

Tensei Saki ga Shoujo Manga no Shiro Buta Reijou datta

-I Reincarnated as a White Pig Noble's Daughter from a Shoujo Manga-

**- Volume 4 -
15 Years Old**

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[fox's coffee time]

Chapter 74

Even if I'm Thin, I shouldn't have been Careless

My fifteenth spring had come.

I raised my big butt from the seat of carriage and set foot on the royal castle with my cousin.

For about a year from now, I would stay in the castle. Ryuze would stay in the castle too for a while, but he said that he would return to our territory after he finished his business.

It was my first time entering the castle for about a year, but my body had changed from before.

[Ha-, come on.]

This body was heavy, just a bit of movement was troublesome.

I was out of breath when I reached the top of the long stairway leading to the entrance of the castle.

(It's so difficult, just to climb the stairs...)

Yes, I had become fat again in this half a year!

The cause was due to stress because of my engagement or going to the capital city. Anyhow, Britney's bad habit of unconsciously eating food had been resurrected!

I was self-conceited since I became thin, but the number of boot camps had decreased.

(But, even though I didn't eat that much, I became fat in an instant...! So fearful, Britney's body!)

When my bodyweight rebounded, I was 10 kilograms heavier now.

Besides, my body was short, so my chubby body stood up considerably.

When it was nearly time to go to the castle, I was in panic and could not diet in time, so I had to depart with such a figure.

(Uu, even though it's my own fault, I'm so depressed.)

With heavy footsteps, we headed to the upper floors, Prince Marlow and Angela had gathered together to greet my cousin and I.

There was no bad atmosphere between both of them. On the contrary, they seemed to have good relationship now.

[I've been waiting, Ryuze, Britney! You both seem healthy!]

While laughing cheerfully, the crown prince approached us.

Angela followed behind her brother with an air of composure while hiding her mouth with her folding fan... but her eyes seemed puzzled when she looked at me.

[I am sorry to call you so suddenly, but I'm pleased to meet you, Ryuze.]

[No, I'm glad to see Your Highness after a long time.]

[There are a lot of things I want to talk about. First of all, let's go to my room. Why don't we talk about work?]

[Ee, well then... by your words.]

When he heard Ryuze's reply, the prince turned towards his sister.

[Angela, can I ask you to guide Britney?]

[Of course I can, onii-sama! Come, Britney, I'll show you to your room!]

[Then I'll leave it to you. Britney, let's talk afterwards.]

After I bowed my head to the crown prince, Angela pulled my arm.

On the way, the kuroko maids gathered one by one, and the number of people

accompanying us increased.

[This way!]

The princess who was in high spirits guided me to the guest rooms at the upper floor, and I did my best to follow her.

Behind the heavy doors that was wide open, it was a room decorated with light pink cloth with ruffles.

The curtains, around the bed, the carpet... it was a totally pink room.

(Is this Angela's preferences?)

Glancing at Angela's proud face, the maid behind her nodded in assent.

Apparently, what I had thought was transmitted to them.

[Eeto... I am very happy that Your Highness had prepared a room for me.]

[Hohoho. You know that I prepared this?]

[Somehow.]

Actually, I saw her fully pink bedroom the day she collapsed, but she didn't know about it.

It seemed that Prince Marlow didn't tell her, so I didn't bother to say it.

[By the way, why is your body like that?]

Upon arriving at the room, Angela stopped and straightly asked about my body.

[Gu, gufufu...]

[When I saw you last year, your figure was normal. How can it became so fat in one year? In such a situation, I will be in trouble.]

[E...?]

While blinking due to Angela's surprising words, she gazed sharply at me.

[Britney, listen carefully.]

[...Yes.]

[This is an order. Lose your weight and return to your body weight last year!]

[Wh, why!?!]

I was stunned and looked at her.

(Why does Angela want me to be thin?)

In the manga, with the fat Britney at her side, she could fulfill her self-esteem.

However she wanted me to lose weight... such a mystery.

[Are, do you not understand my order?]

I raised my face since Angela's words were as if she could read my mind.

[I will tell you. I am gradually establishing my position in the castle for the last half a year. Thanks to your advice last year, I gained more confidence in myself than I ever have. My reputation from the surroundings is also gradually getting better. Nevertheless... although I'm using your family's cosmetic products extensively, since there are no other young ladies here, there is no one to show off to-!!]

[Your, Your Highness!?!]

Although I was confused by the princess' words, her elegant bearing immediately returned and turned her eyes toward me.

[By the recommendation of onii-sama, I have interacted with wives of aristocrats. So, since everyone was interested in my cosmetics, I introduced your products.]

[Thank you so much.]

[It's not the time to thank me! They told me that they wanted to be introduced to you by all means. So I promised to bring you to participate in a large tea party two months

later!]

[E, I never heard of it before though...]

[I said it just now.]

How irresponsible.

[Anyway, if I bring the current you to such a place, I'll be a laughing stock.]

[Haa...]

For no special reason, I was awfully insulted.

[That is why, you have to get thin by that day by all means!]

Angela's sharp violet eyes contained powerful light.

(As soon as I arrived at the castle, I got into trouble-!)

Chapter 75

Reunion and New Perfume

As soon as she said what she wanted to say, the princess and her kuroko maids went out of the room.

After the tempest of a princess had went away, I was left alone in the room.

Right now, I was near Angela's room. It was located at the east wing of the castle.

(Originally, I do intend to lose weight, but two months...)

I was not confident that I could lose 10 kilograms in that time frame.

However, if I stayed fat, it would be troublesome to incur Angela's imperial wrath.

I decided to go on full-blown diet more than ever.

First of all, dietary restriction and exercise were indispensable.

I hurriedly left the room, I then stopped one of the kuroko maids and asked if I could go to the garden, she then went to ask Angela's permission.

Nonetheless, only the east garden was under Angela's jurisdiction.

(East garden, if I'm not mistaken... it's where poisonous plants are planted.)

Feeling a bit nervous, I went straight to the east garden.

There, poisonous flowers were at full bloom. The season from spring to summer was when flowers were blooming. The foxgloves' beautiful pink flowers were swaying due to the wind. Oleander and Aconite bloomed during summer, so they were still covered in green.



TN: From left to right is foxglove, oleander and aconite.

Beside those, there were daffodils, lily of the valley and rhododendrons.



TN: Left to right is daffodil, lily of the valley and rhododendrons.

(They can be used to make medicines...)

There was a corridor surrounding the east garden, a part of which was connected to outside.

(Somehow, audacious shouts can be heard from the other side... but what on earth is there?)

I was curious and walked towards the voice. There were soldiers training at the garden. It was a boot camp that was familiar to me.

However, it was much too lenient compared to the boot camp of Hakusu earldom. If this was the case, I would still be fat back then.

I tried to exercise while following the movements of the soldiers at the corner so as to not get in the way. It's painful... but I could manage it somehow. This body

remembered the intense movements of the boot camp.

After a while, the soldiers noticed me. Looking at me, they talked between themselves.

[Oi, why is there a chubby young lady here? Where are you from?]

[Those movements... those are for soldiers. It's not for ordinary person to use!]

I was somewhat conspicuous. I felt embarrassed and left the place.

I tried to get back to the east garden, but I saw an orange colour in the building and paused.

(That hair, Ricardo?)

His hair colour, an orangeish blond colour, was a little rare and stood out.

Perhaps he had come to see Ryuze and the crown prince.

(I may be wrong, but let's go there.)

As I turned my direction, I walked towards the person who I assumed to be Ricardo.

He was standing in a building located between east and west gardens.

Since I went up the stairs as quickly as possible, my legs became unsteady.

(If I move this much, I'll lose my weight.)

When I arrived at the place where I saw the orange hair, the person was still standing beside the window.

It seemed that there's no mistake, he seemed to be the real Ricardo. He had grown taller than the last time we met.

(Also, he has matured well.)

I approached him from behind and spoke aloud.

[Ricardo, long time no see!]

This was the first time we met in a year.

Since Ryuze put our engagement on hold, he did not come to my territory last summer.

Ricardo, who seemed surprised by my sudden call, looked back towards me while trembling.

[Britney?]

He turned his jewel-like green eyes to me, he was silent with a somewhat difficult face.

I wondered why. Perhaps it's because I had gotten fat again.

[Hasn't it been half a year? Did you come to see Prince Marlow?]

[A, aa, I came since I was called by him. We had just finished talking, so I was about to leave.]

[Is that so. Ryuze-oniisama is also here, have you seen him?]

[He was with His Highness.]

[I'll be staying in the castle for a while, so can we meet again? I also want to tour around the capital city together again.]

[E... no, that's unpleasant.]

Ricardo's gaze wandered around as if he was perplexed.

[Why?]

[Why you ask me... you, how old are you now?]

[Etto, I'm 15 year old.]

[...Isn't it? It's the age when engagement and marriage is becoming realistic. If a young lady of such age goes out with a member of opposite sex without chaperone, won't you have a bad reputation?]

Apparently, he seemed to be worried about me.

The average age for marriage in my previous life was during twenties and thirties, but it was during the teens in this world. If it's early, a young lady could get married at my age.

(As usual, Ricardo is kind.)

Even so, my chest felt tight when he said what he thought was right.

[...Ricardo, I'm sorry. Ryuze-nisama has put our engagement talk on hold. I thought we could get engaged, but...]

[As for that, I also have the same thought as you. But what Ryuze had said is correct. My future is still unstable. I am not fit for you at this moment.]

Was Ricardo giving up on our engagement?

If he was engaged to another young lady, there's no way we could get married.

(To be honest, rather than being in a pending engagement, there are many houses that will welcome him with better conditions...)

Imagining his future with an imaginary woman and having a family of his own, I was shocked by myself.

(In the first place, it's hard since Ryuze-nisama elevated my value.)

Nonetheless, Ryuze who had become Earl Hakusu was now my substantial guardian.

There was no deciding my engagement without involving him.

[It's okay, Britney doesn't have to worry about it.]

Seeing the conflicted me, Ricardo assured me.

It just made me feel uneasy and restless.

(Even though I'm fat now, Ricardo is as gentle as ever.)

He was kind enough to interact with me similarly to when I was thin. It made me happy.

[Ricardo, thank you.]

A fleeting silence came between us.

I wanted to break this delicate atmosphere, so I spoke aloud.

[A, that's right. When I meet you, there is something I plan on giving you. I'll retrieve it now, so please wait a while.]

It's true that there's something I wanted to give him.

Fortunately, the room given to me was nearby, so I could get back to Ricardo not long after.

[Yes, this...! It's a new product of my territory that's just made this spring!]

I offered the small bottle in my hand to Ricardo.

In the small bottle decorated with delicate patterns, a transparent liquid was contained.

[This is...?]

[It's a perfume that my house just started to produce. This fragrance is specifically tailored for you. The only one in this world.]

Ricardo seemed to be wary of the small bottle, remembering the musk perfume incident last year.

He timidly opened it far away from his face.

[...It's not smelly?]

[It's fine! I won't give anything suspicious to you.]

(That perfume shop was so traumatic...)

Such Ricardo felt a little adorable to me, so I reflexively spat those words out.

He brought the opened bottle closer to his face and timidly sniffed it.

[...It smells nice. It's not that strong, and it's a calm and mysterious scent.]

[Isn't it? Since it's for males, I made the scent not too strong and sweet.]

[Thank you.]

Looking at the smiling Ricardo, my heart beat loudly.

Chapter 76

Pending Circumstances and Love Emotion (Ricardo P.O.V.)

I, Ricardo Astor, was worried about how to contact my friend Britney.

It was awkward since our engagement talk was put on hold last summer.

So, after I talked with her guardian, even though I was happy when she gave me a perfume, I felt puzzled.

(...Britney doesn't seem to be fumbling about our engagement talk being on hold.)

Although it was only a little, I was concerned that it was Britney's intention to put our engagement talk on hold.

I reflected on my doubt.

(Anyway, what does Britney feel about me? Is her barrier towards the opposite sex low?)

I was puzzled by her behavior which was different from ordinary young ladies.

However, somewhere inside me, I was pleased when I met the unchanged her even after our engagement talk was on hold.

I also wanted to have a good time with Britney just like before.

(I also don't want to give up being engaged with her.)

According to my father, there were many engagement proposals coming from other young ladies for me.

However, I refused them all.

Ryuze just said that my engagement talk with Britney was “on hold”, it was not “refused”.

(Depending on my actions, the future can be changed.)

I remembered the event of last summer.



Ryuze, who visited my house in midsummer, found me and first brought up my engagement talk with Britney.

[I heard the story from Britney, Ricardo. Your parents had also officially applied for your engagement with my cousin. This makes it your third engagement proposal.]

Ryuze entered the room and asked for details.

[Ryuze, I’m sorry for abandoning my engagement with Britney. Everything was caused by my immaturity... the me of that time thought that Britney had the worst personality.]

[...Maa, it’s not out of place. In the beginning, I also tried to push Britney to you.]

Ryuze murmured something in a low voice, but I didn’t enter my ears since I was nervous.

[I am planning to show my sincerity from now on. That’s why, will you allow me to be engaged with her?]

In that way, my friend was troubled and shrugged his shoulders.

[Before, I would have given Britney to you with pleasure. Unfortunately, I cannot do so now.]

[...What do you mean?]

[Britney’s value is getting bigger year by year. Right now, she is an indispensable existence for Hakusu earldom.]

[But I heard from Britney that you want her to get engaged sooner... she said that she

promised you to find a fiancée by the age of 15.]

[Britney had talked to you that far.]

[If she can't get engaged by 15, will she be kicked out of Hakusu earldom?]

After I said so, Ryuze exhaled a small breath.

[I did promise her that, but... I do not wish to drive her to the capital city after she contributed so much. I am not a demon to that extent. Although it was unexpected that Britney could truly find a fiancée.]

[...Is, that so.]

[I know that you and she have a good relationship, and there was a time when I encouraged her to get engaged with you. But I've been thinking that it's not realistic since you've broken off your engagement twice.]

[I'm really sorry.]

[Oya, it's me that has to apologize this time. Because I'm putting your engagement proposal on hold.]

[It's not a "refusal" but "on hold"? Then, how can I get engaged to Britney?]

If there's a possibility, then I won't give up.

[To put it concretely, you have to become the lord... something like that.]

[Ha?]

[Your position now is too unstable. Don't you think that it's too wasteful to make Britney, who has successfully contributed to territory reformation, a wife of an official or knight?]

I couldn't reply to Ryuze's words.

I was the second son of Earl Astor and there's no guarantee that I would take over the territory in the future.

(Certainly, it's wasteful to make Britney's talent buried as "wife of official or knight".)

In any situation, I knew that Britney would do her best, but she was lively making a variety of products right now.

Surely Britney would continue to produce a lot of good things.

[...All right. What if I make my future profitable?]

[Ricardo, you don't want to give up Britney? I heard from Earl Astor that you received many engagement proposals from young ladies.]

[I don't want it. The only one I want to be engaged with is Britney now.]

Ryuze blinked in surprise.

It seemed that he thought that my engagement proposal was brought out casually.

[By the way, Ryuze... I have a question.]

[N? What is it?]

[You don't really care about Britney, do you?]

Ryuze's face at that moment was a bit of a sight to see.

It was a break from his usual expression; he had a blank facial expression and looked flabbergasted.

[Me, about Britney?]

[Aa... so, sorry, I said something strange.]

I was unable to stand the delicate atmosphere between us, so I changed the topic.



After Ryuze went home, I thought about my engagement with Britney.

However, my thoughts remained unchanged.

(After all, I like Britney as a member of opposite sex. That's what I feel just a while ago...)

I was convinced after my conversation with Ryuze that day.

That's why, I might have asked a foolish question to him. "Do you care about Britney?"...

Now that I was clearly aware of my feelings, it was quite difficult to suppress my feelings.

Chapter 77

The Usual Perfume is in Rage at the Capital City

After I parted with Ricardo, I returned to my room.

(Somehow, my heart is still pounding.)

Anyway, I was glad that I could meet Ricardo.

He did not seem angry at my family's selfish behavior and it's likely that we would still be friends in the future.

I had my maid Maria that I brought with me to ban confectionaries and I worked hard to diet all the time, aiming for my target weight since I had to attend the tea party two months later. I even did muscle training in my room.

[By the way, Britney-sama. I think that it will be better to notify the princess about the new eyelashes product.]

[That's true. She did say to notify her when it's done.]

The product that Maria mentioned was known as "eyelash extension" or "fake eyelashes" in my previous life.

I was experimenting on it a year ago and Angela got interested in it.

Unfortunately, I was too clumsy to attach the extension, but Maria had mastered the technique. We also had the perfected manual so that craftsmen could reproduce it.

[By the way, Britney-sama, I saw something interesting while I walked around the castle.]

[What is it?]

[That, I saw a noblewoman... how to say this, she's very smelly.]

[E...?]

[It's like a mountain beast smell. No, the smell was so strong that it's like it's condensed.]

[Don't tell me...!]

In my head, the perfume store that I went before crossed my mind.

(That place, it has done damage to such extent...!)

It seemed that Ricardo's concern had become reality.

The day might come when a party would become a stinky gathering.

(I hope our territory's perfume will become popular.)

I decided to work hard on promotions with Ryuze.

While thinking such thing, the door was knocked. After Maria went to confirm the person who knocked hurriedly, she tilted her head.

[Britney! Sorry but, hide me!]

It was Ryuze-niisama who came running in when the door opened.

Unlike usual, his hair and clothes were disheveled.

[Onii-sama, what happened?]

[I was followed by girls after we passed each other, and they blatantly tried to press engagement proposals to me... I felt that my body will be in danger.]

[...Marriage proposals huh.]

[I guess it's because I'm single and succeeded our territory. The young women who live in the capital and their parents are crowding my room.]

Perhaps it's because the experience was astoundingly frightening, but Ryuze's complexion was bad. It seemed that the young women in the capital city were

enormously aggressive.

Seeing my haggard cousin, I laughed instinctively.

I urged Ryuze to sit on the couch and asked Maria to prepare tea. Sitting next to my cousin, I thanked him.

[Ryuze-niisama, you must be tired.]

[...Aa. It's all because of the repeated attacks and stinky smell.]

[Stinky?]

[It's the beastly perfume that you used to improve. The daughters and mothers who pushed me were all using that smell... that room won't be usable anymore until it's ventilated.]

Ryuze who laughed weakly seemed somewhat sick.

[...Nee, onii-sama. Do you feel unwell? Is it really because of the perfume alone?]

[Fufu, don't worry. After I rest a bit, I'll return to my room.]

[I don't mean that kind of thing, you seem to be in pain...]

[That's why, it's nothing...]

After he put down the teacup and started to talk solemnly, his body suddenly slumped towards me.

[O, onii-sama!?!]

My cousin who had collapsed was breathing raggedly.

(His condition is pretty bad...)

I dragged him and placed him on my bed.

My still conscious cousin resisted while saying "I'm fine" but he couldn't fight against me when his body was powerless. I forced him to rest on the bed.

[What is this about, onii-sama? Please do not bluff.]

After a while, the doctor who Maria called had examined him and said that the cause was “excessive fatigue”. It seemed that his fatigue had accumulated so much that it was burdening his body.

(Certainly, onii-sama has been busy ever since he became the earl. Has he been enduring?)

Ryuze was still trying to get out of the bed. It seemed that he didn't want to show his weakness to other people.

Maria and I strictly monitored him.

This cousin of mine had never shown any weakness to other people.

When his parents were still around, he was a bit agitated, but... nevertheless, this was worse than that time.

However, I didn't really know my cousin's true feelings.

(Ever since he became the earl, I never heard any word of complaint from him.)

I didn't particularly care since my cousin was a perfect man, but when I thought about it carefully, he was terribly busy. Though he didn't show it to his surroundings, he might have been considerably overwhelmed.

[Onii-sama, please rest today.]

[You're exaggerating. Gradually the girls will give up and leave, so I'll go back to my room...]

[Denied! Until you get better, I won't let you overdoing things.]

I stood next to the bed while he slept.

Chapter 78

What I did not Notice (Ryuze P.O.V.)

On the bed of a room covered in painful pink colour, I, Ryuze Hakusu, was lying down without being able to move.

I was trying to escape till then, but my body could no longer move.

Currently, at my bedside, Britney was nursing me with bright eyes so that I would not escape.

Nonetheless, since the cause was accumulated fatigue, there's nothing she could do.

[Britney... for the time being, I would like to move from here. You can't sleep here at this rate right?]

[E, it does not matter. I only need to sleep in another room or on the couch. I also have to nurse you.]

[I can't let a girl do such things. Leave me alone.]

[Since this is the result of me leaving things alone, there's no way I can agree. I'm reflecting on my mistake!]

Britney blew roughly from her nose and approached the bed.

[Even though we're living together, I have not noticed that onii-sama is overworking yourself. I have only been thinking of myself.]

[No, I'm not particularly overworking. It is me who thought that it was no big deal, so leave me alone.]

[Nevertheless! I behaved like a spoiled child... I let a 20 years old man carry the burden alone, of course I think of myself as deplorable!]

[E-to, Britney?]

My cousin who seemed to be thinking something was blaming herself. It seemed that she felt guilty that she left all the work of the earldom to me alone, but there was no reason to rely on a 15 years old girl any further.

Even so, she developed many products for our earldom, she performed well already.

(I am too tired after handling the piled up problems caused by ojii-sama and my parents.)

This time, I went to the capital city to promote the products of our territory and ask for permission to construct a new waterway.

And it was for me to take a breather too.

Originally I did not intend to go, but my men had advised me to leave the territory and feel the outside air.

I never thought that I would be chased by those women and collapsed after I escaped.

[From now on, please give me more work. I'm not good as onii-sama, but I think that there is something I can do.]

[...Britney.]

My cousin was so straightforward that I was amazed.

If I were to engage her to a disagreeable man, I was sure that she would turn it down.

[I thought that onii-sama is a perfect superhuman. Whatever happens, you will overcome it skillfully. But there is no such person right? I think I have been overly dependent on onii-sama.]

[No need to apologize, you did nothing wrong. Please don't make that kind of face.]

It was I who dared to hide my weakness. It was natural that Britney did not notice it. I won't blame her.

[...It makes me feel much better just because you think so.]

[E-... is that so?]

Looking at her befuddled face, I smiled naturally.

(This cousin of mine, she won't let me off.)

I remembered my conversation with Ricardo as I thought such a thing.

That time, Ricardo asked me "do you care about Britney".

The reason why I couldn't answer anything momentarily was because something came to my mind that time.

(Until now, I have never thought about it so much.)

I stared at Britney fixedly.

(Do I unconsciously have romantic feelings towards her?)

When I was asked about her, I couldn't answer clearly.

I was astonished after I realized something that I was better off not noticing.

(I thought I prefer older women...)

Chapter 79

My Cousin's Spartan Training

From this morning, Ryuze's condition was strange.

After he stayed all night in my bed and became healthy, he then behaved suspiciously.

(He's giving me the stink eye! Is it because I forcibly lay him down on the bed!?)

I was glad that he's fine now, but I didn't want him to hold any grudge because of yesterday.

(Ryuze-niisama seems to have a sticky character.)

On one occasion, he seemed to persistently keep watch over me.

[...Ano, onii-sama? Are you alright?]

[N? I'm fine.]

[Is, is that so? For the time being, I'm glad that your condition has improved.]

[Thank you for taking care of me overnight.]

After he said so, he approached me and dropped a kiss as light as a feather on my forehead.

[...!? Uo, onii-sama!?!]

[N? What's the matter, Britney?]

No, it's not "what's the matter", just now, you kissed me right?

I wanted to retort, but for him it might just be an expression of gratitude.

(If I pointed it out, won't I seem like an overconscious woman?)

Kissing as gratitude... being an ikemen sure was advantageous.

[...It's nothing.]

[Is that so. By the way, Britney, you said that you're starting to diet again?]

[Ee, maa... I've gained 10 kilograms, and the princess ordered me to lose weight.]

[Then I would like to help you. It's as a thank you for yesterday.]

[Bu, but...]

[I am also reflecting. I know that you eat sweets as stress relief. Since it might be because of me, it felt awkward, so I did not pay attention until now. I think your weight is still within acceptable range since it's not terribly obese like before... but if you're struggling with that, then I am also responsible.]

[Onii-sama...]

It was reassuring that my cousin would be helping me with my diet.

From that day, my diet started in between work. As for the eyelashes, it's fine now since Angela had accepted it.

[By the way, what is onii-sama's job?]

[A big job just ended yesterday. In a few days, I will meet with officials to deal with aqueducts, but until then I can afford a little time off. Besides, if I stay in my room, it will be likely that I will be raided by young ladies living in this city.]

[...I understand. Thank you for your consideration.]

The two of them moved to the castle's backyard and started running. Since there're no people around us, it's fine to exercise as much as we want.

[Britney, you should keep training just like how you did in our territory. We'll also train self-defense techniques.]

[...You are right.]

While training, the distance to my cousin was close.

He held my feet down while I trained my abs, or he was my opponent during our self-defense sessions... he was helpful, but the contents of the training were pretty much Spartan.

After half a day of training was done, I was able to do the entire training menu successfully.

[Try your best, Britney.]

As he said so, Ryuze stretched his hand and stroked my hair. He got close to me and I looked up at him awkwardly when I remembered the kiss on the forehead.

(...This Ryuze-niisama is so blatantly gentle. It's going to rain heavily tonight.)

When I entered the building from the backyard with tired body, Angela was standing near the entrance while her kuroko maids accompanied her.

[Britney, you seem to be working hard on your diet. In this manner, can you lose weight properly?]

[Ye, yes...]

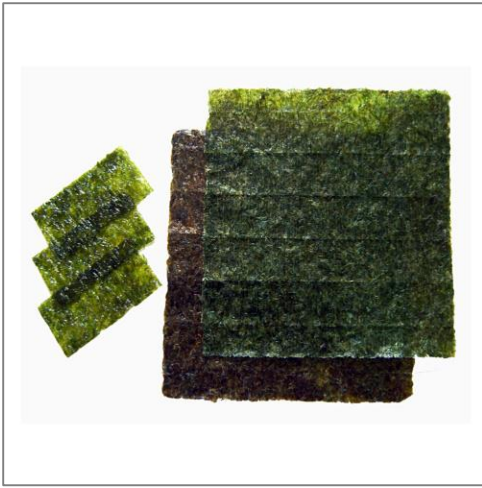
I replied as I stared at her face. It's because I felt a sense of discomfort from her eyes.

(Angela, you clump the eyelash extensions too much-!)

I bet she wanted to try the fake eyelashes I gave her.

For the techniques, it was my maid Maria who taught the kuroko maids, so they may have practiced it as soon as they memorized it.

However, attached to the princess' eyelashes, a large amount of extensions were sticking like nori and hung down due to gravity. She must have thought that it would be better if more amounts were used, but it looked unnatural.



(I know she wants to emphasize her eyes, but since her eyes are small, they're hidden by the extensions.)

I honestly expressed my opinion to Angela with a soft voice.

Since I said so softly, Ryuze shouldn't have heard it.

[Your Highness, you may have attached too many eyelash extensions. Since it appeared long and thick now, it doesn't look that good.]

[...Tha, that!]

[Afterwards, why don't we determine just the right amount?]

[That's right. Please.]

Angela blushed while looking at Ryuze who was behind me.

(...Angela, you too?)

I was no longer surprised by the enchantment spell that my cousin exuded.

Chapter 80

The Crown Prince's Unexpected Inclination and White Pig Girl's Tribulation

One month later—

I was called to the princess' room.

The owner of this room, Angela whose eyelashes had turned to normal, stood in the black and white room (her drawing room, not the bedroom).

[Britney, the result of your diet seems to be passable. Since your weight has reduced by 5 kilograms, it is likely that you can manage it. Also, I have something to tell you.]

I was guided to the leather sofa by the kuroko maids and sat down facing Angela.

I didn't know what she had prepared, but words of amazement came from her mouth.

[In the tea party, each individual will show their specialty song. Of course, you will sing too.]

[Song!?!]

After suddenly hearing it, my voice turned inside out and became agitated.

[...It is such an event. The other time we had to play musical instrument, and before that was reading poetry. The tea party is also a place to showcase the art of the day.]

(Wait a minute-!)

I cried in my mind and was despaired when I thought about the future.

(To think I have to expose my great shame in the future...!)

It was true that a gala occasion was a place for young ladies to showcase the arts that

they were practicing on a daily basis.

If it's to show off, then they had to exert the effort to practice.

However, singing at a tea party was equivalent to torture to me who had no artistic talent.

[Britney? Is something wrong?]

She noticed that my condition was strange. Angela approached me while tilting her head.

[Your Highness... as a matter of fact...]

I talked to her about my lack of artistic talent.

[Ara, since onii-sama mentioned that "Britney's poetry is amazing", I thought that you are good at singing too.]

[...Ryuze-niisama and Ricardo laughed when they saw it though.]

[Regardless, the singing showcase was already decided, so you have to practice. If you are weak at it, I'll ask onii-sama to come.]

Angela said so unreasonably again. I doubted if I could become a songstress by practicing now.

(Still, to entrust the role of teaching me to the busy crown prince... isn't that bad?)

As I thought so, when I left Angela's room, the smiling prince was waiting outside!

Just like before, he waited for me outside of his sister's room.

[...Marlow-sama, nice to meet you.]

[Yaa, Britney. Are you getting used to living in the castle? If you have any inconvenience, you can tell me.]

[Thank you for your concern.]

While I was greeting him, Angela came out.

[Onii-sama! There is something I want to tell you!]

[N? What is it, Angela?]

[Britney has to sing a song in the tea party; I want you to instruct her!]

It seemed that Angela's unreasonable behavior was done indiscriminately, not just to me.

However, the smiling crown prince didn't seem daunted from it. Rather, he looked delighted.

[Ano, Marlow-sama, I know that you're busy, so I...]

[No problem! I'll teach you with pleasure!]

[Ee!?!]

[That's right, I have an acquaintance that's good at singing. Let's call him too!]

The crown prince was in high spirits about the singing lesson.

Thus, my singing lesson had been decided without destroying it.



The next day, Prince Marlow and I had a singing lesson during our free time.

It was located in a room where people would play music instruments and songs.

Various music instruments were arranged at the back of the room, and there was a low stage too.

(This is serious...)

And on the stage were two young men.

[Ricardo! And, Lucas-sama... why are you both here?]

My doubt was answered by the crown prince's refreshing smile.

[Britney, you are acquainted with the fifth prince of the northern country Lucas?]

[Ee, yes.]

[He is famous for his good singing. Since it's a big deal, if we want be friends with him, we should greet him now. Ricardo is here as a chaperone.]

[Is that so...]

Since our country and the northern were in a war in the past, our relationship was still shaky.

As for Prince Marlow, he wanted to deepen the friendship with Lucas and improve our relations with the northern country.

(This is a diplomatic relationship isn't it? To use my singing practice for that... is that okay?)

Rather, I didn't want to sing in front of these three people.

Lucas who combed his glossy silver hair upwards called out to me while I was confused.

[It's been a long time, Miss Britney. Eeto... did you get bigger than last time?]

(A straight ball! Even though I've got a little thinner!)

As I thought, not all men in this world would keep watching me with genial eyes when I became fatter like Ricardo.

However, there was an unexpected follow-up.

[I think Britney's current body shape is healthy and good! The shape of your body when we first met, I found it likeable since it has presence.]

[E...]

In regards of the embarrassing remarks dropped by the crown prince, the remaining

two men's mouth fell open.

I too, it was the first time for me to be remarked positively like “healthy” and “has presence”. Usually, the surroundings would say distasteful words to a fat person after all.

[Well then, let's start Britney's practice. The tea party is a month away... have you decide on a song?]

[Gufufu, I can't decide.]

[There needs to be a good equilibrium with other nobles too. Angela asked me for a few songs.]

Saying so, he spread the music scores in a row on a nearby table.

Lucas seemed to be interested in foreign music. “Since we have to judge the songs, let's start with my preference” was what he stated.

Since he had a good reputation in singing, he seemed to be knowledgeable about music overall.

[I guess this is a good choice. This last part is outstanding...]

I saw a difficult to understand music score given to the crown prince, and I screamed in my mind.

(Such a complicated melody is impossible-!)

The music scores of this world was arranged like my previous world, they resembled tadpoles.

However, the manner in which the music notes was arranged in the music scores recommended by the crown prince was strange.

It went up and down greatly, the sharp and flat symbols were disorganized and it's bullying the singer.

For me who was poor at singing, the most suitable song would be a rap with its constant scale and pitch of tones.

But there was no rap music in this world...

Chapter 81

Starting to Overflow...

Eventually, I chose a song with mellow melodies.

However, it's difficult for a tone-deaf person, and I stumbled during the practice.

[A-, aa-♪, a-?]

[Miss Britney, abdominal breathing is important you know? Abdominal breathing has relaxing effects and it's good for dieting.]

With the numerous single words from Lucas, and Prince Marlow's cheerful musical accompaniment, I was taught the basics of singing. I felt that my music teachers were about to throw in the towel, and I thought that I agreed with them.

Ricardo was silently watching me practicing. It was embarrassing...

More or less my voice could come out, but to sing a song... the results were bad.

Truly, the crown prince couldn't cure my tone deaf. The song elite, Lucas, had faraway eyes...

[I, I apologize.]

I sang a Britney recital of terror in front of the two princes, so I left the room as soon as the practice ended. The practice with Prince Marlow would continue for a while, so I would have to come to this place again.

I hoped my singing could improve even a little bit.

While I was walking in a corridor, Ricardo approached me from behind.

[Britney! Do you have time after this?]

[After this, I'm planning to start the advertisement for perfumes.]

[If possible, can I go with you?]

[Of course. But won't it be boring for you?]

[No, I'm interested in your perfumes. Also, I want to support you.]

In the capital city, the usual pheromone perfume was in trend, and Ryuze suffered a great damage.

Even Ricardo might felt like wanting to eradicate the smelly perfume.

Ryuze was in the center of the aristocrats who were greeting him, appealing the goodness of the perfumes. That cousin of mine had a network of connections in the capital city that he built back in his school days.

(When I think about it, onii-sama is amazing. My only connections are Nora, Lily and Ricardo.)

For me who holed up in our territory, Ryuze who was versatile in many activities were dazzling.

Nonetheless, there's nothing that could be done by envying others. I would do what I could.



As a result, our perfume advertisement went well.

Among the female of the aristocrats who used the pheromone perfume, there were some people that thought "This, it's not smelly?", it seemed that those people had decent sense of thought.

However, there were acquaintances of the noblewomen who had endured and wore the pheromone perfume too.

The perfumes of Hakusu earldom pleased such women. After we placed samples of each fragrance in small bottles and had the women try out the various fragrances, they purchased a large amount of perfumes.

Even Ricardo, who accompanied me, was relieved that the number of people who used

the smelly perfume was likely to decrease.

(Ricardo here seems to be related to the reason why the women's willingness to buy the perfume went up.)

Perhaps he had become numb since he's close to Ryuze and Prince Marlow, but Ricardo himself was good-looking.

The perfumes that he recommended with me...

Even without anything, the feelings like "buy it for this once" and "let's try it" must have grown.

(For once, it also contains the pheromone components!)

In addition, when the fake eyelashes were advertised, young daughters had purchased them all since they seemed interesting.

New colours of existing cosmetic products and new soap fragrances were also sold like hotcakes.

The Hakusu earldom had earned profit year after year and was now trying to embark on a new journey after our debts had been paid off. The construction of the aqueducts was one example.

Regarding the hot spring that I mentioned a while ago, even now Ryuze was still putting it on hold, but since I just made a bathing agent, I can put it in my normal bath at the capital city even without the hot spring.



My bathing agent was made from baking soda extracted from an ore found in Nora's territory, adding it with citric acid made from fermented starch, essential oil and corn flour. The end result could be dissolved in water.



TN: Trona ore is one of the most widespread of the soda minerals found naturally. It is the underlying raw material used in the production of baking soda.

I put it in molds and stored it when it's dried.

(I want to make it popular in the capital city too.)

Baking soda and citric acid could be individually used as cleaning agent, so it's popular among the servants of Hakusu earldom. Currently, my maid Maria was appealing them to the servants of the castle.

I finished promoting the perfume so I talked with Ricardo while taking a walk through the large courtyard located at the center of the castle.

There were many things to be seen and a lot of flowers were in full bloom, and this place was often used as dating spots. By the way, the source of the information was Angela, a resident of the castle.

When I thought that I was taking a walk with Ricardo at such a place, my heart beat faster

Unnoticed, my right hand was connected to his hand.

(No, no, my engagement with Ricardo is on hold. The other party is just kind, he doesn't think about me like that!)

I shook off my extra thoughts.

(Substantially, here too, Ricardo doesn't think of me as an opposite sex... maybe.)

While I was worried about such things, Ricardo turned his concerned eyes to me.

[Britney, are you alright? Do you feel tired after work?]

[I, I'm fine! For a while, I was just dazed. Sorry.]

[No, I don't blame you. I was just a little worried since you're busy working on your territory and exercising.]

[Thank you. I'm alright, and as for the exercise, I'm just paying for my mistakes.]

[Is that so...]

While saying so, Ricardo didn't seem to trust my words. Holding my right hand, he brought his face closer. I was stared at by his beautiful green eyes and my heart felt like it was jumping in my chest.

[Britney. I heard from Ryuze that you're on diet under the command of the princess. You're desperate to make it in time for the tea party a month away. But, I... to me, if you remain the same, I don't think it has anything to do with your body figure. You, the way you are, err, are attractive enough...]

Ricardo said so to me with slightly red face. Perhaps it's because that he felt embarrassed, his words stumbled a bit at the end.

But such a straightforward surprise attack severely pierced my heart.

[...Ricardo, thank, thank you. I, I'm happy.]

My emotions were highly strung, and the corner of my eyes became hot.

I didn't want him to see such look, so I hurriedly bowed my head.

[Are you alright? Is it my fault?]

[...No, it's not your fault. Your words are gentle enough as they are. I am so moved that I have runny nose now.]

[.....]

Only my tears should be coming out when such good things were said to Britney.

However, my runny nose was dangerously on the verge of overflowing.

Ricardo silently and gently presented me his handkerchief. He was such a gentleman.

Chapter 82

Each Person's Weakness is Different

(Uu, it's inexcusable.)

Ricardo, who gave me his handkerchief, caressed my head while he held me in his arms.

The fragrance of the perfume I gave him tickled my nose softly.

Since it's a refreshing and discreet fragrance, I didn't notice until I was close to him.

(The perfume I gave, he's using it.)

As soon as I found out about it, I was embarrassed that I felt happy about it.

My thought couldn't keep up with the rather sweet atmosphere, so I was confused.

Even though my tears and snot were overflowing, Ricardo desperately tried to sooth me.

[It's alright, Britney. Regardless of your body shape, there are others who notice your goodness. I'm one of them after all.]

[Uu, Ricardo... thank, thank you...]

I had always hated this body of Britney.

Even if I ate only a little, it got fat quickly, I had to take care of it carefully, the skin became rough, and at first the body odour was smelly.

My surroundings mocked me about my figure, I pretended not to notice it, but it still hurt my feelings nonetheless.

I hated the weak nature of running to food as soon as I felt stressed.

(Not just that... I hate my cowardly self who ran away by blaming all the bad elements to the Britney in the manga.)

The selfish and fat Britney, but the Britney who went on diet after regaining her memories and rebounded due to her weak will... it was all me.

(However, Ricardo said that he was attracted to me— even if I'm not thin, I am good enough just the way I am.)

His words of my unchanged attitude despite being fat or thin, they were truly irreplaceable to me.

However, I was moved that he continued to say shocking words to me.

[I like your personality as it is. That's why I applied for engagement with you. That, I want to be married to you...]

[...!?!]

While hugging me, Ricardo slowly told me so.

Surprised by that, I timidly looked up to his face.

[That, could it be that you regard me as an opposite sex?]

[...That pierced my core all of a sudden.]

Ricardo with slightly overwhelmed eyes muttered so while averting his green eyes.

[Sorry if it's a misunderstanding. A very embarrassing misunderstanding...]

[No, it's just as you said. I thought about how can I say such a thing when our engagement is on hold... so I patiently endured it.]

Ricardo took a deep breath and placed his hands on my shoulders while holding a serious light in his eyes.

[I'll say it again. I like you as a woman since before!]

[...!!!]

[Nonetheless, I will not force you to answer. Honestly, I didn't think that you will notice it... maa, now I just wanted to tell you that so that you won't feel sad.]

I had no time to answer and he ended the conversation.

(Although I'm not urged to answer soon, I don't know what to say.)

I appreciated Ricardo's kindness that cared for me now.

I found him to be likeable.

However, I was not sure that this was a romantic feeling or not.

(I think that it's an ordinary reaction if a girl's heart throbs due to a handsome guy.)

It was mourned as an evil practice in my past life, but it appeared before me now.

[Britney, I think that you can be more confident in yourself. Everyone has things they're weak at.]

After Ricardo said so, I looked straight at him.

[Does that mean that you have a weak point too?]

[...Maa, there is. Ryuze, Prince Marlow and Lucas know about it, I'm not good with high places and unrealistic things.]

[What do you mean by unrealistic? Like a ghost or something?]

[That too, but I also don't like magic, curses and strange phenomena.]

[...Are you scared?]

[Don't say it. I know it's childish.]

[It's all right, I won't tell anyone. Besides, I think a lot of people also don't like those.]

He was concerned since he had revealed his weakness, but my good impression of him had risen.

(Besides, I think it's cute...)

I didn't know whether I love him or not, but I did respect him and liked him quite a bit.

Chapter 83

Friendship with the Princess?

Finally, the day of the tea party had come...!

The tea party hosted by Angela was a large scale event held at a corner of the east garden. It was a prestigious party where wives and daughters of the country's prominent aristocrats gathered.

While I could say that my family had escaped from destitution, it was not an event in which a daughter of a countryside earldom could attend.

I looked up to the clear summer sky with no clouds in sight.

(Un, I know. Only at such times was the weather was sunny and not rainy.)

Round tables with black tablecloth were lined up, and snacks and confectionaries were carried out one after another. Incidentally, all of the tableware was black and red.

Angela's kuroko maids were serving tea, and I was currently sitting on a prepared black chair. By the way, the cushion was also red.



TN: Something like this but outdoor I guess. It's a horrible theme colours for outdoor party though.

(Uu, I feel nervous.)

Today's participants were about five wives of powerful noble families, the most important being Angela's relatives, the duchess and the marquise. And there were about 10 young ladies who were their daughters. Their ages were more or less similar, but they had the impression of children.

As the tea party was sponsored by the princess, they were in high spirits and wore gorgeous dresses.

And they all used the pheromone perfume... even the children.

(This reduces my appetite... it's just right for my diet though.)

My weight, which had increased by 10 kilograms before I came, had decreased by 8 kilograms in the past two months.

It was thanks to my cousin Ryuze's, who showed excess skin ship at the moment, enthusiastic participation in my exercise.

While I couldn't achieve the goal Angela had set for me, since it's around "Don't you think your face is a little rounder than before?", I'd like to think that it's at an acceptable level.

First of all, after enjoying the greetings and chatting, the organizer Angela introduced me and I desperately tried to describe the items.

It's a large opportunity to gain more customers, so I had to try my best.

[...So, what you are using now are the highest rank items. These are valuable products of Hakusu earldom that are limited in production.]

Since they're influential aristocrats, I tried to introduce mainly the products with exquisite values.

They were terrible prices that were set by the miserly Ryuze, but it's certain that their quality were good.

Of course, we also dealt ordinary products for those who had less money, and we planned to produce simple products for commoners in the future.

[And today's main item is this perfume.]

I introduced the perfume made from musk and amber with flourish.



[It contains the ingredients of the popular pheromone perfume that everyone is currently using. Are there people who are currently using that pheromone perfume and yet feel that there is no effect?]

After my question, a few ladies timidly raised their hands. And for some reason, a young child also raised her voice.

[Papa always tells mama that she's smelly! I was also told that I'm smelly too!]

The wife group was overwhelmed by the child's cruel words. The killing ability of innocent and honest words was too high.

And the person who was told by her father that she's "smelly" was also pitiful.

[...E, eeto. This, this perfume, it properly makes up for that deficiency, and is characterized by its refreshing floral scent that is not too strong. My cousin Earl Hakusu also highly praises it.]

When I gave out Ryuze's name, daughters of marriageable age rushed towards me.

(Oo, as expected of onii-sama!)

The ikemen effect made the noblewomen and daughters interested. Ryuze seemed to be favoured.

I had prepared several scent samples, and the item was reserved one after another.

Sitting next to me, Angela seemed to be in a good mood. It seemed that she was satisfied with the pattern.

On her eyelids, her eyelash extensions drew round and elegant curves.

[Well then, let's proceed to our usual art presentation.]

With Angela's voices, all of their faces tightened. Although they were experienced about it, all of them were becoming nervous about the presentation.

First of all, it's the announcement of the children's group. But just because they're children, they were not to make light of.

The beautiful voices that were spun as the song began were clear like a famous foreign boy choir.



TN: Vienna's Boys Choir

Of course, the tone and the strength of their voices were exquisite.

(U-n... my song after I was taught by my tutors is to be lamented.)

I realized again that talent could make such an obvious difference.

Thinking about my presentation after this made my chest heavier.

Though I became a little better after I was taught by Prince Marlow and Lucas, the status was only promoted from very unskillful to unskillful. My ability was less than a young child's.

Of course, I was really thankful to them. I always participated in Prince Marlow's invitation of his hobby, presented him preferential face lotion and soaps made from rare materials that couldn't be commercialized, and we researched herb tea together... I thought that it was fun.

However, he was careful not to serve a large amount of sweets to prevent making me fatter.

In order to prepare for the future of the crown prince's death, I taught him the art of self-defense when we had time.

Here, Lucas was also involved. He said that he was interested in the techniques of the previous Earl Hakusu who defeated his country's army in the past.

After seeing my increased weight, his attitude was colder than last year, but it was not terrible. It was a good relationship where we could talk normally.

(While negligence is taboo, I don't feel like I'm being hated. The atmosphere is like a friend of opposite sex.)

While thinking about the two princes to escape from reality, my turn had come.

The participants urged me to sing with a smile.

As it had been decided for the presenter to stand at the center of the garden, I moved swiftly.

(It's alright. I've practiced with Prince Marlow and Lucas.)

I breathed in heavily and opened my mouth.

It should be a relatively easy song to sing... but as expected, I sang it terribly.

(This is hard to keep up until the end. That small child is really laughing! Just say that it's "unskillful~", because I heard it exactly~!)

The other women looked at me with sympathy. Although I was not made fun of, it's hard enough as it was.

(As I thought, I'm blanking out.)

I became desperate while singing, but at the same time, a new singing voice was heard from nearby.

The voice had dignified strength, playing a soft and clear sound.

When I moved my gaze awkwardly, Angela had stood up from her seat and sang together!

The princess' melody covered up my horrible singing.

(Angela, amazing!... That said, is she saving me?)

While I was puzzled, the song went on and I was able to safely sing it to the end. Other ladies rose up and applauded.

After that, the song presentation continued, and at the end Angela concluded the event with a song with high level of difficulty.

After the tea party, I ran to Angela and thanked her.

[Your Highness, thank you for your assistance earlier. Thanks to you, I could sing to the end.]

[I, I would be troubled if there's a problem at the tea party organized by me!]

Angela slightly blushed, bent down her eyelash extensions and turned away.

Rather than angry, she seemed shy.

[I've been thinking for a while... Britney, you are always so formal, calling me "Your Highness". Why do you never call me Angela? Only calling onii-sama with his name is sly!]

[E...?]

[Now, call me by my name!]

While I got nervous, I softly opened my mouth.

[...A, Angela, -sama.]

I saw Angela smiled broadly. She seemed to be happy, and she puffed up her small chest with a “fufun”.

[From now on, always call me so. It’s too much for my friend to call me “Your Highness” after all.]

I was surprised by her words and I could only watch her walking away silently.

(.....)

Before I knew it, I seemed to be regarded as a friend by the princess.

Chapter 84

A Cousin Whose Distance is Close

Up until now, I've been trying to avoid my execution...

A big change had just come.

Of course I had become thin, but Angela helped me by saying that I was her "friend".

(No way, I didn't think that Angela would call me "friend". In the manga, I was easily discarded right?)

It was complicated, but I felt glad.

She was not a person who would think of others as friends in the manga.

The children who surrounded Angela were not of equal standings. She would judge people only on whether they could be used or not.

Even the Britney in the manga was supposed to be the most optimum fat person she could stand next to.

(That was her character as a villainess... that's how it was supposed to be.)

Somehow, she seemed different now.

(This, maybe it's Marlow-sama's influence?)

By becoming closer with her older brother, Angela's character had changed considerably.

If there were no obstacles ahead, she seemed to advance in a good direction.

(Hopefully, everyone won't be unhappy.)

I strongly wished for that.

Before I knew it, I became a little attached to the princess.

[U-n, if Merrill doesn't appear and Marlow-sama isn't killed... it should be a happy ending though.]

In the girl's manga "Merrill and the Royal Palace's Gate", although there were small skirmishes between countries and conflicts between aristocrats, they were resolved relatively quick.

Now that the troublemaker Angela had calmed down, it seemed like there was nothing dangerous to me.

While thinking such peaceful things, Ryuze came into my room.

[Onii-sama, are you evacuating from the young ladies?]

[No, today is different. I have to return to our territory, so I came to inform you.]

My cousin, who grasped a lock of my hair, fiddled it with his fingertips.

(Lately, our distance is really close.)

Ryuze seemed tired for some reason, and he had a kind of listless atmosphere.

With his eyes covered by his long eyelashes, he seemed to be worrying about something.

[Did something happen at our territory? I too...]

[You don't have to go back. A little problem had occurred, but ojii-sama was there. I'll be back to the capital city soon.]

[Is that so. So what's the problem?]

I ushered my cousin to sit on a chair, asked Maria to prepare tea, and sat opposite to him.

The subject that Ryuze talked about seemed to be troublesome.

The northern part of Hakusu earldom's territory was the border with the northern

country where Lucas' father ruled.

In the past, that's where the war had commenced.

Recently, it's said that there's suspicious bandit activities there.

They did not just destroy the neighboring villages and towns, but they also did suspicious moves like exploring the territory.

Every time, they were repelled by the soldiers that defended the towns, but they persistently repeated their provocations.

[Have you already informed the northern country?]

[Aa, I've sent a letter of protest through Prince Marlow. I can only think of it as creating quarrels with our country. But the other side's reply said that they're unaware of it.]

[There's no way they don't know... what about Lucas?]

[Since he's friendly with us, he's assessing the situation at the location. From his opinion, it seems that one of his brothers is the perpetrator.]

[That's a terrible thing to do!]

[The brothers seem to be at bad terms.]

There was no such development in the manga.

There weren't any large disputes until Merrill appeared, so I didn't know what's going on.

(By the way...)

Although there was no direct dispute, the relationship between our countries had been delicate.

Although there was no detailed depiction, small cases occasionally occurred.

It seemed that there were few such cases, such as someone trying to steal the castle's documents. Merrill settled them all brilliantly though.

[Every time, strangely, they seem to enter our territory smoothly. The locations of the attacks were villages that produce the raw materials for our territory's commodities... maybe there's a traitor in this country.]

[If so, who would it be? Is the traitor in our territory?]

[Not exactly. Since our territory has made rapid progress recently, it's possible that it's a person from another territory that's guiding them. Either way, I can't leave you alone, so I'm going to resolve the situation.]

Ryuze said so easily, but it's a dangerous job since we didn't know who's behind it.

He probably noticed that I felt uneasy, so he smiled to relieve me and took my hand that was on the table.

[It'll be all right, Britney. I will try not to expand the damages as much as possible, and even if the skirmish worsens for me and ojii-sama, all of the soldiers of our territory are strong.]

[...But, worrying things are still worrying.]

Saying that, Ryuze smiled as if he's troubled. He rose up from his chair, went behind me and hugged me from the back.

It suddenly happened, so I couldn't hide my shock.

[O, onii-sama...!?!]

[Britney, you must not leave the capital city. If you break this rule... there will be punishment.]

[...Hii!]

I tried to stand since I was scared by the disturbing words, but Ryuze held me down and kissed my cheek before I could make a sound.

[Hyaa~!? Onii-sama, what are you doing!?!]

[...It's just a greeting. By the way, there's something I want to propose to you when I return safely.]

[A, yes... I, I understand. I'll be waiting for your return...]

I really wanted to go with him as a member of the earldom, but there's nothing I could do when it came to bandit activities.

(While I do know self-defense, I can't do anything against bandits.)

Although I understood it, an unfathomable insecurity came over me.

Chapter 85

Good News, Bad News

[...That's why, onii-sama has returned to our territory.]

A few days after Ryuze returned home, I was talking with Ricardo who was leaning on a nearby wall when I left the east garden.

A bit away from them, the knights of the castle were conducting their boot camp even today.

While suffering the heat of early summer, they worked hard and trained. Somehow, I remember the face of the knights... why were they smiling at me with eyes like seeing a comrade!?

[Is that so, Ryuze is strong, but... I'm worried.]

[Un.]

Ryuze himself said that it would be all right, but I was worried since it was a dangerous job.

[Britney, to speak at such a time is indiscreet but... that, it seems that somehow I will succeed the Astor earldom. My father nominated me as the next earl.]

[E, really?]

[Aa, my parents will be here to talk to me, so they're heading to the capital city now. My brother stays at home though.]

[Is that so... when Ryuze-niisama returns safely, I want to talk about that.]

[That's right. I want my engagement proposal to be accepted, so I'll try my best.]

As Ricardo extended his hand, I gently grabbed it.

However, a voice came from behind our nice atmosphere.

[Ricardo... I thought you were good friends with Miss Britney. So you have that kind of relationship with her.]

[...!?!]

The one who was staring at us with his smiling black eyes was the fifth prince of the northern country Lucas.

[...Lucas, if you know, then can't you be a little discreet.]

It's not that kind of relationship yet. I was excited since Ricardo was affirming our engagement.

[I very much want to do so, but there's news so I want to hurriedly inform you. Sorry I can't wait until you kiss each other.]

[Na, ki, kiss, I won't do it before our engagement!]

[Oya, is that so?]

[A, that's natural!]

Ricardo's face was as red as a boiled octopus.

He was a perfect, considerate gentleman after all.

[E-. It would be easy if you both have a relationship, then you can force to get engaged.]

[Na, Lucas, such a thing...!]

[Because, if you kiss her in public, there will be no other person who wants to be married to Miss Britney, so you will be selected automatically...]

This execution prince was such a low-life rascal.

Ricardo who sighed greatly changed the topic.

[So, what's the news?]

[Ee, there's something I want to tell Miss Britney... in fact, there seems to be some problems in Hakusu territory.]

As if repelled, Ricardo raised his face. I looked at Lucas as well.

[My home country — to exterminate the bandits operating at the border with the northern country, Earl Hakusu has returned to his territory, but he has been unexpectedly struggling.]

[...Lucas-sama, where do you get that information?]

[Since I'm a member of the royal family, I have sent my subordinates to several places. I want to avoid the scenario of our countries fighting each other. Even now, I feel that it's pretty unpleasant.]

[That's right, Ryuze-niisama did say that you're investigating the situation too.]

For Lucas, who was studying in this country as a symbol of friendship, this time's case was a "What's this unnecessary behavior!" that made him indignant.

[So on this occasion, I am on this country's side. I will tell you about the extent I know. This has only been told to Prince Marlow.]

Ricardo and I nodded silently.

[First of all, the ringleader of this case is probably one of my older sisters. Her pitiable head seems to be dreaming, but it seems that the products of Hakusu earldom are too charming, so she wants to interfere. She is originally an ambitious person and has the ambition to go down to south. Meanwhile, my parents are looking into the situation. If my sister's plan goes well, they will ride it together, but if it fails, they will cut it down...]

[Isn't that laissez-faire?]

[Maa... I understand what Miss Britney wants to say. From me, I can only say that I apologize. I will return to the story, my sister's bandit subordinates should have appeared along the northern border. Naturally, Earl Hakusu also has moved on that assumption.]

[Ee, that's right.]

[However, it seems that the southern part of your territory has been damaged. Along with the west coast...]

[What do you mean? The south west...]

Before leaving here, Ryuze has been suspecting a “traitor”.

(Is onii-sama’s assumption correct... who is it?)

Nonetheless, since it’s my cousin, I thought that he could do it. On horseback without any breaks, it’s a day and a half from here to our territory.

[I thought that if Ryuze-niisama arrives at our territory, he can solve it sufficiently.]

[Well, isn’t that so. Indeed, Earl Hakusu has skillfully responded with instructions... until yesterday that is.]

Lucas’ good-featured face became clouded and he murmured something ominous.

Chapter 86

Macho Platoon and Departure

The Hakusu territory at the northern end of this country was the border with the northern country.

The northeastern territory where my friend Nora lived was surrounded by steep rocky mountains, so it's difficult to attack from abroad.

In that respect, the mountain at the northern part of our territory was just an ordinary one, so it could be passed by riding horse.

Of course, there were measures taken like surrounding the territory with walls, but if the opponent this time was bandits, then it would be difficult to be agile.

As such, Ryuze had returned to our territory.

(It's dangerous, but if Ryuze-niisama and ojii-sama are together, they can get rid of the bandits.)

...That was what I thought, but it was unexpected that there were similar damages occurring at the south and the west as well.

Originally, there were some damages caused by bandits occurring in Hakusu territory.

However, Ryuze had put a lot of effort into security since a few years ago, so the damages were almost gone.

(Even so, this occurrence is unnatural. Even to me, it feels artificial.)

According to Lucas, Ryuze was at the north while ojii-sama confronted the bandits at the south.

[Since the south is the territory of Astor governed by Ricardo's father, "don't make trouble" doesn't prevail over there right.]

Lucas who brushed up his silver hair which was a characteristic of northern country muttered so, Ricardo then frowned.

[I'd like to provide reinforcement from my territory, but unfortunately my parents are heading here and not in the territory currently, so I hope my brother provides it.]

As Ricardo said, Millard seemed to be unable to do such thing.

And at the west side of Hakusu territory, it seemed to be more undermanned compared to other parts where soldiers were sent.

While we were talking, a messenger rushed to Lucas and whispered something to his ears.

[...That's a serious situation isn't it?]

When the messenger left, Lucas' grim face turned to us.

[New information just came. Soldiers owned by my sister had just invaded Hakusu territory. Earl Hakusu is currently dealing with them. However, there are a huge number of soldiers so it's a hard fight. It seemed that ordinary people who live in the territory also became casualties.]

At the same time the prince finished talking, I thanked him and turned on my heels.

[Britney?]

Towards the anxious Ricardo, I quietly told him what I should do.

[I will return to my territory. Ojii-sama and Ryuze-niisama are in trouble.]

Ricardo had a startled face when he heard me.

[What are you talking about? Are you sober?]

[Of course. Certainly I can't fight, but there must be something useful I can do.]

First of all, I should join ojii-sama at the south and listened to the situation.

Then, if possible, I would like to help the soldiers struggling at the west and provide

aid for the casualties.

(I can't help with battling against the opponents, but I can help with relief and construction work.)

As my determination was conveyed, Ricardo sighed heavily.

[I understand, I will pass my parents but... I will go with you.]

[E, there's no need for you to come. It's a matter of Hakusu territory.]

[The, the southern side is the border with Astor earldom. This way, there's no way it's unrelated! I wish my older brother will take measures against it properly, but there's no way he would do it...]

The sickly Millard, who was never involved with practical work all that much, wouldn't know what to do in such emergency state.

I had only met him once, so I couldn't say anything about his temperament.

But, I remembered that he tried to take away Ricardo's achievement before.

[If you decide so, you better hurry. You have to notify Prince Marlow.]

[Un...! Thanks Lucas!]

Ricardo and I rushed to the crown prince and explained the circumstances.

[There's no choice if that's the case, but I'm worried. Especially Britney.]

[Guh... I can't deny it.]

[This is your first time handling a situation like this. Males are knowledgeable about command of soldiers to a certain extent since it's taught at home and school. Young ladies do not have a chance to come in contact with such things.]

[You are right. I have only the knowledge I heard from my ojii-sama and cousin, and my experience with real combat is zero.]

In the beginning, we're living in a peaceful era, even noblemen rarely gained

experience in actual combat.

(What I have is knowledge from manga in my previous life. I don't want to participate in fighting, I just hope to help residents evacuate, provide aid to injured people, and assist in replenishing materials. Nevertheless, there is danger in being involved.)

I told my idea towards the crown prince.

[Marlow-sama, I'm going to do what I can. There must be something I can do to help.]

[...I understand that you will not back down. It can't be helped, I'll lend you my troops.]

From the corridor behind the crown prince who seemed to have predicted this outcome, soldiers who had donned silver armors had appeared. Their number was about 40 people.

I had thought that I had seen them before somewhere, but they're the people who did their boot camp near the east garden.

[Tentatively, only one platoon is able to move right now. I'll send the reinforcements afterwards.]

[Thank you very much for your help.]

I was prepared to go by myself without any escorts, so it was appreciated to have soldiers coming with me.

[Because of Ryuze's crisis, it's only natural that I want to lend you my strength. Ricardo, you are going as well?]

[Of course, it's impossible for Britney to go alone.]

[I can't move from here, but I'll do as much as I can.]

While he quietly lowered his head towards the crown prince, there was a shrill voice coming from behind the soldiers.

[Britney, please wait! Hey, you guys are obstructing me!]

It was Princess Angela who pushed out the soldiers. She probably knew about Hakusu

territory's situation.

[Angela-sama...]

[What a troublesome situation! Though I'm reluctant... something like this, I cannot stop you, the young lady of Hakusu earldom. Since you have to go and fulfill nobility's responsibility.]

I did not think that the word "responsibility" would ever come out of the princess' mouth.

It must be the effect of Prince Marlow's education.

[But, you have to be careful. No one knows if you will return safely or not!]

Looking at the princess who said so with bright red face, I reflexively smiled.

I felt kindness in her words, so I felt a little moved.

[Yes, Angela-sama. We'll surely resolve the problem and come back.]

We were sent off by Angela who was about to cry and left for our territories.

In the direction of our destination, black clouds stirring our feeling of uneasiness spread.

Chapter 87

My Grandfather's Hidden Fans are here too

With my escorts of a platoon of soldiers lent by the crown prince, we aimed towards the southern part of Hakusu territory. Surely my grandfather was there.

Next to me who was riding a horse, Ricardo was also riding on his horse.

Before he headed to Astor territory, he sent his subordinates to his parents.

After we entered his territory, a subordinate of his joined us in our journey to his house.

To inform his parents of his actions, and to have Millard support Earl Hakusu.

[Hahaha, Miss Britney's horse riding skills sure is unfeminine! You also normally underwent strict soldier training, truly a young lady of Hakusu earldom.]

The owner of the out-of-place cheerful voice was the chief of the platoon that's in his thirties. I thought that he was trying to soften the heavy atmosphere.

His well-built body was enveloped in armor, and he really was a man that had the air of a sports-oriented person.

[Compared to my family, I had not done much yet. But women of Hakusu earldom often ride horses.]

Since we're located at the countryside, even shopping for things took a day.

I was discussing with my cousin about things I wished to improve for the neighborhood.

(Since it's an emergency situation, it's impossible to do so now though.)

Since I was heading north from the capital city without taking a break, I was beginning to feel exhausted.

Even though I had been training hard lately, it was difficult to travel for several days without carriage. I had changed my horses on the way, and was going vertically north at Astor territory now.

It's been a day and a half of travelling on horseback at full speed, but it would take another half a day to arrive. It would be nighttime by the time we arrived.

[Britney, are you at your limit? If you're exhausted by the time we reach our destination, you will be unable to do anything you know?]

[Un, I'm a little bit tired, but... everyone's the same, so I have to persist.]

[What are you talking about. There's no way that the physical strength of an ordinary young lady is the same with men who train everyday.]

Ricardo came closer while saying so, and he nimbly hopped to behind me. He took over the reins of my horse in such a way that he embraced me.

I was surrounded by his warm arms and my heart beat noisily.

[Listen, you can sleep now, Britney.]

[But aren't you tired too? There's no way I can be the only one who sleeps...]

[I was thinking of becoming a knight for a while, so I did proper exercises at school. There's no problem if it's just one or two days.]

The captain spoke to the reluctant me while laughing.

[Miss Britney, you better obediently sleep. Don't you have work when you arrive there? Also, please give Mr. Ricardo a little better appearance. It's somewhat painful for a man to be refused in such an important scene. If you like, I can offer you a ride, but Mr. Ricardo will hate it.]

[Wha...!]

In retrospect, my eyes met with Ricardo's green eyes while he was blushing. Somehow, it made me feel embarrassed, so I lowered my head.

Since Ricardo's chest was in contact with my back, I could feel his heartbeat; it was as

fast as mine.

His body was warm, and my eyelids gradually became heavier.

[Then I'll sleep.]

Ricardo was surrounding me as if he was embracing me, but I felt my drowsiness getting the better of me, so I quietly closed my eyes.



It was the afternoon of next day, we arrived at the south of Hakusu territory — a small town where my grandfather was staying.

Thanks to the excellent soldiers and officials, the damages from bandits were kept at minimum. It seemed that grandfather had repelled the bandits and were finishing with the remainders.

The southern town was not so damaged; the number of dead and injured people was few. Nonetheless, the atmosphere of this deserted town was heavy and dark even though there was little damage.

[Ojii-sama, is it safe now?]

When I arrived at my grandfather's lodging, I went to his room.

Ricardo who was deprived of sleep followed me in. The members of the platoon were resting in the inn in the neighborhood except for the captain.

[Oo, Britney and Ricardo! You shouldn't have come to such a dangerous place. You have travelled far, I will prepare a room so please take a rest. Please rest, you'll be in a safe place...]

As usual my grandfather who doted on his grandchildren seemed to have no idea what I came for.

[Ojii-sama, we came to help. On the northern side, Ryuze-niisama should be working hard.]

[Is, is that so! It seems that the south has settled down and the west is calming down.

I plan on joining Ryuze at the north in the future. The battle seems to be hard over there. A group different from the bandits... trained soldiers are moving.]

[Well then, I... will support ojii-sama, I shall help the reconstruction at the south and west. There are not many things I can do at the battlefield.]

[However, remnants of the bandits may still be here.]

[It's alright since the crown prince provided me with a platoon. Since reinforcements will be sent later, you can go to the north side.]

The platoon chief saluted towards my grandfather.

Somehow, his face turned bright red and his breathing became rough...

(Is the captain also one of ojii-sama's fans? Since he's a hero in the past, he has many hidden fans.)

After discussing with grandfather, I borrowed a vacant room in the house, I then decided to take a rest with Ricardo who was exhausted. The captain also went back to the inn to sleep.

For human beings, resting was essential.

[Ricardo, thank you. Please take a good rest.]

[Britney, what are you going to do?]

[I got a good sleep on horseback. I'll provide aid to victims at the south and arranging goods... other various things too. After I finish, I want to go to the west next.]

I couldn't fight, but helping people was also an important job. I would concentrate on what I could do.

[Alright, after I take a break for a while, I'll help you out.]

[Thank you.]

If I stayed here for as long as I like, Ricardo would not be able to rest. I guided him to a room, told him "good night", and left the place.

While Ricardo was asleep, a message from Lucas came.

(It's earlier than Prince Marlow's communication... Lucas, he can't be made light of.)

Even though this was his older sister's dogmatic actions, he was temporarily held under house arrest in the castle since the northern country had attacked us.

The fifth prince was our ally, but he was still a royalty of the northern country. The person himself probably knew it. So he was quietly detained.

(Since it's Prince Marlow, I don't think he will be treated severely...)

My grandfather had already left for the north. It seemed that he had planned on going to the north from the beginning, so we had met each other at the last minute.

Chapter 88

Southern Town and Western Town

From daytime to late afternoon, I cooperated with officials in the territory to arrange supplies to various areas, after that, I then visited the injured people.

Doctors had already been dispatched, but many of the medical supplies had been sent to the north.

There were enough currently, but it seems that it might be a troublesome situation when the number of patients increased in the future.

[...All right. For the citizens, have the soap inventory of the territory sent to the south and west. For other commodities, we will distribute them for free for now. Can you tell me if there are any other missing items?]

I asked the person in charge of the facility where injured people were gathered about the situation in detail.

There were shortages of medical supplies at the west and south, so I would likely had to ask for more from Ricardo. For the north, it would be faster to ask from Nora.

The southern land was a part of the territory where crops were easily grown so there were quite a few vegetables and fruits harvested. There was no present food shortage.

However, if crops that were scheduled to be harvested now and those that would be harvested in the autumn were damaged, it would be hard for the people when winter came.

(I have to investigate properly and take proper measures... I'm worried about the future.)

Currently, I was also prepared for the punishment from my cousin who's currently at the north... but I had not received any reply.

If I provided as a backup, Ryuze should be somewhat be more at ease.

He wouldn't rely on others, and he would work until he collapsed, so his surroundings must recognize it and moved by themselves. He was such a worrisome earl.

(For families who lost their breadwinners in these raids, we need to provide appropriate assistance.)

Since there were two places at the south where hot springs could naturally be found, I encouraged them to use those. During summer, we had to pay particular attention to hygiene.

People whose houses were destroyed were evacuated to wider conference rooms of government offices and other facilities.

(As soon as possible, I must do it. But first, we have to settle the damages caused by the bandits and repeat the same thing at other places that were attacked.)

My grandfather had headed north, so I decided to head west. My grandfather and cousin were not there, so there may be some troubles.

Originally, the quality of Hakusu earldom's officials was not bad. Since Ryuze became the earl however, their directivity had become clearer and their work had improved.

I could immediately listen to the current situation from each person who was in charge of their respective towns, so it was very helpful. In this case, I would be able to quickly arrange supplies and provide aid.

While I was doing various tasks, Ricardo joined me.

[Britney, is there something the Astor territory can do to help? Big things have to be approved by my father first though...]

[For the time being, medical instruments or medicines... if you can, I would like you to arrange those.]

[My home territory has been putting emphasis on medical care from a while ago, so we can give you these kinds of things. I had thought that they would be necessary, so I had sent a messenger to Millard.]

[Thank you. Then... this winter, if the damage to our farmland is too great, can you support us with food? Of course, it's only to an extent so that your people don't starve.]

[No problem. As you know, agriculture is thriving in my territory. I will be able to give you the excess food cheaply. Feel free to order any other daily necessities.]

Hakusu earldom bought food little by little from Astor earldom every year. On the other hand, it's not a bad thing since excess inventory could be decreased and they obtained money from it.

At great pains, the dependence of Astor earldom had ceased, but he guessed that it's unlikely to occur in this case, and she was troubled that her people were unable to pass through the winter.

[So, what are you going to do now?]

[After we finish arranging the delivery of supplies to the north, we plan on heading to the west where the bandit brigands had been exterminated. Based on the report of the western town, the damages occurred are the same as here or slightly bigger. I plan to go there and head to the north afterwards. The journey to the western town from here takes several hours, so I'd like to leave as soon as possible.]

Thus, we left the southern town as soon as the sun had set.



It was late at night when we arrived at the western town.

Fog was enshrouding the neighborhood, and the seaside town was very quiet.

[Excuse us for the late hour. I will ask for the details tomorrow, but please contact me if there is any emergency now.]

It seemed that the officials who met me were pleased at my arrival. Maybe they were a bit uneasy since neither my grandfather nor my cousin came.

I finished what I had to do until it was time for me to sleep and I returned to the prepared room.

(Even so... currently, the cause of the bandit activities in the southern and western towns is unknown. I investigated everything that I had suspected. My aunt and uncle are unrelated this time.)

If the culprit was not in the Hakusu territory, there's a high possibility that the bandits were sent from another territory.

More or less there were people who were envious of our recent rapid development.

However, Ryuze was on good terms with the crown prince and I was liked by the princess... and, the current Earl Astor was good friends with grandfather, there should be little blatant harassments from other nobles.

(Geographically speaking, what's suspicious is that Astor territory is the one that bordering our western and southern sides, but there's no reason for Ricardo to attack us. Are there forces seeking misunderstandings between our territories? Or maybe someone in Astor earldom that wants to fit in Ricardo's family?)

Unless there were any clear facts, I couldn't say anything careless. I might feel impatient, but I still had to investigate it clearly.

It seemed that it had begun to rain outside, and the mood that's already low became worse. The way it was, I couldn't fall asleep.

While late at night, I decided to take a walk at the neighborhood. I wasn't worried since I could fight off ordinary perverts.

The town office of the western town was near the harbor. Even though it was a harbor, the waves were rough and there were many rocky areas, so almost no trade boats came in and out. There were only dozens of local fishermen's ships.

Those familiar with this sea could freely manipulate the ship without encountering the reefs.

When my head was deeply covered in hood and I was walking while checking the topography of the town, there was presence of a person behind me.

I looked over my shoulder and saw Ricardo.

[Oi, Britney! What are you doing alone in the middle of the night, you'll catch a cold.]

[Ricardo?]

[I saw you from the window, so I hurriedly came out. What would you do if there is

something!]

[So, sorry... I was being absent-minded so you surprised me. I couldn't sleep... many thoughts are swirling in my head so I became depressed.]

[It doesn't matter, I'm the same since I can't fall asleep too. Millard's reply has not arrived yet, and there's no contact from my subordinate who I had sent. Just to be sure, I had sent another subordinate...]

Looking at Ricardo's depressed face, I pulled him to under a roof nearby. Unlike me who was wearing clothes to repel rain, Ricardo who came out in panic was wearing ordinary clothes.

While we were taking shelter from the rain, red light began to appear from a place a bit far from us.

[I wonder what that is.]

[...Oi, perhaps, isn't that fire?]

[E, but, it's raining now. For a fire to occur now, then it's man-made... don't tell me!]

[It might be bandits, let's head back!]

[Un!]

Ricardo and I ran to the office in a hurry.

Chapter 89

Government Official's Words and Unexpected Memory

At night in the port city, soldiers hastily went back and forth.

As I expected, bandits had spilled oil in the town and lit up the fire.

Thanks to the rain, it did not spread quickly, but inhabitants were evacuated to the office.

I was helping them evacuating.

For the bandits, the platoon borrowed from the crown prince went after them.

While giving directions at the government office, I helped the evacuees.

The evacuation of residents was almost complete; Ricardo was heading to the site where the bandits were located along with the platoon.

While I was treating the injured people, a woman screamed near the exit. It seemed like something was occurring.

While she was being stopped by the officials, she was raising her voice.

[My child got separated! I beg you, please let me go!]

There were 4 children around that woman. Perhaps one of them got separated while such a large group travelled here.

However, the officials remaining in the office were those that were unable to fight.

Even if it's for searching for a child, they wouldn't want to go outside.

(I can't dispatch the escorts protecting the government office either.)

I inquired the woman.

[Do you know where you got separated from your child?]

[You are...! A, ano, we came together to this neighborhood so far. But when I rushed towards the office with my children, one of them was missing.]

[I saw that when you came inside, you were with your other children. What are the characteristics of the child that got separated?]

[He is a 3 years old boy named Jeff... we ran from our house that is located on the east side of the office.]

I entrusted the officials to take care of the office, I then brought the escorts with me and started searching the port town for the missing child under the rain.

A 3 years old child wouldn't be able to go far.

As I searched the east side for a while, I could hear a whimper. It was just like what the mother had said.

On the corner of the street, a boy was shivering quietly while holding a kitten. It seemed that he got distracted by the kitten and got separated from his family.

[Jeff-san, are you alright? Your mother is looking for you, let's go together.]

[...Un.]

Perhaps my appearance similar to a harmless livestock was useful, but the boy approached me while holding on the kitten... however, on the way back to the office, a dubious man appeared from the other side of the street.

Jeff and I ran towards the government office.

(This is bad, for a dubious person to appear here... is he a bandit?)

Since the remaining officials did not know how to fight... it would be dangerous if we were attacked now.

The movement of the bandits that appeared in Hakusu territory emphasized more on

damaging the towns rather than plundering. It could be considered that they would aim at the refugees.

There was a man who seemed to be a bandit that attacked us by himself on our way back, so I defeated him with a shoulder throw and captured him.

While dragging him along with us, we returned at the office and the mother thanked me.

Just as the officials restrained him, the man woke up. I was standing in front of him with my arms folded and proceeded to question him.

[Now, shall I make you speak everything you know?]



The man seemed to be a bandit after all. Though he's called a bandit, he's more of an employed body.

It seemed that he's conducting a reconnaissance concentrating on the places where people of western town were gathering this time.

It seemed that he attacked me I saw him at the scene of the crime.

Perhaps he had decided that it was harmless to talk to the other party or perhaps it was lonely to be caught only by himself... but that man was talkative.

But what that man had said was shocking.

[Our role is to ransack the territory. It's to buy time until the main troops have arrived.]

[Are you hired by the northern country?]

[No, my employer is... Millard-sama of Astor earldom!]

[...!? What are you saying?]

[If you think that it's a lie, you can check it with your own eyes. Soon the army of Astor earldom will come. Most of your armies are concentrated at the north, so if you don't listen to me, you will have no chance at winning. Armies from the north will arrive by

the sea.]

The officials who listened with me were also stunned.

In this situation, other towns in addition to the western town would also be damaged.

(I have to stop them here. But how do I do that?)

The others were also thinking the same thing. Some officials became depressed due to his words.

[Aa, at this time, if only Ryuze-sama is here.]

[That's true. If it's the Earl of the North, surely he can do it...]

It was a subtle feeling, but somehow I felt embarrassed after hearing their words.

(...I feel like I heard those words somewhere before. No, I feel like I saw those instead.)

Since I “saw” those words, surely it's something from the manga.

I had memorized the contents of the main plot of the manga, so I surely remembered it since I hadn't forgotten about it.

However, I didn't bother on writing it down when it's something irrelevant to the detailed contents and outline.

In the first place, there were some parts of the content that I couldn't remember.

[...! I remember it.]

Since I didn't care about the original manga, I had started to forget about it.

The words uttered by the officials.

(These are the words from the manga, the words of an aristocrat who was suffering from Angela's faction's oppression.)

In the first place, Ryuze's “Earl of the North” was something that only came out in the story.

Ryuze's presence was felt to that extent, but when Angela was raising the heat, he didn't appear anywhere in the story... but that memory had returned when I felt that something was odd about the words.

But if I thought about it carefully, the name "Earl of the North" was secretly scattered in the corners of the story.

(When the crown prince died in the manga, I felt that one of the nobles said that "if only the Earl of the North..." or "if only that person is alive".)

Those words were not written in a speech bubble...

It was a truly inconspicuous scene...

Even me who severely liked shojou manga, I had forgotten those lines.

Now that I had noticed the meaning, I couldn't cover my unrest.

(In addition, this state of circumstances...)

It was about half a year until the heroine Merrill appeared.

Although it was only a guess, I felt that something had happened to Ryuze at this time.

In the story there was no mention of disturbances occurring at the border, nor was the country invaded by the northern country.

But Ryuze... did not appear.

(The line that the noble in the manga said "if only he's alive", perhaps...)

When the story started in the manga, had Ryuze already passed away?

Chapter 90

I Know the Situation

Perhaps, Ryuze might have been killed before the story in the manga started.

So despite, the existence of his presence, only the name “Earl of the North” had come out... that’s my intuition.

(I have to think of how to help onii-sama...)

My heat throbbed faster and I rested my hand on the wall, impatience rose up in me and I couldn’t judge calmly.

(Anyway, I have to hold back the soldiers and the bandits sent by Millard. I can’t let them go to onii-sama!)

From what the bandit said, the number of soldiers sent by Millard was not much.

But it’s a different story when it came to the northern army coming from the ocean.

(But this harbor... only experienced fishermen can navigate this area. How do they intend to come here?)

After a while, Ricardo hurriedly came back.

Apparently he had been informed. Perhaps one of the two messengers he had sent had come back.

[Britney! Sorry, I made a mistake!]

I appeased the apologizing Ricardo and said.

[It’s not just your fault, I too couldn’t see it. Let’s think what to do now rather than that.]

[...Are you trusting me, a member of Astor earldom, despite of that?]

[Of course. I don't like your older brother, I know you to a certain degree.]

Clear green eyes stared straight at me.

[Currently, my father who had received my message is returning from the capital. My mother remains there to take responsibility in case of emergency. Lucas seems to be actively cooperating with the crown prince and His Majesty.]

[Un...]

[From what the information had said, my older brother is sending mostly mercenaries that he had personally hired, not genuine soldiers of Astor territory. Once, he had directed the soldiers but... it seems that most of them waited for my father's judgment and did not obey my brother's words.]

[...He sure is unpopular.]

[Maa, you know how his character is. I wish that the soldiers could stop my brother, but it seems that the mercenaries were sent from the northern country and had moved arbitrarily.]

[Millard-sama can't control the mercenaries!?!]

[The northern country is making good use of him... but it seems that he has successfully slipped through from my parents' eyes this time.]

Ricardo said so with a difficult expression.

[Britney, if this situation resolves, the Astor earldom may be isolated. We had sent soldiers to Hakusu territory who is our ally.]

Until the age before the second king, the relationships between each territory were bad and there were many conflicts.

However, since the rule of the previous king, the struggles between territories had diminished little by little, now domestic conflict had disappeared.

As the northern country had become a common enemy during grandfather's era, it seemed that they had concluded that it would be better to cooperate and protect the country from other countries rather than fighting with each other.

So now, Astor earldom that had attacked Hakusu territory was in hot water.

Even if this incident was settled, they would be blamed nonetheless.

[At my discretion, I had called reinforcements from Astor territory.]

[Do the soldiers obey your instructions?]

[When I was in the territory, I had always mingled with them, and I always showed my face when I returned to the territory from the capital city. Instructions can be given accordingly. After that, I had reported this to my father without fail.]

Even though Ricardo was younger... it seemed that Millard was not really influential.

Maa, he usually stayed in his room due to his weak constitution, so it's unavoidable.

(It's a personality problem... or something like that.)

Ryuze said that he was "delicate", but I didn't think that it's good to finish it up with just "delicate".

(I'll think about Millard later! I have to take measures as soon as possible!)

I pulled Ricardo's hand and headed towards the conference room.

[Ricardo, if we don't stop the enemy here, Ryuze's army at the north will be pincerred by the enemy.]

Sometimes he may be ill-tempered and could be a devil, but Ryuze had continued to support Britney with gentle kindness.

He was my precious family.

Chapter 91

Soap Road and Shipwreck Incident

Ricardo and I were at the meeting room.

Since I had given directions beforehand, the representatives of the officials gathered here.

Everyone started talking at once.

[First of all, this is the real story... there are many rocky areas in the sea here, and there is a high possibility that the ships will run aground. Usually stakes are pierced as markers, but local fishermen remember the canals, so it will be alright even if we take it out. If we pull them out, the army coming from the sea will most probably wouldn't be able to disembark. If we let our fishermen steer the ships loaded with our soldiers, we can somehow manage.]

As one official said so, the others also agreed.

They were familiar with the situation of this place since they're locals. Ricardo and I, who were outside people, should listen to their stories and made objective and correct decisions.

[The position of the enemy at the south is known. According to his story, they seem to be heading northwest directly from Astor territory.]

Ricardo said so and I nodded.

[The enemies coming from the sea had not shown up yet. It may be hard since the sea is currently rough due to the rain.]

[Regarding that, we are saved by the weather. The ocean with its turbulent waves is their worst situation now. Their ships can be shipwrecked.]

[...I hope so.]

The soldiers stationed at the west, escorts of government officials, the platoon borrowed from the crown prince, and the reinforcements from Astor territory would arrive afterwards.

Currently, it's necessary to manage this situation by manpower.

After the meeting, we blocked the area around the government office. We took out large furniture and carts from houses, borrowing the power of men, and built barricades to block the way to the office.

The office made from solid stone also served as a fortress.

Although it couldn't completely prevent the bandits that had already invaded, it would be hard for many enemy soldiers to navigate the narrow streets of the town.

And using the oil for soap ingredient which existed at the western town, the women diluted it a little and it was then spread on the main pavement road that led to the government office. Among the types of oil used, there were kinds that were slippery like wax.

The intensity of the rain had weakened, but if we prepared soap in this poor visibility, many people would slip and fall.

In particular, all roads from the south side and sea at the west side were steep slopes paved with cobblestones.

(We will be saved if the enemy's power is weakened.)

Using soldiers who were good at archery, we would target those who had passed beyond the barricades.

The lights of the houses surrounding the office were left as they were, so we could see them as long as they were not extinguished by the enemy.

Fishermen and soldiers who could fight at the sea headed to the beach. However, the sea seemed to be very rough, so I was waiting near the ships and assessed the enemy's situation.

It was late at night, only the sound of rain falling echoed outside.

In such a situation, screams of the enemy's soldiers came from outside the window. Their torch lights could be seen from the southern side.

I could only see a little due to the darkness and rain, but it looked like Ricardo's territory's soldiers.

I could see the red flag with Astor's coat of arms emerging from the dark.

[It seemed that they would not wait until the day gets brighter...]

[Well, those soldiers have no patience, just like my brother.]

We evacuated people to the upper floor of the office which was turned into a fortress, and placed archers to fortify the surroundings.

(Un, it's a defensive battle.)

After a while, I heard screams coming from roads that were spread with soap.

Our soldiers who were hidden in private houses would slay the remnants of the enemy soldiers and bandits who couldn't move forward due to the slipperiness.

Already, many of the bandits had been disposed of by Ricardo during that arson incident.

[It's all right, Britney. I'm sure the reinforcements from Astor territory will arrive in time.]

[Un...]

While this all happened, good news came from the beach.

[All of the opponent's ships are shipwrecked! The ship remains and their people are stranded on the beach!]

According to the soldier who came to inform the situation, there was no sign of enemy ships approaching.

Without the landmark stakes, they encountered the rocky reefs.

(Fishermen also hesitate to go out to the sea. Anyway, has the northern country examined the situation properly? To do such a reckless thing...)

Ricardo, who thought the same thing as me, opened his mouth and said dryly.

[I have heard from Lucas before. His older sister who caused this commotion seems to be a female version of Millard.]

He's already addressing his older brother with his name and without honorifics.

Chapter 92

Life and Physical Strength are Important (Ryuze P.O.V.)

The battle at the north was prolonged longer than I thought.

The weather was bad, and our physical strength was gradually sapped.

(If I am the me from a while ago, I would have broken down and collapsed.)

I, Ryuze Hakusu, had the tendency to rush without regarding my physical strength.

But now, although it was impossible, I would refrain myself from being excessive.

It was because I was told off by my cousin Britney. Without her words, I guessed that I would have to stay in bed since I would run around at the front lines without caring about the limit of my physical strength.

And if I were to collapse in such a place, it would be fatal.

I had always acted relentlessly on my own. I had to be perfect, that was always in my mind.

However, Britney noticed the true feelings hidden in my heart; she said that she would share my burden.

In the front lines, the army of northern country which had stopped dressing up as bandits did not hold back, and the stalemate continued after several collisions.

Neither of us had the decisive factor to gain the upper hand in this war.

The Hakusu territory lacked the number of people to push back the army in front of us. One third of the soldiers were commanded by my grandfather. The rest were stationed at the west.

The northern army did not move much, and as I remembered, they would only occasionally attack us.

Meanwhile, a messenger with a hurried facial expression came running in.

[Earl-sama, this is terrible! From our south, the enemy's army is marching north towards us!]

[What do you mean?]

[It seems that the army of Astor territory is attacking our west area. The western town is holding their best, but if they fall, we will be pincerred!]

[I see, no wonder the enemy we're facing didn't move much. They're waiting for their reinforcements... then, how about ojii-sama?]

[It seems that he will arrive here soon...]

I was upset by the betrayal of Astor earldom, but I couldn't show it on my face.

After a while, my grandfather and his army arrived and I welcomed them.

My grandfather had been joined by a lot of soldiers from the capital city for some reason. The royal army and Hakusu army could be differentiated since they looked a little different.

Besides, the soldiers of the capital city were bearing the flag of this country.

[Ojii-sama! The royal army is marching behind you.]

[Aa, His Highness Prince Marlow sent them. With this, we can beat the army over there.]

[Yes. However, I heard that Astor territory betrayed us and is directing their soldiers to our western area. We have to take necessary measures there too.]

After hearing my words, my grandfather's face paled in a blink of eye.

[Wha, wha, wha, wha, wha, what! That's terrible!]

[Calm down please. Certainly they seem to be Astor's soldiers; such a thing can't be imitated. Perhaps it's an arbitrary decision made by someone in that territory.]

[No, I don't care about such thing! Britney is over there!]

[...!]

Listening to his words, my heart froze.

[Isn't Britney at the capital city?]

[It is thanks to Britney that Prince Marlow sent us his soldiers. That girl is supporting the western town right now and Ricardo is with her.]

While I was talking with him, another messenger came.

[The northern country is also sending their armies to the west from the sea. 10 big ships are currently heading to our western area.]

[.....]

Grandfather and I reflexively looked at each other.

[Regarding the ships, it will probably be alright. It's impossible for big ships to navigate such place.]

[That's right. What on earth are they thinking to send big ships to such a place? The sky at the west is full of black clouds and the sea will be rough... are they not knowledgeable about our geography?]

[I think so too. Instead, I'm worried about the soldiers from Astor territory.]

Ricardo who was with Britney was not a person who would betray others.

Similarly, his father was on close terms with grandfather, he didn't have the aggressive personality to voluntarily attack other territory especially us.

...I wanted to think so.

[Ojii-sama, can I leave you the command of the northern side?]

[Aa, I had experienced such battles many times before in the past, so it's my specialty. Ryuze, go to Britney.]

[Yes...!]

I brought a fifth of the northern side's soldiers with me and ran to the west on horseback.

Thank to not exerting myself unreasonably like usual, I had adequate physical strength.

Chapter 93

A Person Familiar with Goods Procurement

The colour of the east sky began to turn white. Morning was about to come.

However, enemy soldiers kept trying to go up the slope without giving up.

Even if they were exterminated one after another, to them that appeared out of nowhere, they were at their wit's end due to the soldiers protecting the western town and the platoon borrowed from Prince Marlow. But there was no way for our soldiers to cover the difference in original number.

While watching the situation with rapidly beating heart, new information just came.

The soldiers of the leadership movement were going down to south.

It seemed that the soldiers were raising the green banner of Astor earldom.

For the startled officials, Ricardo informed that “they’re reinforcements”.

As he said so, the reinforcements immediately started to fight against the enemies. Even with the reinforcements, both sides were equal in number. Millard had hired a large number of mercenaries.

The dark mood lingering inside the office began to soften as we saw more hope compared to before.

However, at such timing, multiple screams could be heard from downstairs.

[What happened?]

[I don't know. Ricardo, let's go.]

We went down the stairs along with several officials. The origin of the screams seemed to be the large room where injured people were resting.

Here, soldiers who got injured in battle were taken to this place and given first-aid.

The official who came from inside appealed to me with a pale face.

[This is terrible! An enemy soldier slipped in between the patients!]

[...Then, where is that soldier?]

[He's rampaging inside. Now, the one who is guarding the office is desperately stopping him...]

Ricardo ran into the room as soon as he heard the reply.

As he ran towards the enemy soldier who was engaged with our soldier, he drove a strong blow to the enemy's solar plexus. The enemy was taken aback and sank on the spot.

(Compared to the past, Ricardo is getting stronger...?)

While thinking that he became more reliable as he grew up, I instructed the official to review all the patients.

Ricardo confirmed that the one at the center was an Astor's soldier.

The injuries of the patient who got caught up in the fight deteriorated and he had to be moved to a separate room for his treatment.

[What should I do, the medicine for disinfection has expired.]

A woman from this town who was helping with patient care had appealed to me in panic.

Generally, the disinfectant used in this area referred to alcohol with high percentage content.

Nonetheless, the amount stocked was probably not large.

[What to do... sure, there are herbs used for scents that are stocked in this town's warehouses.]

In this town, using the salt we extracted from the ocean, we started to manufacture bath salts.



In addition, this area also produced seaweed, which was a material to make soap, so my cousin established a soap manufacturing facility in this area.



TN: Seaweed Soap

And among these materials, essential oils with antibacterial properties such as tea tree oil were stocked. Lavender also had sterilization effect and could calm the mind.





(For now, let's prepare everything that's usable.)

However, I remembered that the warehouses where the materials were stored was near the harbor.

In other words, in order to procure them, I had to go out of the government office and head to the west side.

[This is troubling. During this battle, we have to go back and forth between the office and the warehouses.]

Even if somebody went there, soldiers who were not knowledgeable couldn't distinguish herbs.

(The manager of herbs... she should be a woman that can't fight.)

According to the officials, in this town the men often went fishing while the women engaged in manufacturing bath salts and soaps as source of income.

(Here, I feel that it's the easiest for me to be the one to go since I know minimal self-defense.)

Since there's no choice, I decided to take a few escorts with me and headed for a nearby warehouse.

I changed to clothes that were easy to move in, and went out of the government office like a soldier.

Ricardo and the others came with me.

[Britney, I will also go. The confirmation of the injured people can be left to the subordinates.]

After finishing his work, he came hurriedly. I spoke with hesitation.

[There are enemy soldiers, won't it be dangerous?]

[That's why I came. I don't want you to go to a dangerous place.]

While his honesty was reassuring, I was concerned about him.

I had to bring back the materials here quickly.

We headed towards our destination while hiding from the enemy soldiers. Fortunately there were many hiding places, so we could reach the warehouse safely.

The problem was the returning while carrying the baggage.

In the back of the warehouse, the essential oils were stored in big bottles.

I took out those that seemed useful, and thanks to my powerful escorts and Ricardo, the work was carried out without difficulty.

I also carried a bottle and when I tried to leave the warehouse—

From the entrance, a familiar figure with several enemy soldiers came in.

Chapter 94

A Former Gentleman Who Totally Changed

[...Why are you at this place?]

A grim faced Ricardo asked with trembling voice.

It was normal for him to be upset. In front of us, it was his brother Millard standing with several enemy soldiers.

(Millard... doesn't he have weak constitution? Is it alright for him to be here?)

There was a short distance from the center of Astor territory to Hakusu's western town.

Nevertheless, this place was now a raining battlefield.

With his weak body, this was not a good environment for someone who was always in his room.

[Millard-sama, what you are doing now is an invasion into Hakusu territory. Why do you collaborate with the northern country and invade this territory?]

[So noisy, this member of Hakusu earldom sure has a cheeky mouth.]

[...No, it's because I'm a member of Hakusu earldom that I am speaking now.]

I remembered that previously Millard was a polite person.

But the man in front of us was a high-handed person with vulgar behavior.

It was such a total change that he could be regarded as a different person...

[Millard-aniue, I have reported you to our parents. As a nationally serious affair, the

royal family has been informed as well.]

[What is wrong with it, Ricardo?]

Millard who responded with a sharp face seemed to have no knowledge of the graveness of this situation.

In this case, he didn't seem to think that this would develop into a war between the two countries and he was involved in it.

[More than that, we'll have this warehouse held by Astor earldom. Even though this frontier territory has survived by clinging to our house, they're on a high horse just because they develop few new products. The ones here will be as good as ours.]

Millard looked down on me while he snorted.

Indeed, Hakusu earldom was indebted to Astor earldom.

The accumulated debts had finally totally returned a while ago, and I wanted to give my gratitude from now on.

(But... because of that, I can't accept this!)

While I tried to argue, Ricardo stood up to Millard.

[Refrain from doing this, aniu. We should pull out our troops before we expose our shame.]

[Silence, Ricardo!]

Millard ordered oppressively, but Ricardo did not draw back.

[Is this an action in consideration of Astor earldom's position? By invading an allied territory, have you ever considered how people will see Astor earldom in the future... you should calm down!]

Millard was unobstructed by Ricardo's words and turned towards me. Somehow, I felt disgusted since he looked at me as if he was licking me from top to bottom.

[...Fun, when we met before, you had a terrible appearance, but I see that you have

improved a little. No wonder Ricardo is pleased with you.]

Ricardo concealed me behind him as if to protect me from Millard's rude glance.

It seemed that Ricardo, who had become completely reliable, did so without considering the location.

(No good, no good, this is not the right time. We have to defend this warehouse and repel Millard's soldiers.)

Millard was with the enemy soldiers. Their numbers were somewhat more than us, and it would be troublesome if they called their allies.

[Oi, eliminate them and secure this warehouse. Keep only the woman alive.]

I heard Millard's order to the soldiers and I saw it at the moment.

[Millard-sama, what are you saying? When you say eliminate, are you including Ricardo!?!]

[...So what? He's a hindrance and this is a stage that's prepared where he can be erased conveniently.]

[Please wait a moment! Ricardo is your only younger brother!]

[Aa, that's right. It's painful since he's family, but he's a hindrance after all.]

With his words, the soldiers attacked us.

Standing behind the soldiers, Millard continued to talk while being protected.

[Do you know how I've been feeling? How can a woman like you who doesn't have that sort of responsibility understand? This humiliation of always being compared to my extolled younger brother!]

[...!]

I felt that this situation was similar to the past states of Prince Marlow and Angela.

However, this time it was more difficult since Millard was compared to his younger

sibling of the same gender.

(Or perhaps, it's already too late.)

Chapter 95

Rampage of Musky Older Brother

Millard still continued to talk.

[As long as I have this weak constitution, I can't live normally! But without Ricardo... I can be the magnificent next earl. Even father should change his mind! For the most part, it's ridiculous. At first, you told me to give you my hand!]

[That is...]

Blocking Ricardo who tried to speak while fighting, Millard glared at me while talking.

[That woman is the cause. Earl Hakusu is father's favourite. Perhaps, it's the condition for the engagement proposal to be accepted.]

[That is not the case, isn't my engagement proposal for Britney is put on hold?]

[Then why are you still with her? Originally, you shouldn't have been in Hakusu territory... I was searching on behalf of an ally, but I was surprised to hear that you left the capital city.]

Millard seemed to be not familiar with Ricardo's engagement with me. He kept making misunderstandings.

In this dangerous situation, I was just a burden, so I moved to the back of the warehouse so that I was harder to be targeted.

Nearby, there were many bottles containing perfumes. There's also an undiluted solution of musk.

[Aim for that woman! Capture her and bring her back!]

[Ee!?!]

Since Millard gave extra orders, the enemy soldiers looked at me all at once.

One of them broke through an allied soldier and approached me.

[How detestable-!]

I threw the bottle containing undiluted musk towards him... but the bottle which was vigorously thrown did not hit the soldier and cracked when it hit Millard's forehead instead.

I could hear his scream, but I was too preoccupied to see it. I couldn't be caught by the enemy.

The enemy soldier followed me who ran to the back of the warehouse. The allied soldiers couldn't help me since their hands were full.

(There should be something I can do by myself...)

Luckily, the finished bath salt product was placed near me, so I grabbed the content and threw it towards the enemy.

[Eat this!]

[Uwaaaa!]

The enemy continued to attack even though his eyes were red and teary due to the salt getting into his eyes.

However, his movements were slow.

[The direct teachings of ojii-sama, self-defense!]

When the enemy attacked me, I grabbed his hand towards myself, grabbed his little finger, and bent it towards the opposite direction.

[It hurts! It hurts!!!!]

It's pretty plain and didn't need much power, but this little finger attack really hurt.

I then grabbed the enemy's head and bashed it against the corner of a nearby shelf.

When the first salt attack worked, the enemy's movements slowed down and he

became easy to knock out.

(Alright, he fainted.)

[Tha, that's...!]

When he saw it, Millard showed his anger and ran towards me. He smelt quite beastly since I threw the undiluted solution.

[Damn, it's not good to take a thing in this warehouse back home. Since this happens, I'll take you home alone...!]

His original purpose seemed to be the raw materials stored in the warehouse. He would have wanted to take back the soap and bath salt manufacturing process back to Astor earldom.

Millard now wanted to take me away in order to disturb Ricardo and hear the products' information from me. Surely, he's willing to take it for himself.

(Such a thing, I will not let it!)

But I had few problems. Unlike the previous soldier, Millard had an unsheathed sword in his hand.

The opponent until now thought that I was just a normal girl, so I was able to counterattack since they attacked me bare-handed...

(If the enemy uses a sword, if something goes wrong, won't I die?)

What I learned from my grandfather was self-defense techniques that were usually useful, and if pushed, I could engage in hand-to-hand combats. Although I had learned swordsmanship for a while, there were little chances for an ordinary young lady to wield a sword, so the training was postponed.

I used to practice with a wooden sword, but I had never dealt with a real sword before.

(...I didn't predict that this will happen!)

[Miss Britney, I'll lower the sword if you don't resist. But otherwise, you don't know what will happen right?]

I reflexively shouted in my mind towards the approaching Millard.

(Don't you want to capture me? Are you going to kill me-!?)

Chapter 96

Former Fiancée Who Became Serious

Seeing Millard's sharp sword, I instinctively shrank.

(I must do something...!)

But as soon as I started to make a move, Ricardo rushed to me and thrust Millard away.

The tumbling Millard then slammed into the shelves.

[Are you alright, Britney?]

[Un, thank you.]

On the shelf where Millard had collided, a large amount of salt was stored. The salt then fell down onto his head.

It was probably the bad smell emanating from Millard's body that caused Ricardo to take a step away from his brother.

He's sensitive to musk's scent.

[Damn it! You always hinder me! Without you... I don't have to suffer! Without thinking of anything, you're able to live happily as the heir of Astor earldom!]

Ricardo also opened his mouth towards Millard who was crying while scooping off salt from his body.

[Don't be so naïve! Do you think the heir of an earldom can live happily without any suffering!?!]

It's rare for Ricardo to raise his voice towards other people.

While he was morose when we first met, it was not as much as this time. His base personality was calm and serious after all.

But Ricardo's words were right. My cousin Ryuze was always struggling due to his position.

(And that time, he collapsed due to overworking. Even now, he has to fight at the northern area.)

However, while by no means that I would justify this situation, I understood Millard's words.

(If I am a man, I think that I would be jealous of Ryuze. But even so, I won't imitate Millard.)

At least, if he's more popular, it would be a different story.

If he had been more sympathetic to Ricardo since they're young, he might be able to support his brother as an excellent assistant.

However, he betrayed Ricardo and his parents, even though he should have been on their side.

This current situation was the result of all the accumulation so far.

In the vicinity near the entrance of the warehouse, the allied soldiers had restrained the enemy soldiers that they had defeated.

Ricardo thrust his swords towards Millard. His eyes were... steady.

(Ri, Ricardo!?)

It did not feel like he would kill his brother, but the situation was strange.

[Millard, why do you point your sword towards Britney? Although I was distracted, were you seriously going to kill her...?]

[Such a woman, she's not worth worrying about. Are you seriously in love with her so much that you're this emotional?]

[So what?]

Ricardo affirmed Millard's words...!

My cheeks suddenly felt hot when I heard him.

(No, no, no, this is not the time.)

I asked an allied soldier who finished restraining his opponent to restrain Millard too.

[Let's grab the necessary things and hurry back.]

For the injured, we must grab the essential oils to the office as soon as possible.

While these all happened, a lot of time had passed.

Two allied soldiers took the restrained Millard while the rest carried the essential oils.

(Well, the problem is the way home.)

We had to go back to the office with our luggage while the soldiers were fighting.

I then readied myself to go outside with Ricardo...!

[Eh...? It's unexpectedly quiet.]

While we were inside the warehouse, the fierce battle outside had quieted down.

Chapter 97

White Pig Lady, Surprise

[What happened?]

As we cautiously returned to the office, I saw a figure in front of me.

That person ran lightly towards me after he saw me.

[Ryuze-niisama!]

Why was my cousin who was supposed to be at the north here...

I wondered though I was relieved that he's alive.

[Britney, I'm glad you're safe! I asked the officials about the story. You have worked hard.]

[Onii-sama, I'm really glad that you're safe. But the situation at the north...? Is it okay if you're away?]

[Ojii-sama and the reinforcements from Prince Marlow had arrived so it's alright. The northern army had loosened up due to the attack. Looking at the battle situation, it seems that I was supposed to be pincerred between the soldiers.]

[That's right after all.]

[I think it's a matter of time until they withdraw due to their failure at the west. And, there's Ricardo and... Millard too. Why is Millard restrained?]

He was asking a question but Ryuze seemed to have grasped the general situation. He seemed to be bothered by Millard's odour since he frowned a little.

[Probably, it's as onii-sama has predicted. He's the main offender from Astor territory; Ricardo and the earl are not involved this time. Ricardo has been helping me all this time.]

[...That's what I thought, I had confirmed it with the officials since the soldiers of Astor territory are fighting against each other. First of all, we have to finish the situation here. The enemy soldiers who realized that they are now at disadvantage after looking at the reinforcements had either surrendered or flew away.]

[So that's why the vicinity is quiet.]

I talked about the lack of sufficient medicine and decided to carry the essential oil to the office first.

After explaining the efficacy and usage to the person in charge, we ran around inside the building for post treatment.

People were injured in this fight, but there were no deceased.

And then, the army of the north that had tried to come on ships was all shipwrecked in the rough sea. The mastermind of this plan seemed to be not bright on geography.

Since something I had wanted to ask had come up during post treatment, I searched for Ryuze.

He was also busy during this process, Ricardo was kindly helping.

After a while, an official said that he saw him in the prisoners' room. I went straight to that location.

Then my cousin's voice could be heard from the private room where Millard was kept.

[Ryuze-nii...]

Although I was trying to call him, I instinctively stopped my legs when I heard their conversation.

Inside, Millard was suing Ryuze for something.

[I know that you can't give me the information of Hakusu territory's manufactured goods. However, if Britney and I get engaged, then there's no problem for you! If you overlook me and give me a hand to be the head of the family, I can give you a favour.]

I was surprised when my name came up and I stayed rooted on the place.

[How is it, Ryuze?]

I was not sure what Millard's words meant, but I heard Ryuze laughing as if he's making a fun of him.

(His hidden side, it's surfacing...!)

For his cousin's engagement, even Ricardo's proposal was put on hold, being engaged to Millard was out of the question.

Or, in this case, Astor earldom was in a bad position.

Due to his imprudence, Ricardo's proposal might be changed from being on hold to being denied.

[Why are you not saying anything Ryuze? I know that you're flexible in various ways.]

[...You, you really don't understand anything do you? You're so pathetic that I'm amazed.]

Ryuze heaved a big sigh and moved his eyes towards the outside of the window.

Millard looked at him while feeling frustrated.

[Due to the incident that you have caused, Astor earldom will be regarded as a traitor from now on. Although there's room for consideration for Ricardo's work, there's no way you can have Britney as your companion.]

[What are you talking about? She's not pretty, and she's just an ordinary girl.]

[A guy who doesn't understand her merit at all is totally out of the question... to someone like you, I'll tell you then. I would like the person to acknowledge herself, but I feel that this is the best.]

Showing his usual vicious expression, Ryuze told Millard.

(E...? Just now, Ryuze-niisama, didn't he say something unexpected?)

I was a little confused, so decided to cancel my question and quickly turned around.

Chapter 98

White Pig Lady, Confession

(Onii-sama said such a thing. Was he joking?)

After finishing the post treatment for today, I opened the window of the room prepared for me and looked at the scenery outside.

Night had come again to the western town and the rain had completely stopped.

After a while, the door was knocked. When I went outside to answer, I saw Ricardo.

[Ricardo, you must be tired. Thank you for helping a lot.]

[You too, thank you for your hard work. I can only help this much...]

His expression when he replied was slightly cloudy.

[...What's the matter, Ricardo?]

[I think I will leave tomorrow. I have to meet up with my parents and do other things. In this situation, the people of Astor territory are on delicate situation.]

[You are not to blame. You helped me and assisted in rebuilding the southern and western towns. Everyone knows it right?]

[However, Astor earldom had committed a great crime. I don't know what will happen to us... even our engagement proposal, it will probably be declined.]

[That's...!]

His words shocked me more than I thought.

Even though I had anticipated it, when it came from his mouth, the reality became more enforced a little.

[If I handle this unskillfully, I might not be able to inherit my territory. If that happens, Astor earldom cannot return to its former position. It's surely a long way until full recovery.]

Colluding with enemy country, attacking an allied territory of the same country. From now on, the position of Astor earldom would be bad.

Because they had lost their credibility they had cultivated so far, some aristocrats would distance themselves away.

[In fact, it would be better for you if Ryuze refuses the engagement...]

[I, I want to be engaged with you. But I don't know what onii-sama's move will be.]

My chest felt tight when I thought about my engagement being refused.

It's not because Ricardo was a good friend of mine, rather it's because of a different reason.

(It's not because "he's acceptable" or "he's not disagreeable". I, towards Ricardo, I like him...)

Ricardo, who was younger than me from previous life, until now has seen me as a person of romantic interest. Everything was fun with him, and his every action made my heart throb.

When my cousin put our engagement proposal on hold, I was shocked.

When confronted with my feelings, the answer was disappointingly easy to find.

(But... the reality is that there are more obstacles to overcome than ever.)

Ricardo and I couldn't do anything regardless of how much we would like to be engaged.

Even if I said so now, it might just be a bother to Ricardo.

(Still, it might be that I will lose him forever as it is. I don't want such a thing!)

After a little troubled, I told him my thoughts.

[...Hey, Ricardo.]

[Yes?]

[I like you. It took me a while, but I notice that this feeling is like love in a romantic sense. From the time you told me that you find me attractive even when I was fat... I think I really like you.]

[Britney...]

[I couldn't answer at that time since I was not sure, but now I can say it properly. I like you, and I want to be engaged with you. Even if you don't succeed Astor earldom, even when you lose your reputation until now, I still like you.]

After I whispered so shyly, Ricardo embraced me.

The place we were now was in front of my prepared room, but there's nobody around since it's at the corner of the building.

[I'm happy. Britney, thank you.]

Ricardo's attitude was calmer than mine, but his ears, seen in sideway glance, were red.

[I don't know what will happen in the future, but I will try my best as much as I can. I also cannot give up on our engagement...]

[Un. Ricardo, thank you for saying that. If you have any troubles, feel free to consult anything with me. Up to now, you've helped me a lot. I think it's time for me to return the favour.]

Ricardo was the one who helped me, a white pig girl, when I just regained my memories by arranging necessary personnel for me.

He also taught me the content of the lessons of the school.

Besides, there were many other things that he had helped me with before.

[In the manga, Ricardo is not an earl, but he's an entourage of Prince Marlow. I don't know if it's related to the current circumstances or we are already walking a different

path from the manga...)

I also didn't know if I had deduced Ryuze's cause of death correctly.

However, as we were able to stop enemy's reinforcements from pincering him, it would be nice to think that we had avoided his death flag.

(There's no information, it's really inconvenient to be a mob character.)

Since the story was told from the protagonist's point of view, there's a limit on how much a mob character's information could be obtained. And it's important to be able to remember the information correctly.

[Britney, can we stay in this position just a bit more?]

[Un...]

Ricardo would leave tomorrow, after that I wouldn't know what would happen.

I also gently stretched my arms and hugged him back.

I wanted this moment to last a long time, no matter how timid this thought was.

Early the next morning, Ricardo left for the Astor territory. He was planning to join his parents and talk about their future actions.

Millard who was detained in custody... he was left behind.

Chapter 99

Omen of the Start of the Manga

For several days after Ricardo's departure, Ryuze and I were busy with jobs within our territory.

My grandfather had successfully settled the conflict at north area. It seemed that the reinforcement from the capital city played an active part. The soldiers of the northern country had retreated.

The platoon borrowed from Prince Marlow had taken up the job of maintaining security after the conflict.

They had a match among themselves about clearing the huge rubbles, so the people of the towns were really thankful towards them.

The injured people were recovering smoothly. Transportation of goods and other things had also been progressing without any troubles.

And about the captured Millard... his weak constitution so far was like a lie, he was healthy even when he's detained. That said, his selfishness annoyed his caretaker.

From the start, his poor health was perhaps a result from being in Ricardo's shadow.

[Britney, we have to go back home. Before long, I have to depart to the castle.]

[That's true, I have to thank Prince Marlow too.]

We returned to our house and joined grandfather. We also talked about the future.

[Umu. Astor earldom is in a tight spot from now on.]

My grandfather's opinion was almost as what I expected.

[Nonetheless, the earl had assisted us. Now is the time for Hakusu earldom to aid them!]

I agreed with grandfather, Ryuze also seemed to have no objection.

The fact was that we three knew painfully well that we were immensely helped by Astor earldom in the past.

[However, we have to reconstruct our territory. We also need money.]

Towards grandfather who had a sad face, Ryuze opened his mouth.

[Ojii-sama, perhaps some of the northern country's compensation will be given as a reward to our territory. We can use it for reconstruction. Besides, our tax revenue is high this year... it's not available right now, but let's wait for the king's verdict.]

After three of us spoke, a heavy silence settled in the room.

Ryuze returned to the capital with the borrowed soldiers, but I had to stay at the territory for the post treatment. And since I hadn't seen him, I was worried about Ricardo.



Half a month later, a messenger came from the capital city.

It seemed that he brought a message from the king and his decision on this incident.

Continuing to the parlour, the messenger opened the letter he carried and read it out loud.

The content of the letter summarized as followed.

The northern country had decided to pay a large amount of money and other various other things for reparation. Just like Ryuze's expectation, Hakusu earldom was bestowed a portion of it.

The princess who was the mastermind of this incident was to be handed over to this country... but she was presumed to be missing since she was attacked on the way here. I supposed that she probably was not alive anymore.

Punishment was bestowed to Astor earldom. Millard was extradited to the capital city and was imprisoned for a lifetime, Earl Astor and his wife had retired. Lily's father

took over temporarily. Nevertheless, half of Astor territory was to be returned to the country...

Originally, a more severe punishment was planned to be given, but Earl Astor's innocence was proven and Ricardo's success was revealed, so no further punishment was doled out.

Hereafter, Earl Astor and his wife would continue to live in his territory and assist Lily's parents. Ricardo would remain in the capital city.

Even that alone made my stomach hurt, but the following words of the messenger delivered the final blow to me.

[So, since the princess of the northern country is missing, Lucas-sama shall remain in the capital city as a hostage. It's unreliable as a deterrent, but our country does not want to cause big conflicts with the northern country.]

[...That's what I thought.]

My grandfather nodded heavily. Speaking frankly, even if this country fought with the northern country, there was not much to be gained.

The northern country had less bountiful harvest due to the ice covering their ground.

That's why that country often invaded our country in order to gain our rich soil...

Maa, the land of Hakusu territory and Nora's territory felt like it endlessly continued to be on the same level as theirs though.

The princess who started the battle this time was probably worried about Hakusu earldom which continued to develop in spite of being on the same level. So she allied with Millard to gain the technology.

(After she was repulsed, she is now missing.)

Perhaps she wanted to enrich her country, or she just wanted to gain a dominant position in the battle for the throne... now that she had disappeared, there's no way to know the truth.

But the messenger said that the northern country had accepted the conditions

presented in the letter.

[Lucas-sama had proposed an idea to marry him to the princess. His Majesty is considering about it.]

[E... with Angela-sama!?!]

It was not just me who reflexively raised a voice, grandfather and Ryuze were also surprised.

[No, with which princess, it has not been decided yet. Actually the other day, a girl with royal family blood has been found... since this story has not been publicized yet, I wish for your confidentiality.]

After the preface, the messenger began to explain the details.

The king was incompatible with the queen when they were young as they were married due to political reasons. When he was travelling incognito, he fell in love with a commoner lady and did various things.

After that, although the woman was once taken in to the castle, the messenger said that they were separated from each other due to various circumstances.

Specifically, the commoner woman gave birth to the king's child.

However, immediately the woman and her child was caught up in a scheme and became missing.

It seemed that the deceased queen and some aristocrats were involved in the case.

Therefore, it was not revealed to the public and the truth was buried.

The king did his best, but he couldn't find either of them... probably because they were killed.

At that time, the nobility's opposition against the king who loved a commoner woman was at its greatest.

The king himself was forced from his wish and could not make any noise about their disappearance anymore.

(In the manga, it was simply the disappearance of the princess. There're such circumstances...)

However, the woman was quietly living in a distant town and her daughter was safe.

She told her daughter to rely on the king when she fell sick.

Using her mother's past connections, the girl was able to meet the king somehow and was currently being educated about the minimum conduct and behavior at another aristocrat's house. It seemed that she wouldn't be called to the castle until some education was done.

(That girl... isn't she Merrill?)

The manga started when Merrill arrived at the castle.

In the depiction of the past, there was a part of a nobleman who came when Merrill's mother was sick and took Merrill in.

The feared protagonist of the manga seemed to have finally begun to move.

Chapter 100

Towards the Start of the Manga

Half a year had passed since we repelled the northern country, and now the season had turned to winter.

The workroom dedicated to Earl Hakusu was where Ryuze was.

On the old shelves and desk, documents were piled up. When my grandfather was the earl, documents were scattered haphazardly, so there were many things that couldn't be found.

Ryuze's men were briskly working and the papers were processed steadily. The child of the employee that I had once taught, Ryan, was working hard as an apprentice.

I would be 16 years old soon, and I visited my cousin's workroom.

I had consulted with Ryuze a while ago.

[Britney, are you serious in wanting to go back to the capital city once spring has come? Even though you were reluctant to do so...]

[Yes, Angela-sama has sent an invitation to me. I was able to get along with her so I think I will accept it.]

Ricardo, who had lost his position as the next head of the family, would return to the capital city after he finished his work in the Astor territory.

If I went there, I could see him.

If I didn't move, the chances of me as an unmarried woman meeting with Ricardo would almost disappear.

It was difficult to meet him at the capital city without a purpose due to the current condition.

The date would flow as it was, I would be engaged to another person... it would continue like that.

I didn't know who my partner would be and from which territory.

(Even if I can meet Ricardo, being engaged to him will be difficult. I understand that.)

Even though I simply "like" him or said that "I don't want to give up on the engagement", reality was harsh.

But I didn't want to regret like this.

(I'm also worried about Prince Marlow who died in the manga.)

With my cousin or not, I would go to the capital city, either option was fine.

However, Ryuze who was in front of me had a slightly difficult face.

[I understand the story. How long are you going to be there?]

[I have not decided yet.]

[For your social debut, I had thought that we have to go to the capital city anyway. However, you have an active role in our territory...]

I was stared at by his clear blue eyes and got uncomfortable.

Certainly, I had work in our territory. I couldn't stay at the capital city all the time.

[Tha, that is so.]

[Construction of waterways in our territory will begin in spring, and an invitation of "let's start a project together" came from Astor territory. The resources are attractive.]

[...Certainly.]

[Britney, if you wish, do you mind staying in Hakusu territory forever? That way, I will be saved.]

[Onii-sama, that is no good. I will be too old to be a daughter-in-law.]

[If you are too late to be married, I will provide for you.]

[Again, such a joke.]

The conversation between Ryuze and Millard at the western town resurfaced in my mind, it made me feel uneasy.

(No, no, absolutely not! It's impossible for onii-sama to be engaged with me!)

My age was five years younger than him and my cousin was popular among women.

Even Nora, Lily and Angela had a crush on him.

(A character like white pig lady... something like that, no way. It's just an excessive self-consciousness.)

When I thought about it calmly, it made me feel stupid to be so flustered.

I lightly ignored Ryuze's words.

[Well then, can I stay at the capital city?]

[You will have to return back here sometimes, but it doesn't matter since it's fine. I also plan on visiting the capital city more often.]

[As for my place of residence, Angela-sama will prepare it. It won't cost much money.]

[You don't have to worry about money. I had used up part of the budget for reconstruction though, so you can't have much luxury. That said, I'll give you what I should give you so that you're not embarrassed as a young lady.]

[Thank you very much.]

With Ryuze's agreement, I started to prepare for the trip to the capital city while continuing working in the territory.

Soon, I would be 16 years old and the manga started in spring.

If it's in accordance to the story, dangers would await.

But that may not be the case.

Ricardo seemed to be the same as the original, but there were other points — Ryuze was not dead, and Angela's personality had improved.

(It's fine, I won't be executed. The current Angela-sama won't be malicious towards Merrill... maybe.)

There was hope.

Believing so, I started working again.



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