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Tensei Oujo wa Kyou mo Hata o Tatakioru

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Chapter 70: The Reincarnated Princess' Ship Travels (3)

Georg has set off a journey to Flamme for my medicine as per my request. More than a month had passed and he still hasn't come home. I wonder if Miss Flora chased after Georg out of love, or simply came to visit.

If the former is true, the vitality of a maiden in love is amazing.

"Marie, you're spacing out. Keep walking forward."

Klaus called out to me with a bitter voice.

"Please forget that dumb woman."

"...Haa."

I nodded and said nothing further. Now is not the time to worry about Miss Flora's travel purposes. Let's concentrate on the matter at hand.

First of all, this water. What should I do?

"Say, brother... mind taking this to the kitchen-"

"O~i, lil' Miss!"

I looked up at Klaus when another voice interrupted me. The source of the voice was a sailor coming down the stairs.

"...?"

'Little Miss?' Was he talking to me?

The man who came running over to us was the sailor who was on the deck a moment ago. He stopped with his waist now right in my face. He had dark skin and rough copper red hair, with scary looking eyes of the same colour that I don't dare looking straight into. He seemed to be in his mid-30s.

When you're looked down upon by such a towering man you would naturally feel intimidated. I unknowingly hung my head down. Surprisingly, he gave me a gentle smile.

"Thank you, Miss."

“Eh...?”

My eyes flew wide open in surprise at the unexpected words. I wonder why he thanked me? When I tilted my head as if confused, the sailor wryly smiled back.

“You told the spoiled lady back there that she shouldn’t waste water.”

The sailor scratches his cheek awkwardly.

“Since it’s my responsibility to tell people these things, I’m sorry you had to deal with her instead.”

“No!”

I panicked and shook my head.

“I jumped out without thinking... rather, haven’t I caused you more trouble?”

There’s no mistake that the atmosphere on deck back then was terrible. I’m surely also at fault and I don’t deserve to be thanked or apologised to.

“Not at all! If lil’ Miss didn’t interfere like she did, the situation would have been much worse.”

His big hand gently stroke my head that was still hung over.

“You are a brave and kind child. I’m sure your brother is very proud of you.”

“Yes, I am... but I cannot take my eyes off her since she always get herself in troublesome situations.”

Klaus said with a bitter face.

In contrast to me and Klaus who also had the same bitter face, the sailor gave a cheerful laugh. I couldn’t keep up with the situation.

“You are a good brother and sister.”

“Yes.”

“Is that so...?”

Comparing between Klaus who smiled and I who made a doubtful look, the sailor affirmed once again that we were indeed ‘really close siblings.’

“I’m Paul, may hear your names?”

Like that, we also introduced ourselves.

The sailor, Paul, seems to serve as the kitchen staff aboard this ship. I decided to entrust the lemon water with him since he works in the kitchen but it somehow turned out that we will get a tour of his workplace.

The kitchen was narrower than I thought. Since there are kitchen utensils and rations all over the place, it feels like we're interrupting their work. The two sailors who were already inside were wide-eyed in surprise and looked to Paul for an explanation.

"What's going on, Paul? There's a cute customer with you today."

"I was wondering what you were doing. So you were flirting around, huh?"

"It's a wonderful achievement, you better praise me!"

"Shut up, idiot! We're busy around here. Go back to work already!"

With Paul stretching out his chest proudly, some boos were thrown his way.

"I know already. But before that... Eh? Where did my apples go?"

Paul with the barrel under his arms, sensed that something was wrong.

"Oh, you mean the ones that you bought for the goddess, right?"

"I ate them."

"Why?! Do you have a rabbit with you, Kurt?!"

So the one called Yang thinks that guy has a rabbit hidden somewhere? Well, they do say all petite men are stupid.

"Well, a selfish girl like that can't possibly be the goddess. Instead of offering it to her, I'd rather eat them myself."

The young blondie, Kurt, licked the remaining juice off his thumb with an evil smile plastered on his face. Yang watches on with amazement.

"It's common for rumors to be far from reality. I think you're hoping for too much, Kurt."

"No, the real goddess is absolutely different. I'm sure she's more humble and quiet. A kind-hearted princess is definitely out there somewhere!"

A~h. This guy is beyond help.

I realised I felt a bit distant. The meaning behind the goddess name is straying further from the truth. His dream was crushed. Not once, but twice.

I wonder, what did Miss Flora do? It seemed she gave bad impressions even to the people not on the deck earlier.

“You guys, stop it. You’re in front of our guests.”

While calming down the two who were in the heat of discussion, Paul scratched his head.

“Speaking of which, I was thinking of giving the lil’ Miss some of my apples, you know?”

“Eh?”

Kurt’s face turned blue after Paul told him so.

“Sorry about this, lil’ Miss. I went through all the trouble of bringing you here but it seems I have nothing to give you.”

“It’s fine. Please don’t worry about it. Rather, if you’re busy, would you like a helping hand?”

“Thank you, but I can’t let you do that much. Just the thought is enough. Why don’t you go upstairs and enjoy the view together with your big brother?”

I offered my help while looking at the barrels full of potatoes and carrots, but was reluctantly refused. There’s no doubt that there’s not enough manpower... If it’s just peeling, I can do it too.

“...If you don’t mind, can you let her stay here for a bit longer?”

Klaus spoke up after keeping silent all this time. He was making a face as if he’s pondering over something.

To Klaus’ surprising words, I looked up at him with my eyes wide.

“I want my sister to stay away from that woman as much as possible.”

“Why not relax in your room, then?”

“Unfortunately my sister is the type that just can’t sit still.”

“Oh, I see!”

Paul came to an understanding.

I'm quite certain that there's something to be retorted about here, but considering my actions so far, I can't deny it. Actually, I don't want to stay in the same room alone with Klaus. It would be great if you give me something to do during my free time.

"Could I ask this of you?"

"Yes, of course."

"I will help too."

Klaus added, nodding next to me with a smile.

"Brother, please sit still and be quiet."

Klaus widened his eyes. You have to make sure he doesn't do anything unnecessary.

He was giving me a look as if asking 'Why did you say such a thing?'

You don't even realise how bad you are at cooking. This guy...

Chapter 71: The First Prince's Worries

* From First Prince Christof's point of view.

I faced the mirror while fixing my collar.

After a thorough check around the hem of my clothes, I glanced at my face and gave a deep sigh.

The pale complexion and cold eyes are present as they always have, but with my recently thinner lines, it looked more delicate than ever.

As a politician, I can't have my face overcome with worries. The face of my father who throws out cold eyes left and right flashed through in my mind and my mood worsened.

I diverted my eyes from the mirror and looked out of the window.

In the clear blue sky without clouds, the dazzling morning sun was shining. There was no wind, therefore the sea would surely be calm. As I thought that, the face of my sister who visited this room last night turned up in my mind.

Rose had definitely matured compared to the first time I met her. But for me, she will always be my cute little sister.

And that sister was going to a faraway country. Moreover, although she couldn't protect herself, only one guard was assigned. I was so anxious I could

go crazy.

'Don't go anywhere.'

I wonder how many times I've wanted for you to be within my reach.

But I couldn't say such a thing. I was not *allowed* to say it.

'I shall depart tomorrow morning.'

I was anxious, but in her eyes there was no hesitation. Even so, what would you have done if I had decided to get in your way?

It is not my intention to hinder her growth.

What I shouldn't do is to overprotect her, but to see her off with a smile.

Because of the lingering anxiety, I couldn't get enough sleep. I can see dark circles painting itself under my eyes.

I felt sorry for myself and breathed out another heavy sigh.

"...Well then."

I closed my eyes and shook my head.

This isn't the time for sentimental thinking. Switch your feelings and start your work.

I moved closer to the table to pick up the documents I had brought back to my room.

After panning out the papers, I placed down an open book to keep it from rolling back up. A piece of paper was sandwiched between the pages.

When my sister visited yesterday, I got caught off guard.

I opened up the folded paper.

The contents were spelled out with formality, as usual with a message from my brother. He sends them regularly while studying abroad in the neighbouring country. However, unlike personal letters filled with seasonal greetings for Rose, it's merely just his report.

This usually arrives once a month. However, this letter came at an odd time. That means that there was something he wanted to inform me as soon as possible.

The content was about how the First Princess of Raptor will be visiting Wind.

It is said that she was to study abroad. However, her real objective was Wind's First Prince. Raptor had been trying to form relations with Wind, but it seems that they finally sent their own princess.

To make connections between countries, marriage is the simplest answer, but it can be a useful one.

I still don't know how Wind will act.

But whatever their move is, it's already too late. Although our country and Wind are allies, it can't be helped if this brews up some anxiety between us.

The King will have to take some measures.

And one of them will be marrying Rose to a Wind prince. Nothing is certain at the moment, but I am sure that Rose will not get a say in this if it was so.

I can protect her, but that is not enough.

In addition to destroying the future of that child, this will not be easy to find a solution to. If the situation were to change, Rose herself must make a move.

Such a bitter story for a young princess.

However, it is impossible to change Father's will using mere resolution.

What a shame to marry her off just for the sake of some connections. If only she could show her achievements and other possibilities just to make Father think otherwise-

'Knock knock'

There were two knocks on the door. I returned to reality once again.

Shoving the letter into the book and putting it back on its shelf, I grabbed my documents and walked over.

“Good morning, sir.”

“Oh, good morning.”

I greeted Leonhart who was waiting outside and took a glance at his face.

I saw the same thing on his face as I did in my mirror.

There were gaps under Leonhart’s outstanding eyes. It was extremely thin that one wouldn’t notice it if they weren’t this up close.

Unlike me who is weak, I don’t think Leonhart would have circles around his eyes from one or two night’s lack of sleep.

“Leonhart.”

“Yes?”

“Were you busy lately?”

I asked Leonhart while rubbing my eyes. He seemed to understand what I wanted to say and smiled wryly.

“It’s a little embarrassing but I’ve been busy with some private matters.”

With that, I opened my eyes wide.

It is unheard of for Leonhart to give priority to private matters and postpone his work.

Especially so as being the Commander of the Royal Knights, his work is consistently piled up like a mountain. However, he always finishes them off with ease.

Thinking about it, this is not something you see everyday. Speaking of which...

What day is it today?

“...Did you have a safe journey?”

“.....Yes.”

Leonhart nodded after a short silence as if a child whose mischief had been found out, unlike his usual firm attitude.

Apparently, my prediction was on the mark.

He prioritised his private matters first, even if he had to work through the night.

If it was to see her... to see Rose off, then there's nothing more to be said.

'Isn't that great, Rose?'

I imagined my sister's face sailing across the ocean as I muttered in my heart.

If I think about her journey from now on, I won't be worried, but just thinking that she travels with a smile on her face makes me feel a little easier.

Please return to me safely, as soon as you can.
Your unhappy brother wished so for a long time.

Chapter 72: The Reincarnated Princess' Conversation

(1)

Peeling the potato skins and cutting them in half.

I repeated the steps over and over again when I raised my face and was met with Paul's eyes.

Why am I being stared at? Is there something on my face?

I tilted my head.

"You're used to this. That's surprising."

Paul placed his hands on his chin and muttered in admiration.

Eh... Is that so?

I said it myself that I'll do this. I would never make a promise I can't keep.

Maybe my expression spelled it out for Paul as he quickly waved his hand in denial.

"I wasn't doubting you! It's just that I thought you wouldn't be used to it."

“Is it because I’m a child?”

“Nothing like that. There’s plenty of girls about your age training to be a bride or to help their mothers. So I thought you’d make quite the ideal wife.”

“!!”

Shock

My whole body jumped as if electricity ran through it.

Even though that was a normal response, I laughed at myself for misunderstanding it for just a second. Paul hasn’t noticed at all.

“Why-Why do you think so?”

I imitated my hair and dress with the girls around the market. I’m also careful not to talk too politely.

...Though, since the person inside is already quite uncouth, I wouldn’t worry about it that much.

“You’re... how should I say it? You have a gentle expression. Even your attitude is kind.”

That was the first time someone ever said that to me.

'I know you're happy but don't be glad!' I scolded myself.

“And also, your hands are flawless. That’s why I assumed you’re a rich girl from somewhere that’s never done rough work in her life.”

Hands! ...It's the hands!

Certainly, I don't do labour tasks at all. When I'm in the mood I'll use the kitchen, but that's only once or twice a month at most.

Just watering greenhouses won't get your hands rough either.

And besides, even if they do get a bit rough, the maids would probably polish it until it became smooth again.

“But no matter how high-class they are, they surely won't be able to peel potatoes.”

Paul smiled with a big grin while my face became stiff. Cold sweat dripping down my face as I forced out a dry laugh.

“It's surprising, to think that a cute lil' Miss like you could have a strength to be reckoned with. Look at how thin the skin is! It's perfect.”

Kurt picked up the skin I recently peeled and his eyes shone with a strange

glint.

I'm happy that I'm praised, but I'm afraid to say anything in return.

Following that, Klaus looked at me as if acknowledging something and nodded with a smile.

Why are you acting as if you're a grandparent proud of their granddaughter being praised!? It's nothing like that! Can you *please* read the mood for once in your life!?

While I glared at the escort whose thick head I couldn't get through to, I wished someone would change the topic already. Right at that moment, the kitchen doors flung open and Mr. Yang came back, carrying produce in his hands.

"You guys, don't get sidetracked with lil' Miss while on duty!"

Mr. Yang scolded them and the two promptly returned to their work. Although Paul is responsible for the kitchen, the *real* hierarchy seems to be a bit different.

Well, anyway, the topic diverted and I was saved.

"Mary!"

“Eh-?”

As I touched my chest in relief, a woman’s voice called out to me, and my eyes opened wide.

“Were you here all this time? No wonder I couldn’t find you!”

“Miss Bianca!”

Following Mr. Yang, it was Miss Bianca who came into the kitchen. They seemed to have met in the middle of returning from the warehouse. He had heard that Miss Bianca was looking for me.

“I was worried since you suddenly disappeared.”

“I-I’m sorry.”

“Oh no, there’s no need for you to apologise. I simply wanted to see you so I looked for you on my own accord anyway. And it took quite some time for me to get changed, you see.”

Miss Bianca smiled and said so. Certainly, her clothes are different from when she was boarding the ship.

Until a while ago, it was a neat dark blue dress, but now she’s wearing a hemp shirt and brown vest along with a black pants and boots combo.

Her wavy rich black hair was tied up behind her head.

“Those clothes...”

No matter how you look at it, that’s a man’s clothing.

A beautiful woman crossdressing as a man. At first glance it may seem off, but...

“Does it suit me?”

“Yes, very much.”

Rather, it suited her so well it’s scary.

I’ve never seen Miss Bianca dressed as a man even in the game. She looks cool and dignified. This might flip a weird switch inside me...

While I let my imagination ran wild down the stairs of degeneration, Miss Bianca’s lustrous lips smiled in an arch.

“Thank you. I’m happy you’re the one who said it.”

An awfully cool smile was directed at me and struck my mental health.

But soon I could no longer appreciate her smile, because Klaus came in between me and Miss Bianca.

“...What’s the meaning of this?”

Miss Bianca’s voice changed to a low hard tone.

“Whatever do you mean?”

Klaus’s opposing voice is also rough.

The air inside the room fell down by a few degrees. I rubbed my arms to keep warm.

“I ask that you step aside from me and Mary. You’re in the way.”

“Nobody asked you to come and yet you’re still here. That’s quite selfish of you. Who’s *really* in the way here?”

“That’s my line.”

“This is a kitchen, it’s not a place for someone who can’t even help.”

Look who’s talking. I wanted to retort, but my mouth didn’t open. It was me who told Klaus to stay put after all.

However, that’s also not something one should say after only watching other people work.

“I just have to help, right?”

With a *Hmph!*, Miss Bianca declared loudly.

“Mary is peeling the potatoes.”

Miss Bianca pushes Klaus away and approached me.

Looking at my hand, she picked up a potato and glared towards Paul.

“Hey, sailor guy, do you mind if I help out?”

“Ah... Sure. I'd be glad to have such a beautiful lady help us out.”

Paul who was watching the exchange between Klaus and Miss Bianca desperately nodded.

His smile was puffy, but Miss Bianca paid him no heed, took a chair from nearby and quietly sat down next to me.

“I'm not very good at cooking, but I will do my best. Good luck, Mary!”

‘Even Miss Bianca who is capable of many things can be ever so humble at times like these.’

There was a time I thought so.

We sat beside a tub to peel the potatoes, and only three seconds in an echo came out from the tub. My eyes were open wide.

Looking inside, one can see a potato cut in half rolling at the bottom.

I guess her hand probably slipped and it fell. As I thought so, a quarter of a potato was dropped in this time.

I stopped my hands and picked up the quarter-potato. My mind went blank.

That's weird. Wasn't I asked to peel the potatoes?

Maybe I misheard and I was supposed to be cutting them.

'That's gotta be it.'

As my thoughts wandered off to a faraway land, an
eighth
of a potato dropped into the tub brought me back to reality.

"M-Miss Bianca!?"

"Hm?"

In contrast to me who was frantically panicking, Miss Bianca only tilted her head a little. The look is pretty cute. However, it's what in her hands... my eyes were fixed on a tiny piece of potato.

It's chopping potato rather than peeling it.

"That potato..."

As I was struggling for words, the potato were cut further in half.

“I’ve peeled it!”

Miss Bianca spoke with a huge grin while holding up the potato that is now the size of a die.

After looking at her with an understanding gaze, I gave her a warm smile.

“Miss Bianca. Can you please leave the rest to me?”

“Eh? But why?”

“I love peeling potatoes, I love doing it so much I could die. I love peeling so much that it’s not an exaggeration to call it more than a hobby. I yearn to peel so much that I couldn’t bear being robbed of my opportunity to peel them by others!”

So please. Just stay put.

Have you been swallowed by my momentum so much that it made you force out a dry laugh? It wasn’t certain whether she actually gave it any thought when she stood up but Miss Bianca nodded as if knowing that she’s being pushed away.

Chapter 73: The Reincarnated Princess' Conversation (2)

"That's amazing, Mary-chan!"

Bianca-neesan said so when she came over.

"You peeled them so thinly, and fast! You're a wife material for sure!"

"I-Is that so?"

I blushed my cheeks so red it's embarrassing.

Once I heard "wife material" I imagined Leonhart-sama standing in the kitchen. My heart raced.

I lightly shook my head from my own dreams.

"It's amazing that you could peel these potatoes all by yourself."

"Unlike a *certain someone* who didn't give a helping hand at all."

"Isn't that *you*

, a stinking man who's not cute at all? Unlike your sister."

"No, I believe it's a *certain woman* that's being *too* familiar with my adorable little sister."

My fluffy delusion was ruined almost immediately. The two were smiling, filled with sarcasm to the brim.

Hey Patrasche. Somehow it suddenly got colder around here.

“If you can’t help, why not enjoy the scenery from upstairs?”

“Doesn’t the one that can’t help also applies to you too? Why don’t you go stare at the ocean instead? Wasn’t there a cute rich girl upstairs you can get along with?”

“No, please go ahead. I’m sure you’ll be able to get along with *her* just fine.”

What do I do? I’m afraid to even raise my head.

The verbal battle overhead is making me shrink into the chair.

‘The ones that are not helping are the both of you!’

You’re *literally*

in the same boat. But I also don’t want to involve Flora with these two by sending them up.

Why can’t you two just go and gawk at the ocean by yourselves?

I can surmise up a bunch of retorts in my head, but better not put them to

use. The last thing I want is to join into their dangerous conversation.

“That’s because the adorable lady that I want to get along with is right here.”

As she said that, my body jumped.

“Please do not look at my sister with such lewd eyes. Mary, come here.”

Please don’t drag me into this, I beg you.

With empty eyes, I turned to face *Paul-san*.

He was watching closely just before, but now he immediately averted his eyes away. What a thing to do. There is no God after all.

That’s right. Everyone wants a piece of my cute self.

Ufufu

... While my mind wandered off to the verge of escaping reality, a knock came from the kitchen doors.

“Yes?”

Kurt-san

who was nearest to the door answered, and with that the doors flung open.

A tall man walked in.

Ash-gray hair cut neat and short, with light brown skin. The long honey colored eyes were sharp, and old scars remained on the side of his right eye. A similar scar can be seen on his toned body along his neckline under the black shirt.

I'd say he's in his late twenties.

Facial features are in place, but he seemed difficult to approach. That atmosphere is probably invisible to the likes of sailors and merchants. He could be a soldier or adventurer... Maybe he's a mercenary hired as an escort for this ship.

He searched the room and stopped when our eyes met.

"Oh, how cute."

Said the man after looking at me tentatively.

"...Eh?"

A weird voice escaped my mouth.

"You look very much like a doll. It's cute."

The man's voice was deep which complimented his sturdy build, but his tone was soft.

...No, I don't think that his soft tone was a good thing but my head can't keep up right now.

“Well... oh... um... thank you?”

There must be question marks flying around my head right now.

Tilting his head, the man smiled.

“The reaction is also cute. I feel like wanna take you (it) home.”

Ba-shin!

He sent me a wink and I unexpectedly had to pull myself together.

Then Klaus, who was just arguing but a moment ago, stood up to shield me from the man.

“What business do you have with my sister?”

“Oh, the brother is not bad either.”

“What do you want?”

This is rare. Klaus got startled.

This person is strong. *Onee-san*, you’re invincible, aren’t you?

Onee-san

struck his hand together in a pose as if he remembered something.

“Oh, that’s right. Hey, sailor-*san*. Do you have any medicine?”

Kurt jumped at the unexpected question towards him.

“Eh... The m-medicine?”

“Are you not feeling well?”

Paul-san,

being older, was the voice of reason. Though Kurt-san

recovered quickly and turned a serious expression as well.

“It’s not for me, but the person himself says he’s seasick.”

“We have no medicine that would help with seasickness.”

“Please don’t be shy. Why not spit it out instead of keeping it a secret?”

“Now that’s a problem. It’s been hard for me too, you know?”

Onee-san

put his hands on his cheeks and knitted his brows.

I heard them two whispering to each other. After giving it some thought, I reached for my purse and then pushed Klaus out of the way.

“U-Umm...”

“What’s the matter, my cutie pie?”

“Please, if you’d like...”

I gave it to him.

He tilted his head like I was a little earlier.

“And this is?”

“This is a medicinal herb. It will make you feel a little sleepy but if you chew it, it will help with your seasickness.”

What I gave him was Sacred Bamboo (Nanten).

Sacred Bamboo is a red fruit with thin leaves. The leaves are used to decorate small snow rabbits.

Even though Sacred Bamboo is effective as a cough medicine, what I have prepared here are its leaves.

It seems there were mentions of this stopping sickness long ago, but it seems that recognition is low in this world, as can be seen from the sailors not recognising it.

“Since you’ll be poisoned if taken too much, I’ll only give you a little for now. Does anyone else want some too?”

Since I don’t need it anyway.

In my previous life, my semicircular canal was weak. If I drive for even a little, I’ll get car sick right away. But now everything seems to be fine. Even a carriage poses no problems. I brought it with me again this time just in case, but I’ve yet to show any signs of being seasick.

“...”

“...Um...?”

Onee-san

looked at me silently before hesitantly receiving the leaves.

F~un

. As if breathing out a sigh, his lips drew a small arc.

“Will you please come with me for a moment?”

“...Eh?”

“I’d like you to have a look at the symptoms.”

“No, I’m not a doctor-”

“Please.”

“...Yes.”

I lost against such a powerful smile.

Wait... Don’t tell me... Did I just give in again?

TN: So apparently the “tall man” is a man that acts feminine. Hence Rose calling him “Onee-san (オネエさん)” I had so much trouble figuring this out.

Chapter 74: The Reincarnated Princess' Nursing (1)

I kept telling myself *'Don't do this!'*

since I'm not a doctor, but in the end I was too scared to turn him down.

Onee-san briskly lead up the stairs with heavy footsteps.

"Ugh..."

I squinted at the dazzling sunlight shining on the deck.

Blocking the sun with my hands didn't really help either. I could see the glimmering sunlight on the back of my closed eyelids.

I didn't think the deck was this hot. Now I regret leaving my cloak back in my room.

"You alright?"

"Yes, I'm fine."

Klaus who stood behind me looked at me anxiously.

He offered to fetch me my coat, but I declined.

"Mary's white skin will get burnt!"

"Miss Bianca also."

"I'll be fine, you know?"

Miss Bianca

was worried for me but I'm not really concerned about myself.

She

has really smooth skin like high-class pottery... please tell me your secret. Or you're the type that actually don't have to do anything? How enviable.

"Over here."

Following his call, we approached him.

Looking towards the direction he's pointing at while we hid behind a pillar, Miss Flora was lying there.

Klaus let out a small groan.

I wonder if she's ill?

Miss Flora was reclining on her chair under an umbrella and was being cooled by a big fan.

However, no matter how you look at it, she's relaxing with no care in the world.

Just like a celebrity fully enjoying a boat trip.

"She certainly looks comfortable, but..."

"Don't be silly, that's not it. Next to her, over there."

Next to her?

Onee-san

gently guided my face and turned my head slightly.

In my shifted view to the right, a maid waiting to attend Miss Flora was standing slightly further away.

The maid, wearing a dress with a dark gray collar, stood there under the beaming sunlight.

I couldn't quite see her face from here, but she's holding her forehead and her mouth from time to time.

"The maid? She certainly looks quite pale."

"Right? But even if I told her to take a break, she never listens."

,

I don't think she doesn't want to rest, it's more like she's not allowed to rest.'

I murmured to myself while watching Miss Flora relaxing comfortably.

"For now let's get her some water. I'll go back to the kitchen and..."

"Hey, Mia!"

"Y-Yes!"

...get some

. The words that were supposed to come out got totally drowned out by an irritated voice.

The maid, Mia, made a tense expression.

“You, aren’t you slacking a bit?”

“No, I-I’m not...”

“You keep fidgeting so much I can’t relax. And also, didn’t you go missing a while ago?”

“I-I’m sorry... I didn’t finish my preparations for the trip last night and I couldn’t get in any sleep-“

“Enough with the excuses!”

“Yes.”

Mia’s shoulders trembled as Miss Flora scolded her.

“That’s terrible...”

Miss Bianca has a deep wrinkle on her eyebrows.

“I’d like to rush in and go help her right now, but she has her own reputation to consider. What shall we do, my cutie pie?”

“I don’t think we have much time left.”

“What do you mean, Mary?”

Klaus picked up on the words I murmured to myself.

I hesitated before answering.

Do people recognise a heatstroke in this world?

When you're tired from lack of sleep and be forced to stand in the sun, it's obvious you'll get a heatstroke. But I don't know how to explain it properly.

Besides, there's no time to explain.

Mia is now soaking in sweat and her complexion is getting worse every minute.

And she's holding her head and mouth, those are signs for headache and nausea.

There's a possibility of seasickness too, as *Onee-san*

said, but I fear that heatstroke symptoms are already beginning to appear.

“Brother.”

“What is it?”

“Can you go to the kitchen and fetch me some water?”

Looking up at Klaus, he stared back at me.

I gave him my serious look, and we were silent for a while.

“I gather that this is quite urgent?”

“Yeah.”

Klaus accepted my request and nodded.

While we're at it, I'll add some more things.

“Also, put a pinch of salt and sugar in the lemon water from last time. Then, fill a bowl with water and bring some cloth too.”

“Lemon water with salt and sugar, a bowl of water and some cloths, huh? I'll have to return quickly... you always ask the unreasonable, sister.”

Klaus stopped himself and turned around. I dugged my nails into my skin, trying to force the words out.

To him who smiled bitterly, I also returned a bitter smile.

“I'm sorry.”

I'm really sorry that I'm being selfish, but I can't turn a blind eye towards people in need.

“In the future, please don’t ask of the unreasonable ever again.”

“Got it... and thank you.”

Listening to Klaus’ fading footsteps, I took a deep breath and tightened my expression.

‘Now, how should I call out to her?’

I shuffled towards Mia, with *Onee-san* and Miss Bianca in tow.

Miss Flora who noticed glared at us suspiciously. However, as soon as she knew that we were approaching, her eyes turned sharp.

“What do you want? Sneaking up on people like that.”

She glared daggers at me and I panicked a little.

Seems that I’m really being hated.

“Well... please listen to what I have to say.”

“Don’t wanna hear it. Go away already.”

There’s a saying that *an island has nothing attached to it*. This person must be the *definition* of being unsociable.

While pondering on what to do next, I took a quick glance at Mia. Her complexion wasn’t getting any better. She hung her head down while covering up her mouth.

I know that I shouldn't rush things, but it seemed like she's about to collapse any moment now.

"Please listen. It's an urgent matter."

"Quite stubborn, aren't you?"

"It seems that your maid is not well. Do you mind if we treat her?"

"...Ha?"

Miss Flora raised an eyebrow after what I said and glanced back and forth between me and Mia.

"Leave her alone. She just didn't get enough sleep."

"Even so, the lack of sleep and in this hot weather, you can still collapse if you don't get yourself in the shade."

"Like I said! Can't you leave me alone already?"

This is so frustrating. Miss Flora doesn't want to hear any of it.

Alright! Fine! What do I have to do to convince you!?

“It’s useless, my cutie pie. Any more than this and we’ll just be wasting time. Let’s take her by force.”

Onee-san

who watched over our exchanges turned to Mia with a bitter smile.

Mia who was looking at the floor turned her face towards us and saw his outstretched hand. She immediately flinched.

“N-No. I’m *completely* fine! Please don’t worry... about...”

“!”

Before she could finish her sentence, her body started swaying dangerously.

Onee-san caught her frail body with steady arms.

“I told you, didn’t I!”

Onee-san embraced Mia as he grumbled out complaints.

TN: “an island has nothing attached to it” was translated word by word. I don’t know the idiom, but the meaning is basically that a person who is so unsociable that they don’t have anyone around them.

Chapter 75: The Reincarnated Princess' Nursing (2)

"You! Bring her back here this instance!"

Onee-san

started running with Mia in his arms as curses were thrown over him.

"I'm sorry! Please get out of the way! Oh, please lend me that!"

"Eh!? Ah, yes!"

I chased after *onee-san*.

Passing the servant by my side, I borrowed the fan that he had.

"My cutie pie! Where do we go!?"

"Let's use the first room next to the exit! The sailors--"

"Oh, lil' miss! Over here!"

Looking around, at the same time I was about to call out to him.

The same sailor back on the deck apparently heard our conversations and wanted to help us out.

I flew down the flight of stairs and entered the room just next to it.

“Miss Bianca, if you see my brother can you please bring him here?”

“Alright!”

I looked back over my shoulder and asked her.

“What should we do next?”

Onee-san

laid Mia gently on the bed and asked me for instructions.

I took a deep breath to organise my thoughts.

What do you do first when you have a heatstroke?

“...Take off her clothes and cool down her body.”

“In that case it’d be bad if I stay here. Can I leave her to you?”

Onee-san

looked at Mia and opened his mouth after pondering for a while.

Even though *onee-san*

is what he is, it seems he’s still uncomfortable seeing the naked body of the

opposite sex.

“Yes.”

Onee-san

stood up once I gave an affirming nod. “Please take care of her.” He tapped my shoulder lightly before leaving the room.

In return, Miss Bianca and Klaus stormed in.

“Mary, I’m here!”

“Mary, here’s water!”

“Thank you very much! Brother, please leave. Can you help me, Miss Bianca?”

“Of course, what should I do?”

“Please raise her feet up slightly.”

“Got it.”

Undoing her buttons, I opened up her chest area.

Moving her bangs out of the way, I placed a wet cloth on her forehead. Then did the same with her neck and chest and started fanning on them.

Miss Bianca inserted some bedding under Mia’s feet.

It'll be good if her temperature would go down with this...

"Shall we wait and see?"

"Let's do that."

I kept on thinking while fanning Mia.

What should I do if the person herself doesn't wake up?

I'm sorry I had to strip you butt-naked, but it's better to cool down your armpits and thighs, you know?

That said, it's not an easy task when there's no ice.

I wonder how much easier this would be if Lutz were with us.

The moment I muttered so in my heart, I remembered the amulet he gave me.

I touched the pouch that was hanging from my waist from the outside-

"Mary!"

"Eh?"

I was checking the hard feeling through the bag with my fingers when she

called my name.

Following her sight towards Mia, I saw Mia's eyelashes moved as she regained her consciousness.

"Uu..."

Small groans escaped her petite lips and slight wrinkles lie between her eyebrows.

While we were watching, Mia slowly opened her eyes.

"Mia!"

She naturally wandered towards the origin of the voice. Mia looked back and forth between Miss Bianca and I before blinking multiple times.

Life slowly returned back to her empty eyes.

"Where am..."

Mia muttered in a tiny voice.

Her voice was certainly coarse and dry, but it seemed that she was not hallucinating.

That's good news.

"This is the cabin closest to the stairs."

"Eh...I'm..."

“We’ll talk later. For now let’s get you a drink. Can you sit up?”

Mia was trying to say something but I held up my hand and stopped her before asking.

She gave us a nod before trying to sit up and I poured some of the water into a glass.

Mia took a sip of the water while being helped up by Miss Bianca and opened her eyes wide. She stared at it for a few seconds before tilting the whole glass upwards.

“Slow down...”

Although I only poured about half of the glass, the water disappeared in the blink of an eye. Furthermore, she presented the empty glass to me as if asking *‘Please give me more!’* so I had no choice but to pour more for her.

Mia, who gulped down about half of the water jug, breathed out a comfortable sigh.

“Delicious~”

Like I thought, it’s heatstroke after all.

‘That’s a relief.’

While smiling, Mia glanced between her glass and me alternately.

“What is this? It’s really delicious!”

And like she said, I remembered that it's not just water.

"It's a mixture of lemon water with a pinch of salt and sugar."

With only just those ingredients, it can be sort of like a quick sports drink.

It's perfect for heatstroke and even though it's super easy to make, it's pretty tasty.

"It's already this delicious with only just that?"

Mia kept repeating that it's '*amazing!*' and '*delicious!*' while holding the glass in her hand.

"You look a bit better now. That's a relief."

When I said that, Mia raised her face as if she remembered something.

"That reminds me, why... Don't tell me, did I collapse?"

"Yes, you did. You lost consciousness while you were talking."

It was Miss Bianca who answered her question.

Mia's face turned blue. Perhaps unconsciously, her hands clenched the sheets so tight it nearly turned white.

“What do I do? Miss Flora! ...Ow-!”

“Wait!”

Mia tried to get up in a hurry but since her body wasn't good enough yet, she abruptly fell over.

Miss Bianca quickly supported her in time. Luckily, she didn't fall out of bed... But that was close.

“It's reckless if you move too suddenly.”

“But without Miss Flora's permission, I can't just have a rest on a whim!”

I tried to calm her down but she won't listen at all.

Miss Bianca brought her brows together, clearly frustrated.

“Her *permission*? ...You *collapsed* you know!? That's clearly unreasonable!”

She has a point.

But Mia still disagreed. If we have it her way, she would probably stand out there until she breaks.

More wrinkles grew on my eyebrows in reaction to terrible workplace abuse. I tried to dismiss my frustrations with a sigh and held my forehead with my hand.

“Mia, if you go back to work like that you’ll just collapse again.”

“But-“

“If you’re going to collapse again then there’s no point in going back. Might as well get a better rest here.”

I stared at her and asked *‘Am I wrong?’*

Mia slipped down looking like a scolded child and muttered a small voice

‘No, you’re not.’

Me and Miss Bianca had wry smiles on our faces as Mia finally calmed down.

“In that case, take your time and rest properly.”

Retrieving the glass from her hand, I then told her to lie down.

Mia obediently got into the bed. I pulled up the cover to her shoulder and tapped it lightly.

“ ... ”

Mia’s body seemed like it needed rest and she soon began falling asleep. Her eyes were closing but then they were open again as if she had remembered

something.

I realised that a vague gaze was directed at me and lightly turned my head towards her.

Her lips slowly moved and a gentle voice slipped out.

“Thank you for rescuing me.”

“!”

Leaving me there with my eyes wide in surprise, Mia silently fell to sleep.

“You’re welcome.”

I muttered softly as I tended to the wet cloth on her forehead.

TN: “Her permission? ...You collapsed

you know!? That’s clearly unreasonable!” The ‘unreasonable’ here was translated as ‘force majeure.’

From [Wikipedia](#): *Force majeure* or *vis major*

(Latin) – meaning “chance occurrence, unavoidable accident”, is a common clause in contracts that essentially frees both parties from liability or obligation when an extraordinary event or circumstance beyond the control of the parties, such as a war, strike, riot, crime, or an event described by the legal term act of God (hurricane, flood, earthquake, volcanic eruption, etc.), prevents one or both parties from fulfilling their obligations under the contract.

Meaning it couldn’t be helped since an event like collapsing/fainting is beyond one’s control and would not need one’s ‘permission’ for one to collapse on the floor because of a heatstroke, for example. But since ‘force majeure’ sounded

out of place, I replaced the word.

And the same as always, if you see any mistakes please comment below and I'll try to sort it out... Once I get to it. Sorry for the long

Chapter 76: The Reincarnated Princess' Idle Talk

Leaving Mia to Miss Bianca, I left the room only to be surrounded by a bunch of people.

Of course, not only Oneesan and Klaus, but also the sailors and Paul as well. The narrow aisle was packed full of people.

“How is she?”

“Is she okay?”

“Yes, she’s sleeping right now.”

I quietly said with a finger pressed against my mouth.

Everyone then closed their mouth shut with their hands. The sight of Paul’s large figure holding his mouth with both hands was a little cute.

I then began my explanation to the people gathered in front of the room.

If someone didn’t have enough sleep and was exposed to the strong sunlight, a mild dehydration symptom can take place.

Once their consciousness returns, make them drink water. If their complexion still hasn’t gotten better then they must take a rest properly.

“She’s not in any danger, right?”

“I’m not a doctor, so I can’t say for sure, but I think she will recover once she gets enough sleep.”

“Is that so.”

Onesán next to me breathe out sigh of relief. The sailors also relaxed their expressions.

Like a river slowly flowing back, the sailors started to return to their posts but I stopped the sailor who guided us before.

“Excuse me!”

“What is it, lil’ missy?”

“I don’t want to move Mia too much, so I’d like to borrow that room if possible...”

“Of course you can. Don’t you worry about something like that.”

“But isn’t that room already assigned to someone else?”

For a room not in use, a set of bedding was arranged. It was left very clean that not even the air was stale.

As I said that, the sailor looked at me. When asked what's the matter, he shook his head in return.

"No, it's as you said. The room was assigned to someone else, but it's okay because they've cancelled their booking already."

"Is that so? Thank you very much!"

"Yes, the customer agreed quite easily too."

When asked how I can thank them, the sailor struck his palm.

"That's right! If that's the case, it seems there's still some luggage in the room. Do you want to deliver them instead?"

"I understand."

If it's only this much then it should be fine.

I walked quietly into the room as to not wake up Mia and started searching for said luggage. Picking up a cloth bag at the end of the room, I returned to the crew members.

I was guided onto the deck.

I thought I'd meet with Miss Flora here, but she's nowhere to be found.

“Sir! Here she is!”

A sailor, waving his hands around, called out with a hoarse voice.

I tried looking behind the sailor. I could see the figure, but couldn't tell whether this “Sir” is a woman or a man because their hood was deeply covering their face.

“This little girl here brought the luggage all by herself, you know?”

The sailor threw me a thumbs up.

I bowed slightly and looked up at that person.

Standing up close, I could see why they were taken as a man. He's about 190 cm tall. I can't say that they're not just a tall woman, but the jaw lines proved otherwise.

However, despite looking up from below, I still can't see his face.

“Thank you for changing your room.”

I handed over the bag while saying thanks.

He shook his head as if saying he didn't mind, but did not speak a word.

While thinking that he could be a retired senior, I remembered a letter I got from Georg.

The clan that consists of pharmacists... Isn't the Kua clan like this too? They hide their appearance with a cloak and only speak when necessary. Just like what the letter said.

I made a wry smile as I thought so. This is too easy.

A member of the Kua clan got on the same ship I boarded? What kind of miraculous chance is that? How would that ever happen?

It's not that uncommon to wear a cloak in the sun after all. With that in mind, I said my goodbyes.

"Lil' miss! You were here?"

"Hello."

"Oh, hello. Nothing's troubling you, right?"

The sailor who came to deliver goods to the kitchen stroked my hair with a smile on his face. Others who were in charge of the kitchen including Paul however, delivered a heavy sigh instead.

“Please get out when you’re done. It’s getting cramped in here.”

Paul shooed them out like insects.

Indeed, in addition to Paul and three others, there were me and Oneesan helping in the kitchen. Since it’s so cramped, Klaus was sent out to the next room. Miss Bianca decided to stay... Wait... No, it seemed she’s also quite dissatisfied herself.

“Well, young lady, why don’t you come with this old man? I’ll give you a tour of the crow’s nest too, you know?”

“Shut it! You’re the third guy saying that. Can’t you just get out already?”

Raising his voice, Paul ran to the sailor, pulled him back and kicked him out of the kitchen.

There were some complaints coming from outside but they were mercilessly ignored.

“You’re quite popular, Mary.”

Oneesan who was working across me gave a smile as he teased me.

I stopped hand picking the beansprouts and glared at him.

“You’re thinking this is funny, aren’t you.”

“Well, yes, of course.”

It’s no use crying over spilt milk, but I was told not to do anything that would attract attention. I realised my defeat. But I never would have thought that my greatest enemy this time would be my own mouth.

Oneesan glanced at my pouted cheeks and winked. I pushed them up with a finger and gave a funny smile.

The day after Mia collapsed, we introduced ourselves and got along very well.

His name is Wolf Lucca. Age 27 and single.

Contrary to his impression of being difficult to approach, he was a very friendly person, a good listener and speaker. Plus, since cooking was also his hobby, he’s fun to talk to. I think it took me three days before I fully knew Wolf.

“You’re being loved by everyone. Be happy.”

His scary looking face can turn soft just from his smile. With his gentle eyes, I could feel both a woman’s and a man’s charm from him.

It's strange that his appearance was completely masculine though.

"...I don't remember doing anything to deserve that, though."

"What are you saying? Everyone on this ship knows you helped the servant girl, you know?"

"But wouldn't that only concern Mia?"

Mia slept soundly for three hours after that.

When she woke up fully recovered, she thanked all of us.

"That's not all. It probably have something to do with the selfish *princess* she was serving too."

It is as he said, Miss Flora has been quiet recently. To be exact, she just doesn't come out of her room.

Wolf says that all the passengers and sailors looked at her with cold eyes and thought that was the reason.

I don't know if I regret my decision, but I think it was good that Mia didn't get punished.

"Everyone is totally relying on you as a small doctor, aren't they?"

“Please stop...”

I held my forehead and muttered in defeat.

That’s right.

From that point on, if anyone has at least a cut on their finger, I will be called out to help them. Even if I say I’m not a doctor, they would never listen.

“Even though I kept saying that I’m not one...”

“That’s a given. With your knowledge of medicine and diseases, you’re not convincing anyone.”

The knowledge that Lady Irene has given me and the info on homemade medicine set has backfired.

If there’s a major injury then I can only advise them to go see a real doctor. But, if it was a small burn or a bruise, then I can treat them on the spot.

What goes around comes around.

Better yet, let’s go with the setting that I come from a family of pharmacists. Yeah.

“Like I thought, the Kingdom of Nebel is an amazing country.”

“?”

The talk changed so abruptly that I tilted my head in confusion. Why is the talk about Nebel all of a sudden?

“If little girls like you can learn about pharmacy, then it
is

amazing. Once you go to other countries, you will see how blessed you are to be in such an incredible environment.”

Wolf put down his work and looked at me once he realised I was making a curious face.

“In most countries, it’s thought that women doesn’t need to learn. Even to their own daughters, very few parents will teach them anything, let alone pharmacy. The girls will get married, and they are content with that thinking they have helped their family.”

Since I did study European history in Japan, for Nebel to have such a trend might not be too far fetched.

But thinking about it, I am an outlier for being born a princess. Not only embroidery and maths, but I also get to learn astronomy, pharmacy, language history and various other subjects.

“Countries with women who held high positions are limited. Including Nebel, it is said that long ago Flamme was also built on a women-centered society.”

As he said, Flamme had some remnant of being a matriarchy, but it has since transformed into something else.

Even if a woman succeeded the throne, it was the king who was her husband that holds any real power. It was where the king can still have multiple wives, a system that resembled ancient Egypt.

Although the current Queen is loved by the people, and even though the government is stable, it's still unfair to compare someone of royal blood to normal citizens. It seems to be a difficult environment for women who want to work.

Lady Irene holds the title of a Magister Director. From the perspective of other countries, it could be viewed as an amazingly high position.

“Nebel is blessed, isn't it?”

I murmured so, and Wolf gave a big nod.

“That's true. The climate is forgiving and the land is rich, but even more so, it is blessed with great rulers.”

“Rulers?”

So we're talking about father?

“That’s right. Although Nebel has been blessed with many things, the fact that it realised the importance of women, or the fact that anyone can be given any status based on their skills regardless of their gender, was all because of the current king. I have heard that the first prince, the heir to the throne, is a capable person with sincere personality. With that, the future seems promising.”

I couldn't believe the story I just heard about my brother and father.

“So, are they really amazing people?”

“Oh, you say as if you're not one of them.”

“...Eh?”

I couldn't understand his words for a moment. I raised my face up in a heartbeat.

What did you say?

Perhaps I look like someone else?

I stared at him, afraid that he knows I'm not who I says I am. My spine suffered a cold sweat to the extreme tension.

But there was no sign that he even noticed my fears as he just tilted his head.

“Because you came from Nebel? The reputation of the royal family is quite popular among citizens.”

“Eh? Ah... Ah, that’s what you meant.”

The strength from my whole body seemed to flood out all at once. I breathed out a huge sigh.

Wolf looked at me and muttered *‘What a funny child.’*

“It’s not only the king and the first prince that Nebel is proud of.”

Listening to our conversation, Paul joined in.

He stopped stirring his pot and leaned in towards us.

“Still studying in the neighbour country, the Second Prince Johan is also excellent. It seems he’s very friendly and has already gained popularity in Vint.”

“Oh, is that true?”

“Yeah, and there’s also Her Highness Princess Rosemarie.”

“!”

I froze and solidified.

Please congratulate me if I didn't make a weird sound just then. If it is forgiven, I would prefer to just yell loudly and run away right now. I don't want to hear my own evaluation!

"People who have seen her true figure are few and far between, but rumour has it that she's as beautiful as the Queen."

"If you've ever seen a picture of the King and Queen couple, you'd think there will be a low chance of being born ugly."

"Oh well, you have a point. But that's not all, they say she's also very kindhearted."

"Rumours can't be trusted, you know?"

"What?"

As Wolf said that, Paul raised his eyebrow in response. It was a bit scary but Wolf wasn't disturbed in the slightest and fearlessly laughed it off.

"Wouldn't a princess like that be spoiled rotten? After seeing a certain girl on this ship, don't you think so?"

"Ah..."

Paul scratched his neck after realising his mistake.

Well, there are some truth to that. There were times when I said selfish things.

I'm being spoiled a lot too... yeah. Nope, I can't deny it.

'I'm glad Klaus isn't here right now.'

I thought so from the bottom of my heart as I made a wry smile.

Chapter 77: The Reincarnated Princess' Blunder (1)

"I don't have much left..."

Counting the pouches lined up on the bed, I muttered dejectedly.

The medicine I've brought with me has been running low. Though that's a given since I've been handing them out to people left and right.

There's still some seasick leaves left, but my antidiarrhoeal drug and the intestinal medicine have basically ran dry. On the other hand, I didn't get to use any of the bandages.

I checked each pouch carefully again before putting their contents back in when I felt a gaze on me.

I raised my face and met eyes with a *certain* escort knight. I eventually ended up averting my eyes every time though.

Don't you feel awkward if you keep staring like that? Not even in the *slightest*?

Well, it wouldn't be Klaus if he picked up on these things though, yeah.

"...If you have something to say then say it."

“No, nothing in particular.”

“Keep staring at me like that and you’ll poke a hole through me.”

I tapped on a pouch before giving a sigh.

Klaus was brooding over my words with a hand under his chin.

“It could simply be my habit that I stare at your highness, though...”

Cure that twisted habit of yours! *Right now!*

“I have given some thought on it, but I didn’t mean to tell you.”

So, the answer to my question is a ‘no’?

I don’t know if he’s just acting or if he really has a screw loose in his head, this guy.

“So, what were you thinking about?”

I blurted out the question on a whim without much interest.

Klaus silently muttered *‘it’s really nothing important’*.

“My Lord said that helping others is second nature to you.”

I was surprised at those words.

“That’s not true.”

“Your actions of “helping others” including ones that you don’t even realise, even when *you’re* the one who pulled the short straw you didn’t stop. It’s true isn’t it?”

He wasn’t teasing me. There were no trace of hatred or disgust in his voice either.

But somehow I was *irritated*.

“I didn’t pull any short straw.”

“Even if you help others, they are only a drop in the ocean. Even if “Mary” saved the life of a maid, it still wouldn’t be considered the achievements of a “Princess”.”

“!”

Klaus looked straight at me and I held my breath.

I thought back to the conversation between Wolf and Paul.

In the end, Princess Rosemary was considered to be a selfish, spoiled princess. Some people still think favourably of me, but that’s because of my brothers’ and father’s various achievements, and the fact that I’m their relative. It had *nothing* to do with my own accomplishments.

Klaus didn’t hold back and went straight to the point. When I realised my blunder, I looked down. My clenched hands left wrinkles on the bed sheets.

“But even so, I can’t just leave a person in need alone, and I’m convinced that person is you.”

“...Eh?”

A weird voice leaked out.

I raised my face only to meet with his eyes once again. Klaus tilted his head curiously as I staggered.

“That’s it?”

“Yes, that’s it.”

I thought *for sure* he was going to lecture me.

Looking at his face, he was telling the truth that that’s all he wanted to say.

“Is that so.”

My shoulders dropped.

Thinking about it, Klaus has always been like this. He can be weird at times, but right down to it, he’s a sincere and honest guy.

Not everybody knows this though.

“Are you done with that?”

“Yeah... Waah?!”

The ship suddenly shook and I exclaimed in surprise.

I grabbed onto the sheets to stop myself falling out of bed. Klaus also offered his hand, but it wasn't that big of a shake so I didn't grab onto it.

"I wonder if that was a big wave."

"That's because the wind is strong today too."

Just as Klaus said, the wind had been strong in the last few days. I didn't know whether this was a good thing for the ship but it seemed like we will be ahead of schedule.

"It looks like we'll be arriving in Flamme earlier than expected."

Even if I wasn't prone to get seasick, I still missed being on land.

I also wanted to eat fresh vegetables already so I was happy if we arrive early. Yes, in contrast to me who was on cloud nine, Klaus' expression was grim.

"Klaus?"

"Arriving too early is also a problem."

Eh? Wasn't it better to arrive early?

“In the path ahead we will have to pass through small islands, and at this rate it will be during nightfall.”

“So there’s a chance we could be grounded?”

“That’s not all...”

Klaus’ words were *heavy*.

He was so serious it’s not like him at all.

I waited for him to continue, but he hesitated.

“I shall assess the situation. I’ll make sure that the sails are smaller and take other measures so please don’t worry.”

Klaus walked towards the door.

He looked back at me once, and after a brief silence he left the room.

“What’s *that* all about?”

I repeated the question in my head out loud.

I recalled the map I had memorised and followed the ship’s route in my head.

The small islands Klaus mentioned were probably the ones south-southwest to Flamme. There’s no other way around if you wanted to dock at Flamme’s port town.

Many small uninhabited islands were known to cause countless ships to ground at night when it is harder to see. But from Klaus' attitude just now, it seemed that the islands were not the only danger out there.

The ocean is scary after all. Storms, thunder, big waves, sharks and... *ghosts*?
As if.

'Un~'

After I tried thinking about it to no avail, I let out a small groan.

I laid down on the bed and closed my eyes.

I think I've calmed down now.

In the beginning I was nervous about leaving my country. Apart from Mia's heatstroke, because nothing had happened since then, I had grown conceited.

One shouldn't forget; the ocean is a scary place – a man who had strayed from the path is much more frightening than *any* ghost.

I will come to realise this fact later on.

TN: The "Lord" that Klaus talked about is probably Sir Leonheart or The King, but since he used "私の主は" I don't know which one it is. It's basically Lord vs Master, unless I get this wrong of course.

If you find anything wrong with this one, even if it's stuff like "this part is confusing" or "this sentence feels off" then leave a comment below. It doesn't hurt to learn how to write English along the way...

Chapter 78: The Reincarnated Princess' Blunder (2)

"...sama."

I could hear someone's voice faintly calling for me.

"...Mary-sama."

Waking me up were a whisper and a waving hand.

When I finally managed to pull open my eyelids that were tied down by drowsiness, Klaus' grim expression appeared.

"...?"

I helped myself up while rubbing my eyes.

It's still dark. The air was cold and humid, it's probably foggy outside.

"Kla-"

His palm covered my mouth before I could say his name.

Putting his mouth near my ears he quietly shushed me, making my eyes to open wide in surprise. His serious expression blew all of my drowsiness away immediately.

When I gazed at Klaus and nodded silently, he let go of my mouth.

“I heard a sound coming from above just now. I will go and check so please wait here.”

I don't know what sound he heard, but I have a bad feeling about this.

Sitting next to the bed, Klaus looked at me silently biting my own lips in anxiety. Gazing up at me, he took my hands and gave me something.

“Here...”

When I saw what he pushed into my hands, I stopped breathing.

It was a *dagger*

. The heavy feeling it gave off somehow scared me.

“Please use this for self-defense should the need arise.”

‘What on earth is going on? What are you afraid of?’

There were so many questions I wanted to ask but they were all stuck behind my throat, refusing to come out.

My instinct was sounding off alarms in my head without knowing what the danger was.

Scared. I'm scared. So scared I can't stand it.

Klaus held my quivering hands tightly.
His emerald eyes reflected in mine.

"Mary."

"Br-...Klaus..."

I nearly called him *'brother'*.

He would probably laugh at me with a 'big brother' expression plastered on his face.

"I will protect you. So don't worry."

Pon pon

He tapped my head lightly while giving comforting words.

I stared at him, surprised at the sudden change into his 'brother' mode.

"Klaus?"

"I will go have a look so sit tight. If you're scared then you can go stay with Bianca. She's a

funny woman but I know that she won't hurt you."

How could you say that with such a serious face?

Looking right back at me, Klaus eased his expression.

“I’ll be fine, believe me, so wait for me here.”

“!”

I just understood his intentions. He was trying to cheer me up.

It certainly worked. I don’t feel as scared anymore.

Klaus nodded with satisfaction to me who grasped the dagger firmly in my hands.

“I’ll be back.”

After he left, I pressed my ear against the door and held my breath.

“.....”

Turbulent ocean waves and creaking wooden floors could be heard.

But my heartbeat appeared to be the *loudest*.

Sweat coated the dagger in my hand as tension persisted. A few seconds felt

like minutes. Minutes felt like hours.

'How long has it been?'

All of a sudden a thunderous noise of the ship hitting something sounded. At the same time the whole room shook and I lost my balance which hurled me onto the floor. The door flung open with a bang.

Cold air immediately pierced into the room along with the sound of metal clashing. Klaus' loud voice could be heard.

"Enemy raid!!"

"!!"

The screams were repeated again and again.

People eventually vacated their rooms and the ship became noisy.

"Are they pirates!?"

"Hey! Get up! We're *under attack!*"

Said a voice outside. Topless sailors ran through the corridor with rough footsteps.

I was dumbfounded as I repeated their words in my head.

Pirates, under attack. A jumble of words floated in my head incoherently. My brain refused to comprehend the situation and my body trembled like a leaf.

“ ... ”

The door, I have to shut it.

The wooden door was creaking back and forth with a dry sound. I kept staring at it before willing myself up.

But my legs won't listen.

While I was fixed to the floor, the hustle outside became even noisier.

Angry roars, screams and metal clashes. I want to close my ears and forget everything, but my body hadn't been listening to me since a while ago.

I crawled slowly towards the door.

And just before my fingertip reached, a shadow loomed over me.

“Hi!”

“Mary! Are you alright!?”

As I was embraced in someone's arms my eyes flew open in surprise.

A familiar smell and feeling. *‘What a relief’*

was heard from the whispers of the people I know surrounding me.

I forced out a small voice.

“Miss...Bianca...”

“Hey! Can we leave the touching reunion for later and close the door first!?”

Wolf who came into the room shut the door tight behind him.

“Mary-chan, are you hurt?”

Miss Bianca grabbed my face and examined every inch of it.

Because the room was dark, she ended up tracing her fingers all over instead.

“I-I’m fine.”

“Right. That’s good. By the way, where might your brother...”

“My brother went upstairs.”

“Hah?”

Miss Bianca was clearly startled.

On the other hand Wolf retained his composure and nodded.

“Ah, your brother. The one useless in the kitchen? Isn't he part of a knight division or something?”

With everything happening right now, I couldn't hide my surprise anymore.

“The reason we're not overrun by the enemy right now is all thanks to your brother.”

Said Wolf as he pressed his ear against the door to keep a lookout.

Just like he said earlier, it was noisy above us but there were no such sounds coming from our floor. It was obvious that Klaus was fighting, but how long can he hold his ground?

'Are you having trouble? Aren't you pushing yourself too hard?'

Just thinking that brought my heart in pain. Even if I go help him, I would just be a dead weight. Rather, it will just endanger the both of us even more.

Wolf saw me biting my lips.

“...Worried?”

“...Of course I am.”

Why did you even ask something so obvious?

I glared at him vexingly but was met with his cold eyes. It was as if those eyes can see through to the deepest depths of a person's heart. It honestly made me jump.

Leaving me confused on the spot, he put his hands on the door.

Suddenly, a sound of a door opening and something falling down the stairs could be heard, followed by a small groan.

Thinking there's an injured person out there, I turned pale in worry.

But when I was about to reach for the door, I was hugged by Miss Bianca. She whispered in my ear that it could be the enemy.

After seeing me covering my mouth with both hands, Wolf pressed his ear against the door. After a moment, he gently pushed the door open.

Leaving us in the room, Wolf entered the corridor alone.

The person on his shoulder as he came back had a familiar face.

“Kurt!”

Kurt was part of the crew in charge of the kitchen and a man I knew well. Normally his face would be full of friendly smiles but right now it was pale and contorted in pain.

I carefully checked his body for any slash wounds and noticed that his arm was positioned in a way it shouldn't be.

“The bones are broken.”

Wolf's calm voice didn't quite reach my ears.

“Something to prop it up... Mary can you handle this?”

“...”

“...Mary!”

“Eh?”

Wolf raised his voice. Seeing me trembled and not moving, he spat out.

“...It's fine if you can't move. Just lie down so you don't get in the way.”

“!”

“And the lady over there, you can move right? Come and help me.”

“Alright.”

I was disappointed. I knew that better than anyone.

But at the time it didn't even cross my mind that it was sad or frustrating. I was just glad for a moment that I was told not to do anything.

And shortly afterwards, a sense of disgust came over me.

Klaus was fighting. The sailors were fighting.
Even Wolf and Miss Bianca were doing their best.

Am I going to be the only one crying in a corner?

Did I go on a journey just to do this?

“Tsu... Ah...”

Kurt moaned in pain.

Sweat were flowing from his forehead from all the pain. Kurt grabbed my hand that was reaching out to wipe the sweat.

It was firm and strong.

“Kuu...”

Tears started to flow down my face.

Get a hold of yourself, Rosemary.

For what *purpose*

did you get up by yourself? You started to walk on
your own

two feet. What did you want to do? Why did you leave the comfort of the castle you came from?

Even though there were people suffering in front of my eyes.

Even though there were people seeking help.

How could a woman ignoring that ever change the world!

I removed Kurt’s hand from my arm and using my own two hands, slapped my cheeks on both sides.

Slap A loud noise rang within the room

“Eh!?”

“Just-“

Both of my cheeks started to feel sore.

Contrary to my sight that was blurred with tears, my mind was clear as day. I wiped my eyes with the back of my hand and stood up.

“I will help with the treatment.”

“Mary...”

Not waiting for Wolf’s reply, I reached for the sheets. He called out to me as I cut them with a knife.

“Can you handle this?”

They were the same words as before.
But this time I firmly nodded.

“This will be my first time doing it, but I know what to do.”

“Is that so? Then I leave him to you.”

Wolf threw his sheathed knife at me and told me to use it as an immobiliser. I caught it mid-air.

“Eh? But-“

“You’re not a kid who take on things you can’t do. If you say you can do it, then
you can do it, right?”

That was *not* a question.

He looked at me with his sharp eyes and I stopped breathing for a moment. However, I endured it and gave a reply.

“Yes.”

Let's stop being indecisive.

If I don't do what I can now, I will *absolutely* regret it.

To me who declared with strong conviction, Wolf showed his first smile today.

“Good. If that's the case then leave your brother to me.”

“...Huh?”

What did he mean? I was about to ask but he was already flying out the door.

“Wolf!?”

“Be a good girl and wait for me here~! <3”

Wolf looked back over his shoulder and threw a kiss at me as he headed for the stairs.

Chapter 79: An Escort Knight's Internal Conflict

As I reached the deck, the cold night air stroked my skin.

I looked around but a thick white smoke blinded my sight. It appeared that a fog had surrounded the ship.

Not only that. The islands nearby provided the perfect cover, *especially* at night. It seemed this ship had ran out of luck when it got stuck in this mess.

As I approached the watchman, I saw a body leaning against the fence. Was he dead or was he just unconscious? I couldn't make it out from this far away.

Watching out for any arrows, I lowered my body and approached. Then I saw the body moved slightly. So he's not dead yet.

The moment I breathe a sigh of relief and put my hand on the ship's mast, a loud explosion reverberated. The ship shook greatly and swayed to one side.

I got hold of the mast immediately and endured the rattle.

Another deafening explosion roared and a rugged bridge was cast over the hull of the ship.

“Enemy raid!!”

I stood up and hammer the bucket I grabbed repeatedly as I shouted. After confirming that the downstairs were becoming noisier, I threw it away.

Inhaling deeply, piercing cold air filled my lungs.

My thoughts were *clear*

. While listening to the sound of my heartbeat pulsing strongly, I stared at the clouded fog in front of me.

Beyond the hung bridge, another ship and its crew could be seen. Their quick footsteps were silently heard resonating on the wooden floorboards.

The uninvited guests had arrived.

‘The imbeciles who dare to defile my Lady’s important journey...’

When I thought that, my palm tightened the grip on my sheathed sword and I gritted my teeth.

I immediately unsheathed my sword.

Stepping forward. Next step, next step, just one more step before charging-

“Hey! Get more boats!”

“A ship like this rarely comes by! Don’t let a single one escape!”

As the distance shortened, men with vulgar faces that matched their *disgusting* behaviour could be seen.

“Out of my way! I’ll go first!”

Pushing down the guy who was in front, the man raised his voice before dropping down onto the deck. The man blinked in surprise as I ran out and grabbed him. Even before his smile could turn into a frown, my sword slashed his throat open.

Red blood coated the deck. Not knowing what happened, the man stumbled backwards a few steps and fell against the fence. His throat agape. The lifeless body dropped to the floor and a fancy fountain sprayed out from his neck.

“Wha-What!?”

From the top of the bridge, the guy who was pushed away saw me. He pulled out his sword to fight back, but I easily caught his leg and tripped him over.

I stepped on his back and thrust the tip of my sword through his heart. A high-pitched scream followed.

The pirates were stirred by the enemy that suddenly attacked. When I kicked one of the bodies into the sea, they suddenly came charging at me. The sound of clashing swords rang in my ears.

“What the fuck did you do! Die!”

“That’s my line.”

To the shouting man, I calmly replied.

I pushed back his sword that was repeatedly flung down at me. As I swept his sword to the side, the man slightly broke his posture. Immediately closing the gap, I pulled out the dagger from my waist and stabbed his right eye.

I finished him off as he gave a pitiful cry. As I was about to step forward, something caught my collar and pulled me back. I fell on the ground, dumbfounded. In the next moment, an arrow pierced through the spot my face would have been with a dry sound.

I was dragged back towards our ship.

A man stood behind me. His hood thoroughly covering his face.

However, I recognised his attire. When that maid collapsed, he was the guest that surrendered his room.

“You’re rushing in too soon.”

The figure released my collar and spat out in disgust.

The voice definitely belonged to a man.

“Sorry, I was saved.”

I obediently thanked the man, but in return he just gave a sigh as if he was amazed.

“You’re not fit to be an escort.”

“Ha?”

I raised my voice to the unexpected words but the man pushed my head down and told me to *‘stay down.’*

“What do you mean?”

“Exactly as I said. Right now, you’re not suited to fight while protecting others.”

“I’m-“

When I tried to retort, the man faced towards me. Even if I couldn’t see his face, I could still felt a sharp gaze from him.

“You only know how to kill, not to protect. A beast that only run through

enemies can't protect anything it leaves behind.”

“!”

As soon as he said what he wanted to say, the man took his eyes off of me.

The man reached into his pouch while still crouching down and pulled out three weapons in one hand. Sandwiched between his fingers were three slender knives... No, rather, were they needles?

The man grabbed a wooden bucket from nearby and flung it up in the air.

Two sharp arrows flew through the air. One hit the tub and rolled away. It takes a few seconds to knock another arrow. The man raised himself up.

He whipped his hand as if to strike the sky, then an archer had one of the needles in his throat. The other archer got one stabbed deep between his brows.

“Let's go.”

Following the urging man, I got up, but inside my head was a complete mess.

'I'm not suitable to protect others?'

Even though I wished to be her sword and shield.

On the battlefield, any slight distraction was fatal. I know that, but I couldn't think straight. I was feeling uneasy as I slashed the enemies around me.

I wanted to protect Rosemary.

I wanted to protect her wishes. I wanted to protect the precious people around her. I wanted to protect them all.

But I didn't know how to do that.

I only knew how to kill the enemies in front of me.

“Kuu...”

Amidst the turbulent situation, a bitter voice escaped my lips.

Looking back, a sailor was being overwhelmed by a pirate. I pushed the enemy in front of me away and cut him down.

I ran over to the pirate and slit his neck.

“Are you okay?”

“O-Oh, thanks.”

I helped the sailor up.

I firmly tapped his shoulder as if to say 'pull yourself together!' The sailor soon ran off towards another enemy.

'I won't let anyone die.'

I looked over the deck that was a battlefield and swore in my heart.

Please don't die.

Don't scar *her* heart.

A dead person doesn't bother *me* in the slightest. But for *Rosemary*, she will surely be very sad.

I lamented and blamed myself for not having the skills to protect her.

This was not a delusion but rather *facts* and was clearly shown in the past.

At the time of the kidnapping incident, she was desperate to save the lives of the maids who were at the hands of the enemy. But I focused on only saving Mary's life and ignored her wish.

Though I didn't outright fail. If you asked if I had saved her, then I would say I had. However, there were also *circumstances*.

'Do not expose Rosemary-sama to danger no matter the cost.'

For that goal, one or two maids were deemed a low *price* to pay.

And I made a big scar on her heart.

Even though you knew she's a kind person. And exactly because she's kind, wasn't that why you wanted to protect her in the first place?

'...I'm really not cut out to be an escort.'

"Hey!"

Gan!

A clash rang out beside me.

Realising that a slash towards me had been repelled, I glanced at the direction of the sound. A man dual-wielding a huge knife in each hand stood there with his weapons crossed, receiving a pirate's sword.

Parrying back with overwhelming force, the man struck his enemy through the heart. After wiping off the blood on his cheeks with the back of his hand, the man

glared at me with a sour face.

"Stop fucking around already! Do you want to be laughed at by your sister?"

"!"

It was that one passenger who made friends with Rosemary recently. I remember his name being Wolf?

"My sister?"

“She’s doing her best downstairs. I didn’t expect she would have the guts to do it.”

We stood back to back and kept on talking while cutting down enemies.

“That child is also fighting with you. What would she think if she sees you being such a coward?”

I didn’t feel angry nor provoked at those words.

However, my eyes were glued to the stairs leading down below.

Actually, I didn’t want to avert my eyes from those stairs at all.

But I knew in my heart that I was not worthy to be by her side.

Chapter 80: The Reincarnated Princess' Fear

Don!

Loud noises continued to echo from above.

I breathed in and restrained my jumping heart to the sudden shock that came out of nowhere.

'It's alright, Klaus will protect me.'

The sailors were also fighting and Wolf said he would lend a hand after all.

'I have to believe in them and do what I have to do.'

I told myself and turned to face the person in front of me.

Kurt's fracture treatment was over. That said, it was just wrapping his leg and the sheath together as support.

Besides broken bones and bruises, there was no noticeable trauma, but I was afraid to move him around so that's why he was laid down on the floor. To substitute a pillow, a folded cloth was used instead.

His suffering was still clear as day however.

Deep wrinkles formed on his brows, his red cheeks swollen and a thin layer of sweat coated his forehead. Perhaps from all the fractures and bruises he had wrought up a fever.

“...”

Kurt struggled a small groan. Sweat fell down from his forehead as he waved his head around with a painful face.

I brushed away his fringe and wiped his forehead with a cloth.

The small scratches and cuts looked painful.

I would love to clean the blood and mud off his wounds, but that's impossible until Miss Bianca return from the kitchen with more water.

As I gently wiped the mud from his face with my index finger, Kurt's closed

eyelids began to move.

“Kurt?”

As if responding to my call, his eyelids slowly opened. At first there were no life in those eyes, but after a few seconds had passed, life returned to them and Kurt began looking around.

Using his right hand, he traced the sheets with his fingers. Noticing that he was searching for something, I inadvertently took his hand. Grasping his hand with both of mine, a

weak strength could be felt from him.

“Kurt.”

Again, I called his name.

His eyes moved towards the origin of the voice. I found myself reflected in his eyes. His lips started to move... But there was no sound.

I wanted to grant him any demands he wished.

There were only a handful of things I could possibly do right now, but *even then*.

“Please say it again one more time.” I asked him to repeat those voiceless words.

But Kurt did not try to open his mouth. Instead he stared at my direction with his blurry eyes from the high fever.

His right hand gently extended and somehow brushed my cheeks.

His fingertips gently stroked my face that was confused beyond words. It was so gentle that one would doubt if there was really any force behind it at all.

I would never brush away his hand, but it tickled a little bit. While staring at me who was worried about what to do, he smiled softly.

“The goddess... was here... all this time...”

“Huh?”

The little misunderstanding was drowned in the clamour upstairs.

But before he could repeat himself, his eyes closed once more. The hand stroking my cheek fell down and his breathing became more audible.

I wonder what he said.

However, looking at his expression, I think that it was neither unpleasant nor painful.

I gave a quick sigh, grabbed a bed sheet and covered Kurt with it.

“Mary, sorry for the wait!”

“Miss Bianca.”

Miss Bianca who ran into the room noticed Kurt sleeping and hurriedly closed her mouth. I got up and took the tub she handed over.

“Sorry for all the ruckus.”

“No, it’s good that you came back safely.”

“It’s alright. It seems that the enemy haven’t reached the lower decks yet... But...”

“?”

While whispering to me, Miss Bianca made a rare sour face and diverted her gaze away from me.

When I was about to ask her...

The door behind Miss Bianca opened.

Miss Bianca took my hand and pulled me behind her.

“Excuse us.”

“I’m sorry, Mary!”

“Mia?”

Mia said as she came in. Besides her stood a manservant with Miss Flora held in his arms.

“An injured person is sleeping. Please be quiet.”

Mia apologised to Miss Bianca for being rowdy. The man gave a small bow

towards me and walked towards the beds where he gently laid Miss Flora down.

Miss Flora was scared out of her wits, pale and trembling. That figure of her holding her knees like a ball seemed to be smaller than usual.

“I was only hiding in the kitchen. I somehow tagged along. I’m sorry Mary.”

“I will also apologise. I was looking for anything that could function as a weapon or armour in the kitchen but they were all cleared out beforehand...”

With an ‘I am ashamed’, the elderly gentlemen lowered his head.

“Where is her escort?”

Certainly, Miss Flora must have an exclusive escort.

In response to my question the old man opened his mouth, but Miss Flora’s loud shout cut him off before he could say anything.

“*Upstairs!* He left me alone to go fight!”

“Miss Flora, please keep quiet.”

Miss Flora who was frightened just now had her anger exceeded her fear. She ignored Mia’s warnings and rolled up in her bed with tears of regret pouring out from her eyes.

“Even though he’s just an escort! How could he leave
my side

at such an important time like this! I will tell
Father when we get home!”

“Miss Flora.”

“What?!”

I called out standing next to her. She glared at me with her teary eyes.

“Shut up.”

“Why the hell are you order-“

“If you make too much noise, it could attract the enemy.”

“Ku...”

Miss Flora who snapped at me swallowed my words after much persistence.

If you look at her expression, one could tell she was not completely convinced.

“But... This is not right... “

Muttered Miss Flora in a tiny voice. The little droplets forming in the corners of her eyes fell according to gravity.

Were those tears because of your frustration towards the escort, or was it because of the situation you're in?

It's probably both.

I could not think of any comforting words for Miss Flora that was shedding tears.

Resentment against unreasonable circumstances, even I wouldn't be able to come to terms with it either.

My head knew that we were being attacked by pirates, but my emotions were still playing catch-up.

'Why do you steal? Why do you hurt others?'

I wanted to ask “How could your heart be filled with so much hatred?” As I am right now I could never calm *anyone* down.

An awkward silence befell the room.

But shortly after, a loud noise cut through the silence.

“!”

The door roughly flung open.

The first to react was Miss Bianca. She shielded me behind her and

unsheathed her dagger.

But what appeared was a crew member and not the enemy.

“Ah, my bad... You girls are hiding here, huh? I’ll go somewhere else.”

A sailor who entrusted his body to the wall said with a bitter smile.

But his face was distorted in pain. Blood was dripping through his left hand fingers holding his wound on the other arm. The bleeding was making a red puddle on the floor.

“You’re hurt!”

Miss Bianca quickly stopped the sailor who was staggering away.

“I’m alright. It’s not a big-“

“As if you are!”

Miss Bianca frustratingly shouted over his voice.

She pushed him into the room and sent me a glance. I replied with my gaze through the line of sight and pulled out an unused cloth from my bag.

“I will now treat you. Please sit.”

“Err, lil’ Miss?”

Looking at the arms of the embarrassed sailor, the affected area was the forearm on the right. Blood was overflowing from the wound. The cut must have severed an artery. Let’s stop the bleeding as soon as possible.

I was strangely calm that I surprised myself.

Perhaps it was thanks to Kurt who calmed me down. I would also like to thank Wolf that knocked me back to my senses. But right now, I will focus on the treatment.

Placing the hemostatic agent on the wound, top it with a cloth and press it down. The cloth soon turned red. I then added a second cloth.

“Miss Bianca, can you please hold this down?”

“Alright.”

Miss Bianca nodded and moved quickly. While she was holding that down I grabbed the bandages instead of the cloths.

“This will be tight so it might hurt.”

“O-Oh?”

“W-Wait! What are you guys doing?!”

Right when I was rolling the bandages, Miss Flora’s obnoxiously loud voice could be heard.

However, I couldn’t afford to falter here, so I ignored it.

“Wouldn’t the *pirates* come to look for him too?!”

“Miss Flora, please calm down.”

“Shut up! Shut up! Shut up! *Shut up!!*

Look, if you don’t kick him out right now-muhgufh?!”

“Please excuse our rudeness!”

It was Mia who sealed up Miss Flora’s rampant mouth with her palm.

‘Leave her to me! Please focus on treating him.’ She looked at my confused face and said so.

Not to waste Mia’s efforts, I put more pressure onto the bandage then I tied it as tight as I could.

“Lift your arm up higher than your heart... Yes, just like that. It will be a while but please keep your arm like this.”

“Alright... Lil’ Miss.”

“Yes?”

“You’re amazing.”

Dropping the wet cloth full of blood, I raised my face to the sailor's words. His complexion was far from good, but his eyes were sparkling.

"Even though you have a tiny frame and a doll-face, your courage doesn't lose to even grown men. That's foul play."

"Um...?"

'I wonder if I'm being praised.'

I gave a weird sound as a response as I was caught off-guard and the sailor heartily laughed. It seemed that he didn't mean anything bad.

"...I don't believe I have that much courage."

I had only been at the receiving end.

I was *both*

being protected and spoiled. The reason I could stand here right now was because I told myself to get a grip.

And I feared that even a *little*

strike will send my stance crumbling down in an instant.

"U-! Release me, Mia!"

Pan!

A dry echo sounded.

Miss Flora who finally pulled away Mia's hand from her mouth also swatted the other hand that tried to close her mouth again.

"Who the hell do *you* think *I* am? There's a limit to your rudeness!"

"I'm very sorry, but please keep quiet for now."

"You insolent fool!"

In contrast to Mia that calmly replied, Miss Flora's face was red with anger.

What should I do? I would like her to be quiet, but saying anything now would just be adding oil to the fire.

I glanced to my side and met eyes with Miss Bianca.

Knock her lights out?

She muttered something and gestured her hand as if striking a sword. Although it was dangerous, making any more noise than this was also unpleasant in itself.

“This and that is always that girl! Nobody ever listens to what I say!!”

As I was contemplating how to handle the situation, Miss Flora pointed and shouted at me. My eyes widened in surprise and embarrassment.

“Miss Flora...”

“Don’t you dare touch me!”

Miss Flora cried even more as she brushed away the gentlemen’s hand.

Then she stood up and headed for the door.

“Hey! Where do you think you’re going?!”

“I said don’t touch me!”

She even ignored Miss Bianca’s calls and opened the door.

I couldn’t possibly let her go either so I grabbed her arm.

“No, come back!”

“Don’t order me what to do!!”

She knew that it was dangerous outside, but perhaps with blood rising to her head, she wasn’t listening to anyone. I eventually got dragged outside along with her.

The bustling noise sounded closer than expected.

Too close.

I raised my face and turned around. Behind Miss Flora – a looming shadow was coming down the stairs. I held my breath. The first thing I saw was a

descending foot, then a wet sabre in his right hand

dripping with blood.

'We must hide!' The brain orders so, but my body *wouldn't* move.

Miss Flora, not aware of the danger coming straight at us, was still trying to shake off my hand.

"It hurts! How long are you planning to grab it for?!"

The man reacted to her voice and raised his face.

There stood a beast with its rotten eyes shining as if it had found prey.

Chapter 81: An Escort Knight's Wish

Blood smeared my cheeks as I breathed out.

I used the back of my hand to wipe off the blood but it didn't do much good since my hand was also covered in thick red liquid as well. My nose however has gotten used to the strong blood odour drifting with a foul smell.

My breathing was as rough as a beasts' and my heart was beating annoyingly loud.

My arms were heavy and my senses were starting to dull. Even so, my eyes were still hunting for the next prey.

'As if I am actually an animal' A self-pitying thought crept up my mind.

In this state, I was definitely not fit to be escorting anyone. A fact that I was repeatedly told.

Sometimes others would scold me about it. Other times it was pointed out to me as a weakness. But that's not all.

From my few friends and from the elders I respected:

In your way of fighting, although the enemy will be completely annihilated,

your escort will not survive with you. Who would want to leave their life to those who place importance on killing rather than defend?

Looking back, it was such a hard question for me. But I finally understood.

I had understood the importance of such question when I became Rosemary's personal guard.

Protecting Rosemary was more than a duty to me. I would never let anyone else take my place.

If that's the case, I thought, I will protect Rosemary the best I can.

Always keeping an eye on her and never letting her leave my side. Focus your eyes on her only, nothing else.

If I could do that, I would be able to protect her. I foolishly believed.

As a result, I haven't changed at all. Well, it was to be expected.

I did not understand anything.

Not about friends' and my superiors' worries, not about Rosemary's feelings. Nothing.

Even now I still don't understand.

How can I protect them? How can I stand proud and be called Rosemary's escort?

How do I make her laugh?

"This is a problem."

My back was bumped against. To that small shock, my consciousness was brought back to reality.

"I wonder if I'm getting too old for this."

Wolf, who was fighting back and forth, did a small laugh while looking over his shoulder.

"I don't think your age has anything to do with it."

"I'm older than you at least... Maybe."

As we did our small banter, I scanned the surroundings.

Most of the people who were standing were breathless. Many of the other sailors were not used to fighting and it showed. There were only me, Wolf and the hooded man who were moving properly.

Pirates on the enemy side had also decreased by quite a number. Morale seemed not to be so high.

They must not have thought that a merchant ship would put up such a fight.

Would you run with your tail between your legs with another attack?

Thinking that, I glanced over towards the pirate ship.

Several pirates were desperately kicking off the wooden transfer planks into the sea. Although it was a galley ship and didn't have many rowers, it still started to slowly sail away. The remaining pirates who noticed were jumping off our ship into the sea to flee.

Looking at the sight, Wolf carved deep wrinkles between his brows.

"I don't mind returning, but I would like to catch the remaining ones on the ship first."

"Do you think they will surrender?"

Asking while turning my eyes on the leftover pirates.

Wolf instantly shook his head.

“It’s not going to happen, because pirates are hung to death if they’re caught.”

I also agreed.

Sure enough, the pirates scoffed at the surroundings with glaring eyes like cornered beasts rather than giving up.

‘What a nasty situation.’ I murmured in my heart.

I could not imagine what a cornered man will do.

Rather than capturing them, thinking about how to put them down would be the proper course of action.

One of the pirates moved as I took my eyes off him for a split second.

I understood where he was heading and ran at him.

I won’t let you. There’s no way in hell I’m letting you go there!

But before I could reach him, another pirate moved in the corner of my eye. His hands reached out towards an injured sailor.

There was no room for hesitation. None at all.

However, my legs changed their direction, ignoring my will. *What are you doing, me?* Even though she should be my number one priority!

While confused about my own actions I cut the enemy's hands that was grabbing the sailor's head clean off.

Ignoring the pirate that was now rolling around in pain, I went after the one that headed downstairs. However, another pirate came in my way.

Irritably grinding my teeth, I swung down with all my might.

I was nauseated by my stupidity. I was worried, I got lost, greedy, trying to get every single enemy when I was supposed to protect the one person most important to me.

It's a mistake I can't live with even if I die.

But then, what would you have done? Another voice rang out in my head.

Didn't you just kill that pirate to save the sailor's life?

Floating in my mind was a face of a man who was walking far ahead of me, causing me to grind my teeth so hard it could crumble.

Captain, will you get conflicted at times like this? Can you easily choose between who to save?

Will my weakness put her in danger?

“Get out of my way you bastards!!”

Along with that roar, the pirate who had been standing in front of my eyes disappeared. Pirates who got kicked from the side blew off far enough to hit the edge of the ship.

My eyes went wide in surprise to see Wolf standing next to me. Was that shout really came from this man?

“What are you standing there for?! Go after him!”

I was being yelled at.

“I can’t fight as good as you can. I can’t protect that girl. Leave this to me and go!”

“Ku-I owe you one!”

I turned away from Wolf and started running.

I was frustrated by the narrow stairs but as I descended, I found the pirate’s back.

I was relieved that the man had not reached the room, but my breath stopped abruptly when a small shadow could be seen past the man.

The blood in my whole body froze despite my heart pulsating so violently that it hurts. All the sounds were drawn out from my senses.

At the same time that I wished it was someone else, my mind told me that I would never mistake Rosemary for anyone.

Step by step. With every step I took, my conviction grew stronger. While trembling with a pale blue face, the figure standing in front of me was sadly beautiful.

I felt my feet kicking the floorboards as hard as they could but still, it felt too slow.

The image of the pirate slowly raising up his sword burned into the retina of my eye.

I got into eye contact with Rosemary over the pirate's shoulder. Was it my own desire to think that there was the feeling of relief in her surprise?

“Close your eyes!”

At the same time I shouted, Rosemary closed her eyes tightly. You do not know how delighted I am with that trust.

I struck from behind, piercing the pirate's heart.

Along with the feeling of tearing flesh, short screams leaked out of the

pirate's mouth. It was a beastly voice that a normal person would never utter. Or rather, it's more accurate to say that was the impression I got since my ears were still blocked.

Oh, my precious person, my only one. I'm sorry I could not rescue you as good as the Captain would have done.

The lifeless body crumbled to the floor.

Rosemary was no longer obstructed by anything in my view.

Her complexion was even worse than before and she was trembling like a leaf in the wind. If you heard that scream, you didn't even have to see what happened. Nevertheless, I remembered the crushing feeling in my chest to Rosemary who still kept her eyes closed as I said.

I wanted to console her so I reached out.

But I noticed my own hands covered in blood and stopped myself. It's useless if I touch her, she will only get dirty.

"Rose-"

Rosemary-sama. My voice that was calling out to her was stopped.

It was not because I realised that I shouldn't call out her name here, nor was it because Bianca dashed out from the room.

“Hii! Nooooo!!!”

It was interrupted by an echoing scream.

A woman who was caught by Rosemary saw the dead body and screamed. She shook off Rosemary and turned around in a panic.

Then she started running. Perhaps she was not able to endure the repeated fear. She had to run away from the spot, as ordered by her instinct. She quickly rushed up the stairs.

‘Wait!’ There was a voice calling out for her to stop but it didn’t reach her ears.

I clicked my tongue and chased after the woman.

I grabbed her arms once she reached the upper deck and I tried to pull her back, but the woman was confused and resisted. She turned and twisted her body.

As it is now, we will both fall down the stairs. As I was racking my brain on how to deal with her, a dry sound was heard.

After that, I don’t remember much.

Perhaps it was something like body reflexes. Before I knew it, my body moved in to cover for the woman.

A dull sound and a slight shock ran through my back.

In that instant, a warm feeling spread through my body rather than a sharp pain.

“Klaus!”

Opening her eyes wide, Rosemary was crying while looking up at me.

Call me 'brother' instead. Even though I corrected her, I was not upset in the slightest.

It was quite a long time ago since you last called me by my name.

“Klaus! Klaus...!!”

Please do not cry.

I wish for you to laugh.

No matter what happens.

Chapter 82: The Reincarnated Princess' Dismay

With a thud, Klaus stopped moving.

I had a bad feeling something had happened but I didn't know what it was. I repeatedly called out to him to shake away my anxiety while rushing out with my heart irritatingly beating as fast as it could.

Klaus collapsed on the spot as soon as I reached the upper deck. I caught his tense shoulder before his knees hit the floorboards when I noticed an arrow protruding out of his back. Naturally, my eyes went wide in shock.

"Kla...us?"

I could not believe it. I could not believe what I saw. I tried to call out his name but what came out instead was barely audible. Placing my hand against his chest, I confirmed that it was completely disturbed. Shallow wheezing sounds leaked out from his mouth. I couldn't see him very well as my tears fell, blurring my vision.

Klaus sat still like a doll that had its strings cut. Both of his hands resting on the deck twitched slightly.

At that moment his body leaned towards me. I was standing up straight and tried to prop him up, but in the end, I couldn't endure the weight.

I then placed my hands around his back and managed to hold us together somehow, when a warm feeling spread onto the palm of my hands.

The *distinct* smell of rusted iron told me exactly what it was. Unlike blood from small scratches that was hard and cold, this red liquid was lukewarm, raw and was leaking out of his body. Flowing out of a living being.

"...Klaus?"

I called him with a voice full of doubt and he did not reply. No, he didn't respond at all.

With a pained desperation, I shut my eyes tight. His complexion was becoming pale and started to crumble.

"Klaus!... Klaus!!"

He might not open his eyes ever again. Terrible thoughts invaded my mind and I raised my voice to shut them all out.

“Mary!”

Someone strongly shook my shoulder.

I steadily recovered and pulled myself together. A gentle voice whispered to my ear.

“Wolf?”

“Yes. I’m here.”

A small sigh escaped him seeing that I responded. I then gazed at Klaus who was still on his knees.

Wolf’s expression deepened as he observed Klaus. After looking around, he noticed something and ran up to it. It was a bucket with an arrow sticking out on one side.

He pulled out the arrow, sniffed it and licked the arrowhead with the tip of his tongue. Even deeper brows carved themselves on his face. Wolf immediately spat out his saliva and returned back to us.

“Mary, find something for your brother to bite on.”

“Eh...?”

Even if you used a serious face to tell me that. I couldn’t understand. My head was in a haywire.

“Will this do?”

Miss Bianca answered for me, whose head was still confused. She opened his jaw wide and stuffed it full with cloth.

As I was supporting Klaus’ shoulder, Miss Bianca consoled me as if a child, and asked that I leave the rest to her.

Miss Bianca then supported Klaus’ body in my stead.

“I’m going to pull it out.”

“... His bleeding will get worse. Isn’t it better to leave it in as a plug?”

Wolf handed the arrow to Miss Bianca and answered in a low voice.

“It’s poisoned.”

Poison.

The word repeated in my fuzzy head. I heard the word but my brain refused to accept its meaning. *Don’t listen.* A part of my heart resisted.

Wolf grabbed the arrow and pulled it out in one motion. Fresh blood sprayed onto the floor followed by Klaus’ muffled scream.

“Someone bring me my bag from my room! Also get clean water and cloth! Don’t forget to boil the water!”

Wolf shouted to the surroundings. The sailors who could still move ran around carrying out his instructions.

“Hold him down!”

Wolf told Bianca as he started to suck out the poison with his mouth, spitting it out on the deck and repeat.

Prior to this, the pirates all had disappeared from the deck. A mountain of wordless corpses piled up high in front of the red-stained sky. I thought that dawn had come, but that wasn’t the case at all. In front of us, a ship was burning passionately in the lightless sky. A galley ship floating in the murky ocean was wrapped in sparkling flame. A beastly scream echoed and a person wrapped in flames jumped into the night sea, all seemed like slow motion. It was fit to say it looked like an incarnation of Hell.

I could only stare at that scene on the verge of screaming. A bird took flight into the night sky illuminated by the flames promptly followed by a flock of black birds, as if the black smoke itself, and disappear into the jet black clouds.

“Ah... Aaaaah...”

I heard a small groan.

Amongst those who were running around, there were those who sat helplessly like me.

It was Miss Flora that was grasping his body while shedding tears.

“It’s my fault... It was all my...”

A small mumble escaped her lips as I stared at Klaus lying on the floor.

“I’m sor-... I’m sorry...”

Miss Flora casted her eyes my way. However, I didn’t know if her apology was directed at me or him.

She said it was her fault. I could not deny that. I was not so strong that I could forgive her, and I knew it was not fair.

That’s right. I thought. But would condemning her get rid of this painful ache in my chest? If I blame her, would it be easier for me?

My eyes were fixed on Klaus’ pale complexion.

“Mary!”

“...”

My name was called.

But I had no heart to reply. I left my call unanswered and slowly turned my face towards the voice. Wolf stared back with deep worry on his face. I wonder if you’ll be disappointed. I wonder if you’ll get angry. Whatever. Anything is fine... It doesn’t matter anymore.

Wolf’s expression was now beyond grim, as if he saw me having lifeless eyes. Wolf stood up, approached us and kneeled down next to me.

His serious eyes reflected back in mine.

“Even though I promised to protect him. I am sorry that I made a promise I couldn’t keep.”

Said Wolf as he lowered his head.

I blinked a few times in bewilderment.

“But I will never let him die. I swear by the name of Wolf K. Lucca.”

“... Never?”

“Yes. This time I will surely keep my promise!”

When I gave a small reply, Wolf answered with a hearty laugh.

Never letting him die. Don’t die. Klaus is not going to die. When I told myself so, the senses in my body gradually returned.

I looked down at Klaus once more.
I extended my fingertips towards his hand.

“Klaus...”

The hand that I had grasped will not clasp back.
But the warmth was still there, as blood circulated through his veins.

“Hey mister! Is this the luggage you wanted?”

“Yeah! Thank you!”

Wolf received his luggage from the sailor and started spreading it on the deck.

“Anyone has a light?”

“Oi! Bring a torch over here!”

Wolf’s luggage contained many smaller things. A small knife and various different metals that I didn’t know what they were used for. Small bottles filled with liquid and vessels. This looked similar to a pestle and mortar set.

“The poison used by the pirates in this area was probably made from fish and plants. Judging by the smell and taste...”

Wolf focused on his task with amazing concentration all while murmuring something to himself. He took out a parcel, emptied its contents and picked a few things without hesitation.

There were dried leaves and roots of some plants inside the parcel. What was it? The combination, kneading and grinding. I understood that it was familiar to me.

“I’ve got the boiling water!”

Paul declared and handed me the can.
He had blood-stained bandages wrapped all over his body. He was desperately trying to not show the pain on his face.

Why are you trying so hard?

I was at a loss for words and realised that I only looked up. Paul leaned forward until his eyes were on the same level as mine and stroked my head thoroughly.

“Lil’ Miss. Don’t ya cry. Everybody’s helping yer brother get back on his feet.”

“... Wh-?”

“Hn?”

“Why are you helping me?”

Paul’s eyes were surprised at my question.

While still puzzled, he told me it was ‘only natural’.

“You’ve helped us out countless times. Now it’s our turn to return yer kindness.”

“Eh...”

“On top of that, yer brother fought while helping me. Even in this unpleasant situation. I’ll have you know that all the people on this ship owe you brother-sister pair a lot of gratitude.”

‘*Look, see?*’ Following where he pointed, I saw Mia rushing up the stairs to help us.

“Umm! I’ve brought an unused cloth that you wanted!”

“Miss, you look pale. Are you sure you’re alright? Can someone please bring me a blanket over here!”

Mr. Yang, who brought some more boiling water, surveyed my face and grazed my eyebrows.

Looking carefully, everyone who could move was busy running around treating others. A number of people that cared for me and Klaus gathered here anxiously. An encouraging voice could be heard every now and then.

“...”

My breathing muffled and the back of my eyes became slightly hot. As my nose clogged up, tears started rolling down. Even though I had been crying all this time, I was amazed more tears could come out.

But, they were different.

Because these were not tears of sorrow.

I wiped away these emerging tears with my shaken hands.

This was no time to cry. It was also not a time to be blaming others.

Throwing away things that you should do and cry won't make things better.

Don't stop! Start moving!

Keep on going on. That's my motto.

"I'll help you, Wolf."

"Mary... You-"

"I'm alright now."

Wolf was taken aback and looked at me.

However, that only lasted for a few seconds. He quickly recovered and gave me instructions.

"Then I'd like you to cool down the water and start washing his wounds."

"Yes!"

I did as I was asked to do. I poured the water onto the cloth and spread it out to cool it down and then I washed Klaus' wounds with it. Since Klaus was still unconscious, he didn't react.

I worried about the ever-flowing blood but I was sure it was the poison at work. Also, wouldn't using hot water make the poison less effective instead of normal water?

I followed his instructions to the letter and proceeded with the treatment. I slit his clothes apart with a knife, removed them and wiped off the blood. Red liquid dyed fresh new cloths again and again. I shook my head to escape from the fear and kept on working.

After applying Wolf's medicine I moved on to the hemostatic treatment.

I pressed down on the bandages I applied after treatment. Ideally I wanted to go somewhere else for more bandages but before I could ask Miss Bianca, I had to swallow my words because of the figure behind her.

"... Miss Flora."

"Huh?"

Like a lost child, her loose eyes turned towards me.

Miss Flora who was sitting far away, trembling, met my eyes with eyes full of

tears.

“Can you please hand me that bandage over there?”

“...Me?”

“Yes. Please help.”

I kept staring at her as I uttered those words.

“I want to save Klaus no matter what. Please.”

“!!... I-I understand.”

With tears still flowing, Miss Flora reached for the bandages and walked to us.

I'm sorry for what happened earlier. I silently mulled over in my mind. I am weak and I tried to blame you for everything. In order to protect myself, I was willing to conveniently assert false accusations.

I was also at fault.

It was spineless of me to cry victim when it was *me* that dragged him along as an escort to a foreign country.

“Once the wound is closed, please make sure to keep his body warm.”

“Got it.”

While we applied medicine, Wolf observed us with great care and gave instructions at precise timing after our last task had completed.

I soaked the cloth towels in hot water and spread it over Klaus. I rigorously continued my work, wiping the sweat that formed on my forehead with the back of my hand.

Red dark liquid stuck to my fingers. At first, I thought it was blood but the smell was different this time. However, I could not afford to think about it and pushed the question away at the back of my mind.

Chapter 83: A Young Lady's Astonishment

*Bianca's point of view.

"Oi, we're nearly there! Not long now!"

I raised my face to our crew's voice.

I could see the land that he pointed to. Unparalleled red soil stretched as far as the eye could see. Beyond that stood a port town.

However, it was not the original port town we originally headed for in South-East of Flamme. It was instead the South-West port town.

Klaus was barely drifting between the bounds of life and death. Thanks to Wolf's help, he was stable for now, but that itself could change at any moment.

No matter how good Wolf was, there's only so much one can do on a ship. Water, cloth and medicine had already ran low.

The situation was hopeless. But no one was down. I was running around, helping out with all I could. Even those who were injured, even the girl who was crying a while ago, everyone was determined.

Why is that? I wondered.

If I asked the question out loud, everyone would probably say the same thing.

Because she's not giving up.

"It's not long now, Klaus."

Holding Klaus' hand, Mary whispered.

I didn't think she was aware that she was calling him "Klaus" instead of "Brother". In turn, the surrounding people felt uneasy; doubts began to surface that they were not actually related.

Mary who came from a good household and Klaus the expert swordsman. Their true relationship was probably that of a rich girl and her escort.

However, none of us cared enough to point this out at the moment.

“Good luck.”

In prayer, everyone’s gazes landed on Mary.

That line of sight stayed still in unison.

On Mary’s opposite side, the light of dawn was rising from the fleeting horizon. The scattered ray emphasised Mary’s small silhouette.

The knitted strands of her hair undid themselves as a gust of wind blew through the ship. Shades of brown fell from the tips, probably due to handling the hot water from before, revealing it’s original lustre.

Glistening platinum blonde hair danced in the sunlight.

A small cry reached my ears: *A goddess.*

The voice was only one person, but everyone else unanimously thought of the same thing.

Mary’s hair was rough. Sweat coated her forehead, neck and face. Her hands and clothes were dirtied by mud and blood and her condition was far from pristine.

But even so, the figure in front of me was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen.

This made the air around her heavier. No one spoke to her after that, not even when we reached the port town.

The morning crowd was bustling within the harbour.

Small rowing boats scattered sporadically, but no sailing ships in sight. This wasn’t a trading port like Brow, but rather a fishing town. The harbour depth wasn’t suitable for larger ships to dock. I think our ship just barely made it.

With an unfamiliar ship approaching, the people started to grab their weapons.

One of our crew raised a white flag to show that we meant no harm. Once the ship had docked, a man approached us.

About 40 men glared our way, readying their swords in hand.

“If you value your life, you will leave immediately.”

“Please let us pass! We’re injured!”

“Not happening. Who would let a suspicious ship just pass through like that?”

“We have the entry permit!... Though it’s for Brow instead of here. We’ve been attacked by pirates, please help us!”

The man looked straight at the sailor as if to tell him to stop with the begging.

“Even more reason to get out of here! What if the pirates followed you all? *Who* will take responsibility for that?!”

The man had a point.

Anyone would probably have done the same. When it came to family and friends, those would obviously take top priority. For the sake of their loved ones, they would do anything to protect them. I think what they were doing was cruel, but I also understood their feelings.

But giving up here was simply not an option.

And there was not much time left either.

“Ah... All the pirates are dead.”

When I was pondering on what to do, a voice of a young woman sounded right beside me. Wasn’t her name Flora?

“We were lucky that some knights boarded our ship and fought them off. Their ship burned too, so you don’t have to worry about them coming after us.”

Flora suddenly decided that there was nothing to fear.

I couldn’t hide my own surprise given the situation that she was in just a few hours before.

“So, please, will you let us in?”

Her now pale fingers grabbed the edge of the fence and her voice trembled. She was looking worse every minute and cold sweat started to cover her neck.

The men and their swords must be very intimidating to her. Though considering that her life was nearly taken by one, this was to be expected.

But she didn’t waver her gaze.

Even though she was crying just a little while ago. Even though she couldn't do anything except being scared and trembling in a corner. I wonder where this child had found her courage.

“Can you prove what you just said?”

Unfortunately, her pleas didn't reach the man.

I can't.

Of course she couldn't say that. Flora remained silent.

“That's...”

“Hurry up and go back home, *little girl.*”

The man rejected the weak girl's plea and laughed it off as a joke.

Disgusting.

Flora took a deep, long breath.

A conflicting thought flashed across my mind whether to stop her, but it was too late.

“T-There's no way in *hell* I'm leaving!”

Flora shouted atop of her lungs.

“I-I am the eldest daughter of Baron Graz! Flora von Graz!”

With her chest stretched wide, she spoke with as much integrity as she could muster.

Her feet was shaking and her waist was drooping down, but she magnificently portrayed a prideful noble.

“Don't think that you will be forgiven after refusing me!”

“Heh. And here I thought you were some rich brat. Who would've thought that you're a *noble.*”

The man looked at Flora as if appraising her worth.

Flora moved away and broke their line of sight. Looking at her face, she was

extremely embarrassed. After declaring her family name like that, she probably believed it would help her, even a little.

But reality was a little different.

“*And? So what if you’re a noble from another country?*”

“... My grandmother knows Marquis Eigel-”

“Wow. That’s awesome! *So what?*”

After cutting her off, the man snorted.

“If it’s a noble from Flamme then it would be a pain if we ignore their request.

But

you, you’re just some noble we’ve never even heard of before! Do you think your great family holds any power over here?”

“... I... I’m...”

Tears formed in the corners of her eyes, but they refused to come out.

She tumbled on her words though her eyes didn’t give up. Flora was frantically trying to recover the situation.

You’ve done well.

I wanted to embrace her thin shoulders and gently stroke her head. Who would’ve thought that I could feel this way towards this young girl I didn’t care about at all just a few hours before. I guess life is one big mystery.

“*Who*

would know some corner town Marquis or some little Baron!

Lives

are at stake here. If you wanna talk, at least get me a *royalty!* Then we’ll call for doctors or *anything* you want!”

His nose flared up as he made fun of Flora.

“You better not go back on those words.”

A dignified voice called out.

Her voice wasn't all that loud, but it was well heard. As the people's eyes looked for the origin of that voice, a girl slowly stood up and stepped forward.

"...Ha?"

The man was shaken as she looked straight into his eyes. He swallowed back his words and stumbled a step backwards.

The girl... Mary... didn't glare at the man. On the contrary, I couldn't feel any hatred nor malice coming from her figure at all. Her voice remained dignified and her expression, calm.

That being said, she was only a small girl and there was a man about to snap at her.

"You said

if there was a royalty, we can ask for anything. Was I
mistaken?"

"A-and what of it?!"

"What's wrong?"

"...I did say that! *So what if I did?!"*

The man snapped back as if being ashamed that he was being pressured by a small girl.

Mary returned a beautiful smile.

"I'll take you up on your offer."

That smile was so intimidating it wasn't something a girl thirteen or fourteen could muster.

It was weirdly beautiful that it could well drive a grown man insane.

I never thought she was just a pretty girl, but this was too unexpected.

Just who the hell is she?

Although there were clues that were scattered around her, my head couldn't piece them together.

No one uttered a word amidst the confusion as Mary fired a question in

return.

“Would you happen to know of Nabel’s royalties?”

Mary asked while carrying a heavy-looking tub with both hands.

“That’s... yes, of course.”

The man choked on his reply.

The royal family... most people usually wouldn’t notice the royalties of other countries, but Nabel was an exception. It was famous. Even a small fishing town’s residents would have heard of them.

Everyone in Nabel’s royal family were beautiful and dignified.

They eventually became the people’s ideals. Various stories and songs were made up to praise them.

“Do you know about the first princess?”

“Of course. She’s said to be the country’s future. The goddess of a great country to come.”

It was then that Mary broke her stoic expression for the first time.

With a troubled expression, *I wonder about that,*

out came a tiny voice. But those cute moments only lasted a few seconds.

What’s she like? Mary urged the man to continue.

“If I remember correctly, she had pale skin.”

Her skin was as white as fresh snow.

“And blue eyes.”

Her eyes were bright blue as if mocking the clear sky.

“Her hair’s blonde like the colour of the sun.”

At the end of those words, Mary raised the tub over her head.

Hot water violently washed down with powerful force.

The man, overwhelmed by her actions, was at a loss for words at the figure in front of him.

With the rising sun towards the Eastern sky, the tub fell from Mary's hands and resonated across the harbour. I stared dizzily at her sudden change in appearance.

Lustrous platinum blonde hair shone brighter than the morning sun.

Her wet skin paled as white as fresh snow.

Behind the hand that was brushing her hair away from her face, strong blue eyes that mocked the clear sky gazed upon the people in front of her.

To the crew members who were entranced by her original hair colour, and even me who already knew her real appearance were all in awe to the magnificent beauty in front of us.

Her elegance took our breaths away as we were left speechless.

"I am Rosemary von Wervard, the first princess of the Kingdom of Nabel."

As you promised, could you please call a doctor?

No one was able to reply.

It took nearly a minute for everyone else to come back to their senses.

"Do-Do you have any *proof* that you're a Princess?!"

The man shouted as if trying to break the atmosphere.

But Mary calmly replied, *I do not.*

"T-Then...-!"

"But."

The man breathed heavily. It was clear as day that he was shaken up.

"If I'm the real thing, would you be the one to take responsibility? That you killed Rosemary von Wervard's precious escort, would you be able to carry such a heavy sin?"

With words alone, the man was cornered.

There was no one left who dared to refuse.

Chapter 84: The Reincarnated Princess' Guests (1)

I was offered to stay at a large building in town looking out to the harbour... likely the result of my threat, rather than their kind gesture. The doctor lived downtown so after a short while, the man who went to call for him returned with an old man in his 60s. He clearly was dragged out of bed since his grey hair and clothes were an ugly mess.

“This is... not good.”

The man was complaining about his untidy clothes until he saw Klaus' condition. His expression immediately turned serious.

A streak of sweat ran down my back.

Once the bandages were carefully removed, he touched one with his tongue and muttered ‘

poison’.

“You were attacked by the pirates near these islands, right? Their poisons were made to

kill

. It is rare that anyone ever survives. What did you use to treat him?”

“It's the stuff I made myself.”

The old man looked his way after Wolf raised his hand.

“You? So you didn't just buy some expensive medicine from some merchant but instead

you made it yourself?”

“I know my ways around these things. I just properly formulated it, that's all.”

The old doctor muttered half in amazement and half in awe. Wolf didn't say much more and just chalked up dry laughs.

“I would never have thought of a chance to meet such an amazing person. One of the small advantages of living for so long, I suppose.”

The miracle clan, huh. Said the doctor.

It was a small whisper that only I could hear since I was right next to him, but I believe what he said was correct.

“I’m honored. But right now we don’t have time for small chit chat.”

“You’re right... But what would you have me do?”

The doctor confusingly asked as he stroked his beard.

“I’d like to scrape the dead tissue around the wound but... You know, if he loses any more blood, he could die.”

I followed the doctor’s gaze in Klaus’ direction.

Klaus had a very pale complexion and had been unconscious for a considerable amount of time now. Even if I held his hand, there’s no reaction at all. His breathing was so weak and shallow that I felt it could stop at any moment.

“It’s a different story if we could stop his bleeding immediately after the scraping. Would you happen to know of such a magical medicine?”

“There’s no way that exists. But there’s no choice but to do it, right?”

Towards Wolf’s quick reply, the doctor gave a dejected sigh and bitterly spat ‘yeah’.

“Oi! You! Go boil some water!”

The doctor spat out instructions for the servants surrounding us.

“Mary, what about you...”

“I’ll help!”

When I gave him my absolute reply, his eyes rounded in surprise.

Perhaps he expected me to wait in a separate room. He stared at me, confirming my determination.

“We’re cutting off his dead skin. He will bleed even more than before. Do you understand?”

He was asking if I was prepared for the task.

To be honest, I wasn't good with blood. I was also scared of getting hurt. But leaving Klaus near Death's door, wandering between life and death was much, *much* scarier.

I looked up at Wolf and gave a firm nod.

"Yes!"

"... Really, you..."

Wolf said in amazement and raised his face to the sky. Then he released a deep sigh, emptying his lungs.

He turned back to me again and I averted my eyes in a fluster. He waved me to come closer.

"Got it. Then start by cleaning the dirt off."

After a strong nod, I turned my heel around, waded through the busy crowd and started running.

I washed my hands and rinsed my face with the crummy water we had available and changed into some clothes I borrowed in a separate room. The grey blue dress was hidden underneath a simple white apron. I tied my hair together so that it won't get in the way.

On the way back to Klaus, I was stopped in the corridor.

Looking over my shoulder, Mr. Yang who was in charge of the kitchen said that a guest was looking for me.

I shouldn't be acquainted with anyone in Flamme, especially since I was not supposed to be here in the first place. No one should know who I was except the people aboard the ship.

Looking worriedly towards me, Mr. Yang's expression deepened.

"I don't think he's a bad guy... But if you think he's dangerous then please refuse him. Just to be sure, please don't go in by yourself. It'll be bad if you get in danger."

He said so as if telling his own daughter and patted my head gently.

However, he immediately straightened his face after he noticed something

and took a step back.

“I’m sorry... Just now, I treated you the same way as I usually do. Please forgive me, Your Highness.”

“!... Please don’t worry about it!”

He tried to kneel, but I immediately put a stop to that.

He reluctantly got up. I could still see a hint of embarrassment on his face.

I didn’t expect him to treat me like normal, but

this could get out of hand.

Even if you were to say that it’s the result of my own actions, it’s still painful. I didn’t know what to do next and kept silent.

When I couldn’t stand the awkward silence any longer, I told him I was in a hurry and left him on the spot.

I returned to Klaus only to find that the preparations had already been completed.

Klaus was lying face down with his hands and feet tied so that no one would get hurt if he regained consciousness. His mouth was biting something and the room was filled with drifting smoke. Incense. I believe they were used to relieve pain and help with relaxation.

Wolf whispered *‘you’re late’*

with a cloth covering his mouth. I apologised while putting one over my own.

As I stood next to Wolf, I saw the doctor’s hands across from where we were. In one of his hands was a shiny scalpel. It made my heart jump.

My mouth felt dry and sweat started to spread as I panicked. Even though I haven’t done anything, I felt like I was going to faint.

“I’m starting.”

The doctor declared in a heavy voice as the scalpel touched Klaus’ skin.

Putsu

A small sound was made as the blade penetrated and sank through the skin.

Blood oozed out and formed a ball around the blade handle. Just watching already hurts, but I won't look away. I had made my decision that I would help.

I held my hands tight. The pain from my nails digging into my skin kept my consciousness together.

Only the clanking of metal tools could be heard in the cold, suffocating air.

As if breaking the excruciating silence, a busy crowd could be heard from beyond the door. Before long, the door was kicked open with a loud bang.

"Mary-sama!"

"!?"

It was a good looking boy who pounced in with heavy momentum.

The hood that covered his face fell to reveal his platinum blonde hair. He must have rushed here as sweat was covering his face. His violet eyes adorned with long eyelashes frustratingly sought after the person he was looking for.

It was a face that I knew well.

"Georg?!"

I called out to him.

The people that chased after him stopped once they saw my reaction.

"Thank god... You're not hurt, are you?"

"Why... are you here?"

I questioned him as he breathed a sigh of relief.

"A bird delivered the message. It said that you were attacked by pirates and were heading for this port town."

"... A bird?"

He nodded while adding that it was '

a black bird.'

It's no surprise that I didn't recognise it, and of course I wanted to know who sent the bird but now was not the time.

“Mary, keep your reunion for later. Also please ask that man to leave us alone.”

“I’m sorry!”

I apologised to Wolf in a fluster.

After I told him that we would talk later, I pushed him away and returned only to be pulled back by his hand that didn’t let go.

He was holding onto my wrist. I was confused and embarrassed more than I was angry. It was a gentlemanly thing that was rare for Georg.

“Georg?”

“About the treatment, please wait a moment.”

Georg’s gaze passed through me and was directed at Wolf’s back.

Looking over my shoulder I could see the doctor rolling his eyes and Wolf’s expressionless face. His face was stoic like a statue, which made the room temperature drop even further.

“There’s a person *dying* here and you want us to *wait*? Who the hell do you think you are? *God*? Can you change a man’s fate?”

“...!”

Georg’s expression became stiff, but he did not avert his gaze.

“I’m no God. I’m just a brat with no talent. But *he* might be able to help.”

“...He?”

The sound of the door that opened once more drowned out Wolf’s voice.

Miss Bianca entered the room with a slender young man leaning onto her shoulder for support. Due to the hood that covered his head, his glossy black hair was ruffled up like a bird’s nest. Beads of sweat formed on his face along with an exhausted complexion and he was badly out of breath.

Each step he took was unsteady and erratic. But the young man eventually pulled himself away from Miss Bianca’s shoulder. Miss Bianca looked at him anxiously as he laughed his worries away.

“I’m fine from here.”

“But... Michael...”

“It’s alright now. Thanks, sis.”

The young man... Michael, took off his coat and handed it to Miss Bianca before turning to face me.

Our stare was awkward. I mean, when we last parted it wasn’t exactly a fond memory or anything like that. I didn’t know how to call out to him.

Michael showed a troubled face when he saw me confused.

“Princess.”

Michael who looked at me noticed something and adjusted his line of sight downwards. I followed his gaze and noticed that my apron had a few red spots here and there. I had unwittingly ruined the dress even though I borrowed it.

My right hand, which was being gently lifted, had a few markings in the shape of crescent moons. They were caused by how tightly I had been holding my hands. Michael clasped both of his hands on mine.

“I want you to keep a secret for me.”

“Eh?”

“You know that I’m a magician with the Earth attribute, right?”

He asked. I nodded.

“If a magician can’t use offensive magic, what magic can he use instead?”

His thin fingers started to trace my hand.

Surushi

With just a light stroke of his hand that barely touched my skin, I felt a certain change in my palm.

Looking at it, the three wounds carved along my palm lines had beautifully disappeared.

I kept staring at my right hand.

Michael smiled brightly when he saw my face. It was the smile of a child who

was on the verge of crying from immense happiness.

“I will save your precious person... That is why I am here.”

Chapter 85: The Reincarnated Princess' Guests (2)

After reluctantly letting go of me, Michael turned to face the other two.

However, Wolf and the doctor seemed to be having a hard time believing in magic. The Kingdom of Nabel still had users of magic, but other countries thought it absurd and passed it off as rumors. But Michael was set to prove them wrong. He cut his own hand with a knife and healed the wound in front of their eyes.

“There are still limits to my healing powers.”

Michael uttered, breaking the silence in the room.

Even if it was called *'healing magic'*, not everything could be cured.

It seemed that he could only bring out the innate self-healing power of that human being.

“I can't cure illnesses or wounds that require medication or surgery to heal. It's the same with poison as well.”

He said all he could do was *'close the wound'*.

“If you can stop the bleeding, then that's plenty.”

Wolf quickly regained composure after finding himself speechless from surprise and nodded, saying that he could use any help he can get.

“However, there are dangers with the magic. Since the procedure forces the body to heal, it requires considerable physical strength. If his body gives in before the wound closes...”

Michael's words trailed off at the end but I understood. I gathered the meaning behind it.

I dropped my line of sight down towards Klaus. Will he have enough strength left to fight his large wounds, despite being as pale as a sheet?

My head turned blank. I felt as if I could crumble if I didn't pull myself together.

“Then, even more reason to begin the procedure now.”

“Yeah. Let’s get started.”

Wolf and the doctor agreed with powerful conviction in their voices.

Following the other two that went back to work, Michael turned around and began his preparations. The only one left unsure of what to do was me.

“Mary.”

“Y-Yes!”

I raised my face after Wolf called. My body tensed when I thought that I would be scolded again.

But what happened was far from it. Instead, Wolf sent me a gentle gaze.

“Don’t wear yourself out. Have a seat over there.”

“N-No! I will also stay here...”

“I won’t kick you out. Please calm yourself down, and be a voice to guide him.”

“Eh?”

I had always thought that one day, when I can’t be of any use, they would tell me to go away. And when that happens, I would have no right to be there alongside them. I had always thought so.

Once tears started blurring my vision, Wolf smiled bitterly as he called out to me, telling me to stop.

“I am certain your voice will reach him, so please don’t cry.”

“...Yes!”

I wiped my tears and knelt down beside Klaus.

Staring at his face, I gently brushed away the strands on his cheeks with my fingers. As I heard a dry, faint sound, red powder crumbled onto my hands. Was this Klaus’ blood or someone else’s? I did not know. His

whole body was covered in blood.

His figure was sullied with blood and dirt, and underneath it all were

countless cuts and wounds running through his skin. How much effort did he put forth when trying to protect me? How tirelessly did he fight for my sake?

“Klaus.”

I softly stroked his cheek. My other hand held onto the back of his hand. The size difference was so jarring, it seemed as if he was the one holding my hand instead.

“Klaus, please.”

‘Do your best.’

I repeated those words numerous times. As I lost count, Klaus’ body flinched.

His eyes remained closed but creases were carved deeply between his brows. It was clear that he was in pain. Klaus leaked out a groan once the agony became unbearable.

His pained voice blended together with the sound of a knife cutting through flesh. An incision without anesthesia was not just painful, it was torture.

“Ugh...!!”

“Klaus!”

I firmly grabbed both of his large hands. It might hinder the operation, but I couldn’t stand doing nothing.

I called out his name again and again like an idiot.

“Hold that side down!”

“Understood!”

Michael responded to Wolf’s instructions. Klaus’ body that contorted to escape from the pain was being pinned down by two people.

“Ku-AAAAAHHHH!!”

The piece of cloth that held his voice fell off from his mouth. His piercing scream rang out like a beast’s roar.

He’ll bite his tongue like this!

In a hurry, I tried to insert the cloth back into his mouth but that was an

impossible task while he was moving about.

In the end, he bit down hard. A stream of blood flowed from the corners of his lips.

I believed that he had bit his tongue and turned blue from shock.

“Klaus! Klaus!!”

While holding onto his face, I shouted out his name.

Gachan!

The metal tools were dropped.

The doctor took a deep breath before yelling to Michael.

“It’s done! I’ll leave the rest to you, boy!”

“Yes!”

As Michael answered the doctor, his hands were already over the incision.

His eyes, glaring sharply at his hands, were filled with an unyielding will. Sweat started popping up on his forehead. It was apparent this took a lot of concentration. Right in front of me, his eyes turned from black to a mixture of blue and green. It was not bright like Lutz’s or Theo’s but instead was rather complex and beautiful, like a clear, deep lake.

Michael’s hands were now emitting a warm light. The soft glow brightly illuminated the surroundings and painted shadows on his delicate face.

It took some time before Klaus showed any signs of change.

His stiff body started to relax, the fingers that gripped the sheets loosened, and the veins that throbbed on his hands faded.

It’s good that you’re feeling better.

But after I saw his complexion, I realised it was still too early to judge.

Klaus’ brows no longer had wrinkles between them. Instead of feeling relieved, it made me even more uneasy. He looked

too relaxed, like a doll without life.

My uneasiness didn’t subside and Klaus’ back muscles began contracting

uncontrollably.

I felt his back with my hand. It was ice cold. The terror I felt then made me want to scream.

I could hear Death's shallow footsteps approaching.

"K...Klaus!!"

I cried out as loud as I could to shake off my fears.

"I won't forgive you! If you die without my permission, I will never forgive you!"

My voice was shaken as my body quivered. But I continued my cries regardless.

"Aren't you my escort?! How dare you die at a place like this?! How irresponsible can you get!?!"

I wanted to slap myself for saying that.

He had protected me countless times already. He had also worked his hardest and fulfilled his duties.

I was the one who was irresponsible. I had wanted to go to a dangerous place like this, and yet I still had the audacity to depend on others to protect me when I couldn't even protect myself.

Hey, Klaus. I wonder if I shouldn't have asked you to come with me.

Or if I shouldn't have gone on a journey in the first place.

I thought that a powerless girl like me could change the world. And now you were paying the price for my arrogance.

My large teardrops fell onto the back of Klaus' hand. They mixed with the dried blood and traveled down to the sheets, creating a thin, red line.

"Klaus... Hey, Klaus!"

If you die now, how will I ever repay you?

I rejected your advances to close our distance many times.

Whether it be your love or your obstinate loyalty, I had never tried to

understand you better.

No matter how much time passed, you were always an awkward and troublesome escort.

Since the time we first met, nothing had changed. No. I had *thought* that nothing had changed.

I relied on you.

Even when I thought that I hated it, or when I thought that it was troublesome, I still relied on you.

Thinking about it, you were just like a real brother to me.

“E-Even if you die, I will go on without you! And if you die, I will leave you right here! Got that?!”

Thinking back, I was just spouting nonsense.

I was throwing a tantrum like a child. Even a five year-old probably had a better vocabulary than I did.

What I said was hideous, but I couldn't stop myself. Silence was more terrifying than anything.

“You won't be able to go back to Nabel... You don't even know anyone here! When you die, no one will come to bury you!... And my escort will be someone else! Is that alright with you?!”

My voice was truly shaken.

It became hard to make out what I was saying. It didn't make much sense in the first place. It was nothing but hysteria.

Still, it reached him.

There was only one person I wished my voice could reach right at that moment.

“That would be... a problem.”

“!?”

I couldn't comprehend what was happening.

First I thought something was wrong with my ears, then I doubted my eyes.

The hand that I was holding moved slightly. Those hands that lost their strength and temperature took hold of my hands. I could not express in words how much it surprised me.

As I watched Klaus speechlessly, his eyelids slowly opened.

Those emerald eyes didn't focus at first but they began to gradually start moving.

His eyes surveyed the room left and right before finally landing on my figure, and they gently stared up at me.

“Rosemary-sama.”

“...”

Hic

My lips trembled. I wanted to call out to him but the words were stuck at the back of my throat. I wanted to know that this was not a dream. I stared at him, but I couldn't see very well. My eyes were blurred by tears, and my vision was distorted. It seemed I couldn't rely on my eyes either. Why was I so useless at times like this?

A teardrop flowed down my face. My throat was sore and my ears muffled.

“Ah, please don't cry. I can't move my body.”

Klaus was troubled and muttered softly.

“I can't wipe your tears like this.”

What was he talking about?

He's not going to do something stupid like that. I won't allow it.

And I won't thank him either.

Klaus, who then decided to be a little mean to me, closed his eyes and laughed.

Chapter 86: The Reincarnated Princess'

Astonishment

“ ... ”

I slowly gathered my consciousness.

An unfamiliar ceiling appeared in my blurry vision as I gradually woke up. It was completely different compared to the grand ivy carvings of the castle ceiling I was used to. Instead, simple beams adorned the flat ceiling of the room.

Where am I?

My mind posed a curious question. My eyes were better now, but my head still didn't work properly. For a short while, I daydreamed without purpose until my brain decided to function again. I then remembered my escort's pale, faded complexion.

“Klaus!....Ow...?!”

A dull pain hit my head when I tried to get up.

This is... probably *that*

. A migraine from when you had either slept for too long or woke up halfway through your sleep.

Holding my forehead with the tips of my fingers, I waited for the agonising pain to pass and breathed a sigh of relief.

“If it's Klaus you're thinking of, he's fine. Don't worry.”

A voice came as soon as the pain had subsided. I scanned the room but saw no one.

Over here.'

I looked out the window towards the direction of the voice and saw a hand waving from outside. I got up from the sofa and approached the window sill.

When I peeked outside, I was greeted by a pair of honey-coloured eyes

belonging to a young man. He was sitting on the ground while staring at the sea with his back leaned against the outer wall.

“Wolf.”

“Morning. Seems you’re having trouble getting up.”

As he laughed out loud, I could see the hidden fatigue on his face.

“Did I pass out?”

“Don’t you remember what happened?”

“Err... Just a bit... Here and there...”

I tried to recall my memories while trying to talk, which resulted in a jumble of nonsense.

After Klaus regained consciousness, I had then laid down from exhaustion. I couldn’t remember if I had passed out after that.

According to Wolf, I stepped outside for a drink and then felt a terrible headache. When that happened, he carried me to another room and I ended up sleeping on the sofa.

“You slept for so long. Everyone was worried, you know?”

“I have nothing to say to that...”

I hung my head in shame.

Although he was concentrating on treating Klaus, there were still many others who were injured. He probably treated them too while I slept through it all. I wish I could disappear. Rather, can someone please take me away from here right now?

“What are you feeling down for?”

“Because I haven’t done anything to help. I’ve been saved many times and yet I didn’t even say thank you.”

The doctor and Michael saved Klaus’ life. Not only that, but the people who brought Michael to us, Georg and Miss Bianca, also helped greatly. Mia and Flora did their parts as well.

“You definitely said thanks to that young magician of yours.”

“Eh?”

“You grabbed that young man’s arm and repeatedly cried ‘Thank you! Thank you!’ over and over again.”

Through his words, I remembered more of that night.

The gentlemanly Michael offered to help me up on my feet. However, I instead grabbed his arm and repeated words of gratitude many times like a broken record player. I remembered how his black eyes started to well up. What was I doing, making my benefactor cry?

“You also cried out ‘Thank you very much!’ to anyone passing by when I carried you.”

Was I drunk?! I can’t accept that harsh reality!

If that was true, haven’t I dug my own grave?!

“It was pretty interesting. All the crewmembers were baffled. It was such a shameful sight that I couldn’t even bear to look. Even that handsome-looking acquaintance of yours was bright red, you know?”

“Please stop. I will die from embarrassment at this rate.”

I covered my beet red face with my hands.

A hearty laugh roared over my head as Wolf bent down closer.

“I knew it. You feel nothing like a princess.”

He said in a firm voice.

Peeking from between my fingers, Wolf’s soft eyes stared back at me with a kind expression.

Towards his affectionate gaze, my body turned stiff from its charm.

I slowly lowered my hands and opened my mouth.

“Wolf.”

“Hm?”

“Thank you very much!”

I dropped my line of sight from Wolf as I sat down on the carpet with my back straight. Bending over slightly, I stretched out my hands on the floor in front of my knees and formed a triangle with my fingertips. As I deeply brought down my head, Wolf cried out in a panic.

“Oi! Mary! What the heck are you doing?!”

“Thanking you.”

“I can tell just by looking! But that’s not the point! You’re a princess! How can you lower your head to a mere apothecary like me?!”

“It doesn’t matter whether if I’m a princess or if you’re an apothecary, you have my gratitude. Besides, we’re not in public. It’s just the two of us right now.”

“Even if you say that-!”

“The miracle clan, Kua.”

“!!”

Wolf’s eyes opened wide in surprise to my words.

“I heard that you’re from a mysterious clan that rarely gets involved with the outside world. Wouldn’t it make things difficult for you if you revealed your identity?”

A clan that didn’t work for anyone despite having a vast knowledge of medicine and technology. It seemed my journey will be much harder than I first imagined.

Anyone can learn and inherit knowledge if they were enthusiastic enough. But for any further development, money was key. However, the clan didn’t seek out business or sponsors, nor did they raise the price of their drugs. After thinking up to this point, I still couldn’t come up with a good reason to explain why they chose to be so elusive.

Besides, even if the clan refused service, a man of powerful status wouldn’t give up so easily. Those sorts of influential people tended to be more stubborn than the average person, especially when it came to protecting their pride and honour. There will be someone out there whose intention is to monopolise the

clan's immense knowledge and skills.

I believed that the Kua Clan had more reasons for keeping its whereabouts secrets other than cultural traditions.

“You could have kept your identity a secret, and you were also well-aware of the risks that came with exposing it. Yet, you still chose to save Klaus. For that, you have my sincere gratitude for saving my precious escort.”

I lowered my head one more time.

Silence fell upon the room. Only the sound of the distant sea waves echoed in my ears. What finally broke the gentle calm was a long, long sigh.

“...?”

Was he surprised? I raised my face up a little to confirm the situation and noticed that Wolf had also bowed his head towards me.

“Wolf?”

“Stop it. I'm not a man that deserves your gratitude.”

Wolf raised his face back up as he spat out those words bitterly. The lingering sharpness had a hint of self-loathing mixed within.

“Whether it was the servant girl who collapsed or the sailor that was injured, I was the one who forced them all on you, remember?”

“That couldn't be helped because you were trying to hide your identity. If I hadn't pulled through, you were going to treat them yourself anyway, am I right?”

It was certainly true that Wolf entrusted me to treat Mia and Kurt. But if I had refused, he would have taken over immediately. I believe this to be a fact, and not mere speculation.

“I was using you! Don't you get it?!”

“Me?”

Listening to his words, my eyes widened in surprise.

But why?

A simple question came to mind. I wonder what he had to gain by doing something like that. As if he was reading my mind, Wolf spoke further.

“I dropped by Nabel to meet the rumoured Goddess.”

Apparently, Wolf had been gathering up information at the harbour for a while. He heard that a ship, the

Julius zu Eigel

, was departing in the name of the previous Marquis Eigel’s second son. He also heard that the Marquis was related to the Goddess in question and that she was aboard the ship.

“I was on a return journey back home anyway. When I heard that the Goddess was going to be on board, I thought of how lucky I was. Well, I found out the truth soon after though.”

After Wolf realised that Flora wasn’t the real Goddess of the rumours, he had decided to go on a different journey. However, he met me in the ship’s kitchen first.

“My hair colour should have been different then.”

“That’s right, but I was still curious. Besides, it doesn’t matter much if you’re the Goddess or not, because the thing I’m trying to find is not just the Goddess herself.”

Something else he wanted to find?

When I probed him further with my eyes, for some reason, Wolf’s facial expression became sour. Since he always had a reliable look on his face, the sour expression made him look like a child being scolded.

I didn’t want to ask him directly, so I rephrased my question.

“...Was I able to fulfill your expectations?”

I asked with a smile, half expecting him to respond with

‘*Don’t be silly.*’ like usual.

But instead, his facial expression became even more clouded. With an exhausted look, Wolf brushed away his bangs and scoffed.

“Not exactly. Are you serious? Why did you have to be a princess? It’s good and all to have power, but I wished you had been born with a lower social status.”

At first glance, it sounded like something out of Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet. However, it didn’t sound like he was speaking to a lover. I felt as if I was being blamed for some reason.

“If you’re a princess then act like a princess. Be more honourable. If you had been a spoiled brat, ignorant, vulnerable, and arrogant... then I would’ve tried to find someone else. I’ve always believed that anyone with power wouldn’t have much good in them.”

“Wolf...?”

I didn’t know what he was talking about.

Wolf stared at me, but I was still confused.

“...Hey, Mary.”

His large hand extended and grabbed my arm.

At this point, my confusion turned into bewilderment.

“Do you know what will happen to you after this?”

“Well, since I’ve exposed myself as a princess, I would probably be taken to Flamme’s Royal Palace. After that, I would likely be deported back to Nabel.”

The royalties of Flamme would practically be saying

‘We’ve taken care of our guest before sending them back home’

by doing so.

Even though I’ve finally met someone from the Kua Clan, I lost the chance for any meaningful negotiations. Furthermore, since Wolf’s identity had been exposed, it would be impossible to keep him by my side any longer.

I would return home without having achieved anything.

“Just to be sure, can you come back?”

“I don’t think so... Even getting out of the castle will be quite a task.”

'I don't think Father would give this failure of a daughter another chance to redeem herself.'

I muttered ruefully with a smile. Wolf then breathed out another long sigh and turned towards me, his expression surprisingly serious.

“Very well... Then it can't be helped.”

“Eh...? W-Wait!”

My field of view was suddenly reversed. My line of sight that stared up at the sky through the window was now gazing at the ground.

Wolf picked me up and carried me on his shoulder. He grabbed my luggage that I had set aside and pulled a cloak over me.

We disappeared into a back door.

Wolf descended down the flight of stairs without any hesitation.

“Eh?! What's this?! What are you doing?!”

Why am I being carried?!

Besides, where are we even going?!?

Confused, I looked to Wolf for answers, but he covered my eyes instead.

“Would you mind being kidnapped by me for a little while?”

“...Huh?”

A bewildered cry escaped my mouth.

What was this guy saying?

Chapter 87: A Young Lady's Recollection

*Bianca's point of view.

The house had been bustling, but now it was quiet, as if the liveliness from earlier was a lie.

The treated and the sick were all resting peacefully together. Several crewmembers went out drinking with some nobles and were living their lives in the city.

Though I felt tired, I wasn't that keen on sleeping just yet.

I rinsed my face and wandered about inside the house, and before I knew it, I had arrived at a certain room.

"..."

I finally knocked on the door after a short hesitation.

A humble voice replied from within the room shortly after.

I rested my hand on the door knob, but I couldn't turn it. It wasn't because it was rusted, but because of my own weakness. After taking a deep breath, I poured my strength into it and the door opened with a creak.

The man who was recently on the verge of death was peacefully sleeping in the creased bed. A young figure on a chair sat by his bedside with a thick book on his knees. Perhaps that's his way to pass the time.

The young man raised his face and called out to me with a steady voice.

"Sister."

"Can I talk to you for a minute?"

I asked after a short silence. My brother, Michael von Diebold, returned a humble smile.

I entered and closed the door behind me. Michael gave me a troubled look when I sat down at the end of the bed.

"Sis."

The voice was a bit cramped this time. I responded with a hand gesture.

“It’s fine. He’s not going wake up that easily.”

That guy was drained at the end of the day, in both the mental and physical sense. I would be surprised if he even wakes up today.

Whether I had convinced Michael or not, I didn’t bother to find out.

Looking at Michael’s face, a complicated feeling welled up inside me. Was he happy? Was he lonely? I couldn’t tell.

Back then, he used to grow his hair long enough to cover his face, as if hiding behind it. Now, that frightened gaze of his had completely disappeared. Those dark azure eyes were now filled with gentle compassion.

“You’ve grown quite a bit.”

I said. Michael acknowledged my words with a bitter smile.

“That’s not true. I haven’t changed at all.”

After hearing his reply I answered him with my own wry smile.

You have changed. Tremendously.

You’ve started to voice your opinions more often while even making eye contact. Don’t you realise it?

Michael was different now. Not only on the outside, but on the inside as well.

But let’s not dwindle too much into it. Because there’s the other half of me that didn’t want to admit to the change. I didn’t like the thought that he was turning into someone else I didn’t know. It was an unreasonable feeling, like I was a child throwing a fit.

“Let me say this again; it has been a long time, Michael.”

“Yes. It’s been a while, sis. I’m sorry we couldn’t meet more often.”

“Having such a heartless brother makes me sad, you know?”

Teasing him a little, Michael returned a troubled face.

Ever since Michael ran away from home, he had never gone back even once. It all started after he had earned an apprenticeship to become a priest of the

Great Temple.

After that, he became an apprentice magician in the castle. I understood that because of his position, there would be various restrictions on him to a certain degree. It wouldn't be out of the question if he wasn't allowed to come home. However, when he was still being taught under the Great Temple, he definitely still had the time to visit at least once a year. Simply put, Michael didn't want to return home.

I understood that it couldn't be helped.

After all, my parents didn't have any room for Michael in their hearts.

Children with innate magical powers were often dismissed by their own parents.

Although our parents didn't neglect him completely, they weren't attentive either. Ultimately, it wasn't a simple situation.

Our father had a mistress.

It was not just messing around either. They were in love since they were little. If given the chance, he would have married her, and not Mother.

That mistress lived under the same roof as Father. She was the perfect image of an innocent girl, loved by father and everyone around her.

Mother, however, didn't live in the Diebold household.

Her strength dwindled day by day. She was jealous of the mistress and had kept her feelings bottled up inside to breaking point. In the end, her mind finally gave in.

A handful of maids were assigned to look after her in her bedridden condition. She had to survive day after day in that bedroom, forbidden to go anywhere else. But a turning point came. My mother became pregnant.

The mistress had a son. Although my Mother was the lawful wife, she didn't have any son of her own. Because of that, the mistress' son was adopted by the household, but he was still a bastard child. Many of Father's relatives raised an eyebrow when the mistress' child was welcomed as the official heir and eldest son.

Several of Father's acquaintances distanced themselves from the family and he became restless because of it.

And in the midst of all that came Mother's pregnancy.

Father now cared for her once again.

Even though she gave birth to the baby girl that was me, Father came back to attend to Mother. No, that's not the right way to put it. It was as if Mother had become the lawful wife she was supposed to be.

Michael was born the following year. To this long-awaited eldest son, everyone was happy, especially my Father.

It was probably Mother's happiest moments.

But that happiness didn't last long.

The mistress who was robbed of her lover became full of sorrow and began to suffer. Since Father couldn't ignore his first love, he went back to attend to the mistress.

Mother knew all too well what he was doing, but despite that, she often appeared to be in a good mood. I hated the fact that Father was jumping back and forth between the two. Maybe the reason why I dislike men was caused by my childhood experiences with Father.

I decided that I would protect Mother and my brother in Father's stead.

Especially my little brother. In my eyes, he was adorable.

Mother often slept for long periods of time, so it was just me and Michael that kept each other company.

That's when I first noticed his ability.

It happened during the spring when I was just six years old.

I was playing in the garden when I got pricked by a thorn on the roses. As blood dripped from my finger, it was not me but Michael who started crying.

Michael wrapped his hand around mine and whispered

'Pain go away.'

repeatedly. I thought it was the cutest thing in the world. I was so happy.

I was about to say *'It's healed!'*

just to make him smile, but I never got the chance.

There was no wound.

Blood trails were still there, but the wound had disappeared without a trace.

I couldn't understand what I was seeing and thought it was a different finger.

But when I examined the other fingers, there was still no wound.

A throbbing wound just suddenly disappeared. Even a child would know it was something abnormal.

I asked Michael if he was the one who did it.

We tried again. This time I pricked myself with a thorn on another finger and he cured the injury in an instant. I definitely didn't misunderstand.

I hugged Michael who had an anxious expression and thanked him with a smile. After that, I had him promise me not to use his powers in public.

In the next few years to come, Michael's abilities were never discovered.

He was trying desperately to mediate between Father and Mother. They often fought with each other. He probably thought that he was the only one who could take care of this broken couple.

He started awkward conversations and constantly retained a fake smile. For Michael who was an introvert, it must have taken a lot of effort.

During this time, Mother, like me, got pricked by a thorn in the garden.

I couldn't blame Michael for what he did.

He probably wanted them to smile again.

He thought Father and Mother would also smile at him like I did when he healed me.

But after he cured her finger, what he got instead was dreaded fear and sickening hatred.

Father branded him as a monster and swore that Michael could not have

been his son.

He blamed Mother for having raised a demon.

Mother was frightened of Michael and fled the room.

She was already weak. After she went mad, she cried herself to death.

Michael who was left behind blamed himself for what had happened.

A young child was prostrating in front of me while his head rubbed the floor. He vehemently apologised for killing Mother and taking Father away.

It was not Michael's fault. How could such a gentle child commit such heinous crimes?

He only wanted everyone to laugh. He only wished for gratitude in return.

But no matter how many times I told him that it was not his fault, he never took my words to heart.

Michael gradually withdrew from society. He grew bangs to hide behind and started walking with his back arched forward. He rarely left his room and never spoke with any of the servants. I was the only one he would still talk to.

At the time, Father only cared about his reputation and would never let us out of the house.

He would also never approach us. I wasn't even allowed a private tutor. Thanks to him, even though I am a noble, I grew up lacking in key areas. But I didn't care about that.

I wanted to run away from home.

I didn't have any plans to get married. I thought that maybe I'll become a nun.

I was shocked when Michael ran away from home without telling me, but I was glad he did anyway.

Especially right now, as I looked at him, I was sure he made the right choice.

"Hey, Michael."

"Hm? What's wrong?"

"Do you regret it?"

'About what?' wasn't a reply that came back.

But I was sure the meaning of the question was conveyed over to him.

Michael used his ability to save Klaus.

It was the magic he had kept hidden all this time. The traumatic powers that broke our entire family apart.

An enormous amount of guilt would definitely come with using such powers.

The wound from when he was branded a monster by his own parents surely ran deep.

But even so, Michael laughed out loud. With his gentle eyes, he continued to laugh ceaselessly.

"Sis, have you been talking with the princess?"

Hey, Michael.

How long has it been since you were able to laugh like this?

Chapter 88: A Young Lady's Recollection (2)

*Continued Bianca von Diebold's point of view.

"...Of course. I get along well with Mary, you know?" I said teasingly.

There was a slight hesitation because I couldn't relate

'princess' to the girl I spent time with on the ship.

Mary was smart and mature, but she also had a cute side suitable for someone her age. She was easy to talk to. Even if you say she's a princess, I for one couldn't see it.

"Is that so."

"That's right. How could I ever let go of someone *that cute.*"

"You totally dote on the Princess, don't you." *Kukuku.* Michael let out a stifled laugh.

"I thought she was a princess straight out of a book."

While I doubted myself for possibly exaggerating, it wasn't entirely untrue either. Sometimes, what I felt was even stranger than those fairy tales.

"And it's not only her appearance that's beautiful. She's also kindhearted on the inside too. I was surprised. On top of being a brilliant girl, she is not haughty nor arrogant at all."

"Yeah. The princess is amazing. She doesn't admit it, but she really is," Michael said.

I thought that was a funny way of putting it, but I knew what he meant. Mary didn't look down on anyone. She treated them all equally with sincerity but would not hesitate to protect them using her own status. If you lined up her actions together, they would seem rather inconsistent.

"She worked her hardest to help us, and not once did she utter the word *'royalty'*. A girl younger than me was doing that so naturally, as if she was just breathing. I honestly thought it was amazing, but at the same time, I felt

ashamed of myself,” Michael frowned as if he had swallowed something bitter.

I didn't know if I should call out to him.

“Michael...”

“I have a power that no one else has. It's limited and difficult to use, but it has the potential to save someone. However, to me, this power is nothing but a curse,” Michael dropped his gaze and clasped his hands together.

“Even if I helped anyone, they would surely reject me. Even if I healed them, they would be angry. ‘

Get away from us. We don't want to be touched by a monster.

’ If that's the case, then I won't use it. I told myself that I could still help people even without these abilities.”

I couldn't blame him for being scared.

The Kingdom of Nabel didn't look well upon those who were born with magical powers. They were immediately branded as heretics. It is a human instinct to fear the unknown and avoid potential danger, so it was simply impossible for others to come to terms with magicians through words alone.

Of all the people Michael had saved, I couldn't imagine anyone that would express any gratitude towards him. No, rather, there were probably many that feared him instead.

“But all that was a lie. I averted my eyes from it all. I turned my eyes away and denied lives that could've been saved.”

“That's not...!”

‘That's not true!’

I wanted to say, but somehow those words were stuck in my throat. Michael kept his head down and slowly shook his head.

“Of course it is. Those who caught a cold and died, those that were injured and lost their lives; all those people all over the world. I could've saved them.”

“You can't save everyone! This is reality, not an ideal world!”

“I know. But those words can only be said by people who had actually put in

the effort.”

“But...”

“At least, it’s not something someone like me who closes his eyes and waits for everything to resolve itself could say. Also, the princess would never give up and accept that kind of failure. Even if she didn’t know that she could be rescued, even in the face of danger, the words

‘It couldn’t be helped.’ would never escape her lips.”

Michael finally raised his face. His eyes were like a calm lake without wind. While looking at him, I remembered a girl who once gave the same look. Mary didn’t lose determination when she was attacked, nor when her life was in danger. She overcame her fears, clenched her teeth and stood up for herself.

This is a rhetorical question, but what would Mary have done if Klaus weren’t saved?

Would she say that *‘It couldn’t be helped?’* What if someone were to tell her to differentiate between ideals and reality? No, if someone said that to her, she would have never accepted it in her lifetime.

She won’t stop and think that she had done all she could. I was sure she would go as far as blaming everything on herself and herself alone.

“Truthfully, there’s no one out there who is prepared for everything. Even if the outcome isn’t what I wanted, or even if I don’t get any rewards out of it, I will still try my hardest. It seems that I finally understand now,” Michael gently whispered.

“I’ve decided that no matter how many times I get rejected, or how much I’m hated, I will keep moving forward. I tumble and fall because I’m weak... but those mistakes also brought me so much happiness.”

Up to this point, Michael relaxed a little to stifle the stressed atmosphere. His cheeks were dyed a faint red from genuine happiness.

“I befriended my teacher. Mrs. Irene the Royal Head Magician is strict on the surface, but deep down she is extremely kind. She’s always worried for me. Speaking of friends... Although he knew of my powers, Georg didn’t shun me out nor did he hate me. I guess that’s just who he is. I have never shown them

my powers, but I'm sure they will accept me without a doubt."

"Is that so..." I got caught up in his speech and started to laugh.

The idea of my cute little brother being independent is depressing, but I was more than happy. Even if I wasn't around, this boy wouldn't be alone anymore. I wouldn't be lying if I said I was proud of him.

"I think I have been looking at the world through a twisted perspective. There are many scary things in this world, but there are also as many good things. Some people will accept me and some will not, and that's okay. If someone were to reject me, I would be able to understand why...that's what I... believed..."

Michael's shaken voice finally broke its composure. Large droplets fell from his indigo eyes like twilight rain. It didn't stop and kept pouring out of him. For some reason, Michael covered his face with both of his hands and curled up into a ball with his face resting on his knees.

"Michael?"

I hurriedly dropped down from the bed and rushed over to him. The mattress bounced and shook Klaus, but I didn't care about that. Once I stood in front of him, I grabbed both of his shoulders and stared straight into his face. I couldn't see the expression hidden behind his hands. However, the droplets that escaped through his fingers clearly conveyed his feelings.

"Michael..."

"I'm... a-alright..."

"...?"

I couldn't make out his voice because it was filled to the brim with emotion. Before I could ask him to repeat himself, Michael raised his face.

"...!"

It caught me by surprise. I thought that he would be hiding a sad, clouded face under a pained smile.

On the contrary, Michael gave a blissful laugh.

The corners of his mouth loosened as his cheeks were dyed an even deeper red. He was laughing as if to show how *glad* he was.

“She said ‘*Thank you.*’

” Michael uttered joyfully, his face like that of a child who had found their beloved treasure. “

‘Thank you for saving someone dear to me, Michael.’

The princess grabbed my hands and said her thanks with tears down her face.”

Ah, Michael was gratified. I finally understood.

That day, the child who Father shunned and frightened Mother finally got the words he had always yearned for. What Michael had always wanted was not praise nor respect. Neither was it position and honour, much less money. Just a single phrase; ‘

Thank you’ was enough.

“...That’s good. I’m happy for you, Michael.” I wrapped my arms around him as he sat on the chair.

A grin naturally found its way on my lips. My heart was filled with joy, not sadness, and the blurred loneliness I had before happily melted away. Everything was going to be alright.

“Yes, sis. I’m glad I have these abilities.”

“I see.”

The crying Michael that hid behind me all the time was long gone. He was walking his own path now, filled with determination. Steadily advancing step by step on a journey where he would meet many more people that were dear to him.

“You’ll be fine without your sister, won’t you?”

“...Sis?”

Michael wanted to raise his head, but I held him down with my arms. I didn't want him to see my face.

"I've been a terrible sister. I just hampered on your freedom. I came here to see you, but it'd be hard to pass off my reasons as anything else but my own selfishness."

I shouldn't have doted on him so much and instead should have believed in him.

Finally, I understood.

"I must have been very annoying to you. I'm sorry."

"Sis."

"But I was worried, you know? You are so pure, I didn't want you to be caught up with some weird woman. But it seems that you have a good eye, so it was alright."

"Sis."

"I won't say anything from now on. You are free to do whatever--"

"Sister!"

After he shouted at me, I was forced to separate him from my arms. Before I knew it, Michael had become so strong. The days when I used to protect him had already passed.

I'm happy. You're so reliable. I'm so proud of you, Michael. My precious little brother.

"Sis... please don't cry."

"...Eh?" I let out a startled voice. Michael's hands touched my cheeks and wiped away the droplets that trickled down my face.

It seemed that I was crying. Why, I wonder.

"I've never thought of you as annoying, sis."

"That's right. You've always been so kind."

I curled my lips as I doubted my own words, and Michael became angry.

“No, the kind one isn’t me, but this sister of mine. She hugged her little brother when he cried and always stood by his side. I ask you, sister, why do you want to push me away?”

“Michael?”

“I love you. If it weren’t for you, sis, I would’ve been done in a long time ago. The reason that I’m still here is because you’ve given me so much love, you know?”

I was suddenly hugged by the thin and unreliable body that now belonged to a man.

“Because I love you, I didn’t want to become a burden.”

“Now I’m angry! I’ve never thought of you as a burden! Not even once!” I raised my face towards the words I didn’t want to hear.

As he stared down at me, his face broke into a tender smile.

“Yes, I know. But you know, I want you to be happy. I want you to start thinking about your own happiness instead of worrying for me all the time.”

“...Is that why you ran away without saying anything?”

“If I did, you would’ve tried to stop me.”

When I looked at him with widened eyes, Michael simply returned a wry smile and pulled my head closer to his.

“You know, sis. I can’t walk behind you in your shadow forever. Once you start to look for your own happiness, I promise to be strong enough to see you off on your own journey.”

I wonder why I couldn’t say that I was truly happy. My happiness is to remain your sister. I wanted to stand by your side, along with the person you chose as your partner. If I could hold your child in my arms, then I wouldn’t ask for anything else in the world.

But you said that it would not be my own happiness. You wanted me to find somebody that I thought was just as important as you and hold them dear. Just so that I could broaden my own horizons, right?

You've grown stronger, Michael.

Your sister is lonely, but she's very happy right now.

"Please find someone that will take care of you. If that person is willing to put up with you even after you annoy them so much, then you can have my blessings."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"I will send you off with '*Please take care of my sister*' and a smile to match."

I pinched his red nose.

"That's too cheeky even for my little brother."

If that future is waiting for you, then this pain in my heart will not have been in vain.

I whispered to myself as I shed a tear of laughter together with my precious little brother.

Chapter 89: The Marquis' Son's Fatigue

*Georg zu Eigel's point of view.

In the southwestern region of Flamme lies a small port town called Guarnera. Inside a room of a mansion built atop a hill that faced the coastline, I, Georg zu Eigel, heaved a heavy sigh.

I had just spent the last three hours tediously talking to the representatives of the city and the sailors.

I intended to get this done and over with, but by bringing in commoners who never knew the etiquette for proper discussion, I was forced to be as patient as I could.

They were very adamant to justify themselves denying a royalty from a foreign land.

The villagers tried everything, from implying the fact that the princess trying to help her family was all but an elaborate lie, to ultimately questioning the legitimacy of her

princess claims.

Whether it was an act to gain the upperhand or not, there was a limit to how foolish a person can get. When I challenged them about their rude attitude towards the royalty of another country, their faces turned pale and they finally kept their mouths shut.

It was an easy fight after they had exhausted their assault.

A fast horse was sent to the capital city with reports detailing a docked ship without permit, special measures regarding the emergency situation, safeguarding of the injured and the sick, and finally a request to suppress the pirates.

There were specific orders within the reports to keep the princess' existence quiet.

The report contained nothing but courtesy and the truth of the situation, but because of current diplomatic relations, it would definitely be seen as a threat. Those in the capital that treated the princess unfairly should be having a cold

sweat right now.

Most people that had realise the disadvantages had backed down and kept their objections.

When I threatened the rest with my relationship to the currently flourishing merchant, Julius zu Eigel, they immediately behaved themselves.

“I’m tired...” The small whisper was drowned out by the bustling in the room.

It seemed that no one heard me. Realising that fact, I pulled myself together. Acting so complacent right after negotiations wasn’t something I would allow myself to do. If Uncle Julius saw me just now, he would surely deliver his best sarcastic smile.

I stood up, cleared my throat, and notified the staff that I wished to depart, then left the room.

There was a mountain of things still to be done, but before that I should give Mr. Belmar a quick visit. After that was to find someone to help me with my work and let Michael rest.

When Miss Mary wakes up I’ll have a light meal prepared for her. She can talk after that.

Any talks from now on should be carefully discussed.

Yes, I should tread carefully, I told myself.

I understood that Miss Mary was being held within Flamme and sending her back to Nabel as soon as possible would be the best course of action.

But that’s not my decision to make.

Miss Mary’s objective still eluded me, but I was confident that it wasn’t a whimsical trip to sightsee Flamme. However, before I could ask her anything, I hesitated after seeing her unmitigated resolution.

Even so, I couldn’t overlook the fact that she’s in danger.

I lamented my own indecisiveness and heaved yet another sigh as I dumped those negative thoughts elsewhere.

“Um... Sir Georg?” A high-pitched voice stopped me.

I looked back over my shoulder and there stood a little girl about 12 years of age. With her wavy strawberry blonde hair and grey-blue eyes, I felt like I’d

seen her somewhere before. Since she called out my name, I wouldn't be surprised if she was an acquaintance.

Whether it was thanks to my uncle's training or a talent I had, I could remember faces well. But for some reason, other details tended to slip my mind.

It would be just too rude to ask a lady where we had met, however.

What a troubling situation. I followed my training and laughed with a fake smile.

The girl didn't fall for such cheap tricks, however.

"I'm the eldest daughter of Baron Graz, Flora von Graz. It's a pleasure to meet you." With a wry smile, she bent her knees, pinched the hem of her skirt, and gave her greetings.

Suddenly, I remembered. Her great-grandmother had a close relationship with the Eigel family and there was often a girl around. So the girl I saw about a year ago when I visited her great-grandmother, Mrs. Mehrich, was Miss Flora.

I see. It's not a surprise that I didn't remember her.

She has changed.

While dumbfounded, I muttered those words in my heart.

I was always surrounded by girls her age because of my position as the next heir of the Marquis House and because of Mother's various *encouragements*. But not once had I truly felt happy spending time with any of them.

Every young girl was always shy at first, but do not be fooled, their eyes were that of carnivorous beasts targeting their prey. What's worse was that they feigned innocence on the surface but slaughtered each other when no one was looking. The fight between girls was intense.

Rather than cute, they were terrifying. My uncle on the other hand made sly comments like

'what a pitiful boy' while sighing.

If I were to be blunt, Miss Flora was part of the handful that were proper. I bet husbands whose wives showed clear haughty smiles and spoke

condescendingly would have their fair share of troubles.

But seeing Miss Flora's bitter smile just now didn't make me uncomfortable in the slightest. With her simple green dress on her petite body, she looked just like an ordinary girl.

The look on her face was rather modest, almost as if she had lost all her pride and haughtiness.

As if she was a different person.

When I thought she was gently observing my reactions, her shoulders lightly trembled and she suddenly gave a small laugh.

"Miss Flora? Is there something on my face?"

Her smile deepened. She was looking at me like a compassionate mother watching an infant's blunder.

"No... I just didn't expect that you would be showing such an expression."

"Eh?"

"As if she was a different person."

"!?"

"It's written all over your face." Miss Flora said teasingly as my mouth was wide agape.

I thought my facial expressions were just as tough as an iron mask, but the facade fell so easily. I swore in my uncle's name that I would do extra training when I get home.

"Do you mind if I walk with you for a little while?"

Like a young girl who caught her brother in his *uncool* moments, I had no choice and gave a small nod.

The conversation continued as we walked down the long corridor. There weren't many common topics we could talk about, so we settled with Mrs. Mehrich and my mother's health.

"...And why did you come all the way to Flamme, Miss Flora?"

As the talks died down, I wanted to fill in a new topic.

“That’s...”

However, Miss Flora went quiet.

I had thought she was here for a sightseeing trip, but apparently I was wrong. I had realised my blunder when I saw her face full of sorrow.

When I was pondering of a way to cheer her up, I caught Miss Flora with a smile.

“What about Sir Georg? What brought you all the way here to Flamme?” Miss Flora returned my question and dismissed the awkward atmosphere.

Thank you for your thoughtfulness. I will answer you honestly.

“I came here to find something.”

“A search? Is it for your business-... No, I’m sorry for asking foolish questions.”

Miss Flora recognised she was out of line and withdrew her question.

“No, it’s fine. The thing I’m searching for isn’t for my own sake, so I don’t know much about it.”

“So you travelled to Flamme... All for someone else?”

Once I saw Miss Flora’s surprised expression, I realised that what I did wasn’t normal. Taking the vast effort to travel far away to Flamme for another person wouldn’t be seen as mere goodwill.

If I saw someone else do what I did, I would be shocked as well. Most would have given up already.

But it couldn’t be helped.

After all, I wanted to do something.

“Do you regret your actions?” Miss Flora pushed out those words with a faint, bitter smile. She looked up at my face and shook her head shortly after.

“No, that couldn’t be. You must cherish that person very much, right?”

“!”

“I can tell just by the look on your face.”

I quickly cupped my mouth with my hand.

Although I had noticed that my cheeks had begun to flush, it was still

embarrassing to have other people point it out.

When I remembered *her* crying face, my cheeks unwillingly became hotter. Ugh, now that I think about it, I've been making all sorts of awkward expressions during this entire conversation, haven't I? The fact that I couldn't even hold a conversation with a girl was rather pitiful. With all my stuttering and hesitations, I wondered what Miss Flora's impression of me was. I wish she could forget about it, but that would be too convenient.

"Please don't stare too much." Miss Flora lowered her gaze and spoke in a tiny voice as she smiled.

Her teasing voice was lively, but somehow those grey-blue eyes were filled with loneliness.

"Miss Flora...?"

'Are you alright.'

The words that I was supposed to say were interrupted by a loud noise. It sounded like something made of glass had shattered.

We turned towards where the sound came from.

"I believe the princess is over there..."

"!"

Miss Flora muttered something as she stared at the room at the end of the corridor. I caught on to her words and started running. I reached the door with momentum but stopped myself before I could barge in. A girl's room... Not only that, but I would be entering Her Highness' quarters during the nighttime. It would be beyond rude to intrude. However, this was an emergency.

My hesitation lasted only a few seconds.

"Pardon my intrusion!" I slammed the door open wide.

I had imagined some thug would be raiding the room, but there was no one in sight. Everything was in its place as it should be. The only thing wrong was the shattered glass near the walnut chest that was placed under the window. The wet rug, scattered blue flowers, and pieces of broken pottery told me the

vase was broken. Perhaps it got caught in the fluttering curtains.

I heaved a relieved sigh. But when I looked around the room, something was not right. There was no one here. Not a single soul. Only a thin blanket was covering the sofa where

she was supposed to be sleeping.

“...Miss Mary?” No one responded to my call.

I stood dumbfounded as the cold breeze sent the curtains flying.

Chapter 90: The Reincarnated Princess' Distress (1)

The firewood crackled under the dancing flames.

I gently gazed at the blaze that lit the indoors red. The smell of dust and moisture struck my nose. It had rained some time ago.

The windows and the wooden door were tightly closed shut, making it impossible to see outside. Looking up, I saw some parts of the roof that were thin and dry, perhaps on the verge of collapse. A slight gap allowed me to peek at the dense trees above, but I still couldn't perceive the sky. A bird caught onto a tiny branch, gave a small cry, and adorably tilted its tiny head.

I was stuck in an abandoned house within a forest. If I were to judge it by the exterior alone, I would be surprised that this house was still standing. However, the inside was unexpectedly beautiful. It seemed that the Kua Clan often used this spot for scouting missions.

"Mary." As my name was called out, something was thrust in front of me.

Bread and dried-roasted meat. It smelled nice despite its hard appearance, but nevertheless I hesitated to accept it.

"Aren't you going to eat?" The man that sat next to me gave a curious look as he offered me bread.

For a moment, my mind wandered off as I likened the way he tilted his head to the bird from earlier. Eventually, I accepted his offer. He then gave his usual peculiar laugh.

I wonder if I'm going crazy. No, that couldn't be. There should be no reason for my sanity to be slipping. *Please get a hold of yourself, my common sense. Do not be swayed so easily.*

After saying 'Thanks for the food!' I stuffed my face with bread. It was awfully hard, as expected of preserved meals. I thought my teeth were going to shatter. I bit and tore small bites off the loaf and tried my best to chew. It wasn't that

far off from training my jaw muscles.

“I’m sorry you had to eat a meal like this. If we travel a little further from the village then we can go shopping for proper food.”

He gave a wry smile as he watched me struggle to swallow my own food. I knew there was more to leaving the village behind than just *‘shopping’*. It was to derail any pursuers that may come after me.

The man who swept me away, Wolf, gave a wordless smile as he observed my reactions.

Though, he raised his brows as if he was deeply troubled.

There were a lot of things I wanted to say, but how could I say them after seeing such a face? I was at a loss for words. In the first place, why did he even kidnap me?

There was no way he would do this for money. That wouldn’t even be a good guess in the first place considering Wolf’s personality. Besides, the success rate would be very low. Because I am a princess, the risks would be too high to ask for a simple ransom.

That said, I wasn’t valuing myself too highly either. I had the knowledge from the game, and although it was possible to predict certain events, only Sir Leonhart knew about it. Not only that, but there were now clear gaps in the current world and the original setting of the game. Right now, my information would not be very helpful.

Another possibility was to stir the violent conflict between the surrounding countries. For a long while, Raptor had harboured malicious intentions to undermine the relationship between Flamme and Nabel. But since Wolf was a member of the lordless Kua Clan, I highly doubted that this was the case.

I couldn’t come up with a good reason at all...

It’d be easier to guess his motives if my disguise was true; a rich daughter from a merchant house. That would’ve been plenty incentive for kidnapping. It’d be much more of a hassle to abduct a princess compared to that.

“Mary.” I raised my face as he called me.

Thud!

My forehead received a light finger flick, right between the eyebrows.

“Stop frowning already. You’re ruining your cute face.” He whispered under his laughter.

I groaned in pain while rubbing where the attack landed.

“...And whose fault is that?” While holding my forehead, I begrudgingly glared at him.

“Mine, obviously.”

I was forced to swallow my own words due to his unexpected reply. After a few moments of hesitation, I asked the burning question that had been stuck in my mind.

“...Why did you go about and kidnap me? I’m a full-fledged princess, you know?” I couldn’t believe it, but to my surprise, Wolf turned his gaze away.

“I knew that.”

“Then why!? You do realise that you won’t get away with ‘*It’s just a little prank*’ as an excuse, right!?”

“Worst-case scenario, they would probably cut off my head.”

It was so vexing to me that he could spat out those things so nonchalantly.

If you knew that, then why on earth did you abduct me?

The Kua Clan, including Wolf himself, were society’s valuable treasures. They were hard-working individuals, complemented by their vast understanding of medicine that had the potential to save countless lives. There was no way I could let him die a worthless death.

“You didn’t put up much of a fight, am I right? I couldn’t have escaped with you if someone had known what I was up to. But since you didn’t want me to dirty my hands, we got out unnoticed. You’re quite the kind person.”

I bit my lip to the words that I didn’t want to hear.

When I was being carried out of town and into the forests, there were many

chances that I could have called out and gotten help, but it would have meant that I recognised my position as being 'abducted'. I didn't want Wolf to become a *criminal*, so I told myself to stay put.

By doing so, I knew I have worried many and caused them much trouble, but I couldn't make a decision. I was still an indecisive child, even after all I had been through.

"We can still make it back in time. Please listen to me before it's too late." Once I declared so, his eyes widened in surprise.

He gave an exhausted frown before slapping his cheeks with his hands. Then, he looked at me like he was looking at a misbehaving child and smiled lightly.

"No can do. If I give up that easily, I wouldn't be kidnapping a princess in the first place."

"Why!? I'll have you know that I'm not worth a damn! I'm just a girl whose real use is to brag about her royal blood!"

"Of course you have your worth."

I wanted to retort but stopped myself after I saw the serious look on his face.

"A worth so immense that you yourself don't even realise."

His eyes were terrifying. They were the kind that could see right through a person. At that breathtaking sight, I was at a loss for words once again.

Pochi

Raindrops carried by the wind slipped through the gaps in the roof and fell to the floor. Only the rainfall and crackling firewood could be heard in this quiet room.

"There are countless privileged people in this world. Most of them always stuck their heads in their own interests, though they are not bad people per se. But, unlike you, the rich that would risk their lives to save their own people are, in any case, few and far between. In fact, I do not know of such a fool except you."

"...A fool?" I murmured miserably.

I knew that he was right and couldn't counter his words. Perhaps he meant it as a compliment. No, I was probably hearing things after all.

I felt a chill crawled up my spine.

It wasn't your normal discomfort. I think I was uneasy from the fact that I couldn't live up to everyone's expectations, let alone my own.

I might not know what Wolf was asking of me, but I felt that behind his words, there was a wish that he needed to fulfil. My thoughts were being tied down by his hopes, like an iron ball strapped to my ankle.

"You give me too much credit. There are a lot more wonderful people other than myself."

"Then tell me, how many royals would be desperate for their subordinates? How many can truly lower their heads towards commoners?"

"Wolf..."

He grabbed my hand and faced me head on.

With a grip that wouldn't let me escape, he locked his gaze onto mine.

"You ought to learn of your own true worth."

"..."

My voice trembled along with my body.

I couldn't breathe very well and became slightly light-headed. Even then, he still tried to speak to me, knowing full well that I couldn't run away from him.

"Mary, I..."

But he suddenly stopped.

After a fleeting silence, he rushed himself away from me.

Something struck the ground where Wolf's body was just a few moments ago. It was a long and thin knife.

"A hidden weapon...!"

Wolf clicked his tongue and pulled out a knife from his waist belt.

I was left confused as I heard the sound of birds flying away in the distance.

Chapter 91: The Reincarnated Princess' Distress (2)

I hazily stared at the ceiling and froze on the spot. More precisely, I couldn't move. All I could think of was the fear of getting

impaled

by a knife that flew through the air. So I simply sat motionless and refused to stand.

The rain sparsely fell apart into tiny droplets and hit my face along my line of sight.

"Get down."

Wolf ordered in a hushed voice.

I stuffed the bread away and crawled towards one of the walls. While being wary of his surroundings, Wolf pulled out yet another knife. With two knives in hand, he glared steadily at the ceiling.

I had goosebumps from the lingering tension in the air.

Everything was silent. Only the howling gusts of wind and fluttering tree branches could be heard. But there was a constant thumping in my ear, ever increasing in loudness, getting faster and faster. It wouldn't go away even when I shut my ears. Then I realised it was my own heartbeat, loud enough to be heard through my own rough breathing.

I'm scared. I'm so scared. No... No more!

Pathetic pleas and desperate whining filled my head. From the pirates raiding the ship to this, it's been one predicament after another. I was at my limit.

"!"

My fleeting consciousness picked up a soft sound.

Wolf and I watched as a small nut rolled onto the floor.

fuuu

We both let out a sigh of relief.

At that moment, the doors and windows were blown off their hinges with a

loud bang.

“Wah!?” I leaked a scream.

The wooden door was obliterated by a force from outside, turning it into splinters that littered the floor. Without a moment to spare, yet another thin knife came flying in. Wolf was too slow to react and received a shallow cut, barely avoiding the knife. Soon after, he lost his footing.

A man rushed through the opening and came inside the room. He gracefully landed, his hood and long coat fluttering in the wind.

The man shortened the distance without a single wasteful movement and kicked away one of Wolf’s knives. Wolf tried slashing with the other but the intruder avoided it by a hair’s breadth.

Wolf was at a disadvantage so he took some steps back and retreated a safe distance.

“That getup... I think I’ve seen you on the ship before, or is it my imagination?” Wolf spat out. There was no answer.

The intruder didn’t seem to be shaken, but instead it was me who was confused.

What do you mean you saw him on the ship before?

Was the intruder on the same ship as us?

I caught a glimpse of the man in a corner of my memory. I felt like I had seen him somewhere before but my fuzzy head couldn’t make out anything.

Perhaps he had always watched us... Or rather,

aimed for us.

But aim at who? Wolf or me?

And why did he come for the kill now of all times?

On the ship, Klaus was always with me, but even then I thought there were many chances to strike. Back when the pirates were attacking the ship, he could have just conveniently faked an *accident*.

So why now?

As I was contemplating my life, the fight continued.

A larger knife swung against a darker, slender one. I had imagined that Wolf would have the upper hand for close combat, but it was regrettably an even fight.

Wolf clicked his tongue in irritation and thrust his knife at the intruder's face. But he only managed to snag the hood as the intruder evaded the attack and in turn grabbed Wolf's arm. Wolf's stomach then received a heavy knee kick.

"Kuh-!" A grunt escaped Wolf's lips.

The intruder twisted Wolf's arm and knocked the knife out of his hand. He pushed Wolf down with ease and pressed his slender knife against Wolf's neck.

"..."

Checkmate. The fight was over.

Wolf was a member of the Kua Clan, a clan of pharmacists, not a mercenary nor a knight. But since he survived the pirate onslaught, I didn't consider him to be weak. However, he didn't even scratch the intruder, let alone disturb his breathing. Wolf was the one that fell in the end.

Perhaps it wasn't Wolf that was weak, but the intruder was *too* strong.

"You..."

"Don't move." The intruder shut Wolf up.

"Next move and I will kill."

'Kill.' The word rang repeatedly in my head.

My heart pounded like crazy and sweat flowed from my forehead down my cheeks.

Wha-what should I do? What do I have to do!?

I didn't want Wolf to be killed, but I didn't want to die either.

Against the overwhelmingly strong intruder, the only one who can move was just a frail little princess. How would we ever survive?

Think! Think carefully. Don't I have any trick up my sleeve?

The intruder won't kill Wolf right away.

The same probably goes for me.

In other words, he was probably here to gather information from

both of us.

Therefore if I gambled my life I would have a fifty-fifty chance of success.

Looking around, I saw Wolf's knife not far away from me. Would he notice if I reached for it?

Or should I escape?

But to play that hand I must be certain that I was the one the intruder was after. Otherwise, if I left by myself, Wolf might still be killed since it would hinder the chase to hunt me down.

I couldn't come up with any bright ideas and time was running out. If only I could create a distraction and give Wolf some opportunity...

"And you there, please behave yourself too."

My escape plan was easily seen through.

I slowly raised my face after he called me out.

The intruder removed his hood and revealed his lustrous black hair. Red piercing eyes and long eyelashes decorated his face. Was it because of the eyes? He certainly looked like a sleepy cat.

That cold and calm expression of his contradicted the situation we were in, where even the slightest mistake would cost someone their life. A male voice repeatedly muttered in my head as I stared at his appearance.

'So tired~.'

With those sleepy eyes and that drowsy look on his face, it was a habit of his to always groan those words out loud.

The figure in front of me and that of my memories were one and the same.

"...Crowe?"

"!?"

The intruder's eyes widened at the name I unconsciously uttered.

Wolf didn't miss the chance to counterattack. He swiftly grabbed the intruder's arm and pulled it in for a headbutt.

"Take this!"

“Kuh!”

The agonising cry stopped short and the knife slid down his hand. Wolf grabbed the knife and forced the intruder down on the floor. Wolf stared down the enemy from the top, pressing the knife against his throat.

“The tables have turned, eh?”

Wolf laughed as he spat out a broken tooth.

Chapter 92: The Reincarnated Princess' Distress (3)

“Well then, what should I cook~?”

Wolf grinned, the corners of his mouth slightly curled upwards after unpacking his belongings. Whenever he's like this, there's no doubt that he has a more sinister smile hiding underneath. To be honest, I didn't know which of the two men was the villain here.

As for the intruder, he was behaving himself for the time being. His lazy expression was the same as ever, though his brows were tightly knitted together. As a stark contrast to Wolf who was calmly preparing food, it was clear that the man was blaming himself for his current situation. “*What could I've done?*” I could practically hear his lines from the game just by looking at him.

Yes, from the game.

I had a proper look at his face again.

Soft wavy black hair with long front bangs and a short neckline. His slanted eyes shone like a deep, dark ruby, as if a drop of black ink were to mix in red. His lengthy lashes casted shadows on his splendid eyes and unquestionably complemented his charms.

“Ah... This is the worst.”

A sweet voice whispered out with a solemn tone.

I started to piece my memories back together, little by little. Once I had joined the small fragments and looked at him once more, I was sure.

There's no mistaking it, he's Crowe.

One of the major characters to appear in the otome game

Welcome to the Reverse World and the last capture target: Crowe, the assassin.

His age was unknown, but it was estimated that at the start of the game, he was in his mid-twenties. A beautiful young man with a slim figure that carried around a dignified atmosphere. His popularity was so high since he was shown to have a cheerful personality.

That, *and* his good looks.

But when the game was finally released and his true character was exposed, the audience's reactions instantly died down.

For other characters, the strategies to capture their hearts were clearly spelled out. But for Crowe, there was no such thing. The man was gay. He was into *guys*.

I'm not one to judge other people's sexual orientation, but I think it's a bit too much of a high hurdle, even for a game that's targeted at girls.

Leaving the issue that the main character was female aside, how do you even *start* to make him fall in love with you? There's a limit to how unreasonable the developers can get. It was just absurd.

"So, who the hell are ya? Is there someone with a grudge who hired you?"

Wolf pulled Crowe up to his face and pointed a knife down his throat. Since I also wanted to know, I stopped digging up memories and tentatively listened.

"You were on the same ship as us, weren't ya? When that maid collapsed, *you* were the one that gave up your room for her."

When I heard that, it suddenly came back to me.

Yes, he was the one who gave up his room for Mia. He was wearing his hood all the time, so I thought he was part of the Kua Clan.

An assassin was this close to me all along... The thought made me shiver

I was pretty fortunate to still be alive after all I've been through. Seemed like Lady Luck was on my side.

"When you fought the pirates with us, was that because we had a common interest?" Wolf asked Crowe.

Crowe, however, didn't even open his mouth. His expression remained calm and bitter.

He looked like a man that valued his mission more than his life...wait, no, doesn't he seem a bit angry right now?

Rather than having an appropriate expression for someone of his age, he was

instead pouting like an unruly child.

“Nothing to say?” Wolf spat out a sigh as he gave up.

As he raised his face, Crowe’s legs slightly twitched. I couldn’t see very well from where I was and didn’t notice.

Crowe kicked his heel on the dirt and a thin blade sprouted from the tip of his shoe. I took in a sharp breath.

It’s like a scene out of a movie... Wait, this is not the time for that!

“Watch out!” I shouted before Crowe could attack.

“...!?”

Wolf instantly distanced himself and so did Crowe, who sprang away. As I wondered about the approaching fight, Crowe came running towards me instead.

Was I his target after all!?

He twisted my arm behind my back in a lock-hold and held me up with his other arm around my stomach.

This posture again!? How many times was this now? I don’t want myself to get used to the feeling of having someone press down on my abdomen!

Crowe kicked down the door and jumped out. Raindrops quickly dampened my body.

“Mary!”

“Wolf!”

I cried out for Wolf and reached out my hand towards him. He yelled for me, distress clear on his face.

Although I didn’t know who was friend or foe anymore, one thing for sure was that I trusted Wolf far more than Crowe.

“Let me go!”

I hit Crowe on the back with my fists, but he didn’t seem to have felt anything. His slim but firm and toned body couldn’t possibly be hurt with the feeble strength in my tiny arms.

But Crowe became annoyed at my actions and tutted.

“Alright, enough already. You’re such a handful.”

“...Eh?”

“That man that kidnapped you is our enemy. Why are you asking
him

for help? Would it be better if I didn’t come to your aid,
princess?”

“...Aid?”

“Yes. I’ve come here to *help* you. Got it?”

I was stunned by what he told me and couldn’t keep up.
Certainly, Wolf was the one that kidnapped me in the first place, so it would
seem weird to ask him for help.
But even if that’s the case, was Crowe really an ally?

“That’s not true! You’re lying!”

“...Hah?”

I refuted his claims on the spot and he turned his voice down an octave. ‘
This tiny brat’ was what it seemed like he was thinking of me.

“B-b-b-because there’s no reason for you to help me, is there?!”

“?”

I cried out as I tried to escape his grip. Crowe simply remained silent.

“You... haven’t you heard about me from His Majesty?”

“Huh? About what?” The question was so unexpected that I became
confused.

*His Majesty? Which His Majesty are you talking about?
You’re joking... No, it couldn’t be my father... right?*

When I couldn’t answer him, Wolf’s voice could be heard behind us. ‘
Mary!’

I raised my face towards the voice calling out my name. Crowe then opened

his mouth after a few seconds of silence.

“Princess, please answer my last question.”

“What!?”

“Should I eliminate that man for you?”

“No!” I replied without hesitation.

I didn't think I could have given this reply if Wolf weren't my friend. I believed that he wouldn't hurt me, but his reasons for kidnapping me remained unknown.

But I didn't want him to be eliminated. Never. I absolutely didn't want him to die.

“Would you rather escape this country, or do you want to talk to that pharmacist guy? Your call.”

“I'll take the second option!”

“Got it.”

Crowe nodded and stopped running.

Wolf noticed that and stopped at a distance away, being wary of any traps.

“Wolf K. Lukka.”

“...What?”

His full name was called out. Wolf responded with a watchful gaze.

“Are you an enemy of the princess?”

Wolf widened his eyes in surprise.

However, he shook his head immediately after gaining control of his facial expressions.

“No... It might not be much coming from the guy that kidnapped her, but the last thing I would do is to hurt this child.”

Crowe sighed deeply.

“Well then, princess. What will you do? Do you believe what he says?”

Crowe looked into my eyes and asked. It seemed that I was given a choice,

but it felt more like he was testing me.

While puzzled, I nodded. Crowe then gently lowered me down, adding that I was *'unexpectedly heavy'* under his breath.

Isn't this bird too rude?!

"...Hm?"

In the corner of my mind, I had come to a realisation.

Bird? That's right, if I remember correctly, the word "bird" has many different meanings.

'Bird', 'His Majesty' and 'I came to your aid.'

I had come to a conclusion by connecting the dots on these three words.

"Could you be... the 'bird' that Father talked about?"

Once he heard that, he gave a rejected sigh.

"And you realised that just now?"

I felt like my head was spinning, but this wasn't the time to worry about that.

Crowe is Father's 'bird'? The setting in the game and reality is somehow different. What's going on?

Chapter 93: The Reincarnated Princess' Distress (4)

"For now, let's have the Young Master know that you're safe."

Crowe came back to the abandoned house and shook his head. As the droplets of water sprinkled down from the strands of his hair, I thought he looked like a dog shaking off water. Oops, how rude of me.

"Young Master...?"

"The Marquis' son. If I don't let him know right away, he'll pace around his room all night long."

Crowe who sat opposite to me diligently answered my question.

Thinking about it, Georg also said something about receiving a message from a bird. If it was Crowe that sent the bird then it would make a lot of sense.

"Thank you very much."

Perhaps my gratitude came out of the blue because Crowe widened his eyes in surprise. It's getting awkward just seeing him fidgeting about and not knowing how to react.

"...Is something wrong?"

"Even though you have some doubts about me, you still said thank you."

Gulp.

I was being stared at like some rare creature and couldn't help myself.

I didn't know Crowe too well, and I realised that thanking him while I was still suspicious was rather rude. If he's really my father's bird, then I'll also be getting a stern scolding since he's saved me in the past multiple times.

"...I'm sorry." I apologised and hung my face.

This was the only thing I could do, just lowering my head like a little kid.

I didn't think his eyes could get any wider, but it did.

"Apologising to a commoner? Are you *really* a royal?"

“If you’re asking Mary to behave like royalty then you’re wasting your time. She doesn’t have the same type of dignity other royals have.”

It wasn’t me but Wolf that replied to Crowe, who still seemed dumbfounded by my apology.

“If you’ve really been protecting her on the ship then you’d know what I mean.”

“Rather than *protecting*, it’s more like *keeping tabs* on her.”

I didn’t think that Crowe was lying.

Certainly, my father would put me under surveillance. Although he was acting like a (secret) escort, his first priority was to report my actions to the king.

When thinking about it like that, it certainly made sense...

But it’s not easy for me to just believe that.

The Crowe I knew wasn’t a spy but an *assassin*.

He was hired by the Raptor Kingdom to kill off the main heroine.

So what happened? How come he became a spy for our country? Did some change happen in a place I couldn’t see?

The questions just kept on piling up.

However, even if he was hired by the Raptor Kingdom, there’s no reason to deceive me, right?

It wouldn’t matter how friendly we become to each other if he could’ve simply finished me off earlier.

Besides, I couldn’t imagine the Raptor Kingdom aiming for someone as weak as a talent-less princess. Honestly, at this point it would be easier to just chalk everything up to ‘

something’ that happened, deviating us from the game’s storyline and *somehow* we have Crowe as our spy.

...Alright. Let’s go with that for now. I’ll think about it later after I’ve seen

what Crowe's up to.

"Anyway, nice to meet you. By the way, princess, will this guy even explain what's going on?" Once Crowe said that, I suddenly remembered.

That's right. Leaving Crowe's identity aside, Wolf's motive was still largely unknown.

Wolf stopped tending the fire and turned to face us.

"I haven't told you about that yet, have I."

"Yes. Why did you kidnap me?"

Wolf soured his face and gave a bitter laugh.

"Speaking of which, I haven't properly introduced myself either."

"Eh? I thought when we first met..."

Ignoring my confused self, Wolf proceeded to kneel down before me.

"My name is Wolf Kua Lukka. I am the next chieftain of the Kua Clan, and I am extremely happy to have found you, Your Highness."

"Eh?... Eh!?"

Although I was confused with Wolf bowing down to me as part of his self introduction, it was what he *said* that truly surprised me.

Wolf is the next Kua Clan Chief!? Are you serious!?

"I've heard something outrageous just now..."

Even though I was still in shock and struggling to get back to reality, my ears somehow picked up Crowe's words.

"Re-really...?"

"Really."

At the sight of Wolf nodding with an extremely serious face, I was at a loss for words.

Just being able to meet *anyone*

from the Kua Clan would be a miracle in itself, but meeting with
the next chieftain?

I wonder who set my luck stats. Hey, I'd like to see my status screen. All the points from

Power, Intelligence, and Speed must have been dumped into *Luck* alone!

I quickly scolded myself for getting too distracted and returned my focus to Wolf's story.

"Remember I told you before that I wanted to find the Goddess of Nabel, right?"

"Yes. Though I haven't heard the reason why."

"Ah. Well, I'm looking for a bride."

"Huh?"

What did this guy just say!?

Bride? Who's the bride!? And a bride to which groom!?

"You wanna make 'the Goddess' your bride? Are you saying that you want this no-sex-appeal princess as your partner?"

This bird wants to have its feathers plucked!

I may have no sex appeal, and maybe I'm not very mature. But even if it's the truth, there are things in this world that you should never say!

...I barely resisted the urge to retort.

"It's fine, Mary. I didn't kidnap you to take you as my bride."

What's fine about that!?

No. I wanna be Sir Leonhart's bride, so this is fine. This is fine, right? It feels like they're rubbing more salt on the wound, though!

My pride as a female was waning thin.

Someone, please put me out of my misery already.

Wolf continued his story as I laughed dryly at myself.

It was for the prosperity of the Kua Clan that he searched for the Goddess. He wanted to incorporate new knowledge and ideas to further improve the clan's current medicinal practices.

However, Wolf gave up right after he saw the rumoured Goddess, because I had no sex appeal. No, wait, it was because I was a princess. Yes, that probably must be it. Totally.

Oi! Don't say something so mean!

"Mary is certainly cute. But that's not all she's worth."

"Eh?"

I raised my face. My eyes were met with Wolf's serious gaze. It was kinda scary.

"Wolf...?"

"You know, Mary. I know this is coming from me, but I believe the Kua Clan is a good bargain. When it comes to drugs and herbs, our knowledge is abundant, and our hands and arms are skilled when it comes to tending others. Many of my clanmates are stubborn and cold, but I'd say it is part of our charms."

"R-right..."

Should you really be labelling the '*miracle clan*' with words like *bargain*

? Even if you were saying all of this as a joke, I wouldn't know what to say to that.

More importantly, I was lost. I couldn't grasp the true meaning behind Wolf's words. Unlike me who was confused, however, Crowe seemed to be surprised and amused at the same time.

"There's no doubt that the Kua Clan's medicinal expertise is amazing. After all, the reason I came to Flamme in the first place was because I was hoping to get my hands on a Kua Clan medicine that would treat my people."

"Oh my, what a coincidence."

Don't tell me that he's going to sell it?

I didn't really expect this outcome, so my eyes were sparkling in anticipation. I had heard that it was a rare medicine, as it was exclusive to the tribe. For that reason, I didn't think obtaining it would be *this* easy.

"If possible, I would like you to hire *all of the Kua Clan*."

"Eh?"

As he watched me become dumbfounded, Wolf gracefully smiled.

"Rosemary von Wervard, would you kindly become our Master?"

"...What?"

My brain ceased to think, and a genuinely puzzled voice escaped my lips.

Chapter 94: The Marquis' Son's Frustrations

*Georg zu Eigel's point of view.

"No good. I can't find her anywhere." The sailor who had barged into the room said exhaustively.

As if dragged down by the grim atmosphere, the people in the room were visibly worried.

There was a search conducted throughout the house. We even looked through the garden and in the city, but Miss Mary was nowhere to be found.

I bit my lips hard in order to calm my frustrations. Outside, the sun had already set, and it was getting darker every minute.

How afraid are you at night?

Is it terrible? Is it cold? Are you in pain?

Just thinking so made me uneasy.

"Mary... Where on earth are you?" Lady Bianca, Michael's sister, whispered. Her voice filled with despair.

Michael stood by her side, his arm supporting her as all colour drained from her face.

"Sis, please get a hold of yourself."

"But Michael. Mary isn't the type to abandon her friends and go running off somewhere. I'm sure something else must have happened."

"That's true... The princess wouldn't pull something like this as a prank. She might've been caught up in something unexpected... We should assume that she was kidnapped by someone. Hey, the young master right over there. Should we have issued a request for help after all?"

The sailor—I believe his name was Paul—gave his proposal and I, Georg zu Eigel, became silent.

It's as they're all saying. It's hard to imagine that Mary would choose to run away on her own will. If she got involved in some kind of incident, then it's highly likely that she was abducted.

But here lies the problem: Who the hell kidnapped her?

“Has anyone found the man who was with Miss Mary yet?”

“...No luck.”

Paul shook his head with a bitter face. Lady Bianca and the crew also had troubled expressions.

The man who was supposed to accompany Miss Mary, Sir Wolf, had apparently gained everyone’s trust.

“If we’re going to search for Her Highness, then finding him is critical. If we are to explain the circumstances of her disappearance, then this person you call Wolf is an important witness. I think that a fugitive warrant should be issued, considering he’s the person who most likely kidnapped her.”

“*Wolf being the culprit!?* That’s absurd!” Bianca protested.

“Even if you say that, he was the only person around Miss Mary when she went missing. On top of that, he vanished as well. The circumstances are evidence enough.”

“That’s...” Lady Bianca couldn’t give a reply and words got stuck in her throat.

“There were no signs of any fight that occurred. The vase may have fallen, but the rest of the room was still tidy. Mary probably lost consciousness, but it is hard to believe she didn’t resist at all.”

“But... That guy was really dotting on her, and no matter what you might say or think from your high horse, I for one don’t think that was an act.”

“Yeah. He looked after her as if she was his daughter. I can’t believe that he would ever hurt her.”

The sailors started talking about that Wolf guy.

For me, listening to all this rattle was irritating. ‘*Well then, in that case can you tell me who kidnapped Miss Mary?*’ Even trying to say it made me want to throw up.

“Oh, are you saying that Wolf’s mysterious departure is *completely and utterly* unrelated?”

“...”

In response to my words, everyone became speechless. A heavy and painful silence fell upon the room.

I didn't know Wolf. I didn't even know the days that they spent on board together, so I couldn't understand their conflict. But exactly because of that, I could see things that they couldn't.

There were a great number of people in the hall and around town. It would be incredibly difficult to sneak into the mansion to kidnap Miss Mary

and

a burly man such as Wolf and not be seen by anyone.

As such, that meant there were only two possibilities; either Wolf carried her off by himself, or Wolf collaborated with another person, the kidnapper. Rejecting those two options because of sentimentality was something I would not allow to happen.

If that guy had kidnapped Miss Mary, then he would have betrayed the trust she had in him. I absolutely could not forgive someone like that.

“Georg...”

Along with a voice full of vigour came a tap on my shoulder. Michael, who now stood before us, unexpectedly lowered his brow as he watched me. He was busy looking for the right words, but I could tell that he was full of worry.

It seemed that I wasn't the only one that was agitated. The sailors were as well.

I took a deep breath to distract myself. Cold air filled my lungs, and I felt my mind calmed down a little.

“We're all worried for the princess. We shouldn't be arguing.” I sighed.

“Yeah, sorry.” With a bitter smile, Paul scratched his head awkwardly. “My bad. Even though you thought of this seriously, I let my emotions come over me and dismissed your ideas.”

“Not at all. I’m also at fault for getting angry. I’m sorry.”

It wasn’t perfect, but the cold air finally dispersed.

“For now, let’s summarise our situation. Does anyone have a map? If we know the surrounding topography, we might be able to narrow down the path that the kidnappers could’ve taken.”

“Yes, I think I have one... I’ll go get it.”

After I asked, one of the sailors complied.

It was apparently in a different room so he headed for the entrance, but once he opened the door, he took a step back with a surprise in his voice.

“What’s wrong?”

At the same time that Paul asked, someone stepped into the room.

“!”

Everyone, including me, widened our eyes as we stared at the person who walked in.

His whole body was inclined to one side, leaning against the wall of the hallway. Various bandages could be seen under his cloak, and blood was seeping through from multiple places. He was obviously not fit enough to walk, but his eyes said otherwise. They shone with a sharp glint, like an angered beast’s.

“Where’s Mary?” With a strained voice, that person, Klaus von Belmar, quietly asked.

“Klaus! You’re not supposed to be walking with a body like that!”

“Don’t push yourself! Your wounds are not completely healed!”

Lady Bianca and Michael hastily rushed in to help but Sir Belmar just brushed them off.

“Enough! I don’t care about that. More importantly, where is Her Highness?”

“...”

Lady Bianca and Michael fell silent.

I knew that the siblings were like open books and how it’d be difficult for them

to simply lie with a smile, but I wish they would've at least done something to conceal just how dire the current situation really was. I internally sighed as I watched the knight's face turned grim. Then he directed a sharp glare towards me.

"You said something about Her Highness' kidnappers?"

As the growl reached me, I realised my mistake. It seemed that Sir Belmar had somehow heard our conversation. What was I doing, criticising Lady Bianca and Michael, when it was obvious that I had made the biggest blunder of all?

"Who did it? Where did they go?"

"...If you've heard our previous discussions, then you must already realise we don't know who the culprit is, let alone where they are headed. In fact, we're not even sure that she was kidnapped in the first place."

"But she's not here! Isn't *that* factual enough!?" He roared.

His face distorted in anger, and he let it out by hitting the wall. The wound on his left hand burst open and bled through the bandages that wrapped around it.

"Please calm down! You're not in any shape to move about!"

Michael, with a pale face, hurriedly grasped Sir Belmar's arm. However, he shook him off and pushed himself from the wall.

"Hey, where do you think you're going?" Surprisingly, Lady Bianca scowled at Sir Belmar, who started dragging his feet off to the distance.

"I'll go look for Her Highness."

"In that condition? Only a fool would say that! You won't make it pass the outskirts of the town!"

"That's right, mister. You were seriously hurt, you know?"

"If you keep moving around restlessly like that, more wounds will open! Just stay put already!"

Not only was Lady Bianca chiding him, but the sailors were as well. However, Sir Belmar wasn't planning on listening.

"I am her *escort*. If I don't go look for her, then who will?"

“We will go!”

“I won’t allow anyone else to be involved with Princess Rosemary.”

“Why the hell are you so stubborn!?”

The sailors tried to hold him in place, but Sir Belmar roughly shook them off. Where he got the power from that tattered body of his, I had no clue. I didn’t know whether to be amazed or impressed at his feat.

“If anything happens to you, how will we ever face her and apologise? Please behave yourself and go back to sleep!”

“While I was taking my sweet rest, Princess Rosemary went missing! Do you think I would go back to bed like nothing happened!?”

“And if you died, wouldn’t all of our efforts be for nothing!?”

“I’ve already dedicated my life to serving Princess Rosemary! She’s in danger *right now*

. If I can’t give my life to her now, then when can I ever help her!”

Sir Belmar strained out the last sentence. What hit him next was anger and frustration, followed by deep regret over those words.

“Klaus... How could you...” Lady Bianca, after being at a loss for words, her face dyed red in anger.

Her thin shoulders and clenched fists were readying themselves in a swaying position as she approached Sir Belmar with small, powerful steps. However, Michael was ahead of her.

Everyone stared at Michael who now stood in front of Sir Belmar. As we gazed upon them, not knowing what might happen, something spectacular took place.

SMACK!

“Ugh!”

Michael struck his fist onto Sir Belmar’s face. No, let’s try that again. Michael *beat up* Sir Belmar’s honour without holding anything back.

Being a magician, he wouldn't have much power behind his strike. However, the actual power this time wasn't in the punch itself, but of the *purpose* it had. The meaning, if you will.

Everyone hung their mouths half-open like a cave. Even Michael's older sister was no exception.

The reddening hand that hit Sir Belmar was shaking slightly. Behind his bangs, Michael's eyes were burning with anger.

"Stop being an idiot." Michael's voice was low, as if trying to control the fury within.

"You're still alive, and it's not because of some miracle! It's everyone's tireless efforts! It's thanks to all of the hard work from the crewmen! It's thanks to the princess when she was the only voice to reach you that you're now standing here! How dare you say something as selfish as to throw your life away!!"

"..." Sir Belmar took a deep breath.

The burning rage seemed to have disappeared from his emerald green eyes.

"Do you know how many times did the princess called out to you? How long she cried because of you? She treasures you so much... And yet..."

"...Michael." Lady Bianca hugged Michael's shuddering shoulders. His face crumbled, and his eyes soon filled with tears.

Michael tried to stifle his crying while muttering,

'I'm sorry for hitting you,' under his breath.

".....Don't be." Sir Belmar, who was still stunned, felt his swollen cheek with his hand and slowly dropped to the floor.

As for me, I couldn't say anything to either Sir Belmar nor Michael. I didn't know what to say.

Michael's anger was truly justified since he was trying to protect something that everyone, and most importantly, Miss Mary, had worked so hard for. But I also understood Sir Belmar's feelings, even if a little.

Although I was so close, I still couldn't protect the person I held most dear.

That regret and anger are impossible to put into words. Especially when someone disagrees with you. Then only unpleasant thoughts seem to fill up your head, all of them driving you crazy.

All I could do was helplessly clenching my fists in frustration.

As an awkward silence filled the room, a deafening sound suddenly rang out. We looked around the room to find the source of the noise, when it resonated once again.

“...A bird?”

Lady Bianca tilted her head curiously. Following her gaze, I looked beyond the windows. A black bird that seemed to melt into the darkness tilted its small head in reply. I recognised it immediately.

“...Don't tell me-”

I hastily ran towards the windows.

The bird pecked at the glass with its beak. There, just as I had hoped it would be, was a small letter, tightly fastened to its ankle.

Chapter 95: The Second Prince's Exchange

*Nabel's Second Prince, Johan von Wervard's point of view.

The elaborate garden sprawled around like a labyrinth, shaping my path into a maze. Though the intricacy of the pattern was beautiful from a bird's-eye view, it was harder to admire from the ground.

While pondering about how the gardeners would get mad at me if they had heard my thoughts, I began to walk.

"It's so difficult to walk here. I don't know much about art, but why not just make a straight path and be done with it? Honestly, you should be able to enjoy a garden with simple walkways on the ground. There's no need to be able to fly just to appreciate a pretty sight. It's just a hindrance like this."

The words I had in my head were spat out by the boy next to me with great ire.

"I truly mean it when I say that from the bottom of my heart, I cannot even begin to understand those who call themselves *artists*. Don't you think so too, Johan?"

The young boy beside me smirked and urged me to agree. He was a head shorter than me and his body could be described as too thin for his own good. But for a boy of his size, his attitude was wild beyond belief. Although his looks weren't bad by any standards, you could still notice the sober air he gave off. His hair and eyes were both a bright brown colour, common in the country of Vint. So common that if he was to be lost in a crowd, I wouldn't be able to find him again. His haughty attitude *did* stick out like a sore thumb, however.

He was only twelve, but contrary to his age and attitude, he acted more like a bitter old man.

His name was Nacht. Nacht von Elster, Vint's second prince.

"Personally I do agree, but I'm afraid we're the minority in this. Your brother and His Majesty seem to enjoy it very much."

I gave a wry smile as I looked back at him. Further beyond the twisted trails, we saw two people—a man and a woman—flirting. The man was tall and had a sturdy body. His two eyebrows were shaped sharply and coupled with various other charming facial features. The hair and eyes were the same shade as Nacht's, but what made him so different from his brother was the friendly atmosphere he gave off.

Nicknamed the 'Prince of Light,' Vint's ever popular first prince: Licht von Elster.

"His ladies' face shows no sign of fatigue. I guess he still isn't satisfied with all the girls who already wait upon him hand and foot. One day, his love of women is going to lead to his downfall."

By the way, the guy who spat a long sigh next to me was called the 'Prince of Darkness'...well, not really. I've heard his brother call him 'The Weird Prince,' and I can see why.

"It's not entirely his personality's fault. With those good looks, girls would've never left him alone in the first place anyway."

Though I secretly agreed with his words, as rude as they were, I instead decided to keep the atmosphere light and relaxed by replying vaguely. Nacht then slightly widened his eyes, and every so often he would glance at me. After a few seconds, his facial expression shifted minutely as he began to speak blunt words once more.

"Give yourself some more credit."

"Should I?"

"You bet. My older brother have might have good looks, but when compared to you, you're by no means any less qualified. The castle maids and those noble ladies are all heads over heels for you, you know?"

I received praise from the usually cynical Nacht, something that definitely didn't happen every day. But there's no point in being modest right now, so I just smiled without saying anything further. I finally looked away after our staring contest became boring.

"Well, even with your good looks, you still haven't captured the heart of your

special someone yet.”

“...My special someone?”

Was he talking about Sister?

The first thing that came into my mind was a figure of my sister, who I hadn't seen in four years.

She had clear blue eyes and wavy blonde hair. Her soft cheeks took on a light colour and were complemented by her petal-like lips. She resembled a girl in a priceless painting, and her smile was as lovely as a blooming flower.

She seemed like an angel then, so I wonder how beautiful had she become? On one hand I was excited to meet her, but on the other I felt scared. It's a complicated feeling.

“Didn't Princess Julia take a liking to you before?”

I realised my mistake with his words.

That's right. Normally you *wouldn't* consider your sister as your 'special someone.'

“Yes, but unfortunately, I couldn't win against your brother after all.”

I acted indifferent as to cover up my thoughts.

But Nacht still sniffed me out in no time.

“There really wasn't any innocent love story playing out between you two, hm? Not that my fool of an older brother would have a clue. Your exchanges with the princess were like two sly foxes trying to outwit each other.”

“I don't mind what you call me, but to call the cute princess a sly fox is just ridiculous.”

“*Cute princess*

,’ huh.” Nacht scoffed at the girl who was cuddling with Prince Licht.

She had a delicate body that only came up to the prince's chest, complete with straight black hair and her matching crystal-like eyes that were adorned with long eyelashes. Her skin was pale white, almost as if she was ill. She was

like a fragile princess that sat alone behind a castle window. Her name was Princess Julia von Merquell, Laptah Kingdom's first princess.

Prince Licht conversed with her in a soft tone, occasionally striking a gentle smile. She currently looked like a perfect, beautiful, and obedient girl. But that's a lie. As long as Prince Licht was nearby, she would behave. But whenever he looked away, she would turn cold eyes towards me.

Although she was young and gave a fragile impression, she was good as a princess. She probably understood her position in society very well.

"How nice would it be if she was only just a pretty princess? Really, she's such a handful." Nacht pinched his brows as he lamented.

The Kingdom of Vint was currently Nabel's ally, but they also had a neutral relationship with Laptah. But that's only because Nabel and Laptah weren't publicly confronting each other. If a war was to break out, Vint would stand on Nabel's side.

But if a prince of Vint and princess of Laptah happened to be in a relationship during that time, it would definitely spell trouble.

"From my point of view, it would be best if your older sister became my brother's queen. I reckon that she would be able to handle him well."

"Nice joke." I promptly answered. Nacht just gave his usual mocking smile.

But this wasn't a laughing matter. Why would my precious sister have to be some skirt-chasing musclehead's wife?

"My brother may love women, but he's not a bad person. Also, having your sister become the queen of a neighbouring country wouldn't be such a bad idea."

"It's just as you say."

When not bringing my personal feelings into play, I think it certainly would be a good match.

But that was only until a couple of years ago, when there was no connection between Vint and Laptah.

Currently, with Laptah's princess trying to court Vint's first prince, things would get ugly if Nabel pushed for a marriage alliance. If someone was deemed to be intruding, then assassination attempts wouldn't be out of the question.

"Even so, I'm just a little brother who couldn't survive being so far away from her. If at all possible, I want her to stay as my elder sister in our home country.

"...Well, let's put such things aside for now, shall we?"

Towards me who struck a dubious smile, Nacht obnoxiously raised an eyebrow, but he didn't chase the matter any further.

"Nacht! Johan!"

We were called out in a loud voice from afar. Through the maze garden, Prince Licht was waving his hand in our direction.

"Come on! Let's have some tea!"

So you came all the way out here to have some
tea?

Looking at his cheery, untroubled smile, I was reminded of something. Once you wave back at the first prince, he'll just wave at you even more. He was similar to a friendly dog. Really, he's not a bad guy. He just had problems when it came to women and was a bit lacking in the brain department; nothing wrong at all.

"Look at that carefree face. I suppose he's already forgotten that I said anything about inspecting the western regions." Seemingly exhausted, Nacht held his head while muttering next to me.

"About the western regions, are you referring to the southern forest near the border with Sckellz?"

"...Stop being so darn perceptive, would you."

"Recently, wood exports to Flamme have been steadily increasing, right? And no matter how big the southwestern forest is, those resources are still limited."

Actually, restrictions on logging and cutting down trees should be put in place. Not to mention the fact that there are tribes living in those forests. It was crucial that we also take them into consideration. However, I knew that I had no

place to order around the royalty of another country, so I'll try a different approach.

But I'll put my own spin on it and add on a story from one of the rumours I came across.

"By the way, it seems that there's been reports of a disease spreading in a town by the western border."

"What!? I've never heard of anything like that. Where did you hear that from?" Nacht widened his eyes and raised his voice.

"From one of the travelling merchants. He told me that he found it strange a disease would break out in the west rather than the south."

"Is it a fever? There's no reports of such a thing, but I guess it's better to be careful."

"Nacht?"

Nacht's expression became irritated after Prince Licht called out to him in a lively voice once more.

"Hey, you idiotic brother. Is this really the time to be drinking tea?!" As Nacht cursed under his breath, I answered Prince Licht, saying that we were on our way. Beside me, the prince sighed and briefly spoke.

"Johan, tell me the details later. If possible, I'd like to hear from the merchant directly."

"I understand."

I raised my face after nodding. In the direction of Prince Licht and Princess Julia, dark clouds were forming in the sky.

The wind stroking my cheek was humid.

'It's going to rain soon.' Thinking so, I started walking away from the garden.

Chapter 96: The Reincarnated Princess' Travels (1)

"There's a lot of sharp rocks around here, so make sure to watch where you're walking."

To my most trusted knight, Sir Leonhard.

How are you doing on this scorching hot day?

"Hey. Your feet are shaking all over. Are you okay?"

Even though I've just arrived at Flamme, it felt like I haven't seen Sir Leonhard's face in forever.

We've just departed and I'm *already* homesick. Makes you want to laugh, doesn't it?

"Hey Marie, can you still communicate with us humans?"

If I close my eyes, I can still see the stretches of our homeland. Someone waving to me from the other side of the river where a flower garden had spread. I can't remember it too well, but it feels kind of nostalgic... Oh, I know-

"This is hopeless. Hey, mister. If you don't help her, she'll really bite the dust."

"Marie! Get a hold of yourself! Do you even know what I'm saying!?"

"...Three years ago...before grandma died..." I coughed violently.

"Marie!!"

And after I caught a glimpse of Wolf's face, my consciousness blacked out and I crossed over to my grandmother's side of the river. The End.

"Here, have a drink."

I grabbed the water bottle while trembling. It's a mystery how I actually got it out of his hands

and

safely brought the bottle to my mouth. The feeling of water running down my throat...it felt

beyond amazing.

After sipping a few more times, my head finally cleared.

“I’ve returned from the dead.”

I say that, but I didn’t even die in the first place. Thanks, brain. Helpful as always.

What the hell was I thinking? Who was the grandma that died three years ago? My grandparents passed away before I was even born, and my grandmother from my previous life was even in

better

shape than I was. Last time I checked, I even died

before her.

“It seems you’ve come back to the realm of the living. That’s good to hear. You were breathing so strangely that I was at a loss at what to do. All I heard was

kofuu~ kofuu~”

Can’t deny that. I thought I was Darth Vader back there.

I couldn’t speak then because not only was I out of breath, but my feet were both sore and rough. To top it off, I’d nearly crossed the

life and death border.

But in the end, the outcome was obvious from the start.

“You’re a princess that’s been pampered in a castle. Of course trekking through mountains would be impossible...”

Our high but dizzying altitude had an amazing view. I could see where the green forest met and spread all over the red earth. When I looked to the far side, I marvelled at the stunning horizon.

We were currently on top of a mountain southwest of Flamme.

Basically, I was in the middle of climbing before I blacked out...how did it end up like this?

“This is the result of your own doing. Just accept it and give up already.”

“Ugh...”

I gave a small groan once faced with the undeniable truth, but I didn't force the issue any further.

“Should I carry you? You've clearly reached your limits.”

“You'll just tell Father about helping me, won't you?” I looked at Crowe.

“Oh, but of course! ‘

Your Majesty, would you believe I had to drag our pampered princess all the way up a mountain?’

Something like that.”

“Even if I have to crawl, I will climb this all by myself.” I immediately shot down Crowe's taunting comment.

As I said those biting words, my face became visibly irritated. When I think about it, I make all sorts of obvious expressions, huh. I'm sorry to disappoint anyone who thought I was a

cool and emotionless type of character.

“I'll carry her. She's my precious employer, after all.”

Wolf gently patted my head. Looking up at him, I noticed he was watching me with warm eyes. It was a gaze full of affection. It was so embarrassing that I didn't know where to look.

“I haven't promised you anything yet.” I muttered quietly, my insides churning with complicated feelings.

Wolf still smiled softly at me, his voice gentle, “I know that.

”

Honestly, I felt conflicted once he gave me that smile. I didn't know what Wolf was thinking; not now, and not back then.

‘Would you kindly become our Master?’

When he said that back at the house, I was at a complete loss for words. My

brain had simply decided to stop working. Behind me, Crowe had sent a glance at Wolf and muttered, 'We have a pervert on our hands,' in a voice filled with both pity and disgust.

I came here to buy some medicine from the clan, but now the whole tribe was being forced on me. It's all Wolf's fault. He's definitely a devil in disguise.

Did Wolf really wish for me to become the Kua Clan's Master? Or was there a hidden goal? All this time and I still couldn't find his real intentions.

And even if he truly wanted me as their Master, it's not something I can answer so easily.

I certainly needed their help, there's no doubt about that. However, hiring the whole clan could spell its own troubles if I didn't think this through.

But if I said no, well, that wouldn't work either. I wanted the medicine, all that they could give me.

If I wish to stop the spreading of the disease, then I should definitely take him up on his offer. In the end, I'm still hesitating. I wasn't *ready* to accept it.

Realising my own cowardice, I halfheartedly postponed my answer. And as he waited for that reply, I was heading off to see the Kua Clan in the flesh. How cunning of me.

"You don't have to make a face like that."

I didn't know what face I was making, but I'm sure it wasn't a happy one. Wolf rubbed my head to comfort me, an apologetic smile appeared on his face.

"Delaying your answer wasn't a bad idea. After all, there's still a lot of things I have yet to tell you."

"Yep. Though you seek the princess to become your Master, you're still being vague. Are you following the intentions of your clan as the next chieftain, or are you fulfilling your own ambitious goals?" Crowe joined in.

"You're quite the sharp one."

When Crowe mockingly clasped his mouth shut, unwilling to speak any

further, Wolf's eyes narrowed dangerously.

The exchange just now was tense, but it did bring a few things to my attention. What were the Kua Clan's intentions? Why would a clan that stubbornly refused to have a Master all this time be looking for one now? I wonder if they'd even follow a little girl like me.

Crowe and I stared at Wolf, pressing him for an answer. He wore a troubled face as he started scratching his cheeks.

"Well, I'm sure there are many things you'd like to ask, but could we keep it for later? Let's get going now. I wanted to travel a little bit further before nightfall. I'm sorry that you'll be seeing the place at night rather than in the day." Wolf said as he carelessly kicked the rock at his feet, sending it flying.

The terrain around here was full of rocks making it hard to sleep on. Small breaks aside, it's not a suitable place to set up camp at night.

I nodded and stood up.

My feet were still staggering, but my breathing was back to normal.

Alright, I can do this... Probably.

"Do you wish to be carried, princess?"

I gently stared daggers back at a *certain* soon-to-be unfortunate bird.

"Ah, wait. You said you would still go on even if you had to crawl, didn't you?" He continued.

"You're a real piece of work. As stubborn as a mule."

"You've only realised that now?"

Crowe laughed cheekily at me, but I just ignored the noise and began to walk, leaving him behind.

Chapter 97: The Reincarnated Princess' Travels (2)

Lying down against the cold hard floor of a damp cave was never going to be comfortable. I could feel the sharp rocks on my cheeks. But I didn't want to get up or even move, really, ever since the horrifying howl of some animal from the outside.

I couldn't walk a step further. ‘

I'm so pathetic,’ was what I thought. And I meant every word.

After enjoying our break midway up the mountain, I thought we were aiming for the summit, but it seems that wasn't the plan. Soon, the road veered off downhill, straight into the forest. When the path began to climb again, the sun was already setting. By the time we reached the cave, my whole surroundings had turned completely pitch-black.

“Marie, can I touch your feet for a bit?”

“...!?”

When I opened my eyes wide, Wolf was kneeling before me. He kept insisting on removing my shoes. I nodded without much thought and he cautiously took it off. Wolf wiped my feet with a damp cloth and applied some kind of medicine. I sensed a pleasant feeling and closed my eyes.

“You can sleep like this, if you'd like.”

His gentle, motherly voice invoked the child in me and was sending me to sleep. Still, I shook my head and resisted. I heard a small laugh from the side when I was seen acting my age. ‘

So stubborn,’ he whispered.

“I told you that I would carry you on my back, but you still refused, and you kept telling me that you could still walk, even though you were sore all over.”

I'm sorry. I'm totally reflecting on that. Even if I didn't want to be carried by *that bird*, I didn't have to refuse Wolf's offer, right? Well, perhaps I was just being a *little* obstinate...

At any rate, it didn't feel right to take advantage of Wolf when I was still trying to avoid answering his 'master' question. I wasn't going to try and depend on him any time soon.

"You really are stubborn... but you also have the guts to go through with your decisions."

I didn't expect praise coming from the guy who was currently caressing my feet. My widened eyes were met with his usual gentle gaze. I felt awkward and changed the topic towards Crowe, asking where he was. It seemed he went out to gather some firewood.

"Alright. That's done. With this, I don't think there'll be too much swelling come tomorrow morning."

pat pat

My foot was tapped lightly as he finished his treatment.

I didn't know what he gave me but it felt a lot better now. So not only was that ointment anti-inflammatory, but it also acted as pain relief as well?

"This is amazing..."

As I murmured to myself, Wolf raised his face. He had been in the middle of carefully tidying up equipment that was spread out on the floor.

"Are you interested in hiring us now?" Wolf said with a wink, but I could only return a bitter smile. He gave a chuckle after seeing how bad my reaction was.

"Since I'm still holding back some info, it's not really fair to force the choice on you now, is it?"

"Information? You mean what Crowe was talking about before?"

Wolf's reasons to be hired were still unclear. Was it out of his own desire? Or was it decided as the clan's next chief? Crowe had asked those questions. Wolf nodded and mulled over an answer for a few seconds.

"If I had to give an answer, it would be *neither*

, I think. The idea about having someone else as the master of my clan is something I wanted as the next chieftain. But I personally put faith in you,

Marie, out of my own volition.”

“I’m far from qualified for that position.”

That kind of role would require aristocratic status to be able to fund the entire clan. I also haven’t forgotten what Wolf said about having good common sense along with wealth. This responsibility wasn’t fit for a princess like me. And yet, even after learning I was a royal, Wolf didn’t back down in the slightest and made an offer. While I was happy that he thought highly of me, I still didn’t think I had what it takes to manage a clan.

“...And here’s the most important thing.” Wolf slowly spelled it out.

He brought me back to focus on his next words.

Gulp.

“My choice hasn’t got the full consensus of the clan.”

“Eeh?...”

Wolf seemed embarrassed about what he just said. When asked, ‘*Isn’t this just the worst case scenario?*’ Wolf simply shrugged, ‘*Yeah.*’ I hated his nonchalant way of talking. I wasn’t one to talk, but Wolf was really pushing it.

Would I be acknowledged by the Kua Clan? And would they accept me as their master? It wasn’t just those two points that had me worried, though; there was one other major thing. If the Kua Clan

truly

didn’t need a master, should I interfere with them at all?

“That was extremely important information. Please don’t keep it to yourself.”

“I proposed to tell you many times, but those old geezers wouldn’t give permission and dismissed the idea.”

“So you just decided to force everyone involved... Look, I may be an outsider, but even I think this whole subject should be planned out more carefully.”

“There’s no point arguing over this. It’s already too late.”

Wolf's gaze drifted off into the distance. I had wanted to retort, but after seeing his face, I was at a loss for words.

“We have great skills and knowledge, but what's the point in keeping all of it to ourselves? I absolutely refuse to stay in these backwater mountains for the rest of my life, content with doing nothing and saving no one. I won't let them drive my life down into ruins like that.”

“Wolf...?”

“The Kua Clan lives deep in the mountains, and the only way we contact the outside world is through selling medicine. There's no place that we frequent, and because of that, we're said to be hard to find. But if you look hard enough, the possibility of finding one of us is not zero.”

That's absolutely right.

The information that Georg gave me said that they lived deep in the mountains southeast of Flamme. If you kept snooping around the foot of those mountains and nearby villages for long enough, then it's not impossible to come across someone from the Kua Clan.

“Also, not everyone who wants to find us is necessarily a good person. In fact, it's usually the good-for-nothings who kept coming back time and time again.”

Wolf then slid off his shirt, exposing the scars underneath. Thinking about it, for being a pharmacist, Wolf had surprisingly endured many wounds. I then realised where the topic was heading and my face turned blue.

“Some of our medicines are worth more than gold to some buyers. There are many idiots who try to kill or capture us to get their hands on some of our merchandise, thinking it's easy money.”

I finally calmed down and focused on reality once more. Wolf was chuckling at what he said with a lighthearted expression. However, I could tell the depth of the wounds in his heart.

“In the clan, some people have proposed that we shouldn't even step a single foot off the mountain. They say things like

‘We should break off all ties to the outside world. As long as we can quietly live off our crops, we don't need money from outsiders.’

But y'know, if we become like that, what meaning is there to our existence? The knowledge passed down through generations from our ancestors would lose all meaning”

Wolf's eyes shone with bright determination. So bright that even a wall wouldn't be able to block it.

“Watching so many people needlessly die just to save our own skin...I can't do that anymore.”

Hearing Wolf's real intentions for the first time certainly felt heavy. After noticing that I was biting my lips in utter silence, Wolf's eyebrows knitted as he straightened his posture.

An awkward silence followed soon after until Crowe came back with some firewood.

It seems that I fell asleep after a light meal. I felt bad leaving the lookout to those two, but thanks to them I've recovered quite nicely.

Wolf's medicine was very effective, too. My foot pain was completely gone.

We left via the narrow path. The visibility was pretty bad thanks to the early morning sun.

I struggled not to lose sight of Wolf who was walking ahead of me.

“We'll be there soon.”

It's been an hour since Wolf said that.

How much longer is 'soon,' I wonder? Wolf's feet stopped moving just as I spat out a sigh.

Noticing he was staring at something, I came up beside him.

Rows of houses began to emerge from the mountain fog.

“Wow.”

It was a quiet village that was caught between two mountains.

A thin path weaved through the houses sitting on the hillside, almost like a river. Next to them were fenced animals and farm crops. Beyond that, vast fields spread as far as the eye could see.

“Is this the Kua Clan village?”

“Yep. This is where I was born.”

‘Though there’s nothing to see here.’ Wolf quickly followed up his words.

“I’ll go on ahead. You can stay here for now.”

“Eh? Are you going to leave us behind?!”

I panicked and hurriedly stopped him. No way was I going to stay in some strange place I didn’t know. Wolf gently grabbed my shoulders to calm me down.

“I will send a friend over right away. I’m going to go convince my father, so until then I want you to stay hidden at their house.”

“I can’t tell if I’m hearing a brilliant on-the-spot strategy or some suicidal plan.”

“Well, the fact that I get to meet *you* was something I would’ve never dreamed of happening.”

While I sighed in disbelief, Wolf on the contrary laughed his heart out without a hint of fatigue.

“Don’t worry. I’ll come back for you. Wait and see.”

“There’s no need for that.”

“!?”

Another voice cut into our conversation.

When I looked back, a spear tip was thrust in my face. Crowe, who was supposed to be the rearguard, was nowhere to be seen, and in his place was a complete stranger. I soon realised that the stranger wasn’t alone. And before I knew it, Wolf and I were completely surrounded.

“Thanks for the warm welcome.” Wolf growled in a low, sarcastic voice, his back against mine.

These were probably the other clan members, and they clearly weren’t on Wolf’s side.

Wait, doesn’t this mean we’re in quite the pinch?