more skillfully. Having trained quietly in the backyard, did you think I, the master wouldn't have noticed?”

“Uuh....”

「隠れて訓練するなら、もっと上手くやりなさい。あなたが裏庭でこっそりと訓練しているのを、主のわたしが知らないと思って？」

「う.....」

Apparently, he was found out by his master. So,he couldn't do anything except to report his progress.

どうやらご主人様には筒抜けだったようだ。仕方無く進捗状況を話すと、

“... I see, you are thinking you have no talent, right?”

“Y-Yes....”

「.....なるほど、自分には才能が無いと思っているわけね？」

「は、はい.....」

Having seen the depressed Souji, Yoyo, *fuh*, was full of smile.

落ち込むソージを見たヨヨは、フッと笑みを溢すと、

“It’s okay Souji”

“Eh?”

“You’re the man I chose. Have more confidence.”

“Ojou-sama....”

“You have talent. Surely it’ll come soon... .. that’s why you shouldn’t show that resigned look”

「安心なさいソージ」

「え？」

「あなたはわたしが選んだ男よ。自信を持ちなさい」

「お嬢様.....」

「あなたには才能があるわ。きつともうすぐ.....だから諦めずに前だけ向いてなさい」

The shock made him doubted if she was truly a six years old. And he could see halo behind her. Her words was as if she could foreseen what ahead. Souji held his breath, and just like the girl had said, he thought to struggling just a little more.

これが本当に六歳児かと思うほどの衝撃。彼女の背後に後光が見えていた。まるで彼女にはこの先のことが見えているような気さえしてくる。ソージは息を飲むと、彼女の言う通り、もう少し踏ん張ってみようかと思った。

Several months had passed since he began the training, and finally he could felt the change inside his body. When he concentrated to sensed the inside of his right chest, heat was generated.

訓練を初めて数か月、ようやく身体に変化を感じた。瞑想して右胸に意識を集中させていると、じんわりと熱がこもるようになった。

Following that, he continued to practice every day, and although he was not burned, he could felt it became considerably hotter. And that’s the point. At the moment his feeling became a passion, he could sensed something raging from the inside of his body.

そしてそれを毎日続けることで、火傷まではいかないが、かなりの熱さを感じるようになった。それからだ。熱さを感じている間、自分の体内で何かが暴れているような感覚が生まれる。

Having thought of releasing this from the inside of his body, he made a thrusting motion out of curiosity, but he felt somewhat uneasy about it.

これを体内から解き放ったらどうなるのだろうと好奇心に突き動かされるが、若干の不安もある。

Actually magic was different depending on the person. There were no elements just like the ones inside light novels.

If there was a person who could manipulate the wind, then there was also someone who only could do magic that's used to talk with animals. Although many magic resembled each other, the varieties were infinite.

実は魔法というものは、人それぞれによって異なる。よくライトノベルにあるように属性などがあるわけではない。

風を操ったりする魔法を持つ者がいれば、動物と話せるだけの魔法しか使えない者だっている。似た魔法は幾つもあるが、それでも本当に千差万別なのだ。

That's why, just what kind of magic Souji could do wouldn't be known until it actually appeared. He had heard the method to investigated that seemed to existed inside the royal palace, and there was nothing in this town.

だからソージの魔法がどんなものかは実際に発現してみないと分からないのだ。それを調べる方法は、王宮などには存在するらしいが、ここには無いと聞いた。

Therefore Souji wished.

だからソージは願っていた。

Somehow, please pardon me from any strange magic!

どうか、変な魔法だけは勘弁を！

That was followed by him wishing for it not to become a magic that wouldn't be able to put into practical use, then he concentrated to sensed the thing which raging inside his body. When he gripped the sensation that he could moved that something with his will, he slowly moved the sense towards his opened right palm. And in the middle of doing that, his stomach grumbled.

そして実用性も全く見出せない魔法だけは止めてくれと願い、体内に暴れる何かに意識を集束させる。

その何かを自分の意思で動かせる感覚を掴むと、ゆっくりと右手の平に感覚を宿していく。その最中に、お腹がぐ〜となった。

(... .. yesterday stew, is there any remain of that?)

(.....昨日のシチュー、まだ残ってるとか言ってたっけ?)

Having recalled the taste of yesterday stew, he thought of eating it again later. But at that moment, something suddenly appeared.

昨日食べたシチューの味を思い出して、後で食べさせてもらおうと思った。だがその時、突然それは出現した。

“... .. eh?”

「.....え？」

What appeared on his opened right palm was—————pure white flame.

右手の平に現れたのは—————真っ白な炎だった。

### Story 4 Flame Genesis Magic

#### 第四話 創炎魔法

At first, I thought it was done by someone else, so I waved my hand to shook off the flame in surprise, but it didn't let go as if it was glued on my hand. Apparently, it wasn't someone's prank as I was convinced I myself msade it.

初めは誰かに何かされたのかと思い、驚いて炎を振り払うように手を振っていたが、まるで吸いついているかのように離れなかった。どうやらこれは誰かの仕業では無く、間違いなく自分が生み出したものだと確信できた。

Souji stared at the flame that burn inside his hand for a while. There's no heat. Rather, he couldn't feel anything at all. But, he understood it was the flame he had sensed before.

ソージはしばらく手の中で燃えている炎をジッと眺めていた。熱くはない。というより何も感じない。しかしそれは感覚で炎だと理解はできた。

But, why? Isn't flame usually red? Or blue?

しかし何故？ 炎は普通赤色では？ もしくは青？

Such common sense ran around inside Souji's mind.

そんな常識がソージの脳内を駆け巡る。

(What mother used was certainly fire, right? Yup, it surely was red in color)

(母さんが使ってたのも確か火だったよな？ うん、間違いなく赤色だった)

He recalled the time when Kaina burnt a cockroach-like insect to death. Then he heard from Kaina that her magic was capable to create and manipulate flame. Actually she had shown it for several times, and it had considerable heat and scale.

ゴキブリのような昆虫をカイナが焼殺した時のことを思い出す。あれからカイナにも聞いたが、カイナの魔法は炎を生み出し操れるものらしい。実際に何度か見せてもらったこともあるが、熱量も規模も相当なものだった。

The head butler, Balmunk also said Kaina was an excellent magic user.

カイナは魔法士としても優秀なのだと言っていた。

That's why it was not strange for the blood related Souji to have fire related magic, but the thing in front of his eyes was an abnormal spectacle.

だからその血を引くソージが炎に関係する魔法を扱えるのは別段不思議ではないが、目の前にある事実は異常な光景だった。

(White flame? Moreover there's no heat... .. what the hell is this?)

(白い炎？ しかも熱くないし.....何なのコレ?)

It couldn't be helped for him to think like that. The usage of this white flame was completely unknown after all.

With the book laid on the ground, he used one hand to flip the page as read it, and for most people the usage flowed into the head at the moment magic appeared written.

そうってしまうのも無理はない。この白い炎の用途が全く以て不明なのだから。

本を地面に置いてじっくり片手でページを捲り読み進めていくと、ほとんどの者は魔法を発現した瞬間、その使い方が頭に流れてくるとあった。

(... .. nothing flowed though....)

(.....流れてきてないんだけど.....)

Probably because of fear. It appeared. Am I able to use magic? probably something like that.

But, unfortunately nothing go according to my wish... .. what a strange magic.

About the practical use, its usage couldn't be distinguished. While thinking about what to do, the sound of carriage entering the mansion was heard. More accurately, it was the horse's footsteps.

恐れていたことが起きたのかもしれない。発現はした。魔法は使えた？ かもしれない。だが残念ながら懸念した通り.....変な魔法だった。

実用性どころか、使い方すら判別できない。どうしたものかと思っていると、馬車が屋敷に入ってくる音がした。正確には馬の足音だが。

(O-Ojou-sama is back! A, but what to do about this....)

(あ、お嬢様が帰って来た！ あ、でもコレどうしたら.....)

Thinking it wouldn't be good to welcome her as is, for a while he strongly wished for it to disappear inside his mind. Then, *fuh*, it disappeared just like smoke.

このまま出迎えには行けないと思い、とりあえず消えるように心で強く念じてみた。するとフッと煙のように消失したのでホッとした。

Interrupted his training as is, Souji rushed to welcome her.

そのまま訓練を一旦中断して、ソージは出迎えに急いだ。

In front of the mansion, a lot of maids were welcoming. Souji was positioned beside Kaina as he also quietly bowed his head.

Yoyo and her father, Justin came out of the carriage. The head butler, Balmunk was beside the carriage, he received Justin's bag, and he move toward the mansion while importantly holding the bag. Following that, Yoyo discovered Souji.

屋敷の前では多くのメイドたちが出迎えていた。ソージもカイナの隣に陣取り静かに頭を下げていた。

ヨヨは父親のジャスティンとともに馬車から姿を現す。ともに馬車から降りてきた執事長のバルムンクは、ジャスティンのカバンを彼から直接受け取ると、大切に抱えて屋敷の中へと向かって行く。そしてヨヨがソージを発見すると、

“Souji, come.”

「ソージ、来なさい」

Thinking she was ordering him to take the small pochette in her hands, he approached her. As he passed Balmunk, “Come before your master call,” he advised him. He replied with small “Yes,” and raised his speed.

恐らく手に持っている小さなポシェットを持つように指示されるのだろうと思い、近づいていく。バルムンクとすれ違う時、「主がお呼びする前に向かうように」と一言注意してきた。小さく「はい」と答えると、進む速さを上げる。

But at that time, he discovered something suddenly came flying as it cut off the air from far away.

しかしその時、突然遠くから空気を切り裂いて何かが飛んでくるのを発見。

It was something similar to stone, and it hit the horse’s body. The horse was surprised by the pain and shock, and suddenly began to act violently.

Immediately, with his back facing the horse, Justin was blown away. Everyone was stupefied wondering what had happened. Balmunk was also looked back by turning his head.

それは石のようなものであり、馬の身体に命中する。そのせいで馬が痛みと衝撃に驚き、突然暴れ出した。

咄嗟のことで、馬に背を向けていたジャスティンは吹き飛ばされる。皆もギョッとなって何事かという様子だ。バルムンクも目を剥いて振り返っていた。

“Papa-!?”

「パパッ!？」

Although Yoyo shouted that, the same threat moved towards Yoyo. The horse was about to trample the small Yoyo. Nothing would be left if the slender Yoyo got trampled by the huge horse’s hoof.

ヨヨは叫ぶが、同じ脅威はヨヨにも降りかかろうとしていた。馬がまだ小さいヨヨの身体を上空から踏みつけるように落ちてくる。巨体の馬の蹄の下敷きになればヨヨのか細い身体など一溜まりもない。

“Ojou-sama-!”

「お嬢様っ！」

Souji immediately shouted, but he couldn't make it because of the distance. As he thought that, something quickly passed above Souji's head.

ソージも咄嗟に叫ぶが、距離があり過ぎて間に合わない。そう思ったその時、ソージの頭の上を何かが物凄い速さで通過した。

He recognized it as fireball, and it rescued Yoyo as it splendidly hit the horse. The horse was blown away as the fireball continued to advance. It was Kaina's magic that rescued Yoyo. *Just as expected of Kaina*, the maids' leak out admirations in unison.

She, with her quick thinking, thrown magic towards the horse to avoid the danger.

それは見覚えのある火の玉であり、見事馬に命中しヨヨを危険から救った。馬はそのまま火の玉の進んだ方向へと吹き飛ぶことになった。彼女の窮地を救ったのはカイナの魔法だった。さすがはカイナだとメイドたちから一様に感嘆が漏れている。

彼女は咄嗟の機転で魔法を馬にぶつけて危険回避しようとしたのだ。

And, it was a success... .. just as he saw.

そしてそれは成功した.....かに見えた。

“Watch out, Ojou-sama!”

「危ないお嬢様っ！」

Souji shouted again. The crisis of getting trampled by the horse was certainly averted. But, because the horse that blown away by the fireball's impact, the carriage that tied to the horse became dangerous weapon as it fell towards Yoyo because of the recoil.

ソージは再度叫ぶ。確かに馬に踏みつけられるという危機は乗り越えた。しかし馬が火の玉の衝撃で吹き飛んだせいで、その反動を受け今度は馬に繋いであった荷車がヨヨに向かって倒れてくる凶器に変わってしまった。

“... .. eh?”

「.....え？」

Yoyo body stiffened because of the suddenness, it hardened as if all of it was someone else's problem. However, she regained her senses as the danger approached.

突然のことでヨヨも身体を硬直させて、まるで他人事のような感じで固まっていた。しかし自分に迫る脅威に正気を取り戻したのか、

“N-No... .. HE-HELP!”

「い、いや.....た、助けてえっ！」

At that time, the time inside Souji's body was condensed just like that time, that's right, just like the time when the female student was about to fall.

In an instant, information flowed into Souji's head. Following that, Souji *kih*, sharpened his gaze, and opened his right and aimed at the carriage. That followed with one sentence-----

その時、ソージの体内時間が、まるであの時のように凝縮した。あの時、そう、落下しそうな女生徒を庇った時だ。

刹那、ソージの頭の中に情報が流れてきた。そしてソージはキッと視線を鋭くさせると、荷車に向けて右手を開いた。そして一言-----

“-----devour it, white flame!”

「-----喰らい尽くせ、白炎(はくえん)！」

Pure white flame from before gushed out from Souji's right hand, it came before Yoyo as it moved like a lightning, and as if it had opened its large jaw, the carriage was wrapped by the flame. Following that, *bakibaki*, crushing sound came from the white flame. Then the sound stopped, the flame disappeared as if it had finished its duty.

ソージの右手から先程の真っ白な炎が噴出し、電光石火な動きでヨヨの前まで来ると、まるで大きな口を開けたように炎は広がり荷車を包んでしまった。

そして、バキバキと砕いているような音はその白炎から聞こえる。そして音が止むと、役目を終えたかのように炎は霧散していった。

Everyone didn't move from their spots as if the time had stopped. It was only Yoyo who moved her face towards Souji.

皆がそれこそ時が止まったかのように動かずその場で佇んでいた。その中でヨヨだけが、ゆっくり顔を動かしてソージを見た。

“So-Souji... .. you....”

「ソ、ソージ.....あなたが.....」

Thank god. He was relieved having confirmed Yoyo's safety. But, as Souji dropped his shoulder, he fell to the ground as is.

良かった。ヨヨの無事な姿を確認するとホッとした。だがそこでソージはガクンと肩を落とすと、そのまま前のめりに地面に倒れた。

“Souji-!”

「ソージッ！」

The time started to move. Everyone started to move and they ran towards Justin and Yoyo. However, Yoyo ignored those who came towards her and looked at the fallen Souji again.

そこで時が動き出した。全員が弾かれたように動き出し、ジャスティンとヨヨに駆けつける。しかしヨヨは、向かって来る者たちを退け、倒れたソージのもとに向かう。

She approached Kaina with Souji in her arms.

そしてソージを抱き上げているカイナに近づく。

“How is Souji?”

「ソージは？」

Yoyo asked Kaina with an uneasy look, and Kaina smiled as if saying it's okay.

不安気な様子でヨヨはカイナに尋ねるが、カイナは安心させるように微笑む。

“He is okay. He probably just unconscious because it was the first time he use magic.”

“O-oh....”

「大丈夫です。恐らく初めて魔法を使った反動で意識が飛んだだけでしょう」

「そ、そう.....」

Yoyo breathed in relieve. Yoyo gently took the right hand of the sleeping Souji.

ホッと息をつくヨヨ。ヨヨは眠っているソージの右手を優しく手に取る。

“With this hand, you protected me Souji.”

「この手が、あなたが守ってくれたのねソージ」

She let out a gentle smile, and

優しげに微笑むと、

“As expected, you're my butler. Butler of no one but me. Thank you, Souji.”

「やはり、あなたはわたしの執事よ。わたしだけの執事。ありがとう、ソージ」

Inside the forest a little away from the mansion, two men showed frustrated faces.

屋敷から少し離れた森の中、二人の男がその顔に焦燥感を表していた。

“Oi! This ended in failure!”

“Ho-How should I know! Furthermore, there's no information about that brat!”

“Tch, let's just quickly get away from here”

「おい！ 失敗したじゃねえか！」

「し、知らねえって！ それにあんなガキがいるなんて情報も無かったぞ！」

「ちっ、とにかくさっさとずらかるぞ！」

At the moment these men took a step away from their location,

男たちはその場から離れようと歩を進めた瞬間、

“Just where, are you going?”

「どちらへ、行かれるのですかな？」

In front of them was a gray-haired elderly which wore tail-coat. The men, “Hih!,” let out small screams.

目の前に白髪を生やした燕尾服の老人が立っていた。男たちは「ひっ！」と小さく悲鳴を上げる。

“I am sorry for the late of the introduction. I am Balmunk, and I serve Justin-sama. This matter, I came here to ask you about the circumstance, so may I ask for your accompaniment?”

「申し遅れました。私、ジャスティン様にお仕えするバルムンクと申します。此度の件、事情をお聞きしたく参上致しましたが、御同行、願えますかな？」

Balmunk who was at the mansion just a little while ago, having guessed the location of the attacker from the direction the stone came flying, and after he knew the crises already left Yoyo and Justin, used his tremendous force and reached this place.

先程、間違いなく屋敷にいたはずのバルムンクは、飛んで来た石の方向から攻撃をしかけた賊の居場所を推察して、ヨヨとジャスティンの危機が去ったことを知った後、凄まじい勢いでこの場所へ辿り着いていたのだ。

The men, who was attacking just a while ago, must have thought they still have time to escape. However in reality, there was the butler whose master was the one they attacked in front of them.

男たちは、攻撃したのはつい先程のことであり、逃げる時間も十分にあったと思っていたのだろう。しかし現実には、目の前に自分たちが攻撃をした当主に仕えている執事がいた。

Although Balmunk floated a smile, his eyes were completely frozen.

バルムンクは笑みを浮かべてはいるが、目だけは凍り切っている。

Following that, the men’s heartbreaking screams echoed inside the forest.

そして男たちの悲痛な悲鳴が森の中でこだまを生んだ。

When Souji woke up, he was on the bed, but somehow there was the sleeping Yoyo whose hand grasped his.

ソージが目を覚ました時、そこはベッドの上であり、何故か自分の手を握って眠っているヨヨの姿があった。

“... .. Umm, what’s with this situation?”

「.....えっと、どういう状況コレ？」

Even more, his memory was vague on how did he got on bed.

というよりも何故自分がベッドの上で寝ていたのか記憶が曖昧だ。

“Surely... .. I was practicing magic then....”

「確か.....オレは魔法の訓練してて.....」

As if on cue, the door was opened and Kaina came inside. From her story, Souji had continue sleeping for one full day. It seemed Yoyo was the one who nursed him.

そこで都合が良いことに扉を開けてカイナがやって来た。彼女から話を聞くに、丸一日、ソージは眠り続けていたという。そんなソージをかいがいしく看病していたのがヨヨらしい。

Refusing the maids, she told them she’d nurse him. Even her father, Justin didn’t stop her and let her do as she like while laughing heartily.

メイドたちの反対を押し切って、自分が看病をすと言いつつしたこと。父であるジャスティンも、豪快に笑いながら彼女の好きなようにさせてやれと認めた。

Finally he remembered he used magic for the first time to save Yoyo. At the moment he was relaxed after confirming her safety, his consciousness was *putsun*, cut off. But, for Yoyo to nursed him herself, he wanted to apologize.

そこでようやく自分が初めて魔法を使いヨヨの危機を救ったことを思い出した。彼女の無事を確認して気が緩んだ瞬間、意識がプツンと途切れたのだ。でもまさかヨヨ自身が看病してくれているとは、何だか申し訳なかった。

“I see, but is it okay for Ojou-sama to do that?”

「そっかあ、でもお嬢様がそんなことしていいのかな？」

Souji could only inclined his neck when he saw Yoyo’s sleeping face. Although she usually kept a not child-like expression, she was truly adorable just like ordinary child as she sleep.

いまだに眠っているヨヨの寝顔を見ながら首を傾げるソージ。普段はキリッとして子供らしくない表情を保っているが、こうして寝ていると本当に可愛らしい普通の子供である。

“Fufu, it’s okay. Love is capable to transcend anything after all!”

「ふふ、いいのよ。愛は全てを超越するんだから！」

Kaina wore a very happy smile, but because he didn’t understand his mother’s words at all, he felt ashamed as a son.

カイナは嬉しそうに微笑むが、自分の母親が意味の分からないことを言うもんだから、息子として恥ずかしくなった。

“U... .. u... .. ah, Souji!”

「う.....う.....あ、ソージ！」

Yoyo woke up and she drew closer. His heart throbbed because Yoyo’s adorable face approached him as if she was about to kiss him. In his mind, (I am not a lolicon), he repeated that for so many times.

ヨヨが目覚めて、詰め寄ってくる。ヨヨの可愛らしい顔がキスするかの如く近づいて来てドキッとする。心の中で（オレはロリコンじゃない）と何度も繰り返す。

“Are you already okay? Nothing hurt?”

“Y-Yes! I am already fine... .. I think.”

「もう大丈夫なの？ 痛いところはないの？」

「は、はい！ もう大丈夫.....な気がします」

Honestly, there was no incompatible feeling or pain at all. He judged it as normal. Yoyo was relieved as she pat her chest, and she stood up on the spot.

正直身体に違和感も痛みも感じない。正常だと判断した。ヨヨはホッと胸を撫で下ろし、その場に立つ。

“Souji, you’ve done well this time. Just as expected of my butler.”

“Ah, yes. Thank you very much.”

「ソージ、今回のこと良くやったわ。さすがはわたしの執事よ」

「あ、はい。ありがとうございます」

No one felt it unpleasant to be praised. Souji floated an embarrassed smile because of the itching but pleasant sensation. Yoyo also floated a beautiful smile, and she turned towards the door as is. Following that, *pitah*, she halt her step.

褒められて嫌な奴はいない。むず痒い気持ちを感じながらも頭をかき照れ笑いを浮かべるソージ。ヨヨも微笑を浮かべると、そのまま扉まで向かう。そしてピタッと立ち止まり、

“That’s a good magic. Continue your training and get stronger. I will also get stronger so as to not lose against you.”

「良い魔法だったわ。さらに訓練を積んで強くなりなさい。わたしも負けないように強くなるわ」

She got out of the room after saying that.

それだけ言うと部屋から出て行った。

“Fuu~.”

「ふう～」

Souji let out a big sigh, and Kaina talked about the people who startled the horse. They were people who think ill of Justin, and they hired mobs using money to give Justin a warning.

ソージは大きく息を吐くと、カイナから馬を驚かせた存在について語った。何でもジャスティンのことを良く思っていない者が、金で暴徒を雇いジャスティンに警告のために事を起こしたという。

The planner was someone who would be troubled if Justin’s current business went well. From the pair Balmunk captured, thanks to the easily gotten information, they could pursue the employer and Justin was full of motivation.

今ジャスティンが抱えている商談が上手くいけば困る者が画策したことだったとのこと。バルムンクが捕らえた二人組が、情報をあっさり吐いてくれたお蔭で、彼らを雇った者たちを追求することもできるとジャスティンはやる気満々なようだ。

“But Souji surprised me, when did you started train your magic?”

“Nn~ I think it was a long time ago? I was going to surprise you, so I just kept quiet about it.”

“That’s a splendid strategy. Not only Ojou-sama, everyone in this mansion were surprised.”

“Ehehe!”

“But, what kind of magic is that? Although I got the feeling it was a flame when I saw it, there was no heat...”

“Un, actually, it looks like my magic is 『a magic capable to create special flame』 ”

“... .. what do you mean?”

「でも驚いたわよソージ、いつから魔法の訓練してたの？」

「ん～結構前かな？ 驚かせてあげようと思って黙ってた」

「それは見事な作戦だったわね。お嬢様だけじゃなく、屋敷中のみんなが驚いてたわよ」

「えへへ！」

「だけど、あの魔法は一体何なの？ 見た感じ炎のようだったけど、熱量も感じなかったし.....」

「うん、実はね、オレの魔法は『特殊な炎を創り出すことができる魔法』みたい」

「..... どういうこと？」

Question marks floated above Kaina’s head.

カイナは頭の上にハテナを浮かべている。

“That is, that white flame was something I created, its effect is to 『devour』 . In other words, a flame that capable to eat anything.”

“... .. wa-wait a sec. Then, what? Is it it didn't have flame's characteristic to burn?”

“Un, the white flame is.”

“Eh? The white flame is... .. eh, what do you mean?”

「えっとさ、あの白い炎は、オレが創り出したもので、その効果は『喰』。つまり何でも食べちゃう炎ってこと」

「.....ちょ、ちょっと待って。それじゃ何？ 炎の特性である燃やす効果は一切無いってこと？」

「うん、白炎はね」

「え？ 白炎は.....ってどゆこと？」

At that time, the information that flowed into his head was considerably huge. Because a lot of time had passed, almost all of them were forgotten, but the effect of the white flame, only his magic's characteristic was remembered.

あの時、頭の中に流れてきた情報はかなり膨大なものだった。あまりに一瞬過ぎて、ほとんど忘れてしまったが、白炎の効果と、自分の魔法の特性だけは覚えている。

Souji's magic was 『Flame Genesis (Souen)』 . In other words it was the creation of flame.

Moreover it was possible to equipped the created flame with special effect.

At the time he created the flame, it's important to imagine what kind of flame he wanted to make.

ソージの魔法は『創炎(そうえん)』。つまり炎を創ること。また創り出した炎には、特殊な効果を備え付けることが可能だということ。

生み出す時、どんな炎にするのかイメージすることが大切だ。

The first flame he created, his stomach rang in hunger by chance, and he remembered the stew he ate last night, he wanted to eat it to fill his stomach.

The phenomenon resulted by his unconscious thinking gave birth to 『Devouring Flame』 , the white flame. By the way, it was white because the stew he remembered was a white stew.

初めて白炎を生み出した時、たまたまだが空腹でお腹が鳴り、昨夜食べたシチューのことを思い出し、食べたいと、腹を満たしたいと思った。

無意識にそれが現象化した結果、生まれたのが『喰らい尽くす炎』である白炎だった。ちなみに白なのは、思い出していたシチューがホワイトシチューだったからだ。

“Th-That's amazing... .. then, if you imagine an ordinary flame, can you create a flame just like mine?”

“Un, looks like it.”

“Kya~! As expected of my son! That's incredible!”

「す、凄いわね.....それじゃ普通の炎をイメージしたら、私みたいな炎も創り出せるってこと？」

「うん、みたいだよ」

「きゃ~！ さっすが私の息子よお！ もうすっごいじゃない！」

Kaina said that while hugging him. Not only her, anyone would be delighted. This magic was certainly useful. Although he was uneasy and thought it was a strange magic, this magic surely provided with its practical usage.

そう言いながら抱きついてくるカイナ。彼女じゃなくても嬉しく思うだろう。この魔法は確かに使える。

不安に思っていたように、変な魔法ではあるが、実用性は確実に備えている魔法だった。

Because he had thought it was an unuseful magic, he was so happy that he actually wanted to dance.

It was a magic that capable of creating a flame with all kind of effect depending on his imagination. Because he have this, if Yoyo was in danger just like the other day, he would be able to rescue her or so he think.

本当は何の役にも立たない魔法なのではと思っていたので、今も実は踊り出したくなるほど嬉しいのだ。

イメージ次第でどんな効果も得られる炎を創り出せる魔法。これがあるなら、先日みたいにヨヨが危険に陥った時、助けることができると思った。

For a butler, it was a natural thing to protect his master. And... .. and... ..

執事たるもの、御主人の身を守るのは当然。そして.....そして.....

(I can rapidly improve my housework skills with this!)

(これならもっと家事スキルを飛躍的にアップさせることができるし！)

He make Guts Pose in his mind.

内心でガッツポーズをしていた。

Note : Guts pose, something like braced your arms while shouting YEAH!

Souji Alkasha. As expected he was a boy who did not forget to held a househusband mind wherever he was.

ソージ・アルカーサ。やはりどこまでいっても主夫心を忘れない少年だった。

## Story 5 Summoning Brave Souls Vessels

### 第五話 英霊器召喚

【Rasthia Kingdom】. A kingdom where a lot of races lived in, and the biggest country in west continent. Originally it was a harbor town, but a country was built there as a lot of races set foot there and it had became the place for cultural exchange.

【ラスティア王国】。多くの種族が住む国であり、西の大陸で最大の国。元々はただの港だったのだが、そこには多くの種族が足を踏み入れる交流の場であったため、拠点として国を築くことになった。

The one responsible for this was the Knight, Alsey Bruss. With a lot of supports, Alsey created the history of the kingdom although it took times.

その任を受けたのは騎士アルセイユ・ブルッセ。アルセイユは多くの支持を受け、時間をかけて国の歴史を作ってきた。

For the reason of why did such huge responsibility entrusted to him, ones need to look back at the history. Alsey was a knight who served the Emperor, his popularity, coupled with his ability made everyone recognized him as a man of character. That followed with him being involved with a certain incident, which made Alsey a splendid man in Emperor's mind.

何故彼がそのような大任を任されたのかは、歴史を振り返る必要がある。アルセイユは皇帝に仕えていた騎士であり、その人望、実力ともに誰もが認めるほどの人格者だった。そしてある事件に携わり、アルセイユは見事皇帝の意に報いた。

As the proof of his trust, the Emperor decided it'd be okay to entrusted him with the duty of creating a country.

He used all of his might to create a country in order to answer the Emperor's expectation.

Having created the **【Rasthia Kingdom】**, he became the founder king, Alsey Bruss Rashtia I.

そんな彼に信頼の証として皇帝は、彼ならば国造りを任せられると判断して任を授けた。

皇帝の期待に応えるためにも彼は国造りに全てを懸けた。それで出来上がったのが**【ラスティア王国】**であり、彼は初代国王アルセイユ・ブルッセ・ラスティア一世となった。

Time flowed since then, the current ruler was Tiley Bruss Rashtia VII. As the age changed, **【Rasthia】** had became the country where a lot of people gathered and the greatest in regards of cultural exchange.

それから時が流れ、今国を治めているのはティレイユ・ブルッセ・ラスティア七世である。時代も移り変わり、**【ラスティア】**は最大の交流の場として多くの人が集まる国になった。

However, **【Rasthia】** was currently wrapped in tension. It was because of the imperial command that came from the Emperor.

The content itself could make ones aghast.

しかし今、**【ラスティア】**はかつてないほどの緊張に包まれていた。それは皇帝からの勅命が降ったからだ。

しかもその内容が愕然とするものだった。

----- **【Summoning Brave Souls Vessels】** .

----- **【英霊器(えいれいき)召喚】**。

It was the summoning for those who could became a vessel to the Brave Souls just as the name suggested. Although it had tried many times in the past, most of them ended in failure.

In **【Orb】**, there were existences called brave hero and hero. These people held tremendous power as they used it to help people, and became everyone's lead.

その名の通り英霊を宿すことのできる器を持つ者を召喚すること。過去にも何度も試されたが、ほとんどは失敗に終わっていた。

ここ【オーブ】には、かつて英雄や勇者と呼ばれた存在がいた。その者たちの持つ力は絶大であり、その力を以て人々を救い、皆の導き手となった。

Note : Eiyuu and Yuusha both are hero, and I almost use braver for eiyuu

Brave Soul was a soul that came from another world. There were heroes who called Ten Excellents in the past. Those heroes' souls were currently managed by the palace where the Emperor lived.

英霊というのはそうして世界を湧かせた人物の魂のこと。この世には十傑と呼ばれる英傑が過去にいた。そしてその英傑の魂は、現在、皇帝の住まう宮殿に管理されている。

Having entrusted these souls to Rashtia VII, the Emperor ordered him to made the **【Summoning Brave Souls Vessels】** a success.

His reason was the north of this continent, the **【Zoan Continent】**, also called **【Demon Continent】**, the largest continent in the world.

その魂をラスティア七世に預けた皇帝は、見事**【英霊器召喚】**を成功させることを命じた。

その理由、それは北の大陸である**【ゾーアン大陸】**、別名**【魔族大陸】**と呼ばれる、世界最大の大陸に既存する。

There was a race called Demon race in **【Zoan Continent】**. They possessed intelligence, and although there were those who didn't cause trouble for other races, they numbered a few. Most of them acted by instinct just like beasts. **【Zoan Continent】** continent had become the most dangerous continent, and although no one approached it, recently a leader-like existence appeared.

**【ゾーアン大陸】**には魔族と呼ばれる種族がいる。彼らの中には知性を持ち合わせ、他種族とも問題無く接している者もいるのだが、それは数も少ない。

ほとんどが獣のように本能のみで行動する者ばかりなのである。そのせいで**【ゾーアン大陸】**は屈指の危険大陸として、誰も近づかないようにしていたのだが、昨今その中に統率者のような存在が現れたのだ。

The leader began to expand their power towards the other continents. A lot of races were sacrificed, and lives were scattered.

そしてその統率者は、他の大陸にも自分たちの勢力を広げようとし始めたのだ。多くの種族がその犠牲になり、命を散らしていった。

Having considered that fact, for the sake to defend against such violence, the Emperor was giving out an enormous reward for those who succeed in stopping the Demon race's action. But although those who boasted their strength go to subjugate the leader, the result was unfavorable.

It seemed the leader was stronger than expected, the strong and famous people that raised their fists were screwed. As for the other reason, the enemies were numerous.

その事実を鑑みて、皇帝がその暴挙を防ぐために、魔族の暴挙を止めた者には莫大な褒章を与えると触れを出し、我こそはと力自慢の者たちがこぞって統率者を討伐しに行ったのだが、結果は芳しくなかった。

意外にもその統率者の力が強かったらしく、強者と名高い者たちも挙げた拳を下ろすハメになった。その理由として、敵の多さが挙げられる。

Although there were people who proposed to joint their power together in battle, there existed countries and politician's scheme, they wanted to defeat the leader themselves, so there were fear of attacks from behind if they were united.

ならこちらも力を合わせて戦えばと提案した者もいるが、どの国や権力者も腹に一物を構えており、統率者を倒すのは自分たちだという考えを持つので、背後から撃たれることが怖くて組むことが恐怖の対象になっている。

The Emperor grieved on this unimproving situation, so he tried to 【Summoning Brave Souls Vessels】.

いつまでも状況が良くなならないことに嘆いた皇帝は、かねてから試したかった【英霊器召喚】に動いた。

The Emperor entrusted the Brave Souls to the king he trusted, the country would ended if it fail after all. Not anyone could do the summoning, it could only done by those with summoning magic.

皇帝は信頼する国王たちに英霊を託し、召喚の任を与えたのだが、ほとんどの国が失敗に終わる。召喚は誰もができるわけではなく、召喚魔法を使える者しか無理なのだ。

The summoning magic summoned the vessels from another world, but once it failed there was no second time.

Having summoned the vessels, heroes that capable of defeating the Demon race's leader would be born was the Emperor's intent, and the one to received the imperial command was 【Rashtia Kingdom】.

そしてその召喚魔法は、異世界から器を召喚するのだが、一度失敗すれば二度と試みることができない。

器を召喚して、生まれた英傑に魔族の統率者を倒してもらう心積もりの皇帝が、次に勅命したのは【ラスティア王国】である。

There was a person there who excelled in summoning magic was the report received by the Emperor from Rashtia VII. It was a magician employed by that country.

ここにも一人、優秀な召喚魔法を扱える者が居ることを皇帝はラスティア七世から報告を受けていた。国お抱えの魔法士だということだ。

But if it fail, the Emperor's trust would be betrayed, and that'd be a big problem, and 【Rashtia】 was currently doing the summoning ceremony in the King castle's basement where everyone there were wrapped in tension.

しかし失敗すれば、皇帝の信頼を裏切ることになり、それは大問題に繋がるとして、【ラスティア】では今、召喚の儀を行う王城の地下室に誰もが息を飲み緊張に包まれていたのだ。

-----Failure is not allowed.

-----失敗は許されない。

Because he never thought he'd be entrusted with such huge responsibility, he still felt he lost the sense of reality even now, and watching the magic circle that extended from his feet was 【Rashtia Kingdom】's hired summoning magician; Laki Orven.

まさか自分がこのような大任を任されるとは思ってもおらず、いまだにどこか現実感が失われた感覚で、足元に広がる魔法陣を見つめるのは、【ラスティア王国】のお抱え召喚魔法士であるラキ・オーベンだ。

He was certainly awoken to summoning magic and his ability was bought to be used for the country. His living was a smooth sailing since then, and he thought such peace might continue forever, but suddenly he could hear the sound of the crumbling peace.

確かに彼は召喚魔法に目覚めてからは、その実力を買われて国に仕えることができた。そうして順風満帆な生活を送り、ずっとこのような平和が続くのだらうと思っていたが、突如その平和は音を立てて崩れた。

A certain days, he was called by Rashtia VII towards the 《Throne Hall》. He faced the king with his usual fortitude, but the popular king and the maids' expressions were very dark.

ある日、ラスティア七世の呼び出しに応え《玉座の間》に向かった。そこでいつも精悍(せいかん)な顔つきで、女中たちにも人気な王の表情がとても暗かった。

Having heard he wanted him to use summoning magic, he readily affirmed it. He already used his magic for this country up until now after all, so it was a natural responsibility for him to served the country or so he thought as he nodded.

召喚魔法を使ってほしいと言われ、二つ返事で肯定した。今までも国の為に魔法を使ってきたのだから、国に仕えている身をしては当然の義務だと思い首を縦に振った。

However, Laki face paled when he heard the content of the summoning. Of course he had the knowledge about the 【Summoning Brave Souls Vessels】.

しかしその召喚内容を聞いてラキは顔を青ざめさせた。【英霊器召喚】というのはもちろん知識として知っている。

It just that he never tried it, he knew the success rate of such outrageous summoning. But, he already said to the king he'd do it.

Following that, Laki lead everyone to the basement as he forced to turn over his idea. He could only brace himself having come this far.

ただ試みたことはないし、そんな大それた召喚が成功するとも思えなかった。だが国王は有無を言わずやれと言った。

そうしてラキは、意に反して強制的に地下室へと連れられていった。ここまで来たらもう覚悟するしかなかった。

For now he was going to do his best. He didn't know what would happen afterwards. With tension wrapped their location, the mood feeling it'd be a success wasn't there at all.

But nothing else could be done except to do it. Even if he failed and lost his job, he'd also lost his job if he didn't do it, so he activated his magic as he cursed his fate.

とにかく全力を尽くす。その後はどうなるか分からない。場に緊張が包まれ、全く成功しそうなムードなど微塵も感じない。

だがそれでもやるしかなかった。たとえ失敗して職を失ったとしても、やらなくても失うのだからと、自分の運命を呪いながら魔法を行使した。

In the center of the magic circle were the Brave Souls's container entrusted by the Emperor. Many small souls moved around inside the container. It was as if they told him to do it quickly.

魔法陣の中心に、皇帝から預かった英霊が封じ込められている鉄籠を置く。この鉄籠の中には小さな靈魂が幾つもの動き回っていた。まるで早くここから出せと言わんばかりだ。

Laki confirmed everything had been prepared, but he couldn't calm down no matter how many times he took breathes. The place had become quiet, King Rashtia VII and the soldiers watched as they held their breath.

ラキは全てが整ったことを確認すると、何度も深呼吸して心を落ち着かせる。場が静まり、国王のラスティア七世含めた兵士たちもジッと固唾を飲んで見守っていた。

Laki opened the book that was in one of his hand, he glanced towards it and slowly closed his eyes. Following that, he took out many sparkling round stones from his pocket and threw them towards the magic circle.

ラキは片手に持っていた本を開くと、一度そこに視線を落とすとゆっくりと目を閉じた。そして懐からキラキラ光る丸い石を幾つも取り出すと魔法陣に向けて放り投げた。

“Ruby represent the eyes, Sapphire represent the mouth, Emerald represent the ears, Amethyst represent the nose, oh the one who ruled the great dimension, heard the small wish of this small person. My name is Laki Orven. With your power, open the door of dimension and draw the people from different world!”

「ルビーは御前(ごぜん)の目、サファイアは御前の口、エメラルドは御前の耳、アメジストは御前の鼻、偉大なる次元を司りし者よ、小さき者の僅かばかりの願いを聞き届けたまえ。我が名はラキ・オーベン。その御力を以て、次元の扉を開き異なる界に在る者を喚びよせたまえ！」

The colorful jewels let out dazzling light and their shine became stronger in response to him. However, the light gradually quiet down.

Not only Laki, the others were also thought it was a failure, but at that time a flash engulfed the surroundings that made them unable to open their eyes.

色とりどりの宝石が眩くそれぞれの光を強く光らせ反応を見せる。しかしその光が徐々に鎮まっていく。

ラキだけでなく、他の者もやはり駄目だったかと思ったその時、周囲を目も開けていられないほどの閃光が包む。

After the light calmed down, there were three people. Just by seeing the three's clothing, they recognized them as someone that came from different world.

光が収まると、そこにいたのは三人の人物。そして見るからに三人の服装は、異界から来た者たちだと認識させた。

“Eh? Wh-What is this? What had happened?”

「え？ な、何だ？ 何が起こったんだ？」

From what they saw, there were a boy and two girls. The boy was looking around at the surrounding and floated a surprised expression.

見たところ、少年が一人、少女が二人だった。その中の少年はキョロキョロと周囲を見回し愕然とした面持ちを呈している。

The girls were also surprised and their bodies stiffened. Rashtia VII approached such trio. His body was slightly trembling, and his face was relaxed and looked happy.

他の少女たちも呆気にとられているようで身を硬直させていた。そんな三人のもとに、ラスティア七世が近づいていく。その身体は小刻みに震えており、顔を実に喜ばしいのか緩み切っていた。

That couldn't be helped. The summoning magic they thought as a failure was a success. Moreover, there was no more to be said on how there were three Brave Souls summoned. *Batan*, Laki was collapsed and Rastia VII ordered the soldiers to nurse him. Laki had consumed considerable magic power and energy, so he turned unconscious having relieved of the success.

それはそうだろう。失敗すると思っていた召喚魔法が成功したのだから。しかも三人も英傑を召喚できたのだから言うことは無いのかもしれない。

バタンと倒れたラキを丁重に看病しろと兵士たちに命じたラスティア七世。ラキもかなりの魔力と気力を消費し、それに成功した安堵感から意識を飛ばしてしまったのだろう。

“Pardon me boy and girls. I am Tiley Bruss Rashtia VII. Although I know you are confused, for now may I hear your name?”

「すまないな少年たちよ。私はティレイユ・ブルッセ・ラスティア。混乱していると思うが、まずは名前を聞かせてもらえないか？」

The trio were actually confused, but because Rasthia VII politely introduced himself, they were able to slightly calmed down. First the boy introduced himself.

三人は実際に混乱している様子だったが、ラスティア七世が丁寧に名乗ったので、少し落ち着いたので、まず最初に少年が名乗った。

“I-I am... .. Ni-Ninomiya... .. Kazuto... ..”

“Sei-... .. m-my name is... .. Ho-Ho-Hoshimori Seila....”

「お、俺は.....に、二ノ宮.....和斗.....です」

「セイ.....わ、私はその.....ほ、ほ、星守(ほしもり)セイラ.....で.....す」

The boy and the girl introduced themselves respectively, then Rashtia VII turned his glance towards the girl who sat down a little away from them.

少年と少女はそれぞれ名乗り、少し離れたところに座り込んでいたもう一人の少女にラスティア七世の視線は向く。

“Then, your name?”

「して、お主の名は？」

The girl's mouth faintly trembled, then it began to move.

少女の口元が微かに震えているが、ゆっくりと動き出した。

“Ma... .. ki...”

“Ha?”

「ま.....き.....」

「は？」

Rashtia VII asked back because he couldn't caught what she said. The girl once again speak with volume higher than before.

聞き取れなかったようでラスティア七世が聞き返す。再び少女は、先程よりも大きな声で確かにこう言った。

“Amakawa... .. Mayuki.”

「天川(あまかわ).....真雪(まゆき)」

(note: Seila from last time can also written as Sarah, but I'll keep it as Seila....”

## Story 6 Missanga's Wish

### 第六話 ミサンガの願い

Asakura Souji's funeral was not a grand one, the scale so small that only his family attended. However, among his family was his childhood friend, Amagawa Mayuki.

In front of Souji who had entered the coffin were his family with faces dyed in despair. Unlike Souji, his older brother, Koichi, lead a bright social life, but his usual expression was erased right now, and his dumbfounded expression was as if he wore a Noh mask.

朝倉想二の葬式は盛大的なものではなく、小規模な家族葬で行われた。しかしその中には彼の幼馴染だった天川真雪の姿もあった。

棺に入った想二の前で、彼の家族が絶望の色に顔を染めていた。想二と違って、いつも社交性に明るい彼の兄である光一も、今は表情を消し、まるで能面みたいな表情で呆然としていた。

Similar thing happened to his mother and father. No, her mother was the only one who couldn't endured it as she sobbed and wetted her handkerchief.

Having lived in the same house as family of four, it could be understood that Souji was loved from their current appearances. Souji's paternal grandmother, who came slightly late because she lived in the country, was pounding the coffin as she let out a grieving voice.

彼の母親と父親も同様だ。いや、母親だけは我慢する気も無いようにハンカチを濡らしながら嗚咽していた。

四人家族で一軒家に住んでいた想二は、彼らの姿を見れば愛されていたのだと理解できる。少し遅れてやって来た田舎に住んでいる想二の父方の祖母は、棺を叩きながら声を枯らさんばかりに嘆いていた。

Having seen their pained appearances, Mayuki couldn't endure it and went out. On the way, she heard Koichi's shout, but she didn't stop.

She clenched her teeth, and as if this was just a dream that she wanted to get rid of, she kept running straight ahead. *Gatsuh*, she fell because she stumbled on something.

そのいたたまれない姿を見て、真雪は溜まらずそこから飛び出していた。途中、光一の叫び声が聞こえたが止まることはできなかった。

歯を食い縛り、まるでこれは夢だというように、その夢から脱却するかの如く、ただ一直線に走っていた。ガツツと何かに躓き転んでしまった。

As she slowly looked up, the missanga on her right wrist entered her vision. It was something created by Souji for Mayuki with leftover thread from the Academy's Home Economic class.

そしてゆっくり顔を上げた時、右手首につけているミサンガが目に入る。これは以前、学園の家庭実習で糸が余ったからといって想二が作って真雪に上げたものだった。

'It's okay even if it's just a wish.'

『願い事でもすりゃいいよ』

There was the anecdote where missanga would grant a wish if it was cut. Even without that, Mayuki was happy because it was something Souji created for her.

Since then she always wore it, but even if he noticed it or not, this thing never became the topic of his talk.

ミサンガは願い事を叶えると切れてしまうという逸話を持つ。だがそんな効果よりも想二が自分のために何かを作ってくれたことが真雪には嬉しかった。

あれからずっと肌身離さず持ち続けているが、彼はそれに気づいているのか気づいていないのか、話題には全くしなかった。

Even so, Mayuki was very pleased because she could feel his gentle warmth from the missanga. They had grown up together ever since childhood.

Although their families weren't related, they got along pretty well. Having become a high school student, Souji became slightly distanced, but her mother said it was just his puberty and told her it'd recover sooner or later, so she decided to endure it.

それでも真雪はミサンガから彼の優しさと温かさを感じてとても心地好かった。ずっと子供の頃から一緒に育ってきた。

家族付き合いも少なくなく、本当に仲が良かった。高校生になって、少し想二がよそよそしくなったが、彼の母親から思春期なのよ、そのうち治るわと言われて我慢することにした。

But, he interacted with other girls normally. That made Mayuki dissatisfied. Especially when she saw the girls eat the bentou he cooked, and her dissatisfaction only increased.

However, when she complained to him, she was shocked because he said *are you my mom*.

Certainly she always worried about Souji, but she thought that remark was too cruel.

でも彼は他の女子たちには普通に接したりする。それが真雪には不満だった。特に彼の作ったお弁当を彼女たちに上げている姿を見ると、増々不愉快さが増した。

だけど以前、それに対し愚痴みたいなことを言ったら、お前はオレのオカンかと言われてショックを受けた。確かにいろいろ想二のことを心配しているけどその言い草は酷いと思った。

At least she tried to endure it without saying anything.

だからできるだけ何も言わないように我慢した。

Because if they could interact normally, Souji would smile at her. And that'd make her happy. Since childhood, because he said smiling suited her, Mayuki never erased her smile.

She believed that would make Souji happy. When she asked if she could call him Sou-kun while smiling, he answered with *what's with that* as he laughed.

だって普通に接していれば、想二は自分に笑いかけてくれるから。それが嬉しかった。子供の頃、お前は笑っている方がいいと言われたことから、真雪はいつも笑顔を絶やさなかった。

そうすれば想二が喜んでくれると信じていたから。笑顔は想くんを救うんだよと前に言ったら、何だよそれって大笑いしてくれた。

That's why she decided to smile to make him smile. However....

だから彼が笑ってくれるなら自分は笑っていようと決めた。だけど.....

“No more... .. I can't smile anymore... .. Sou-... ..-kun.....”

「もう.....笑えないよ.....想.....くん.....」

He was no longer here. She could no longer be by his side. No longer... .. able to smile.

もう彼はいない。もう傍にいない。もう.....笑ってはくれない。

A commotion appeared when the accident happened in the academy, and Mayuki was shocked because his name appeared on that commotion. However the truth was crueler.

Having involved in such accident, it didn't end with him being injured, because due to the accident, he lost his life. An instant death.

学園で事故が起きたと騒ぎがあり、その騒ぎの中に彼の名前があったことに真雪は肝を冷やした。しかし真実はもっと残酷なものだった。

事故に巻き込まれて怪我をしたのではなく、その事故によって、彼が命を失ったという。即死だったと。

She didn't understand what happened after that. She didn't have the memory of how many times had passed. She also didn't come to academy.

それから後のことはよく分からない。正直どうやって過ごしてきたのか記憶が無い。学園にも行っていなかった。

His funeral was held, her feet unconsciously moved towards his house. She might be only trying to confirm it. To confirm if it was just one of his pranks.

She thought it was just his mischievous prank in order to surprise her. And she thought she'd indeed be angry and crying this time.

However, the him inside the coffin was as cold as ice. No matter how much she touched him, talked to him, nothing was returned.

葬式が開かれ、無意識に足が彼の家へと向かった。そこで確かめたかったのかもしれない。これは彼によるドッキリとかではないだろうか。

たまにビックリするくらいのドッキリをする彼の悪戯ではないかと。なら今度はさすがに泣いて怒ってやろうとも思った。

しかし、棺の中に入っていた彼は、氷のように冷たかった。どれだけ触れても、語りかけても、何も返してくれはしなかった。

In the end, the cold reality was crueller.

ただただ残酷で冷たい現実が強くなる一方だった。

“Sou-kun... .. Sou-kun... .. Sou-kun... .. Sou-kun... .. Sou-kun... .. -kun... ..-n.”

「想くん.....想くん.....想くん.....想くん.....想くん.....くん.....ん」

Mayuki repeated that for many, many times as she collapsed on the ground. However, no answer came after all. The rain gradually fell, *potsu potsu* her body gradually became wet. It was as if even the sky lamented Souji's death.

何度も何度も地面に倒れたまま繰り返す真雪。しかしやはり何も答えは返ってきはしなかった。次第に雨が降って来て、ポツポツと徐々に身体を濡らして行く。まるで想二の死を天まで悲しんでいるかのようだ。

Wearily, she returned to her home, and her parent's words of comfort entered her ears. She shut herself inside her room as is, and on the thing that decorated her desk, the photograph of Souji with wry smile as he was embarrassed entered her eyes.

トボトボと自分の家に帰り、母親と父親の慰めの声が届くが耳に入らない。そのまま自室に閉じこもると、自分の机の上に飾ってある自分と、恥ずかしそうに苦笑を浮かべる想二が映っている写真が目に入った。

Already, she couldn't endured it. The tears that was stopped were overflowed as they came out from her eyes. Although until now her tears had fell because of the sudden event, it was the first time Mayuki let out her voice.

もう、我慢できなかった。堰(せき)を切ったかのように両目から涙が溢れ出てきた。今まであまりに突然の出来事で涙が出てこなかったが、今初めて真雪は声を上げて泣いた。

“I hate it... .. I don't want this! Come back! Sou-kuuuuuun! Uwaaaaaaaah!”

「やだよお.....やだよお！ 帰って来てよお！ 想くううううんっ！ うわあああああああつ！」

After that, she cried for so many times. Over and over, she thought her tears had not dried up, but she believed it'd dried up someday, and she raised her voice.

Having seen Mayuki's face that swollen because of tears, her mother said "What an awful face," as she gently hugged her. Her mother was also crying. Her mother had thought of Souji as her own son.

それから何度も泣いた。何度も何度も、涙が涸れないと思ってはいても、いつか涸れてくれると信じて、ただ声を上げた。

母親は、泣き腫らした真雪の顔を見て「酷い顔ね」と言いながら優しく抱きしめてくれた。彼女もまた泣いていた。母親だって想二のことを息子のように思っていたのだ。

From her mother, she heard Souji was dead because she protected a girl. Apparently, the girl only ended up with light bruises. That was the result of Souji firmly held her.

母親から、想二は女の子を守って死んだと聞かされた。どうやらその子は軽い打撲で済んだとのこと。想二がしっかり抱きかかえていたからこそその結果だったという。

'It's just like Sou-chan.'

『想ちゃんらしいわね』

Although her mother was crying, she said that in joy.

母親は涙を流しながらも嬉しそうに言った。

Having resulted in him losing his own life, Mayuki thought he was truly a fool. For a while, Mayuki shut herself and didn't attend the academy, and her friends visited her because they were worried about her.

Gradually she resumed to commute to the academy, and half a year had passed. Although she was at least able to smile towards her friends, her mind was still muddled, it was as if there was a chain inside.

それで自分の命を落としてしまうなんて、本当に馬鹿だよと真雪は思った。真雪はしばらくの間、学園に行かずに家に籠っていたが、友達も心配して家に訪ねて来てくれたりした。

少しずつ学園にも通い始め、半年近くが過ぎた。友達に笑顔くらいは向けられるようになったが、まだ真雪の心は晴れず、鎖でがんじがらめになっているかのようだった。

After a year had passed since his death, Mayuki who was in the second grade used her holiday, and she came to visit Souji's grave alone.

そして彼が死に一年が過ぎた頃、高校二年生になった真雪は、休みを利用して、一人で想二の墓参りに来ていた。

"Sou-kun...."

「想くん.....」

She couldn't get accustomed to it after all. Tears always flowed every time she thought of him. But at that time, there was a presence behind her and she suddenly turned around.

There was a girl she had never seen before. and maybe because the girl was shaken when Mayuki was crying, the flowers in her hand were dropped and she tried to run away from there.

やはりいまだ慣れない。どうしても彼のことを想うと涙が流れ出てくる。だがその時、ふと背後に気配を感じて振り向く。

そこには見たことのない少女がいた。真雪が泣いていたことに動揺しているのか、手に持っていた花を落とすとその場から逃げ出そうとした。

“Ah, wait!”

「あ、待って！」

Mayuki spontaneously grasped her arm.

思わず真雪は彼女の腕を掴む。

“I-I am sorry if I surprised you! Are you also going to visit Sou-kun’s grave?”

「お、驚かせてごめんなさい！もしかしてあなたも想くんのお墓参りに？」

Even though she heard that, the girl kept averting her face. No, the gripped arm was slightly trembled. Following that, the girl’s face were as if she was scared of something.

Her wavy, brown hair was cut short. But, the thing that caught attention was the lovely, small face that equipped with her blue eyes.

そう聞いたが、相手は顔を背けたままだ。いや、掴んでいる腕が小刻みに震えている。そして振り向いた彼女の顔は、まるで何かに怯えているようだった。

パーマをかけた茶色のショートヘアをしている。だが気になったのは可愛らしい小顔の顔に備わっている彼女の青い瞳だった。

Then, tears flowed from those blue eyes.

するとその瞳から涙が流れ出る。

“Eh!? Ah, that... .... did I do something?”

“N-No! It was Seila’s... .... my fault.”

「えっ！？ あ、その.....私何かしたのかな？」

「い、いいえ！ セイラが.....私が悪いんです」

Mayuki was troubled about how to treat the girl who suddenly sat down and cried. Mayuki changed their place to calmed the girl, and she handed over the juice she bought at the vending machine.

突然座り込んで泣きじゃくる彼女の扱いに困る真雪。真雪は彼女が落ち着ける場所まで連れて行き、自販機で買ったジュースを手渡した。

“Th-Thank you very much....”

「あ、ありがとうございます.....」

The girl said her gratitude in a small voice, the girl’s name was Hoshimori Seila, she was a half of American and Japanese origin. That’s why her eyes were blue.

Moreover, she said she attended the same academy and in the same grade as Mayuki.

恐縮するように小さくなる少女。彼女の名前は星守セイラとって、アメリカ人と日本人との間に生まれたハーフだという。だから瞳が青いのだと納得した。

しかも同じ学園に通う同級生だという。

“About Sou-kun... .. do you know him?”

“... .. that’s... .. eu”

「想くんのこと.....知ってるの？」

「.....それは.....えう」

Maybe because it was something painful to said, she always looked down. Because of this, she somehow looked adorable just like a small animal. Mayuki thought of her like that, and Mayuki was also needed considerable courage to asked her.

言い辛いのか、ずっと顔を俯かせていた。こんな状況だが、その姿が小動物か何かに見えて可愛らしかった。そこでふと気になったことがあったが、真雪も尋ねるのがかなりの勇気を必要とした。

Gokuri, Mayuki gulped,

ゴクリと真雪が喉を鳴らすと、

“U-Umm... .. a-are you... .. that’s... .. Sou-kun’s... .. g-girlfriend?”

“Gi-girlfriend!? Th-th-th-th-th-th-that’s wrong! Th-that can’t be-!”(note: I couldn’t translated of the last sentence)

「あ、あのね.....も、もしかして.....その.....想くんの.....か、か、彼女さんだったりとか？」

「か、彼女っ！？ ち、ちちちち違いましゅっ！ そ、そんなおしよれ多いっ！」

Seila shook her head as she blushed. Although Mayuki felt she was so cute when she bit her tongue, she was relieved that she wasn’t his girlfriend.

顔を真っ赤にしてブンブンと頭を横に振るセイラ。囁む姿が物凄く可愛いと感じた真雪だが、彼女ではないと聞いてホッと息をついた。

“Th-That’s right! I don’t have boyfriend, so it isn’t possible for Sou-kun to have a girlfriend! Aha,ahaha!”

「そ、そうだよね！ 私も彼氏いないのに、想くんがいるわけないもんね！ あは、あはは！」

Mayuki let out an unnatural laugh as if to smoothed thing over.

取り繕うような感じでわざとらしく笑う真雪。

“Ah, then which? A friend?”

“Umm... .. Seila is....”

「あ、それならどうして？ 友達？」

「えと.....セイラは.....」

Then, she began to wept again. Mayuki didn't understand what happened and puzzled by it. Following that....

するとまた泣き出した。もう何が何だか分からず戸惑う真雪。そして.....

“... .. sor... ..ry”

“... .. he?”

“I am... .. sor... .. ry”

“... .. why are you apologizing?”

「.....な.....さい」

「.....へ？」

「ごめん.....な.....さい」

「.....どうして謝るの？」

She said that out of curiosity. Then, the girl began to talk about a surprising thing.

純粋な興味から聞いた。そして驚くべきことを彼女が話し出した。

“... .. at that time, Asakura-san... .. helped me.”

“... .. eh?”

“I am sorry... .. I am rossy....”(note : either it was intended or typo... dunno)

“... .. maybe, the one Sou-kun helped... .. was you?”

「.....あの時、朝倉さんが.....助けてくれたんです」

「.....え？」

「ごめんなさい.....ごめんさない.....」

「.....もしかして、想くんが助けたのって.....あなたのこと？」

Seila nodded while her body trembled. Silent continued for a while, then Seila started to apologized again.

コクンと身体を震わせながら肯定を示したセイラ。しばらく沈黙が続き、またセイラが謝り出して、

“Because of Seila's carelessness... .. that's why... .. that's-... ..h!?”

「セイラの不注意で.....だから.....だから.....っ!？」

Mayuki hugged Sarah with all of her might. Seila was stiffened while her eyes opened wide.

真雪はセイラを力一杯抱きしめた。セイラは目を大きく見開き固まっている。

“... .. thanks for being safe!”

“Eh... .. but... .. because of Seila....”

“Uun, that's wrong. Sou-kun only did what's right.” (note : Uun spelled as U-Un as she shook her head)

“... .. h!”

“That’s why, for you, who Sou-kun protected with his life, to be safe is a truly good thing.”

“... .. U... .. Uu... .. Uwaaaaaan!”

「.....ありがとう無事でいてくれて」

「え.....でも.....セイラのせいで.....」

「ううん、違うよ。想くんは正しいことをしただけだもん」

「.....っ!？」

「だから、想くんが命を懸けて守ったあなたが、無事で本当に良かったんだよ」

「.....う.....うう.....うわああああん！」

Two people were crying together as they embraced each other.

二人は一緒に抱き合いながら泣いていた。

“Ah~ we have cried it out!”

“Eu... .. yes.”

「あ~泣いたね！」

「えう.....はい」

Mayuki and Seila’s faces were crimson, and their eyes congested. It was a face a woman wouldn’t shown to a man.

真雪とセイラの顔は真っ赤になり、目は充血していた。女性としては男性に見せられない顔である。

“But, I am truly glad... .. un, thank god.”

“... .. I am sorry.”

“Hey! Don’t apologize! Come on, let’s visit his grave together!”

「でも本当に良かったよ.....うん、良かった」

「.....ごめんなさい」

「こら！ もう謝らないの！ ほら、一緒にお墓参りしよ！」

Mayuki pulled Seila’s hand as they moved towards the grave. The two affixed the flowers they brought respectively, and clapped their hands.

真雪はセイラの手を引いて墓へと向かった。二人はそれぞれ持ってきた花を添えて、手を合わせる。

“Nee, do you have some time now?”

“Eh... .. yes.”

“Let’s go to my house.”

“Eeh!?”

「ねえ、これから時間ある？」

「え……はい」

「私の家に来て」

「ええっ!？」

Seila was so surprised that her face warped, and she was forcibly took along by Mayuki. The two arrived at the house, then laughed together as they saw the album in Mayuki's room. Thus, the two became friend. They regularly visited the grave together. They also had lunch together in the academy. The two spoke about a lot of things.

セイラは驚愕に顔を歪めるが、強引に真雪は連れて行った。家に着いた二人は、真雪の部屋でアルバムなどを見て一緒に笑い合っていた。

二人はこうして友達になったのだ。それからは定期的に一緒に墓参りに行くようになった。学園では昼食も一緒だ。二人はいろんなことを話していた。

And, a certain day after several months had passed, the two visited the grave again.

そして数か月が経ったある日、二人はまた墓参りに来ていた。

“Ah, Mayuki-san. You got that Missanga from Asakura-san, right?”

“Un”

“Fufu, a wish, do you have something like that?”

“A wish huh... .. it's that after all.”

“Eh?”

“I want to meet Sou-kun”

“h!?”

“Even Seila have thought of that, right? Wanting to meet and said your gratitude.”

“... .. yes.”

“But... .. that wish... .. is impossible.”

“... .. that's... .. right.”

「あ、真雪さん。そのミサンガって確か朝倉さんに頂いたものですよ？」

「うん」

「ふふ、何かお願い事、したのですか？」

「願い事かあ.....やっぱりあれかな」

「え？」

「想くんに会いたい」

「っ!？」

「セイラだって、そう思ってるでしょ？ 会ってお礼を言いたいわって言ってたし」

「.....はい」

「でも.....その願い事だけは.....無理なんだよね」

「.....そう.....ですよ」

The two muttered in front of Souji's grave.

二人は想二の墓を目の前に眩く。

“I want to meet him”

“Yes....”

「会いたいなあ」

「はい.....」

Then, at that time, dazzling light gushed out from around their feet. Everything in front of the two turned white, and when they noticed it... .. they were in an unknown place.

するとその時、足元から眩い光が迸った。二人の目の前は真っ白に包まれ、気が付いたら.....知らない場所に居た。

### Story 7 Souji has Grown Up

#### 第七話 成長したソージ

It's been several months since Mayuki was summoned to 【Orb】 , she and the others were called Heroes and currently stepped their feet on 【Zoan Continent】 after summoned and pleaded by 【Rashtia Kingdom】

真雪が【オーブ】に召喚されて数か月、彼らは英傑と呼ばれ今、召喚を行った【ラスティア王国】の頼みにより【ゾーアン大陸】へと足を踏み入れていた。

They searched the one that lead the Demon race, and finally ascertained its base. When they reached the place called 【Demon den】 to subjugate the leader, an astonishing spectacle happened in front of them.

そして魔族を統率している者を探し出し、ようやくその根城を突き止め、討伐せんがために【魔巢窟(まそうくつ)】という場所に辿り着いた時、真雪たちの目の前には驚愕すべき光景が広がっていた。

There were the Demons who lurked there. A lot of them laid scattered around. Mayuki, Seila, and Kazuto were already braced themselves for sudden attacks, but they could only stood still in blank surprise.

それはそこに潜んでいる魔族たちのなれの果て。それが大量に散在していた。真雪、セイラ、そして和斗はいきなり襲われる覚悟をしていたが、あまりのことに肩透かしをくらった感じで呆然と立ち尽くしていた。

The three advanced towards the interior as they wondering what had happened here. There was not even a fragment of life inside, only death was spreaded. There were teared up corpses as if something bitten on them, and there were corpses which burned completely black too.

一体何があったのかと三人で考察しながらも奥へと進んでいく。そこには生命の欠片も感じず、ただ死が広がっていた。何かに噛み千切られたような死体や、真っ黒に焦げている死体もあった。

Mayuki's party were already have the experience of killing Demon race in this several months. They couldn't became accustomed to it just as expected, but for the sake of survival and going back to their former world, they endured it and became stronger.

But, this situation was unexpected after all, and they instinctively covered their mouth with their hands. Then, they heard the sound of something destroyed from the interior.

真雪たちもこの数か月で魔族を殺めるという経験もしてきた。さすがに慣れはしないが、それでも生きるために、そして元の世界に還るためにも、我慢して強くなってきた。

しかしさすがにこの状況は予想外であり、思わず手で口元を覆うほどだ。すると奥から何かが破壊される音が響いてくる。

They tightened their guards while wondering who's there, and they advanced ahead at a slow pace. And, when they arrived at that location, all of them became wide-eyed.

There was the leader of the Demon race, they had understood what kind of existence it was from the information. That's why they knew one of them was the leader. The problem was....

誰かいると三人は警戒を強めながら、ゆっくりとした足取りで前へと進んでいった。そして開けた場所に出たところで、全員が目を見張っていた。

ここにいる魔族の統率者の外見は、情報からどんな存在なのか理解していた。だから一つはその統率者だと分かった。問題なのは.....

Orange smoke was wringing the neck of the leader as if it was a living thing, and the leader was hanged in the air. The leader wasn't able to move because the same smoke bounded its hands and feet. It's expression was one of the despair. Following that, there was a person who manipulated the smoke, as he calmly stood and looked at the leader.

その統率者をオレンジ色の煙のようなものがまるで生きているかのように統率者の首を絞めて、宙ぶらりんにしていたことだ。両手両足も同様の煙に縛られてあり身動きができないようだ。その表情は絶望に歪んでいる。そしてその煙を操っているであろう人物が、悠然と立ったまま統率者を見上げていた。

From the information they heard before, the leader was so strong that its power was in no way inferior compared to the heroes. That's why Mayuki's party firmly trained themselves and improved their teamwork, as they decided to put all of their efforts to fight it.

However, a red-haired person was currently in front of the leader. They only knew he was an existence clad in full black because they could only seen his back figure, but they understood he was about to killed the leader.

情報では統率者の強さは英傑と遜色ないほどの力を持つと言われていた。だからこそ真雪たちはしっかり訓練し、チームワークも向上させ、力を合わせて戦うと決めていた。

しかし今、その統率者は、目の前にいる赤髪の人物。後ろ姿しか分からないが全身黒づくめの存在に今まさに殺されようとしていることは理解できた。

Silently, a red smoke appeared on the red-haired person's hand, then it settled right above the leader. And, as if it opened its jaws widely, the smoke wrapped around the leader as if to ate it.

Pained screams resounded from the inside of the smoke, but the voice gradually became smaller and it stopped. Mayuki's party could do nothing but agape at the spectacle.

刹那、その赤髪の人物の手から今度は白い煙が出現し、統率者の真上に収束していく。そしてその煙がまるで口を開けるように大きく広がると、統率者を食べるように包んでしまった。煙の中からは痛々しい悲鳴が響いているが、徐々にその声も小さくなっていき途絶える。その光景をただ啞然と見守るしかできなかった真雪たち。

After a while, the smoke disappeared. The leader had disappeared just like a magic. They didn't understand what had happened, but there's one thing the trio felt in common, the leader was dead. Even more, it's in disappointing way.

しばらくして、煙は霧散していく。手品のように統率者の姿が消失していた。何が何だか分からないが、ただ一つ、三人に共通して感じたことは、統率者は死んだということだ。それも呆気なく。

Then, the red-haired person make a gesture without any triumphant on his shoulders.

すると赤髪の人物が自分の肩を誇りでも払うようにしてはたく仕草をする。

“A~a, the clothes are dirty. I am going to be scolded by Ojousama again.”

「あ～あ、服が汚れちゃったな。これじゃまたお嬢様に叱られる」

Although it's a little low, it was a voice of boy that's still a child. But Mayuki certainly heard his voice, and as if an electricity ran through her head, she remembered.

少し低いが、まだ幼さを残す少年の声音。だが確かに真雪はその声を聞いて、脳天に電撃が走ったような感覚を覚えた。

(... .. lie)

(.....嘘)

The red-hair finally noticed their existences and turned around. Mayuki wanted to ascertained his face that she even forgotten how to blink.

赤髪がゆっくり、こちらの存在に気づいたのか振り向く。真雪はその顔を確認しようと瞬きを忘れていた時、

*Buchih!*

ブチッ！

The missanga on her right wrist suddenly cut and fell to the ground. “Eh?,” her reminiscing face turned towards the missanga below. Seila also saw the red-haired person's appearance for a moment, but because she heard Mayuki's voice, she turned her glance away from the red-hair towards Mayuki.

突然右腕にしていたミサンガが切れて地面へと落ちた。「え？」と反射的に顔を下に向けミサンガに目が行く。セイラも一瞬赤髪の姿を見たが、真雪の声を聞き、彼女は目だけを真雪の方に向け赤髪から視線を切った。

“Nn? Oops, this is not good. Please forget about me being here.”

「ん？ おっと、これはいけませんね。どうか私のことはお忘れになって下さい」

As the red-hair muttered that, he did a big jump from there, and exited from the hole on the ceiling as is. A terrific jumping power.

赤髪がそう呟くと、そこから大きくジャンプして、そのまま天井にできた穴から出て行った。物凄い跳躍力だった。

“Ah, wait!”

「あ、待ってっ！」

Mayuki immediately shouted but it was too late. He had already disappeared. Mayuki quickly picked the missanga up, and hurriedly turned back to the path they came from.

真雪は咄嗟に叫ぶが時すでに遅し。もう彼の存在は消失していた。真雪はミサンガを素早く拾うと、来た道を急いで引き返して行く。

“Ah, Mayuki-san!”

“O-Oi Amanogawa-san!”

「あ、真雪さんっ！」

「お、おい天川さん！」

Seila and Kazuto shouted at her, but Mayuki ignored them as she kept running. She came outside, then she turned her glance towards the surroundings, but she didn't find her target.

セイラと和斗が叫ぶが、真雪は無視して走り続けた。外に出て、周囲にくまなく視線を泳がせるが、目的のものは発見できず。

“... .. lie... .. it must be a lie....”

「.....嘘.....嘘.....」

Mayuki's eyes began to moistened. She strongly clenched her right hand which carried the missanga, and her body started to trembled. Her companions came from the interior.

真雪の目が潤み始める。ミサンガを持った右手を強く握りしめ、身体を小刻みに震わせる。その後ろから仲間たちが追ってきた。

“Wh-What are you doing, Mayuki-san!?”

“That's right, just what on earth happen?”

「ど、どうされたのですか真雪さん！」

「そうだよ、一体全体何がどうなっているんだい？」

The last question from Kazuto was included about the person person from before, and also about this spectacle of Demon race annihilation.

最後の和斗の質問は、先程の人物もそうだが、この魔族殲滅現場の光景に対してのものだろう。

Mayuki didn't answered the two's questions, as she only stared at the sky. Her eyes looked at the distance as if she was looking for someone on the other side of the sky....

真雪は二人の質問に答えなくて、ジッと空だけを見つめていた。空の遥か向こうにいる誰かを探すように遠い目をしながら.....。

12 years had passed since he used magic for the first time. Souji Alkasha had turned 17 years old, but if it was added with his previous life, his mental age was 31 years old. He was already an old man.

初めて魔法を使ってから十二年が経っていた。ソージ・アルカーサも十七歳になり、前世から合わせると、精神的な年齢は三十一歳になっていた。もうオッサンである。

A lot of thing had changed in 12 years. First, at the time Souji turned eight years old, the father of the one he served, Yoyo Yatsugi Crowtail had gone alone towards the hometown of Yoyo's mother; **【Hi no Kuni】** .

この十二年で変わったことはいろいろある。まずソージが八歳になった時、ソージが仕えているヨヨ・八継(やつぎ)・クロウテイルの父親であるジャスティンが、ヨヨの母親の故郷である**【日ノ国】**へと単身で向かって行った。

When she was a kid, Yoyo had said that the mansion would be her, and she became the current Master. The birth of a nine years old Master.

小さい頃、ヨヨが言ったように、屋敷はヨヨのものになり、彼女が当主になった。僅か九歳の当主誕生である。

Justin had taught Yoyo everything until she could take substituted him, Yoyo who desperately absorbed the teaching had grown up splendidly. Apart from her external appearance, her substance was provided with a vessel that couldn't be thought of a nine years old girl. Knowledge, experience, her wording, and even her behavior were unlike a child's.

ジャスティンはそれまでにヨヨを自分の代わりができるように全てを教え、ヨヨもまた必死で吸収し、見事に成長していった。見た目はともかく、中身はとて 九歳とは思えないほどの器を備えていた。知識、経験、言葉遣い、立ち振る舞いなど、全てにおいて子供のそれとはかけ離れたものだった。

Following that, Souji was formally appointed as Yoyo's butler, and all of the basic for a butler was driven into him by the head butler, Balmunk. Even though he was appointed, he was still an apprentice butler.

そしてソージ自身はというと、正式にヨヨの執事として任命され、執事長のバルムンクから執事のイロハを本格的に叩き込まれた。任命されたとはいえ、まだ見習い執事ということだ。

There was a time when Yoyo took him to a noble's party, and Souji was puzzled because it was the first party he ever attended to, but because Yoyo wanted to showed Souji the world's true state of affairs, she always stayed beside him. While he was grateful for it, he regretted to have ashamed Yoyo. After that, he studied further on how to behave wherever he was.

一度ヨヨに貴族たちのパーティに連れて行かれたことがあったが、ソージはただ一人初めて参加したパーティに戸惑いあたふたしていただけだったが、ヨヨは そんなソージにこういう世界の内情を見せたいといって、ずっと傍についてくれた。ありがたいと思う反面、ヨヨに恥ずかしい思いをさせているのではと思ひ悔しくもあった。それから一層ああいう場での振る舞いなどを勉強したのだが。

Because Souji's original housework skills were excellent, his absorption rate was high, he shown movement that's no way inferior if compared to the other butlers and maids. Although he began to do housework when he turned ten years old, it already reached the height where Balmunk said he didn't have anything else to teach him.

ソージも元々家事スキルが激高だったため、吸収率は高く、他の執事やメイドに劣らぬ動きを見せて、十歳になる頃には家事のみだが、もう教えることは無いとバルムンクに言わしめるほどまでの高みに辿り着いていた。

However, his attitude as a butler, consideration as a butler, behavior as a butler, etc, the things he needed to memorized were a lot.

Balmunk driven all of those into Souji, while Souji also desperately tried to learnt all of those to became an independent butler.

しかしまだ、執事としての心構え、執事としての気配り、執事としての振る舞いなどなど、覚えることはたくさんあった。

バルムンクは自分の全てをソージに叩き込み、ソージもまた早く一人前の執事になりたいと必死で学んだ。

The combat training was especially harsh. There were times where he vomited blood. There were many times where he tasted the experienced which made him wanting to die. Once, he went to travel to learnt with Balmunk, they were enclosed by brutal looking living things that made him gave up his life. However, Balmunk only, "Yah hah hah ha!," instant killed them as he

floated a smile, he still remembered the surprise at that time which made his jaw almost dropped. No, it might already dropped.

特に激しかったのは戦闘訓練だった。時には血反吐を吐かされたこともあった。死ぬ思いも何度か味わった経験がある。一度バルムンクと修業の旅に出た時、身の丈十メートルはある凶暴な生物に囲まれた時はさすがに命を諦めた。しかしバルムンクは「ヤッハッハッハ！」と笑顔を浮かべながら瞬殺していくのだから、その時の驚きは顎が外れかけたのを覚えている。いや、アレはもう外れていたのかもしれない。

With this and that, he experienced the adventure that was impossible when he was still in Japan, and his body and mind were toughened thanks to that. There were time the two confronted thieves, and did spy-like mission. There's also time when they walked without sleeping for three days in a scorching desert. Without tiredness and sweat to be seen, Balmunk said "Yahaha! Today is refreshing, right," and it was a secret his important part as a man had shrunk because of fear from that.

そんなこんなで日本にいた時は決してありえない冒険を体験し、そのお蔭で身も心もタフにはなった。二人で賊とやりあったこともあったし、スパイのような任務もこなした。三日間寝ずに灼熱砂漠を歩いたこともあった。疲労感も汗ひとつも見えないバルムンクが「ヤハハ！今日は涼しいですなあ」と言った時、恐怖で男の大事な部分が縮んでしまったことは内緒だ。

Following that, when Souji turned 15 years old, he undertook a certain appointment from Justin who came back for once. It was an appointment to be the head butler for this mansion.

そしてソージが十五歳になった時、一度帰って来たジャスティンから正式にある任命を受けた。それはこの屋敷の執事長の任命だった。

*Isn't Balmunk here?*, was what Souji thought, but because he'd took action together with Justin in the future, Balmunk said he'd leave the mansion. From the beginning, for the sake to make Souji as his successor, Balmunk had trained him.

バルムンクがいるのではないかと思ったソージだが、何でも今後はジャスティンとともに行動するとのことで、屋敷から出るという。最初からソージを自分の後釜にするために、バルムンクは鍛えてくれていたということだ。

Honestly he thought it was a heavy thing to be the successor of such monster, but because of the present Master, Yoyo's recommendation, and so as not to stained her honor, he respectfully received it. By the way, his mother, Kaina was so happy that she cried because of her son's promotion.

正直化け物の後釜は荷が重いと思ったのだが、現当主ヨヨの推薦もあったため、彼女の面目を汚さないためにも、謹んで頂戴した。ちなみに母親であるカイナは、息子の出世に泣いて喜んでいた。

From then on, all of the miscellaneous duties and houseworks in the mansion became his responsibility, and he worked without truly occupied by them. Of course he also trained his magic. For a butler, it was a must to use his body to protect his master in time of danger, so he

must become stronger and from Balmunk's teaching, his body was frantically strengthened. With that said, the next time they meet, Balmunk said he'd took him to the desert again to train if he was weakened with a sneer floated on his face, so Souji trained as if he was going to die.

それからは屋敷の雑務や家事などは一切がソージの責任となり、忙(せわ)しなく働いてきた。無論魔法の訓練もした。執事は主人が危険な時、身体を張って守らなければならない、強くなければ務まらないとバルムンクから教えられ、身体も必死に鍛えた。というより、今度会った時、弱体化していたらまた砂漠行きましようかと冷笑を浮かべながらバルムンクが言ったので死ぬ気で鍛えてきた。

Thanks to that, no matter how many times Yoyo and Justin became targeted thus far, Souji was able to countered those and protected them. Compared to the training from Balmunk, the enemies were so easy that his tears fell.

Moreover, beside the improvement in his physical strength, his own magic, 『Flame Genesis』 was indeed convenient, he was so glad because the cheat-like versatility.

お蔭で今まで何度かヨヨもジャスティンのように狙われたことがあるが、ソージが身を挺(てい)して守ってきた。バルムンクとの修業に比べれば、涙が出るほど易しい相手だった。

また向上した身体能力もさることながら、自分の『創炎』の魔法はやはり使い勝手が良く、反則並みに万能だったので嬉しい限りだった。

Following that, when he worked diligently as a butler, he received a certain order from Yoyo.

そうしてなりたかった執事の仕事に勤しんでいると、ヨヨからある命令を受けた。

『Go and destroy the one who lead the Demon race』

『魔族の統率者を滅ぼしてきなさい』

For a moment he doubted his ears, but because her expression said she wouldn't said it twice, he readily accepted it. Yoyo's principle was to not do any meaningless thing, so he judged there's surely a meaning to that.

In the past he also thought, "Why?," towards the jobs entrusted to him, but there's always a reason for them. Well, it's also necessary for him to searched for the reason....

一瞬耳を疑いかけたが、二度は言わないといった表情だったので、二つ返事で承した。ヨヨは無意味なことはしない主義なので、必ず意味があると判断した。

過去にも「何で？」と思うような仕事を任されたりしたが、どれも必ず理由があった。まあ、その理由も自分で調べる必要があるのだが.....。

Even if he asked her, she'd said to guessed it himself. The ability to gather informations was said to be necessary for a butler, so he couldn't help but moved as desired by the one he served.

Following that, he searched about various things, and he confirmed the fact that the one who lead the Demon race had killed men of power one after another. There's also the possibility that its hand would also reached Yoyo, so Yoyo must be ordered him to annihilated the Demon race to forestall that.

聞いてもそれくらい察しなさいと言われるだけだ。情報収集能力も執事には必要よと言われれば、仕えている者としては動かざるを得ない。

そしていろいろ調べたところ、魔族の統率者が権力者を次々と殺している事実が判明した。そして近々ヨヨにもその手が伸びる可能性もあったため、先手を打ってヨヨは魔族の殲滅をソージに命令したということだ。

The first time he deprived someone of their lives was when he was 13 years old. At the time Yoyo was kidnapped, she got hurt so he deprived the enemies of their life with *Kah*-like feeling. There was no pang on his conscience because the other party was thieves who killed many people for their own reason, even so the murder was considerable weighted his mind. He laid on his bed because of the impact, and Yoyo nursed him at that time. Then,

初めて誰かの命を奪ったのは、十三歳の時だった。ヨヨが誘拐された時、彼女が傷つけられてカッと相手命を奪ってしまった。相手も人を何度も私的な理由で殺している賊だったので良心の呵責はなかったが、それでも精神的に人殺しの重みは相当なものだった。

その衝撃によりずいぶん寝込んでしまったが、その時もヨヨは看病してくれた。そして、

『Let's become stronger together, Souji』

『一緒に強くなるわよソージ』

she said that. From then on, Souji didn't wanted to showed any ungracefulness, and he decided to occasionally helped Balmunk on his work in the dark.

This world wasn't a utopia. It was a place filled with deceit and inconvenient. That's why sometimes his hands must be stained for his master's sake.

と言ってくれた。それから、ソージは無様なところは見せたくないと、バルムンクに時々闇の仕事を手伝わせてもらうことにした。

この世は理想郷ではない。都合の悪いことや欺瞞に満ちているところだって多々ある。そして時には主のために手を汚すこともある。

Stepping his feet into the dark part, the mental pollution was intense in the beginning, but he had grew accustomed to it now. He had fully realized and accustomed to what kind of living things the existences called humans were.

Even so he couldn't just randomly killed people after all. Thus, Souji strengthened his body and mind.

そんな闇の部分に足を踏み入れて、最初は精神汚染が激しかったが、今ではもう慣れた。つくづく人という存在は慣れる生き物だと痛感した。

それでも無闇に人を殺したりはさすがにしたくはないが。こうしてソージは身も心も強くなっていった。

Also for erasing the leader, if possible he wanted to ended it fast before he was found by someone. If he stood out, it'd exposed Yoyo towards danger and that must be avoided.

Therefore, he moved alone, subjugated Demon race, and used the white flame's 『Devour』 to instantly killed the leader at the end. Honestly he thought it was weak. Rather, Souji's magic was too much of a cheat that his enemies were half crying.

そして今回の統率者抹殺も、できれば誰かに見つかる前に速やかに終わらせたかった。あまり目立ち、ヨヨを危険に晒すわけにはいかないからだ。

だから単独で動き、魔族を討伐し、最後に統率者を『喰』の白炎で瞬殺した。ハッキリ言って弱かった。というよりもソージの魔法が反則過ぎて、相手はほぼ半泣き状態だった。

However there was a problem, it was after he defeated the leader. He thought he wouldn't be seen by someone else, and he found three people with human-like appearance when he noticed it.

One was a boy, the other two were girls. Even though he wasn't able to confirmed one of the girl's face because she looked down, at the very least they weren't acquaintanced to him. The black-haired girls who came even to here didn't entered his mind.

ただ一つ問題があったのは、統率者を倒した後だった。誰かに見られるつもりはなかったのだが、気づくと人間らしい三人に姿を見られていた。

一人は少年、二人は少女のようだった。少女のうちの一人は顔を俯かせていたため顔を確認できなかったが、少なくとも知り合いではないだろう。こんなところまで来る黒髪の少女に心当たりは無かった。

For the boy, he got the feeling that he had seen his face somewhere, and he secretly clicked his tongue that an ikemen existed even here in this world, then he instantly get out of this place. On his way, he thought he heard a voice, but he thought it was just his imagination and returned to Yoyo as is.

少年の方は、どこかで見たことのあるような顔立ちだったが、ああいうイケメンはこの世界にだけいるんだなと舌打ちを内心でしてから、その場をすぐさま後にした。

途中、聞いたことのあるような声が聞こえた気がしたが、気のせいだと思ってそのままヨヨのもとに帰った。

When he returned and reported it, From Yoyo,

帰って報告した時、ヨヨから、

『You did well. Just as expected of my butler. And thanks for your hard work.』

『よくやったわ。さすがは私の執事ね。ご苦労様』

she said that with a smile. He told the appearances of the three he had seen, and apparently the three were people from different world who was called to to this world through

【Summoning Brave Souls Vessels】.

He thought that story was just like those in light novels, but he could only smiled wryly as he recalled similar thing also had occurred to him.

と微笑みを頂けた。ヨヨに姿を見られた三人について話すと、その三人はどうやら【英霊器召喚】でこの世界に喚ばれた異世界人だということだった。

そんなライトノベルみたいな話があるんだなと思ったが、自分にもそれと同等なことが起きているのを思い出し苦笑した。

As he wondered how he should proceed after this, Yoyo said,

もしかしたらわざわざ自分が出向かなくても良かったのではとヨヨに言うと、

『It's okay. With this, it had become a proof of your strenght.』

『いいのよ。これでまた一つ、あなたの強さが証明されたもの』

she said that in joy. When he felt somewhat itching and tried to leave that place, Yoyo noticed that his uniform had become dirty.

と嬉しそうに言っていた。何だかむず痒くなりその場を離れようとした時、服が汚れているのに気が付いたヨヨから、

『For the uniform to be stained, you still have a long way to go. If it was Bal, he'll annihilate the enemy while humming and return unhurt.』

『服を汚すなんてまだまだね。バルなら鼻歌混じりに相手を殲滅して無傷で帰って来るわよ』

In other words, he must also become that unhurt. However,

そう言われたので自分も無傷だと言った。だが、

『Ara? The tail-coat is part of the butler's body, didn't you learned that?』

『あら？ 燕尾服は執事の身体そのものと、教わらなかったの？』

he couldn't find the room for rebuttal if she said that. Souji became depressed,

そう言われればもう反論の余地は無かった。ガックリと落ち込むソージに、

『Fufu, be diligent, Souji』

『フフ、精進なさいソージ』

the corner of her eyes raised as if she enjoyed it. Souji could only said, "I can't do anything but apologize for this," he apologized and returned to his works.

楽しそうに目尻を上げていた。こういう顔をする時はヨヨが人をからかう時なのだ。ソージは「申し訳ございませんでした」と謝罪して、仕事に戻っていった。

## Story 8 Those who Look for Someone

### 第八話 探し人を求めて

A grand parade occurred in 【Rashtia Kingdom】. It was to congratulate the Heroes who defeated the Demon race's leader.

All of the people waved their hands as they rejoiced on Mayuki's party's triumphant return. However, Mayuki who knew the truth was unable to honestly responded to them.

【ラスティア王国】では盛大なパレードが開かれていた。それは魔族の統率者を倒した英傑を祝ってのことだった。

民たちは皆が大手を振って、真雪たちの凱旋を喜んでいた。しかし真実を知っている真雪は正直にそれに應えることはできなかった。

After all it wasn't them who defeated the leader. Everything had ended when they arrived. Although she was glad it had become peaceful, she couldn't just obediently be glad about it.

何故なら統率者を倒したのは自分たちではないからだ。行ったら全てが終わっていたのだ。確かに平和になるのは嬉しいが、自分たちの功労でもないのに、素直に喜べるはずもない。

It was them same for Seila, she's always beside Mayuki because she felt uneasy. Just one person, only Kazuto, as if he was a mochi from a shelf, he smiled cheerfully as he waved back at the spectators. It was mostly aimed at the women though.

それはセイラも同様のようで、不安そうに真雪の傍にずっと居た。ただ一人、和斗だけは、棚からぼた餅、だと思っているのか、上機嫌に微笑み観衆に手を振って応えていた。主に女性に向けてだが。

“Come on, you must respond them too!”

「ほら、君たちも皆に應えてあげなよ！」

Because Kazuto's words, the two looked at each other and floated wry smiles, then they reluctantly raised their hands. Following that, the shouts of joy grew further.

They meet Rashtia VII who obviously in a good mood. It was natural, after all the heroes his country summoned had splendidly accomplished the Emperor's Imperial Command.

和斗は言うが、二人は顔を見合わせ苦笑気味に笑みを浮かべると、仕方無く手を上げた。するとさらに大きくなる歓声。

出迎えてくれたラスティア七世は見るからに気分が良さそうだった。それはそうだろう、何といっても自国が召喚した英傑が、見事皇帝の勅命を遂行したのだから。

With this, the Emperor's trust would be deeper. It was extremely natural for Rashtia VII to showed a joyful expression.

Although Rashtia VII said he wanted Mayuki's party to participated in the party, Mayuki was exhausted from the long journey and returned to her room after saying *till next time*. After that, Seila followed suit.

これで皇帝からの信頼も更に厚くなるに違いない。ラスティア七世が嬉々とした表情をするのは至極当然だった。

ラスティア七世は真雪たちもパーティに参加してほしいと言ったが、真雪は長旅で疲れているからとまた今度と言って部屋へと帰らせてもらった。その後にはセイラもついていった。

Rashtia VII didn't say anything to the leaving heroes, he easily understood them.

Mayuki and Seila returned to the prepared room, and their silence continued for a while. Seila was the one who broke the silence.

ラストティア七世も英傑のそんな申し出を無下にできず、あっさりと了承したようだ。  
用意された部屋に戻った真雪とセイラは、しばらく沈黙を続けていた。そんな沈黙を破ったのはセイラだった。

“Wi-With this, we can return to our original world!”

“... ..”

“By the time we defeated the leader, Laki-san said he’d find the method to return us to our original world, surely soon....”

「と、ところでこれで元の世界に戻れるのですよね！」

「.....」

「統率者を倒すまでに、ラキさんが元の世界に戻れる方法を見つけて下さると仰っていたので、きっともうすぐ.....」

Seila worked hard to behaved cheerfully, but she was worried about Mayuki who still silent even now. However, Mayuki’s hardened expression was as if she’s always thought of something.

セイラは努めて明るく振る舞い、いまだに黙り込んでいる真雪を気遣っていた。しかし真雪の表情はずっと何かを考えているように固まっていた。

“... .. Ma-Mayuki-san? What are you thinking since before? It is painful to lied to everyone after all... .. something like that?”

「.....ま、真雪さん？ 先程から一体どうされたのですか？ やはり皆さんに嘘をつくのは辛いとか.....でしょうか？」

Mayuki wasn’t energetic because they weren’t the one who defeated the leader and because of the misunderstanding by the people along with their guessing or so Seila thought as she worriedly asked her, and Mayuki finally opened her mouth.

真雪が元気無いのは、自分たちが統率者を倒したわけではないのに、勘違いした国民からチヤホヤされることに疑問を感じているからだろうかと思っているのか、不安そうにセイラが尋ねると、ようやく真雪が口を開く。

“Uun, that’s not it... .. though some of it is about that, what I am concerned about is the one who defeated the leader.”

“E... .. ah, now that you mention it, I wonder who is that? He’s truly strong.”

“... ..”

“... .. Mayuki-san?”

「ううん、そうじゃないよ。.....それもあるけど、私が気になっているのは統率者を倒した人のこと」

「え.....あ、そう言えばあの方はどなただったのでしょうか？ とても強そうでしたが」

「.....」

「.....真雪さん？」

Then, Mayuki showed Seila the thing she took out from her pocket.

すると真雪はポケットからあるものを取り出しセイラに見せる。

“Missanga? Ah, is it cut?”

“Un, nee Seila, missanga will be cut if the wish is fulfilled, right?”

“Well, there’s such saying.”

“That’s right... .. once the wish is fulfilled... .. it’ll be cut.”

“... .. h!? ... ..don’t tell me, Mayuki-san, was your wish fulfilled?”

「ミサンガ？ あ、切れていますね？」

「うん、ねえセイラ、ミサンガって願い事が叶えば切れるんだよね？」

「まあ、そういう謂(いわ)れはあるようですね」

「そう.....願い事が叶えば.....切れるんだよ」

「.....っ！？ .....まさか真雪さん、何かお願い事が叶ったのですか？」

Seila realized it and asked her.

セイラはハッと聞いて聞く。

“... .. I have said it, Seila. My, uun, our wish is just one.”

“A... .. b-but, that’s... .. eu.”

「.....言ったでしょセイラ。私の、ううん、私たちの願いはただ一つ」

「あ.....で、ですがそれは.....えう」

For a moment there’s shadow in Seila’s expression. However, Mayuki continued her words.

セイラは瞬間的に陰りを表情に宿す。だが真雪は続ける。

“... .. nee, if, it’s only if. If the wish is truly fulfilled... .. what will you do?”

“... .. eh? That’s... .. wh-what do you mean?”

「.....ねえ、もし、もしもだよ。本当に願いが叶ったかもしれないって言ったら.....どうする？」

「.....え？ あの.....ど、どういう意味でしょうか？」

Mayuki stared at Seila’s eyes that showed her perplexity.

真雪はジッと困惑気味のセイラの瞳を見つめる。

“You know, that red-haired person’s voice... .. is similar to him. Uun, it’s not only similar. ... .. it’s the same.”

“S-Same...?”

“That’s right... .. it’s the same... .. the same voice... .. as Sou-kun.”

“h!?”

「あのね、あの赤い髪の人声.....似てたんだ。ううん、似てたなんてものじゃない。.....同じだったんだ」

「お、同じ.....？」

「そう.....同じだった.....同じ声だった.....想くんと」

「っ!？」

Seila was surprised and opened her mouth.

セイラは吃驚して口を開ける。

“Also, at that time, the missanga was cut.”

“Eh, but... .. eh?”

“Un, I understood what I was saying. That’s impossible. But... .. even so, I can feel it somehow. That person is... .. surely someone I know.”

“Mayuki-san.”

「それでね、その時、このミサンガが切れたの」

「え、でも.....え？」

「うん、自分でも何言ってるのか分かってるよ。そんなことはありえないって。でも.....でもね、何か感じたんだよ。あの人は.....きっと私の知ってる人だって」

「真雪さん.....」

Seila watched Mayuki who strongly grasped the missanga with both hands as they trembled.

ミサンガを強く握りしめながら両手を震わせている真雪を見つめるセイラ。

“I understood. I knew. Sou-kun is dead. He couldn’t be in this world any more... .. but although I knew it-”

「分かってる。分かってるよ。想くんは死んだんだもん。ましてやこの世界に居るわけがない.....分かってるけど」

Following that, *potapota*, tears began to fall as they flowed from Mayuki’s eyes, and fell into the missanga.

そしてポタポタと真雪の両眼から涙が零れ落ち、ミサンガに落ちる。

“I want to meet him after all... .. to meet Sou-kun....”

「やっぱり会いたいよお.....想くんに.....」

The desire that had been buried until now exploded as her tears overflowed. Seeing such Mayuki, Seila was determined about something as she slightly nodded.

Following that, her hands overlapped Mayuki’s hands.

今まで堪えてきた思いが、爆発したように涙となって溢れ出てきた。そんな真雪を見て、セイラは何かを決意したように小さく頷く。

そして真雪の手に自分の手を重ねる。

“Then, let’s confirm it.”

“... .. eh?”

“To confirm whether that person is really Asakura-san.”

“B-But, that’s....”

“That’s why we are going to confirm it! Fortunately, Laki-san still haven’t find the method to return us”

“... .. e-even so, I wonder is it okay?”

“It is! After all we are heroes now. Certainly we didn’t defeated the leader, but I think we have contributed greatly towards this country! They should at least allowed our selfishness!”

“Then, should we ask the King?”

「では確かめてみましょう」

「.....え？」

「あの方が本当に朝倉さんなのかをです」

「だ、だってそんなわけ.....」

「だから確かめるのです！ 幸いまだラキさんも送還について発見していないようですし」

「.....そ、そんなことしてもいいのかな？」

「いいのです！ だって今やセイラたちは英雄です。確かに統率者は倒していませんが、それでも結構お国のために貢献したと思います！ 少くらの我が儘は許されていていいはずです！」

「それじゃ国王様に頼んで？」

However, Seila shook her neck.

しかしセイラは首を横に振った。

“No, that person had said it. To forget about our own matter or something.”

“Now that you mention it....”

“Following that, even if we immediately run away from here, I think that person will not published that we are gone to the public.”

“I-Indeed.”

“That’s why, so as to not troubling that person, it’ll be better if only us that move. After all it’ll be too exaggerated if we asked the King.”

「いいえ、あの方は仰っていました。自分のことは忘れて下さいと」

「そう言えば.....」

「そしてすぐさま逃げように出て行かれたことから、恐らくあの方は自分の行いを公にしたいとは思っていないと思われます」

「な、なるほど」

「ですから、その方にも迷惑をかけないためには、セイラたちだけで動く方が良いかもしれません。国王様にお頼みすると、どうしても大げさになりそうですから」

That’s the truth. After all it was someone the Heroes looking for. It’d likely to become a grand investigation if they asked. Even if they asked to be secretive, they’d fully investigated that person’s identity, and that’d troubled that person.

それはそうだ。何とんでも英雄が探している人物だ。頼んでしまったら大々的な捜査になってしまうかもしれない。秘密裏にと頼んだとしても、その人の素性は調べ尽くされ、その人の迷惑になってしまうかもしれない。

“... .. Seila is amazing, you have a good head.”

“Eu... .. it make embarrassed.”

「.....すごいねセイラ、やっぱり頭良い」

「えう.....照れちゃいます」

Seila's cheeks blushed as she floated an embarrassed smile.

セイラは頬を染め上げて照れ笑いを浮かべる。

“Un, but thanks! Is Sheila also going to help?”

“Of course! If that person is really Asakura-san, even Sheila wanted to meet him.”

「うん、でもありがと！ セイラも手伝ってくれるの？」

「もちろんです！ もし本当にその方が朝倉さんなら、セイラの本懐でもありますから」

That's right, she wanted to meet and thank the one who helped her.

そう、彼女もまた会って助けてもらった礼をしたいのだ。

“... .. un, I knew.”

「.....うん、分かった」

Mayuki was reassured as she grasped the missanga, they matched their gazes and nodded.

真雪は力強くミサンガを握ると、セイラを顔を合わせて両者ともに頷いた。

“Let's find him, Mayuki-san! Then, let's confirm it!”

“Un, that's right. A wrong person... .. is also a possibility, but even if the possibility is close to zero, it's necessary for me to meet that person again.”

「見つけましょう真雪さん！ そして確かめましょう！」

「うん、そうだね。違う人.....かもしれないけど、可能性はゼロに近いだろうけど、私はあの人にもう一度会わなきゃいけない気がする！」

After the party was over, the maid came to Mayuki and Sheila's room to check on them, and it was already emptied. There was only a message.

パーティが終わってメイドが真雪たちの部屋の様子を見に来ると、そこはもうもぬけの殻であり、一枚の書置きだけがあった。

『We are going for a private reason』

『私用のため、出かけてきます』

Rashtia VII and Ninomiya Kazuto's expression turned aghast when they see that paper.

その紙を見たラスティア七世と二ノ宮和斗は愕然としていた。

## Story 9 Head Butler's Works

## 第九話 執事長のお仕事

Several days had passed since Mayuki and Seila determined to start their journey, and the person they look for, Souji was,

真雪たちが旅を決意し旅立ってから数日、彼女たちの探し人であるソージはというと、

[Un, today's weather is also a good one.]

「うん、今日も良い天気だ」

watering the flower bed with orange colored watering can. From the sky without any cloud, fresh face could be seen as it poured the sunlight into the ground. Although he had watered it in the early morning, today's sunlight was strong, so he watered it again in the noon.

Bathed inside the brilliantly shining light, Souji nodded in satisfaction because the flowers look happy. When he saw the flowers blooming energetically, he feel healed.

橙色のジョウロで花壇に水をやっていた。雲一つ無い快晴に包まれた空からは、清々しいほどに顔を覗かせている太陽の光が大地へと注いでいた。早朝にも一度水をやったのだが、今日は日差しが強かったので、昼にこうして再度水をやっているのだ。

燦々と輝くその光を浴びて、花たちもどことなく嬉しそうな感じがしてソージもまた満足気に頷いている。こうして元気よく咲いている花を眺めていると癒される。

“SOoooooJI-SAMAaaaa~h!”

「ソオオオオオオジ様ああああ〜っ！」

While he enjoyed the healing, *dododododo*, a sound of someone running resounded on the ground.

そんな癒しを満喫している最中、ドドドドと地面を鳴らしながら走ってくる者がいた。

[What happened, Ninthe?]

「どうしたんですか、ニンテ？」

The one who mightily ran and breathing roughly was a maid called Ninthe. She was a maid employed by this residence when Souji turned 16 years old.

Her slight purple hair was tied with short ribbons on both ends. Though she was still a new maid at the age of 10 years old, she was a lovely girl who work well and always smiling.

盛大に息を乱しながら駆けつけてきたのは、ニンテと言う名のメイドである。彼女はソージが十六歳の時にこの屋敷に雇われたメイドだった。

薄い紫の髪色をしていて、両端を短く紐で結っている。まだ十歳の新参者のメイドではあるが、よく働き笑顔を絶やさないう可愛らしい顔をした少女だ。

She seemed to have a complex about her small breast. *Isn't it okay because she's still 10 years old*, was what Souji thought. But, the girl firmly said, "It seems the breast is a woman's status."

コンプレックスは貧乳だということらしい。まだ十歳なんだからいいじゃないかとソージは思う。しかし彼女から「胸は女のステータスらしいんです」と強気で返されてしまった。

The other day, though he didn't know from who she heard that her breast would grow if they were massaged by a man, Ninthe came to Souji and she requested, "Please massage Ninthe's breast!"

Moreover, it was at a bad place, there were Yoyo and other maids with Souji's mother included. For some reason his mother averted her gaze.... He had hope that it was just some kind of punishment game as he asked for her reason while he was instinctively stiffened, but Ninthe said the previous reason in loud voice with serious face.

この間、誰から聞いたのか知らないが男の人に胸を揉んでもらえれば大きくなると言われたらしく、ニンテはソージに「ニンテのお胸をモミモミして下さいですう！」と頼みにやって来た。

しかも場所が悪く、そこにはヨヨを含めて、他のメイドにソージの母親までいた。何故か母親はその時顔を逸らしたのだが.....。もしかしてこれは何かの罰ゲームないしドッキリかと希望を持ったが、彼女の言葉で思わず固まってしまったソージが理由を尋ねると、ニンテは真剣な顔をして先程の理由を声高々に告げた。

At that time, Yoyo looked at him with terrible cold eyes and said, "Oh, massage huh?," as if she let out killing intent and he remembered that his whole body drenched in sweat.

For the better or worse, the incident was caused by the innocent Ninthe so everyone thought it as just a small thing, but what he experienced was as if a missile with huge explosive power grazed her cheek.

その時、ヨヨが物凄い冷たい目を向けて、「揉んだら分かってるわよね？」的な感じの殺気を飛ばしてきたので全身が汗でビッシヨリになったのを覚えている。

良くも悪くも純粹過ぎるニンテが起こした事件は、皆にとっては小規模なものだったかもしれないが、ソージは大爆撃の威力が込められたミサイルが頬を掠めていった感覚を経験したのだった。

To learn more about common sense, from then on Ninthe was teached directly by Yoyo who was concerned about her. To begin with it was Yoyo who picked Ninthe from the orphanage. So, she cherished her just like her own little sister.

Then, from the result of his investigation, Souji understood it was his own mother, Kaina who taught a lot of strange things to Ninthe. He finally know the reason she averted her face at that time. Following that was naturally a punishment by omitting her meals for one day.

あれからもっと常識を学ぶべきだということで、ニンテのことを気に入っているヨヨが直々に教えたりしている。そもそもニンテを孤児院から引っ張ってきたのはヨヨなのだ。まるで自分の妹のように可愛がっている。

そしてソージが調べた結果、ニンテに妙なことをいろいろ吹き込んだのは実の母親であるカイナだと分かった。あの時顔を逸らしたのはそういう意味があったのかと理解できた。そして当然お仕置きと称して一日飯抜きにしてやった。

Kaina seemed to not reflecting as she said, "It's oka~y, I'll just make it myself!," but she couldn't obtain any food because Souji was the one who managed the ingredient, and in the end Kaina apologized while crying like a child. Even so she must endure to not eat for a day because it was her punishment. Rather because she was an adult, he never thought she'd cry just because her meals for a day were omitted.

カイナは「いいも〜ん、自分で作るから！」と反省してなかったようだが、食材を管理しているのはソージなので、食べ物を得ることができずに、結局カイナは大人げなく泣いて謝った。それでも信賞必罰と称して一日我慢してもらった。というより大人なんだから、たかが一日飯抜きで泣くなよと思った。

"T-T-T-T-Trouble!"

「タ、タタタタイヘンですっ！」

Souji looked back dubiously as he saw Ninthe changed her expression as she shout.

血相を変えて叫ぶニンテを見てソージは怪訝に見返す。

"Did something happen?"

"Th-Th-Th-Th-This!"

「何かあったんですか？」

「コココココレをっ！」

The girl thrust out her arm as she said that. There was something like a letter which folded three times in her hand. Receiving that, he opened and confirmed the content,

そう言って彼女が腕を突き出してきた。その手には三つ折りになった一通の手紙のようなものがあつた。それを受け取り開いて中を確認してみると、

“Aa, I see, a threatening letter huh.”

“What’s with that lightness!?”

“Eh? After all, such thing had happened too many times thus far.”

「ああ、なるほど、脅迫状ですか」

「どうしてそんなにアッサリですっ!？」

「え? だってこんなもの、今までいくらでもありましたから」

With that, the threatening letter was burnt and thrown on the spot. It wasn’t something unusual.

そう、脅迫状など腐るほど送られてきたり、敷地内に投げ入れられたりされてきた。別段珍しくも何ともないのだ。

“B-B-B-B-But, it’s written that Yoyo-sama is the target!”

“It does. However, there’s no problem at all.”

“Why!”

“I am here after all.”

“... .. heh?”

「だ、だだだだだっってヨヨ様をねらうって書いてあるんですよ!」

「みたいですな。ですが問題ありませんよ」

「どうしてです!」

「だって、オレがいますから」

「.....へ?」

Ninthe became dumbfounded. That followed by Souji who floated a smile.

ポカンとなるニンテ。そしてソージは微笑を浮かべると、

“I am, Yoyo-sama’s butler after all.”

「オレは、ヨヨお嬢様の執事ですから」

There’s nothing but confident on his face.

その顔には自信しか存在していなかった。

“Ara~? Isn’t it Ninthe, what’s with that flustered face.”

“Ah, Kaina-sama!”

「あら～？ ニンテじゃない、どうしたのそんなあわあわした顔して」

「あ、カイナ様！」

After Ninthe delivered the threatening letter, Souji said “Please keep quiet about it,” and he left to somewhere.

However, Ninthe couldn’t understand how he was so calm, she returned to the mansion while still feeling anxious and insecure about Souji’s attitude as she didn’t know what to make of it.

ニンテはソージに脅迫状を届けると、ソージは「これは預かりますね」と言ってどこかへ去って行った。

しかしニンテは何故そんなにも平然としているのか、ソージの態度に不安を感じて屋敷の中に戻った今でも気になって気になって仕方が無いのだ。

At that time, Souji’s mother, Kaina, appeared.

そんな時にソージの母親であるカイナが現れた。

“I~ see, it came again huh~.”

“A-Again!? Th-there’s really a lot of it that came!?”

“Well~ yes, aren’t these kind of thing a status for one with power? or so I see it. For someone famous or someone with power, it’s inevitable that they’d gained the envy and resentment from their surroundings. Well, most of them were unjustified resentment though~.”

“... .. I-I didn’t know that...”

「な～るほど、また来たってわけね～」

「ま、また！？ ほ、ほんとにあれってそんなにイッパイ来てるんです！」

「ま～ね、ああいうものって権力者にとっては一種のステータス？ みたいなものよ。有名になるほど、力を持つほど、周囲に妬みや恨みが膨らむのは必然よ。まあほとんどが逆恨みでしょうけどね～」

「.....し、知りませんでした.....」

Ninthe looked down.

ニンテは顔を俯かせる。

“Well~ that might be so~. Souji is the one who dealt with those kind of things. It just that Ninthe saw this by chance today.”

“... .. U-Umm, is it really okay?”

“He? About what?”

“That’s, about the threatening letter... .... If Yoyo-sama is truly targeted....”

「ま～そうでしょうね～。ああいうものはいつもソージが対応してたから。今日はたまたまニンテの目に入ってしまったってだけだし」

「.....あ、あの、ほんとに大丈夫なんです？」

「へ？ 何が？」

「その、キョーハクジョーのこと.....です。もしヨヨ様がほんとにねらわれたら.....」

Ninthe was anxious and her heart was shaken as her expression seemed so sad. Kaina gently put her hands on Ninthe’s shoulders.

ニンテは不安に心を震わせ悲しそうな表情をする。そんな彼女の肩に優しく手を置くカイナ。

“It’s okay. Didn’t Souji also said that?”

“Eh, ah, yes. He said that.”

“Then it’ll be okay. Even though he doesn’t looks like it, my son is strong.”

「大丈夫よ。ソージも言ってなかった？」

「え、あ、はい。おっしゃってましたです」

「なら大丈夫。ああ見えてウチの息子は強いしね」

Even though Kaina was smiling, Ninthe could only tilted her neck. At that time, someone’s footstep arrived at the the second floor.

ニカットと笑うカイナだが、ニンテにしてみれば首を傾げるしかできなかった。その時、二階から誰かが降りてくる足音がした。

“Ara, you two, what happen?”

「あら、二人とも、どうかしたのかしら？」

It’s Yoyo. Just how much needed to maintain such beautifully flowing, blond hair or so Ninthe thought.

The hair shined and shook as she walked and made Ninthe never get tired of watching it.

Following that were her black eyes from her mother which drawn anyone that see her.

ヨヨだった。どれだけ手入れをしたらそれほどの美しい流れるような金髪を維持できるのだろうとニンテは思う。

歩く度にキラキラと揺れるそれは、ずっと見てもニンテを飽きさせない。そして母譲りの黒い瞳は、見る者を引きこんでいくような気分になってしまう。

Pure white skin just like the snow and slender body which seemed it'd be broken if it was touched. A beautiful girl who would captivate everyone that saw her without exception. It wasn't unreasonable that was how she won over Ninthe.

雪のように真っ白な肌、触れると折れるのではと思われそうな細い体。間違いなく誰の目をも惹く美少女である。ニンテが勝っているところなんてあるわけがないと思うのも無理はない。

It just that, there was a certain point, a part of her which even Ninthe feel affinity to. That was ----- her flat chest that made one doubted if she was really a woman.

ただそう、唯一、ある一点だけに関しては、ニンテも親近感を覚えている部分があった。それは-----本当に女性かと思うほどの薄い胸だった。

Of course Ninthe know she's a woman. They have taken bathes together. That' why she was aware that Yoyo was a woman

However, the sad thing was, if Yoyo's chest was compared to the girls at the same age of her, it'd only caused her overflowed with grief, that's how regrettable her flat chest was.

無論女性なのはニンテも理解している。ともに湯浴みをしたこともある。だからこそヨヨが紛うことなき女性だということは存じている。

しかしながら、悲しいことにヨヨの胸は同年代の女性と比べても嘆きだけが零れるほど、残念な貧乳ぶりだったのだ。

That girl arrived at the second floor accompanied by Souji. Apparently Souji was going to where Yoyo was as Ninthe began to understand it.

そんな彼女がソージとともに二階から降りてきた。どうやらソージはヨヨの所に行っていたのだとそこで初めて知ったニンテ。

“There's nothing at all, Yoyo-sama. From what is seen, isn't it just woman's secret talk?”

「別にどうもしませんよヨヨ様。言ってみれば、女同士の内緒話でしょうか？」

Kaina said that and Yoyo *Fuh*, floated a smile, then

カイナがそう言うと、ヨヨはフッと笑みを浮かべて、

“That looks fun. If I have the time, I want to do it too.”

“Mother, don't tell me you teach Ninthe another unnecessary thing....”

「それは楽しそうね。時間があれば私も混ぜてほしかったわ」

「母さん、もしかしてまた余計なことをニンテに……」

Souji stared at Kaina who had previous offense.

ソージは前科のあるカイナをジト目で睨む。

“No~ Souji, I won't teach unnecessary thing, you know?”

“From whose mouth did that came from?”

“Mo~ don't be that angry. Ah, are you going somewhere, Yoyo-sama?”

“Ee, I am going to deal with this.”

「や~だソージ、私はためになることしか教えないわよ？」

「どの口が言うんですか？」

「も~プリプリしないの。あ、ところでどこかお出かけになられるんですかヨヨ様？」

「ええ、コレの処理にね」

As she said the Ninthe who saw what she put out muttered, “Ah....” It was unmistakably the threatening letter from before.

そう言って彼女が見せたものを見たニンテは「あ……」と呟く。それは間違いなく先程の脅迫状だった。

“I see~, then shall I prepare the carriage?”

「そ~ですか、では馬車のご用意を？」

Yoyo shook her head when Kaina asked that.

カイナが尋ねるとヨヨは首を横に振る。

“No need, Souji will carry me.”

“I understand. Souji, do~ your job properly.”

“I know. Rather, mother too please stop talking and do your job. Your wage will be reduced, you know?”

「いいえ、ソージが運んでくれるわ」

「分かりました。ソージ、ちゃ〜んと仕事してくんのよ」

「分かりましたよ。というか母さんもくっちゃべってないで仕事して下さい。給金下げますよ？」

The employee's wages were actually calculated and told to the smart master, Yoyo by the head butler, Souji. In the beginning it was Kaina the head maid who calculated the maids' wages as she observed their works and summed it to Yoyo, but Souji told Yoyo about hourly wage and commission system followed with compensation of danger and bonus system. Plainly speaking it resulted with she entrusting Souji to calculate it.

実は働いている者たちの給金を計算して、その旨を当主であるヨヨに伝えているのは執事長のソージである。元々メイドの給金などはメイド長のカイナが、その者の働きぶりを観察して、それに見合った額をヨヨに提示していたのだが、ソージが時間給や歩合制に、危険手当やボーナスなどといったシステムをヨヨに話した結果、それは分かり易くていいということで、計算の得意なソージに一任されることになった。

Kaina was happy because her works decreased by one, but it was already too late when she came to understand that her wage was grasped by her own son. Kaina could only kneel before Souji who had grasped everything in this mansion now.

カイナは一つ仕事が減り楽になったと喜んでいたのだが、自分の給金も息子に握られていることを知り、しまったと思ったらしいが、時すでに遅し。今では屋敷の全てを把握しているソージにカイナは膝を折ることしかできなかった。

“P-Please stop that! Clothes that I want will soon appear in the market!”

“Then, I hope you work accordingly to your wage. If this keep up, it'll become even lower than Ninthe, you know?”

“A l-... .. A lie... .. right?”

“I wonder?”

「そ、それだけは止めてえ！ もうすぐ欲しい服が市場に出るのよお！」

「だったら給金を頂くに見合う働きをお願いします。このままだと、ニンテよりも低くなりますよ？」

「う.....嘘.....よね？」

「さあ？」

It was natural that there's different in wage between Ninthe who had only served for half a year and Kaina who had been served for more than 20 years. However, Souji had declared he'd evaluated everyone's work and calculated the wages equally.

まだ仕えて半年ほどのニンテと、二十年以上仕えているカイナとでは給金が違うのは当たり前。しかしソージは、皆に仕事ぶりを評価して平等に給金を計算すると公言した。

In other words, the more they worked their wages increased accordingly. So it couldn't be helped that Kaina's wage who didn't even work was inferior compared to Ninthe who worked desperately.

Even though she was a hard worker and needed to be stopped by everyone when Souji was born, something gone wrong and now she could only be remembered as a useless parent.

つまりは働けば働くほど給金が増えるのだ。しかし全く働かないカイナの給金が、めまぐるしく必死で働いているニンテより給金が劣るのも仕方が無いのだ。

ソージが生まれるまでは皆から止められるほどの働き者だったのだが、何がどう間違っただのか、楽を覚えてしまい駄目親になりつつある。

Gakkuri, Kaina dropped down, Souji and Yoyo started to go outside. Then, Yoyo suddenly stopped her feet and said,

ガックリと項垂れるカイナをよそ目に、ソージとヨヨは外に出て行こうとする。するとふと、ヨヨが足を止めて、

"Now that I remember it, Ninthe never saw the other face of the head butler,"

"Eh, ah, another... .. face?"

"Ee that's right."

"Ojou-sama, surely...."

「そう言えばニンテ、あなたはまだ執事長のもう一つの顔を見ていなかったわね」

「え、あ、も、もうひとつの顔.....ですか？」

「ええそうよ」

「お嬢様、まさか.....」

Souji felt his cheeks cramped. However, Yoyo just floated a joyous smile and said,

ソージは頬が引き攣られる思いをしていた。だがヨヨは楽しそうに笑みを浮かべると、

"It's a good chance. Ninthe, come with us."

"Heh?"

"I'll show it to you. Just what kind of person the head butler of this mansion is."

"... .. haa."

「いい機会だわ。ニンテ、一緒について来なさい」

「へ？」

「あなたに見せてあげる。この屋敷の執事長がどういうものかをね」

「.....はあ」

Ninthe who didn't understand the meaning keep her mouth opened. It couldn't be helped. Only a few would understood when suddenly told that the head butler had another face.

ニンテは意味が分からないのか口を開けたままだ。無理もない。いきなり執事長にはもう一つ別の顔があると言われてもピンとくる者は少ないだろう。

“Souji, take that girl too.”

“As you wish.”

「ソージ、彼女も連れて行くわ」

「畏まりました」

Souji didn't even object in the first place, and he only bow.

ソージは最初から反論するつもりなどなく、頭だけを下げる。

Having come outside, Ninthe opened her mouth in uneasiness.

外に出て、ニンテは不安そうに口を開く。

“U-Umm Yoyo-sama. Th-Though it's just my assumption... .. are you going to meet the people who sent that... .. threatening letter?”

「あ、あのヨヨ様。も、もしかしてですけど.....そ、そのキョーハクジョーを送った人たちに会いに行く.....とか？」

Ninthe looked at the expressionless Yoyo and said,

ニンテは無表情のヨヨの横顔を見て、

“A-Ahaha, that can't be! I am sorry to ask! Surely for Master to voluntarily go is impos-----”

“That's right.”

“si... .. ble... .. heh?”

“Fufu, a girl shouldn't keep her mouth open like that. I'll say it again. I am going to meet the sender of this threatening letter.”

“E... .. e? ... .. EEEEEEEEEH!?”

「あ、あはは、そんなわけないですよ！ すみません！ まさかトウシュ様みずから動かれるわけが-----」

「その通りよ」

「な……い……へ？」

「フフ、女の子がそんなに口をポカンと開けないの。もう一度言うわ。これから向かうのは脅迫状を寄越した連中のところよ」

「え……え？ ……………ええええええええええっ！？」

**Ninthe's voice resounded magnificently.**

盛大にニンテの声が響き渡る。

“Nn... .. my ears hurt, Ninthe.”

“Ah, I am sorry, Yoyo-sama.”

「ん……耳が痛いわよニンテ」

「あ、すみませんですヨヨ様！」

**Ninthe immediately bowed.**

即座に頭を下げるニンテ。

“B-But, that's dangerous! At least Yoyo-sama mustn't go!”

“It's okay.”

“Eh?”

“I just want to understand what kind of people were the one who sent this.”

“E-Even so....”

“It is okay. That's why I have an excellent bodyguard.”

「で、ですがキケンですう！ なにもヨヨ様みずからいかななくてもです！」

「いいのよ」

「え？」

「私はどんな者たちがこんなものを送ってきたのか把握しておきたいのよ」

「で、ですけど……」

「大丈夫よ。そのために私には優秀なボディガードがいるのだから」

**Ninthe slowly turned to look at Souji, the so-called bodyguard, and Souji floated a smile as he nodded slightly.**

ニンテがゆっくりとそのボディガードであるソージに視線を向けると、ソージは微笑を浮かべて軽く顎を引いた。

“Well then, Ojou-sama.”

“Ee, I leave it to you.”

“Eh? What’s just now? Ah, there’s no carriage so how....”

“Ninthe will understand once you see it. Just obediently wait for it.”

「ではお嬢様」

「ええ、頼むわ」

「え？ いまからなにを？ あ、そういえば馬車なしでどうやって移動を.....」

「見ていれば分かるわニンテ。大人しくしていなさい」

As Yoyo said that, Ninthe muttered “Yes....,” as she quietly watched.

ヨヨに言われ、ニンテは「はい.....」と呟いてジッと見守っている。

Souji hold his hand forward and orange-colored flame appeared all of a sudden.

ソージが前方に手をかざすと、突然その手から橙色の炎が出現する。

“Kyah!”

「きゃっ！」

Seeing it for the first time, Ninthe immediately raised a scream.

初めて見たニンテは、咄嗟に身を引いて悲鳴を上げた。

“Eh? Ah, fire? Eh, the color is orange? Are? Isn’t it usually red... ..?”

「え？ あ、火？ え、でもオレンジ色？ あれ？ 普通赤じゃ.....？」

Yoyo happily watched Ninthe who obviously confused.

明らかに混乱しているニンテを楽しそうに見つめるヨヨ。

“The desired image, Orange flame (Tou-En).”

「想いを像(かたど)れ、橙炎(とうえん)」

At the same time Souji muttered that, the orange flame changed its shape. Then, it became just like the clouds floating in the sky, and there were wings growing on both ends. Its size was just like a carriage.

Seeing that, confusion on Ninthe’s face became stronger, then Souji get on top of that thing.

Following that, he outstretched his hand towards Yoyo and she also get on.

ソージがそう呟くと同時に、オレンジ色の炎は形を変えていく。そしてまるでそらに浮かぶ雲のような造形になり、両端には翼が生えている。ちょう乗車一台分ほどの大きさだ。

その光景を見て、増々混乱が強まっているような顔をしているニンテをよそに、まずソージがその上にヒョイッと乗った。そしてヨヨに手を差し伸べて彼女も同乗した。

Yoyo turned towards Ninthe whose face was hardened and said,

ヨヨはいつまでも固まっているニンテに顔を向けると、

“Let’s go, Ninthe.”

“Eh, ah, y-yes!”

「行くわよニンテ」

「え、あ、は、はいです！」

However because it burning just like fire, Ninthe was in caution and Souji stretched out his hand.

しかしやはり火のように燃えているので、警戒している様子のニンテに、ソージが手を差し出す。

“Please relax. It isn’t hot. Please just think it as a vehicle.”

“That’s... .. y-yes.”

「安心して下さい。熱くはありません。ただの乗り物と思って下さい」

「えっと.....は、はいです」

Souji took her hand and pulled her. Although the girl let out a small scream, she felt relieved when she finally know there’s no heat.

Following that, *fuwah*, the three were wrapped in a floating sense. Ninthe once again raised a voice and dropped on her butt, but Yoyo stood as is because she was accustomed to it.

ソージは彼女の手を取り、クイッと引っ張り上げた。小さく彼女は悲鳴を上げたが、ようやく熱くはないと感じたのかホッとしていた。

するとフワッと三人を浮遊感が包む。ニンテはまたも声を上げて、腰を落としているが、ヨヨは慣れているようでそのまま立っていた。

Then, the orange flame took the three as it raised into the sky. Seeing Ninthe who still astonished as if it was just a dream, Yoyo let out a small laugh and said,

そして橙炎は三人を乗せたまま上空へと昇っていく。いまだに夢の中にいるような感じでキョトンとしているニンテを見てクスリと笑みを溢したヨヨは、

“Now that I remember it, Souji. Aren’t these wings unnecessary?”

“... .. for direction.”

“I see, do you want me to say they are beautiful?”

“... .. at your will.”

「そう言えばソージ。別にこの羽はいらないのではなくて？」

「.....演出です」

「そう、素敵ねとでも言ってほしいのかしら？」

「.....ご随意に」

It certainly could fly even without the wings. After all the characteristic of this orange flame was the embodiment of Souji's imagination. In other words, it's a flame that could touch other objects.

Then, if he could create a vehicle to transport people, Souji could even also created kitchen knife and pan, it was truly convenient inside the kitchen.

確かに翼などなくとも飛べる。何故ならばこの橙炎の特徴は、ソージの想像を具現化するもの。つまり物体に触れることができる炎なのだ。

こうして人を乗せる乗り物を創ることもできれば、包丁や鍋なども創れてソージとしては使い勝手抜群の効果を持っている。

Actually, today he was watering the flowers with orange watering can and it was also created from the orange flame. Ninthe didn't noticed that because she was in panic because of the threatening letter.

As they flew, Ninthe became somewhat calmer and Souji explained his magic to her. Maybe because it was the first time she saw magic like Souji's, she listened carefully with her eyes sparkling though she knew what magic was.

実は今日、オレンジ色のジョウロで花に水をやっていたのだが、それもこの橙炎で創ったものである。ニンテは脅迫状のことで気が動転し気づいていないようだったが。

飛んでいる間、少し落ち着いてきたニンテに、ソージは魔法の説明をしていた。ソージのような魔法は初めて見たのか、魔法だと知ってからは目をキラキラさせて話に耳を傾けていた。

After flying for a while, they finally reached the location where the forest stretched below their eyes.

しばらく飛んでいると、眼下に森が広がっている場所へと辿り着いた。

“They are over there, Ojou-sama.”

“Approach it.”

「あそのようですねお嬢様」

「向かいなさい」

The location Souji pointed was a small fountain inside the forest. There were several men. From how the men dressed, they were armed just like bandits.

ソージが指を差したのは、森の中にある小さな泉だった。そこには男たちが数人いた。どの男も身形は小汚く、賊のような武装をした者たちだった。

### Story 10 The Bandit was Burnt Brown

#### 第十話 賊はこんがり焼いて

“Wh-What is THAT!?”

「な、何だアレはっ!？」

Uniformly, all of the men opened their eyes wide because an orange object was floating in the sky. Moreover, the object was obviously approaching them which caused a commotion. The men instinctively poised their weapons and they became further agaped when they saw people were on top of the orange object.

男たちは一様に、空に浮かんでいるオレンジ色の物体に目を見張っている。しかもその物体が近づいて来るので明らかに動揺している。

男たちは思わず武器を構えて警戒していると、そのオレンジ色の物体に乗っている人物を見て更に愕然とする。

“Y-You are-!?”

「お、お前はっ!？」

The orange object was of course the flame created by Souji Alkasha, moreover Yoyo and Ninthe were also boarded beside him.

無論そのオレンジ色の物体はソージ・アルカーサが創り出した炎であり、その上にはソージの他にヨヨとニンテも乗っている。

“Aren't you the one who send this?”

「あなたたちがコレを出したのでしょうか？」

Yoyo showed the threatening letter with a disappointed manner.

懨然とした態度でヨヨが脅迫状を出して見せる。

“It's written here to stop the negotiation with lord Hakuhou.”

「ココにはハクホウ卿との商談を止めてほしいと書かれてあるわね」

Although the men gritted their teeth, they laughed with *Fuh*.

男たちはギリッと歯を噛むが、フッと笑う。

“J-just what is this miss saying. We did what? As if we know such a thing.”

「な、何言ってんだこの嬢ちゃんは。俺らが何だって？ そんなもの、知るわけねえだろうが」

The men floated smiles as they regained their composure.

調子を取り戻したように笑みを浮かべる男たち。

“Is that so? Even if you’ve grown senile, our side already know everything, you know?”

“How annoying, miss should quickly go, if you say any more than this, I’ll make you watch some painful experience, you know?”

「あらそう？ でもそう惚けても、こちらには全て分かっているのだけれど？」

「うっせえな、とつと消えな嬢ちゃん、これ以上何か言おうもんなら、ちょっと痛い目を見てもらうことになるぜ？」

At the moment the men let out killing intents, one of the men’s shoulder was tapped by a hand.

男たちから殺気が迸った瞬間、その中の一人の肩にポンと手が置かれる。

“That won’t do.”

“Eh? U-Uwah!”

「それは頂けませんね」

「え？ う、うわっ！」

The man greatly jumped sideway to distance himself. Because Souji was there before anyone was aware, all of them were surprised.

男は大きく横に跳びはねて距離を取る。いつの間にかそこにいたソージの存在に、誰もが驚愕している。

“Wh-What’s with this red hair....”

“O-Oi, he is that, right? That miss’s butler-”

「な、何だこの赤髪.....」

「お、おい、コイツってアレだろ？ あの嬢ちゃんの執事の」

When the man shared the information,

男たちが情報を回していると、

“Oh my, to know a mere butler like me, and to be that detailed.”

“Sh... .. shut up! J-Just what are you blabbing! You didn’t even have the proof we are the one who wrote that threatening letter!”

「おや、私のようないち執事のことを御存知とは、ずいぶんお詳しいようで」

「う.....うるせえ！ い、いちゃもんつけやがって！ 俺らが脅迫状を送ったって証拠なんてねえだろうがよ！」

Then, Souji *niyah*, raised the corners of his mouth.

するとソージはニヤッと口角を上げる。

“Is that so? Then, why did you know the paper Ojou-sama carry is a threatening letter?”

“A....”

“You idiot!”

「そうでしょうか？ なら何故、お嬢様がお持ちになられてるあの紙が、脅迫状だと御存知なのですか？」

「あ.....」

「バカおまえっ！」

Even though the other men rebuked the man’s blunder, it was already too late. Certainly on the paper Yoyo carried, 『Stop the negotiation with lord Hakuhou. If not, your important people will disappear one by one』, were written. It was certainly a threatening letter.

男の失態に他の者が窘(たしな)めるが、もう遅い。確かにヨヨも持つ紙には『ハクホウ卿との商談を即刻取り止めたし。さもなければ大事なものが一つずつ消えていく』と書かれてある。間違いなく脅迫状である。

“Even more, since some time ago these things from your pocket....”

「それにですね、先程あなたの懐からこんなものが.....」

What Souji shown to the men were a bunch of similar threatening letters.

ソージが男たちに見せつけたのは、同じような脅迫状の束だった。

“Hohou, are you going to send these next? I see, they are addressed to lord Hakuhou. For such things to be inside your pocket, ... .. do you still have other excuse?”

「ほほう、これは次に送るためのものですか？ なるほど、これはハクオウ卿当てのものですね。このようなものを懐に差し入れておいて、まだ……言いわけなさいますか？」

Souji said so while he keep floating a smile. Following that, the men’s expression gradually changed. Their impatience disappeared and their killing intent swollen.

努めて微笑を浮かべながらソージは言う。そして段々と男たちの顔が据わっていく。焦りなどが失せ、殺意が膨らんできた。

“T-TTTThat’s, Yoyo-sama! If this keep up, Souji-sama will-!”

「え、ええええっとヨヨ様！ このままじゃソージ様がっ！」

Ninthe raised her voice towards Yoyo while trembling in fear, but

ニンテは恐怖に震えながらヨヨに向かって声を上げるが、

“Just be silent and watch.”

「いいから黙って見ていなさい」

Maybe because she couldn’t believed Yoyo’s attitude that didn’t show any discomposure, Ninthe face paled and hardened. The men tried to encircled Souji and,

少しも動揺を見せないヨヨの態度が信じられないのか、ニンテは顔を青ざめたまま固まっていた。

男たちはソージを囲むように陣取ると、

“Then, we’ll you force. We will kill this butler, then made that miss listen to us even if it’s something unreasonable.”

「こうなったら実力行使だ。この執事を殺して、あの嬢ちゃんには無理やりにでも言うことを聞いてもらおうとしようぜ」

The other men agreed to the man’s words as they nodded. However, Souji just shrugged his shoulders in amazement when he saw these men.

男の言葉で男たちも了承したように頷いている。しかしソージはそんな男たちを見て呆れたように肩を竦める。

“As expected, you’re bandits after all.”

“What’s that, bastard!”

“That’s good. Well then, about whom did you pick a fight, I will let you study a little about it.”

“Don’t underestimate us!”

「やはり所詮は賊ですか」

「何だとしてめえ！」

「いいですよ。では、どなたに喧嘩をお売りになったのか、少しお勉強をさせてあげましょう」

「なめんなっ！」

The men pulled the swords that hanged on their waists, then they approached Souji as is. Seeing such spectacle, Ninthe instinctively shut her eyes.

男たちは腰に下げている剣を抜くと、そのままソージに向かって来る。その光景を見て思わずニンテは目を閉じる。

Thus *bata bata*, came the sound of collapsing people, Ninthe with “Eh?” such feeling slowly turned her gaze towards Souji.

そして、バタバタと人が倒れていく音が響き、ニンテも「え？」という感じでゆっくり視線をソージに向ける。

“Yareyare, shouldn’t you learnt a little more on how to handle sword?”

「やれやれ、もう少し剣の扱い方を学ばれた方がいいのでは？」

A lot of men collapsed in Souji’s surroundings, they completely fainted. Souji was countering the attacks with paper-thin difference, his chop promptly dropped on the other party’s back necks and they lost their consciousness. Moreover, all of them in a short time.

ソージの周囲には多くの男たちが軒並み倒れており、完全に失神していた。ソージは攻撃を紙一重でかわすと、すかさず相手の後ろ首に手刀を落とし意識を奪ったのだ。しかもそれはほんの一時のことだった。

“Wh-Wh-Wh-Wh-Wh....”

「な、なななな.....」

Even though there was a man remained, because he couldn't believed what had happened in front of him, he began to back away.

ただ一人残った男がいるが、男は目の前に起こった出来事が信じられないのか、後ずさりし始めた。

“Well then, you are the only one left, you know?”

“D-Damn iiiit-!”

「さて、残りはあなただけになりましたね？」

「く、くそがあああっ！」

The man charged while desperately swing his sword. However, the sword trail which appeared in the air only ran through the air. It gave birth to the sound of a miss.

Souji had completely saw through the sword path and avoided it.

男は自棄になりながら剣を振りかぶって突撃してきた。しかし上空から生まれる剣線はただ空に走っただけだ。生まれたのは空振り音だけ。

ソージは完全に剣筋を見極めて避けていた。

“H-Hit hiiiiim-!”

「あ、当たれええええっ！」

*Bunbun*, the brandished sword didn't hit, it didn't even grazed him. Then, at the moment the man made a great swing, he immediately shorten the distance and lightly kicked the man's abdomen.

ブンブンと振り回す剣が当たるわけも無く、ソージには掠りもしない。そして男が大きく振りかぶった瞬間、間を即座に詰めて腹に軽く蹴りを入れる。

“Gohooh!?”

「ごほおっ!？」

Although he considerably took it easy, saliva scattered from the man's mouth as he tumbled into ground. The sword which released from his hand, *karan*, made that sound as it fell on the ground.

かなり手加減したが口から唾を撒き散らして地面へと転がる。剣もその際に手放しカランと音を鳴らして地面に落ちた。

“Well then, let’s end this.”

「さて、終わりにしましょうか」

Souji approached him. The man, “Hih!,” raised a small scream and saw Yoyo at the edge of his vision,

ソージがジリッと近づく。男は「ひっ！」と小さく悲鳴を上げると、視界の端に映ったヨヨを見て、

“Wi-With this, you bastard will be hosta-... .. kh!”

「こ、こうなったらてめえを人質にし……っ！」

Just as he said, he tried to take Yoyo as a hostage as he started to leave his spot. But, at the moment his foot was moved, Souji gripped his hand.

言葉の通り、彼はヨヨを人質にして、この場を離れようとしたのだろう。だが足を動かそうとした時、その腕をソージに掴まれていた。

“... .. that won’t do, you’ll be hurt now.”

“A....”

「……いけませんよ、おいたしちゃ」

「あ……」

For a moment, Souji narrowed his eyes and suddenly red flame gushed out from the hand he used to gripped and it wrapped the man.

ソージは一瞬、目を細めると、突然ソージの掴んでいる手から赤い炎が噴出し男を包んだ。

“GYAAaaaaaaaaaaaaah!?”

「ぎゃあアアアアアアアアアアアッ!？」

Becoming a fire tumbling doll, the man rolled on the ground. However, the flame didn’t easily disappeared and the man started to convulsed as is. Then, the flame suddenly extinguished and there was a man with completely burned body and faint breathing.

火だるまになったまま、地面を転がる男。しかし炎はなかなか消えずに、そのまま痙攣し始める男。すると突然炎が鎮火し炎の中からは、体中を焦がした男が息も絶え絶えの様子で、

“... .. a... .. ga....”

「.....あ.....が.....」

*Kohyu- kohyu-*, strange breathing sound could be heard from them, as he seemed to be alive.

コヒューコヒューと、変な呼吸音が男から聞こえるが、どうやら死んではいないようだ。

“Well, looks like you’re conscious. I will give you a warning. In the future, at the time you put your hand on Ojou-sama or anyone from the mansion....”

「さて、意識はありますね。忠告しておきましょう。今後、お嬢様、もしくは屋敷の者に手を出したその時は.....」

Souji slowly drawn his face near the man’s ear,

ソージはゆっくり男の耳元まで顔を近づけ、

“you’ll be erased, kay?”

「ぶち消しますよ？」

Saying only that much, he returned to where Yoyo was while making *kotsu kotsu*, footstep sounds.

それだけ言うと、コツコツと足音を立てながらヨヨのもとへと戻る。

“As expected, these bandits are lord Van Kurs’s handymen.”

“That so, well that one impatiently took this measure because he’ll fall into extreme poverty if his business fail after all.”

「やはり賊はバンクルス卿の手の者のようでした」

「そう、まああそこも事業が失敗して火の車らしいから性急に手を打ちたかったってわけね」

Yoyo shrugged her shoulders in amazement. Following that, because Ninthe was still in a blank surprise, Souji call out to her.

ヨヨが呆れたように肩を竦める。そしていまだに呆然としているニンテに、ソージが声をかける。

“Are you okay? Was the stimulus too strong?”

「大丈夫ですか？ 刺激が強過ぎましたかね？」

Following that, *kuwah*, Ninthe raised her face which had an earth-shattering look,  
するとクワッと顔を上げたニンテが物凄い形相で、

“Wh-Whwhwhwhawhat’s with that! Souji-sama is su~per strong after all!”

“Ahaha, even so I still have to made desperate effort.”

“... ..”

“Furthermore....”

“Eh?”

“Furthermore, I am Yoyo Ojou-sama’s butler after all.”

「な、なななんなんです！ ソージ様、ちょ〜ツヨいじゃないですか！」

「あはは、これでも必死に努力しましたから」

「.....」

「それに.....」

「え？」

「それに、オレはヨヨお嬢様の執事ですから」

Ninthe became agape while Yoyo smiled in satisfaction. And, the three returned to the mansion using the flame created by Souji again.

ポカンとするニンテと、満足そうに微笑むヨヨ。そして三人は再びソージが創った炎の乗り物で屋敷へと帰って行く。

There was someone who watched Souji and the others left in silent. From the shadow of the trees, it looked at the surroundings circumstance,

去って行くソージたちを黙って見つめていた者がいた。木の陰から、周囲の状況を見回して、

“As expected of Souji Alkasha.”

「さすがね、ソージ・アルカーサ」

Another shadow appeared behind the one who muttered that. Apparently, there were two existences whose presences had disappeared to hidden themselves. Although there was considerable distance from Souji and the others, they confirmed Souji instant killed the bandits using farsight. Though how the last of the bandit suddenly rolled on the ground then fainted in agony was not clearly understood. But, they understood that those kind of bandits couldn't even be an enemy to Souji.

そう呟いた人物の背後からもう一つの影が出現する。どうやら隠れるように姿を消していたのは二人の存在だった。大分ソージたちからは距離があるが、ソージが賊を瞬殺したのを遠目には確認できた。賊の最後の一人は急に地面を転がり悶絶していたようだが、よくは分からなかった。だが確実にあの程度の賊なら、ソージの相手にはならないということは理解できた。

“If it's you, you can win right, Testa?”

「アナタなら、勝てるわよね、テスト？」

The other shadow that arrived at its side moved its head vertically. It had the meaning of affirmation.

傍に出て来たもう一つの影の頭がコクンと縦に動く。肯定だという意味だ。

“Fufufu, then shall we greet them first. Aa~ how enjoyable. I want that to be mine sooner... .. just wait Souji Alkasha. I... .. this Femme D. Dresoj-sama will snatch it away from you! O~hhohohohoho!”

「フフフ、ならまずは挨拶に行きましょうか。ああ～楽しみだわ。早くアレをアタシのモノにしたいわ.....待っていなさいソージ・アルカーサ。アナタはアタシが.....このフェム・D・ドレスオージェ様が奪ってあげるわ！ オーッホホホホホ！」

Shrill laughter rang out inside the forest.

甲高い笑い声が森の中に響き渡っていた。

“Th-That;s... .. Souji-sama?”

「あ、あの.....ソージ様？」

Traveling in the sky, Souji turned around because he was called by Ninthe.

空を遊行中、ニンテに呼ばれたのでソージは振り向く。

“What is it?”

“Ah, that... .. may I ask something?”

“Ee, I don’t mind.”

“Th-Then... .. about that, how did you know the bandits were there?”

“Aa, about that huh. It’s all thanks to the threatening letter Ojou-sama carry.”

“Eh? The threatening letter?”

「何です？」

「あ、その.....いくつかお聞きしてもいいですか？」

「ええ、構いませんよ」

「そ、それじゃ.....あのですね、どうしてゾクがあそこにいることがわかったんです？」

「ああ、そのことですか。それはお嬢様がお持ちになられている脅迫状のお蔭ですよ」

「え？ キョーハクジョー？」

Ninthe naturally turned her glance towards Yoyo. Following that, Yoyo was the one who explained it in Souji stead.

ニンテは自然とヨヨに視線が向いた。そしてソージではなくヨヨが説明に入った。

“You know, Souji can use magic to read the memory inside objects.”

“I-Is it so!?”

“Ee, thanks to that magic, the location of the bandits and how they were hired by lord Van Kurs were known.”

“Fue~ a-amazing, but... .. is that true?”

「ソージはね、物から記憶を読み取る魔法が使えるのよ」

「そ、そうなんですか！」

「ええ、その魔法のお蔭で、ここに賊がいることも、そして賊たちがバンクルス卿に雇われていたことも知り得たのよ」

「ふえ〜す、すごいですけど.....ほ、ほんとなんですか？」

Ninthe looked at Souji with 100% doubt. *Fumu*, Souji put his hand on his chin, then turned his left hand towards Ninthe.

疑惑百パーセントでソージを見つめるニンテ。ソージはふむと顎に手をやると、左手をニンテに向ける。

“... .. eh? Th-That’s... .. Souji-sama?”

「.....え？ あ、あの.....ソージ様？」

Following that, blue flame came forth from Souji’s palm. The flame wrapped Ninthe’s body.

そしてソージは手の平から青い炎を生み出す。その炎があろうことかニンテの身体を包んだ。

“Kyaah! It... .. isn’t... .. hot.”

「きゃあっ！ 熱ッ.....くはないです.....ね」

Souji smiled at Ninthe who watched him in agape. With the appearance of blue flame in front of him, Souji dropped his line of sight towards the flame. Then, when the flame vanished, he drawn his face near her ear.

ニッコリと微笑しているソージを啞然と見つめるニンテ。ソージは目の前にも青い炎を出現させ、その炎に視線を落としている。そして青い炎を消すと、彼女の耳元に顔を持って行き、

“The color of today’s underwear... .. *mumble mumble*.”

“E-Eeh!? H-Hohohow did you know!? That Ninthe’s underwear is pink!”

“Souji... .. you....”

「今日の下着の色は.....ゴニョゴニョ」

「え、ええっ！？ ど、どどどどうして知ってるんです！ ニンテの下着がピンクだって！」

「ソージ.....あなたは.....」

To the surprised Ninthe, Yoyo let out an amazed sigh as she cast a skeptical gaze.

驚くニンテを尻目に、ヨヨは呆れて溜め息を吐く。

“Ahaha, I just searched the memory from Ninthe’s clothes. Have you understood now? I can read the memory of objects. If not, then where Ninthe hide the broken plate today-”

“Aa! Aa! Aa! I-I believe you! I believe it so-!”

“Ninthe, it’s okay to broke it, just report it immediately.”

“U-Uu~ I am sorry~.”

「あはは、今のはニンテの服の記憶を探ったんですよ。これで分かりましたか？ オレが物から記憶を読み取れるということが。何なら今日ニンテが、割ってしまった皿をバレないように隠したことも」

「ああ！ ああ！ ああ！ も、もう信じます！ 信じますからあ！」

「ニンテ、割ってもいいからちゃんと報告なさい」

「う、うう～すみませんでしたあ～」

**Receiving Yoyo's advice, Ninthe dropped her shoulders.**

ヨヨの注意を受けてニンテはガックリと肩を落とす。

“Also Souji, stop purposely informing a girl about what they tried to hide. Next time, there'll be punishment.”

“Yes, I can't say anything but sorry.”

「それとソージ、女性の隠れた部分をわざわざ本人に告げるのはよしなさい。次やったらお仕置きね」

「はい、申し訳ございませんでした」

**Souji once again received a warning, then he bowed.**

ソージもまた注意を受け、頭を下げた。

“Fufu, but you did well. As expected of my butler, Souji.”

“I am honored.”

“Ninthe, this is Crowtail's, no, the strongest butler who serves me. Remember it.”

“Ah, yes!”

“Fufu, that's a good reply.”

「ふふ、でもよくやったわ。さすが私の執事ねソージ」

「光栄です」

「ニンテ、これがクロウテイルの、いえ、私に仕える最強の執事よ。覚えておきなさい」

「あ、はいです！」

「ふふ、良い返事ね」

**The three returned as they wrapped in smiles.**

三人は笑顔に包まれたまま帰路に着いた。

## **Story 11 Ninthe is Studying**

### **第十一話 ニンテの勉強**

Today will be two story at once.

今日は二話連続投稿です。

note : author note...

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===

At that time, Amagawa Mayuki, who valuated as a hero for defeating the demon race's leader and greeted by waves of cheers in 【Rashtia Kingdom】 , arrived at 【Deston】 , a town which considerably far away from the Kingdom.

その頃、魔族の統率者を討ち倒した英雄として評価を受け、【ラスティア王国】にも大手を振って出迎えてもらった天川真雪は、今王国からかなり離れた位置にある【デストン】という街まで来ていた。

She went out to travel to search the red-haired boy who had defeated the leader. The one who advised her to do it was Hoshimori Sheila her best friend who keep her company even outside of Japan.note : (here)

She was an irreplaceable friend who also traveled to find that boy.

彼女は統率者を倒した赤髪の少年を探すためにこうして旅に出たのである。そしてその旅を勧めてくれたのは、他ならぬ日本でも親友として付き合いしていた星守セイラだ。

少年を探す旅にも同行してくれているかけがえのない友である。

There were several reasons for them to came to 【Deston】 . First, there's harbor in this town which connected to every continents. The other reason, a lot of races gathered and associated here just like in 【Rashtia】 , so it'd be easy to obtain various information.

ここ【デストン】に来たのは幾つか理由がある。まず一つに、ここには港があり、各大陸を繋ぐ橋渡しをしてくれる。そしてもう一つ、ここにも【ラスティア】ほどではないが多くの種族が集まり交友しているので、様々な情報が得やすいのだ。

Having thought there was a possibility someone knew something about the red-haired boy, they came here.

However, although they separated and collected various things, they couldn't easily gathered good information.

もしかしたらここにいる誰かが赤髪の少年について何か知っているかもしれないと思い、やって来たのだ。

しかしいろいろ二手に分かれて聞いてはみたが、ためになる情報はなかなか得られなかった。

“After all, there's a commotion in this kingdom right now.”

“That's right... .. eu, we are being quite audacious after all.”

“Don't say that. Sheila isn't the one who persuade me into this journey.”

“Eu... .. even if it is so....”

“I only feel gratitude to you!”

“Mayuki-san....”

“Yosh! End of the break! For now, shall we go to another continent?”

“The reason?”

“Nn~ somehow I feel he is not in this continent.”

“So-somehow... .. you say?”

「今、国じゃ大騒ぎしてるかなあ」

「そうですね.....えう、セイラたち、結構大胆なことしてますよね」

「何言ってるのよ。この旅を勧めてくれたのはセイラじゃない！」

「えう.....それはそうなのですけど.....」

「感謝してるんだからね私は！」

「真雪さん.....」

「よし！ 休憩終わり！ とりあえずさ、別の大陸に行ってみない？」

「何か理由が？」

「ん~何となくこの大陸にはいないような気がしてさ」

「な、何となく.....ですか？」

Because Sheila thought there was a reason for her to proposed that, her narrow eyes could only blinking in bewilderment because that was wrong.

セイラは何か理由があると思っの発言だと思っていたのか、そうではないことを知り目をパチクリしている。

“Un, even though I look like this, I have a good intuition!”

「うん、こう見えても結構勘当たるんだよ！」

*Ehhem*, she stick out those big breasts with that kind of feeling. Normally these two masses would, *poyon*, shook grandly and be worshipped, but these girls currently wearing robes to hide their identities.

There would be a commotion if they were found, and there's also the fear of being brought back.

えっへんといった感じでその大き過ぎる胸を張る。本来ならポヨンと盛大に揺れる二つの塊を拝めるのだが、今彼女たちは正体がバレないようにローブを身に纏っているのだ。

もし見つかってしまうと大騒ぎにもなるし、連れ戻されたりするかもしれないと危惧しての格好だった。

“Ah~ I want my magic to be able to help the search even a little~”

「あ~でも私の魔法がもうちょっと探索とかに向いてたらなあ~」

Grumbling spilled from Mayuki's mouth as she looked displeased.

口を尖らせて愚痴を溢す真雪。

“Fufu, that's right. Mayuki-san's magic is offensive one.”

“Muu~ even though Sheila's magic is certainly convenient, it still unsuitable for the search.]

「ふふ、そうですね。真雪さんのはどちらかというと攻撃主体ですしね」

「むう~セイラの魔法も確かに便利だけど、探索には不向きだしね」

Silence flowed between them for a while, then suddenly Sheila remembered something as she said, *Hah*.

二人の間にしばらく沈黙が流れるが、ふとセイラが思い出したようにハツとなる。

“Now that I remember it...”

“Nn? Did you caught on something?”

“Y-Yes. Certainly that person...”

“That person, you mean the red-haired person?”

“Yes. It is about that person, at the time he turned around, he seemed to wear a tail-coat...”

“Is that so?”

「そういえば.....」

「ん？ 何か思いついたの？」

「は、はい。確かあの人.....」

「あの人って赤髪の人？」

「はい。その人なんですけど、こちらに振り向いた時、燕尾服を着用していたような.....」

「そうなの？」

Apparently, Mayuki couldn't clearly confirmed that.

どうやら真雪はハッキリとは確認していなかったようだ。

“Yes. Also, he certainly spoke. Something about being scolded by Ojou-sama....”

“Ojou-sama? ... .. what's with that?”

“You can't understand that? Wearing a tail-coat with an Ojou-sama nearby. There's the possibility that person was employed to serve that Ojou-sama, right?”

“... .. ah.”

「はい。それに確かこうも仰ってました。お嬢様に叱られると.....」

「お嬢様？ .....だからどうしたの？」

「分かりませんか？ 燕尾服を着用して、身近にお嬢様がいる。もしかしてその人は、そのお嬢様に仕えている使用人なのではないでしょうか？」

「.....あ」

Mayuki could feel a shock ran through her from what Sheila had thought.

真雪もセイラの考えに衝撃が走るのを感じる。

“Th-That's it! It is about THAT! That's... .. a celebrity! Moreover, surely the butler!”

“Ah, yes. Even though it's only a possibility, he probably taking care of a rich person's house. Though I don't know whether he is a butler or not.”

“Ooh! Sheila is amazing! You have a good head! It's as if you are a detective!”

“Ah, that's, ehehe.”

「そ、それだよ！ ということはアレだよね！ えと.....セレブ！ しかも執事だよねきつと！」

「あ、はい。可能性としてですけど、もしかしたらお金持ちの家に厄介になられているのではないのでしょうか。執事かどうかは分かりませんが」

「おお！ 凄いよセイラ！ あったま良い！ まるで探偵さんみたいだよ！」

「あ、その、えへへ」

**Sheila didn't feel dissatisfied as she smiled in embarrassment.**

セイラも満更ではないのか照れ臭そうに微笑んでいる。

**“Then, we will concentrate on those celebrities from now on!”**

**“That might be a good thing. They might understand if we ask if they know a red-haired butler.”**

**“Yosh! Let's strike while the iron is hot! First, we should take a ship towards the east continent.”**

**“Y-Yes!”**

「それじゃこれからの的を絞るのはセレブなんだね！」

「恐らく、その方が良いかと。その筋の方に、赤髪の執事を知らないかとお聞きすれば分かるかもしれません」

「よし！ 善は急げだよ！ まずは船に乗って東の大陸に行くよ！」

「は、はい！」

**Having found a guide, the two were pleased.**

二人は道標を見つけた喜びではしゃいでいた。

**“Are? Everyone, what are you doing gathering in such place?”**

「あれ？ 皆さん、そんなところに集まって何をしていますか？」

Several days had passed without any happening after they subjugated the bandits, and when Souji, who indifferently handled the everyday work, went to the kitchen because he had not eaten lunch yet, he saw the maids surrounding Ninthe as they sit on the chairs of the kitchen's table.

賊を討伐してから数日が何事も無く過ぎ、日々の淡々とした仕事をこなしていたソージは、昼過ぎ、まだ昼食を食べていなかったのも何か腹に入れようと厨房に足を踏み入れた時、厨房のテーブルにメイドたちが椅子に腰かけているニンテを囲んでいた。

**“Ah, isn't it Souji~.”**

「あ、ソージじゃな〜い」

There's also his mother, Kaina. As he looked at them, there was a book in front of Ninthe, and she stared at the book with "Mumumu," feeling.

そこにはソージの母親であるカイナもいた。見てみると、ニンテの眼前には一冊の本が置かれてあり、ニンテは「むむむ」といった感じで本を凝視している。

Note : Mmm or mumumu is the sfx that leaked when someone thinking.

"Actually, this time Ninthe say she want to know more about the world."

"Hee."

"Because now is time for break, everyone are teaching Ninthe various things~."

"I see. So it's a study. That's a good mental attitude."

"Right~, Ninthe is ignorant of the world situation because she lived in the orphanage for along time, so it is a good opportunity for that!"

「実はね、ニンテったら今頃になってもっと世の中のこと知りたいですって言い出してね」

「へえ」

「そんでちょうど休憩だから、みんなしてニンテにいろいろ教えてあげてるのよ〜」

「なるほど。勉強ですか。それは良い心がけですね」

「そうね〜、ニンテはずっと孤児院で暮らしてて世界情勢とかに疎かったし、良い機会かもね！」

Just as Kaina had said, it was definitely a good thing to have the knowledge. However, what concerned him was why Ninthe suddenly said that....

カイナの言う通り、知識は無いよりあった方が断然良い。しかし気になるのはニンテが何故急にそのようなことを言い出したのかだが.....。

"If anything, isn't it because that girl followed you subjugating the bandits before?"

"Ee."

"At that time, it seemed she noticed that the world is wide. She said she wouldn't be able to help Yoyo-sama and Souji-sama if this keep up as she came to me with teary eyes."

"Such thing huh."

「何でもね、あの子ったら、この前ソージたちに賊討伐についていったじゃない？」

「ええ」

「その時にね、世界は広くなって気が付いたらしいのよ。このままじゃヨヨ様やソージ様のお役に立てませんって言ってね、私に泣きついてきたってわけ」

「そんなことが」

Souji looked at Ninthe who desperately studying while her mouth sharpened.

口を尖らせながら必死に勉強しているニンテを見つめるソージ。

"Ninthe so pure and cute! Rather, Souji? To make a girl think of such thing, *kono kono*, since when did you have such technique!"

「ホント純粹で可愛いんだからニンテは！ それにしてもソージ？ 女の子にそんなことを思わせるなんて、このこの、いつからそんな技術身に着けたのよ！」

note : kono kono is the sound she raised when Kaina hit Souji.

**Gashi gashi**, she thrust her elbow to his flank.

ガシガシと肘で脇腹を突いてくる。

“M-Mother that hurt. Moreover, there’s no technique or whatever, I am only act according to what Ojou-sama said.”

“Fuun, that Yoyo-sama also went to Souji if anything happen. Something like, it’ll be okay if she leaves it to Souji. Or, she will listen to Souji’s opinion. Or, always thinking of Souji. What do you think? Isn’t that a happy thing for a man~?”

「い、痛いですよ母さん。それに技術も何も、オレはただお嬢様の言う通りに行動しただけですから」

「ふうん、そのヨヨ様も何かあればソージは？ とか、ソージに任せれば大丈夫よ。とかソージに意見を聞いてみるわ。とか、いつもいつもソージのこと。どうなの？ 男としてはやっぱり嬉しいんじゃないの~？」

He lightly flicked Kaina’s forehead as she drawn her face near while grinning.

ニヤニヤ顔で顔を寄せてくるカイナの額に軽くデコピンとする。

“Auh! U~ honestly, what are you doing~.”

“I am sorry, I just feel somewhat annoyed.”

“... .. I won’t apologize about that. What you’ve done is also unreasonable after all.”

“Rather than that, the alcohol I created and preserved has decreased, does mother know what...”

“Aa~h! Sorry~, I remember to have some business to do! Ahaha, bye~!”

「あうっ！ う~もう何するのよ~」

「すみません、何かムカつきました」

「.....それ謝ってないからね。とつても理不尽だからね」

「それより母さん、この間オレが作って保存しておいた酒が減っているんですが何か.....」

「ああ~っ！ ごつめ~ん、ちょっと用事思い出しちゃった！ アハハ、じゃ~ね~！」

His mother who disappeared in panic obviously hiding something.

明らかに何かを誤魔化すように慌てて消え去っていく母。

(... .. let reduce her salary for it.)

(.....今度減給しておこう)

Souji decided that.

そう心に決めたソージだった。

He immediately looked at Ninthe and she was writing a letter on paper. Souji silently approached her, and

ふとニンテを見ると、紙に筆で文字を書いていた。ソージは静かに彼女に近づくと、

“Ninthe, this letter is wrong, you know?”

“He? Ah, that’s true... .. eh, Souji-sama!”

「ニンテ、その文字、間違ってますよ？」

「へ？ あ、ほんとだぁ.....ってソージ様！？」

The other maids also noticed him as they straightened their postures.

他のメイドたちも気づいたようで姿勢を正している。

“It isn’t good if the letter not correctly written.”

“Ah, yes!”

「文字は正しく書き取らないと駄目ですよ」

「あ、はいです！」

Seeing the girl answered cheerfully, suddenly he got a flashback. That person was also a really cheerful girl. Following that, her smile suited her.

元気よく返事をする彼女を見ていると、ふと脳内にある人物がフラッシュバックする。その人物も、ハキハキして元気の良い少女だった。そして笑顔がとてもよく似合う。

(I wonder why I thought of this at such time~. If I think it normally, it has been 17 years since I died... .. she might have been married to someone, and built a peaceful family.)

(今頃何しているんだろうな~。普通に考えて、オレが死んでから十七年ほどか.....もしかしたらもう誰かと結婚でもして、平和な家庭を築いているかもしれないなあ)

He looked slightly towards the distance as he recalled Amagawa Mayuki, his childhood friend from previous life in nostalgia. Also, about her too plentiful breasts....

少し遠い目をして、懐かしき前世では幼馴染であった天川真雪のことを思い出す。そして同時に彼女の豊か過ぎる胸も.....。

(... .. for them to become someone else’s.... For now, I’ll pray for a harsh divine punishment to fall upon that man.)

(.....アレが誰かのものになったとは.....。とりあえずその男には何かドギツイ天罰でもくらうことを祈っておこう)

Then he noticed Ninthe had looked up to him since a while ago.

すると先程からニンテがこちらを見上げているのに気づく。

“Did something happen?”

“No, that’s, about Souji-sama, why Souji-sama can do anything?”

「どうかされましたか？」

「いえ、あのですねソージ様、ソージ様はどうしてそんなになんでもできるんです？」

It was a really pure question. Different from that mother who full of impurity... .. no, usually she wasn’t that impure, but recently she made him seriously thought her mother was annoying.

それは本当に純粋な質問だった。あの濁り切った母親とは違い.....いや、別に濁ってはいないのだが、最近の母親は少々めんどくさいと本気で思っていた。

“Well, it is the result of my effort.”

“Then, can Ninthe become just like Souji-sama if she also work hard?”

“That is not something I know.”

“... .. I, see.”

「まあ、努力の賜(たまもの)ですね」

「じゃあニンテもいっぱいがんばればソージ様みたいになれるんです？」

「それは分かりません」

「.....そっかあ」

Hearing Souji’s words, Ninthe’s shoulders drooped as she thought it was regrettable.

ソージの言葉に残念とばかり肩を落とすニンテ。

“However, the effort certainly will help the person’s growth.”

“... ..”

“Even I can’t do anything at first. As Ojou-sama’s butler, I tried to not shame her.”

“Hee, so that happened.”

“Therefore, I think it’s okay for Ninthe to only do what you can. Following that, find something you want to do.”

“Something I want to... .. do?”

“Ee, a dream or something along that line.”

“... .. Does Souji-sama have a dream?”

“Of course.”

“What is it!?”

「ですが、努力は必ず人を成長させます」

「.....」

「オレだって、最初から何でもできたわけじゃありません。お嬢様の執事として、恥ずかしくないように努めてきました」

「へえ、そうだったんですね」

「ですから、ニンテも自分にできることをすれば良いと思います。そして、やりたいことを見つけます」

「やりたいこと.....ですか？」

「ええ、夢、ともいいますね」

「.....ソージ様はユメがあるんです？」

「もちろんです」

「それはなんです！」

Her eyes were sparkling.

キラキラした目を向けてきた。

“Nn~ that’s a secret.”

“Ee~h!”

「ん～それは秘密ということで」

「ええ～っ！」

Not only Ninthe, the other maids there also seemed to be dissatisfied.

ニンテだけではなく、その場にいたメイドたちも全員不満そうだった。

“Ahaha, I’ll say it sooner or later.”

「あはは、いずれお話ししますよ」

Souji waved his hand and went out of the kitchen. As he going out, he instinctively smiled when he heard Ninthe said, “Yo~sh! I will work hard~!”

ソージは手を振ると、厨房から出て行った。出て行く最中、「よ～し！ 頑張るぞ～！」というニンテの声を聞いて思わず頬が緩んだ。

Guuuuuuuuuu....

ぐううううううう.....

Souji had forgotten why did he go to the kitchen.

何のために厨房に向かったのか忘れていたソージだった。

## Story 12 Pirate Assault

### 第十二話 海賊強襲

The big sailing ship was swaying, Mayuki, who staring at the horizon as she exposed her body to the comfortable sea breeze, was called from behind.

大きな帆船に揺られ、気持ちの良い海風に身を晒して水平線をジッと見つめていた天川真雪は、背後から声をかけられた。

“Mayuki-san, you look happy.”

「真雪さん、嬉しそうですね」

It was Hoshimori Sheila who accompanied her travel. Her transparent-like blue eyes were looking at Mayuki.

それはともに旅をしている星守セイラだ。彼女の透き通るような碧眼が真雪を見つめている。

“Un, after all we found the clue even if it’s only a small one!”

“That’s right. But, is that red-haired person really.... .... Asakura-san?”

“U~n, I ... .. don’t know. But, I want to confirm it because it make me anxious.”

“Fufu, that’s just like Mayuki-san.”

“Right! Ahaha! Ah, but not that many people board this ship.”

“It is so, I wonder why?”

「うん、だって少しだけでも手掛かりが見つかったんだもん！」

「そうですね。でも、本当にその赤髪の方がその.....朝倉さんなののでしょうか？」

「う~ん、分からない.....よね。だけど気になったらやっぱり確認したくなるよね」

「ふふ、真雪さんらしいです」

「でしょ！ あはは！ あ、でもこの船ってあまり人乗ってないよね」

「ですね、どうしてでしょうか？」

As they were conversing, a muscular man who seemed to be a sailor speak to them, maybe because he heard their conversation.

そんな会話をしていると、船乗りらしきガタイの良い男が話を聞いていたのか声を挟んできた。

“Oi misses, do you not know?”

“Eh? Wh-What do you mean?”

“We are going towards 《Anjax Region》, right?”

“Yes.”

“Normally, we follow the sea route from 【Moltes Sea】 into 【Jibrach Sea】 , but....”

“Is there a problem?”

「おい嬢ちゃんたち、知らないのかい？」

「え？ し、知らないって？」

「今から向かうのって東大陸の《アンジャクス地方》だろ？」

「はい」

「本来なら【モルテス海】から入って【ジブラーチ海】に向かうつつう航路を辿るんだけどよ」

「何か問題でもあるんですか？」

The sailor shrugged his shoulders with *yareyare*-like feeling, then

船乗りはやれやれといった感じで肩を竦めると、

“It is the period of high tide there, so there are lot of eddying currents generated. That’s why this ship currently moved towards **【Rose Blood Sea】** .”

“Certainly that’s....”

“Aa, the so called 《Red Sea》 .”

「今ここは大潮の時期で、渦潮も大量に発生すんだよ。だから今この船が向かってんのは**【ローズブラッド海】**なんだよ」

「そこって確か.....」

「ああ、俗に言う《赤海(あかうみ)》だ」

It was 《Red Sea》 because the sea color was deep red just like how it’s written. Moreover, there were ferocious animals in the **【Rose Blood Sea】** , it was a highly dangerous sea. From the sailor, the sea seemed to be avoided by everyone.

《赤海》というのは、読んで字の如く海の色が真っ赤なのである。しかも**【ローズブラッド海】**には凶暴な生物もいて、危険度の高い海である。船乗りなら誰もが避ける道のりらしい。

“Truthfully, I wanted to choose the route after the high tide calmed down, but there is a reason I can’t do that.”

“Is that so?”

“Aa, this ship currently carrying a certain thing that will be presented to the Emperor.”

“A certain thing?”

“Even I don’t know what that is. Anyway, the client seemed to told us to immediately deliver that to **【Gincent Port】** in 《Anjax Region》 , and it’s decided we will sail through even though it was unreasonable. Rather, how can misses boarded this ship without even knowing that. Even the other clients canceled their boarding.”

「ホントはよ、大潮が治まるのを待って順路を選ぶんだが、そういうわけにもいかねえ理由があんだよ」

「そうなんですか？」

「ああ、今この船にゃ、皇帝様に献上するある物が積まれててな」

「ある物って？」

「そりゃ俺も知らねえよ。とにかく先方さんが、一刻も早く《アンジャクス地方》にある**【ジンセント港】**まで届けてもらいてえって話らしくてよ、無理を押しこめてこうして航行することを決めたってわけだ。つうか嬢ちゃんたち、よく知らずにこの船に乗ったな。他の客なんて、軒並みキャンセルしたってのに」

Apparently, they have taken a ridiculous ship. The two, for the sake of immediately getting out of the continent, were hurriedly boarded the nearest ship.

There'd be a movement from 【Rashtia Kingdom】 if they stayed too long, and there's the possibility they were found out. That's why when they heard there was a ship headed towards east continent, their destination, they moved without investigating more about it.

どうやらとんでもない船に乗ってしまったようだ。二人は一刻も早く大陸から出たかったため、出向間近な船に大急ぎで乗ったのだ。

あまり長居していたら【ラスティア王国】から動きがあり、見つかってしまう可能性がある。だからこそ目的地である東大陸へ向かうという船があると聞いて、碌に調べもせずに身を任せてしまったのだ。

“Well, let just pray it will be over without any happening.”

「まあ、何事もなく終わることを祈っててくれな」

With that said, the sailor left with a laugh. The two remained there for a while, then Mayuki floated a forced smile.

それだけ言うと船乗りの男は笑いながら去って行った。しばらく二人は固まったままだったが、真雪は空笑いを浮かべながら、

“... .. was it a failure?”

“Eu... .. we moved too much because we wanted to leave immediately.”

“Nn~ but it isn't decided that something will happen, even though we aren't the sailors, let's pray the voyage ended safely without any happening!”

“That's right. However, I am still anxious, just what on earth this ship bring?”

“Un, that certainly worrying. I wonder what that might be.”

“Now that you said that, there's a restricted area in the cabin, they are likely to be kept it there or so I think.”

“Aa, there is such thing. I have wondered why there was that area inside a ship, it's probably just as Sheila said.”

「.....失敗した？」

「えう.....少し早急に動き過ぎましたね」

「ん~でも何か起こるって決まったわけじゃないし、船乗りさんじゃないけど何事もなく無事に航海が終わることを祈ってようよ！」

「そうですね。でも気になりますね、一体この船には何が積まれているのでしょうか？」

「うん、確かにそれ気になる。何なんだろうね」

「そう言えば、船室に立ち入り禁止区域がありましたけど、今思えばあそこに保管されているのでしょうかね」

「ああ、あったねそんなの。船ってそういうものかなとか思っていたんだけど、もしかしたらセイラの言う通りかも」

As the two conversed, they discovered a sea which dyed in deep red far in front of them.

そうやって二人が会話をしていると、まだ遙か前方だが、うっすらと海が赤く染まっている個所を発見した。

“That’s the 《Red Sea》 huh.”

“It is really red.”

「あそこが《赤海》だね」

「本当に赤いのですね」

The two who saw a red-colored sea for the first time were somewhat moved as their cheeks flushed. However, on the scene in front of them which should only be a flat water, a small shadow could be seen.

Following that, the sailors suddenly began to rush around. There were also some whose face turned pale among them.

二人は初めて見る赤い海に若干感動を覚えているのか頬を上気させている。だが水平線だけだったはずの目の前の光景に、小さな影が見えた。

すると突如として船乗りの男たちが慌ただしく動き始めた。中には顔を青ざめさせている者もいるようだ。

“What happened?”

「どうかされたのでしょうか？」

Sheila inclined her neck as she saw the spectacle. Mayuki also watched in blank surprise. They asked the sailor from a while ago when he passed in front of them.

セイラはその光景を見て首を傾げる。真雪もまた呆然として見つめている。目の前を通った先程の船乗りに何があったのか聞いて見ると、

“It’s pirate ship!”

「海賊船だよっ！」

The sailor whose expression carried frustration only said that and left immediately. Mayuki and Sheila looked at each other and raised their voices at the same time.

焦燥感を宿した表情でそれだけ言うと船乗りは去って行った。真雪とセイラは顔を見合わせると、声を揃えて言う。

“... .. pirate ship?”  
「「.....海賊船？」」

The ship Mayuki boarded hurriedly changed its course on the spot towards the way they come from. However, because the enemy's ship was faster, it gradually caught up.

急遽航路を変更してその場から真雪たちの乗った船は来た道を引き返して行く。しかし相手の船の方が速いようで、段々と追いつかれていく。

Mayuki and Sheila only had the knowledge of pirate ship from mangas and movies. They thought there'd be a skull drawn on the sail, but unfortunately there wasn't. Drawn on the sail which supported by the main mast was a bird whose foot gripping an apple-like golden object.

真雪とセイラも海賊船という造形は漫画や映画などで知識としてはある。本当に帆にはドクロが書かれているのかと二人は思ったが、残念ながらそうではなく、メインマストに支えられている帆には、リンゴのような金色の物体を足で掴んでいる鳥が描かれてある。

Boarding that ship were many rough looking people. Following that, the sailors began to leak some words.

Inside those mutters, there was something which looked like the name of the pirate.

その船には荒くれっぽい様相の者たちが大勢乗っている。そして口々に船乗りが言葉を漏らし始めた。

その中の呟きに、海賊の名前が判明するものがあった。

————— 《Eagle of Dawn》 .

————— 《暁(あかつき)の鷲(わし)》。

The pirate name was 《Eagle of Dawn》 . They finally know that the bird which drawn on the sail seemed to be an eagle.

The pirate ship caught up in no time, and the pirates who stationed on the port jumped one after another.

海賊の名前は《暁の鷲》。あの帆に描かれている鳥はどうやら鷲だということが理解できた。

瞬く間に海賊に追いつかれた船は、真横に陣取られ次々と海賊たちが乗り込んできた。

“Mayuki-san!”

“Un, it is necessary to punish these rude men!”

「真雪さん！」

「うん、ああいう乱暴さんにはちょっとお仕置きが必要だね！」

Mayuki said that and Sheila nodded strongly. These girl were here in 【Orb】 because of the summoning, and they didn't panicked because they had experienced such rudeness.

However, when Mayuki started to move,

真雪が言うとセイラも力強く頷く。彼女たちもここ【オーブ】に召喚されて、こういう荒場も経験しているのでそれほど慌てていない。

だが真雪が動こうとした時、

“Don't move!”

「動くなっ！」

A roar rang out from the pirate's ship. When they looked at it, there was a girl just like Mayuki and Sheila with bandana coiled around her head while he stood cross armed in dignity. Her orange-colored hair were simply tied behind her. Without any traces of make-up, her appearance and aspect seemed lively, with her slender body and small face, her figure was just like a model. Then if one looked more thoroughly, a long tail was appearing and disappearing behind her hip.

海賊の船からよく響く声が轟く。見ると頭にバンダナを巻いた真雪たちとそう変わらない少女が腕を組んで仁王立ちしていた。

オレンジ色の髪の毛を後ろで無造作に縛っている。化粧っ気もまったく感じられない活発そうなその表情と様相だが、スラッとした体躯と小顔を持ち、モデルのような体形だ。そして極めつけは彼女のお尻から見え隠れしている長い尻尾だ。

For a moment, Mayuki thought, *Why does such a young girl is there?*, but she remembered it was not something unusual for this world.

There was an extreme gap between the rich and the poor in this world, so the poor couldn't choose the mean on how to live. That's why children become thieves and attacked the rich and men of power.

真雪は一瞬、何故あんな若い女の子が？ とも思ったが、この世界では別段珍しい光景ではなかったことを思い出す。

この世界は貧富の差が激しく、貧しい者は生きるために手段を選ばないのだ。それこそ子供が賊として金持ちや権力者を襲うことも多々ある。

“Listen, from now on I am controlling this ship! I am captain of 《Eagle of Dawn》, Yura! Don't pull your swords! I promise to spare your lives if you just stay quiet!”

「いいか、この船は今からアタシの支配に置く！ アタシは《暁の鷲》の船長ユーラだ！ 刃向うなよ！ 大人しくしていれば命はとらないと約束しよう！」

Mayuki never thought that the girl was the pirate's captain. Sarah who thought the same as her became agape.

まさか彼女が海賊の船長だとは真雪も思わなかった。セイラも同様のようで啞然と固まってしまっている。

“My reason to come here is to get that thing which loaded on this ship!”

「アタシらがここに来た理由、それはこの船の積み荷を頂くためだ！」

Following that, the door of the cabin where Mayuki and Sheila stayed was opened. Two men appeared from there.

すると真雪たちの乗っている船室に続く扉が開いた。そこからは二人の男性が現れ、

“That's interesting. Then, are you going to defeat us? Even though you're just pirates?”

「それは面白い。なら我らを打ち倒せると？ たかが海賊風情が？」

A great pressure gushed out from the men. However, Yura was smiling.

物凄い威圧感が男たちから放たれている。しかしユーラはニヤッと笑う。

“So you're the guard huh.”

「お前らが積み荷の守護者ってわけか」

The two men were also floated light smiles. One of them was a swordsman whose huge build and atmosphere gave off an image of a strong man, while the other one was wrapped in robe, his outward appearance was just like a mage.

二人の男たちも軽い笑みを浮かべている。一人は体型も大きく、歴戦の強者のようなイメージを持たせるような雰囲気を持つ剣士、そしてもう一人はローブに身を包み、見た目は魔法士のような格好をしている。

“《Eagle of Dawn》, even though I have heard of it, but I know how dirty for a woman, moreover a brat like this to become the head.”

「《暁の鷲》、聞いたことがあるが、女で、しかもガキが頭をしているようじゃタカが知れている」

Because of the man objection, one of the pirates said, “What did you say!,” as he tried to cut him with the sword in his hand. However, the swordsman moved slightly, then his fist reached the man which made him thrown into the floor.

男の物言いに、傍にいた海賊の一人が「何だっ！」と言いながら手に持った剣で斬りかかっていく。しかし剣士の男は身を引きあっさりかわすと、拳を男の顔に落とし床に叩きつけた。

“That guy is strong.”

「強いですね、あの方」

Sheila whispered to Mayuki.

セイラが真雪に耳打ちしてくる。

“Un, it seems we won’t get our turn.”

「うん、どうやら私たちの出番はなさそうだね」

As the two feel relieved, they heard a laughter from the pirate’s ship.

二人が安堵していると、海賊の船から笑い声が聞こえる。

“A~h hahahahaha! Just~ what are you doing!”

“That’s right, that’s right! You are a member of the 《Eagle of Dawn》!”

「アーッハハハハ！ な～にやってんだおめえは！」

「そうだそうだ！ それでも誇りある《暁の鷲》の一員かい！」

Two men appeared beside Yura. The two's bodies looked sturdy. Scars could be seen in some places.

ユーラの隣に二人の男が姿を現す。どちらも屈強そうな身体をしている。ところどころに消えない傷も見えている。

“Head~, let me and Gazee take care of them.”

“Yup yup, head just need to take that thing.”

“... .. I leave it to you.”

「頭ぁ、ここは俺とガジが相手すっからよ」

「そうそう、頭は例の物を奪ってきてくんさい」

「.....任せた」

Yura made a big jump from her spot, boarded the ship, and walked towards the cabin as is.

ユーラは大きくその場から飛び上がると、船に乗り込み、そのまま船室に向けて歩き出す。

“Oi lass, who said you can go?”

「おい小娘、誰が行かせるって言った？」

The swordsman turned his hostility towards Yura and pulled out his sword, then

剣士の男は敵意をユーラに向けて剣を抜くと、

“We are your opponent.”

「俺らが、だぜ」

From behind the swordsman and the mage, pirates appeared respectively. The swordsman and the mage clicked their tongues because they couldn't just ignore the pirates. As is, Yura disappeared into the cabin.

その剣士の背後と、魔法士の背後にそれぞれ海賊たちが現れる。剣士たちは舌打ちをしながら海賊に対応せざるを得ない。そしてそのままユーラは船室へと消えていく。

Mayuki and Sheila thought of it as a strange situation, but they just watched quietly. At that time, the fight between the men in front of them became even more severe.

Apparently they were almost equal, the offense and defense were repeated between them. The swordsman's enemy also pulled a sword as they clashed for many times.

Following that, the mage used water magic to attack the pirate while his opponent continued to move splendidly and lightly.

妙な状況になったと真雪とセイラは思い、ただ静かに見守っている。その間にも、目の前では男たちの戦いは苛烈になっていく。

どうやらほとんど互角のようで、互いに譲らない攻防を繰り返している。剣士の相手も剣を抜き何度も鏢迫り合いを行っている。

そして魔法士の方も、彼は水を扱う魔法を行使して海賊を攻撃しているが相手の動きが見事で軽やかにかわし続ける。

**“Filthy pirate! You don’t know anything!”**

「たかが海賊が！ 何も分かってねえな！」

**The swordsman smiled as he clashed against the pirate.**

剣士が海賊と鏢迫り合いをしながらニヤッと笑う。

**“Aa? The hell are ya sayin?”**

**“Did you think we are the only who protected that?”**

**“... .. what?”**

「ああ？ 何言ってるんだおめえ？」

「アレを守ってるのは俺らだけだと思ってんのか？」

「.....何だと？」

**The pirate’s eyebrows moved in realization. The swordsman swing his swords and the man was blown away. The man clicked his tongue as he braced himself so that he wouldn’t collapse.**

海賊の男が眉をピクリと動かす。剣士は剣を振り抜き、男を吹き飛ばす。男も舌打ちをしながら態勢が崩れないように踏ん張る。

**“It is decided that thing will be fully protected. By the strongest between us that is.”**

「ちゃんとアレのお守りはつけているに決まってるだろ。俺らの中で最強がな」

**The pirate turned silent as he heard the swordsman’s words. Mayuki thought something unexpected for the pirates began to occur, and that certainly was the thing reflected by her eyes. Hearing the swordsman’s words, a faint smile floated on the pirate’s face....**

剣士の言葉を黙って聞いている海賊。どうやら海賊にとって予想外な事態が起き始めているようだと思っただが、真雪の目に確かに映った。剣士の言葉を聞いて、微かに微笑を浮かべる海賊の顔が.....。

### **Story 13 Mechanical Doll**

#### **第十三話 自動人形**

Note : Changed Yura to Eula, will edit the other chapter if I have the mood. Also mechanical doll or machine doll or automaton, they are interchangeable

Eula who moved alone towards the cabin went down the stairs and keep advancing inside. Then, she found a passage with “off-limit” written on it. As is, Eula ignored and crossed it, then she stopped before a room.

船室へと一人で向かったユーラは、階段を降りて奥へと突き進む。すると立ち入り禁止と書かれた通路があった。ユーラはそのまま気にせず突っ切って行くと、一つの部屋の前で足を止める。

“... ... I see, even pirates have fallen.”

「.....なるほど、海賊も地に墜ちたな」

The man who was sitting in front of the room stood up when he saw Eula. Deep engraved features and his sharp eyes transmitted an assassin-like atmosphere. However, even with such peculiar aura, one could understand the man was a swordsman from what he held.

部屋の前に座っていた男がユーラを見て立ち上がる。顔立ちは彫が深く、目つきも鋭いのでどこぞの暗殺者のような雰囲気を伝わらせる。しかしその独特なオーラからでも男が腕に覚えのある剣客だということが理解できる。

“Surely, for a little girl like you to be the head... ... are you that shorthanded?”

“... ... I'll just say one thing. Move away if you don't want to die.”

“How ridiculous.”

「まさか、お前のような小娘が頭とは.....人手不足なのかな？」

「.....一応言っておく。死にたくなきゃ、そこをどきな」

「笑止」

The man smiled fearlessly, he pulled his swords and rushed towards Eula.

男は不敵に笑うと、剣を抜きユーラ目掛けて突進した。

Everyone on the deck were dumbfounded as the pirates started to laugh all of a sudden.

甲板では突然笑い出した海賊たちに啞然とする光景が広がっていた。

“Is something funny, pirate? Or are you finally gone mad?”

“Kuhaha, no no sorry sorry, it just that your words just now were off the mark, just a little of it.”

“Aa?”

「何がおかしい海賊？　とうとうおかしくなったか？」

「クハハ、いやいやスマンスマン、ただちよつと的外れなこと言われたもんだからちよいと  
な」

「ああ？」

The pirate wiped the tears that came out from laughing, and grinning.

海賊の男は笑って出て来た涙を拭くと、ニヤッと笑みを溢す。

“You guys didn’t know a~nything.”

“... .. what did you say?”

“That child... .. captain is certainly young, furthermore a woman, but....”

「おめえらはな～んも分かっちゃいねえよ」

「.....何を言ってる？」

「あの子は.....船長は確かに若え。それに女だ。けどよ.....」

At that time, something broken through the deck from below and flew up into the sky. The swordsman and mage’s faces were hardened by the sudden event. Then, they turned aghast when they confirmed the thing that had flew out.

It was obviously a human, with the white of its eyes displayed, blood scattered around from its mouth. *DOGON*, that human fell into the deck and completely unmoving. It looks like something hit its jaw because its jaw was swelling and completely red.

その時、甲板を突き破って下から何かが上空へと舞い上がった。突然のことで剣士と魔法士の表情が固まる。そして更に、その飛び出した物体の正体を見極めて愕然としている。

明らかに人間であり、その表情は白目を剥いて口から血を撒き散らしていた。ドゴンとその人間は甲板に落ちて、グッタリとしていた。顎を打ち抜かれたのか、だらしなく開かれた顎が真っ赤に腫れている。

“Have you understood now? Our captain, she introduced herself as the captain because she is the strongest.”

「分かったか？ うちの船長は、最強だから船長を名乗ってんだよ」

Hearing the pirate's words, the swordsman and the mage turned pale. They never thought this person could be defeated. They were obviously perplexed.

海賊の言葉を聞き、剣士たちは顔を青ざめさせていた。まさかその人物が倒されるとは微塵も思っていなかったのだろう。明らかに困惑している。

“Well then, isn't it about the time for us to be serious?”

「そしてだ、そろそろ俺らも本気出すぜ？」

The pirates' atmosphere changed completely, and their eyes shone mysteriously.

海賊たちの雰囲気が一変し、目が怪しく光った。

At that time, Eula who have blown away the guard entered the room, and she discovered something which looked like a coffin.

その頃、門番のように部屋を守っていた男を吹き飛ばしたユーラは部屋に入り、棺桶のようなものを発見した。

“This is... .. I see.”

「これが.....そうか」

She approached it slowly, staring at it as if to observe it. It was a black coffin, and there was something that looked like a crest at the lid. Golden and silver lines were intertwining, drawing a circle, and a cross was drawn inside.

ゆっくり近づき、観察するように眺める。黒を基調とした棺桶であり、蓋の部分には紋章のようなものが施されてある。金と銀の線が絡み合いながら円を描き、その中に十字架が描かれてある。

“This is certainly 【Holy Kingdom Lavahha】’s crest.”

「これは確か【ラヴァッハ聖国(せいこく)】の紋章だな」

She spoke the information obtained from the crest, then she used her finger to trace the crest. The coffin seemed to have double door-like lid, and there were two knobs at the center. Moved by curiosity, Eula gripped the knobs and opened the lid. What appeared from inside was a person-like object that wrapped in bandages. Moreover it wrapped all over its body except the eyes, and it was ominous because it looked like a completely bandaged man.

紋章から得られた情報を口にしながら、その紋章を指でなぞる。その棺桶は両開きのようになっっていて、取っ手が二つ中央に備わっている。

好奇心に突き動かされ、ユーラは取っ手を握り開いていく。中から出てきたのは、身体を包帯で巻いた人型の物体だった。しかも目元以外、全て包帯人間と化しているのが不気味である。

note : Want to type it as mummy but it wasn't what the words translated to.

Eula observed the bandaged man's face and her hand reached the bandage that wrapped its face, then when she touched it, *kah*, its eyes suddenly opened.

ユーラはその包帯人間の顔を確認しようと、顔に巻かれている包帯に手を伸ばし、そして触れた瞬間、突然カッと相手の目が開く。

Eula jumped back by reflex, took some distance and watched it. The bandaged man roused its upper body slowly and mechanically, then it simply pulled and teared the bandage.

When Eula saw the bandaged man's true appearance, she muttered.

反射的にユーラは背後へと飛び、距離を取り警戒する。包帯人間はゆっくりと、しかも機械的に上半身を起こし、包帯を無造作に引き千切り出した。

そして露わになった包帯人間の身体を見てユーラは呟く。

“It really was a mechanical doll (automata) huh.”

「やっぱ、自動人形(オートマタ)だったか」

Its body didn't have skin just like human, it was made by piling up many blackish machine frames. At the part where human's heart was, a fist-sized red ball was buried, and *dokundokun*, it pulsed.

相手の身体は人間の肌のようなそれではなく、黒々とした機械骨が何本も積み重なってできた造りをしていた。そしてちょうど人間なら心臓がある部分には、拳大ほどの赤い玉が埋め込まれており、ドクンドクンと脈打っていた。

The doll that woken up turned its gaze towards Eula, and

起き上がった人形がユーラに視線を向けると、

『VISUALLY CONFIRMED THE TARGET. PROCEED TO ANNIHILATE.』

『ターゲット視認。殲滅に移ります』

It spoke with constant high pitched voice without any trace of emotion.

At the moment the doll's eyes shone, it held up its hand aiming at Eula.

感情が一切感じられない一定の高音が紡ぎ出される。まるで機械音だ。

人形の目が光った瞬間、ユーラに向けて手をかざす。

“... .. kh!? This is bad!”

「.....っ！？ まずいっ！」

Eula immediately bend her body when she sensed that. Then, a laser-like thing fired from the doll's palm, opening a clean hole in the wall behind where Eula's head previously was.

However, its attack hasn't ended yet, and that hand once again aiming at Eula.

Eula crouched, kicked the floor and shorten her distance to gripped the doll's arms, then she kicked the doll's jaw from below.

咄嗟にそう感じたユーラは身を屈める。すると人形の手の手平からレーザーのようなものが放たれ、先程ユーラの頭があった背後の壁に綺麗な穴が開く。

だが相手の攻撃はまだ終わっておらず、その手をユーラの方に再び向けてくる。

ユーラは屈んだ瞬間、床を蹴り即座に間を詰めて人形の両腕を掴み、下から上へと人形の顎を蹴り上げる。

**BAKlih!**

バキィッ！

With both arms pulled and teared as is, the doll broken through the deck and flew to the sky just like a man from a while ago.

そのまま両腕は引き千切られ、先程吹き飛ばした男のように甲板を突き破って上空へと飛んだ。

Mayuki was hesitating about what to do. The pirates' movement suddenly sharpened when their atmosphere changed, the swordsman and mage were quickly defeated.

It looked like the pirates were taking it easy before. Their strength was undoubtedly first-class.

真雪はどうすればいいか迷っていた。突然雰囲気を変えた海賊たちの動きが鋭くなり、剣士と魔法士はあっという間に倒されてしまったのだ。

海賊たちは先程まで手加減をしていたということ。そしてその強さは、紛れもなく一級品だった。

After the swordsman and mage was defeated, the one left who could stop them were Mayuki and Sheila.

It was just like they planned, they thought to somehow protected the ship by themselves, then something once again appeared and broken through the floor when they started to move.

だが剣士と魔法士がやられた以上、彼らを止められる者は、もう真雪とセイラしかいなくなってしまった。

やはり当初の予定通り、自分たちが何とか船を守ろうと思い、動こうとした時、またも床を突き破り何かが現れた。

(Eh!? Wh-What... .. a-a robot...?)

(えっ！？ な、なに.....ロ、ロボット.....?)

Seeing the strange object that flew into the sky, she was surprised because it appeared just like a robot. Moreover, both of its arms were torn, and above all the reason it was blown into the sky was still not known.

空に舞い上がった奇妙な物体を見て、それがロボットのような姿だったので驚く。しかも何故か両腕が引き千切られているし、何より上空へ吹き飛んでいる理由が一瞬分からなかった。

Even the pirates didn't expect that and they were dumbfounded just like Mayuki and the others.

Then, this time the girl who was called Eula appeared from below the opened hole.

海賊たちもさすがに予想していなかったのか今度は真雪たちと同じようにポカンとしている。

すると下に開いた穴から今度はユーラと呼ばれた少女が姿を現す。

“”””Headdd!””””

「 「 「 「頭あっ！」 」 」 」 」

The pirates shouted in unison. However, Eula said,

海賊たちが一様に叫ぶ。だがユーラは、

“Be careful! That thing is a mechanical doll (automata) as expected!”

「気をつけな！ アレはやっぱり自動人形(オートマタ)だった！」

The pirates's faces tightened due to Eula's words.

ユーラの言葉で海賊たちの顔が引き締まる。

(Auto... .. mata? It is a robot after all?)

(オート.....マタ？ やっぱりロボット？)

While Mayuki thought of that, she turned her gaze towards the mechanical doll (automata) that has fallen below. The automata tried to stand up while letting out *gishigishi*, mechanical sound, and its chin was damaged.

真雪はそう思い、下に落ちてきた自動人形(オートマタ)に視線を向ける。自動人形(オートマタ)はギシギシと音を鳴らしながら立ち上がろうとするが、よく見ると顎の部分も破損しているようだ。

It probably from receiving Eula's attack below the deck.

もしかしたら下でユーラに攻撃を受けたのかもしれない。

(But, is that the present for the Emperor?)

(でも、アレが皇帝様に献上する品?)

Frankly, it wasn't in a good shape even as flattery. Although Mayuki didn't understand the value of a mechanical doll (automata), she thought it'd be better to be more human-like. The piled up frames simply gave off an unpleasant atmosphere.

She didn't know the Emperor's preference, but Mayuki thought no one would be glad to get such misshapen doll.

ハッキリ言ってお世辞にも格好が良いとは言えない。自動人形(オートマタ)の価値が真雪には分からないが、もう少し人に似せられなかったのだろうかと思う。骨組だけで構成した簡易な雰囲気は否めない。

皇帝の嗜好は知らないが、不格好な人形をもらって嬉しいものなのだろうかと思っ  
ていると、

『..... FINAL..... SAFETY DEVICE..... LIFTED 』

『.....最終.....安全装置.....解除』

An inorganic voice could be heard from the doll. Following that the doll, *gakun*, kneeled and the pulsing of the red mass which buried on its chest gradually quicken.

Eula who see that let out an *Hah*, and

無機質な声が人形から聞こえてくる。そして人形がガクンと膝をつくと、胸に嵌まっている赤い塊の脈動する感覚が徐々に速くなる。

それを見たユーラはハッとなって、

“You guys! Quickly get away from here now!”

「お前らあっ！ 今すぐここから離れるぞお！」

Hearing Eula's alerting shout, the pirates return to the pirate ship in fluster.

ただ事でないユーラのその叫びを聞き、海賊たちは大慌てで海賊船へと戻って行く。

“Oi you guys also quickly jump into the sea! If not, you're going to be swallowed by the explosion!”

「おいお前らも今すぐ海に飛び込めっ！ さもないと爆発に巻き込まれるぞお！」

Hearing Eula's words, the sailors raised screams and jumped into the sea.

船乗りたちにユーラは言うと、彼らは悲鳴を上げながら海に飛び込んでいく。

“Headd! It is faster to throw that doll into the sea!”

“Fool! It will explode if you wrongly stimulate it! Anyway, quickly return to the ship!”

「頭あ！ その人形を海に投げ入れた方が早えんじゃ！」

「バカ言え！ 下手に刺激したらその瞬間ボカンだっのっ！ とにかく急いで船に戻れっ！」

Apparently, it was dangerous to move the doll. So it was wiser to thought of taking shelter in the sea.

どうやら人形を動かすことは危険なようだ。となると普通に考えると海に避難するのが賢明だ。

“Wh-What should we do, Mayuki-san! If Sheila and Mayuki-san also escape from here-!”

「ど、どうしましょう真雪さん！ セ、セイラたちもここから逃げた方が！」

Just as Sheila said, even though it depend on the scale of the explosion, they weren't likely to be able to sail with this ship.

セイラの言う通り、もし本当にアレが爆発するのなら規模にもよるが、もうこの船では航行できないかもしれない。

If that happen, they could do nothing but wait for rescue, and the nearest one was from the port Mayuki and the others sailed from. Even though they would be rescued, they'd just back to where they started. Then, it'd be necessary to disclose their identities, and that information would reached 【Rashtia Kingdom】. The possibility of them being brought back was very high.

そうなったら救助を待つしかないのだが、ここから近いのは真雪たちが出航した港。助けられたとしても、またとんぼ返りになってしまう。そして身分を明かすことになるだろうし、その報告は【ラスティア王国】にも行く。連れ戻される可能性が非常に高い。

Mayuki who thought so, acted which made Sheila surprised.

そう考えた真雪は、セイラが驚くような行動に出た。

“Wait!”

「待って！」

Mayuki gripped the hand of Eula who was about to return to her ship.

真雪は自分の船に戻ろうとしていたユーラの腕を掴んだのだ。

“... .. ha? What’s with you?”

「.....は？ 何だお前は？」

Eula of course looked at Mayuki with a expression filled with suspicion.

当然ユーラは怪訝な表情で真雪を見てくる。

“I beg you! Please let ut board that ship!”

“Eeh!? W-Wait a sec, Mayuki-san!”

「お願いします！ 私たちをその船に乗せて下さい！」

「ええっ！？ ちょ、ちょっと真雪さん！」

Sheila’s shout was justified. The ship that Mayuki and Sheila tried to board was the pirates’ ship that attacked them. It couldn’t be helped that she doubted her sanity for asking to board the pirates’ ship.

セイラの叫びも尤(もっと)もだ。相手は真雪たちが乗っていた船を襲った海賊なのだ。そんな相手の船に乗せてもらおうとするなど正気を疑っても仕方が無いだろう。

“Wa-, let me go! It is going to explode!”

“Don’t want to!”

“Haa!?”

“I have a place where I want to go! I don’t want to stop in such place!”

“I-I don’t know such a thing, rather my hand hurt!”

「ちょ、離せっ！ 爆発するだろうが！」

「嫌です！」

「はあ！？」

「私には行きたい場所があるんです！ こんなところで止まりたくない！」

「そ、そんなことアタシは知らないし、つうか腕が痛いっての！」

Mayuki didn’t let go of Eula’s hand as she obstinately gripped it. Eula was also perplexed because Mayuki suddenly said something she didn’t understand.

真雪は意地でも離さないとユーラの腕を掴んでいる。ユーラも、突然わけのわからないことを言う真雪に対し困惑している。

“Headd! Hurry!”

「頭あ！ 急いでえ！」

Eula's subordinate shouted,

ユーラの子分が叫び、

“Let me go, oi!”

“Then, please let us go with you!”

「離せこらっ！」

「じゃあ一緒に連れて行って下さい！」

Mayuki desperately appealed, and she didn't look away from Eula. Following that, Eula who was at her wit's end was comparing between the doll and Mayuki, then she tousled her head.

真雪は必死に嘆願し、彼女から目を逸らさない。そしてユーラはこの切羽詰まった状況で、人形と真雪を見比べると、頭をガシガシとかいて、

“Aah okay okay! Oi you guys, bring them in!”

“A-As you wish!”

「ああもう分かった！ おいお前ら、コイツらも入れてやれ！」

「わ、分かりやしたあっ！」

Mayuki floated a bright smile and,

真雪はパアッと明るく笑うと、

“Thank you very much!”

“U... .. s-stop that, we are going now!”

「ありがとうございます！」

「う.....れ、礼なんていいからさっさと行くぞ！」

Eula was blushing in embarrassment, *puih*, she looked away and returned to the ship.

ユーラは気恥ずかしそうに頬を染めると、プイッと顔を背けて船へと戻って行く。



Mayuki had already returned to her senses, and her face stiffened by what she had done. Sheila beside her cling to Mayuki while, “Eueu,” as she lamented.

Mayuki feel it was her fault that Sheila was rolled into this situation, and because it had turned to this she decided to tell Eula the purpose of their travel.

真雪も我に返って、自分がしてしまったことに顔を引き攣らせていた。隣にいるセイラは真雪にしがみつくような形で「えうえう」と嘆いている。

真雪はそんなセイラを巻き込んだのは自分のせいだと感じ、こうなった以上、ユーラに自分たちの旅の目的を教えることにした。

Eula’s party was certainly the pirates who attacked the ship, but about Eula, Mayuki thought she wasn’t a violent person. She didn’t know if the reason was because their age was similar, or it was just her intuition....

確かに彼女たちは船を襲った海賊だが、ユーラに関してだけ言えば、何となく乱暴なことはしないだろうと思っていた。それは同年代だからという思いなのか、それともただの勘なのかは分からないが.....。

“I see, you’re going to east continent huh.”

“Th-That is right....”

“Then, you’re going to make us, pirate, to be your transportation, something like that?”

“... .. i-if possible....”

「なるほど、お前らは東大陸に行きたいわけか」

「そ、そうです.....」

「それで、海賊のアタシらに足になれって、そういうことか？」

「.....で、できれば.....」

Then, Eula, *DANh*, kicked the floor and,

するとユーラはダンッと床を踏みつけると、

“Don’t joke around! Why I should comply to such thing! In the first place we are pirate!

Something wrong with your head for asking us to board this ship!”

“That’s... ..ahaha”

“Don’t laugh! Rather, how can you laugh in this situation!”

「ふっざけんなっ！ 何でアタシらがそんなことしなきゃなんないんだよ！ 大体アタシらは海賊なんだぞ！ そんな相手に乗船を願い出てくるなんてお前は頭おかしいのか！」

「えっと.....あはは」

「笑ってる場合か！ つうか何でこの状況で笑えるんだよお！」

When Eula hold her head with her hands,

ユーラが頭を抱えていると、

“Kuhaha, captain, isn't it okay? Our destination is around there after all.”

“R-Really!”

「クハハ、船長、別にいいんじゃないか？ 俺らもちょうどそこら辺に行くわけだしよお」

「ほ、本当ですか！」

The man that fight the swordsman from a while ago gave her a timely help.

先程剣士の相手をしていた男が助け舟を出してくれた。

“Wa-, oi Reiss, don't say unnecessary thing!”

“Kuhaha! Because flowers to bloom inside this group of men, these guys are happy to do it, you know?”

“What!”

「ちょ、おいレイス、余計なことは言うな！」

「クハハ！ この男ばっかの群れの中に花が咲いたようで、野郎どもは結構喜んでっけど？」

「何ィ！」

Eula confirmed her surroundings, and the men were certainly smiling in happiness.

ユーラが周囲を確認すると、確かに男たちはニヤニヤして嬉しそうだ。

“Oi guys! I am a genuine woman!”

「ちょっと待てお前ら！ アタシだって一応女だぞ！」

Then, the men looked at each other and leaked sighs at the same time.

すると男たちは互いに顔を見合わせ溜め息を漏らす。

“But, even if head is a woman, rather than flower you are... .. a beast?”

“Isn't that because of my race!”

「だってよ、頭は女だけど花っていうよりは.....獣？」

「それはアタシの種族だろうがっ！」

*GOTSUN*, Eula poked the henchman that said unnecessary thing with her fist. This world certainly had species called beast race, and Eula carried that characteristic. She had a cat-like long slender tail, and lovely animal ears might be hidden under the bandana that wrapped her head. Eula had a human-like form because she carried excellent blood even among the beast race.

ゴツンと余計なことをいった子分を拳骨で小突くユーラ。確かにこの世界には獣族という種族がいて、その特徴をユーラは宿している。猫のように細長い尻尾に、頭に巻いているバンダナの下には恐らく可愛らしい獣耳があるのだろう。人型になれているということは、ユーラは獣族の中でも優秀な血を持っているということだ。

“Agh, if I dress a little like these fellows even I...”

「まったく、アタシだってコイツらみたいに着飾れば少しは.....」

Though she muttered something, Reiss only laughed as if finding it amusing. Following that, that Reiss approached them.

ブツブツと何か言っているが、レイスは面白そうに笑っているだけだ。そしてそのレイスが近くに来て、

“Little misses, you want to go to east continent, right?”

“Ah, yes.”

“Then, it will be okay to send you along our way.”

“I-is it really okay!”

“Ah, oi Reiss! Why the hell you are deciding the ship’s course! I am the captain!”

“It is no problem after all, captain. There’s the saying to help fellow traveler while traveling, right? Furthermore, even though pirate is sea bandit, we are carrying the will of righteous bandit, right?”

“U... .. that’s... .. aa honestly, do whatever you want!”

「嬢ちゃんら、東大陸に行きてえんだろ？」

「あ、はい」

「なら途中まででいいなら送ってってやんよ」

「ほ、本当にいいんですか！」

「あ、こらレイス！ 何でお前が船の進路を決めてるんだよ！ 船長はアタシだろうが！」

「別にいいじゃねえか船長。旅は道連れ世は情けって言うだろ？ それに海賊は海賊でも、俺らは義賊の意志を貫いてんだぜ？」

「う.....それは.....ああもう、好きにしろ！」

*PUIh*, Eula looked away and turned her gaze towards the sea. Because she somehow did something bad, Mayuki wore an apologetic expression.

プイッと顔を背けて海に視線を向けるユーラ。何だか悪いことをしたようで真雪は申し訳なさそうな表情をする。

“Well, don't mind her, miss. Even though head said that, she won't treat someone who board her ship coldly.”

“Th-Thank you very much.”

“Kuhaha, we are pirate after all. There are time we are going to be attacked, so be prepared for that, kay?”

“Ahaha, p-please be easy....”

“Please tell that to our enemy. Well, the sea around here is comparatively calmer, so it should be okay. Though I don't know about those that entered from 《Red Sea》”

“That, are the enemies something like the other pirates?”

“Ah? Well, something like that. The others are the guard ships of other countries.”

「ま、気にすんなって嬢ちゃん。頭はああ言っても、一度船に乗せた以上は無下に扱うことはねえ」

「あ、ありがとうございます」

「クハハ、けどこちとら海賊だからよ。襲撃とかしょっちゅうだし、そこは覚悟しとけよ？」

「あはは、お、お手柔らかに.....」

「それは敵さんに言ってくれ。まあ、ここら辺は比較的大人しい海だし、大丈夫だろうけどよ。まあ、《赤海》に入りやどうなっか分かんねえけどな」

「その、敵って他の海賊とかですか？」

「あ？ まあ、そうだな。他には国の警備船だな」

Apparently it'd become an exciting voyage. If by some chance this pirate ship was sunk by the guard ships, it wouldn't be odd for Mayuki and Sheila to be treated as pirates too. Naturally if Mayuki and Sheila's identities were to be investigated, they would quietly returned to **【Rashtia Kingdom】**. That's why Mayuki and Sheila could do nothing but prayed that this ship wouldn't be found by anyone and arrive at the east continent safely.

どうやら騒がしい船旅になりそうだった。下手をすればこの海賊船が万が一警備船に捕らえられた時、海賊扱いされてもおかしくはない。無論真雪たちの身分などを調査してもらえば、何だかんだで放免はされそうだが、その時は大人しく**【ラスティア王国】**に帰ることになってしまう。だから真雪たちにとっては、このまま船が誰にも見つからずに東大陸へ着くことを祈るしかない。

“S-Sorry, Sheila. For me to act selfishly....”

「ご、ごめんねセイラ。勝手な判断で行動して.....」

There were lot of things to apologize to her best friend. She had acted selfishly and involved Sheila. However, Sheila floated a beautiful smile and,

親友には謝らないといけないことがたくさんだ。自分勝手な判断で行動してしまい、それに巻き込んだのだから。だがセイラは微笑みを浮かべると、

“It is okay. Isn’t it an all right result?”

「大丈夫です。け、結果オーライなのではないでしょうか？」

It was certainly a good thing that they would arrive at the east continent as the result, but she couldn’t help but apologize for involving Sheila in such dangerous travel.

確かにこのまま東大陸に連れて行ってくれると言うのだから結果的には良かったかもしれないが、危険な旅になりそうなのでセイラには申し訳ないのだ。

“Well, there’s no way this ship sinking. We are strong after all.”

“That’s right, even that mechanical doll (automata) was beaten out of its life by the head.”

「ま、この船が沈められることはねえよ。俺らは強えかな」

「そうそう、あの自動人形(オートマタ)だって、頭にかかりゃちよちよいのちよいでさあ」

The one that said so was the man who was fighting the mage, and his name was said to be Gazi-something. Though Reiss had a slender and maccho body, Gazi could only be said as plump.

そう言ったのは魔法士と戦っていた男、名は確かガジとか言った。レイスは細マッチョな体型だが、ガジはどちらかというとぽっちゃり体型だ。

“mechanical doll (automata)... ... umm, can I ask something?”

“Ah? What is it?”

「自動人形(オートマタ).....あの、聞いてもいいですか？」

「あ？ 何だ？」

Mayukis asked Reiss because there’s something she wanted to hear.

真雪は聞きたいことがあったのでレイスに尋ねる。

“What is a mechanical doll (automata)?”

“You don’t know?”

“Yes.”

“I see. A mechanical doll is a moving doll that imitates human. There are various type of them, and that one that explode is called weapon type (Killing Type). Well, just think of it as a weapon.”

“W-Weapon?”

“Aa, didn’t miss also saw it? That explosion. That’s the last weapon prepared to kill its target; self-explosion. In the first place, lot of money and times are needed to create the weapon type (Killing Type), so the manufacturing had been discontinued, but there is a certain country that capable of easier manufacturing method, thud underground auction was created, where a lot of transactions happened.”

“A certain country?”

“It’s **【Holy Kingdom Lavahha】** . The birthplace of doll users and molding artists.”

「自動人形(オートマタ)って一体どういうものなんですか？」

「知らねえんか？」

「はい」

「そっか。自動人形ってのは、人を模して造られた動く人形だ。いろいろ種類はあるが、あの自爆した奴は兵器型(キリングタイプ)だ。まあ兵器そのものつつうこった」

「へ、兵器？」

「ああ、嬢ちゃんらも見たろ？ あの爆発。ありゃ、ターゲットを殺すために仕込まれた最終兵器の自己爆弾だ。元々兵器型(キリングタイプ)ってのは造んのに金もかかるし時間もかかるしで、製造中止してたらしいんだけどよ、何でもある国がもっと簡単に造れる製法を編み出したとかで、今じゃ裏オークションじゃ、結構取引されてるって話だぜ」

「ある国？」

「**【ラヴァッハ聖国】** だ。人形師や造形師の発祥の地だな」

It was a name of a country in south continent.

南大陸にある国の名前だった。

“Why was something like that being carried as a present for the Emperor? Moreover, that’s a weapon, right? I feel it was still incomplete when I saw it...”

「それがどうして皇帝様に献上品として運ばれていたんですか？ しかも兵器なんですよ？ それに見た感じ、あれはまだ未完成だったんじゃないや……」

Eula was the one reacted to Mayuki’s words.

そんな真雪の言葉に反応したのはユーラだった。

“Hee, your powers of observation is quite something huh.”

“Eh, th-thank you very much.”

“... .. you guys, your names?”

「へえ、観察力はなかなかのもんだなお前」

「え、あ、ありがとうございます」

「.....お前ら、名は？」

The two obediently said their name. If it was only the name, they judged the pirate wouldn't be able to guess they were called hero in this world.

二人は素直に名前を言った。海賊なら名前だけで、自分たちが英傑としてこの世界に呼ばれたことは推測できないだろうと判断した。

“Mayuki Amagawa and Sheila Hoshimori... .. what unusual names. From the nuance, they are similar to 【Hi no Kuni】's, are you from there?”

“Th-That's....”

「マユキ・アマカワにセイラ・ホシモリねえ.....変わった名前だな。ニュアンスが【日ノ国】っぽい、もしかしてそっち出身か？」

「え、えっと.....」

They couldn't say they were summoned here as heroes, so they hesitated on answering her.

まさか英傑として召喚されましたとは言えず、どう答えたものか迷っていると、

“Well, it doesn't matter where you come from.”

「ま、別にお前らの出身なんてどうでもいいか」

*Is that really okay?*, was the rebuttal from the surroundings. She seemed to have considerably simple character. Though Mayuki was helped by that.

いいのかよと周囲から突っ込みが聞こえた。結構さっぱりした性格をしているようだ。そのお蔭で真雪たちは助かったのだが。

“I'll answer your question in deference to your power of observation.”

“Ah, yes! Please, sensei!”

“Please teach uch!”

「お前の観察力に免じてさっきの質問に答えてやる」

「あ、はい！ お願いします先生！」

「お、おにえがいしましゅ！」

Not only Mayuki, Sheila also wanted to hear the answer. However, Sheila bit her tongue.

真雪だけでなくセイラも答えを求める。しかしセイラは嘔み嘔みだったが。

“S-Sensei... .. ah, that can't be helped, I will lecture you if you want to hear it that much!”

“Head looks so happy.”

“Shut up, Reiss! Get back to your work quickly! You guys too!”

「せ、先生だって.....しょ、しょうがないなあ、そこまで言うんならアタシがレクチャーしてやろうじゃないか！」

「嬉しそうだな頭」

「う、うるさいレイス！ さっさと仕事に戻れ！ お前らもだ！」

The men laughed happily as they scattered when they saw Eula's flushed face.

顔を真っ赤にしたユーラを見て男たちは楽しそうに笑いながら方々(ほうぼう)に散っていった。

“Ohon! Umm... .. about the answer of that question-”

「おほん！ えっと.....質問の答えだったな」

Coughing to smoothed things over, Eula gave a well-ordered explanation.

取り繕うように咳をするとユーラは順序立てて説明してくれた。

First, that mechanical doll (automata) wasn't created by 【Holy Kingdom Lavahha】 . As for the reason, if that thing came from 【Holy Kingdom Lavahha】 , then there's no need for it to moved from west continent like Mayuki and Sheila.

After all it only needed to go straight from south continent to the middle continent where the Emperor resided. Following that, her other reason was the doll was too imperfect.

まずあの自動人形(オートマタ)は【ラヴァッハ聖国】で造られたものではないということ。その理由として、もし【ラヴァッハ聖国】の物なら、いちいち真雪たちがいた西大陸に寄る必要が無いからだ。

真っ直ぐ南から中央に存在する皇帝の住む大陸である中央大陸に向かえばいいのだから。そもそも一つ、人形の完成度が低過ぎること。

Frankly, it was just as Mayuki had said, that mechanical doll was incomplete. The real things seemed to be no different compared to human.

That's where the doubts came from. *Just who created that? Also, why did such crude, unfinished good was sent to the Emperor?*

ハッキリ言って真雪の言うように、あの自動人形は未完成だった。本物はそれこそ人と比べても遜色無いほどの出来栄らしい。

するとここで疑問が出てくる。一体誰が造ったのか？ そして何故そんな粗末な未成品を皇帝に送ろうとしたのか？

**“I honestly don’t know about who made that thing. But, I understand their aim.”**

**“Aim?”**

**“Aa, that’s....”**

「誰が造ったかは正直分かんないな。だけどそいつの狙いは分かる」

「狙い？」

「ああ、それは.....」

**The two quietly pay attention to the words that came from Eula’s mouth.**

二人はジッとユーラの口元に注目する。

**“... ... to assassinate the Emperor.”**

「.....皇帝暗殺だ」

**From her words, using it’s battle weapon, the mechanical doll would suddenly rampaging and killed the Emperor at the time the Emperor saw it. That kind of plot.**

**However, if something else approached it just like in Eula’s case, wouldn’t it become a failure or so Mayuki asked her.**

彼女が言うには、あの戦闘兵器を使って、皇帝の御前で見せ、突然暴れ出した自動人形が皇帝を殺す。そういう筋書きだったのだろうと。

だがもしユーラのように皇帝以外の者が近づいていたら、それは失敗したのではと真雪は尋ねる。

**“Aa, at least its main objective was to assassinate the Emperor. The ones who created that doll should be in fact aiming at the Emperor’s life... ... should be.”**

「ああ、あくまでも皇帝暗殺は最高目的だろう。人形を造った奴の当初の目的は、皇帝が命を狙われているという事実を広めること.....だな」

**Even if the assassination ended with failure, for Emperor’s present to be a weapon type (Killing Type) mechanical doll that rampaging inside the Palace, it was natural to guess it was aiming at the Emperor.**

たとえ暗殺に失敗したとしても、皇帝が住む宮殿で献上品である兵器型自動人形(キリングタイプ)が暴れば、皇帝が狙われたと思われるのが自然だ。

“Why such a thing.”

“Who know, this is only a guess of mine to the end. But, about it to be incomplete, it looks like they never thought it'd be a success. Isn't it normal to think that their objective is to give the Emperor the sense of crisis? Or maybe they will also be in trouble if the Emperor really died?”

“Haa... .. ah, that's why the Eula and the others attacked that ship as righteous bandits!”

「どうしてそんなことを？」

「さあな、これはあくまでアタシの推測だ。けど未完成品を送ったってことは、最初から暗殺が成功するなんて思っちゃいない。皇帝に危機感を持たせることが そいつの目的だったと思うのは普通だろ？ まあ、アレで皇帝が本当に死んだのならめっけもんだとか思ってたんじゃないのか？」

「はあ.....あ、だからそれを止めるために義賊のユーラさんたちはあの船を襲ったんですね！」

When Mayuki's eyes sparkling because she thought Eula and the others were brave people who did such act for Emperor's sake,

真雪はそれならユーラたちは皇帝のために行動した勇敢なる者たちではないかと思って目を輝かせた時、

“Ha? That's absolutely wrong, you know? Rather, we don't care if the Emperor dies or not.”

“... .. heh?”

「は？ 全然違うぞ？ つうか皇帝が死のうが生きようがどうでもいいし」

「.....へ？」

Not only Mayuki, Sheila also astonished by that.

真雪だけでなくセイラまでもがキョトンだった。

“We attacked that ship because I thought it carried the thing I am looking for. But, it was something different....”

“... .. th-that's, what are you looking for?”

「あの船を襲ったのは、アタシが探してるものが運ばれてるかもって思ったからだ。けど、また違った.....」

「.....あ、あの、探しものって何ですか？」

Then, Eula glared with eyes filled with killing intent unlike a little while ago which made Mayuki caught her breath.

するとギロリと、先程までと違って殺意に満ちた瞳を宿すユーラに、真雪は息を飲んだ。

“... .. a mechanical doll (automata).”

“Eh? ... .. mechanical doll (automata)?”

“It is so, but it is different from that inferior good, also it is a doll that completely similar to a human. I am here, I am here to find the one who created that.”

“... .. did something happened... .. with that doll?”

“... .. nothing, just a simple revenge.”

「.....自動人形(オートマタ)さ」

「え? .....自動人形(オートマタ)ですか」

「そうだ、あんな粗悪品じゃなく、それこそ普通の人間と何もかも同じような人形。アタシはそいつと、そいつを造った奴を見つけ出すためにここにいる」

「.....何かあるんですか.....その人形に？」

「.....別に、ただの復讐だ」

Her eyes were cold, they'd make girls at the same as her turned aghast. Surely she attacked that ship because she thought it carried that doll. However, it carried something different.

寒気がするほどの目を、自分と同じ年頃の少女がしていることに愕然とした。きっとあの船に積んでいるのが、その人形だと思って襲ったのだろう。しかし違った。

“Let me ask this. Do you know someone with silver hair and an eye in his forehead?”

“Eh? Uun, I don't know.”

“I see... .. then that's good.”

「一応お前らに聞いておく。額に瞳を持った銀髪を知ってるか？」

「え? ううん、知らないですけど」

「そっか.....ならいい」

Just what kind a past did she had, and though Mayuki was curious about it, she realized it was a subject she mustn't thoughtlessly ask, so she didn't ask any more than that.

一体過去に何があったのか、興味が湧いた真雪だったが、そんな軽々しく突っ込める内容ではないと悟り、それ以上は聞かなかった。

After that, Eula returned to her own room, and because they feel bad to boarded the ship for free, Mayuki and Sheila were helping the pirates in cooking and cleaning.

それからユーラは自室へと戻って行き、ただで乗せてもらうのも悪いからと、真雪とセイラは、料理や掃除など手伝えることは手伝った。

### Story 15 Souji the Tutor 第十五話 ソージの家庭教師

At the same time Mayuki boarded the pirate ship, the one she looked for, Souji was teaching Ninthe. The location was inside Ninthe's room.

真雪が海賊船に乗り込んでせっせと働いている頃、彼女の探し人であるソージはというと、ニンテに勉強を教えていた。場所はニンテの自室だ。

Souji said it was okay for him to teach Ninthe, and he promised to teach her if he had time to spare. He also couldn't just coldly refuse it because his mother, Kaina, requested him to do this, that's why he would skillfully spare some times for the teaching.

ニンテが教えてもらうならソージが良いと言うので、時間が空いた時にでも教授すると約束していた。母であるカイナからの頼みでもあったので無下にもできず、上手く時間を作って教えていた。

“Ninthe, time for a question. Do you know how many continents there are in 【Orb】?”

“U~n... .. please give me some time.”

「ニンテ、では問題です。この【オーブ】には幾つの大陸がありますか？」

「う〜ん.....ちょっとまって下さいです」

Ninthe spreaded her hand as she said so. Following that, she counted one by one and,

そう言って手を広げたニンテ。そして一つずつ追っていき、

“Umm... .. East continent and West continent, South continent and North continent, and also Central continent!”

“Well then, their names?”

“M~mm... .. east is 【Dolkia continent】 , west is 【Woodvern continent】 , south is 【Dadaneo continent】 , north is 【Zoan continent】 , and central is 【Ougon continent】 !”

“Yes, that's perfect. Well then, do you know the provinces' name in each of them?”

“.....?”

「えっと.....東大陸に西大陸、南大陸と北大陸、それと中央大陸です！」

「ではそれぞれの大陸名は？」

「ん〜と、東は【ドルキア大陸】、西は【ウッドベン大陸】、南が【ダダネオ大陸】で北が【ゾーアン大陸】、最後に中央は【オウゴン大陸】です！」

「ええ、正解です。ではそれぞれでの地方の名前は御存知ですか？」

「.....？」

Apparently she had not studied the provinces name yet.

どうやら地方名まではまだ学習していなかったようだ。

“Well then, please remember it well.”

「ではしっかり憶えて下さいね」

Souji spreaded the map in Ninthe’s hand. Then he explained as he pointed at them with his finger. *Fumufumu*, Ninthe nodded as she heard the explanation.

She wasn’t stupid but just didn’t have the habit to study up til now. Rather, her memory was very good, she had an excellent brain that capable of remembering information that interested her at once.

ソージはニンテの手元に地図を広げていく。そして指を差しながら説明していく。ふむふむとその説明を聞きニンテは頷いている。

彼女は今まで学習習慣が無かっただけで馬鹿ではない。むしろとても記憶力が良く、特にこうして興味のある情報だと一度で覚えてしまうほど優秀な頭脳を持っている。

“I see, this here is 《Nockles province》!”

“Yes, There are 《Anjax》, 《Gudo》, and 《Nockles》, three provinces in 【Dolkia continent】. It is the second biggest continent among the other continents. Remember it.”

“Ye~ss!”

“Then, next question. Though there are various races in 【Orb】, how many races there are if you roughly divided them?”

「そっかあ、ここって《ノックルス地方》って名前だったんですね！」

「ええ、ここ【ドルキア大陸】には《アンジャクス》、《グド》、《ノックルス》の三つの地方があります。他の大陸の中でも二番目に大きい大陸です。覚えておくように」

「は～いですう！」

「それでは次の問題。この【オーブ】には様々な種族が存在しますが、大きく分けると幾つの種族に分けられますか？」

Ninthe let out a “Mu~,” lovely voice as she pouted her mouth. Then she opened her hand and fold her finger as she said the races’ name one by one.

ニンテは「む～」と可愛らしく口を尖らせている。そして手を開くと一本ずつ種族名を言う度に折っていく。

“Because there are, human race, demon race, beast race, dragon race, water-dweller, then spirit race... .. six races?”

“Looks like you’ve studied it. That’s answer is correct.”

「えっとお、人族、魔族、獣族、竜族、水棲族、精霊族だから.....六つです？」

「やりますね。正解です」

That’s right, there were roughly six races existing together in this world. There were another classification even in human race such as dwarf and hobbit.

そう、この世界は大きく分けてそれだけの種族が混在している。また人族の中でもさらに分類され、ドワーフや小人などもここに属している。

“Then the race that didn’t have 《Magic core》?”

“U~mm, beast race and dragon race!”

“Oo, once again a perfect answer. Looks like you’ve studied well. Good girl.”

“Ehehe~.”

「では《魔核》を持たない種族は？」

「ん~とお、獣族と竜族！」

「おお、それもまた正解です。しっかり勉強してるじゃないですかニンテ。偉いですよ」

「えへへ~」

Ninthe looked so pleased as her head was gently stroked.

Just like she said, there was no one from beast race and dragon race that carried 《Magic core》 which was needed to use magic. Therefore they were incapable of using magic. In exchange, they own superior movement ability and other unusual abilities.

頭を優しく撫でてあげると気持ち良さそうににんまりしているニンテ。

彼女の言った通り、獣族と竜族には魔法士なら誰でも持つ《魔核》が存在しない。故に彼らには魔法が使えないのだ。その代わりに卓越した運動能力や、特別な異能を持ち合わせていたりするのだが。

“Next, what kind of special ability does the beast race has?”

“They can become humanoid! There was such children in the orphanage!”

“That’s right. They can use the ability to personify. Well, most likely not all of beast race could do that. To begin with, I heard only special people from beast race are capable of personifying.”

“Hee~, then were those special people strong?”

“There are various types of special. But maybe it could be simply said they have a great power of existence....”

「では獣族にはどんな特殊能力がありますか？」

「人型になれますです！ 前いた孤児院でもそんな子がいましたです！」

「その通りです。擬人化という能力を彼らは使えます。まあ、最もそれも全ての獣族が成し得られることではないようですがね。そもそも擬人化できるのは優秀な獣族だけという話をよく耳にします」

「へえ~、それじゃユウシュウな人はツヨいってことなんですか？」

「優秀にもいろいろあるそうです。簡単に言えば存在の力と言えば良いでしょうか.....」

Maybe because she couldn’t understand it, Ninthe raised a groan with a troubled expression.

そうは言ったがニンテは分からないのか難しい顔して唸っている。

“It means it impossible personify if they only have physical strength. Mind and body, it can only be done if they blessed in both of them.”

“Nn~ that’s difficult.”

“Ahaha, but Ninthe definitely can understand it. Even I was puzzled in the beginning. It’s okay to just gradually understanding it. Sooner or later you’ll likely to become friendly with someone from beast race.”

“Yes! I’ll remember that!”

「単純に物理的な力が強いだけでは擬人化はできないということです。心と体、双方が恵まれていて初めて成せるとのことですから」

「ん～むつかしいですう」

「あはは、でもニンテは理解できている方ですよ。オレも最初はチンプンカンプンでしたから。徐々に理解していけばいいんです。そのうちそういう獣族とも親しくなるかもしれませんしね」

「はいです！ がんばって覚えますです！」

As he could feel the reliability from Ninthe’s enthusiasm, Souji floated a slightly wry smile.

そう意気込むニンテに頼もしさを覚えつつも、ソージは少し苦笑を浮かべてしまう。

“However, even though Ninthe memory is good, it looks like you aren’t good at arithmetic.”

“U~ I become dizzy everytime I see the figure after all.”

「しかし、ニンテは記憶力は良いんですが、算術はあまり得意ではないようですね」

「う～だって数字って見てるだけでああ～ってなっちゃうんですう」

Ninthe said that as she pouted in dissatisfaction. The result of various tests to find her aptitude were she had amazing writing skill and memory, but she didn’t good at logic.

She particularly weak in calculating. She even troubled by simple problem.

口を尖らせながらニンテは言う。彼女にはどんな適性があるのかいろいろテストをしてみた結果、文章力、記憶力には目を見張るものがあるのだが、どうやら論理的な思考は不得意のようだ。

特に計算に弱く。簡単な問題にも四苦八苦ししていた。

“Well then, it looks like I can promote Ninthe to anything except the management of money.”

“A~u~, I will try my best~.”

“Ahaha, next let’s take a little break. Because I will make delicious ones, please look forward to it.”

“Wa~i!”

「では、ニンテが出世しても金銭管理だけは任せられませんね」

「あ～う～、がんばりますう～」

「あはは、ではここで少し休憩しましょう。美味しいものでも作ってきますので、楽しみに待って下さい」

「わ～いですう！」

After he took a glance at Ninthe who floated a delighted smile, Souji went to the kitchen alone, he looked in the preservation storage and took some fruits, then he stood before the counter.

喜び、笑顔を浮かべるニンテを一瞥するとソージは一人で厨房に行き、貯蔵庫を覗いて果実を幾つか取ると、調理台に立つ。

“Become my desired image, orange flame.”

「想いを像(かたど)れ、橙炎(とうえん)」

An orange flame created in his palm, and its shape changed into a kitchen knife. A strange orange colored knife was completed.

The fruit's skin was peeled off with a dexterous movement. There was no stagnation in the movement and all of the fruits completely peeled off in the blink of time.

手から橙色の炎を生み出し、それが包丁のような形に変化していく。奇妙なオレンジ色の包丁が出来上がる。

それを器用に動かして、果実の皮をサクッと剥いていく。その動きに澁みがなく、瞬く間に裸にされていく果実。

Souji put the fruits with completely peeled off skin into a big bowl, and the kitchen knife now changed into a rod-shaped. *Gorigori*, he crushed the fruits until their shape changed.

Once they crushed and became muddy, this time the flour was put inside the bowl, then he mixed it after adding some milk.

あっという間に全ての果実は丸裸にされ、ソージはそれらを大きなボールに入れて、今度は包丁を棒状にしていく。ゴリゴリと押し潰すように果実の形を変えていく。

ある程度潰してドロドロにしたら、今度は小麦粉を新しいボールに入れ、ミルクをそこに加えてこねていく。

“Okay, next is-.”

「さてと、次はっと」

The cooking process advanced steadily, then

どんどん調理工程は進んでいき、

“Yosh, it's complete.”

「よし、完成」

Having put it on a big plate, Souji nodded in satisfaction, then he carried it to where Ninthe was. On his way, he run into Yoyo who just arrived from the second floor.

大きな皿にそれは置かれており、ソージは満足気に頷くと、それを持ってニンテのもとへと向かった。

その途中に、二階から降りてきたヨヨと鉢合わせをする。

“Oya, Ojou-sama. Your rest?”

「おや、お嬢様、お休みなさっていたのでは？」

She sleep late last night, and when afternoon came she said she would take a rest for a while as she headed to her room. It still around an hour since then, that's why he thought whether she obtained a satisfactory sleep or not.

彼女は昨夜遅かったようで、昼過ぎになると少し休むと言って自室へと向かって行ったのだ。まだ小一時間ほどだったので、満足な睡眠を得られたのかなと思ったが、

“No, it just I somehow smelled a good fragrance.”

“Are Ojou-sama also want it? I think I did a good job on it.”

“Yes, later in my room... .. no, are you going somewhere?”

“Yes. I am tutoring Ninthe, and it is a reward for her hard work.”

“Ara, that's good. Then I will also go there. Is it in Ninthe's room?”

“Ee.”

“That's so, then let's go,”

「いえ、何か良い香りがしたのよ」

「お嬢様もいかがですか？ 上手くできたと思いますので」

「ええ、後で自室に.....いえ、これからあなたはどこかへ行くの？」

「はい。ニンテに勉強を教えていまして、頑張っているご褒美にと」

「あら、それは良いことね。なら私もそこに行くわ。ニンテの部屋？」

「ええ」

「そう、なら行きましょ」

Along with Yoyo, the two went towards Ninthe's room.

ヨヨを連れ添って二人でニンテの部屋へと向かった。

“Y-Yoyo-sama!?”

「ヨ、ヨヨ様っ!？」

Ninthe who was surprised by Yoyo sudden appearance immediately risen from her seat. Yoyo stopped her with a gesture and,

突然現れたヨヨに驚いているようで即座に椅子から立ち上がるニンテ。それをヨヨは手で制して、

“Don't be that attentive. I think I am also to be blamed for this.”

「そんなに畏まらなくていいわ。少しご相伴にあずかろうと思ってね」

Though she should be awake, Ninthe became absent-minded when she saw Yoyo's beautiful smile. Souji was putting the plate on the table in front of such Ninthe.

寝起きのはずなのに綺麗な微笑を浮かべるヨヨにニンテは見惚れているようにぼうっとしている。ソージはそんなニンテの前にあるテーブルに皿を置く。

“Uwa~! What a savory fragrance!”

“The name is 《seasonal jam pizza》.”

「うわ～！ とってもおいしそうなのオイしますう！」

「名付けて《季節のジャムピザ》です」

It was a food where various kind of fruits that only appeared in this season were made into jams, then spreaded on the pizza crust. Vanilla ice was put on the pizza and it began to gradually melt by the warm pizza.

この時期に最も旬な果実を数種類ジャムにし、ピザ生地の上に塗った食べ物だ。またその上にはバニラアイスも乗せてあり、温かいピザの上で徐々に溶け出している。

Because there were four kinds of fruits, the pizza was divided into four with different jam respectively.

First, there was a jam made of 《Spring Peach》 with irresistible sweet fragrance.

Second, a jam made of 《Sakura Lemon》 with strong sourness that make one addicted.

Third, a jam made of 《Pink Melon》 with faint sourness and elegant sweetness.

Fourth, a jam made of 《Dandelion Strawberry》 with sweetness and enjoyable texture.

Yoyo and Ninthe took the pizza, then they ate it. Following that, Ninthe's cheeks were flushed as she was charmed by it.

ちょうど果実の種類が四種類だったので、ピザも四等分してそれぞれに違うジャムが塗られてある。

一つは《春桃》で作ったジャムで、甘い香りが堪らない生地。

一つは《桜レモン》で作ったジャムで、酸味が強いが癖になる生地。

一つは《ピンクメロン》で作ったジャムで、ほのかな酸味と上品な甘さの生地。

一つは《たんぽぽ苺》で作ったジャムで、甘さに加えてサクサクとした歯ごたえも楽しめる生地。

ヨヨとニンテはピザを手に取り、パクッと口に含む。するとニンテの頬が上気し蕩けていく。

“Uwaa~ it is very delicious~”

“Ee, as expected of Souji. It is delicious.”

“Thank you for the praise. Please wait for I will bring the beverage.”

「ふわあ～とてもおいしいですう～」

「ええ、さすがはソージね。美味しいわ」

「ありがとうございます。お飲物をお持ちしますのでお待ち下さい」

Saying so, Souji was happy by the praises and he got out of the room in a smile.

When he returned to brought the beverage, somehow inside was,

そう言ってソージは褒められたことが嬉しく頬を緩ませながら部屋から出て行った。

飲み物を持って帰って来ると、何故かそこに.....

“You're slacking off again... .. mother.”

「またサボりですか.....母さん」

That's right, it was his own mother, Kaina, who slowly filled her mouth with the pizza.

そう、自分の母親であるカイナがおもむろにピザを頬張っていたのだ。

“Oh my, Souji! You've improved once~ again! Ah, you brought the beverage! You come at the right time~!”

「あらソージ！ ま～た腕を上げたわね！ あ、飲み物持ってきてくれたの！ 気が効くう～！」

Saying so, she tried to take the cup so he raised it up. Kaina's hand was grabbing the air.

そう言いながらカップを取ろうとするのでヒョイツと上に上げる。スカッと空を切るカイナの手。

“Honestly, what are you doing!”

“There's no portion for mother. Please procure one yourself if you want it.”

“Boo~ stingy Souji! Whate~ver! I'll get it myself! Ah, Ninthe please leave that remaining one with ice for me!”

“Eh, ah, yes!”

「あんもう、何よお！」

「母さんの分はありません。欲しかったらご自分で調達なさって下さい」

「ぶ～ソージのいけず～！ いいも～ん！ 自分で取って来るから！ あ、ニンテ、そっちのアイスがまんま残ってるやつ置いといてよ！」

「え、あ、はいです！」

Kaina disappeared from the room just like a typhoon.

まるで台風のような勢いで消えていくカイナ。

“... .. Ninthe, about that remaining one with ice, it's okay for you to eat it.”

“Eh? But, it was something Kaina-sama....”

“It's okay. That's right, how about this....”

「.....ニンテ、そのアイスが乗ってるやつ、食べてもいいですよ」

「え？ でもこれはカイナ様が.....」

「いいんです。そうですね、ではこうして.....」

He cut that pizza into three, then he put one each on Yoyo and Ninthe's plate, followed with the remaining slice that entered his mouth.

そのピザを三等分にすると、ヨヨとニンテの皿に置き、そしてソージは一切れ分を口の中に放り込んだ。

“Oh my, how ill-natured of you, Souji. Well, I am also going to eat it though.”

「あら、意地が悪いわねソージ。まあ、私も頂くけど」

Thus Yoyo also carried it into her mouth. The remaining slice was only Ninthe's.

そうしてヨヨも同じように口へと運んでいく。もう残っているのはニンテのだけだ。

“Come on Ninthe, don't hold back.”

“Eh, but....”

「ほらニンテ、遠慮せずに」

「え、でも.....」

Maybe because it was something her superior left behind, Ninthe hesitated to eat it.

やはり上司に残せと言われて口をつけるわけにはと思っているのか渋っているニンテ。

“It is okay. Beside, she said, I gained some weight recently~, so please eat it for mother's sake.”

“... .. i-is it okay?”

“Ee.”

“Eat it, Ninthe. It's delicious.”

「いいんです。それに最近太ってきたわ~とか言ってましたから、母さんのためだと思って食べて上げて下さい」

「.....い、いいんです？」

「ええ」

「食べなさいニンテ。美味しいわよ」

Because of what Yoyo said, Ninthe gulped and ate it. The fluffy texture, fruit's sweetness, and its sourness stimulated her mouth. Her face flushed once again.

As if it was the right timing, Kaina came back.

ヨヨにも言われて、ニンテはゴクリと喉を鳴らして食べる。モチモチとした食感に、果実の甘みと酸味が口内を刺激。またも彼女の顔がにやけていく。

そこへタイミング良く、カイナが帰って来た。

“Have I made you wait~! My piz... .. za... ..?”

「待っててくれたかしら~！ 私のピ.....ザ.....？」

The wide smiling face when she entered the room petrified. Following that, *gi gi gi*, she turned her neck and saw Souji.

物凄い笑顔で部屋に入って来た彼女の顔が石化する。そしてギギギと首を曲げソージを見つくる。

“... .. my pizza?”

“Who know? Maybe a wind fairy came and took the plate?”

“There's no way that could happen~!”

「.....ピザは？」

「さあ？ 風の妖精さんでもやって来て攫(さら)っていったのでは？」

「そんなわけないじゃないのよお~っ！」

It was hard to calm Kaina down after that. Though his shoulders drooped when he thought such person was his mother, she was truly an interesting mother.

それからカイナを宥めるのは大変だった。こんなのが母親だと思い肩を落としてしまうが、本当に面白い母親である。

“Souji-sama’s magic is truly convenient right~.”

「でもソージ様の魔法ってベンリですよね～」

As usual, Souji was watering the flowers with watering can created from orange flame in the morning, and Ninthe who helping him to watered the flowers said that as she staring at his watering can.

いつものようにソージが、早朝に橙炎で創ったジョウロで花に水やりをしていると、同じように水やりを手伝ってくれていたニンテがマジマジとジョウロを見つめながら言ってきた。

“What’s with that out of the blue?”

“Because, even though all magic is amazing, Souji-sama’s magic is even more amazing!”

“Haa....”

“Even though Ninthe cannot use magic because Ninthe didn’t have magic core, there was people who could use it in the orphanage. Even among them, I feel Souji-sama’s magic is truly convenient after all.”

“Well, that could be true.”

「何です突然？」

「だって、魔法ってすごいですけど、ソージ様のはもっとすごいです！」

「はあ.....」

「ニンテは元々マカクがないので魔法が使えませんが、前いた孤児院では使える人はいました。その中でもやっぱりソージ様の魔法ってベンリすぎだとおもいます」

「まあ、そうですね」

Souji himself also have thought that. Living in this world, Souji had met various magic user. Compared to those people, his magic truly a convenient one out of them.

ソージ本人にもその自覚はある。ソージ自身、この世界で生きてきているいろんな魔法士にも出会って来ている。その者たちと比べても、やはり自分の魔法の便利さは群を抜いていた。

“I wonder just how did Souji-sama’s magic became like this?”

“Ahaha, do you want to know?”

“Yes!”

「ソージ様の魔法っていったいどうなってるんです？」

「あはは、知りたいですか？」

「はい！」

Ninthe's face spontaneously revealed an innocent smile.

無邪気な笑顔を向けてくるニンテに思わず顔が綻んでしまう。

“I see, you want to know about this orange colored flame?”

“Ah, yes. Even before, it took Ninthe and Yoyo-sama to the sky!”

“Ee, this is called orange flame, simply put it has the effect of making my imagination a reality.”

“... .. Souji-sensei, I don't understand it at all!”

「そうですね、このオレンジ色の炎のことは知ってますよね？」

「あ、はい。この前もニンテたちを乗せてお空をとんでましたです！」

「ええ、これは橙炎といって、簡単に言えばオレの想像を具現化する効果を持っています」

「.....ソージ先生、分かりませんです！」

Ninthe immediately raised her hand and said so. Souji rode on her mood and coughed once.

ニンテがピシッと手を上げて言ってきた。ソージは彼女のノリに乗っかるつもりで咳払いを一つする。

“Ohon, then let me teach you so you can understand it. This orange flame use what I imagine inside my head and well, change its shape. Then it is possible to make it appear as an object. Do you understand?”

「おほん、では分かりやすく教えて差し上げましょう。この橙炎は、頭の中に思い描いたもの、まあ形ですね。それをこうして物体として出現させることができます。いいですか？」

He immediately made the watering can vanished. Following that, he concentrated his magic power in his right hand.

一度ジョウロを消す。そして再び右手に魔力を集中させる。

“Become the desired image, orange flame.”

「想いを像れ、橙炎」

Once again, an orange flame appeared on his right hand, then its shape changed into a watering can and its handle was seized by Souji.

右手から再びオレンジ色の炎が現れ、ジョウロの形になりソージの手に取っ手が握られてあった。

“Just now, I imagined the shape of this watering can inside my head. The flame changed its form according to that image.”

“Hoe~.”

「今オレは、頭の中でこういうジョウロの形をイメージしました。そのイメージを炎が形作ってくれるのです」

「ほえ～」

As if finding it amusing, Ninthe was poking the watering can.

ニンテは面白そうにツンツンとジョウロを人差し指で突いている。

“That’s right, Ninthe should also know by now that it doesn’t feel like the usual flame, right? Let say, it shouldn’t be able to be gripped and touched, and it shouldn’t even possible to rode on it.”

“Ah, now that it was mentioned!”

“That’s the characteristic of this orange flame. This flame can be gripped and touched. That’s why it could be rode on. In addition....”

“Eeh!? I-it floated!?”

「そう、今ニンテがしているように、普通の炎は触ることはできませんよね？ いえ、触ることができて掴んだり、その上に乗ったりなどできるはずはありません」

「あ、そういえばそうです！」

「それがこの橙炎の特性です。この炎は掴むことも触れることもできます。ですからその上に乗ることも容易。さらに.....」

「ええっ！？ う、ういた!？」

Just like that, the watering can suddenly floated by itself and swayed pleasantly in the air.

そう、突然ジョウロが独りでに空中に浮きフワフワと気持ち良さそうに揺れているのだ。

“Thus it is also possible to be freely moved. Well, it consumed considerable magic power though.”

“... .. ah! I see, that’s why Ninthe and Yoyo-sama could rode on it!”

“Ee, that’s correct.”

“Fuwa~, oh? Is it possible that the things Souji-sama such as kitchen knife and the pan are orange in color because....”

“It is as you guess. Those things are this. They helped greatly in household finance because they reduced the water supply fee for they didn’t need to be washed.”

「こうして自由に動かすことも可能です。まあ、魔力は結構消費するのですが」

「.....あっ！ だからニンテたちを乗せてとべたんですね！」

「ええ、正解です」

「ふわ～、あれ？ もしかしてソージ様が使ってる包丁とかお鍋とかがオレンジ色なのって.....」

「その通りです。アレもコレです。洗わなくていいので水道代も浮いて家計に大助かりです」

With such reason, Souji created the tools used in housework with his flame. The kitchen knives for cooking, the mops for cleaning, and even the baskets for laundry, all of them created from orange flame.

ソージはこうやって家事などで使用する道具を炎で造り利用しているのだ。料理包丁然り、掃除モップ然り、洗濯カゴなども全てソージは橙炎を使っている。

“That’s extremely convenient~ I am jealous~.”

“Ahaha, that’s so. However, even this magic has its own limitation.”

“Eh? There’s such a thing?”

“Ee, there was water inside the previous watering can, right?”

“Ah, yes.”

“Even though it wouldn’t be a problem with that amount of water, it is basically a fire so it weak against water. For something like this watering can, it will immediately disappear when it is thrown into the bathtub.”

“Well, it fire after all~.”

“The other is, it’ll disappears suddenly after a few minutes if it was separated from me after a fixed distance.”

「ベンリすぎですよお～うらやましいですう～」

「あはは、でしょうね。ですけどこの魔法にだってちゃんと制限はあるんですよ」

「え？ そんなものあるんです？」

「ええ、先程ジョウロに水が入っていましたよね？」

「あ、はい」

「あの程度の水なら問題はないんですが、基本的に炎なので水には弱いですね。こんなジョウロ程度ならたとえば風呂に投げ入れたただけですぐに消滅しちゃいます」

「まあ、火ですもんね～」

「他にもオレから一定の距離に離れると、数分で勝手に消滅しますし」

Souji shrugged his shoulders with *yare yare*-like feeling.

ソージはやれやれといった感じで肩を竦める。

“Then~ if it’s a rainy day, can Souji-sama do his work?”

“No no, I have another method for such time, but at the very least I will avoid using this orange flame in rainy day.”

“Fu~n, there’s other huh~”

“While the other flames are also convenient ones, they surely had their own limitation.”

“B-By others, you mean there are a lot of them!?”

「ん～じゃあ雨の日と違って、ソージ様役に立てなくなっちゃうんですか？」

「いえいえ、その時はまた違う方法で乗り切れますが、あくまでもこの橙炎に関して言えば、雨の日に使うのは避けたいですね」

「ふ～ん、いろいろあるんですね～」

「他の炎もいろいろ使い勝手が良い反面、制限が必ず存在しますからね」

「ほ、他のって、そんなにいっぱいあるんです!？」

Maybe because Ninthe was interested in those, her eyes were sparkling.

ニンテは興味津々なのか目をキラキラさせている。

“Ahaha, though I want to continue the talk, it seems you need to wait for the next time.”

“Ee~ Why~?”

「あはは、その続きを話してあげたいですが、どうやらそれはまた今度ですね」  
「ええ~どうしてですう~？」

The ten years old girl adorably expanded her cheeks in dissatisfaction,

不満気に頬を可愛く膨らませる十歳児。

“Look, over there.”

「ほら、あそこ」

Following that, another maids were coming from the place Souji's finger pointed at. It seemed they came to look for Ninthe. It was about time for her to start her work as a maid. The same thing applied to Souji, it was about the time for him to wake Yoyo up.

そうしてソージが指を差した先には、他のメイドたちがいてこちらに向かって来ていた。ニンテを探しに来たようだ。そろそろメイドとしての仕事が始まるのだ。そしてそれはソージも同様であり、そろそろヨヨを起こす時間だった。

“Okay, let's work hard today too.”

“Yes! But, Souji-sama! Please let me hear your story again! It's a promise!”

“Ee, it's a promise.”

「さあ、今日も一日、頑張ってお仕事しましょうか」  
「はいです！ でもソージ様！ またお話聞かせて下さいね！ ゼッタイです！」  
「ええ、約束です」

He smiled, and Ninthe ran towards the other maids while smiling in happiness.

ニコリと微笑むと、ニンテも嬉しげに頬を緩めるとメイドたちのところへと走って行った。

## Story 16 Yoyo's Music

### 第十六話 ヨヨの音楽

The story this time..... will revolve around Yoyo.

次回、ヨヨの身に.....物語が動きます。

=====

Souji who's worried about the amount of food left inside the storage came to town to purchase some more accompanied by Ninthe.

貯蔵庫の中にある食物の量に不安を覚えたソージは、ニンテとともに街へ買い出しに来ていた。

“But, it is weird. I remember we should still have enough of them.”

「でもおかしいですね。まだ十分に備えがあると思っていたのですが」

It was certainly near the time to replenish the foodstuffs, but the consumption speed was more than he had estimated.

Especially the fruits and confectioneries, the decrease rate was abnormal even if they were favored by children. However, at the time he asked Ninthe, she said she never touched the foods in the mansion without permission.

Beside, Souji never thought she would do that. She always gained Souji's permission first before she cook or took the confectioneries whenever she was hungry.

確かに近々食料を補給しようとは考えていたが、見積もりしていた以上に食料の減るスピードが尋常ではなかった。

特に果物や菓子類など、子供が好む傾向にあるものの減りが異常だった。しかしニンテに聞いたところ、彼女は勝手に屋敷の食べ物には手をつけていないと言う。

それにソージも彼女がそんなことをするとは思えない。いつもお腹が減った時はソージに許可を得て料理を作ったり菓子類などに手を伸ばしている。

“Ah, now that's mentioned, there's always someone who hang around the kitchen before!”

“Eh? In the kitchen? Who was it?”

“Kaina-sama!”

「あ、そういえばこの前、チュウボウでウロウロなさっていました！」

「え？ 厨房？ 誰がですか？」

「カイナ様です！」

Souji immediately held his head while rolling his eyes. All mysteries were solved. He recalled that recently Kaina said to him, [I am hungry, make something~,] and apparently the culprit that secretly ate the food was his mother, Kaina.

He inadvertently leaked a sigh, and he suddenly feel the heavy responsibility on his whole body.

急遽目頭を押さえてしまったソージ。全て謎が解けた。最近カイナが「お腹へったから何か作ってえ」と自分に言ってこないと思っていたが、どうやら隠れて食料を食い潰していたのは実の母親のようだった。

思わず溜め息が漏れ出し、一気に重荷を背負った感覚が全身に感じる。

“..... she said it looks like she grew fatter recently, but of course that would happen if she did that.”

“But, Kaina-sama always full of energy!”

「.....最近太ったかしらあとか言ってましたが、そりゃ太るでしょうに」

「でもいつもお元気ですよカイナ様は！」

Ninthe was smiling happily. She was truly a pure girl.

ニンテはにんまりと嬉しそうに微笑んでいる。本当に穢れの知らない少女である。

“Ninthe, mother’s cheerfulness was certainly influencing everyone, but listen, it isn’t good to if you become an adult like mother, you know?”

“Eh? Why? Every~one said Kaina-sama is amazing!”

“Ee, that’s the glory of her past.”

“..... past?”

“It is so. Now she will meddle with other people’s work if she has free time, just like a former worker ant that remember the easiness of eating food in secret.”

“Nn~ I don’t understand.”

“I don’t mind if you didn’t understand that. However, I want Ninthe to become a splendid woman.”

“W-Will that make Souji-sama happy!?”

“Eh? That is yes, of course. I feel Ninthe will become a hardworking and splendid woman.”

「ニンテ、確かに母さんの元気はみんなにもその影響を与えてくれますが、いいですか、母さんみたいな大人にはなってはダメですよ？」

「え？ どうしてです？ み~んなカイナ様はすごっておっしゃってます！」

「ええ、それは過去の栄光ですから」

「.....かこ？」

「そうです。今では暇があれば働いている者にちょっかいをかけ、食べ物があればつまみ食いをする楽を覚えてしまった元働きアリですから」

「ん~よくわかりませんです」

「分からなくても構いません。ですがニンテには立派な女性になってほしいんです」

「そ、その方がソージ様もうれしいです!？」

「え？ それは、はい、もちろんですよ。ニンテはきっと働き者で素晴らしい大人の女性になると思われますから」

**Ninthe’s cheeks were slightly flushed as she revealed a smile.**

ニンテは少し頬を上気させて照れたように顔を綻ばせている。

“Beside, this kind of smile fit you.”

“Ehehe! I am happy!”

「それにその笑顔も素敵ですしね」

「えへへ！ うれしいですう！」

Thus the two were shopping in a warm mood. They return to the mansion once their shopping ended. When they entered the premise,

そうして二人はほんわかムードで買い物をしていった。そして買い出しが終わり屋敷へと戻った。敷地内に入った時、

“..... ah? I can hear something.”

「.....あれ？ なにか聞こえますです」

Ninthe did the gesture where she strained her ears. Souji nodded and said, “..... aa,” as he knew about the sound they heard.

ニンテが耳を澄ますような仕草をする。ソージは「.....ああ」と聞こえてくる音に心当たりがあるので頷いた。

“This is..... music?”

「これは.....音楽です？」

Just as Ninthe said, a music could be heard from the mansion before them. Souji answered Ninthe when he saw her curious face.

そう、目の前にいる屋敷からニンテが言ったように音楽が聞こえてくるのだ。不思議そうなニンテの顔を見てソージは答える。

“Now that I remember it, Ninthe didn’t know about it. This is Ojou-sama’s musical performance.”

“Eeh!? Yoyo-sama can do a musical performance!?”

“Ee, Ojou-sama is very good at playing musical instrument.”

“Hee~.”

“Since childhood, her skill had been shown in various party she attended with her father.”

「そう言えば、ニンテは知らなかったんですね。これはお嬢様の演奏ですよ」

「ええっ！？ ヨヨ様が演奏してるんです！？」

「ええ、お嬢様は楽器演奏がとても上手なんですよ」

「へえ～」

「小さい頃は、お父上とともに参加した様々なパーティでその腕前を披露なさっておられましたよ」

When he said that Yoyo was playing it at her room at this time, Ninthe’s eyes sparkled as her gaze displayed that she want to see it, and Ninthe very quickly nodded when he asked her if she want to see it.

今頃は自室で音を奏でているのだと言うと、ニンテは目を輝かせて一目見たいという雰囲気を出していたので、ならば行ってみようかと尋ねるとニンテはコクコクと凄まじい速さで頭を縦に振っていた。

The instrument’s sound became louder as they approached Yoyo’s room. He know that Ninthe’s excitement level keep increasing.

After some knocks, the sound stopped, and “Is it Souji?,” an intellectual voice could be heard from inside. They entered the room once they obtained her permission.

ヨヨの自室に近づく度に楽器の音は高まっていく。そしてニンテのワクワク度もドンドン増していつているのが分かる。

トントんとノックをすると、音が止まり、中から聡明そうな声で「ソージかしら？」と声が聞こえる。入室の許可をもらって部屋へと入る。

Inside was Yoyo who stood beside the window as she held a violin-like instrument.

そこにはヴァイオリンのような楽器を持ったヨヨが窓際で佇んでいた。

“Looks like Ojou-sama knew we are coming.”

“Ee, I saw you two return from your shopping from the window. Beside, didn't you two looking towards here? Ninthe probably said she want to hear my musical performance, right?”

“As expected of Ojou-sama, what a splendid conjecture.”

「よくオレが来たことが分かりましたねお嬢様」

「ええ、窓からあなたたちが買い出しから戻って来たのを見ていたもの。それにあなたたち、こちらを見ていたでしょ？ 恐らくニンテが私の演奏を聞きたいとか言っていたのではなくて？」

「さすがはお嬢様、見事な推察です」

Souji once again admired Yoyo's wonderful observation power.

ヨヨの観察力は大したものだと改めてソージは感心した。

“Y-Yoyo-sama! I-Is it okay for me to hear it?”

“Ee, I don't mind. Rather than standing, relax yourself in that sofa.”

“Yes!”

“Then let me accept the kind offer.”

「ヨ、ヨヨ様！ き、聞かせてもらってもいいです？」

「ええ、いいわよ。立っているのもなんだから、そこのソファにでも腰かけて楽になさい」

「はいです！」

「ではオレもお言葉に甘えて」

Souji also approached the sofa, but Yoyo floated a smile of a mischievous child.

ソージもソファに近づこうとすると、ヨヨは悪戯をする子供のような笑みを浮かべる。

“Oh? How about you also play with me?”

“..... Ojou-sama, that's too cruel even as a joke, you know?”

“Fufu, but you won't improve if you didn't do it.”

「あら？ あなたも演奏に参加したらどう？」

「.....お嬢様、それは冗談でも酷いですよ？」

「ふふ、でもやらなければ一向に上達はしないわよ」

Ninthe inclined her neck towards the two's conversation and,

二人のやり取りに首を傾けたニンテが、

“Souji-sama can perform too?”

“Eh? Ah, well..... that is....”

“As expected of Souji-sama! You can do anything! Head butler is so stylish!”

“Ah..... uu.”

「ソージ様も演奏できるんです？」

「え？ あ、いや.....それはですね.....」  
「さすがはソージ様です！ なんでもできるんですね！ シツジチョーはダテじゃないです！」  
「あ.....うう」

Souji leaked out a perplexed voice as sweat began to flow from his forehead.

ソージは困惑気味に声を漏らすと額から汗が流れ出てきた。

“Fufu, Ninthe, don’t misunderstand, okay?”

“Heh? Mis-..... understand?”

“Ee, Souji certainly looks like he can do anything, but he also has things he isn’t good at.”

“I-Is that so?”

「ふふ、ニンテ、勘違いしては駄目よ？」

「へ？ かんちがい.....ですか？」

「ええ、確かに何でもできそうなソージだけど、彼にも苦手なものがあるのよ」

「そ、そうなんです？」

Ninthe’s innocent eyes were looking at Souji.

ニンテの無邪気な目がソージを貫いてくる。

“It is. About Souji, he doesn’t have a good artistic senses. Even among them, his musical sense is especially catastrophic.”

“..... haa.”

「そうよ。ソージはね、芸術センスがいまいちなよ。中でも音楽センスは壊滅的ね」

「.....はあ」

He could not deny it and could only sigh. It was just Yoyo said after all. His artistic senses weren’t good even in his previous life. Though his drawing and handicraft weren’t that bad compared to the general, only his musical sense was just as Yoyo said, a painful zero.

そう、反論できずに溜め息しか出てこない。ヨヨの言う通りだからだ。前世から芸術センスはいまいちだった。絵や工作などは一般人と比べてもそれほど遜色があるわけではないが、音楽的な部分はヨヨの言う通り嘆いてしまうほどセンス0だった。

Because everyone in his family were like that, it was probably hereditary, and before, he even made Yoyo’s cheeks cramped when he was told to do a musical performance for her.

家族皆がそうなので、恐らく遺伝なのだろうと言いわけてきたのだが、この前、ヨヨに楽器で演奏してみろと言われてやってみた時、ヨヨの頬を引き攣らせてしまう出来栄えだった。

His singing is hopeless in particular, just how could the same song became so different as Yoyo and Souji’s singing could be compared as the moon and a soft-shelled turtle using a cute analogy.

特に歌は絶望的であり、何故同じ歌でこうも違うのかというほど、ヨヨとソージの歌は、月とスッポンと例えるのが可愛く言えるほどの差があったのだ。

“What does Ninthe think of singing?”

“I love it!”

“I see, maybe we should open a concert in the mansion next time.”

“..... I'll just handle the properties at that time....”

“Souji will of course do it too.”

“..... Ninthe will see hell, you know?”

「ニンテは歌はどうかしら？」

「好きです！」

「そう、なら今度屋敷で音楽会でも開こうかしら」

「.....オレはその時は裏方で.....」

「もちろんソージにも出してもらおうわよ」

「.....ニンテが地獄を見ることになりますよ？」

He understood how horrible his singing was. After all when he went to the karaoke with his childhood friend in the previous life, even though it was just one song, his childhood friend turned pale, and she said, “Let’s go back,” with a gentle, small voice while her gaze was as if she was looking at a pitiful person.

She also said it afterwards. *Don’t ever sing before people other than me, it’s enough for me to be the only victim*, she said so.

自分の歌の酷さは理解している。何故なら前世で幼馴染とカラオケ行った時、一曲歌っただけなのに、幼馴染が顔を青ざめさせ、まるで可哀相な人を見るような目をして小さな声で「帰ろっか」と優しく言ってきたのだから。

後に彼女は言った。もう二度と私以外の人の前で歌わないでねと、被害者は私だけでいいからと言っていた。

Then when his family singing before him, he felt it and he said the same words as that time, thus he decided in his heart to not sing anymore as he understood he and his family were the same.

It just that, he didn’t understand why his childhood friend said it was okay to sing that mysterious wave-like singing only in front of her. He thought it was her trait, but it’s not like she like to sing that much, and he didn’t think deeply about it.

それは家族がソージの目の前で歌った時に、ソージ自身を感じて彼らに言った時と同じ言葉だったので、アレと同じものを自分が発するのだと理解して歌は歌わずにおこうと心に決めたのだ。

ただ何故幼馴染がそんな怪音波のような歌なのに、自分の前だけなら良いといった意味が分からない。もしかしたら癖にでもなったのかなと思ったが、別に歌うことはそれほど好きではなかったので、深く考えることはしなかった。

“Fufu, you are right. But, it should be possible to turn that zero into one, right?”

“..... I will do my best.”

“Good. Then, I shall do my best to make sure you enjoy it now.”

「ふふ、そうね。でも努力すれば0が1になるかもしれないわよ？」  
「.....善処します」  
「よろしい。それじゃ今は、この場を楽しませられるように努めるわ」

Yoyo set up the instrument. The sunlight that reflected make her blonde hair sparkling, and her orderly face as she set the instrument up was angelical.  
Even Ninthe was admiring her as she dropped her jaw.

ヨヨは楽器を構える。陽射しに反射する彼女の金髪がキラキラ輝き、その整った顔で楽器を構えるその姿はまるで天使のようだった。  
ニンテも見惚れているようで口をポカンと開けてしまっている。

One could understand that Ninthe's excitement increased when the performance began. Yoyo's music could easily seize people's hearts. There weren't few who requesting for her performance by all means even if it mean they must pay.

It was not looked like Yoyo was playing the instrument, it was as if the instrument was the one that answering her desire to please Yoyo.

演奏が始まるとニンテの感動がさらに高まっているのが分かる。ヨヨの音楽は人の心を簡単に掴む。中にはお金を払ってでも是非演奏してほしいという依頼も少なくは無い。

ヨヨが楽器を奏でているのではなく、まるで楽器がヨヨを喜ばせるように想いに応えているようだ。

It was a brilliant performance. Those were the only words that could be said, but the viewers, no matter who they were would feel something more than that.

Yoyo's sound ruled their surroundings as it entered Souji and Ninthe's ears, and their moods became pleasant. Following that, the sound gradually quieter, and Yoyo lowered the instrument as she bow.

素晴らしい演奏。一言で言えばそれだが、一目見れば、それ以上のものを感じさせてくれるのは実際に目の当たりすれば誰でも感じることだ。

ヨヨの音だけが周囲を支配し、ソージたちの耳を、心を心地好い気分にする。そして静かに音が静まっていき、ヨヨは楽器を下ろし頭を下げる。

*Pachi pachi pachi pachi*, Souji and Ninthe unconsciously clapping. Moreover they were in standing ovation.

パチパチパチパチと無意識にソージとニンテは手を叩いていた。しかもスタンディングオベーションだ。

“Fufu, thank you.”

“A-A-Amazingg! Bravo!”

“Ee, as expected of Ojou-sama. Only Ojou-sama can play a sound that could seize people's minds.”

“Ara, that's an exaggeration, Souji. Fufu, I am happy. Thank you, you two.”

「ふふ、ありがとう」

「す、す、すっごいですう！ ぶらぼ一ですう！」

「ええ、さすがはお嬢様です。これほど人の心を掴まれる音を奏でられるのはお嬢様だけです  
ね」

「あら、それは言い過ぎよソージ。ふふ、でも嬉しいわ。二人ともありがとう」

Maybe because she was a little embarrassed, Yoyo's cheeks were somewhat flushed.

少し照れているのかヨヨの頬が若干染め上がっている。

“Instruments also have hearts. You can play the sound as long as you can feel that.”

“Hoe~, m-maybe even Ninthe can do that!”

“Ee, you definitely can do that if you practice.”

“Yo~sh! I will work hard until the concert.”

「楽器にも心があるわ。それを感じてともに音を奏でるのよ」

「ほえ～、ニ、ニンテにもできるでしょうか！」

「ええ、練習すればきっとできるわ」

「よ～し！ 音楽会までに私も頑張りますです！」

Ninthe's breathing roughened as she displayed her eagerness. Looking at her happy smile made them smile inadvertently.

ニンテは鼻息を荒くし、意気込みを見せている。そんな彼女が微笑ましく思わず頬が緩む。

“Then I will learn from Ninthe, and singing in the concert....”

“No, Souji, you do the instrument.”

“..... eh? But, before....”

“I never told you to sing.”

「ではオレもニンテを見習って、音楽会では歌でも.....」

「いえ、ソージ、あなたは楽器になさい」

「.....え？ でもさっきは.....」

「歌えとは言ってないわ」

Eeh~, though he feel dissatisfied inside, Yoyo certainly never told him to sing. Apparently only Souji's singing was hopeless compared to his musical instrument performance.

He inadvertently wanting to droop his shoulders, but Souji decided in his heart to triumph over Yoyo in musical instrument performance.

ええ～って心の中で不満気に言うが、確かにヨヨには歌を歌えとは言われていない。どうやら楽器演奏はともかくソージの歌だけは駄目なようだ。

つい肩を落とす気分になったが、こうなったら楽器演奏でヨヨを見返そうと心に決めたソージだった。

## Story 17 Yoyo was Kidnapped

### 第十七話 攫われたヨヨ

Their boarded ship was attacked by pirate, and Mayuki, who guessed she was troubling the pirate after the asking event, was cooking using the kitchen inside the pirate ship along with Sheila.

乗っていた船が海賊に襲われ、その海賊の御厄介になるという想像だにできなかった事件に見舞われた天川真雪は、星守セイラとともに船の中にあるキッチンを使って料理を作っていた。

“Yosh! It’s done!”

「よし！ できた！」

Mayuki was looking at the boiling liquid inside a large pot, then she nodded in satisfaction. However, Sheila beside her was somewhat..... no, her cheeks were completely cramped.

真雪は大なべの中でグツグツと煮込まれている液体を見て、満足気に頷いていた。しかしその隣にいるセイラは若干.....いや、かなり頬を引き攣らせていた。

“Th-That’s..... Mayuki-san?”

“Nn? Wha~t is it, Sheila?”

“..... a-about this dish..... what is it?”

“Heh? It’s curry, you know?”

“..... eh?”

“After all, I saw in the TV that the navy’s fixed curry as the food for one of the week’s day when I am still in Japan. It’s hard to know what day it is because they are always in the sea, that’s why they created a curry day so as not lost sight of what day it is.”

“Eh, yes..... Sheila understand that, but....”

「え、えっと.....真雪さん？」

「ん？ な～にセイラ？」

「.....そ、その料理は.....何でしょうか？」

「へ？ カレーだよ？」

「.....え？」

「だってね、日本に居た時、テレビで海軍の人たちが毎回決まった曜日にカレーを作ってたんだ。アレって海にずっといるから曜日を把握し辛くて、その曜日を見失わないためにカレー曜日を作ってるんだって」

「は、はあ.....」

「だけどね、それって海軍の人がみ～んなカレーが好きだからできた決まりだよね？ 海賊と海軍ってやっぱ海の人たちだから、カレー好きだと思うんだ！ だからきっと気に入ってくれると思って！」

「え、ええ.....それは分かりますが.....」

Somehow there was curry roux-like ingredient inside the kitchen, so the pirate might also ate it. However, that thing didn’t matter. What Sheila currently worried about was although it was a curry..... there’s only red inside the pot.

何故ならカレールーのようなものもキッチンにあったのだから、彼らも好んで食べるのだろう。しかしそんなことどうでもいいのだ。今セイラが気になっているのは、何故カレーなのに.....鍋の中身が真っ赤なのかということだ。

Because sometimes, *bokoh*, the boiling phenomenon occur, it made Sheila who saw it as if she was watching magma.

時々ボコッと沸騰しているように弾ける現象が起きるので、まるでマグマを見ているような気分になるセイラであった。

(Sh-Sheila wonder if this is..... curry..... no matter how Sheila see it, it is not something eatable....)

(こ、これは.....カレーなののでしょうか.....どうみても食べてはいけないものに見えてしまうのですが.....)

She didn't know whether she was sweating because the kitchen was hot or because the curry (temp.) before her, but Sheila could feel the sweat was dripping from her forehead.

キッチンの熱さなのか、それとも目の前にあるカレー（仮）を見て出た冷や汗なのか分からないが、額から垂れるものを感じるセイラ。

note : temp. = temporary (name)

“U~n, I thought of making it redder to make it look more delicious~”

「う～ん、もう少し赤い方が美味しそうに映るんだけどなあ～」

Mayuki began to talk as if there's nothing wrong. Though Sheila who didn't see the cooking process couldn't have known as to why it turned red, she understood that there's definitely red pepper-like thing inside. That's because her eyes were hurting since a while ago.

とんでもないことを言い出した真雪。何故赤いのか調理過程を見ていなかったセイラには判断しかねるが、きっと唐辛子的なアレだとは分かる。何故なら先程から若干目が痛いのだ。

She guessed that steam which contained the stimulant that attacked her eyes was because there's too much red pepper added. It was a mystery as to why Mayuki who was right in front of the pot didn't feel any damage.

これは唐辛子を煮込み過ぎて、その刺激を含んだ湯気が目を攻撃しているのだと推測した。何故真雪が鍋の直前にいて、一切のダメージを感じていないのかは謎だが。

By the way, what Sheila made was simple salad and fried fishes. It wasn't a problem to make seafood because they were in the sea. Inside the salad were delicious looking shellfish and fish meats which intertwined with the vegetables.

ちなみにセイラが作ったのは簡単なサラダと魚のフライだった。海にいるので魚介類には困らないのだ。サラダも美味しそうな貝や魚の身を蒸して解したものを野菜と絡めてある。

Sheila was good at cooking, so she was dumbfounded by the totally red and deadly smell before her.

At that time, the pirates came and crowding inside the dining hall while saying, “We are hungry~.” Mayuki heartfully filled the plates with her curry (temp.).

料理が得意なセイラだからこそ、目の前にある真っ赤な死の香りに唾然としてしまった。  
その時、「腹減ったあ〜」と言葉を溢しながらゾロゾロと食堂へとやって来る海賊たち。意気揚々としてお皿にカレー（飯）を注いでいく真雪。

“..... Oi Mayuki, what is this?”  
「.....おいマユキ、これは何だ？」

After everyone entered the dining hall and sat around the table, the head, Eula had her cheeks cramped when she see the plate before her.

皆が食堂に入って来て、テーブルを囲んだ後、頭であるユーラが目の間に置かれてある皿を見て頬を引き攣らせている。

“Nn? This? You didn't know this? This is curry!”  
「ん？ あれ？ 知らないの？ カレーだよ！」

Since they boarded her ship, Mayuki and Sheila understood that Eula was a good person from their small talks.

あれからユーラに関しては、彼女から砕けた喋り方でいいと言われていた真雪たち。

“N-No, I know what curry is..... eh? This is curry?”  
「い、いや、カレーは知ってるけど.....え？ これカレーなのか？」

Not only Eula, everyone were looking at the red liquid that seemed to be capable of opening holes.

ユーラだけでなく全員が穴が開くほど真っ赤な液体を見つめている。

“..... hey, somehow my eyes are hurting.”  
“Aa, even I can't stop my tears.”  
“I-I can't see what's in front of me....”  
「.....なあ、何だか目が痛いんだが」  
「ああ、俺も涙が止まらねえ」  
「ま、前が見えない.....」

Eula, Reiss, then Gazi, they stated their impression in that order. Tears were flowing just like waterfall from Gazi's eyes. The other pirates were also rubbing their eyes.

ユーラ、レイス、ガジの順に感想を述べる。ガジなんかは目から滝のように涙を流している。他の者たちも目頭を擦っている。

“Mou~ isn't it looks delicious and stimulating! Come on, you'll feel it once you eat it!”

「もう～それほど刺激的に美味しいってことじゃない！ ほらほら、いいから食べてみてよ！」

Mayuki innocently recommended them to eat. Everyone were *gokuri*, gulping, they timidly took the spoons, and they quietly but certainly sunk the spoon into the magma.

Only one person, only Sheila had predicted what might happen after this as she joined her hands in prayer, but no one noticed her.

真雪は無邪気に箸を勧める。皆はゴクリと喉を鳴らすと、恐る恐るスプーンを手に取り、静かにだが確実にマグマにスプーンを沈ませていく。

ただ一人だけ、セイラだけはその後どうなるのかすでに予測しているのか合掌しているのだが、それには誰も気づいていなかった。

The first of the victims was Eula.

まず最初の犠牲者はユーラだった。

“Bogafuuh!?”

「ぼがふうっ!？」

Her tail that grown from her hip and her beast ears on her head were reflexively *pin*, straightened towards the sky. Following that, Sheila saw fire coming out of Eula's mouth.

彼女の頭に生えている獣耳と尻に生えている尻尾が、どんなものでも貫けるのではないかと思えるほどピンと空へ向く。そしてセイラには見える。彼女の口から炎が吐かれているのを。

“Ababababah!?”

“H-Hit hurt!? Hy houth his hurttttt!?” note : it hurt!? my mouth is hurttttt!!

“Haherrrrr!” note : water!

「あばばばばっ!？」

「ひ、ひはいっ!？ くひがひはいィィィッ!？」

「み、みじゅううううっ!？」

It was just like the drawing of hell. Everyone's lips were swollen to twice their sizes, there were some who was crawling on the floor in search of water, there were those with the white of their eyes shown and foaming mouths, and there were those that were convulsing with completely red faces.

まさに地獄絵図だろう。たった一口で全員の唇は二倍に腫れ、中には水を求め床を這いずりまわる者、白目を剥いて口から泡を吹いて気絶する者、顔を真っ赤にして痙攣している者。

The red magma was mysteriously looked like blood, it was a scene where those who didn't know anything would misunderstood it as a place of tragedy.



In a certain day, Yoyo Yatsugi Crowtail was looking over the piled up document on the desk as she work inside the study. Then a knocking sound came from the door, she allowed the person to enter as she thought it was Souji. After all, only Souji would visit the room when she was at work.

ある日、書齋で仕事をしていたヨヨ・八継(やつぎ)・クロウテイルは、机に積み重なっている書類に目を通していた。そしてドアをノックする音がして、ソージだと思い入室を許可した。基本的に自分が仕事をしている時、部屋を訪ねてくるのはソージだからだ。

However she recalled that Souji would without fail called on her, and she who noticed it was not him raised her face.

The one standing there was someone she never seen before. It was a woman with an inorganic, doll-like expression. Light blue short hair and her almond eyes gave off a cold impression. But what's more noticeable was she wore maid clothing.

しかしそこでソージなら、いつも必ず一声かけることを思い出し、彼ではないことを悟り顔を上げる。

そこには見たこともない人物が立っていた。人形のような無機質な表情をした女性。水色の短髪で、切れ長の瞳は冷酷な印象を受ける。ただ気になるのはメイド服を着込んでいることだ。

“Who are you?”

「あなたは誰？」

Yoyo tried to calmly asked her. Naturally she wasn't an invited guest, much more someone from this mansion. Furthermore no amiable atmosphere could be felt from her.

The question as to why no one noticed her coming here wandered inside Yoyo's mind. There should be maids who were working in the garden, and there's also Souji inside this mansion. No matter how excellent one in stealth, no one should be able to come here in this time which obviously not in the night without anyone noticing....

Even so, Yoyo keep sitting on the chair without showing she was shaken by it. However she desperately thinking of an idea inside her head. Then from the back of that woman,

ヨヨは努めて冷静に尋ねる。無論彼女が招いた客でもなければ、屋敷の者でもない。それに友好的な雰囲気も彼女からは感じない。

一体何故誰にも感づかれずにここまでという疑問がヨヨの脳裏を廻る。庭にはメイドが仕事しているし、屋敷内にはソージもいる。いくら隠密に優れている者でも、夜でもない今の時間帯に誰にも見られずにここまでやって来れるとはどういうわけか.....。

それでもヨヨは動揺を一切見せずに椅子に座り続けている。だが頭の中では必死に思考を回転させている。するとその彼女の背後から、

“Fufufu, as expected of Yoyo Yatsugi Crowtail.”

「フフフ、さすがねヨヨ・八継・クロウテイル」

A girl with silver blonde hair appeared. It could be seen she was younger than Yoyo. To put it bluntly, she was a child. Though she might be older than Ninthe, there's not much different between them. However, she could feel her strong mind from her eyes along with her self-confidence look.

Because the light blue haired woman was tall and the girl beside her was small, they looked very unbalanced. But the two were definitely a beautiful woman and a beautiful girl.

From the atmosphere where the beautiful girl took the initiative, Yoyo judged that perhaps the beautiful woman was her maid.

白髪に近い銀髪を持った少女が現れた。歳はヨヨよりかなり下に見える。ハッキリ言って幼い。ニンテよりは上のようなのだが、あまり変わらないようにも見える。だが勝気そうに吊り上がった瞳は自信の表れにも感じられる。

水色髪の女性の身長が高く、隣にいる少女の身長が小さいのでとてもアンバランスだった。しかしその二人ともが、美女と美少女であることは間違いなかった。

美少女の方が主導権を握っている雰囲気を感じたので、恐らく彼女のメイドが美女なのだろうと勝手に判断した。

“Looks like you won't show any fear in your expression towards unknown people who suddenly appeared.”

“Answer me. What are you?”

“Fufufu, please relax. I'll surely introduce myself..... after you are captured.”

「突然現れた得体の知れない者相手に、怖気(おじけ)づくどころか表情一つ変えないとはね」

「答えなさい。あなたたちは何者？」

「フフフ、安心しなさい。名乗りはちゃんとしてあげるわよ.....捕らえた後でね」

At the moment the girl said that while narrowing her eyes, the woman beside her moved towards Yoyo in tremendous speed.

Though Yoyo stood up to try to counter attack, her arms were instantaneously turned behind her and twined. At the same time something cold was put her wrists.

そう言った少女の目が細められた瞬間、隣にいた女性が凄まじい速さでヨヨに向かってきた。

ヨヨも反撃しようと立ち上がろうとしたが、瞬時に背後に回られて腕を絡め取られてしまった。その際にカチャリと手首に冷たいものが嵌められる。

“Kuh..... 《Magic Sealing Lock》 ..... kh!?”

「くっ..... 《魔封錠(まふうじょう)》 .....っ!？」

It was a handcuff with effect that literally sealing one's magic. Moreover the maid-like woman's movement was very refined unlike a mere maid. It was a movement of someone who received advanced combat training.

それは文字通り魔法を封じる効果のある手錠だった。それよりもメイドらしき彼女の動きが、とても一介のメイドだとは思えないほど洗練されたものだった。高度な戦闘訓練を受けているような動き。

(..... no, this is.....!?)  
(.....いえ、コレは.....!?)

While she was caught, Yoyo noticed something.  
ヨヨは捕まった状態で、何かに気づいた。

“Fufufu, your expression finally changed.”  
「フッフ、ようやくその表情を歪められたわね」

The girl floated a very happy smile. When Yoyo tried to shout, her mouth was covered as if they had predict what she'd do.  
嬉しそうに笑みを浮かべる少女。こうなったら叫ぼうとした時、先を読まれていたように口を手で塞がれる。

“Looks like the capturing is complete now. Well then, I'll introduce myself as promised. My name is Femme D. Dresoj!”  
「とりあえず捕獲完了ね。では約束通り教えてあげる。アタシの名前は、フェム・D・ドレスオージェよ！」

When she saw the girl giggling as she put a hand before her mouth,  
手を口元に当ててクスクスと笑う彼女を見て、

(Dresoj? Certainly there is such name related to 《Ozwine Province》 in South continent....)  
(ドレスオージェ? 確か南大陸の《オズワイン地方》に縁(ゆかり)がある名前.....)

Yoyo calculated the other person's identity from the vast knowledge stored in her brain.  
ヨヨの脳内に保存されている膨大な知識から相手の素性を割り出す。

(【Holy Kingdom Lavahha】 should be in 《Ozwine Province》. Among their royalty and nobles' name, there is Dresoj....)  
(《オズワイン地方》には【ラヴァッハ聖国】があるはず。その王侯貴族の名に、ドレスオージェがあったわね.....)

She looked up at Femme who drew closer step by step, and she arranged the information. Toward such Yoyo, Femme looked down at her in amusement.  
カツカツと近づいていくフェムを見上げながら、情報を整理していく。そんなヨヨに対して、楽しそうに見下ろしているフェム。

“Because you're knowledgeable, about myself, you should've noticed it, right?”

“.....”

“Well, my identity isn't matter. Let's go, Testa.”

「聡明なアナタのことだから、アタシのこと、もう気づいてるでしょ？」

「.....」

「まあ、アタシの素性なんてどうでもいいのよ。さあ、行くわよテスト」

When the woman called Testa touched Femme's outstretched hand, Femme's body gradually turn transparent.

テストと呼ばれた女性が、フェムが伸ばした手に触れると、フェムの身体が徐々に透けていく。

(..... magic!? Moreover, transparency? I see, that's how they got inside....)

(.....魔法っ！？ しかも透明化の？ そうか、これで屋敷の中に.....)

Though she seemed to understand on how these women entered the mansion, she couldn't do anything in her state where her magic was sealed and her body was restrained. Following that, Yoyo's body also became transparent.

彼女たちがどうやって屋敷内に入って来たか理由が分かったが、魔法を封じられて身体も拘束されている今の状態では何もできなかった。そしてヨヨの身体もまた透けていく。

(..... Souji....)

(..... ソージ.....)

The three suddenly disappeared from the study.

三人の姿はその場から忽然と消えた。

## Story 18 Butler on the Move

### 第十八話 動く執事

Ten minutes had passed since Yoyo was kidnapped by Femme when the fact that someone had kidnapped Yoyo was noticed.

ヨヨが何者かに連れ去られたという事実に気づいたのは、ヨヨがフェムに攫われて十分後のことだった。

Everyone inside the mansion with Souji at the top set their feet inside Yoyo's study. Souji who was visiting the room felt it was odd because there's no response from Yoyo coming from inside, and there was no one when he entered the room, no one know where she went when he asked the other maids.

Though he searched around the mansion for a while, he couldn't find Yoyo, and Souji who felt this becoming more and more strange once again came towards the study.

今屋敷中の者たちがソージを筆頭に、ヨヨの書斎に足を踏み入れていた。部屋を訪ねたソージが、中からヨヨの返事が無いのでおかしいと思い入ってみれば、そこはもぬけの殻であり、どこに行ったのかメイドたちに訪ねても知らないと言う。

一応屋敷中を探してはみたが、ヨヨの姿を発見できず、いよいよこれはおかしいと思ったソージは再び書斎に来ていたのだ。

“Everyone, please back off a little.”

「皆さん、少し離れていて下さい」

As Souji said so, the maids get out of the room through the opened door. Souji's right hand was placed on the floor and,

ソージがそう言うと、ドアを開けたまま外へメイドたちは出て行く。ソージは右手を地面へとかざし、

“Project what recorded, Blue Flame.”

「記(しるし)を映せ、青炎(せいえん)」

Blue flame manifested from Souji's right hand and it engulfed the room. Following that, it changed into a wall-like form before Souji.

ソージの右手から青い炎が顕現し、部屋を覆っていく。そしてそれとは別にソージの目の前にも壁のような形に変化する。

“Umm..... is something starting?”

“Shh! Just keep silent and watch.”

「えっと.....なにが始まるんです？」

「しっ！ いいから黙って見てなさいな」

Ninthe watched the room from the door, and she asked that question towards Souji's action, but the other maid just warned her.

Thus something was projected from the wall-like blue flame .

ニンテがドアの外から中の様子を見て、ソージの行動に疑問を感じたようで言葉にしたが、それを他のメイドが注意した。

すると壁のようになった青い炎に、何かが映し出されてきた。

“Y-Yoyo-sama!”

「ヨ、ヨヨ様っ！」

It couldn't be helped that Ninthe shouted that. After all there's definitely the image of Yoyo who was working inside the study. However Ninthe who let out such loud voice received another warning.

After watching for a while, two mysterious figure appeared before the working Yoyo-sama. Following that, Yoyo was pinned down and kidnapped.

ニンテが叫ぶのも無理はない。そこに映像として映っているのは間違いなく書斎で仕事をしているヨヨなのだから。しかしまたも大声を出したことで注意を受けるニンテ。

しばらく見ていると、仕事をしていたヨヨ様の目の前に謎の人物が二人現れる。そしてヨヨは組み敷かれ、連れ去られてしまった。

Souji erased the blue flame and let out a slight sigh.

ソージは青い炎を消すと、軽く溜め息を吐く。

“The enemies apparently using a troublesome magic huh.”

“Looks like it~, I never thought it was magic to make one transparent, it is considerably rare.”

「どうやら、敵は厄介な魔法を使うようですね」

「そうみたいね~、まさか透明になる魔法なんて、結構レアだわ」

Kaina reacted towards Souji's words.

ソージの言葉にカイナが反応を返した。

“Beside, the other party are someone related to the south continent. Certainly there is an aristocrat with Dresoj as their name in 【Holy Kingdom Lavahha】.”

“Looks like you remember it well~.”

“Ee, when I privately went to the south continent, I incidentally thought of at least searching for the name of powerful nobles, and there's that name among the nobles.”

“Fu~n, but why is that aristocrat-sama need something from Yoyo-sama? Is there animosity between them?”

“No, from what I know, Ojou-sama doesn't have any relation to 【Holy Kingdom Lavahha】 .

Though that place was a sacred place for famous mechanical doll, Ojou-sama never got involved in work related to mechanical doll....”

「それに相手は南大陸の関係者のようですね。確かドレスオージェは【ラヴァッハ聖国】の王侯貴族にあった名前でした」

「よく覚えてるわね~」

「ええ、以前私用で南へ行った時に、ついでに実力のある貴族の名前くらい探っておこうと思  
い、幾つかの貴族名にその名前がありましたから」

「ふ～ん、でもその王侯貴族様が何でヨヨ様を？ 何か反感買ってたっけ？」

「いえ、オレの知る限りでは、【ラヴァッハ聖国】とは関わりを持っていないはずですよ。あそ  
こは有名な自動人形の聖地ですが、お嬢様の携わる仕事に自動人形に関するものはありません  
し……」

Souji had known all of Yoyo's work schedule. Souji thought that within it there should be no one  
that at the very least would antagonized her.

ヨヨの仕事はスケジュール管理も含めて、ソージは全て把握している。その中には少なくとも  
相手の反感を買うようなものはなかったはずだとソージは考える。

“Right~, I can't feel any feeling such as grudge from their appearances.”

“It is so. Though there's the possibility that someone hired them....”

“What is it?”

“Ah, no....”

「そうね～、相手も表情を見た限りじゃ、別に復讐とかそんな感じじゃなかったし」

「そうですね。もしかしたら誰かに雇われて仕事をしているのかもしれませんが……」

「どうしたの？」

「あ、いえ……」

Souji felt something was strange when he thought that they must be employed by someone.

ソージは果たして本当に誰かに雇われているという考えが当たっているのか不思議に思う。

(They are aristocrat. Beside, Dresoj is a distinguished family that produced excellent doll  
makers and molding artists one after another. Just who could hire such people.....?)

(相手は王国貴族。それにドレスオージェと言えば、数々の優秀な人形師や造形師を輩出して  
きた名門。そんな人物が、誰かに雇われたりするのか……?)

From what he seen, the girl that introducing herself as Dresoj had an atmosphere of a very  
proudful person. Beside she looked to be still a child that all the more made her pride wouldn't  
allowed her to be used by someone. However, it was the truth that Yoyo was kidnapped. For  
now, rather than their objective, he decided to first find Yoyo's whereabouts.

At that time, *dadada*, a maid came into the room with loud steps. She carried one sheet of paper  
in her hand.

見た感じ、ドレスオージェと名乗っていた少女はプライドの高そうな雰囲気を出していた。  
それにまだ子供みたいだから尚更誰かに使われても許容できるような矜持は持ち合わせて

いないだろう。しかしヨヨが攫われたのは間違いない。とにかく今は相手の目的よりも、ヨヨの居場所を見つける方が先決だった。

その時、ダダダと物凄い勢いでメイドが部屋に入って来た。その手に一通の紙を持って。

『We are in custody of Yoyo Yatsugi Crowtail. If you want her back, Souji Alkasha must come to 【Jeancack Hill】 alone, come to the unused church. The date is xxx.』

『ヨヨ・八継・クロウテイルの身柄を預かった。返してほしいば、ソージ・アルカーサー一人で【ジャンカックの丘】にある、今はもう使われていない教会に來い。日時はxxx』

Souji became dubious when he saw what's written on the paper.

ソージは紙に書かれている内容を見て訝しむ。

“Nn? What's with this? The demand?”

「ん？ 何これ？ 要求は？」

Just as Kaina questioned, about money and goods, the things that should naturally be the demand were not written in this paper.

What's written was only for Souji to come alone along with the date that should be obeyed. It must be along the line that they would not guarantee Yoyo's life if this arrangement was not obeyed.

カイナの疑問通り、この紙には金品などの、誘拐なら当然要求しそうなものが一切書かれていない。

書かれてあるのはソージが一人で来ることと、日時を守れということ。もし約束を違えればヨヨの命は保障しないということだ。

(What is their aim? If I think more about it, their grudge is not towards Yoyo-ojousama, but me...?)

(相手の狙いは何だ？ 考えられるとしたら、恨みを買っているのはヨヨお嬢様ではなく、オレということ.....?)

If that's so, he could understand what had happened. They were trying to restrict Souji's movement by taking Yoyo as hostage, thus they'd be able to reach Souji. There's also hint of the possibility of them using Yoyo as some kind of a bait.

それならば理解できる。ヨヨを攫い人質にすることでソージの身動きを制限して、ソージに本懐を遂げる。ヨヨは体(てい)の良い餌として使われた可能性を示唆する。

(The one who hold grudge against me..... when I think about..... aah, there are a lot of them)  
(恨みか.....そんな覚えは.....ああ、いっぱいあったわ)

To be precise, there were more people that holding grudge against Souji than Yoyo. It was because of his other-side job. Even at the time he traveled with Balmunk, they were punishing bad people as if they were some allies of justice.

Beside, he had knocked down the kidnapers, disempowered hostile factions, annihilated demon race, those were the things he got involved with for Yoyo's sake. He also had a lot of experiences that he couldn't helped but being unjustly resented.

ハッキリ言って恨みを買うのであれば、ヨヨよりソージの方が多。裏の仕事をこなすという事は、そういうことだ。バルムンクと旅していた時期も、まるで正義の味方ごっこをしているかのように悪さを行う者たちを成敗してきた。

それにヨヨのために、誘拐犯をぶちのめしたり、敵対勢力を無力化させたり、魔族を殲滅したりと、それこそ実際に行動しまくってきたのだ。逆恨みをされていては仕方の無いことを多く経験してきた過去を持っている。

(Haa, this will make Yoyo-ojousama scold me again.)

(はあ、これはまたヨヨお嬢様にお小言を言われそうだな)

Souji, who thought that he had exposed his master into danger for so many times, was scratching his head with *yare yare* feeling.

自分の落ち度で主を危険に晒してしまったと考えたソージは、やれやれと頭をボリボリとかく。

“Let me hold this paper. There's also things I want to examine from it.)

「この紙は頂いておきますね。少し調べたいこともありますし」

He put the paper in his pocket as he said so. Then when he turned his gaze to Kaina,

そう言うと懐に紙を収めた。そしてカイナに視線を向かわせると、

“Mother, I'll go away for the time being.”

“Ye~s, take care and have a safe trip.”

“Eeh!? You won't help him!”

「母さん、とりあえず今から行ってきますね」

「は~い、気を付けて行ってらっしゃい」

「ええっ！？ 加勢とかしないんですか！」

Ninthe let out a surprised voice because of Kaina's simple response.

カイナのあっさりとした言動にニンテが驚き声を上げる。

“Ee~, after all it was written on the paper for Souji to come alone.”

“B-But...”

“It's okay, it's okay, there's no need to worry about our Souji. Right, Souji?”

“Ee, I'll return before dinner.”

“..... Souji-sama.”

「ええ～、だって紙にはソージ一人で来いって書いてあるし」

「で、でも.....」

「大丈夫大丈夫、ウチのソージなら心配ないわよ。でしょ、ソージ？」

「ええ、夕飯までには戻ります」

「.....ソージ様」

He quietly put his hand on Ninthe's head as she looked up at him in worry, then he slowly patted her. “Fuwa...,” Ninthe leaked a voice as she seemed to feel pleasant by it.

心配そうに見上げてきているニンテの頭にそっと手を置くとゆっくりと撫でる。「ふわ.....」とニンテは気持ち良さそうに声を漏らす。

“Please don't worry. I am Ojou-sama's butler. So, we'll return for sure. Right, Ojou-sama must be hungry when we return, that's why I want Ninthe to prepare the meal.”

“Ah, y-yes!”

「安心して下さい。オレはお嬢様の執事です。必ず戻って来ますよ。そうですね、帰って来た時は、お嬢様もお腹を空かしておられるかもしれませんから、食事の用意頼みますねニンテ」

「あ、は、はいです！」

Kaina was grinning as she saw Ninthe smiling happily and,

嬉しそうに微笑むニンテを見てカイナはニヤニヤしながら、

“My oh my, for my son to even put his hand to su~ch innocent girl..... how sinful.”

“..... mother, I don't understand what you mean by that, but if the works I announced in the morning are not done when I return, this month salary will be decreased into third.”

“Now now everyone! Let's return to our work!”

「あらあら、ウチの息子ったら、こ～んな幼気(いたいけ)な女の子まで.....罪作りね」

「.....母さん、何言ってるか分かりませんが、オレが帰って来るまで今朝言い渡した仕事が出ていなかったら、今月の給金は三割減ですから」

「さあさあみんな！ 仕事に戻るわよお！」

Kaina went out of the room in a good mood accompanied by everyone. Souji who was left alone floated a smile, but it was destroyed instantly as his eyes became just like a hunter that was going to capture the prey.

調子良く部屋から皆を伴って出て行くカイナ。一人残されたソージは、笑みを浮かべていたが、瞬時に崩すとまるで獲物を捕らえるハンターのような目を作った。

(I'll make them regret to put their hands on Ojou-sama.)

(お嬢様に手を出したこと、後悔させてやる)

**【Jeancack Hill】** . It was located to the west of the town where Yoyo's mansion was. There's nothing on the ground except the grass that spreaded out all over it, and the existence of the only ruin in the vicinity was as if it became the accent of this hill.

**【ジャンカックの丘】**。ここはヨヨの屋敷がある街から西方に位置する場所に存在する。一面には何も無い草原が広がっており、崖近くにポツンと廃墟がまるでアクセントのように存在感を示している。

The ruin that was formerly a church had been abandoned for a long time after it was attacked by bandits, and it keep such state even after tens of years. Of course because no one maintained it, ivies were entwined in the walls, and there were holes opened.

When one entered, there were seats with broken parts. Though the altar that placed inside was broken, only the table in front of it was still in good condition.

その廃墟はかつて教会だったが、賊に襲われて以来、ずっと放置されており、何十年もそのままである。無論手入れも全くしていないので、壁には蔦(つた)などが絡まっていたり、穴が開いていたりする。

中に入ると、参列している長椅子もところどころ破壊されてある。室内の突き当りにある祭壇も壊されているが、その手前にあるテーブルだけはまだ綺麗なままである。

Following that, Yoyo Yatsugi Crowtail who was deprived of her limbs' freedom was sleeping above it.

そしてそのテーブルに、ヨヨ・八継・クロウテイルは四肢の自由を奪われ眠らされている。

“..... uh.”

「..... う」

The wind that sometimes entered from the cracks was brushing her cheeks, and Yoyo's beautiful blonde hair was lightly swayed.

時折入ってくる隙間風が頬を撫でて、ヨヨの美しい金髪も微かに揺れる。

“..... here is....”

「.....ここは.....」

The scenery that entered Yoyo's eyes when she opened them was of an unknown ceiling.

目を開けたヨヨの目に入ってきた風景は、見覚えの無い天井だった。

“You're slow to wake up, Miss Crowtail?”

「遅い目覚めね、クロウテイル嬢？」

When she heard that voice, Yoyo immediately recalled what happened to her. Following that, *fuu*, she exhaled slightly.

その声を聞いて、即座に自分に起きていることを思い出したヨヨ。そしてふうっと息を軽く溢すと、

“If possible, I want a herb tea.”

“Hee, to have so much composure when you wake up, just as expected of Crowtail's present master.”

「できればハーブティが欲しいわね」

「へえ、起きた途端にそんなに余裕を見せるなんて、さすがは若くしてクロウテイルの当主になっただけはあるようね」

Sitting on one of the seats was Femme D. Dresoj, Yoyo's kidnapper. When Yoyo realized that she was deprived of her body's freedom, she moved her head to confirm the surrounding.

参列している椅子に腰かけていたのは、ヨヨを攫ったフェム・D・ドレスオージェだった。ヨヨは身体が効かないことを悟ると、顔だけを動かして周囲を確認する。

“Ara? That reliable maid is not here?”

“Fufu, is that make you worry?”

“That's right, I am worry about it. After all she—————”

「あら？ あの頼もしそうなメイドはいないのかしら？」

「フフ、もしかして気になる？」

「そうね、気になるわ。何といってもアレ—————」

————— is not a human, right?

—————人間ではないでしょ？

### Story 19 Souji VS Testarossa

#### 第十九話 ソージVSテストロッサ

The smile Femme had until now was stiffened because of Yoyo's words. Seeing that reaction, Yoyo floated a smile as she gained her conviction.

ヨヨの言葉にそれまで笑顔を浮かべていたフェムが固まる。その反応を見て、ヨヨは確信を得たかのように笑みを浮かべる。

“It is like that after all.”

“What is?”

“Fufu, if you have grown senile then you shouldn't have reacted a little while ago.”

“..... you, didn't someone said you have a bad personality?”

“I think it is not as bad as yours, you know?”

「やはり、そうだったのね」

「何のことかしらね？」

「ふふ、惚けるなら、先程の反応をしないことね」

「.....アンタ、性格悪いって言われるでしょ？」

「あなたほどではないと思うわよ？」

Femme gritted her teeth.

するとフェムはギリッと歯を噛むと、

“You, haven’t you understand your situation? You don’t have your freedom now, right?  
Depending on my feeling-.”

「アンタ、状況分かってるの？ アンタに今自由は無いのよ？ アタシの気分次第で」

*Gatsu gatsu*, she approached Yoyo with loud footsteps. That followed by her taking out a knife from her breast pocket and applied it on Yoyo’s neck.

カツカツと大胆な音を立てながらヨヨに歩み寄ってくる。そして懐から出したナイフをヨヨの首元に当てる。

“Like this, you will immediately die, you know?”

“..... can you do it?”

“What did you say?”

“You have an objective. I was kidnapped because of that objective. That’s also why you deprived me of my body’s freedom. If it’s a bandit, I might have been killed, sold, or made into his plaything. However you are different. There should be a reason that you will be troubled if I die. At the very least, you can’t kill me now. Did I guess it right?”

「こうやってすぐにでも死ぬのよ？」

「.....やれるの？」

「何ですって？」

「あなたには目的がある。その目的があるから私を攫った。そしてこうして身体を自由を奪っている。賊ならもう殺しているか、売り飛ばしているか、慰み者にしているか、そのどれかよ。だけどあなたは違う。私には死なれると困る理由があるはず。少なくともまだ、殺せない。違うかしら？」

Because Yoyo indifferently said that, Femme’s face gradually flushed and the knife in her hand trembled.

そう淡々と告げると、増々フェムの顔が紅潮していき、ナイフを持った手が震える。

“E-Even if I can’t kill you, it is possible to beat you up. Shall I do that? Mind your words if you don’t want a wound that cannot be healed through your life!”

「こ、殺さなくても痛めつけることはできるわ。何ならやってみましょうか？ 一生治らない傷でも与えれば少しはその軽口が重くなるかもね！」

Femme thought that Yoyo would at least shows a frightened expression but,  
フェムはそれでヨヨが怯える様子一つくらい見せると思ったのかもしれないが、

“I see, then I will say, do it.”  
「そうね、だったらやってみるといいわ」

Because of the unexpected reply, Femme distorted her expression in surprise.  
返って来た言葉は予想外のものだったらしく、フェムはまた驚愕に顔を歪めた。

“I-I am not joking, I will really do it! You shouldn't have wanted that kind of wound because you're also a woman!”  
「じよ、冗談じゃなく、本当にできるのよ！ アンタも女なんだからそんな傷嫌でしょ！」

Disregarding Femme who was glaring at her as she told her to admit that, Yoyo calmly moved her mouth.  
認めなさいよと言わんばかりに睨みつけてくるフェムに対し、ヨヨはあくまでも冷静に口を動かす。

“It is so. But let me say one thing.”  
“Wh-What!”  
“If you even put a scratch on me then....”  
“Then, then what?”  
“..... think that your life already ended there.”  
“W-What-..... kh!?”  
「そうね。でも一つだけ言っておくわ」  
「な、何よ！」  
「もし私に傷一つでもつけば.....」  
「つ、つけば何よ？」  
「.....そこであなたの人生が終わると思いなさい」  
「な、何を.....っ!？」

At that time, the maid that accompanying Femme appeared and,

その時、フェムとともにいたメイドがサッと姿を現し、

“..... a guest.”

「.....来訪」

She only muttered that. When Femme heard that, she put the knife back to her breast pocket and she grinned.

短くそれだけを呟く。フェムはそれを聞き、ナイフを再び懐に納めると、ニヤッと笑った。

“I have been waiting..... Souji Alkasha.”

「待ってたわ..... ソージ・アルカーサ」

In front of her who was turning around, a tail-coat wearing, red-haired boy was bowing slightly.

彼女が振り向いた先には、燕尾服を着用した赤い髪の少年が軽く頭を下げていた。

“I have come to pick you up, Yoyo-ojousama.”

「お迎えに上がりました、ヨヨお嬢様」

Souji, who set his foot into the church that completely turned into ruin, discovered that Yoyo was laid down on the altar and her body was restrained with rope. He was relieved because she seemed to be safe.

完全に廃墟と化した教会に足を踏み入れたソージは、祭壇のある場所で身体を紐のようなもので拘束され寝かされているヨヨを発見する。どうやら無事のように安心する。

“Please let me introduce myself first. I am the butler who serves Yoyo Yatsugi Crowtail-ojousama, Souji Alkasha.”

「まず自己紹介をさせていただきます。私はヨヨ・八継・クロウテイルお嬢様に仕える執事、ソー  
ジ・アルカーサと申します」

The one who answered him was the girl who called herself as Dresoj. She was a beautiful girl with a different charm compared to Yoyo. The girl did the gesture of raising her silver hair with her hand then she smiled.

それに答えたのは映像の中でドレスオージェと名乗っていた少女だ。ヨヨとはまた違った魅力を持っている美少女。少女は銀髪を手で払う仕草をしてニッと口角を上げる。

“I am Femme D. Dresoj. The maid here is Testarossa.”

「アタシはフェム・D・ドレスオージェよ。こっちはメイドのテストロッサよ」

Next to Femme, the expressionless woman with light blue hair bowed slightly.

フェムの隣にいる水色の髪の色を持つ無表情の女性が微かに頭を下げる。

“This ended the politeness. Well then, I want you return Ojou-sama.”

「これはご丁寧に。さて、お嬢様を返してほしいのですが」

He diligently said that with a smile and,

努めて笑みを浮かべながら言うと、

“I don't mind, however there is a condition.”

「いいわ、ただし条件があるの」

He already expected that. There is no kidnapper who doesn't demand anything. If it was not related to money and goods, Souji had guessed that it was related to him.

Perhaps he was called because he unknowingly made her resented him, he thought she was going to demand his life, and he looked at her eyes.

そう、それは予想していた。何も要求しない誘拐犯などいない。金品関係ではないとすると、それはやはり呼びつけたソージに関係することだと推測している。

恐らく自分が知らず知らずに恨みを買っており、相手は命を要求するものだと思い、相手の目を見つめる。

“I wonder what kind of condition is it?”

「どのような条件でしょうか？」

He would hear her for now. However Femme immediately declared something that surprised him.

とりあえず聞いてみた。しかし次にフェムが驚くべきことを言い放った。

“I want you to become mine!”

「アタシのものになりなさいっ！」

His thought frozen for a moment.

瞬間、思考が停止した。

*Just now, what did she said?, he tried to ruminate her words once more in his head. I want you to become mine? If it is just as the words mean, she wants me to serve her.*

今、彼女は何と言った？ もう一度頭の中で反芻してみる。アタシのものになりなさい？ それは言葉通りの意味に捉えるならば、自分に仕えよと言っているようだ。

To tell the truth, though he had thought he was the cause of this matter, he never thought it'd come to this. He had guessed that the kidnapper at the very least was someone who resented him.

正直今回の件は、自分が原因だと考えていたが、こういう関わりをしているとは全く思っていなかった。あくまでも相手がソージに恨みを買っているのだらうと推測していたのだ。

Even Yoyo who lying down became agape as she watched them for a while because she never expect that kind of objective.

横たわっているヨヨも、その目的を予想していなかったのか久しく見ないような唾然顔をしている。

“..... for confirmation, are you telling me to serve you?”

“That is right! A noble existence like mine is the one suitable for an existence like yours!”

「.....一応確認しておきますが、それはあなたに仕えろということでしょうか？」

「そうよ！ アナタのような存在には、アタシみたいな高貴な存在こそが相応しいわ！」

Though her chest flatness would not lose to Yoyo, she displayed a satisfied expression that might be either because of her great confident or the declaration just now.

ヨヨと負けず劣らずのその平坦な胸を張っているが、余程自分に自信があるのか、それとも今の宣言に酔いしれているのか満足気な表情をしている。

“..... don't tell me, did you kidnap Ojou-sama just to gain the upper hand and smoothing the negotiation?”

“That is right! It is as you just said as I was not sure if you will accept it.”

“No no, even if I say I am going to serve you here, no other people could prove it. So I'll quickly betray you.”

“Fufufu, I already prepared for that.”

「.....もしかして、その交渉を優位に進めるためにお嬢様を攫ったのですか？」

「そうよ！ ただアナタにそう言ったところで了承するはずないと思ったからね」

「いえいえ、たとえここで私があなたに仕えると言ったところで、それを証明するものはないでしょうに。すぐに裏切りますよ私」

「フフフ、それに抜かりは無いわ」

Femme took out a black, cylindrical object from her breast pocket. Smiling suspiciously, she opened the cylinder's lid and a rounded paper was taken from the inside.

フェムが懐から黒い筒状の物体を取り出す。そして怪しく口角を上げながら、その筒の蓋を開けて中から丸めてある紙を手にとった。

“Do you know what is this?”

「コレが何か分かる？」

She unrolled the paper and shown it to him.

紙を広げて見せつけてくる。

“《Blood Oath》 ....”

“Oh my, though I didn't ask you, it is as you said.”

「《ブラッド・オース》 .....

「あら、アンタには聞いて無かったんだけど、その通りよ」

Though it was Yoyo who answered, Femme lightly nodded in confirmation.

ヨヨが答えたが、合っていたようでフェムが軽く頷く。

“I see, a 《Blood Oath》 huh. A.k.a 《Blood Covenant》 . A catastrophe is said to befall the one who put his seal on that if he doesn’t adhere what written on it.”

“It is so, this is originally used to sign a contract between mechanical doll (automata) and the puppeteer, but of course it can be used between human. Even though I said that, this thing is rare and very expensive.”

“Certainly, an excellent doll was said to have feelings. That is a magic tool made to not let the doll with feeling betrays its master huh.”

“Fufufu, how amazing. To know that much even though there aren’t much of it in the market, it make me want you more and more.”

“Though I am honored by it, in short you are saying that I must put a blood seal on that if I want to rescue Ojou-sama, right?”

“That is so.”

“I refuse.”

“..... then, is it okay for me to do as I like to this woman?”

「なるほど、《ブラッド・オース》ですか。通称《血の誓約書》。そこに血印(けついん)した者は、遵守を違えた場合、災いが起こると言われていますね」

「そうよ、これは本来、自動人形(オートマタ)と人形師の間に契約の印として使われているけど、無論人間同士でも使えるわ。こんなペラペラでも、希少価値の馬鹿高い代物よ」

「確か、優秀な人形は感情を宿すと言われています。その人形が感情のままに主を裏切らないように作った魔法具でしたね」

「フフフ、凄いわね。市場に出回っていないコレのことをそこまで知ってるなんて、増々アナタを手に入れたくなったわ」

「それは光栄ですが、要はお嬢様を助けたければ、そこに血印せよと、そういうことですか？」

「その通りよ」

「お断りします」

「.....ならこの女がどうなってもいいのかしら？」

This time she took out the knife, and Femme set it up to stab Yoyo’s chest.

今度はナイフを取り出すと、フェムはヨヨの胸に突き立てるように構えた。

“That will be a trouble. However, I advise you that it will be better to stop it.”

“Can I hear your reason?”

“Ee, that person is my master after all.”

“.....?”

“If you even put a scratch on her....”

「それは困りますね。ですが、それは止めておいた方が良くと忠告しておきます」

「理由を聞いてもいいかしら？」

「ええ、その方が私の主だからです」

「.....？」

「もし少しでも傷つけようものなら……」

Souji's smile vanished, he narrowed his eyes as he coldly glared at her and,  
ソージは笑みを崩し、冷酷に目を細め睨みつけると、

“I will annihilate you, okay?”  
「ぶち消しますよ？」

A clear killing intent gushed out from Souji. Femme who met that, “U...,” held her breath. Testarossa completely entered battle mode. However as her mind and body were exhausted because she continued to be bathed in killing intent, Femme was smiling.

ソージは明らかな殺意を迸らせる。それに当てられて「う……」とフェムは息を詰める。テストロッサは完全な戦闘態勢に入る。

だがそんな浴び続ければ心身が疲弊するほどの殺気の中、フェムは笑みを溢している。

“I want you! You are as good as expected! Testa!”  
「欲しいわ！ やはりアナタは良い！ テスタ！」

Femme called out to Testa, Testarossa lifted her skirt and she took out two big things with black luster that was equipped on her thighs, then she set them on her hands.

フェムがテストロッサの名前を呼ぶと、テストロッサはスカートをたくし上げ、太ももに装着してあった二つの黒光りするものを取り出し、両手に構える。

(Dual-gun? Their forms, magic guns huh....)  
(双銃？ あの形状は魔力銃か……)

Their outward appearances were having much smaller muzzles compared to normal guns. Just as their name said, they were loaded with magic power and they shot bullets made of condensed magic power. Their firepower depended on how much magic power supplied, but they were tricky stuffs due to the ability of rapid-fire.

外見は銃口が普通の銃より大きい小型の銃である。名前の通り魔力を充填し、その魔力を凝縮した弾を撃ち出す。その威力は込める魔力にもよるが、連射も可能な銃なので厄介な代物である。

“Just deprives him of his movement!”

“..... Acknowledged.”

「動きだけを奪いなさい！」

「.....理解しました」

Testarossa narrowed her eyes just like hawk's and she pointed the guns at him. Souji promptly jumped sideways from his location, and he was hidden in the shadow of the rows of chairs. The magic bullets destroyed chairs, and punctured the wall. They packed considerable power. If his defenseless self hit by those, he would literally be deprived of his movement.

テスタロッサが鷹のように目を細めると銃を向けて放ってきた。ソージはすかさずその場から横に飛び、参列してある椅子の影に身を潜ませる。

魔力弾は椅子を破壊し、壁にも穴を開けていく。なかなかの威力だった。無防備に当たれば、文字通り動きが奪われるだろう。

(Well then, I wonder how I shall proceed....)

(さて、どう処理するか.....)

Souji murmured that and his mind was as if he was organizing the collected documents.

まるで溜まった書類でも片づけるような感じでソージは内心で呟いていた。

## Story 20 Transparency Magic and Mechanical Doll

### 第二十話 透明魔法と自動人形

Because of Femme's order, Testarossa continued to rapid-fire without even a break, and Souji couldn't easily approach her. Inside such situation,

テスタロッサはフェムの命令で、休むことなく銃を連射し続けていて、ソージはなかなか近づくことができなかった。そんな状況の中、

“Nee, hear me, Souji Alkasha!”

「ねえ、聞こえてるかしらソージ・アルカーサ！」

Femme's voice rang out inside the church.

フェムの声が教会中に響き渡る。

“Why did you think I have my eyes on you?”

「アタシが何故アナタに目をつけたと思う？」

There's no way he know the reason.

そんなの知るわけがない。

“Where did you think I met you?”

「どこでアナタを知ったと思う？」

He wasn't interested either.

興味も無い。

“Let me tell you those!”

「教えてあげるわ！」

She began to talk even without his consent.

頼んでもいないのに語り始めた。

“You know, I, twelve years ago, was in 【Kuchenbar】 .”

「アタシはね、二年前、【クーヘンバー】に居たのよ」

Souji ruminating, (Twelve years ago? 【Kuchenbar】 ?,) in his mind.

ソージは心の中で（二年前？ 【クーヘンバー】？）と反芻(はんすう)していた。

“In such a big town, a certain incident occurred. You remember, right? After all you are the one who led it into the conclusion!”

「それなりに大きな街だけど、そこである事件が起きたわ。覚えてるでしょ？ 何と言っても結果的に解決に導いたのはアナタなんですからね！」

Her words made him recalled it. A strange incident certainly occurred 12 years ago in a town called 【Kuchenbar】 in south continent.

As they were transported to the 【Holy Kingdom Lavahha】 , mechanical dolls (automata) began to rampage in 【Kuchenbar】 .

彼女の言葉で思い出していた。確かに二年前、南大陸の【クーヘンバー】という街で奇妙な事件が勃発した。

それはすぐ近くにある【ラヴァッハ聖国】で造られ、輸送されてきた自動人形(オートマタ)が【クーヘンバー】で暴走し始めたのだ。

“The one who created those mechanical dolls (automata) was an unlicensed amateur. The dolls were magically crafted, so they required an extreme technology to be manufactured. If it was done half-assedly, it’s possible that the magic circuit would running wild thus it become impossible to control the dolls.”

「その自動人形(オートマタ)を造ったのは免許も持ち得ていない素人だった。人形は魔力細工を施す、極めて技術力のいる作業を要するわ。それを中途半端に行えば、魔力回路が暴走して人形は制御不可能になるの」

The unlicensed person, for the sake of prestige, sneakily slipped the dolls he made into the transportation, and after some time passed, he would say to the dolls’ owners that it was him who made those dolls and publish it to the public.

その無免許の人物は、名誉を得るために、こっそり輸送車に自分の造った人形を潜り込ませ、時期を見て、出回った人形の持ち主が実は自分だったと公にしようとしていたという。

He seemed wanting to prove that he could created splendid dolls even without license, but his immaturity caused disaster.

免許など無くとも立派な人形は造れると証明したかったらしいが、結局はその人物の未熟さが災厄を招いただけだった。

“There were three dolls slipped by that man. When the kingdom obtained that information, they gave me the duty to collect those dolls. But I was one step too late, the berserking dolls were already rampaging inside the town. Following that, I found a man surrounded by those three dolls.”

「その男が潜り込ませた人形は三体いたわ。アタシはその情報を得た国から、即座に人形を回収する任務を任されたのよ。けど一足遅く、暴走した人形はすでに街中で暴れ回っていた。そして、そこでその三体に囲まれてる一人の男を発見したのよ」

Souji recalled about that time and shrugged his shoulders because apparently he was seen. At that time Yoyo leaked words that she wanted to eat the fruit that only sold in South continent, and because Yoyo’s birthday was soon, Souji alone was on his way to the 【Holy Kingdom Lavahha】 where the fruit was.

どうやら見られていたのかとソージは当時のことを思い出しながら肩を竦める。そう、あの時はヨヨが南大陸でしか売っていないという果実を食べてみたいと 言葉を漏らしていたので、

もうすぐヨヨの誕生日だったため、ソージは一人でその果実がある【ラヴァッハ聖国】まで行く途中だった。

At the time he stopped by 【Kuchenbar】 , he encountered that incident. Frankly, three poorly made dolls were rampaging.

Because one of them tried to hurt a child, he instinctively kicked it flying, and his action apparently made him their enemy.

そこで通り道である【クーヘンバー】に立ち寄った時、その事件に遭遇した。ハッキリ言って拙い造りの人形が三体暴れていた。

その一体が子供を傷つけようとしていたので、思わず蹴り飛ばしたのだが、どうやらその行動で一気に敵視されてしまったようだった。

“No matter even if they were clumsily made dolls, the three were created as weapon type (Killing Type), so their power were quite troublesome when they rampage. Even one was troublesome but there were three of them. Moreover they surrounded you who didn't have any weapon at all. When I thought there's no way other than helping you..... I was really surprised.”  
“.....”

“Suddenly a white flame appeared from your right hand, and it erased the three dolls in no time.”

「いくら不格好な人形でも、その三体は一応兵器型(キリングタイプ)として造られており、暴走した力はかなり厄介だったわ。一体でも面倒なのにそれが三体。しかもアナタは武器も何も持たないで囲まれていた。仕方無く助けようと思ったら.....ホントに驚いたわよ」

「.....」

「突然アナタの右手から出現した白い炎が、瞬く間に三体の人形を消したんだからね」

That's right, he recalled that he instant killed them because he was in a hurry at that time.

そう、あの時は急いでたこともあって、瞬殺したことを思い出した。

“That time, although you worn a robe, after defeating the three, I saw your face as the hood covering your head came off.”

「その時、あなたはローブを着てたけど、三体を倒した後、頭を覆っているフードが取れて顔が見えたわ」

Indeed, his face was seen at that time. Though he was being careful, Souji had completely made a mistake.

なるほど、その時顔を見られたということだ。注意はしていたが、完全にソージの落ち度だった。

**“More than your face, I was captivated by the flame you created. It was a never-seen before white flame. It was very beautiful.”**

「アタシはアナタの顔よりも、アナタの生み出した炎に見入ったわ。見たこともない白い炎。とても美しかった」

**Femme was blushing in a trance.**

恍惚そうに頬を上気させるフェム。

**“That’s why I wanted to see it again, and I ran after you. However, I saw you running with a speed that couldn’t be caught up by me, and not only the flame, I became interested in you. Just what kind of a man you are, I desperately searched for you.”**

「だからもう一度見てみたいと思い、アナタを追ったわ。だけど、このアタシが追いつけないほどの速さで走って行くアナタを見て、炎もそうだけどアナタ自身にも興味が湧いた。一体どんな男なのだろうと、必死で調べたわ」

**Femme raised her hand and Testarossa stopped shooting.**

フェムが片手を上げると、テストロッサが撃つのを止める。

**“And I finally found you. I never thought you are in this East continent. No, rather than that I couldn’t understand why such strong person like you worked as a butler.”**

「そしてついに見つけた。こんな東にいるとは思わなかったわ。いいえ、それよりも何故アナタのような強者が執事などやっているのかが分からなかった」

**Souji who hid himself behind the chairs stood up.**

ソージは身を潜ませていた椅子から立ち上がり姿を見せる。

**“A strong person like you shouldn’t be content as a butler! Your value will shine if you use your strength under me! That’s why I want to liberate you.”**

「アナタの強さは執事に甘んじていいものじゃないわ！ その強さはアタシが使ってこそ価値が光るの！ だからアタシは、アナタを解放してあげたいのよ」

**Souji sighed as her frenzy filled eyes were turned towards him.**

狂気じみた瞳を向けられソージは溜め息を溢す。

“Good grief, looks like I have been misunderstood.”

“.....?”

“It seemed you thought I was forced to become a butler, however that’s where you are wrong. I have become a butler by my own will.”

“Fufufu, stop joking. If you have that power, shouldn’t you aim for something better? After all only strong people could obtain authority in this world.”

“Authority huh..... I don’t need that.”

“Wh-!? ..... what did you say?”

「やれやれ、どうやら勘違いをなさっておられるようですね」

「.....？」

「私が執事をやらされていると思われているようですが、それは違います。私は私の意思で執事をやっているのです」

「フフフ、冗談はよしなさい。それほどの力があれば、もっと上だって目指せるはずよ？ この世は強い者が権力を手にできるのだから」

「権力ですか.....別にいいですね」

「なっ！？ .....何を言ってるの？」

Femme’s expression shown that she couldn’t believe that.

フェムは信じられないといった面持ちだ。

“Though you might not understand it, I am happy now so I want you to not obstructing me.”

“..... lie.”

“I am not lying.”

“Lie! If you have that power, you should be able to quickly get rid of this woman! Yet, you served this weak woman, spending every days cleaning, washing, and other houseworks! How can someone be satisfied by that!”

“There is one here, you know?”

「あなたには分からないかもしれませんが、私は今幸せなのでですから邪魔をしないで頂きたいですね」

「.....嘘よ」

「嘘ではありませんよ」

「嘘よっ！ アナタほどの力があれば、すぐにでもここにいる女くらい蹴落とせるはずよ！ それなのに、弱い人間に仕えて、毎日掃除洗濯家事！ それが満足だと思ってるの！」

「ここに居ますよ？」

Souji pointed at himself. Those words made Femme stiffened and at a loss for words. However Souji really thought like that. He wanted to be a butler even in his previous life, he yearned for a fantasy world where he could use magic at least once as child, and those were exactly what happened now.

ソージは自分を指差す。その答えにフェムは言葉を失って固まっている。だが本当にソージはそう思っているのだ。前世からなりたかった執事になれ、男の子なら一度は憧れるファンタジーな世界で魔法を使ってみたいという体験も、今まさに実行中。

What's there to be dissatisfied about..... well, if it was about what he want, then he wishes for his mother to steady herself. Excluding that, he was satisfied enough to spend his life like that in this different world.

Hearing Souji's words, Femme staggered as she received the shock. Yoyo who was lying down opened her mouth.

これで何が不満なのか.....まあ、欲を言えば、もう少し母親がしっかりしてくれればと思うが。それを差し引いても、十分満足のいく異世界生活を送っている。

ソージの言葉を聞いて、ショックを受けたようによろめいているフェム。そんな彼女に横たわっているヨヨが口を開く。

“Give it up. Souji is mine, even Souji acknowledged it.”

“Shut up! A-A weak noble like you shouldn't speak as if you are above an aristocrat like me!”

「諦めなさい。ソージは私のものだし、ソージもそれを了承しているわ」

「黙りなさいっ！　じゃ、弱小貴族のくせに王侯貴族のアタシに上から物を言うなっ！」

The knife in her hand trembled as she put more power into it. Seeing her, Yoyo sighed in amazement and shut her eyes.

ナイフを握っている手に力を込めて震わせるフェム。ヨヨはそんな彼女を見て呆れたように息を吐くと目を閉じる。

“Souji, though I have become accustomed to lying down here, I want to return quickly. There's also the piled up work.”

“As you wish, Yoyo-ojousama.”

「ソージ、ここの寝心地も慣れてきたけど、早く帰りたいわ。仕事も溜まっているしね」

「畏まりました、ヨヨお嬢様」

Souji turned his right hand towards Testarossa before him and,

ソージは右手を目の前にいるテスタロッサに向けてかざすと、

“Burn and scorch, red flame.”

「燃え焦がせ、赤炎(せきえん)」

A crimson flame appeared from his right hand. It immediately attacked Testarossa just like a wave.

その右手から紅蓮の炎が現れる。そして真っ直ぐテストロッサに波のように襲い掛かる。

“Red!? That can’t be! His flame should’ve been white-!”

「赤っ！？ そんな！ 彼の炎は白じゃ！？」

Femme’s face was dyed in surprise, Testarossa aimed the guns towards the flame and shoot water-like thing, but its momentum didn’t loosen even if small holes were opened. Thus the flame swallowed her as is.

フェムは驚愕の色に顔を染め上げ、テストロッサはその炎に向けて銃を放つが焼石に水の如く、小さい穴が開くだけで勢いは緩まない。そして彼女はそのまま炎に飲み込まれる。

“Testa-!”

「テストッ！」

The wall destroying flame rapidly raised the room’s temperature.

壁ごと破壊した炎は部屋の温度を急激に上げていく。

“How, th-this is the same as general flame magic....”

“Well then, next is your..... kh!?”

「そんな、こ、これじゃ普通の炎魔法.....」

「さて、次はあなた.....っ！？」

At the moment Souji turned his attention to Femme, a silhouette jumped out from the burning flame. It came straight towards Souji, who put his power into the right leg’s toes and kicked the ground to move back.

ソージが意識をフェムに向けた瞬間、燃え盛っている炎の中から一つの影が飛び出してきた。そのまま真っ直ぐソージの方へ向かって来るが、右足のつま先に力を込め大地を蹴り背後へと移動する。

However the silhouette, Testarossa aimed the guns in her hands towards him. There’s only a slight distance and holes would appears in his body if this keep up. He rotated his body and used the force to kick the ground and this time he moved towards Testarossa.

しかしその影、テストロッサは素早く方向転換すると手に持った銃を向けてきた。距離はほとんど無い。このままでは身体に穴を虫食いのように空けられてしまう。しかし身体を回転させてその回転力を活かして地面を蹴って、今度はテストロッサとの距離を潰す。

Maybe because she had thought his action was one of evasion, Testarossa slightly frowned her brows, Souji kicked the guns in her hands. He thought with this she had lost the means of attacking, but this time a kusari fundo shot out from her palm.

回避一辺倒の行動をしようと思っていたのか、テストロッサも微かに眉をひそめるが、ソージは彼女が両手に持っている銃に直接蹴りを加えて飛ばした。これで武器攻撃がなくなったかと思っただ、今度は彼女の手の平から鎖分銅が放たれてきた。

note : <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kusari-fundo>

(!? ..... as expected huh.)

(!? .....やはりか)

The kusari-fundo twined around his left arm. Though they continued their contest of strength, his enemy's physical strength was higher, so she keep a cool face even though Souji was pulling it with a considerable power. Well, that maybe because she was a doll.

その鎖分銅が左腕に絡みつく。力比べが続くが、相手の膂力の方が大きいようで、ソージがかなりの力で引っ張っているというのに相手は涼しい顔だ。まあ、人形だからかもしれないが。

Testarossa sharply narrowed her eyes, and her abnormal strength was transmitted by the chain. *Guih*, she pulled and jumped over his head. She rotated once and landed splendidly.

Testarossa aimed her empty left hand's palm on him.

テストロッサの目が鋭く細められ、鎖から彼女の異常な力が伝わってくる。グイッと引っ張られるが、そのまま逆らわずに彼女の頭上目掛けて跳ぶ。グルリと身体を一回転させると、見事に着地を決める。しかしテストロッサが再び空いている左手の手の平を向けてくる。

Watching what she was doing, *gacha gacha*, a muzzle appeared in the center of her palm and expanded.

何をしてくるのかと警戒していると、ガチャガチャと手の平の中心から銃口のような筒が伸び出てきた。

(..... kh! Looks like she can do a lot of things.)

(.....っ！ いろいろやってくれる)

Thinking he would turn into beehive if this keep up, Souji fired the red flame again. However he understood that it was hardly effective against her. His aim was to obstruct her view ever slightly, and to loosen the chain. Just as he aimed, the power in the chain slightly weaken at the moment she was attacked. Using that moment, he removed the kusari-fundo from his arm.

ソージはこのままだと蜂の巣にされると思いもう一度先程放った赤い炎を彼女に放つ。しかし彼女には効果がほとんど無いことは分かっている。狙いは少しでも彼女の視界を塞ぎ、鎖を緩めること。狙い通り炎が彼女に襲い掛かった瞬間、少し鎖から力が弱まる。その一瞬を利用して、自分の腕から鎖分銅を外した。

Testarossa instantly rushed out from inside the flame with tremendous momentum. Souji jumped over her just like she did before. However before he lands, the spectacle that she picked up the guns that fell on the ground came into his sight.

刹那、炎の中からテストロッサが物凄い勢いで突進してきた。ソージはまた彼女を飛び越えるようにジャンプする。しかし着地する瞬間、彼女が地面に落ちた銃を拾う光景が視界に入った。

(This is bad!)

(まずい!)

He immediately thought so, but her movement was faster and she already set up the guns, he judged he would receives the attacks once he land if this keeps up. That's why Souji decided to create the next flame.

咄嗟にそう思ったが、彼女の動きの方が速く、銃はすでに構えられ、このままだと地面に到着する前に攻撃を受けてしまうと判断した。だからこそ、ソージは次なる炎を創り出すことを決めた。

“..... become my desired image, orange flame.”

「.....想いを像れ、橙炎」

He quickly turned his left hand forward and an orange-colored wall instantaneously appeared.

左手を素早く前方に向けると、そこから瞬時にして橙色の壁が出現する。

“It's orange now-!?”

「今度はオレンジ色っ!？」

Femme becoming more aghast. It couldn't be helped. She only thought that Souji could only use white flame after all. However Femme was laughing when she understood that Souji could use more than two flame.

フェムは更に愕然としている。それはそうだろう。彼女はソージが使用するのはいち炎だけと思っていたのだから。しかしソージは複数の炎を操れると理解したフェムはまた笑う。

“Fufufufufufu! Amazing! It is really amazing! I won't have anything to be feared once you become mine! Testa, come here!”

「フフフフフフ！ 凄いわ！ ホントに凄い！ アナタがアタシのものになれば怖いものは何も無いわ！ テスタ、こちらへ来なさい！」

Called by Femme, Testarossa face the wall created by Souji and moved back to Femme. Souji showed his face from the wall and confirmed the enemy's appearance. Because Testarossa was wrapped in flame, her uniform was in tatter. However there's thing that made him anxious.

フェムに呼ばれたテストロッサは、ソージが生み出した壁を警戒しながらもフェムのもとへと向かった。

ソージは壁から顔を出して相手の姿をゆっくりと確認する。テストロッサは炎に包まれていたため、服がボロボロだ。しかし気になることがあった。

That was although she was wrapped inside that flame, only her uniform was burnt. Her limbs, face, and even her hair didn't affected at all. There's not even one burn mark.

それはあれほどの業火に包まれたのに、燃えたのは服だけということだ。手や足、顔、髪などほとんど変化が見られない。火傷が見当たらないのだ。

“Quite the sturdy body you had.”

「ずいぶん、頑丈なお身体をなさっておられるんですね」

Even though Souji didn't know if that'd be answered, he let out those words. The one who answered him was Yoyo.

ソージが答えてくれるか分からないが、質問ともとれる言葉を発する。するとそれに答えたのはヨヨだ。

“Be careful. This woman is..... a mechanical doll (automata).”

“..... it is so after all huh.”

「気をつけなさい。この女性は……………自動人形(オートマタ)よ」  
「……やはりそうでしたか」

Everythings were answered by that. Certainly mechanical doll (automata) have what called human model, but of course the materials weren't human flesh. Especially weapon type (Killing Type)'s body was made by strong materials that couldn't be easily damaged in combat. This woman probably one of that type.

そこで全てに答えを出せた。確かに自動人形(オートマタ)は人に似せているが、材質は無論人肉というわけではない。特に兵器型(キリングタイプ)の身体は、戦闘で簡単に傷つかないように頑丈な素材でできている。恐らく彼女もそうなのだろう。

In the battlefield, there'd be times when she met flame. That's why it wasn't strange for her to be fireproofed.

However, her was splendidly done,

戦場では炎に出会うことも少なくは無いだろう。だからこそ耐熱などの処理が施されてあっても不思議ではない。

しかしああも見事に無傷ということは、

(She seems to be a doll with a considerably high exquisiteness.)

(かなり精巧度の高い人形のような)

The flame from before was enough to incapacitated the dolls that he met up until now. For it to be uninjured means she was that special.

ソージが今まで出会った人形程度なら先程の炎でも十分行動不能にできたはず。それが無傷だということは、彼女が別格の存在だということだ。

“Are you surprised? That's right, this child is a mechanical doll (automata). My special pawn.”

「驚いたかしら？ そうよ、この子は自動人形(オートマタ)よ。アタシの優秀な手駒」

Femme proudly puffed out her chest.

フェムが自慢げに胸を張っている。

“However, there is one thing I want to hear.”

「でも、一つ聞きたいことがあるの」

Femme didn't look at Souji, she was looking at Yoyo.

フェムは視線をソージではなく、ヨヨに向けた。

“How did you know this child is a mechanical doll (automata)? Her attitude shouldn't even hinted that, right?”

「どうしてこの子が自動人形(オートマタ)だと分かったの？ そんな素振りは一切見せなかったつもりだけど？」

Testarossa's appearance was certainly only looked like a quiet woman with few words. Her movement was also smooth just like a person, no one would believe if she was said to be a doll.

確かにテストロッサの見た目は、少し取っつきにくそうな物静かな女性ってところだ。動きも人と同じように滑らかだし、人形だと言われてもそちらの方が信用できないほどだ。

“Oh my, don't underestimate me. Even if I looks like this, I have eyes that could discern people.”

“..... are you saying you saw through her just by looking?”

“Ee, shouldn't have you know as a puppeteer that there are parts that cannot completely imitate a person?”

“.....”

“Those are..... eyes. No matter how much emotion installed into them and how they are shown to be alive, you can judge whether they are people or not by looking at the shine in their eyes.”

「あら、あまり私を甘く見ないことね。こう見えても人を見る目はあるわ」

「.....ならアンタは見ただけで見抜いたって言うの？」

「ええ、人形師ならどれだけ見た目を人と似せても完全に似せられない部分があるのを知っているでしょ？」

「.....」

「それは.....瞳よ。どれだけ感情を造り上げようが、生きているように見せようが、瞳を見れば、その輝きを見れば人かそうでないかは判断できるわ」

Silent wrapped their location because of Yoyo's answer.

ヨヨの解答にその場は静寂が包む。

(Well, Ojou-sama's discerning eyes are exceptional after all.)

(まあ、お嬢様の見抜く目は別格だけだな)

Yoyo's observation power, insight, and eyesight surpassed the normal. Moreover, they were cultivated since her childhood by accompanying her father to meet a lot of people. In addition, her magic was also along that field.

ヨヨは観察力、洞察力、視力、ともにずば抜けている。その上、幼い頃から父親とともに多くの人と接してきたことで培われた眼力もあるのだ。さらにそれに加え、彼女の魔法にも起因する領分にも入る。

“..... you..... are you really just a normal noble.....?”

“Ara? I wonder who's the one who said I am a small and weak noble?”

「.....アンタ.....ホントにただの貴族.....？」

「あら？ 弱小貴族と言ったのはどこの誰だったかしら？」

Yoyo smiled fearlessly, it was an attitude that as if she wasn't deprived of her freedom or going to be killed at any time.

不敵に笑うヨヨは、まるで自由を拘束されて今にも殺される立場にあるとは思えない態度だった。

“Beside, even Souji noticed that without me saying anything, right?”

“Ee.”

「それにソージだって、私に言われるまでもなく感づいてはいたでしょ？」

「ええ」

Souji pulled out a sheet of paper from his breast pocket.

ソージは懐から一枚の紙を出す。

“Th-That's....”

“Yes. It is the ransom note send by you. It is written with considerably beautiful characters, but it looks like the one who wrote this was the mechanical doll (automata) over there.”

“H-How did you know that!”

“Well, to your regret I was able to know that. I also know that you praised her with “As expected of my mechanical doll (automata),” when this ransom note was written.”

“H-How can such thing....”

「そ、それって.....」

「はい。あなたがお出しになられた脅迫状ですね。ずいぶん綺麗な字で書かれてありますが、これを書かれたのはそちらの自動人形(オートマタ)さんのようですね」

「な、何でそんなこと分かるのよ！」

「いえいえ、残念ながら私には分かるのです。そしてこの脅迫状を作成している時、あなたは彼女のことを『さすがはアタシの自動人形(オートマタ)ね』と仰っておられますよ」  
「だ、だから何でそんなことが.....」

While coming here, Souji confirmed that by using the memory searching blue flame to watch what recorded in this letter. At that time, only the image of Testarossa writing this letter was projected, but he heard Femme praise, “Un, what beautiful characters. As expected of my mechanical doll (automata),” as she laughed when she saw the characters written on the paper.

そう、ここに来る間、記憶を探る青炎を使って脅迫状が見た映像をソージは確認していた。その時に、ちょうどこの脅迫状をテストロッサが作成している映像が映し出されたが、フェムが紙に書かれた字を見て『うん、美しい字だわ。さすがはアタシの自動人形(オートマタ)ね。万能とはこのことを言うのかしら』と言って笑っていたのだ。

“Looks like you underestimated Souji too much. He is my butler.”

「あまりソージを舐めないことね。彼は私の執事なのよ」

Because of Yoyo’s provocation, Femme was glaring at her. The two glared at each other for a while, but Femme averted her gaze first.

ヨヨの物言いにフェムは彼女を忌々しそうに睨み付ける。しばらく二人は睨み合っていると、フェムが先に視線を切る。

“Testa, let’s end this already. Quickly bring Souji Alkasha back to my home.”

“..... I understood.”

「テスト、もう終わらせるわよ。さっさとソージ・アルカーサを連れ帰るわ」

「.....理解しました」

Souji heightened his cautiousness because of the sudden change in Femme’s atmosphere. Then Testarossa held Femme. That followed by the two’s bodies gradually disappearing.

ソージも、突然雰囲気が変わったフェムの様子に警戒度を高める。するとフェムをテストロッサが抱えた。すると徐々に二人の身体が消失していく。

(This is..... kh!?)

(これは.....っ!?)

He looked around to look for the two people who vanished completely inside the church.

完全にこの教会から消え失せた二人を探すために視線を動かす。

(Transparency magic.....? I see, how troublesome.)

(透明魔法.....? なるほど、厄介だな)

Even their presences couldn't be felt. It was probably Femme's magic, one that could give the same effect to those she touches, and frankly he feel cheated.

Suddenly, *bakiih*, an acute pain came along with the impact on his cheek. Souji, who falls while destroying chairs, immediately stood up and confirmed the surrounding, but for those without knowledge it'd looked like Souji was blown away by himself.

気配すらも全く感じない。恐らくフェムの魔法であり、彼女が触れた者も一緒に魔法効果を与えることができるようだが、これはハッキリ言って反則気味だった。

するとバキィッと突然頬に衝撃とともに激痛が走る。椅子を破壊しながら転倒するソージは、すぐさま起き上がり周囲を確認するが、何も知らなければソージが一人で吹き飛んだだけに見えるだろう。

However, the attack just now certainly came from the disappearing Testarossa.

しかし間違いなく今のは、姿を消したテストロッサによる攻撃だろう。

“How is it? I think it will be better for you to give up, okay?”

「どう？ 降参した方が良くと思うわよ？」

Femme's voice echoed inside the church.

教会にフェムの声が反響する。

(Fuu, my my, this ability truly suitable for assassination and infiltration.)

(ふう、いやはや、この能力は暗殺や潜入などにもってこいだな)

With this magic one could soundlessly approached the target. Just like the killing part, it was used to kidnap Yoyo.

この魔法があれば音もなく相手に近づき事を成すことができる。それこそ殺すことも、ヨヨのように誘拐することもだ。

“Fufufufufu! How is it, Crowtail! I can kill your important people anytime when I and Testa got serious! Just look quietly from there! I will take your important butler!”

「フフフフ！ どうクロウテイル！ アタシとテストが本気を出せばいつでもどこでもアンタの大切な者を殺すこともできるわ！ そこで見ておきなさい！ 大切な執事が奪われるところをね！」

Femme's tone was as if she was convinced of her victory. However the next thing sounded inside the church was the unchanging voice of Yoyo.

フェムはまるで勝利を確信しているかのような声音だ。しかし次に教会に響いたのは、いつも通り動揺を一切感じさせないヨヨの声だった。

“Souji, we will late for dinner if we don't return quickly.”

“Wh-!?”

「ソージ、早く帰らないと夕ご飯が遅くなるわ」

「なっ!？」

Femme raised her alertness because of Yoyo's response where fear couldn't be felt. Following that, *pan pan*, Souji stands up while beating the dust off his clothes.

全く恐怖の欠片も感じていないヨヨの言動にフェムの吃驚が轟く。そしてソージはパンパンと服を叩きながら立ち上がり、

“That's right, Ninthe will be relieved if we return quickly. After all she is terribly worried about us.”

“Oh my, then we should hurry.”

“Ee.”

「そうですね、早く帰ってニンテを安心させてあげましょう。すごく不安がっていましたから」

「あら、それは急がなくてはね」

「ええ」

For a moment, Souji floated a sneer and a white flame came out from his right hand.

瞬間、ソージは冷笑を浮かべると、ソージの右手から白い炎が溢れ出てきた。

“That's-!?”

「アレはッ!？」

Femme's slightly excited voice could be heard.

少し感動めいたフェムの声が聞こえる。

“Well then……”

「さて……」

The white flame began to float around Souji and his next words gave birth to shudders.

白い炎はソージの上空に浮遊し始め、次のソージの一言が戦慄を生む。

“Excluding me and Ojou-sama, devour everything, white flame.”

「オレとお嬢様以外、喰らい尽くせ、白炎」

It was an instant that could be missed just by blinking. When thinking the white flame changed its form as if it was opening its big mouth, it moved just like the wind———— and true to his words, everythings except Souji and Yoyo were annihilated.

それは瞬きすれば見逃すほどの一瞬だった。白炎はまるで大口を開けたような形態に変化したと思ったら、風のような動きで————文字通り、ソージとヨヨ以外の全てを消滅させていった。

### Story 21 The Strongest Butler

#### 第二十一話 最強の執事

It first devoured the ruined church’s roof, followed by the walls, chairs, and the altar. Because they were disappeared in an instant in front of her, the previously excited Femme was in fear.

廃墟だった教会はまず屋根が食い尽くされ、次に壁、そして椅子や祭壇。瞬く間に目の前から消えていく存在に、フェムは先程覚えていた感動より恐怖が宿っていた。

(Wh-What’s with this magic....)

(な、何よこの魔法……)

Everything except Yoyo and Souji were lost. Next, the assassin’s dagger approached Femme and Testarossa. Of course the white flame didn’t know of their existences.

It casually moved, but Femme and Testarossa were in its way. That’s a natural thing. Femme and Testarossa were inside the church after all.

ヨヨとソージを除いた全てが失われていく。そしてその凶刃がフェムたちにも迫って来ていた。無論白炎はフェムたちの存在を認知していない。

ただ無造作に動き回っているのだが、その通り道にフェムたちがいるのだ。それもそのはずだ。フェムたちは教会の中にいるのだから。

Testarossa held Femme and tried to escape from the freely flown about white flame, but it grazed her for so many times. It truly was at a hairbreadth.

Then Testarossa parted with Femme at the time it devoured part of her shoulder. The shock from being thrown to the ground made her magic deactivated..

テストロッサはフェムを抱えて、自由に飛び回る白炎から逃げ回っているが、何度も身体を掠っている。ギリギリだ。

その時、肩を食い破られた衝撃でテストロッサは抱えていたフェムを手放す。地面に投げ出されたショックで魔法が解けてしまう。

Everyone could see the two. Following that, the white flame flew towards Femme as if it was aiming at her.

二人の存在が誰の目にも映る。そして白炎は狙ったようにフェム目掛けて飛んで来た。

“Hiih!”

「ヒィッ！」

Her expression warped in fear as she thought she'd be dead. However something covered Femme's body at that moment and *bakiih*, there was a sound of destroyed machine.

What greeted Femme's eyes was the appearance of Testarossa that had her right arm eaten because she protected her. Even so, Testarossa didn't change her expression. After all she was a robot that charged with the mission of protecting Femme.

その表情は恐怖に歪められ、死を連想させた。しかし刹那、フェムの身体を何かが覆い、バキィッと機械が砕かれるような音がする。

フェムの目に映ったのは、自分を庇ったせいで右腕を食い千切られたテストロッサの姿だった。テストロッサはそれでも表情を変えない。ただフェムを守るという使命を帯びたロボットだった。

However the white flame quickly returned to face them. The two would be eaten at the same time if this keeps up.

Death. The death. They were going to die. They would be dead in this unnamed place.

しかし白炎はすぐさま方向転換して再び向かってきた。このままでは二人同時に食べられてしまう。

死。死ぬ。死んでしまう。こんな名も無き場所で死ぬのだ。

(No..... no..... don'twannadon'twannadon'twannadon'twannadon'twannadon'twannaaa-!)

(いや.....いや.....いやよいやよいやよいやよいやよいやよおっ！)

Femme lost herself as she was frightened by the terror from the approaching death. Then she shouted as she tightly embraced the damaged body of Testarossa.

フェムは無我夢中に、迫ってくる死の恐怖に怯えていた。そして彼女はきつくテストロッサの傷ついた身体を抱きしめて叫んだ。

“I-I am sorryyyyyyyyyy-!”

「ご、ごめんなさあああああいつ！」

Femme strongly shut her eyes and prepared herself for the pain that would come soon, but no impact whatsoever come no matter how long she wait, so she slowly opened her heavy eyelids to confirm it.

There was the white flame that could devour them at anytime, and beside it was Souji with a radiant, wide smile.

目を強く閉じ、もうすぐ来るであろう痛みにも備えていたフェムだが、いつまでもやってこない衝撃に対し不審に思い、ゆっくりと確認するように重い瞼を上げた。

するとそこには、今にも喰らおうとしている白炎と、その隣でにこやかに笑っているソージがいた。

“Pardon me for I arrived late, Ojou-sama.”

「遅くなり申し訳ありませんでしたお嬢様」

Souji apologized as he freed Yoyo who was restrained on the table.

ソージはテーブルに拘束されているヨヨを自由にすると謝罪する。

“It is okay, you did well. Thank you, Souji.”

「いいえ、よくやったわ。ありがとうソージ」

Souji was relieved because Yoyo was unhurt. Incidentally, Femme and Testarossa were currently bound by ropes made of orange flame. In addition, 《Magic Sealing Lock》 that was used on Yoyo was equipped on Femme as an extra.

ヨヨも怪我など一つも無かったようでソージは安心した。ちなみに今、フェムとテストロッサの二人は、橙炎で造ったロープで身体を縛ってある。さらにフェムには、ヨヨに装着させていた《魔封錠》のおまけをつけてある。

Yoyo approached the two and,

ヨヨが二人のもとへと向かうと、

“Higgu..... gusu..... th-..... that was so scary....”

「ひっぐ.....ぐす.....ご.....ごわがった.....」

Femme sobbed. She seemed to have been really scared by the white flame.

フェムが泣きじゃくっていた。余程白炎が怖かったようだ。

“You shouldn’t have do it, Souji. To make a girl this scared-.”

“Eh!? Ojou-sama is angry about that!?”

「いけないわねソージ。女の子をこんなに怖がらせるなんて」

「えっ！？そこを怒られるんですか！？」

He indeed surprised by Yoyo’s reaction. Certainly since the beginning he didn’t want to kill them. No matter what was said, she didn’t hurt Yoyo at all. Even about Testarossa, he adjusted the flame so she wouldn’t be dead when the flame devoured her. Even if he noticed she was a mechanical doll (automata), she’d be broken if he overdid it. Though he was a little surprised that she was unhurt at that time.

さすがにヨヨの言動には驚きだった。確かに最初から殺すつもりはなかった。何を言っても、彼女はヨヨを傷つけてはいなかったのだから。テストロッサについても、炎を食らわせた時、ちゃんと死なないように調節はしておいた。いくら自動人形(オートマタ)だと気づいていたとしても、やり過ぎると壊れてしまう恐れがあったからだ。全くの無傷だったのには少々驚いたが。

He thought to frighten the one responsible for this a little, but he overdid it....

こんなことを引き起こした責任として、少しお灸を据えようと思い、ああしたのだが.....。

“Higu..... hhihhiggu....”

「ひぐ.....っひっひっぐ.....」

There certainly the guilt when he seen the girl crying while she was bound with rope. Testarossa didn't move as she silently looking at Femme.

確かにロープで縛られて泣いている女の子を見ていると罪悪感が半端無い。テストロッサはフェムに動くなと言われていたようでジッとしている。

“Besides, no matter if she was a mechanical doll (automata), isn't this too much?”

“..... is it okay to do that?”

“Shouldn't you understand without me saying anything? Besides, you will do it anyway, right?”

“..... haa, as you wish.”

「それに、いくら自動人形(オートマタ)だとはいえ、コレはやり過ぎじゃないかしら？」

「..... よろしいんですか？」

「言わなくてもあなたなら分かるでしょ？ それにどうせやるつもりなのでしょ？」

「.....はぁ、畏まりました」

Because Souji approached the two and once again held his hand up, Femme who thought they'd be killed after all turned pale.

ソージが二人の前まで来て再び手をかざしたので、やはり殺されるのかと思ったのか、フェムは顔を青ざめさせる。

“Please be at ease. I will not harm you.”

「安心して下さい。害は加えませんから」

After Souji breathed deeply, he shut his eyes. Large beads of sweat appeared on Souji's forehead.

ソージは大きく深呼吸すると、目を閉じる。ソージの額から大粒の汗が滲み出てくる。

(This is hard after all....)

(これはやっばしんどいな.....)

Even so magic power was concentrated on his hand. Then a green flame manifested from Souji's palm. That green thing covered Testarossa's body.

それでも手に魔力を集中させていく。するとソージの手の平から緑色の炎が顕現した。その緑がテストロッサの身体を覆っていくので、

“P-Please stop! Please forgive us!”

「や、やめてよお！ もう許してえ！」

Femme shouted so in tears as she misunderstood that Testarossa would be destroyed,

フェムは壊されると勘違いしたのか涙を流しながら叫ぶが、

“It is okay. That’s why just be silent and watch.”

「大丈夫よ。だから黙って見ていなさい」

Though Yoyo said so, Femme who turned her gaze towards Testarossa couldn’t believe that.

Then an astonishing spectacle entered her view.

The shoulder part that should have been devoured, and the wounds that covered by the green flame were restored. Following that, the right arm that should have been lost returned completely.

ヨヨが言うが、それでもまだ信じられない面持ちでテストロッサに視線を向かわせるフェム。すると驚愕すべき光景が彼女の視界に入ってきた。

先程食い破られたはずの肩や、傷の部分に緑炎が覆い修復していく。そして完全に失われたはずの右腕までが元通りになっていく。

“..... no..... wa-..... y!?”

「.....う.....そ.....っ!？」

Femme’s surprise might have exceeded the limit. Not only attacking, she didn’t even considered him to be able to use healing like this.

フェムの驚きは天元突破しているだろう。攻撃だけでなく、このような治癒までできるとは全く以て考えつかなかったはずだ。

“..... Fuu.”

“Thanks for your hard work, Souji.”

“Ee, I am a little tired now.”

「.....ふう」

「お疲れ様、ソージ」

「ええ、少し疲れました」

Femme looked in blank surprise at Souji and Yoyo who were talking as if nothing had happened.

何でもないように会話をするソージたちを呆然と見つめるフェム。

“J-Just..... what are..... you....”

“Ara? Rather than that, don't you have something you should say first?”

“Ah..... u..... uu~..... th-thank you.”

“Ee, you're welcome. Ah, there's scratch on Femme-san's right hand.”

“Eh? Ah....”

「い、一体.....何なの.....アナタ.....」

「あら？ それよりまずは言うべきことがあるのではなくて？」

「あ.....う.....うう~.....あ、ありがとう」

「ええ、どう致しまして。あ、フェムさんの右手にも擦り傷が」

「え？ あ.....」

Souji wrapped her right hand with his hands.

ソージは彼女の右手を両手で覆うように包む。

“Heal it, green flame. .... looks like it is okay now.”

「癒しを施せ、緑炎(りよくえん)。.....これで大丈夫ですね」

Unlike a flame, her hand was wrapped with a comfortable warmth. Souji was smiling brightly and Femme's cheeks were dyed in red. Immediately he saw her looking down and,

炎とは思えないほど、心地好い温かさが彼女の手を包む。ソージはニッコリと微笑むと、フェムの頬が赤に染まる。すぐに顔を俯かせた彼女を見て、

“Huh? What happen? Don't tell me there's still another injury? If so, I will hea- ouch ouch ouch!”

「あれ？ どうされたんですか？ もしかしてまだ怪我してたとか？ それなら私が治してって痛い痛い痛い！」

A sharp pain suddenly came from his flank. What he saw was Yoyo pinching his flank.

突然脇腹に激痛が走る。見るとヨヨが脇腹をつねっていた。

“U-Umm…… i-it’s hurts, Ojou-sama?”

“……… massage me when we return, it is an order.”

“Eh? Ah, yes……”

「あ、あの……い、痛いのですがお嬢様？」

「………今日帰ったらマッサージしなさい、命令よ」

「え？ あ、はい……」

Truthfully he intended to rest early today because he was tired, but he couldn’t do anything if it was his master’s order. Setting that aside, he didn’t understand the reason why Yoyo seemed to be ill-humored.

本当は今日は疲れたから早く休みたいというのが本音ではあるが、主の命令なら仕方が無い。それはともかく、どうしてヨヨが若干不機嫌そうなのか理由が分からなかった。

Yoyo coughed once and straightened her postured then,

ヨヨは場を整えるように咳払いを一つすると、

“Well then, about how to deal with you-.”

「さて、あなたたちの処遇だけど」

Femme moved her shoulders in surprise.

ビクッと肩を動かすフェム。

“If you say you won’t attack me for the second time, then you will be released.”

“E…… Eeh!?”

「もう二度と襲撃しないと言うのなら、解放してあげるわ」

「え……ええっ!？」

She was surprised. Though Femme since the beginning didn’t want to hurt Yoyo, she kidnapped her and caused such a commotion, but Yoyo said those would be ignored if she promised only one thing.

それは驚くだろう。どうやらフェムも最初からヨヨを傷つけるつもりはなかったみたいだが、誘拐をして、これほどの騒ぎを起こしたのに、ただ一つの約束で不問にしているのだから。

“Eh, th-that’s…… are you okay with that?”

“Ee, however there’s no next time, okay?”

「え、そ、その.....いいの？」

「ええ、だけど次は無いわよ？」

She looked down at Femme with a cold gaze, and Femme gulped. Yoyo turned on her heel and said, “Time to go, Souji.”

冷やかな視線でフェムを見下ろし、フェムもゴクリと喉を鳴らしている。ヨヨは踵を返すと「行くわよソージ」と言う。

“As you wish. Ah, those ropes will disappear in a few minutes.”

「畏まりました。あ、そのロープはあと数分で消えますので」

Souji only said that much then he run after Yoyo.

ソージはそれだけ言うとヨヨを追っていった。

Few minutes after Souji and Yoyo leave, the orange ropes were certainly disappeared beautifully just as he said. *Fuuh*, Femme sighed which contained her exhaustion, she suddenly stand up, and she saw the fact that the church was completely disappeared.

ソージたちが去って数分後、確かに彼が言ったように身体を縛っていたオレンジ色のロープは綺麗に消失した。ふうっと疲弊感を含んだ溜め息を吐き出すとフェムはスッと立ち上がり、見る影もなくなった教会の有り様を見る。

“..... that’s the power of the red haired butler.”

「.....あれが赤髪執事の力」

Without any sound, she turned her gaze towards Testarossa by her side.

音も無く、フェムの隣に控えているテストロッサに視線を向ける。

“Even that recovery magic..... uun, that has already exceeded recovery magic. It was just like restoration.”

「それにあの治癒魔法.....ううん、あれはもう治癒魔法を越えてるわ。まるで復元よ」

note : uun = sound when one shake one's head

Then her gaze was dropped into her own right hand. That followed by her shaking her head as she felt her cheeks had become hot.

そして自らの右手に視線を落とす。すると頬が熱くなっていくのを感じて頭を振る。

“Aah honestly! Just what am I thinking! Testa!”

“..... yes.”

「ああもう！ 何考えてんのよアタシは！ テスタ！」

「.....はい」

What returned was an inorganic reply.

無機質に返事を返してくる。

“How's your body? Is it really okay?”

“..... there is no problem.”

“I see..... even if there were only a few arms you were equipped with, to easily defeated Testa....”

「身体は？ 本当に何とも無い？」

「.....問題ありません」

「そう.....いくら搭載兵器を少な目にしてたっていっても、テストがこんなにあっさりやられるなんて.....」

*When I thought he was going to let out a red flame that would burnt everythings, he let out a white flame that immediately erased the church, furthermore, a green flame that could restored the torn off arm of Testarossa....*

全てを燃やし尽くすような赤い炎を生み出したと思ったら、一瞬で教会を消した白い炎を生み出し、さらにはテストロッサの千切れた腕さえ復元した緑の炎まで.....。

“..... I want him after all.”

“..... Pursuit Mode ON.”

“Aah nonononodoon’t!”

「.....やっぱり欲しいわね」

「.....追尾モードON」

「ああダメダメダメダメエッ！」

At the moment Testarossa heard her words, her eyes' color changed, and Femme panicky stopped her.

テスタロッサの言葉を聞いた瞬間、テスタロッサが目の色を変えたので、慌てて止めに入ったフェム。

“..... Pursuit Mode OFF.”

“Haa~, though I want to run after him, there's high possibility that we would just be beaten again. Besides....”

“.....?”

“Besides, I want to have a fair match to rob him from that woman!”

“..... Understood.”

“Well then Testa, let's begin by knowing our enemy! By doing so, one or two of her weaknesses..... I will challenge her for a match with that red haired butler as the reward! Fufufu, then he will be mine.”

“..... a fair match?”

「.....追尾モードOFF」

「はあ～、追いかけたいけど、今追いかけてまた返り討ちに合う可能性が高いわ。それに.....」

「.....？」

「それにあの女からは、まっこうから勝負を挑んで奪い取ってやるわ！」

「.....理解しました」

「それじゃテスト、まずは相手を知ることから始めるわよ！ そうすればあの女の弱点の一つや二つ.....それにつけ込んで勝負を挑んで、その勝負に赤髪執事を賭けてもらうわ！ フフフ、そして彼はアタシのもの」

「.....まっこう勝負では？」

Maybe because she confused about it, Testarossa inclined her neck and asked that.

テスタロッサが疑問に思ったのかコクンと首を傾けて聞いてきた。

“It is a fair match. But preparation is also necessary for a match, remember that Testa.”

“..... understood.”

“Fufufu, I will absolutely have him next time! Just wait, Souji Alkasha! O~hhohohoho!”

「まっこう勝負よ。けど勝負には打算も必要なのよテスト、覚えておきなさい」

「.....理解しました」

「フフフ、次こそは絶対手に入れてやるわよ！ 待ってなさいソージ・アルカーサ！ オーッホホホホ！」

Her loud laughter echoed in the church's site.

高らかな笑い声が、教会の跡地でこだましていた。

## Story 22 The Butler Fainted

### 第二十二話 執事昏倒

Souji and Yoyo who returned to the mansion received a warm welcome from the maids. Even Ninthe was hugging Yoyo as she cried. Such a Ninthe was gently hugged by Yoyo, and she patted Ninthe's head with a smile.

屋敷に戻ったソージたちはメイドたちから温かい歓迎を受けた。ニンテなどは泣きながらヨヨに抱きついてたりしていた。ヨヨはそんな彼女を優しく抱き、微笑みながら頭を撫でていた。

Souji was asking the other maids as he thought it was strange that his mother wasn't here and from one of the rooms, "You return too faast~," a scream of grievance could be heard.

何故かそこに母であるカイナがいないので不思議に思ったソージがメイドに尋ねると、何でも部屋の中から「帰って来るの早いわよお～」と嘆くような叫び声が聞こえるそうだ。

Apparently she seemed to have not arranged the documents even after they returned. *Yosh, the wage reduction it is*, Souji decided in his mind.

Afterwards everyone had dinner. The unchanging daily life was something to be happy about for Souji.

どうやら帰って来るまでに終わらせるように言っておいた書類整理ができていなかったようだ。よし、減給決定だとソージは心に決めた。

その後は皆で食事をした。普段と変わらないその日常が、ソージにとっては嬉しいものだった。

When the night came, Souji faced Yoyo's room as he was told to come. Yoyo whose skin was flushed having entered the bath was incredibly sexy.

Such a Yoyo was lying on the bed and,

夜になると、ヨヨに自室へ来るように言われソージは向かった。風呂上りで上気した肌を宿しているヨヨは、物凄く色っぽかった。

そんな彼女がベッドに横になり、

"Souji, do it."

「ソージ、して」

At the moment he saw her bewitching smile, his heart seemed could be held directly as it jumped out. The thin piece of clothing clearly defined her tender body line.

妖艶な笑みを見た瞬間、心臓が直接手で握られたかのように跳ねた。薄い服一枚は、彼女の柔らかそうな身体のラインを明確に伝えてくる。

“Do-dodododo it, as in?”

「し、ししししてというのは？」

He desperately tried to suppressed his agitation, but he couldn't handle this situation that well. Thus Yoyo was smiling just like a child whose prank had succeeded and,

動揺を必死で抑えようとするが、こういう状況があまりなく思わずきよどってしまう。するとヨヨは悪戯が成功したみたいに子供のように笑うと、

“Ara? Didn't I have said it? To massage me that is.”

“Eh? A..... AHI!”

「あら？ 言ったでしょ？ マッサージをなさいって」

「え？ あ.....あっ！」

He recalled that she certainly said that in the church.

確かに教会で言われたのを思い出した。

(Wh-What..... a massage huh..... fuu, I was too eager.)

(な、何だ.....マッサージか.....ふう、焦ったあ)

Though he somehow managed to not let it shown on his face,

何とかあまり顔には出ないように努めるが、

“Fufu, if it's not a massage, I wonder what Souji was thinking?”

“Uh.....”

“Will you tell me? My butler-san?”

“Uu..... I-I can't match Ojou-sama....”

「ふふ、マッサージではないとすると、ソージは何だと思っていたのでしょうかね？」

「う.....」

「教えてくれるかしら？ 私の執事さん？」

「うう……お、お嬢様には敵いません……」

**Gakkuri**, his shoulders drooped. Yoyo was smiling happily as she saw such a Souji.

ガックリと肩を落とすソージ。そんなソージを見て楽しそうに笑うヨヨ。

“Fufufu, then please.”

“As you wish.”

「ふふふ、ではお願いするわ」

「畏まりました」

As Yoyo said so, Souji began to massage her. Since the beginning Souji had something he wanted to hear so he asked her.

ソージはヨヨの言うようにマッサージを開始した。始めてソージはふと聞きたいことがあったので聞いてみる。

“Ojou-sama, may I ask one thing?”

“What is it?”

“Why were those two overlooked?”

「お嬢様、一つよろしいですか？」

「何かしら？」

「何故、あの二人を見逃したのですか？」

It was about Femme and Testarossa. Though they didn't after her life, it was strange that she just released her without blaming her.

フェムとテスタロッサのことだ。命が狙われたわけではないが、それでも何の咎めも無しで放免するとは不思議だった。

“Ara, would it be better to kill them?”

“Next time they might come after Ojou-sama.”

“You just said something scary. Fufu, but rest assured. I am not blaming them because I want to make them learn.”

“Learn?”

“That is no matter what they do will be useless. Rather, you should have noticed that.”

「あら、それなら殺した方が良かったかしら？」

「その方が今後のお嬢様のためだったかもしれません」

「怖いこと言うのね。ふふ、でも心強いわ。私が彼女たちを咎めなかったのは、彼女たちに知らしめるためよ」

「知らしめる？」

「そう、何をやっても無駄だということをね。というより、あなたも気づいていたでしょうに」

Just as Yoyo said, he had noticed her intention by leaving those girls alone. However he couldn't confirm that. He now know that was correct after he heard her words.

ヨヨの言う通り、彼女がそう思い彼女たちを放置したのは気づいていた。しかし確信はなかった。話を聞いてやっぱりといった思いを受け取る。

“That kind of fellow should have considerable connection. Surely this time case would be spreaded to those people. It will be the best for them to think to never antagonize you. Well, at the end it was just my wishful thinking.”

“..... That's just like Ojou-sama.”

“Fufu, for me to be able to choose such reckless action is also because you are here, Souji. Therefore I trust you, Souji.”

“Please leave it to me.”

「ああいう輩は横にかなりの繋がりがあったりするわ。きっと今回のことも、そういう者たちには伝わる。そしてあなたを敵に回すのは割りに合わないと思ってくれたら一番かしらね。まあ、あくまでも希望的観測ではあるけれど」

「.....お嬢様らしいです」

「ふふ、私がそういう無茶な行動を選択できるのも、あなたがいるからよソージ。だから信頼してるわよソージ」

「お任せ下さい」

The massage continued for a while, silent flowed until Yoyo opened her mouth.

しばらくマッサージが続き、それまで沈黙が流れていたがヨヨが口を開いた。

“..... nee, Souji.”

“Yes?”

“..... thank you for everything.”

“..... no need, after all I am Yoyo-oujousama's butler.”

“Fufu, that is so. You are my butler. My one and only..... bu..... tler....”

“..... Ojou-sama?”

“.....”

「.....ねえソージ」

「はい？」

「……………いつもありがとう」

「……いえ、オレはヨヨお嬢様の執事ですから」

「ふふ、そうね。あなたは私の執事。私だけの……し……つじ……」

「……お嬢様？」

「……………」

Apparently she seemed to have slept. Today was a rough day. Though it wasn't shown on Yoyo's face at all, she was still a teenaged girl, so no matter how determined she was, She must have exhausted her mind.

どうやら寝てしまったようだ。今日は大変な一日だった。ヨヨは顔には一切出さないが、まだ十代の少女であり、いくらああいうことを覚悟しているとはいえ、それでも精神は擦り減らしているに違いないのだ。

Souji thought of supporting her to at least let lost some of those. That was to repay her kindness to allow him to serve her as a butler, and....

ソージはそれを少しでも無くせればいいと思いを支えている。それが、執事として仕えさせて頂いている恩返しでもあり、そして……

(For Yoyo-ojousama to become happy....)

(ヨヨお嬢様が幸せになれますように……)

He wished that, that's why he was here. He wanted to protect Yoyo's smile. Though she didn't smile innocently, when she see the others from the mansion, Souji knew her smile was truly a happy one.

These small shoulders shouldered a lot of things. There's also her wish for the happiness of everyone inside this mansion.

そう願っているからこそ、ソージはここにいるのだ。ヨヨの笑顔を守りたい。無邪気そうに笑うことがほとんど無い彼女だが、彼女が屋敷の者たちを見て、本当に嬉しそうに笑っているのをソージは知っている。

この小さな肩に、多くのものを背負っているのだ。そして彼女の願いは屋敷の者たちの幸せでもある。

If Yoyo wished for the happiness of everyone inside this mansion, Souji decided to wish for her happiness.

Souji put the blanket over her who had a calm breathing of a sleeper, and he went out of the room without making any noise.

ヨヨが屋敷の者の幸せを願うのなら、ソージは、彼女の幸せを願おうと決めた。

ソージは穏やかな寝息を立てている彼女に布団をかけると、音を立てずに部屋を出て行った。

“..... thank you, my Souji.”

「.....ありがとう、私のソージ」

Regrettably, her mutters didn't reach Souji.

そんな彼女の呟きは残念ながらソージには届かなかった。

After Yoyo fall asleep, Souji returned to his room and sat on his bed, he recalled what happened today and displayed a bitter expression.

As for the reason, it was because Yoyo was easily kidnapped by the enemy. Certainly the enemy had one of the rare magic, even so it was the truth that Yoyo was kidnapped within his reach.

ソージはヨヨを寝かしつけた後、自室に帰るとベッドに腰かけ、今日起こったことを思い出し渋い表情をする。

その理由として、ヨヨが敵にあっさりと誘拐されたことについてだ。確かに相手の魔法の稀少さがあってのものだったが、それでもソージの手の届いた範囲でヨヨが攫われたのは事実だ。

“Fuu, if the one aiming at Ojou-sama from now one was someone with a troublesome magic just like transparency magic...”

「ふう、もしこれからも透明魔法みたいな厄介な魔法士がお嬢様を狙ってきたら.....」

For this time, Femme didn't have any reason to kill or injure Yoyo. But if it was an extremist whose goal was to erase Yoyo, then she would already be no more in this world.

Souji see the outside of the window from the bed, and there was a huge moon that couldn't have exist in Japan peeping inside.

今回、フェムにはヨヨを殺傷する理由は無かった。しかしもし、ヨヨの抹消を目的とした過激派だったら、ヨヨはすでにこの世にいなかった。

ソージはベッドから見える窓の外を見ると、そこには日本では考えられないほどの大きい月がこちらを覗いていた。

“..... If there is a power that can immediately perceive Ojou-sama's crisis....”

「.....お嬢様の危機をすぐにでも悟れるような力があれば.....」

Souji stand up from the bed, then he spreaded his right hand and watched it.

ソージはベッドから立ち上がると、右手を広げて見つめる。

“That's right. I only have to create such a flame.”

「そうだ。そういう炎を創ればいいんだ」

Souji shut his eyes and concentrated his will in his right chest. *Dokun dokun*, it throbbed, and it gradually heated. As he felt the heat that seemed to burn him, he extracted the magic power from the cause; the 《Magic Core》.

ソージは目を閉じ右胸に意識を集中させる。ドクンドクンと脈打ち、徐々に熱されていく。火傷しそうな熱さを感じながら、その原因である《魔核》から魔力を抽出していく。

The magic power that was raging inside his body was focused to his right hand.

身体の中を暴れるような魔力が右手に集束していく。

(A power that can perceive the danger and appears at any time....)

(危険を察し、いつでも飛んで行ける力を.....)

Thus a flame appeared in Souji's right hand. The flame's color was a beautiful yellow just like the moon that floated in the sky.

するとソージの右手に生まれた炎があった。その炎の色は、空に浮かぶ月のように美しい黄色を宿していた。

“Souji collapsed, you say?”

「ソージが倒れたですって？」

Yoyo thought it was odd because Souji who always come to wake her up in the morning didn't come. Instead, Ninthe rushed inside with her eyes swollen with tears.

According to her story, because she didn't see Souji who was always watering the flowers early in the morning, Ninthe went to his room as she thought it was unusual for him to wake up late.

ヨヨは朝、いつも起こしにくるはずのソージが来なかったことで不審に思った。代わりにニンテが泣き腫らした顔をして飛び込んできた。

彼女の話によると、いつも早朝に花の水やりをしているソージの姿が見えないので、珍しく寝坊かと思いニンテは彼の部屋へ行った。

However, there's no response even though she knocked. She thought he went out somewhere, and Ninthe watered the flowers in his stead, but Souji still didn't come.

しかしノックをしても返事が無かった。どこかに出掛けているのだろうかと思い、ニンテはソージの代わりに水やりをしていると、やはりソージは来ない。

The other maids who woke up to work were also asking Souji's where about, but she could only said she didn't know. Ninthe, who thought it was indeed strange, explained the situation to Kaina who is Souji's mother, and for the time being they went back to Souji's room.

他のメイドたちも仕事のために起きてきて、彼女たちにもソージがどこにいるか聞いたが、知らないと言う。さすがに変だと思ったニンテは、ソージの母親であるカイナに事情を説明すると、とりあえずもう一度ソージの部屋に行こうということになった。

There was still no answer even if they knocked. Kaina said, “I am coming,” and opened the door, then they discovered Souji who collapsed on the floor inside.

Yoyo who didn't understand what had happened hurriedly went to Souji's room as she wondering. Yesterday, there was no particular change in his appearance.

やはりノックしても返答が無い。カイナは「入るわよ」と言いながらドアを開けると、そこには床に倒れているソージを発見したとのこと。

ヨヨも一体何故そんなことになったのか不可思議に思いソージの部屋へと急いだ。昨日、彼には別段変わった様子は無かった。

There were certainly various things such as the kidnapping, but they weren't enemies who could defeat Souji. Even at the time he massage her last night, he was just as usual.

確かに誘拐などいろいろあったが、それでもソージが倒れるほどの相手ではなかった。夜にマッサージをしてもらった時も、普段通りだった。

(Yet..... kh!?)

(それなのに.....っ!?)

With unusual impatient looks, Yoyo passed through between the maids and entered Souji's room. What laid in the bed was Souji who breathed painfully.

珍しく焦った面相をしながらヨヨはメイドたちの間を縫ってソージの部屋に入った。そこにはベッドに横たわっており、辛そうに呼吸をしているソージがいた。

“..... Souji.”

「..... ソージ」

She asked the situation to Kaina by his side.

傍にいたカイナにどんな様子か聞いてみた。

“I don't understand. However he was in terrible heat while the magic power in his body is not stable too.”

「分かりません。ただすごい熱で、体中の魔力も安定していないようで」

Even Kaina didn't act innocent as usual as she raised a frustrated expression because of the matter of her son.

Yoyo touched Souji's hand. Sweat flowed from his whole body as he seemed to be in a great pain. Moreover just as Kaina had said, his body was in unbelievable heat.

さすがのカイナも、いつものように天真爛漫ではなく、息子の一大事に焦燥感を表情に浮かべている。

ヨヨはソージの手に触れる。全身から汗を流しているようでとても苦しそうだ。しかもカイナの言った通り、信じられないくらい身体に熱がこもっている。

“Just what is the cause? Don’t tell me something happen in yesterday’s kidnapping....”

“No, I didn’t see such situation.”

“Maybe magic that acted slow..... or he was poisoned without his knowing....”

「一体何が原因なんのでしょうか？ まさか昨日の誘拐犯に何か.....」

「いいえ、そんな様子は見られなかったわ」

「遅行性の魔法とか.....さもなくば気づかずに毒を打ちこまれて.....」

Though Kaina said such scary things, Yoyo shook her head to deny those.

怖いことをカイナは言うが、ヨヨは首を振って否定する。

“..... I was massaged by Souji last night. At that time, Souji’s body..... was seen. Though he was a little tired, his health condition was excellent.”

“There’s should be no mistake if Yoyo-sama said that..... then why...?”

“Uu~ Zoooooji-zabaaaa~h!”

「.....昨日ソージに夜マッサージしてもらったのよ。その時、ソージの身体を.....視たわ。少し疲れはあったけど健康状態は良好だったわ」

「ヨヨ様がそう仰るなら間違いなさそうですけど.....ならどうして.....？」

「うう〜ゾオオオジざばあああ〜っ！」

Hearing Yoyo and Kaina’s conversation, Ninthe who became even more worried let out tears with runny nose and her face was messy.

ヨヨとカイナのやり取りを聞いて、増々不安になったのかニンテは涙と鼻水を出して顔をグチャグチャにしている。

“..... for now let me see him again....”

「.....とりあえずもう一度私が視て.....」

Yoyo narrowed her eyes as she watched Souji and,

ヨヨが目を細めてソージの顔を見つめると、

“Uh..... a.....”

“Souji-!”

「う.....あ.....」

「ソージッ！」

Souji weakly opened his eyes.

ソージが微かに目を開けた。

“Haa haa haa..... O-..... jo-..... u..... -sama?”

「はあはあはあ.....お.....じょ.....う.....様？」

Souji moved only his eyes and he noticed that everyone inside the mansion had gathered,

ソージは目だけを動かして屋敷中の者が集まっていることに気が付き、

“Wh-..... why.....?”

“Souji, just what had happened to you? No, that’s okay now, anyway....”

“Th-..... this....”

「どう.....して.....？」

「ソージ、あなた一体何をしたの？ いえ、今はいいわ、とにかく.....」

「こ.....れを.....」

Souji gritted his teeth and thrust his right hand towards Yoyo while trembling. His right hand was strongly clenched. Instinctively, Yoyo gently wrapped that fist with both hands.

ソージが歯を噛み締めながら震わせながら右手をヨヨに突き出す。その右手は強く握りしめである。思わずヨヨはその拳を優しく両手で包む。

“..... Souji?”

“Open..... it....”

“Eh? Open? What is?”

“..... the hand.”

“..... your hand?”

「.....ソージ？」

「ひら.....いて.....」

「え？ 開く？ 何を？」

「.....手を」

「.....手を？」

Yoyo didn’t understand Souji’s words, even so her hands were put under Souji’s fist. Following that Souji’s fist was slowly opened.

*Potoh*, something dropped into Yoyo’s hands. It was a necklace. A small tag-like thing was attached at the front and a crest she seen for the first time was carved there in yellow.

ヨヨは訳が分からないソージの言葉に、それでもソージの拳の下で両手を広げる。するとゆっくりとソージの拳が開いていく。

ポトッとヨヨの手の中に何か落ちる。それはネックレスだった。先には小さなタグのようなものがついており、そこには初めて見る紋が黄色で刻まれていた。

“..... Souji?”

「..... ソージ？」

She groaned as she couldn't judge just what was this mean. However Souji was smiling though it must be painful.

一体これが何を意味するのか判断に苦しむ。しかしソージは辛いはずなのにニッコリと微笑む。

“If..... Ojou-sama have that..... I'll always be..... able to come..... to Ojou-sama's side.”

「それ.....があれば.....いつで.....も.....お嬢様の.....もとへ」

*Hah*, Yoyo dropped her gaze towards that necklace, and she touched the crest carved in the tag. Following that she shut her eyes and she raised her face as she noticed something.

ヨヨはハッとなりもう一度ネックレスに視線を落とし、タグに刻まれてある紋に触れる。そして目を閉じると、またも何かに気づいたようにバツと顔を上げる。

“Souji..... you....”

「ソージ.....あなた.....」

She understood everything. About why Souji became like this. All of this..... was for a certain person.

Yoyo quietly stand up and,

全部分かった。どうしてソージがこうなったのか。それは全て.....ある者のため。

ヨヨは静かに立ち上がると、

“Everyone, fall back a little.”

「みんな、少し下がちなさい」

As if she had guessed it, Kaina left the bedside accompanied with Ninthe. Having confirmed that, Yoyo looked down at Souji's face, and her right hand was put on his forehead. Following that, faint light came out of Yoyo's body.

カイナは察したように、泣いているニンテとともにベッドから離れた。それを確認したヨヨはソージの顔を見下ろすと、、そっと彼の額に自らの右手を添えた。

するとヨヨの身体から淡い光が滲み出てきた。

### Story 23 Conclusion

#### 第二十三話 大団円

Seeing that spectacle, Ninthe, who was in verge of crying, said,  
その光景を見ていたニンテは半ベそをかきながら、

“hic..... K-Kaina-sama..... just what Yoyo-sama....”

「ひっぐ.....あ、あのカイナしゃま.....ヨヨしゃまは一体.....」

Kaina smiled and gently patted Ninthe's head.

そんな彼女の頭を優しく撫でてカイナは微笑む。

“Everything is okay now. Yoyo-sama has a very powerful magic after all.”

“Eh..... i-is that her magic?”

“Ee, let just watch them.”

「もう大丈夫よ。ヨヨ様の魔法はとっても強力だから」

「え.....あ、あれは魔法なんでしゅ？」

「ええ、見ておきなさいな」

Magic power went out of Yoyo's body, it overflowed and covered the room.

ヨヨの身体から出た魔力、それはドンドン溢れて部屋を覆い尽くすほどになっていく。

“Th-..... This is amazing....”

「しゅ.....しゅごいでしゅ.....」

Ninthe was amazed.

ニンテは啞然としている。

Then magic power was compressed gradually and gathered in Yoyo's right hand. As it was, it was absorbed by Souji's body and disappeared.

Quickly Souji's previously painful breathing returned to normal. Even his face that was dyed completely red was similarly returned to when he was healthy.

そしてその魔力が徐々に圧縮していきヨヨの右手に集まる。そのままソージの身体に吸収されるように消えていく。

すると先程まで呼吸をするのも辛そうだったソージの息が、普段のそれに収まっていく。真っ赤に染まっている顔も、同様に元の健康状態に戻っていく。

“Remember it well Ninthe, that;s our master, Yoyo-sama's Tuning magic.”

“Tu-..... ning?”

「覚えておきなさいニンテ、アレが私たちの当主様、ヨヨ様の調律魔法よ」

「ちょう.....りつ？」

Yoyo fell on her knee at the same time as Ninthe muttered so. Kaina shouted, “This is bad!” as she tried to help her..... but that was not necessary.

ニンテの眩きと同時に、膝をつくヨヨ。カイナは「まずいわ！」と叫びながら支えようとして向かうが.....それは必要無かった。

“..... thank you very much, Yoyo-ojousama.”

「.....ありがとうございます、ヨヨお嬢様」

The one who strongly supported her before Yoyo collapse was Souji, who was on the bed.

ヨヨが倒れる前に力強く支えたのは、ベッドに寝ていたソージだった。

“Thank you for taking care of me.”

「お世話をおかけしました」

Souji said so towards Yoyo whose breath slightly disarranged.

軽く息を乱しているヨヨに向かってソージは言う。

“..... for the love of god. You truly are a reckless one.”

「.....まったくよ。本当に無茶するのだからあなたは」

Yoyo moved her mouth while her body was still supported by Souji.

身体をソージに支えられながらヨヨは口を動かす。

“I am sorry. However, Ojou-sama also reckless by instantly cured my magic’s recoil.”

“Fufu, that so. Looks like I am not one to talk about it.”

「すみません。ですがお嬢様も、オレの魔法の反動を一気に治すのは無茶ですよ」

「ふふ、そうね。私もあなたのこと言えないわね」

Yoyo breathed deeply to regain her normal breathing and she looked straight at Souji. Following that, her gaze slowly moved towards the necklace given by Souji.

ヨヨは深呼吸するように息を整えると、真っ直ぐソージを見つめる。そしてその視線はゆっくりとソージに手渡されたネックレスに向かう。

“I am happy about your feelings.”

“That is an honor for me. There was the result that I would be laid in bed for a long time…… O-Ojou-sama?”

「あなたの想い、嬉しく思うわ」

「それは光栄です。寝込んだ甲斐があった……お、お嬢様？」

Souji found himself at a loss for words because Yoyo stared at him in displeasure.

ソージはヨヨが不機嫌そうに睨んできていたので言葉に詰まった。

“However, I cannot forgive you for that.”

“B-But…… if this power exists-.”

“Be silent.”

“Uh……”

“I understand that you are thinking of my safety. However if in the future you silently try to do such a thing, a harsh punishment await you.”

“Th-That is…… may I ask what is it?”

“That’s right. How about other than serving me you are also to serve Kaina?”

“I swear I will not do it again.”

“Wa~itt, somehow I feel the damaged~.”

「だけど、こういうことはもう許さないわ」

「し、しかしですね……この力があれば」

「黙りなさい」

「う……」

「あなたが私を想ってやったのは重々承知よ。だけど今後、黙ってこんなことをやるようなら、きついお仕置きがあなたを待っているわ」

「そ、それは.....ち、ちなみにどのようなものなのでしょうか？」  
「そうね。私の世話も含めてカイナの世話も見てもらおうかしら？」  
「もう二度とやらないと誓います」  
「ちょ〜っとお、何か私にもダメージきたんだけどお〜」

Kaina shouted, but they weren't joking. It was definitely better for him to serve Yoyo as always. Frankly, he didn't have any problem because Yoyo only ordered him things within his reach.

カイナが叫ぶが、冗談じゃなかった。ヨヨの世話はいつもしているからいい。ハッキリ言っ  
てヨヨは自分ができるとは自分でしているので問題は無い。

However Kaina is different. If Souji was to serve her, she surely to become lazier than ever before. She would definitely say anything she want. Because he was confident he would not be able to endure it for even a week, he wanted to be pardoned of that.

しかしカイナは違う。もしソージが世話役となったら、きっと今まで以上にずぼらになるはず。言いたい放題言われることも間違いない。きっと一週間で胃に穴が開く自信があるので、それだけは本当に勘弁だった。

“Fufu, then don't do such a thing again. Understand?”

“Y-Yes.”

“That's good. I am going to sleep now because I became a little tired. Even though Souji is recovered now, you are resting today.”

“B-But...”

“It is an order.”

“..... as you wish.”

「ふふ、ならもうしないこと。分かったわね？」

「は、はい」

「いいわ、私は疲れたから少し寝るわね。ソージも治したとはいえ、今日は大事をとって休みなさい」

「で、ですが.....」

「命令よ」

「.....畏まりました」

Though he wanted to work because his condition had improved thanks to Yoyo's magic, he could not go against the order. Reluctantly, he decided to obey her today.

ヨヨの魔法のお蔭ですっかり身体は良くなっているので働きたいが、命令を破ることはできない。仕方無く今日は大人しくしていようと決めた。

“Souji-samaaaaaa-! Thank goddddd-!”

「ソージ様あああああっ！ よかったですううううっ！」

Ninthe tried to cling to him as she cried. Then Souji gently caught her.

ニンテは泣きながら抱きついてきた。彼女を優しく受け止める。

“Ahaha, I am sorry, Ninthe. Everyone too. Just as you can see, my body is okay now. I am sorry to make you worry.”

「あはは、すみませんでしたニンテ。それに皆さん。この通り、もう身体は何ともありません。本当にご心配をおかけしました」

He politely bowed to them, the others pat their chests in relief and returned to work.

丁寧に頭を下げると、他の者たちもホッと胸を撫で下ろし、仕事へと戻って行った。

Souji recalled what happened last night as he laid on the bed.

A new flame was created. That was yellow flame. Firstly, he carved the crest made of yellow flame that would be put it into an object. Following that, no matter where it was, he could immediately fly to where the crest was.

ソージはベッドに横になりながら昨夜のことを思い出していた。

新しく創り出した炎。それは黄炎。まず黄炎で物体に紋章を刻む。そしてその紋がある場所なら、たとえどこにいても一瞬で飛ぶことができるのだ。

It could simply said as teleportation. However only Souji himself could fly there. Moreover, he could perceive the physical and mental condition of the one touching the crest.

It couldn't accurately grasp the inner working of the mind, but that wasn't matter. What would be transmitted were something like impatience and anger, feelings that appeared strongly.

簡単に言えば転移だろう。しかしソージ本人だけしか飛ぶことができない。また、刻んだ紋章に触れている者の心身状態を察知することもできる。

だが心の機微を正確に把握することは叶わない。ただ伝わってくるのは焦りや怒りなど、強く表に現れている感情だけである。

With magic with such a power, Souji carved the crest on the tag and made it into a necklace. As long Yoyo carried it with her, he could feel when a crisis approached her and immediately teleport.

However the carved crest would expire in a week, so it was necessary to regularly carved it again.

ソージはこの魔法の力で、タグに紋を刻み、ネックレスにしたのだ。これで肌身離さずヨヨが持っていてくれさえすれば、彼女に危機が迫った時、その感情を感じて即座に転移することが可能になった。

しかし紋が刻まれている期間は一週間なので、定期的に刻み直す必要はあるが。

With this, he was glad that he gained a new flame.

Normally, he would do it slowly to create a new flame, but he was too hurried added with the too strong of an effect of the magic, so it resulted in that recoil.

こうして新たな炎を得たのは良かった。

本来ならゆっくりと時間をかけて新しい炎を創るのだが、急ぎ過ぎたということと、魔法効果が強力過ぎたということもあり、その反動でああなってしまった。

He somehow made it safe with Yoyo's Tuning magic, and his condition returned to normal, but he would likely to lay in the bed for more than a week if nothing was done.

The boy with 31 years old of mental age once again learnt that it was not good to be too hurried.

何とかヨヨの調律魔法で無事、元の身体に戻ったが、あのままだと恐らく一週間以上は寝込む羽目になっていたかもしれない。

何事も急ぎ過ぎるのはよくないと改めて学んだ精神年齢三十一歳の少年だった。

(Even so, as expected, Ojou-sama's Tuning magic is something different altogether...)

(だけど、やっぱりお嬢様の調律魔法は次元が違うな.....)

Of course in his previous condition, Souji likely would be able to recover with green flame.

However the time took to recover living thing was different than the time for object. It was a flame that originally created to mend broken things, but he added the condition when Yoyo was injured.

無論先程のソージの状態なら、ソージが扱う緑炎でも治せるだろう。しかし物とは違って生物を治癒するのは時間がかかるのだ。本来壊れた物を直すために創り出した炎だったが、どうせならヨヨが怪我した時に治せるようにと条件を増やした。

However the limitation was strong and though it was possible to cure anything in level of scratch immediately, more magic power and time was necessary for a deep wound. Surely Yoyo had thought of the same thing and it might only be a dream for now.

しかし制限が強く、擦り傷程度なら一瞬で治せるが、結構な傷病になるとかなりの魔力と時間を必要とするのだ。きっとヨヨと同じことをしていたら、今頃夢の中にいるだろう。

However Yoyo was able to do it and resulted only in her staggering.

しかしヨヨは少しふらついただけでそれを成し得た。

Tuning magic was as its name suggested, a magic that corrected the distortion of things Yoyo touched directly. Not like Souji's blue flame that searched for object memory, Yoyo could see through everything she touched.

調律魔法は、その名の通りヨヨが直接触れて歪みを正しくする魔法である。ソージの青炎のように物体の記憶を探るのではなく、ヨヨは触れたものの全てを視ることができる。

Before, Yoyo showed the expression like she guessed everything when she touched the tag's crest, but she clearly understood what the crest was.

She could peep on everything she touched, a power that could change the condition and structure of things as she liked. A rare magic that made Yoyo capable of controlling the magic power that covered the room.

先程、ヨヨはタグの紋に触れて全てを察したかのような表情をしたが、彼女にはその紋が何を意味するのか把握したのだ。

そうして触れるだけで全てを覗き、好きなように調子や構造を変えることができる力。部屋を覆うような魔力を宿すヨヨだからこそ扱える稀少魔法だ。

(Before, I made Ojou-sama angry and punished by always getting diarrhea..... I don't want to remember it.)

(昔、お嬢様を怒らせてずっと下痢にさせられたな.....思い出したくない)

At that time, Souji was turned into the toilet's resident for three days. It was a magic that could even do that.

However too powerful magic consumed not only magic power but also physical strength and mental greatly. A magic that couldn't be used so casually.

その時、三日間、ソージはトイレの住人と化した。そう、そういうこともできる魔法なのだ。

しかし強過ぎる魔法は魔力もそうだが体力や精神も大幅に削る。そう簡単にヒョイヒョイ使える魔法ではない。

Yet, Yoyo used it for Souji without any moment of hesitation.

それなのに、一切の迷いなくヨヨはソージのために使ってくれた。

Souji suddenly get up and his feet moved somewhere.

ソージはふと起き上がると、その足でどこかへ向かって行った。

Souji knocked on the door before him.

ソージは目の前にあるドアをコンコンコンとノックした。

“..... Souji?”

「..... ソージ？」

What he heard from inside was Yoyo's serene voice that was as if she had expected him coming. He quietly opened the door after he obtained the permission to enter the room.

中から聞こえたのは、まるで自分が来ることを予期していたようなヨヨの澄み切った声音だった。入室の許可を得ると、静かにドアを開く。

“Didn't I told you to rest?”

「大人しくしていなさいと言ったはずだけど？」

Slight anger included in her words. However Souji came next to Yoyo who was laying on the bed and bowed.

少し怒気を絡ませたような言い方。だがソージは、ベッドに横になっているヨヨの隣まで向かい頭を下げる。

“I am truly sorry.”

“..... haa, what a helpless child.”

「申し訳ございませんでした」

「……………はあ、仕方の無い子ね」

Yoyo's amazed sigh entered his ears. However, a pleasant spectacle reflected before Souji's eyes.

呆れたようなヨヨの溜め息が耳に入る。しかしソージの目の先には嬉しい光景が映った。

“Fufu, of course I wear it. After all, this is something you created desperately.”

「ふふ、ちゃんとしてるわよ。だって、あなたが必死で作ってくれたものどもの」

A necklace was hung on her neck. He inadvertently smiled because she immediately wore it.

彼女の首にはネックレスがかかってあった。さっそくつけてくれていることに思わず頬が緩む。

“Nee, Souji, you………… did you regret to become my butler?”

「ねえソージ、あなたは…………私の執事になって後悔は無い？」

Though she said so with her usual expression, her voice trembled faintly. Thinking what she was worried about, he smiled.

いつもと変わらぬ表情で彼女は言っているが、微かに声が震えている。何を不安がっているのかと思い、笑みを溢す。

“What's with that question?”

“…………”

“I am happy because I work here.”

“…………”

“I have no regret at all. That is why, please don't ask such a thing again.”

“…… fufu, looks like that was a foolish question.”

“Ee, I am Yoyo-ojousama's butler after all.”

“Then let me rephrase it. Souji, serves me from now on. You are my one and only butler.”

“As you wish, Yoyo-ojousama.”

「何を仰っているんですか？」

「…………」

「オレはここにこうしていられるだけで幸せです」

「…………」

「不満なんて一つもありません。だから、そんなことはもう聞かないで下さい」

「……ふふ、愚問だったわね」

「ええ、オレはヨヨお嬢様の執事ですから」

「なら改めて言うわ。ソージ、これからも私のために尽くしなさい。あなたは、私だけの執事よ」

「畏まりました、ヨヨお嬢様」

The two looked and smiled at each other, then Souji put his index finger before his mouth. Yoyo, “Eh?” had such feeling, but Souji came before the door without making a sound and quickly opened the door.

二人は互いに微笑み合い、そしてソージは人差し指を口元に立てた。ヨヨは「え？」という感じだったが、ソージは音を立てずにドアの前まで行き、一気にドアを開く。

““Kyaah!?””

「「きゃあっ!?!」」

Maybe because they were leaning on the door to listen, Kaina and Ninthe fell into the room.

ドアにもたれて聞き耳を立てていたのか、部屋になだれ込んできたのは、カイナとニンテだ。

“Ah, d-don’t misunderstand! It’s because I saw Souji’s back figure, it’s not like I think you are going to attack the exhausted Yoyo-sama!”

“W-Wawawa! Ninthe was forcibly brought by Kaina-sama!”

“W-Wait, Ninthe. You should have stick with me there!”

“Eeeeeh!?”

「あ、こ、これは違うのよ！ ただ、ソージの後ろ姿が見えたから、もしかして疲れてるヨヨ様を襲いに行ったんじゃないかと思ったわけじゃないからね！」

「わ、わわわ！ ニ、ニンテはカイナ様にムリヤリ連れてこられて！」

「ちょ、ちょっとニンテ、そこは私を庇うのが筋でしょうが！」

「えええええっ!?!」

Even so, was what surprised Ninthe expressed, Souji looked at them in leer and greatly sighed before saying,

これでもかと言わんばかりに驚くニンテを横目に、ソージは大きく溜め息を吐くと、

“Ojou-sama, I only have one complaint.”

「お嬢様、一つだけ不満がありました」

Souji stared at Kaina's face. "Eh? What is it?," was Kaina's face expressed as she could not understand the situation.

ソージはジッとカイナの顔を見つめる。「え？ なに？」といった顔をして状況を飲み込めていないカイナである。

"Fufu, that is right. But, won't you feel bored without it?"

"Ahaha, I can't refute to that."

"What are you laughing about~! Ah, is it about the *manjuu* Souji created and put into storage yesterday that I sneakily ate just now..... ah."

「ふふ、そのようね。でも退屈はしないわよ？」

「あはは、言えてますね」

「二人とも何笑ってるのよお~！ あ、もしかして昨日ソージが作って保存してた饅頭をさっきこっそり食べた時に食べカスでも.....あ」

Kaina seemed to have noticed her words, but it was too late. Souji sneered and looked down on Kaina.

カイナは今の言動が失敗だったと気づいたようだがもう遅かった。ソージは冷笑を浮かべると、カイナを見下ろす。

"Hohou, Mother. This month salary will be decreased by 70%."

"Th-That's~! Have mercyyy, Soujiiii~! I won't be able to survive like this~! Ninthe, please say something too!"

"Eeh! That's unrelated to Ninthe!"

"Would it be better with 80%, Mother?"

"My life point is already at the very limit you know~!"

「ほほう、母さん。今月は給金七割減です」

「そ、そんなあ~！ 後生よおソージイイ~！ そんなんじゃ生きてけないわよお~！ ニンテも何とか言ってよお！」

「ええっ！ ニンテ関係ないですう！」

「八割減にしましょうか、母さん？」

「もう私のライフポイントはギリギリよお~！」

Watching the three's conversation, Yoyo laughed happily as she muttered,

そんな三人のやり取りを見ていたヨヨは、楽しそうに笑いこぼす。

"You guys are the best."

「最高よ、あなたたち」

## Story 24 Yoyo's One and Only Butler

### 第二十四話 ヨヨだけの執事

Chapter 1 ended with this

これで第一章は終わりました。

=====

One ship was leisurely sailing over the blue sea. And a big continent could be seen ahead the ship. The East continent, 【Dolkia,】 owned vast terrain that only second compared to the other continents.

一つの船が青い海の上を悠々と渡っていた。そして船の先には大きな大陸がその存在感を示している。この東大陸【ドルキア】は数多くの大陸の中でも二番目に広大な土地を持つ。

The continent was divided into three and names were given to the regions respectively, the one the ship moved towards was one of them, 《Anjax Region》.

大きく三等分され、それぞれに地方としての名前がついており、今船が向かっていたのはその中の一つである《アンジャクス地方》である。

“That is 【Dolkia Continent】!”

「あそこが【ドルキア大陸】なんだね！」

The impression from the spectacle that could be seen from the ship made Amagawa Mayuki's eyes sparkled.

船から見える光景に感動を覚えて目をキラキラさせているのは天川真雪である。

“You're right, we will moor at the high-water mark that could be seen there.”

「そうだ、あそこに見える山場に停泊するぞ」

The one who said so as she pointed at the high-water mark at the edge of their view was this ship----- this pirate ship's captain, Eula.

Mayuki and Sheila were excusing themselves inside the pirate ship, and about ten days had passed since then.

そう言って視界の端にある山場に指を差しているのはこの船-----海賊船の船長であるユーラである。

ひょんなことから真雪たちは海賊船の世話になることになったが、初めて船に乗ってから十日ばかりが過ぎていた。

Though Mayuki forcefully boarded the ship accompanied by her best friend, Hoshimori Sheila, after knowing the character of the people that called themselves as noble thieves who received them, they were able to get along.

Being heroes and someones summoned to this world, their relationship could be doubted, but Mayuki's attitude clearly expressed that it couldn't be helped that they got along.

勢いで乗り込んでしまった真雪とその親友である星守セイラだったが、義賊と自称する彼女たちと接するうちに、彼女たちの人となりを知って、すっかり仲良くなったのだ。

この世界に英傑として召喚された立場としては、この関係はいかがなものかとも思うが、仲良くなったものは仕方が無いと真雪は割り切った。

In this ten days, the pirates indiscreetly attacked the other ships, but didn't excessively caught the fishes or other marine products, so Mayuki thought at the very least they also had their own way of justice.

But, no matter even if they didn't kill anyone, it was the truth the ship Mayuki's party boarded on attacked other ships. Furthermore, there was a personal reason for that, and though Mayuki said she want them to hold back to the utmost, it was impossible to do for Eula with her hardened resolve.

この十日ばかりの間で、彼女たちが無闇に他の船を襲ったり、魚などの魚介類を乱獲などもしなかったことで、彼女たちにも少なからず自分たちの正義があるのだと真雪は思った。

でもいくら人を殺したりしないといっても、真雪たちが乗っていた船を襲ったのも事実。それにも私的な理由があったのだが、極力そういうことは控えてほしいと真雪が言うと、ユーラはそれはできないと意志が固かった。

She also had something she couldn't yield for, so they wouldn't be able to meet each other eyes for that thing. They continued their voyage like that, and the ending had approached.

Mayuki's objective was right before her eyes, 【Dolkia】. Once they arrived there, Mayuki and Sheila would go separate way from Eula and the pirates.

彼女にも譲れないものがあるようで、そこだけは分かり合うことができなかった。そうして船旅をしていたが、それも終わりに近づいてきた。

真雪の目的は目の前で見えている【ドルキア】だ。そこに着くと、それでユーラたちとはお別れだ。

Though it was only for a little while, she felt lonely to be separated from the pirates with good natures. Once they reached that high-water mark, it would be the end of their lives in pirate ship.

ほんの少しの間だったが、気の良い彼女たちと別れることにもやはり寂しいものを感じる。あの山場に着けば、世話になった海賊船生活も終わりを告げる。

“That? But that is not a port, right?”

“Mayuki, are you an idiot? We are pirate, remember? If we triumphantly go to the port, it will be troublesome as the patrol ships will immediately be called.”

“Ah..... now that you say it.”

「あれ？ でも何で港じゃないの？」

「マユキ、お前はバカなのか？ アタシらは海賊だぞ？ 大手を振って港なんかに行ってみろ、即座に警備船を呼ばれて面倒だろうが」

「あ.....それもそうだね」

Mayuki had forgotten it was a pirate ship because she was too comfortable boarding it.

あまりに居心地が良かったものだから海賊船ということがすっかり抜けてしまっていた。

“The mooring will be..... for three days. We will likely to be found if we stay for more than that.”

「停泊は三日.....だな。それ以上は見つかる恐れがあるしな」

As Eula said so, her pirate’s companion, Reiss, lightly nodded.

ユーラがそう言うと、海賊仲間であるレイスが小さく顎を引く。

“Aa, we will resupply our ration there, then resume our adventure.”

“Aa, guys! I am going to divide the duties, so move!”

「ああ、そこで食糧を調達して、そっからはまた冒険再開だな」

「ああ、野郎ども！ 役割を分担して動けよ！」

Eula said so in loud voice which the pirates replied with, “Aye aye, Sir!”

After a while, they arrived at their destination. Eula’s subordinates were preparing to stop the ship.

ユーラが大声を張り上げると海賊たちは「アイアイサー！」と口を揃えて言う。

しばらくして目的地である山場に到着する。ユーラの子分たちは、船を停留させるために準備をしている。

Following that, Mayuki and Sheila came to meet Eula, Reiss, and Gazi.

そして真雪とセイラは、ユーラ、レイス、ガジの三人と対面していた。

“Eula, thank you to bring us to even here!”

“Thank you very much, Eula-san.”

「ユーラ、ここまで本当にありがとう！」

「ありがとうございました、ユーラさん」

Mayuki and Sheila said so as they smiled, and Eula scratched her head as she was embarrassed.

真雪とセイラが笑顔を浮かべ言うと、ユーラは照れたように頭をボリボリとかきながら、

“There’s no need for gratitude.”

“How unfriendly for the head. Ah, don’t tell me head is lonely?”

“Wh-! Th-There is no such a thing!”

“That so? But yesterday head said, “Hey, about those girls, do you think they will really left the ship?,” with a sad face to me....”

“Uwaaaaa-! R-Reiss, d-dododododo you want me to cut your mouth to pieces?”

「礼なんていい」

「無愛想だな頭は。あ、もしかして寂しいとか？」

「なっ！ そ、そんなことあるわけないだろうが！」

「そっかあ？ その割には昨日なんて俺に『なあ、アイツら、ホントに船を下りるつもりなのかな？』って悲しそうな顔で.....」

「うわああああっ！ レ、レイス、そ、そそそその口を切り刻んでやろうか？」

Eula drew closer to Reiss while blushing. Reiss was grinning as he found it interesting.

ユーラは顔を真っ赤にしながらレイスに詰め寄る。レイスはそれでも面白そうにニヤニヤしている。

“Well, even the misses, how about you stop searching for that person and become pirates?”

「まあ、嬢ちゃんたちも、人探しなんて止めて、海賊にならねえか？」

Mayuki shook her head towards Reiss who jokingly invited the two.

レイスの冗談ともとれる誘いに真雪は首を横に振る。

“I am sorry. I am happy for the offer, but we have someone whom we want to meet by all means.”

「ごめん。申し出はとっても嬉しいんだけど、私たちにはどうしても会いたい人がいるんだ」

Mayuki and Sheila looked at each other at the same time and smiled.

真雪とセイラは同時に顔を見合わせ微笑み合う。

“Kuhaha, good grief, looks like we are rejected, head?”

“Aamou, just stop it already!”

「クハハ、やれやれ、こりゃ振られちまったな頭？」

「ああもう、お前いい加減にしやがれっ！」

Reiss was carried and shook by the neck so he couldn't even answer that.

レイスの襟首を持ってガシガシと揺らすがレイスはまるで答えていない様子。

“U~n, you two, though it was for a short time, I think of you as my companions. These guys think so too.”

「う~ん、でもさ二人とも、短い期間だったけど、俺らはおめえたちのこと仲間だと思ってるんよ。アイツらもさ」

Gazi said so and the others replied with “Ooh!”

ガジが言うと、他の海賊たちも「おお！」と答えている。

“It is just as Gazi said. Therefore if the one you search for make misses cry, then we are going to beat him up.”

「ガジの言う通りだ。だからもしその探し人とやらが、嬢ちゃんたちを泣かすようなことがあったら、俺らがぶん殴ってやっからよ」

Mayuki could feel her heart filled with warmth. From these words, she understood they really care about her and Sheila.

真雪はとても心が温かくなる想いを感じていた。彼らの言葉が、本当に自分たちのことを想ってのことだということが分かるからだ。

“Thank you Reiss-san, Gazi-san, and everyone. Last but not the least..... Eula-”

「ありがとうレイスさん、ガジさん、それに皆さん。そして.....ユーラ」

Eula kept looking away.

ユーラは顔をそっぽ向けたままだ。

“Truly, thank you.”

“Thank you very much.”

「本当にありがとうね」

「ありがとうございます」

Mayuki and Sheila once again bowed their heads in gratitude. Though Eula didn't face them,

真雪とセイラは再び礼を言い頭を下げる。ユーラは決して顔は向けてくれなかったが、

“..... take care, Mayuki, Sheila.”

「.....気をつけろよマユキ、セイラ」

She said so while her tail moved and gently brushed Mayuki and Sheila's cheeks.

When the two went down to the rock, Mayuki with her best smile shouted.

そう言った彼女の尻尾が動きトン、トンと、真雪とセイラの双方の頬を優しく撫でた。

そして二人は岩場に下りると、最大の笑顔を作り叫ぶようにして真雪は言った。

“See you, everyone!”

「またねみんなあっ！」

Thus Mayuki and Sheila were separated from their new companions, and took their first steps toward the continent.

こうして真雪とセイラは、新たにできた仲間との別れと、新大陸への第一歩を踏み出した。

While experiencing the loneliness, happiness, and their gratitude within the separation, they moved on 【Dolkia Continent】

真雪とセイラは寂しくも喜びと感謝が残る別れを経験し、【ドルキア大陸】に乗り込むことができた。

“What should we do from now on, Mayuki-san?”

“Umm, first let’s go to find the town, then gather the information there.”

“It will be great if he is in this continent.”

“Un, but I will definitely find him no matter where he is!”

「これからどうしますか真雪さん？」

「そうだね、まずは街を探して、そこで情報収集かな」

「この大陸におられるといいんですけどね」

「うん、でもどこにいたって必ず探し出してみせるよ！」

Mayuki strongly thrust out his fist to show her enthusiasm.

真雪は意気込みを表すように拳を強く突き出す。

“Let’s do our best!”

「頑張りましょう！」

The two immediately walked, and Sheila was giggling only to be asked by Mayuki.

二人は真っ直ぐ歩いていると、ふとセイラがクスリと笑い、気になった真雪が問いかけた。

“What happened, Sheila?”

“Fufu, well, Sheila just recalled about Eula-san and the others. They really are interesting people.”

“That’s right~, even though they are pirates, right?”

“They are noble thieves after all.”

“Ahaha! I wonder if we can meet again! Uun, I want to meet them again!”

“Yes, someday. Now that was said, we didn’t repay them with anything but words of gratitude.”

“Ah, if it is about that then we have repaid them with something.”

“Eh? Is that so?”

「どうしたのセイラ？」

「ふふ、いえ、ユーラさんたちのことを考えてたのです。本当に楽しい方たちだったなど」

「そうだね~、海賊なのにな？」

「義賊ですから」

「あはは！ また会えるかな！ ううん、また会いたい！」

「はい。いつかまた。そう言えば、お礼の言葉だけで、あの方たちに何もお返しできませんでしたね」

「あ、それならちょっとだけ返してきたよ」

「え？ そうなのですか？」

Sheila widened her beautiful blue eyes.

セイラの綺麗な碧眼が開かれる。

“Un, you know last night, I cooked food to express my gratitude!”

“..... come again?”

「うん、昨日の夜にね、感謝の気持ちに鍋に料理を作っておいたんだよ！」

「.....はい？」

Yesterday, Mayuki wanted to do something to express her gratitude towards Eula and the pirate, and she thought of cooking her specialty dish.

真雪は前日にユーラたちに感謝の気持ちとして何かをしてあげたいと思い立ち、考えた結果、自分の得意料理を作り置きしておこうと思ったのだ。

“Eu..... th-that’s..... Mayuki-san? The kitchen is certainly off-limit for Mayuki-san, right?”

「えう.....あ、あの.....真雪さん？ た、確か真雪さんはキッチン立ち入り禁止でしたよね？」

That’s right, because Mayuki caused 『the incident of curry that is more painful than death』, she was prohibited from cooking.

そう、真雪が起こした『カレーが死ぬほど辛え事件』のせいで、真雪は料理禁止を言い渡されていた。

“Un, I wonder why they did that. But, that’s why I sneakily did it at night.”

「うん、何でだろうね。だからバレないように夜にこっそりね」

*What do you think? Am I not great?*, Mayuki stuck out her tongue with such feelings. That followed by Sheila who turned pale.

どう？ 凄いでしょ？ 的な感じで舌をペロリと出す真雪。そしてそれを見て顔を青ざめさせるセイラ。

“B-By the way, what did you made?”

“About that, Meat Buns!”

“..... d-did you made it normally?”

“Of course! I even tasted it myself and it made me groaned! The taste is perfect!”

「ち、ちなみに何を作られたのですか？」

「えっとね、肉まんだよ！」

「.....ふ、普通に作られました？」

「もちろんだよ！ ちゃんと私の舌も唸るほどにしておいたから！ 味見もバッチリ！」

V, V, she raised peace sign towards Sheila. However Sheila know. Mayuki’s taste bud wasn’t like one of ordinary human, it was truly a broken one.

Sheila clapped her hands in her mind and muttered as if she was praying to the god.

ブイブイとピースサインをセイラに向ける。しかしセイラは知っている。真雪の味覚は常人のそれではなく、激しくぶっ壊れていることを。

セイラは無意識に手を合わせて、まるで神に祈るように小さく呟く。

“Please somehow make everyone healthy till we meet again..... eu.”

「どうか皆さん、次会う時までにご無事で.....えう」

It was unknown whether Sheila’s voice was heard. However, after several hours, painful screams such as “Hon geeeee-!,” or “Pigyaaaaaa-!,” could be heard from the rock somewhere or maybe not....

セイラの声が聞こえたかは分からない。ただ数時間後、どこかの岩場から「ほんげえええええっ！」や「ぴぎやあああああっ！」などの痛々しい悲鳴が聞こえたとか聞こえなかったとか.....。

At the time Mayuki’s party entered 【Dolkia】 , the one they were looking for, Souji was accomplishing his duty as a butler.

真雪たちが【ドルキア】に入った頃、彼女の探し人であるソージは、執事としての務めを果たしていた。

When Souji was cleaning the study Yoyo always use, one book suddenly caught his eyes. It was a book about methods of using magic that Souji was indebted to.

ソージはヨヨがいつも使用している書齋の掃除をしていた時、ふと一冊の本が目に入る。それはかつてソージもお世話になったことがある魔法を使うための方法を書かれてある本だった。

“Hee, how nostalgic.”

“What is nostalgic, Souji-sama?”

“Oya, Ninthe?”

「へえ、懐かしいなあ」

「なにがなつかしいんですソージ様？」

「おや、ニンテ？」

Unbeknownst to him, Ninthe had entered the room and looked up at him in curiosity.

いつの間にか部屋に入って来ていたニンテが興味津々な様子で見上げてきていた。

“This is.”

“What is that?”

“It was a book used to make me remember on how to use magic. Though it was bought by mother, I put it here because there’s no more use and forgot about it.”

「コレですよ」

「なんです？」

「オレが魔法を覚えるために使っていた本です。母に買ってもらったのですが、もう使わないからとここに保管していたのを忘れていました」

The book had finger marks and the color was fading. There were crooks in some places, and it could be understood that it was considerably used just by looking.

本は手垢(てあか)でそこら中に変色がされていた。所々も折れ曲がっていたり、ずいぶん読まれたのだと一目で分かる。

“Hee~ is this Souji-sama’s?”

“Ee, I have studied it even until it opened holes. I was really troubled that I couldn’t even use magic at all in the beginning.”

“Eeh!? Did Souji-sama also had such a time?”

“That’s so, Ninthe.”

「へえ～これをソージ様が？」

「ええ、穴が開くほど読んで勉強しましたよ。最初は全然魔法が使えなくて本当に困りました」

「ええっ!? ソージ様にもそんなことがあったんです？」

「そうよ、ニンテ」

There was another visitor. She was the master of this mansion and the one Souji serve, Yoyo Yatsugi Crowtail. With her long golden hair swaying, she gracefully came next to Souji.

そこへまたも来訪者。屋敷の当主であり、ソージの仕えるヨヨ・八継・クロウテイルだ。長い黄金の髪を揺らしながら歩に気品を感じさせながらソージの傍までやって来る。

“How nostalgic. The Souji at that time was in verge of crying.”

“Uwaa~ Souji-sama is so cutee~.”

“Wa-, O-Ojou-sama! To say I was in verge of crying....”

“Ara? I wonder who was depressed on the bottom of his heart because he didn’t have talent in magic?”

“Uh....”

「懐かしいわね。あの時のソージは、半べそをかいてたっけね」

「うわあ～ソージ様かわいいですう～」

「ちょ、お、お嬢様！ 半べそなんて.....」

「あら？ 自分には魔法の才能が無いのではと心底落ち込んでいたのはどこの誰だったかしら？」

「う.....」

That definitely was Souji. Yoyo was looking at him as if to make fun of him.

間違いなくソージのことだった。ヨヨはからかうような視線を向けると、

“Fufu, but Souji didn’t give up. That is why you are you now.”

“Ojou-sama....”

「ふふ、でもソージは諦めなかった。だから、今のあなたがあるのよ」

「お嬢様.....」

The two’s gazes met, and Souji felt the time had stopped. Following that, Yoyo quietly lifted her hands and touched Souji’s right hand.

二人は見つめ合い、時間が止まった感覚がソージを包む。そしてヨヨがソージの右手にそっと触れ両手で持ち上げる。

“At that time, this hand protected my life.”

「あの時よね、この手が、あなたが私の命を守ってくれた」

That time referred to when he first used his 『Flame Genesis』 magic.

それは初めてソージが『創炎』の魔法を生み出した時のことだ。

Yoyo smiled gently. Towards the goddess-like smile, Souji felt his cheeks became hot. Then Yoyo's gaze completely pierced Souji's eyes. *Doki*, his heart throbbed.

ヨヨは優しげに微笑む。その笑みはまるで女神のようだとソージは思い頬に熱がこもるのを感じる。そしてゆっくりとヨヨの視線がソージの瞳を射抜く。ドキッと心臓が跳ねる。

“Fufu, why are you nervous now? What a strange child.”

“..... p-please don't make fun of me, Ojou-sama.”

“Okay, after all Ninthe was dumbfounded since a while ago.”

「ふふ、今更緊張しているの？ おかしな子ね」

「.....か、からかわないで下さいお嬢様」

「そうね、ニンテも先程から啞然としてるしね」

Just as Yoyo said, Ninthe could only stared at the two's conversation. Then Ninthe said something unexpected.

ヨヨの言う通り、二人のやり取りをじ〜っと見つめていたニンテ。そしてとんでもないことをニンテが言い出した。

“Some~how, you two really are well-matched! It is as if you two are lover!”

「な〜んかお二人ってお似合いです！ まるで恋人同士みたいですよ！」

*What are you saying?*, Souji thought that. Their positions were obviously apart, and because they were connected by master and servant relationship, Souji judged Yoyo would be displeased if such a thing was said, he panicky trying to deny that and when he see Yoyo's face,

何て事を言うんだとソージは思った。身分も明らかに違うし、主従の関係で結ばれているのに、そんなことを言えばヨヨが気を悪くすると判断したソージは、慌てて取り消そうとヨヨの顔を見ると、

“..... h!?”

「.....っ!？」

There was Yoyo's startled and flushed face. She was biting her lips as if enduring something. .... *why?*

そこにはビックリするほど顔を紅潮させたヨヨがいた。何かを我慢するように下唇まで噛み締めている。.....何故？

“Eh..... O-Ojou-sama?”

“Wh-Wh-What is it?”

「え.....お、お嬢様？」

「な、な、何かしら？」

Though she was trying to smooth thing over by saying so, her voice completely sounded shrill and nervous. It was also the first time Souji see such a Yoyo, so he was puzzled on how to respond.

取り繕うに言っているつもりなのだろうが、声が完全に上ずっている。そもそもこんなヨヨを見るのは初めてでソージもどう対応したらいいか戸惑う。

“Th-That is, Ninthe is, she is still a child, so she just honestly said the thing as she see, that's why I want her to be forgiven for her innocent remark....”

「あ、あの、ニンテはその、まだ子供であり、何と見ても見たまんまを正直に言うので、無邪気な失言ということでどうかご容赦を.....」

After he managed to explain so, this time Yoyo looked down and with a mutter,

何とかそう説明したら、今度はヨヨは顔を俯かせて、ほんのささやき声で、

“..... Souji is an idiot.”

「.....ソージのバカ」

She said so. Though Souji wondered why he was insulted here, he didn't forget to apologize as he felt the mood had recovered. After he apologized, Yoyo let out a sigh as if she was amazed about something, but his mind was in chaos as he couldn't understand why she did that.

と言った。何故ここで自分が罵倒されたのだろうと不思議に思ったソージだが、とりあえず機嫌を直してもらおうと思い謝るのを忘れない。謝った後、呆れたように溜め息を溢すヨヨに、どうしてそんな態度をしているのかまるで分からなく、頭の中は混乱状態だった。

“..... it is okay now, instead make me something delicious.”

「.....いいわ、その代わり何か美味しいものを作りなさい」

He was relieved because Yoyo's previously changed expression returned to her usual cool one.

先程とは違って変わって涼しげなヨヨの表情に安堵を感じる。

“A-As you wish. Ninthe please help me too.”

“Yes!”

「か、畏まりました。ニンテも、手伝って下さいね」

「はいです！」

Ninthe went out of the room happily, and when Souji was about to chase after her,

ニンテは嬉しそうに部屋から出て行き、その後を追うようにソージが向かおうとした時、

“Nee, Souji.”

「ねえソージ」

A voice came from is back, and he turned towards Yoyo, the owner of that voice.

背後から声が届き、その声の持ち主であるヨヨに真正面を向ける。

“May I ask what is it?”

「何でしょうか？」

For a while they were looking at each other, then Yoyo quietly opened her mouth as she floated her usual beautiful smile.

しばらく見つめ合う形になったが、いつものように微笑を浮かべたヨヨが静かに口を開く。

“It is an order. Forever stay by my side. My————— my one and only butler.”

「命令よ。いつまでも私を支えなさい。私の—————私だけの執事」

Towards Yoyo who finally regained her usual composure, Souji let out smile that rivaled her and deeply bowed.

ようやくいつもの調子に戻ってきたヨヨに対し、ソージも負けじと笑みを浮かべて腰を曲げる。

“Of course. After all I am Yoyo-ojousama’s butler.”

「もちろんです。オレはヨヨお嬢様の執事ですから」