

レジーナボックス
Regina

勇者様 いきなり 求婚 さこれたのですが

Marry Me!

富樫聖夜
Seiya Toyashii



THE HERO SUDDENLY PROPOSED TO ME, BUT...

– Yuusha-sama ni Ikinari Kyuukon Sareta no desu ga –

- Volume 1 -

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- SYNOPSIS -

Having rescued the beautiful princess who was kidnapped by the Demon King, the Hero's party returns. That Hero, the King said, could take any reward. As everybody expected, the Hero said. "I love you." Taking my hand, the princess's maid— But I—I'm a mob character!?

This is about a maid with a predisposition to retort [tsukkomi] and the history's strongest Hero, a promise of disregarding a new sense of fantasy romantic comedy.

PROLOGUE

The beautiful and famous princess of the great kingdom of Schwarze was kidnapped by the Demon King. The King of Schwarze immediately dispatched soldiers to try to rescue the princess, but the overwhelming power of the demonic being caused the soldiers to fail.

The king, whose course of action is at its limit, received an oracle of God to obtain help from a reputed Hero. The Hero, along with his party, was invited inside the castle and the King told him.

“Please, please, I want you to rescue the princess. Of course, if you succeed, I promise to bestow upon you the reward that you want.”

“I understand. I will rescue the princess, even at the expense of my life.”

The bowing youth—the Hero, is an owner of a beautiful face, stunning blonde hair and blue eyes. But it’s not only him. The Hero’s party’s magician, elf, female warrior, Shinto priestess, and female thief, were all surprisingly eye-catching in their looks.

Huh? Looks? Were they chosen by their looks?

That was the thought that involuntarily came deep into the minds of the prime minister, cabinet ministers and the princess’s lady-in-waiting A who happened to be present there.

However, the party has the ability despite their appearances.

Each person in the Hero’s party, while receiving the exultant cheers (mainly from women) on their departure, in fact, successfully returned after rescuing the princess. Nevertheless, it was until they defeated the Demon King.

“Ah! How admirably you safely brought us back the princess.”

The King said in good humor after his emotional reunion with his daughter.

“In all sincerity [1], I’ll give you your desired reward.”

At this time, the congregation of people in the hall is anticipating. The princess with the unparalleled beauty and the Hero who rescued the princess from the Demon King. The standing couple is like a lovely painting, anyone would get that feeling that they are well-matched. Surely, love between the couple began to grow just like what happens in tales. There's no way affection did not bloom. Therefore, you could say that the Hero will demand the princess as his reward. And then the two of them will get married and, without a doubt, live happily forever.

The Hero who heard the words of the King, with his eyes glittering from blue to green in the light, said with a serious look towards the King sitting on the throne. "Then, please let me bring back home the kingdom's finest flower."

Here it comes!— is what everyone thought.

Of course, the word "flower" pertains to the princess.

"Uh-huh. I permit. I permit it!" The King nodded several times.

"Of course. Certainly." The Queen said, smiling broadly.

"Thank you very much."

Expressing a soft smile, the Hero elegantly bowed to the royalty on the throne and advanced to his beloved.

Then he stopped walking in front of her and said, with love and kindness on his blue eyes.

"I love you, my lady. Please become my wife."

——so he said.

————— while taking the hand of the Princess's lady-in-waiting A.

CHAPTER 1

HERO'S MARRIAGE PROPOSAL

Hello, nice to meet you. My name is Aria.

I am Lady-in-waiting A. I am a daughter of a Viscount, and having previously learned manners from my apprenticeship, I am now employed to serve as lady-in-waiting of Princess Louise, the Second Princess of Schwarze.

Just recently, the princess was kidnapped by the Demon King, but the Hero managed to safely bring her back to the castle. I was very happy. It was worthwhile to devote a prayer to God day after day for the Princess' safety.

—however . . .

What is really going on in this situation?

Before my eyes, a man with beautiful looks is sparkling as brightly as possible. This man—the hero, Greed, took my hand for some reason and said. "I love you, my lady. Please become my wife."

Everyone around us was surprised. The king and the queen almost stood up from their throne due to their great astonishment.

But above everyone else, I was the most surprised.

But weren't you supposed to be proposing to the princess?! So why are you standing in front of me, clasping my hands like that . . .

—Princess.

And I was relieved.

That's right. The princess must be very shocked at watching this scene. Because the hero just ignored her and in a way proposed marriage to her lady-in-waiting. While Greed was holding my hand, I peeped over his shoulder to look at the princess.

But how about that? The princess won't look this way. Intently, she was gazing closely at the beautiful man with long black hair and light brown eyes, the magician of the Hero's party! The faint blush dying her cheeks is that of a maiden who fell in love.

Why is she falling in love with the magician and not with the Hero as it should be?!

Not being able to understand, I instinctively looked around and that's when I noticed. Everyone present in the hall was surprised at this situation, but the members of the Hero's party were not surprised at all.

On the contrary, every one of them watching this was . . .

"Go for it, Greed."

"That's right. Say it passionately."

"Let me officiate the wedding by all means."

. . . encouraging it, one way or another. By the way, the remarks were by the female warrior, female thief and Shinto priest in that order. When I heard these words, I realized that it was already known amongst the party members the truth that the Hero likes me.

Suddenly, it seems like his actions were not becoming funny at all.

I'm bothered.

It is the curse of the Demon King or something, because it is many times probable than proposing marriage to the likes of me. If his sanity recovers, this marriage proposal has not happened in the first place! But their appearances do not seem to be like it. The Hero is sane and also appears to be serious.

I timidly looked up at Greed-sama. "Errr . . . Are you sane?" I wished to ask with a slight hope.

"Of course. This feeling I have for you, my beloved lady, is not a lie."

. . . . he immediately replied, however.

Earlier, I did not notice because of his sparkle, but the blue-green eyes peeping below

the long eyelashes were sending me a heated gaze that could melt.

I'm seriously perturbed. That is because I am one of the others.

Because we are "mob characters".

CHAPTER 2

LADY-IN-WAITING A'S BEWILDERMENT

Mob. It is a group of small fish characters that always appears in stories. And many others. It is only a supporting role, an insignificant existence.

Common in so many heroic novels read by the public, names do not appear except for the protagonists and semi-protagonists. All other small fish characters are represented by their occupation. Cabinet member A, B, C . . . Knight A, B, C . . . Soldier A, B, C . . . Chamberlain A, B, C . . . etcetera, etcetera. If one is unlucky, one could be lumped into “crowd of soldiers” or “servants” or “congregation of people in the hall”. Of course, even if it does not appear in the hero’s tale, practically a name exists. Because they are living a life, without names they will be troubled.

I am a worthy human, one of those mob characters. To the role that was given to me in this present day hero’s tale, am I not helpful as the “Princess’s Lady-in-waiting A”, am I?

Witnessing the scene in which the Demon King kidnapped the princess . . .

“Princess~!!!!”

I screamed, and to the king and the ministers,

“The-The princess was . . . by the Demon King . . . “

I said in a panic while doing my duty to report the situation.

As a matter of fact, many generations before this hero’s tale, there was also a case where a certain beauty has been kidnapped by the Demon King, and at that time she also did the same thing—the Lady-in-waiting A of the previous generation. And now, I also imitated that. No, it could be said that I became like her.

By the way, even though the Demon King was in a human form, he was not handsome. I bluntly say my disappointment.

Isn't beauty the standard nowadays? Why is he an unattractive middle aged man?! In

seeing the so-called “Demon King” carry the princess in his arms, that’s what I thought which should not be told to anyone.

I mean, if the ordinary Demon King could just command his subordinate, why did he personally and single-handedly come to kidnap the princess, my inner tsukkomi¹ pointed out which should also be kept secret. Well, putting it aside, my role in the hero’s tale almost ended with that.

After the incident, with nothing to do besides praying for the safety of the princess, I put into order the room of my absent master [princess] everyday to ready it for the day she returns. Because I am a mob, the things that I can do are limited. But I am grieving at heart to the leading roles and supporting roles in the Hero’s party despite the nonchalant way I spend my time, for it must have been days in order for the Hero to save the princess and defeat the Demon King.

I shivered just by thinking about it. I have no fighting skills. No, even if I am given one, I don’t need it. Being a mob is enough. Right, no matter who says, being Lady-in-waiting A is enough!

Therefore, it is troubling when the Hero proposed marriage. After all, it is common that one should have skills and status in order to become the Hero’s wife.

While Greed-sama was holding my hand, I felt the cold sweat breaking out. Looking around me, I have a feeling that someone saying something like “Who is that woman?” with a sharp glance has transformed the confusion.

Aren’t they correct? That is because the Hero only thought to choose to court the uninteresting lady-in-waiting instead of the beautiful princess.

“A, a . . . Uhm . . . Why is it me?”

Princess Louise is a beautiful woman who is a head-turner. Since he is travelling together with the beautiful woman for a while until their successful return in the kingdom, it should be natural for him to become fond of her. Despite this, the Hero in front of me did not spare a glance at the princess and proposed marriage to a lady-in-waiting with ordinary appearance and features.

Everyone thinks so, right? *Why should it be you?*

With his faint smile fixed on his lips, the Hero looked down at me and said. “At the time

when I was invited to this castle, I fell in love at first sight when I saw you, who was worried for Princess Louise. To be honest, the information related to the Demon King is still insufficient so I thought that at that stage it is too early to fight him directly. Nevertheless I was resolved to tell you that I want to save your² princess. To tell you that I will save the princess for your sake.”

“I want to save your princess” . . .

Yes. He said that. He certainly said that!

Was it when I was clinging to the Hero who had just arrived in the castle and was saying, “I beg you! The princess . . . Please save the princess!”

The Hero being hero-like, embraced me who was clinging to him, smiled and replied, “It’s going to be okay. I will save your princess without fail.”

Because this is the role of the Hero who saves the world, this is not something special. That is the only thing that I have conversed directly (if that would be considered a conversation) with the Hero.

Even though I was present at the hall when the Hero was having an audience with the King, I did not have the right to speak to him personally. Then, did he mean he fell in love at first sight at the time when I was clinging to him? But, I thought that was one of the roles of lady-in-waiting A . . .

Isn’t that line supposed to be words of promise? But even then, that sort of unexpected speech of the Hero is showing his willingness to go to save the princess. Not to mention that the romance flag is standing one-sidedly.

———I do not understand what on earth is going on.

“While I am travelling, I always thought. If I can save the princess, you . . . “

At that juncture, Greed-sama gazed sweetly at me.

My fellow ladies-in-waiting behind me, in other words my fellow mob characters, are noisy, and heard them saying “Hero-sama is cool!” or something like that. It seems that those who are near me became a victim of the sparkling beam of beauty, this Hero’s charm.

But can I switch on my tsukkomi?

... We did not talk a lot, so isn't the sudden proposal hasty? Isn't it immensely in a lot of ways?

"The—The princess . . . What will become of the princess?"

The king, who is observing, stood unsteadily from the throne and protested in front of everyone. It seems he is trying to calm down. Also, the king was filled with feeling that the Hero will marry the princess, and is now in a state of extreme indignation. Surely, he thought that the Hero toyed with the princess's feelings.

However, the state of the princess does not appear to be like it. Even now, she is still staring at the black-haired magician while blushing hotly. And the Hero in question completely ignored the words of the king.

With eyes fixed zealously at me, I wonder if he heard for he has not casted a fleeting glance towards the king.

"Princess Louise? Princess Louise has Rufus, right?"

Instead of the Hero, a young man elf—no, it seems the physique is that of a boy, replied. He pointed out with the staff in his hand at the magician and Princess Louise who did nothing but stare at each other. It seems that the mage is named Rufus. Finally the king seems to have noticed the state of the princess.

"P-Princess, what on earth . . . ?"

At those words of the king, the princess and the magician looked at the king at that instant. However, both of them immediately got their eyes back to each other. The magician smiled gently as if to relieve the princess whose countenance showed some anxiety.

The beautiful smile has an outstanding power. "Kyaaa~!" my fellow ladies-in-waiting said behind me in loud, shrill voices.

If one is handsome, anything is alright?

No, if I am not in this situation where the Hero took my hand and proposed marriage to me, I might be also mixed in that group in loud, shrill voice. So using tsukkomi is

not necessary.

When the magician smiled again at the princess, he took her hand and turned to the throne. The magician is as handsome as the Hero. With the princess standing beside him, they look very pretty as a picture.

People around me also think so, and the sigh of admiration, “Oooohh. . .”, spread like ripples on the surface of the water. Meanwhile, the hall became noisy at the words of the magician.

“I am the prince of the Principality of Elusion, Rufus Ricleed Elusion³. Please, Your Majesty King of Schwarze and also Your Majesty Queen. Permit me and Princess Louise to get married.”

Behind the Hero who kept holding my hand, a solid story unfolds.

CHAPTER 3

NOT A RELATIONSHIP NO MATTER WHAT KIND OF SOLID DEVELOPMENT

The words of the magician Rufus clearly echoed across the hall.

Immediately after that, a commotion began to start when the people have comprehended on the meaning of what he said.

Rufus-sama is the prince of the Principality of Elusion!

If that is true, it seems a sweet . . . I mean, wonderful story.

I looked at Princess Louise and I am glad that my master is happy. But still, I was surprised. No, I should say I am not the only one who is surprised. Even the princess in question is wide-eyed. Isn't she looking at Rufus-sama, her gaze filled with shock? Perhaps the princess did not know till just now?

But if that's the case, I nod in agreement at the anxious countenance of the princess earlier. Without a doubt, the princess anxiously thought that since Rufus-sama is only a mere magician, the king and the royal court will not think of their marriage well. It is different when it is the Hero who received the oracle, but the King will decide not to agree if she becomes a bride of a mere magician.

"The Principality of Elusion, you say?"

The King looked at Rufus-sama, who is leading the princess by the hand, with an expression that shows disbelief.

Elusion is on the same continent as Schwarze, a large country that is bigger and more powerful than our country. It is a little far so there is not so much diplomatic relations. Which reminds me, I think I have heard from stories circulating somewhere that this Greed-sama in front of me also came from there.

"Why did the Prince of the Principality of Elusion participate as a magician in the Hero's party?"

The King asked the question that everyone was thinking.

“Now that it is mentioned, I have heard of it. That country’s Second Prince, Prince Rufus, is a talented man who excels at magic.”

That was said by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He is a diplomat for many years, a person who is well versed in foreign affairs. If what he said was true, perhaps it is not strange that the magician in front of everyone is Prince Rufus.

“Let me explain.”

It was Rufus-sama who said that.

“Greed and I are childhood friends. So when I heard Greed received the oracle of the goddess to become a hero when the demon appeared, I thought of doing something that would aid him. Fortunately, I had magical power, so I was able to join his party as a magician.”

Rufus-sama said until that point, turned around and looked down at his beloved princess.

“Princess, I am terribly sorry for not revealing that I am a prince. However, as a member of the Hero’s party I am not a prince and I intended to take the position Rufus, the magician, until the very end. Besides . . . This is my selfishness, but I want you to love me as simply Rufus, not as a prince of a large country.”

“Rufus-sama...”

Tears welled up on the big eyes of the princess and spilled like drops of pearls. But, I understand. That is not sadness. As a proof, isn’t the princess trying to express a smile on her face?

“The person that I like is Rufus-sama. It doesn’t matter to me if you are a magician or a prince. Such thing is trivial. You are the only man that I love.”

“Princess—!”

Rufus-sama murmured emotionally and hugged the princess tightly. On Rufus-sama’s back the princess’s hands quite artlessly and tightly grasped his robe.

I witnessed that scene over Greed-sama's shoulders while my hands are still held by him. It's amazing. Because behind the Hero, his status as a protagonist is in danger in this solid love story.

Yes. The summary has such an impression—

“There was a prince with a great magical power in a certain country. One day, he heard about his precious childhood friend received the role of the Hero entrusted to him. He abandoned his title as a prince for the sake of his childhood friend and joined the Hero's party as a magician. Thus he encountered the beautiful princess who was kidnapped by the Demon King. The Hero's party battled to death with the Demon King in order to save the princess and finally, they rescued the princess. In that rough journey, the magician and the princess fell in love with each other. They were attracted with each other even if his status as a prince was not revealed. Before long, the party successfully returned to the princess's country and the magician asked the princess's father, the King. At that time, the magician finally reveals his identity, I am a prince—“

Ooohh... isn't it a solid development?! The role of protagonist changed instantly!

Or perhaps I should say, can this confusion make me forget what Greed-sama told me?! After all, isn't the scene much, much better than the Hero who proposes to Lady-in-waiting A?

While I was thinking about that, Greed-sama strongly gripped my hand all of a sudden.

“Ouch!” I said with a grimace and Greed-sama told me.

“You can't look.”

Did my rude thoughts unintentionally leak out, I suddenly thought as I looked up at Greed-sama, who is looking down at me with a serious look and expression. He is beautiful as always.

However, that gaze is different from the sweet one a while ago. And for some reason, I can't help but sense that it is bursting in flames. Most likely it is.

Again, pressure is applied in my hands. Although it does not hurt this time, it strangely feels that there is a sense of intimidation at the pressure applied to my hands.

“Please look at me. Do not cast your eyes over another man.”

“Haaa—?”

For a moment, I did not understand what he said. However, the fact that he was not pleased when I looked away was barely understood.

It..... It does not mean that I am fascinated by Rufus-sama!!

“E-Even Princess Louise’s fiancé?”

Greed-sama shook his head at me when I nervously asked.

“Even someone’s fiancé is not allowed. Please do not look at other men.”

Other men . . . Isn’t he your comrade and childhood friend!?!?

——It appears that the Hero is feeling extremely jealous.

CHAPTER 4

I CAN READ THE ATMOSPHERE, BUT THE REPLY IS EQUIVOCAL

Because of Greed-sama's jealousy and something like a strange demand, I felt uneasy to not to look at Prince Rufus and Princess Louise. Of course, the reaction of the king and the others is to oppose. However, since the protagonist of the hero's tale is holding my hand, the story progresses in an entirely different way.

"If he is the real Prince Rufus, I have no reason to object. No, even if he is not a royalty, parents should send their daughter to the person she wants to marry."

The words of the King echoed in the hall. In agreement with those words, the Queen continued with kind words.

"Indeed, Princess. They are the ones who came to rescue you. Even if he is only a mere magician and not a prince, I will support your love. Rufus-sama, please take care of our princess."

"Mother, Father"

"His majesty, Her majesty. Thank you very much."

It seems that the marriage of the princess and Rufus-sama is permitted in this way. The King and the Queen are indeed called the royal couple. They are broad-minded.

Well . . . I have a hunch though that saying they will give their approval even if Rufus-sama is really only a mere magician is a little dubious. That's that, I honestly want to congratulate them than pointlessly find fault at them.

The words "Princess, congratulations!" and "We wish you happiness" from everyone in the hall were directed to the couple. The cheers and applause increased. It is like a warm welcome of the marriage of Prince Rufus and Princess Louise in the hall. Just a little while ago, the atmosphere was kind of full of surprise and shock, and now that the solid love story was on the verge of being successful, everyone seems to be waiting eagerly for a clear and harmonious atmosphere to flow.

Everyone is quick to switch. Really, as expected of those working in the castle! Similarly, I would also have taken the initiative and applauded if Greed-sama has not taken my hand. After all, I have been a lady-in-waiting for 6 years. I am good at reading the atmosphere.

However . . . the one in front of me does not seem to read the atmosphere. No, does he dare to ignore it?

*Kuuki yome!*¹

Oh, my mistake. *Read the situation!*²

But with my thoughts' zero magical power, it did not reach the Hero . . .

Behind you is your childhood friend and comrade, and also your country's prince who is trying to secure a wife, you did not turn without a fleeting glance, Greed-sama. You have been staring at my face the whole time. It will be pierced and have a hole. I don't think you see anything appealing in an ordinary lady-in-waiting's face but . . . are you counting the number of pores?

— is what I thought. I somewhat escaped reality because I am afraid to say it bluntly.

After I looked at the princess (and Rufus-sama), the sweetness in the gaze of Greed-sama returned but the strange dark flame that I have seen in his eyes gave me a feeling of "fear". It feels like being a frog cursed by a snake. And yet . . . Ah! I wonder what was that?

My skills to read the situation became annoying for the first time.

The solid development of the Princess and Rufus-sama has satisfied everyone's interest, and I know that they came to gather around me and Greed-sama again.

"By the way, what about these two?" or something like that!

Even if you do not see anything except for the Hero, you can sense such thing in the air. The joyous mood in everyone who happened to experience the solid development feels like "*this should also have ideal results*" kind of atmosphere.

Surely, doesn't it look like everyone thinks "*the love story of the lady-in-waiting who was worried for the princess and the hero who defeated the Demon King and saved the*

princess for her sake” in their mind?

Such flowery . . . No, no, it is a positive interpretation.

Unless that *“compassionate lady-in-waiting”* is me, surely flowers might have bloomed in my head, right?

What a sudden change of attitude . . . Containing my tsukkomi in my heart, I went along with the mood around me.

But I did not want to read such atmosphere!

Ahh... They noticed that I have not given my reply and their stinging gazes seem to say, *“There is no reason to reject him, right?”*, and *“No way.”*, and *“She will not dump the Hero in public.”*

Also, even the king has read the thoughts, *“By the way, what is happening in the hero’s side?”*

That’s not what a royalty should say!

It is clear that everyone in the hall have their gazes zeroed in to me and the Hero.

I’m in a pinch.

I felt the cold sweat dripping continuously on my face and back while my hand is held by the Hero. This person unmistakably created the biggest crisis. I’m in a dilemma.

I want to reject the marriage proposal once and for all, which was my real intention. After all, isn’t he the Hero? Isn’t he the great person who received the oracle from the goddess, took responsibility of the mission to defeat the Demon king and splendidly accomplished it?

I am only a daughter of a viscount, whose both appearance and ability are ordinary. Mixed with the ladies-in-waiting who assembled in the hall and immediately hidden, like one of the extras (mob) that will not remain in anyone’s memory, he . . . will marry me?

Ahhh! Impossible! When you think about it, it is impossible!

I am not forgiving myself even if others did. Other women can rival me to be next to the Hero! I must absolutely, absolutely refuse this. Frankly, it is troublesome to decide in this unconventional circumstance.

But can I refuse this.....?

I desperately thought about it. I wonder what will happen if I refuse.

If I say that this is detestable—the whole kingdom will make me suffer without a doubt. Because if I will become the Hero's wife, this country will certainly be able to have a connection with the Hero.

The connection with the Hero who has the power to beat the Demon King with the blessing of the goddess will be effective as a political advantage against other countries. That is why the king and the ministers thought about marrying Princess Louise to the Hero. Because the Hero brings national interest regardless of his origin, it doesn't matter whether the Hero is a noble or one of the general masses. Well, since the princess was determined to marry into the royal family of Elusion, then the national interest has shifted into another direction. However, even if you set that thought aside, the place where you want a connection with the Hero still has not changed. If you can use the influence of the Hero . . .

Just imagining it is very bleak. In a word, even when I imagine myself as the Hero's wife, why did it give me a bleak feeling..... I cannot imagine it.

I'm troubled. Really, really troubled. I cannot refuse. But I don't want to accept the Hero's marriage proposal.

"Aria."

The Hero who had that momentary flame in the sweetness in his eyes suddenly called my name. His voice is not loud. But for some reason, it felt like his clear voice resonated in the hall.

"Let me say it again. I love you. Please become my wife."

Why read the situation now, Greed-sama.....?

Becoming the center of attention because of the second marriage proposal.....

That's it, right? It was definitely on purpose! You aimed to say it again so that I cannot refuse, right?!

Sweat came out continuously like before.

On that occasion, I cannot take my eyes off the Hero who was unstoppable but at the edge of my peripheral vision, I saw the Hero's comrade's behind him trying hard . . . to send their thoughts to me by desperately looking at me. It is as if they are pressing their hands together in prayer and winking towards me. Even Rufus-sama, who looks calm, is doing the same thing. Unfortunately, with my zero magical power, I cannot comprehend what they are trying to convey.

But I wonder why. I wonder why their supplication felt like, *"Do not refuse! Do you want this country to be ruined?"*

I . . . see. I . . . can read the atmosphere.

I don't understand but it appears that the extinction flag is standing.

I am troubled. My chances of refusing are gradually decreasing! My head is spinning.

At that moment, I suddenly recalled my Milford family's precept. Ugh . . . there's no choice but to abide it.

I breathed and opened my mouth.

"Hero-sama....."

I felt the people around me hold their breath in anxiety, waiting for my reply. On the other hand, the Hero's party members seem to be praying to the goddess for some reason.

Greed-sama..... What the hell are you? Suspicion began to form in me.

But it is not the right place right now to worry about that. Placing my suspicion in the corner of my mind, I returned my awareness to the Hero in front of me and nervously gave my reply.

"I... I don't know Greed-sama that well. And I also think that Greed-sama does not know anything about me. Then, isn't it better if I replied when we became well-

acquainted with each other?”

This... is postponing!

One of the family precepts in our Viscount Milford’s household: “One should postpone if a difficult problem arises!”

In the hall where the dejected atmosphere spreads, I waited for the Hero’s response.

The Hero looked down fixedly at me with unreadable eyes, but before I could think what that was, he expressed a soft smile.

“Kyaaa— !” my fellow ladies-in-waiting behind me squealed. So the handsome man’s smile was now a weapon. Even I felt that I was instantly defeated.

In such a commotion, the Hero bowed down his head and kissed the back of my hands.
Hiii—!

The shrill voices get louder again. Isn’t that so? This elegant behavior, isn’t it prince-like?

“Yes, of course. I also want to know about you and I want you to know about me,” the Hero said.

While piercing me with a look from his sea-colored eyes peeping through his shining pale golden bangs—

Looking at such wonderful gentlemanly appearance, I wanted to think that I only imagined those chills running through my spine.

CHAPTER 5

THE STRONGEST HERO

IS THE MOST UNFORTUNATE HERO

PART 1

This world was created by a married couple of gods, Refelia, the goddess of light and Atillard, the god of darkness. They created the new world from the powers of the six kinds of kings of spirits: water, earth, air, fire, light and darkness. The kings of spirits, together with the goddess of light and the god of darkness, used those powers to create the world. In other words, the kings of spirits were descendants of gods, an existence that make up this world.

These six kinds of forces that form the foundation of the world needs to be spread far and wide, but it seems that it is difficult to distribute the energy with only six kings of spirits. From the fragments of their power, they created subordinates and deployed them throughout the world. That is a spirit.

When the spirits' power goes around the world and circulated well, the god and goddess of creation created life. The plants and animals and other living things that we know.

The god and goddess, with their children, the kings of spirits, discussed together and concluded to create a life similar to their appearance. That was us human beings.

However, the god of darkness, Atillard, ran out of power during the creation of human beings and succumbed to eternal sleep. The goddess of light, Refelia, grieved about it. From that grief, the demons were born. It is said that the eyes of the demons are red without exception because they were born from tears of mourning.

The demons who existed due to grief became the world's most disliked beings. And they hated the humans in the world who were born due to blessing——From that time on, the conflict between humans and demons began.

[The World Creation Myth Told to Children]



[Present]

“So it’s been a month since we left here last time”

The female thief, Milly, murmured with strong feelings while sitting on the soft sofa.

After the commotion in the hall, a special room was given to the Hero’s party by the King of Schwarze that serves as a private room and living room to rest for a short while. Currently, not all six members are there.

“I never thought that we would defeat the Demon King and then return so soon.”

“Yeah. I also did not imagine such thing when we left here. However, since everyone was upset at that time, one could not think to that extent because of the real situation.”

It was Renas the priest sitting next to Milly who answered. He has a pale green hair and black eyes, the priest who is said to be in a high ranking position with status of “white” among priests, and also the mood maker of the party.

“It was a tiring month in a lot of ways, right?” Remembering about that time, Renas looked at a distance while sighing.

Everyone seemed to sympathize with that impression. All who were present gazed towards the main cause of their tiredness, who was standing by the window. However that culprit Greed, the hero, only watched outside the windows while folding his arms, as if not worrying about those stares.

His face is devoid of any expression. There is only a stoic expression just like a doll. There is not a sweet smile and an expression of someone who is in love like the one he showed in the hall, as if it was just a dream or illusion.

However, this expressionless state is a default for Greed. If Renas and the rest would say, the Greed in the hall is more of a nightmare than a dream. And the nightmare shown to them is equivalent with that one month.

No, instead—

“I feel that the nightmare is still going on.....” Renas’ murmurs were the same with what everyone has in their hearts.

The beginning of the nightmare happened a month ago, when Greed fell in love with a certain lady-in-waiting at first sight when they arrived at the Kingdom of Schwarze’s castle. Greed, who did not favor anyone from the opposite sex, and even did not show interest in other people until now. The six people were friends even before becoming a fighting party. Normally, it is a blessing when something pleasant happens to a friend.

However, this is Greed. This generation’s strongest hero and most unfortunate hero, he is . . . in love.

Probably, his first love.

There is the harbinger of natural disaster, they thought. And they can say that the premonition is correct in a sense. Surely, the demons may have not noticed that the fate of the world has been left on the hands of one woman.

They recalled what happened in the past month. Those days were full of shivering, chills and anguish.



[Past]

“I’m going out for a bit.”

Departing from the castle to rescue Princess Louise, the party arrived in a big district to the east of the Kingdom of Schwarze called Mifana, and took a room in an intermediate level inn that was neither high class nor shabby. Whether to discuss future policies or to prepare for the journey, Greed, the leader, left alone. That expressionless and unconcerned tone is a usual habit.

Although the remaining members did not have any prior arrangements, they gathered in one corner of the inn’s dining hall. Because it is not yet time to eat, there are few costumers. It is a passable place to discuss.

However, no one will clumsily open their mouth. The unconcerned facial expression and H-mood was the usual. Furthermore, everyone looked bewildered.

Actually, they are in the same state up to this point. Or rather, to be more accurate, this is their state since they arrived from the castle of Schwarze.

In front of the king and everyone, they kept up appearances but they were actually confused. No, it is not an exaggeration if they their brain is short-circuiting even now.

They could not believe what their eyes saw earlier. To tell the truth, they can't still believe it.

Greed smiled at that woman in that way. Simply spoke to her like that. Also hugged her. This is the surprise of all the surprises.

Greed's behavior is entirely different than the usual. Perhaps or perhaps not—it might be love.

Their minds were full of those thoughts.

Love!! That Greed!?! Expressionless, unimpressed. That man who looks like a doll . . . is in love?

..... Their minds refused to think any further.

Besides, they have never heard it from Greed himself. Perhaps, there is some reason. That is what they have concluded, but after travelling out of the castle, they could only glance and peep at Greed even though they want to ask him about the way things are.

"Greed being in love is impossible!"

"But what if that impossible thing is truly happening?"

Everybody thinks about the same thing. And since the cause of the strange tension between the party members have disappeared, they were blessed to finally have the chance to talk regarding the matter in question.

"I wonder if he really fell in love with that woman as it is....." Rufus the magician said with a gloomy expression.

“I cannot believe it but it does not seem to be like it! What was that smile? I thought the end of the world has come.”

When Milly, the female thief, said that, the female warrior, Farah, with brilliant golden hair and a calm shade of gray blue eyes, nodded.

“Yeah. I do not think that it was a drama or a performance. It is unbelievable but... he may have seriously fallen in love.”

“I... Because I don’t want to get involved with troublesome things, I want it to be only a fruit of my imagination.”

It was the elf Rufaga who said with a heavy sigh.

“Unfortunately—” Renas, the priest, said while looking at the sky. “It seems that Greed certainly likes her. That’s what the spirits are saying.”

Although his ability for visible and clear communication is not the same as Greed’s, what they say are comprehensible so he is able to work on it when he feels like it. There are particular spirits that are sensitive to the changes in Greed’s heart and understands his thoughts; the spirits can be asked.

“Even now, he seems to have gone to order a bracelet for her. There’s a skilled craftsman in this street.”

“Bracelet.....”

Shock ran through them.

“He is already aggressively giving a gift?!” exclaimed Rufus.

“I don’t think so, but isn’t it too soon? Haven’t they just met?” Farah said.

“Besides, he only talked a bit with the woman, right?” said Milly while Renas, on the other hand, looked at a distance, expressed a dry laugh, and said, “Thank you. It looks like a pair of bracelet, right?”

“A pair of bracelets!?!”

Everyone exclaimed in harmony. And immediately simultaneously drew back after

that.

To the woman who he just met, a pair of bracelets——that is a man making arrangements for an engagement bracelet.

..... Scary. Very scary.

He is throwing away a lot of things! Especially the feelings of his partner!

“So it is already decided” Rufaga declares with a tired expression. It seems like he is frightened about something.

Rufaga is an elf. His appearance looks like a beautiful boy with silver hair and eyes with the same color, but he has lived a long life and is older than anyone else here. He is always calm under the role of the watch dog as well as the guide of the Hero’s party.——That’s how it was supposed to be.

Rufaga who does not change his detached attitude has the same expression. The others were shivering.

But it was not due to the fact that Greed fell in love, but because of the part of the nature of Greed that became clear.

Greed was not in a state to be moved by anything. A man who does not attach to anything, who does not have special feelings.

But as soon as he has somebody he harbors special feelings for, his resolution ran out of control.

“Hey, what if she is already married or already has a lover..... what will happen?”

Everyone turned pale at an instant Renas said those words while having a stiff expression.

Whether Greed did not know if there is a husband or a lover, it is certain that this person will disappear and slip into the darkness.

Preparing a bracelet for her meant that he intends to obtain her at all cost. She is pitiful, there is no one here who can stop Greed.

That is because Greed is this generation's strongest hero.

He is the strongest hero, but at the same time, the most unfortunate hero.

A human who has a high magical power and who received power from the goddess to become a hero. Moreover, he is the only one who received "Spirit Protection" from all kinds of spirits in the human history.

———He can destroy the world if he felt like it.

PART 2

[Past]

“Spirit protection” is particularly dangerous.

Spirits are the embodiment of the power of nature itself that exists everywhere in the world. They control the water, earth, wind, fire, light and darkness and rarely give divine protection to people they like. That is the “spirit protection”. It is a skill where the spirits sometimes lend their powers, which they use to protect themselves, for humans to use.

However, the “Spirit Protection” given to the present day hero Greed is different from an ordinary one. Or rather, it can be said that Greed’s “Spirit Protection” power has evolved. He can use the power of the spirits freely, regardless of intention of the spirit. Also, the spirits entrust their powers to him without reserve.

The spirits are the strength of the world itself. In other words, it is possible to destroy the world depending on how one uses such powers. Stop someone like him?

Impossible, impossible, impossible!

It is impossible, unless it is the goddess and the kings of the spirits. So all they (party members) could do was to try to minimize the damage.

Well.....sorry. We're really sorry.

They apologized to the woman’s partner (the fictitious husband or lover) in their hearts. Imagining future things, they could not stop doing that.

Sorry for such kind of hero.

However, the party who were apologizing for a while now suddenly noticed something particular.

———No one remembered her appearance.

“Errr... She has brown hair, right?” Milly asked while tilting her head.

“The spirits said that the eyes are dark brown in color, it seems,” Renas said, who was looking above as if to confirm something.

“Judging from the height difference when Greed hugged her, she seemed to be petite,” said Rufaga.

“When I was in the hall, I was told that she is the lady-in-waiting of Princess Louise.”

Rufus nodded at Farah’s reply. “Yes she is the first lady-in-waiting of the princess. She also saw how the princess get kidnapped. But—” Rufus evasively said. The words that followed “but...” was understood without mentioning them. It was, *I do not remember well.*

That’s right. Because they were very surprised at the attitude of Greed, no one can clearly recall her appearance. They were neither stupid nor forgetful. Rather, their memory is good. But despite this, no one can clearly recall her appearance.

“A-anyway, she was very ordinary,” said Renas, as cold sweat breaks out.

Even if he tries to remember, he can only imagine a small figure of a woman with brown hair, wearing small maid clothes.

“Yes, yes. Ah, I thought she was an ordinary girl,” said Milly.

“She looks like she was normal and did not have much feature,” said Rufus.

“It’s not that she’s ugly, it’s only that I think she has an inconspicuous appearance that is neither passable nor impassable.” Rufaga said.

“That’s what I meant. She was too plain that I can’t remember her. I suppose she will remain in my memory even if it is a negative image if there are any features, such as being fat or thin, or a large or small mouth, but she is . . .” Farah continued while scowling.

“That somebody was completely average. Maybe that’s why she did not leave any impression.”

In a sense, perhaps it is an awful thing being not at the end of someone’s memory. However, there’s a big problem with that. They do not remember her face, a person that would eventually become an important person to them.

———Even though she is Greed’s first love.

First love.....

At the instant that word entered their mind, was it just their imagination that they received severe emotional damage?

“Greed” and “first love”. How unsuitable those words are. Renas, who is also a childhood friend of the hero, thought rudely. More importantly, he has to find out about the identity of Greed’s sweetheart. She may hold a certain significance on the world’s fate. And yet—

“This is bad. The next time we meet, I don’t know whether to recognize her or not.” Renas said, feeling greatly troubled and Rufus nodded to agree.

“Even if you do it imprudently, you may not recognize her even if you pass by each other.”

Remembering something of the Demon King whom she talked about, that voice was also properly heard. So maybe they can tell by listening to her voice. However.....

“Not remembering her face clearly is too difficult. I am going to mistake another person for her.” Farah shrugged her shoulders as she replied.

That’s right. With no extraordinary features, wouldn’t they assume that every town girl around the area is her? Although they were planning to make contact without making it known to Greed, doesn’t this seem likely to come true?

———It was around that time.

One of the spirits who was watching their exchange told Renas while giggling.

“Oh, the wind spirit told me. It seems that her name is Aria. She is unmarried and has no lover..... Thank goodness!”

The group breathed a sigh of relief. With this, there is no need to consign an innocent person into oblivion.

After all, all she needs to do is to get together with Greed.

Ignoring human rights? No, it is for the sake of the world peace. Or rather, for the survival of the whole world.

“First of all, we should get familiarized with the face.”

Everyone nodded in agreement at Rufus’ words.

“Whether Greed himself understands or not, we will commit her face to our memory every time we meet, whatever the circumstances may be.”

Everyone also agreed. It appears like a conversation between a hero’s party members who fear demonic beings because they are really, really serious.

Rufaga frowned and said, “Even so, every one of us does not remember her. Perhaps she possesses a special skill.”

“[Spy]? Or is it a skill to make her unrecognizable in another form?” Rufus’ expression darkened.

They are knowledgeable with skills, but they do not know everything. Some are very minor. Even this could be an effect of a suspicious skill among the large variety of skills.

“She doesn’t appear to have very good skills but this confusion can’t be explained otherwise. As expected of the person that Greed has chosen.....” Farah nodded as if she was convinced.

“Choosing someone not because of her appearance is typical of Greed,” Milly said.

“You’re right. A lady-in-waiting who looks ordinary but is not really ordinary, huh.....”

While feeling suspicious at the strange giggling of the spirits, Renas also agreed.

———Have seen her face but did not remember well.

Actually, it is nothing but a characteristic of a mob character, but those who have the role of supporting characters did not know that.

Did they remember the master of the inn where they stayed the other day?

Did they remember the face of the owner of the shop where they bought food?

Did they remember how the woman who served in the dining room look like?

The answer is—NO.

It is because they've seen their face only once. It did not remain in their memory. That is because those people are mobs. They, who had never thought about mobs deeply, even those human beings that they “cannot remember even though they have seen their faces”, have not noticed until now.



[Present]

Another moment of shock after the hero's marriage proposal.

In the living room of the castle where the party members have gathered, the gentle atmosphere of the room can be felt—it was the spirits.

“Ah, so it seems the newspaper reporters were able to sniff the existence of that lady-in-waiting.”

That “voice” reached both Greed and Renas at the same time but Rufaga, the elf, was the one who spoke the words of the spirit. As an elf who is a descendant of the offspring of king of spirits and a human, he can hear the voice of the spirits.

Renas, the priest, also nodded and explained to the other members in a manner that is easy to understand. “Just now, the wind spirit told us. The newspaper reporters seemed to hear from a servant in the castle about the hero proposing to Aria. It's just a matter of time before it becomes a scoop.”

“A servant, huh? Are rumors already spreading to such a place?” Rufus the magician scowled.

A royalty himself, he is one of those who have gathered in the hall but he is aware that there were certain people in certain positions. Although it is a small castle, the number of people working is numerous. Outsiders cannot enter the hall. Despite that, as long as the story has already been talked about, the rumors will circulate at a terrible speed.

“Her existence will be known sooner than I thought..... As usual, they are irritating

people.” Farah, the female warrior, said and sighed at the same time.

The female thief Milly smiled wryly at what Farah said. “It can’t be helped. That is their work. They are desperate too. They cannot get the detailed information of the Demon King’s subjugation from us anyway.”

“The Demon King’s subjugation.....” Renas absentmindedly whispered. “We can’t tell it..... Such a messy thing.”

Everyone agreed to that comment and Greed remained looking outside the window as usual.

This hero took a shortcut and took only about half a month to finally finish what the previous heroes have accomplished in a few months—in some cases, for several years. He ignored all the procedures and theories.

They absolutely cannot reveal such thing. They will never reveal it.

———For the sake of the heroes of the next generation.

PART 3

[Past]

Originally, the reason why the Hero's party of the previous generation was not able to immediately go and defeat the Demon King was because, of course, it is necessary to train to become stronger. There is also the existence of the Demon King's subordinates, and the Demon King's castle moves into another location after a definite period.

When Princess Louise was kidnapped, the Demon King's castle happened to be in Schwarze. That's why this kingdom was able to immediately dispatch soldiers to the castle———although it was a struggle to reach the castle due to the interference of the group of demons. However, the castle moved after they have taken the princess. No one knew where it went. That is why Schwarze had to rely on the hero.

The hero's party, who received the request, first gathered information including the location of the moving castle through information brokers, adventure guilds and spirits. It turned out that the castle moved to the Barlude mountain range located at the border of the two countries, Lexarida and Mindalk.

But even if they knew the location, there is still a problem.

The Demon King's castle had many barriers. The barrier was created by the seven major subordinates of the Demon King and it was necessary to defeat all the major subordinates in order to enter the castle. If they do not defeat them, they won't be able to enter the castle.

However, it is more difficult to find the whereabouts of the major subordinates than to locate the Demon King's castle. Unlike the huge castle, they can individually and freely move around.

At this point, Greed had defeated four major subordinates. They had to find the other three and defeat them.

However———*Greed, the strongest hero, ignored the protocol.*

"I cannot wait. I'll capture the Demon King's castle now." Greed declared. "A month has passed since Princess Louise's abduction. If I keep on detouring, I will not be able to

take the princess.”

Although he has stated plausible reasons, in actuality it is obvious that he was not worried about the princess at all.

“Even if I take back an injured princess, she (Aria) will not be delighted.”

———*That’s what you really think, right, Greed?*

“So I have to rescue her as soon as possible.”

———*Isn’t it just because you want to return to her as soon as possible?*

Because there is a love rival in the castle!

The party thought so, but no one had the courage to voice an opinion to Greed. Who wants to rush out in front of a charging wild beast while holding out a red cloth?

“Well..... the Demon King is unprepared now, and if the magical powers of the Demon King including all the demons in the castle will vanish, then the world will stabilize considerably.”

The elf Rufaga sighed as he stated his opinion and everyone resolved their selves to accept the situation. Thus, the hero’s party took a shortcut and proceeded to force their way through the castle under the pretext of the Demon King’s subjugation.

——The capture of the Demon King’s castle continued in a very rash and unreasonable manner.

Fortunately, they had been there in the district near the border of Lexarida. So they were able to move easily by using magic. However, from the district, they need to go to the Demon King’s castle in the Barlude Mountain by foot. They can only use the “teleportation magic square” to be able to go to the place the caster of the magic knows and they will be discovered if they use magic near the castle of the Demon King. They followed a steep mountain path but it was not so difficult because an earth spirit taught them a safe shortcut.

———It is the third day after they left the district near the border.

They arrived on a place where they can look out over the Demon King’s castle.

The Demon King's castle was not on top of the mountain but is instead located deep into the woods of the valley to avoid being seen. Still, whether the trees were blown away during the time the castle transferred or the earth spirits hated the demons, not a green thing could be seen in the castle and its surroundings. It was wide open, hollowed out and exposed.

The Demon King's castle is not that big. It is as big as the Schwarze's castle. In contrast to the chalk color of the castle of Schwarze, the Demon King's castle is dark colored all throughout. A black tree was also used as the door of the main gate and is surrounded by rocks. The appearance gives a creepy and intimidating feeling to humans.

Renas the priest made a sacred barrier around the barrier of the castle that the demons made. It was from the flower of Reelis that the wind spirits scattered around the castle. Reelis is a pale red flower that symbolizes the goddess Refelia. In addition to being compatible with the sacred magic, the demons hate sacred magic for some reason. Therefore this barrier has a double purpose. By catching the major subordinates of the Demon King under the barrier, they can lock down the demons inside.

"I have to do most of the work after all, huh?" Renas naturally complained.

Renas covered a sacred magic over the barrier around the Demon King's castle that was put up by the demons, while this hero protected it. Even if they drill a hole in the barrier and the demons notice, the demons cannot rush to the Demon King and will not be able to escape the castle.

The sacred magic was originally developed by elves and this magic specializes on protection rather than attack. However for some reason, the demons became weak. That is because the sacred magic contains chants that disturb the core of their evil powers. It is not an exaggeration to say that demons have a dense evil magical power that is packed into a container called a body. The reason why a container is necessary is that the evil magical powers will dissolve and disappear without it. That is why the demons condense their magical powers into their own nucleus and protects it by forming a body. The fact that the nucleus of the magical power, which can be said as the life itself, is being disrupted, putting their lives at risk.

Therefore, the demons hate the sacred magic.

That is why it was effective to create a barrier with sacred magic and cover the castle.

“Hey, my magical power is almost zero.....”

Renas’ face was pale as he continued to erect a huge barrier around the castle.

It was his first time putting up a big barrier. However, because it is a high priest like Renas, he can produce an immense amount of magical powers.

“I will take care of the rest.” Rufaga the elf patted Renas’ shoulder to comfort him.

They took a sidelong glance at Greed, who was the perpetrator of doing such unreasonable thing, and those with magical powers gazed quietly at the barrier built by the leaders of the demons, which looks like a film of soap bubbles on the surface.

“I will remove the limiter as we attack,” he announced from near the creaking barrier.

“I see. Are you also exerting pressure from the inside of the castle’s barrier using the power of the spirits?” Rufaga stared at Greed and the creaking barrier with a wry smile. It seemed impressive and amazing.

It is unusual for him to have this kind of expression. It is because this barrier breaking is just all about common sense.

———Yes. The one who is irrational is the strongest hero, Greed.

Greed removed the limiter outside the barrier of the Demon King’s castle built by the other surviving leaders and the spirits commenced an attack from the inside of the barrier.

He synchronized his power and the power of the spirits and concentrated to hit onto a single point of the barrier.

The barrier of the Demon King’s castle is in fact anti-human but is ineffective to spirits, and because Greed always synchronizes his powers with the spirits, it was a technique that he could do. The magical powers that Greed possesses are the powers of all kinds of spirits and also the power of the hero that the goddess bestowed upon him. The three kinds of powers hit the barrier of the demons inside and outside on one point and before that force———it vanished quickly. Thinking about the long battle journey of the heroes of the previous generations, it was truly amusing.

[Present]

I wonder if this is alright?

Slowly, everyone except Greed and Rufaga tilted their heads in contemplation.

Moreover, everyone got shocked at the words Rufaga mentioned afterwards.

“At that moment, a tremendous “force” was concentrated over there that caused the world for a moment to shake. That enduring barrier———vanished.”

However, Renas thought while gazing at the profile of the strongest hero, who stood by the window and not reflecting any emotions.

What was really shocking was the words Greed said after the subjugation of the Demon King.

Perhaps, that was the beginning of everything.

PART 4

[Present]

“Please excuse me for intruding. I am the Prime Minister of this country, Ruth Hyllingam.”

The hero's party, who were reminiscing about the Demon King's subjugation, was visited by a tall glasses guy.

“Thank you very much for rescuing the princess. I cannot do much hospitality, but I will do as much as I can so please do not hesitate to ask me.”

The man who came into the room and gave a gentle smile was young for a prime minister. However, even when discussing with the king in the hall earlier, this man is the one who was always at the side of the king and was managing the place. With unusual eyes and maroon hair, his appearance is on par with the members of the party. His age is probably around mid-30s. However, as expected, his calm countenance is full of quiet force as he does his ministerial duties.

“Thank you very much. We are very grateful to receive your hospitality.”

It was Rufus who responded in behalf of everyone.

Greed, who was looking expressionlessly outside the window until now, turned back and spoke. “Prime minister, I have a request for you.”

The prime minister noticed that the expression he showed to Aria in the hall was quite different, but he didn't mind and responded while smiling.

“What is it? I wonder if it is something that I can do.”

“I would like to contact her father, but how long does it take riding a fast horse from here to the Viscount Milford's estate?”

“Oh.... To the Viscount Milford's estate, is it? Well, if you go there riding a fast horse, it will take you three days; six days if it is a round trip.”

While feeling slightly astonished, the prime minister answered and looked for a while

at Greed to observe.

“Forgive me for asking but the reason why you wanted to contact Viscount Milford.....?”

“Yes. I heard this from Rufus that in the nobility, one must appear before the father to obtain permission to marry. In accordance to that custom, I wanted first to verify her father’s intentions.”

“I see.....”

The prime minister’s eyes behind his glasses narrowed, thought of something for a few seconds and then smiled at Greed.

“If that is the case, then I think I can be of assistance. Viscount Milford and I, along with the royal family’s magician Famir, are old friends. Besides———I am her guardian [1] here in the castle.”

“I see. So that’s the quickest way to talk to you.”

It was the elf Rufaga who spoke and stood from his chair.

Ah! Here it is! Here it is!

The party members except Greed thought the same thing.

Casting a sidelong glance in his surroundings, he drew closer in front of the prime minister and looked up at him.

The elf, whose appearance is that of about a 14 or 15 year old boy, and the tall man with glasses. Their eyes met, staring at each other to gauge the other’s thoughts——it seems they are thinking about something.

The prime minister suddenly expressed a small smile and said. “It seems this story is better not told to people. Let’s move to a separate room and discuss it.”

“Yes, please.” Rufaga accepted the invitation with a smile. It seems like he found an ideal negotiation opponent.

No, rather than a negotiation opponent..... a collaborator?

The prime minister and the elf went out of the living room together.

“Well then, Hero-dono, I will see you later in regards with the letter.”

After the two went out, the complexion of the rest of the members turned sullen as they saw Greed turning his gaze again outside the window.

It is now the calm before the storm. The Demon King was defeated. The threat to the world should have been removed. That word has disproved it.

———No, when Greed has found her in this castle, it has already started.



[Past]

Although it is true that the difference between the invalidation of barrier of Demon King's castle and the distortion of the world is paper-thin, they were chosen to be a member of the elite hero's party.

They instantly nodded to one another and broke into the castle after splitting into teams as they have already planned.

That strategy was———

“After Renas constructs the barrier with sacred magic, I will make a hole in the barrier of the Demon King's castle. When we enter the castle, the group that will rescue the princess will head towards the tower where she was imprisoned. Rescuing her is the top priority. Once you have rescued the princess without being chased by the enemy, go outside the barrier and wait..... The meeting place is here, the entrance to the forest in front of the Devil's castle. Renas, Rufaga and I will blatantly divert their attention by infiltrating deeper into the castle.”

To put things bluntly, this is only a strategy. After that, they acted spontaneously as usual. In other words, not according to the plan.

I'm sorry to the fans of the hero nationwide but their strategy was always like this.

Princess Louise was, no doubt, in the tallest tower of the Demon King's castle that they have spotted earlier. There are no watchmen in the area, so you could say that they

will follow the established strategy.

However, the hero did not join the group that would rescue the princess. Because his aim is the lady-in-waiting of the princess, not the princess.

Though he cares for the safety of the princess, everything is for her. The princess herself is completely out of consideration.

Moreover, with the abilities of the three who headed towards the tower——Rufus the magician, Milly, the female thief and Farah, the female warrior——rescuing should succeed without any problems.

The issue is, aren't we the ones who will face the Demon King? Renas thought while following Greed, running through the dark and eerie castle.

The hero and the Demon King exist as pairs. Once in hundreds of years, a Demon King is born among demons. Then the world—— the goddess, rather, selects a hero among humans. It has repeated for thousands of years, for many generations. The demons are basically a tribe that prefers to act independently so it is rare for them to go in groups. Because the number of individuals in the tribe is small, their existences are not that harmful to humans. At least, just enough to be repulsed by humans.

Although it is the demons that possess magical powers which surpass humans far more, most of that magical power is, in fact, spent on the formation and maintenance of the vessels to hold it. However, it was the existence of the Demon King that completely changed the situation.

The breeding season of the demons begins as if to match the Demon King's birth through mutation. Keeping on breeding and increasing their magical powers——they start to attack humans according to the command of the Demon King. However, the breeding season of the demons is a threat to human beings, as well as a threat to the natural order of the world. So the world created the hero to eliminate the existence of the Demon King and the demons. When someone among the demons becomes the Demon King, like a pair, the goddess chooses a hero among the human beings.

In other words, if there is a Demon King, there is a hero.

Just a little while ago, Greed was trying to find out the meaning of his existence. Killing the Demon King——that is all.

So if the Demon King is killed, then what will happen to Greed afterwards? That was the common fear among the party members except for the hero Greed. Until Greed encountered her. Now, that fear is gone.

——But, is it really?

“Arrow of light.”

With a faint voice, countless lights exploded forward. What the hero released was an attack magic.

Without expression, Greed continued after slaughtering the demons with magic and holy sword. Renas was concerned.

To eliminate the existence of the other pair, will it not lose the meaning of the other's existence?

“It is okay.” Rufaga, who is running beside Renas, said as if reading Renas' thoughts. “Greed will not be influenced by the Demon King. Rather, I have another concern.”

“Another concern?”

“Yes—Ah, looks like we've arrived.”

Suddenly seeing a big black door blocking their way, Renas and Rufaga stopped running. Greed has already stopped in front of the door, staring at the door in front of him. The door is massive and has a sense of intimidation.

Without asking anyone, they can feel that there is someone inside. The closer and closer you get here, it is evident that the number of demons attacking them has increased.

“You are inside, aren't you——Demon King? I can feel an enormous high-density magical power from inside.” Rufaga said as he looked at the big door.

“Then, let's finish this quickly.” Greed murmured as he swung the holy sword in a casual way.

“So you came..... the goddess'—no, the world's lowest people.....”

———A middle-aged macho.

The one sitting on the throne in the back of the dimly-lit hall and the one who greeted them with a low groaning voice, the three people including Greed, who saw the Demon King, thought it was strange that they were the same person.

Those were the words that Greed's beloved lady have testified in the hall.

"It was not handsome! It has black hair and red eyes——It was a middle-aged macho!"

When he heard that, he thought she was lying but that testimony was extremely accurate.

There are large eyebrows on the slightly wrinkly face of the Demon King and each one is oddly thick; he does not look young. In other words, he is a middle-aged man. His physique is bigger and stronger than anyone else. No, rather than being strong, it is better to say that his physique is ridiculous. The clothes on which the black jewel is embedded is luxurious and the arms and chest are likely to burst with muscles. It was absolutely not just their imagination that maybe engaging in hand-to-hand combat is much better than using magic. It's just they felt uneasy because the leaders of the demons they've met so far were all slender-faced and beautiful.

Renas wondered why it was necessary to make such an appearance when they're beings capable of containing magical powers—that is, they are demons who can freely form their appearance.

Just to be sure, he asked Rufaga.

"Is that. . . really the Demon King? He seems fake....."

However, Rufaga, who is expected to see the flow of magic, replied, "It was the real thing."

The Demon King glared at them with hatred. "Stupid people. After all, you are no more than a mere chess piece of the goddess. Just for the purpose of surviving in this hateful world."

The enemy has not used magic yet. But even with just the malice and hate, it will be a burden for human beings. The major subordinates that they have fought until now did not have this sense of oppression. Certainly, the man in front of them possesses

magical powers suitable for a Demon King.

“We only use our magical powers and if it is said to have increased too much, we are killed—that damned widow goddess. I did not realize that we are also included to those who are to be culled. Just crush these average manipulated puppets for survival!”

Hatred, hatred, hatred, and then wrath. From the words of the Demon King, such emotions were bursting as if they were fired from a gun. Except from the hero, the other two think that it is impossible.

The myth, being conveyed on the human realm, was modified to sound nice.

The truth was more harsh and cruel. For demons, and for humans too.

For this reason, people had to cover up the real state of the world, the truth, with a modified myth.

———For the world to not to despair.

PART 5

[Past]

Renas clenched his teeth and Rufaga secretly concealed his eyes. The hero's party is the "one who knows the truth".

Being the hero who is the regulator of the balance of the world, he, therefore, informed the truth to his friends, and on top of that, asked them to choose whether to stop despairing or to move forward.

Still, we must live in this world. So we will move forward. That was their answer when they got to know the truth.

That's why they will not deviate. However, because they know what the root of demon's hatred was, they were driven by helplessness. Except for the hero.

"I am not interested in the world's expectation. I do not care whatever happens to the world."

Due to the removal of the limiter, Greed, while speaking dispassionately with a different tone, pointed the tip of the holy sword towards the Demon King. The holy sword that the hero got has characters engraved in the center with the "power" of Greed. A part of the characters—which were sacred characters of the gods and whose meaning were indecipherable—emitted a faint light.

"But she is in this world. I am in trouble if it got destroyed. . . Rufaga, where is the core of the Demon King?"

Greed asked the elf, while looking at the demon with glass-like eyes that does not show emotion.

"Left chest, forehead, and the right knee." Rufaga replied as he scrutinized.

Those of the lower classes have only one core, but it was natural for the major subordinates and the Demon King to have several cores of magical powers. They gathered and formed a body. That is the reason why they are strong. Even if they lose one nucleus, they can still fight.

Rufaga, the elf, was able to precisely locate their cores, the masses of magical power, even from the outside of the body. And Greed's sacred sword is a weapon that could release the magical powers and disintegrate them, and return them to the world as they should be.

"Goodbye, Demon King. You are not needed. In this world, to me—" The hero murmured as he faced the Demon King.

—And then, the Demon King vanished from this world.

[present] "No, it was not that easy, right?" *It was not a battle that could be described in one word*, Renas thought.

"The battle between the hero, who is out of control, and the Demon King, who is beyond expectations, you mean? It was the first time, that one."

The elf, who has watched over the battle of the heroes for many generations, almost expressed a bitter smile. A fight with the Demon King is a fight using magic. It was like that even now. Therefore, it was supposed to be like that this time as well.

However, the Demon King launched an attack that does not betray his appearance. That is, hand-to-hand combat.

[past] While releasing magic, he approached Greed and tried to crush him. With his arm.

Greed barely avoided the approaching armored arm of the Demon King. The wall behind made a roaring sound of wind pressure as it collapsed. Perhaps, even touching a little of that arm, he would have been killed at once no matter how hard he had trained. It was a powerful attack with such a bare hand.

While dodging lightly from the Demon King's attack, Greed held the sacred sword that is charged with electricity, trying to hit the Demon King very hard. The Demon King avoided it with defense magic.

Advance, retreat. Advance, retreat. That's how the fight is. With both having magical powers, they can't land a decisive blow while defending.

Meanwhile, the Demon King shifted. And that was also the moment that Greed was waiting for.

Renas, who was expected to defend the sacred barrier, felt the flickering sparks spreading by his feet. The Demon King, who has been only targeting Greed, has turned his fingers to them. Perhaps he was expecting that Greed will be distracted. The whole magic of powerful flames was called “Infinite Prison of Flames”. Perhaps, he was trying to burn the sacred barrier along with the two of them.

In a moment, Renas and Rufaga were surrounded with flames. However—

“It is stupid to use ‘fire’ in front of Greed.”

Rufaga smiled scornfully while being surrounded with flames. Whether those words have ended or not, Greed, who floated to the sky with flying magic, held the sacred sword while made a shooting action with his other arm towards the sky.

Shortly after that, the flame of the candle that shined on the dark hall suddenly spreads around the surroundings for a moment to cover the room and when the flames fell, the flames also disappeared into the “Infinite Prison of Flame” which was created by the Demon King.

“This is.....”

The Demon King was astonished. But with that blunder from the Demon King, something glittery came from behind him. And taking advantage of the blunder, “that thing” penetrated the cores in the left chest and the right knee of the Demon King, respectively.

The arrow of light, and the arrow of darkness.

Greed synchronized his powers and the spirits of light and darkness, and from behind the Demon King, fired those arrows at the same time that decided their victory and defeat.

“Y-y-you!!!”

As the power of the spirits and also the power of the hero flowed into that arrow, the Demon King, whose cores were destroyed, roared.

“Paying no attention to the contempt of the demons to the spirits..... did you forget? What is the “power” that makes up this world? In this world, the flame of the spirit is stronger than the flame produced by the demons and the flame that we produce with

magical powers.”

The voice of Rufaga was cold towards the staggering king of the demons.

As if in agreement to those words, Greed’s holy sword emitted an intense light. He held the sword, like a spear—

“The previous heroes possessed only one type of spirit attribute. For that reason, the power of the spirit could not be a threat for the Demon King. Uu—”

He threw the holy sword at the Demon King. Having lost the cores on the left chest and the right knee, the holy sword penetrated the forehead between the eyebrows—piercing the Demon King on the wall. With the sound of “dogoo~”, the wall was gouged. A cloud of dust rose.

“The cause of your defeat was that you could not see Greed’s power because you despise the power of the spirits.”

Rufaga spoke indifferently to the Demon King severed on the wall of the demon castle with the holy sword piercing the forehead. Whether that voice was heard or not by the Demon King. . . no one knows.

The holy sword emitted light and breaks down the core of demonic power of the Demon King. And the body of the demon king who lost the power—it melted smoothly and eventually disappeared without a trace. Only the holy sword of the hero stuck in the wall was left behind. Pulling it casually and putting it back to its sheathe, Greed descended to the ground lightly and looked at the empty throne. Following him, Renas and Rufaga also advanced towards the throne.

It was a victory of the hero. But there was no joy or exaltation for victory in anyone’s heart. There are only bitter thoughts. Greed was only standing in silence.

No one is currently sitting on the throne made of a drop of obsidian. The magical power was dissolved, and it returned to the world where it should belong. In this distorted world, no one can say that they are the greatest victim.

Suddenly, Rufaga calls out to Greed, who watches the throne with emotionless eyes.

“What is the impression of the hero who defeated his pair, the Demon King, Greed?”

“Nothing..... I don’t feel anything.”

The eyes of Greed which looked like glass unexpectedly lighted with emotion and flickered. Is it yearning, lovesickness. . . or madness in there? But whatever is Greed’s intention, Rufaga kept on asking questions.

“Then, if she knew the truth of the world, and despaired and wanted the ‘destruction of this world’—?”

Renas quickly looked up. Not caring about him, Rufaga asked Greed.

“Greed, what would you do?”

Greed smiled thinly at those words. “Of course—”

That smile is not like the shallow smile he had in the past; they can say that it was his real smile. A genuine smile that he showed to them for the first time.

The strongest but the most unfortunate, the handsome hero slightly smiled as he spoke.

“If she wants it—”

I will destroy this world.

Before they could respond to those words, the ground shook unexpectedly.

“It looks like this castle is going to collapse.” The hero said, who spoke terrifying words just now with a smile and returned to a relaxed expression.

As he looked at the hero, Rufaga’s sigh was that of someone who is giving up, and he nodded his head as if exchanging signals.

“.....this thing always happens. Shall we escape?”

It was the major subordinates who were creating the barrier, but it seems that it was the demonic power of the Demon King that supported the castle. The castle that lost its Demon King crumbled with a roaring sound.

While moving to the outside of the castle with the “transportation magic square” created by Rufaga, Renas, with a cold sweat falling down on his back while on their way from the hall, understood the meaning of “having another concern” that the guiding elf had said.

The Demon King was defeated.

But, they know that the world is going to be exposed to another threat—



After Rufaga and the prime minister left the living room, Milly, who had been looking at Greed for some time, stood up as she came to a decision.

“Well then, I will go and see Aria. We’re going to have a lively girls’ talk. I also want to see the princess.”

Rufus also stood up from his seat. “I will go and greet the kingdom’s wizard, Famir. I also want to hear about the situation of the restoration of the castle’s barrier.”

Both the female thief and magician left the room. To do whatever they want to do.

“From now on, right?”

Greed responded strangely to Renas’ murmur. “Yes.”

Those words spoken at that time is the beginning of everything.

To prevent the worst, they will take action—for the sake of this world too.

CHAPTER 6

THE PRINCESS AND THE LADY-IN-WAITING

Shiver.

The chill suddenly struck me..... I wonder why.

I felt a sort of unpleasant feeling. It seems like the danger is coming closer.....?

Being busy responding to the words “Congratulations!”, “How wonderful that the hero fell in love with you at first sight!”, “When did you meet the hero before, getting a head start?!” with “Nooo, Stop it—!!!” inside my heart while my face is twitching with a smile, I forgot the ominous premonition that I felt a while ago.

To be honest, the expectant atmosphere has a more sense of danger compared to that premonition.

Will it not become more and more difficult to refuse the hero as the time passes?

And then, that apprehension unfortunately hits me.

I got tired of being hit by a huge amount of HP (hit points) in the hall and came back to Princess Louise in her room. Until a while ago, the princess had just an exciting reunion with her family as expected.

We waited in a separate room—while I continued on bantering and progressively decreasing the HP—and then I finally came back.

To the room of my true master, who was eagerly waiting.

“My room is quieter as expected.”

Looking around my room that I should be familiar with, I saw the princess smile. At her appearance, I suddenly straightened my back.

That’s right. The princess has been kidnapped by the Demon King a long time ago. It was a terrible feeling for me. There were things I’ve cried about every day I’ve spent

here. I have absolutely cried.

I spoke in a voice with deep affection to the princess, who was sitting in the chair that I always used when I'm reading. "Waiting for the day that the princess will return, I was preparing every day. Because I believed that the princess will come back safely."

From the chair, the princess smiled at me. That smile is as gorgeous and beautiful as a glowing halo. Even if I am familiar with it, my heart skipped a beat for a moment.

"Thank you, Aria. I'm glad to be back. Only after I was kidnapped was I able to realize how wonderful our daily lives here were. That the days that I spend with my father and mother, elder brothers, the prime minister and the cabinet ministers, and then with you is the most important treasure."

"Princess....."

It felt like the princess suddenly became an adult. The princess left behind her younger self before she was kidnapped. She is now a fine lady. Is it because of the hardships, of being forced into cruel situation?

.....No, I guess it is the effect of falling in love with Rufus-sama. I feel a little lonely being left behind, but it is certain that the princess is happy, so I'd like to happily accept the change.

The princess was sitting on the chair and after enjoying the feeling for a while, looked at me suddenly and laughed.

"It is thanks to you that I did not break my heart when I was captive, Aria."

"Huh?"

"Earlier, you were stressed when the Demon King was mentioned. You said, 'The Demon King is sure to be beautiful! That is the usual! It is a promise!'"

"Oh. Haha." I laughed drily.

I surely said that. After all, it is a promise. However, the real Demon King—

Trimmed, short black hair and red eyes that are common to demons. He has a muscular body—a giant middle-aged macho.....

Demons should be able to change their appearance by themselves, so why do they need to be macho? I was fully loaded with a lot of tsukkomi. Yes.

“.....It was a pity.”

As I murmured, the princess laughed merrily.

“Yes, as you said! But whenever I was threatened to become the bride of the Demon King, every time my heart gets caught in fear, I remembered what you said at that time and fear faded away. If not for those words, my spirit may have been broken with fear. It is thanks to you and the Hero, that I was able to come back here safely.”

“Tha-That’s too much.....”

Now that I know that the Demon King is neither young nor handsome, I think that it will be entered as one of the dark history of the “hero’s tale” in the future.....

I rearranged my thoughts and said. “I haven’t done anything. Thanks to the hero, the princess is safe. I can’t thank him enough.”

.....*I just can’t accept the proposal.* I wonder if she heard me muttering in my heart.

The princess suddenly became interested and asked me.

“What will you do about Greed-sama, Aria?”

I moaned depressingly deep in my heart.

I’d like to personally express my real feelings to the friendly princess, but outside the room there are security guards and other maids who are waiting for their turn, so I cannot say stupid things in this situation. I don’t know who is listening.

If the King and the Prime minister know what I hate, I will be immediately sacrificed with a king’s command..... No, no! I might be married off.

I cannot risk such danger!

I coughed once and answered. “Well, neither I nor Greed-sama is well-acquainted with each other, so I’d like to get to know a little more before replying....”

Yes, it's how it is. It is exactly the same as my answer to the Hero in the hall.

I decided not to mention anything to others other than this response. Therefore, please forgive me for the flat tone of my voice!

“But at least, Greed-sama knows you well, does he not?”

Strangely, the princess tilted her head and said it. That gesture of touching her mouth is very pretty.

———However, the words the princess said next dropped me to the bottom of my fear.

“He told me a lot about you. Of course, he already knew about your birthplace, age, family structure, three sizes and the day you started working in the castle.”

“Haaaa~??”

“That's why I just wanted to know how the two of you became acquainted enough to talk about such details before Greed-sama and the others embarked on their journey.”

“E-ehh?! I-Impossible!” I shook my head fiercely. “The only thing I've said to him was, ‘Please, save the princess!’ I have not even mentioned my name!”

And yet he knows even my birthplace and family structure. On top of that———my three sizes?! Where and when such information.....?

——— *H-Hero-sama, you are terrifyiiiiiiiiing!!* I screamed in my heart.

A chill ran down my spine. *Hiiii!*

“U-uhm... Ah! That's it, right? Hero-sama has that ability to know the level and skill of his opponents.”

The princess slightly turned pale as she said that. I was also pale like her, but I denied those words.

“The [Analysis] skill? But that is the ability to see the status of the enemy and supporting characters. I have never heard about seeing a mob character's status.”

It can't be helped since whether he has seen the status of a villager, a maid or a

traveller as a good character, he or she will never become his companion or enemy.

Besides, if my status is seen, my three sizes should not be listed as it should be.

Even I myself cannot remember the day that I started working in the castle——

Ahhh! I will say it again. Please let me say it.

———*Hero-sama, you are terrifyiiiiiiiiing!!*

“I wonder why Greed-sama knows you well.....”

“.....I also would like to know.....”

While looking at her pale face, thinking about someone who is not here sent shivers through my and the princess's spine.

CHAPTER 7

HERO-SAMA IS A WALKING NATURAL DISASTER?

Although the princess has returned home safely, the situation that made our spine cold completely dampened our mood.

We were talking about the Hero, aren't we?

And the Hero is our last hope, isn't he?

He was chosen by the goddess to save us from the demons' threat, right?

But why do I have to feel dreary?

Is it because he knew my three sizes..... I wish I didn't hear it!

That's right..... I didn't hear it.

It is also in the family precepts of the Milford family! *Do not listen to inconvenient things!*

Since it is a family precept, it must be observed. I should do so, by all means. That's why. I. Have. Not. Heard. Anything.

I forcibly told myself, shook off the gloomy thoughts and smiled. "Princess, I want to hear about Prince Rufus. What kind of encounter did you have?"

The princess's face was immediately dyed red.

Really, speaking about that blush in her cheeks!

The long eyelashes that hid her eyes fell, casting shadows on her smooth white cheeks dyed in pink. If I were a man, I would have fallen in love just by seeing this expression for a moment.

Really! Behaving like this with the princess for a little while, it doesn't feel like I am marrying the Hero.

The blushing princess shyly said. “The one who helped me when I was captured in the high tower in the Demon King’s castle, it was Rufus-sama.”

“———What?”

H-Huh? It was not the Hero? In the story, it was the Hero who appeared in the prison tower to save the princess, right?

The princess continued ecstatically without noticing my unconvinced expression.

“Rufus-sama said, ‘Everything is all right now that we came’, and kindly cared about me who was dreading the possible arrival of the Demon King. It was also Rufus-sama who carried me down the tower when my trembling legs could not properly walk A-And it was also Rufus-sama who shielded my back when we were attacked by a demon immediately after leaving the tower. ‘I will absolutely protect you. I will not let even a single wound on you.’ He was so cool. And then, and then . . .”

Wow, the princess is speaking fondly. It seems that she will talk about her memories with Rufus-sama like this all the time.

However, when Rufus-sama went to rescue the princess, there’s no way to confirm where the Hero and the others went. On their way back, coincidentally there was festival in town, and when the story ended to the part where Rufus-sama brought the interested princess out to the festival, I was finally able to interrupt her. While bringing the princess who has the tendency to talk fondly back into the track, I finally succeeded in finding out the details of the rescue part.

According to her, it seems that the Hero’s party who entered the Demon King’s castle was divided into two. Rufus-sama, the female thief and the female warrior were on the “Princess Louise’s rescue unit”, while the Hero, the priest and the elf formed the unit that went to attract the enemy’s attention. In the princess’s story mixed with fondness, it seemed that Rufus-sama came to rescue the princess alone, but in fact, there were two other people. It appears that Rufus-sama was not alone in the battle that shielded the princess’s back.

..... I would like to accurately tell you the facts but..... it seems impossible.

Currently, eighty percent of the princess’s mind is filled with Rufus-sama. I will do my best and somehow, hear about the other 20%.

So, on the high tower of the Demon King's castle where the princess was imprisoned——the solid story was only up to here. Good job, middle-aged macho Demon King! ——The princess who escaped and Rufus-sama and the other members of the party succeeded in escaping from the castle while defeating the lower class demons.

When they arrived to the entrance of the forest a little farther from the castle, it seems that there are no demons following after them. No unusual phenomenon happened while they were on their way as if the demons hastily disappeared.

“It looks like Greed and the others did well.”

The murmurs of the female warrior who was just beside reached the ears of the princess.

The princess, who was blushing at Rufus-sama's gallant figure, remembered for the first time that the Hero and the others still remained inside the castle. (*Slow! You're slow, Princess!*)

When the princess, who was late in her realizations, was worried about them, Rufus-sama and the female thief said with a very refreshing smile.

“They are fine. Because Greed is there.”

“That's right. For you see, Greed is the “walking natural disaster”. So no worries! No worries!”

At those words, the female warrior had nodded in agreement.

..... Please wait for a moment.

What is a “natural walking disaster”? “Greed” is the name of the Hero, is it not?

I really wanted to switch on my tsukkomi, but unfortunately I do not have an opponent to retort to. It would be good to hear a little more of the in-depth story, but she has only just been released..... *Kuu.*

Moreover, becoming fixated to Rufus-sama, it seems that she is not interested with the Hero. *Kuu.*

When I gave up on that matter and returned back to the story, it seems that the Hero and the others came out of the castle much later. They arrived using the “teleportation magic square”.

And, at the same time, as if it had lost its support, the huge castle of the Demon King collapsed with a roaring sound.

Casting a sidelong glance at the amazed princess, Greed-sama and the others did not appear to be surprised at the collapsing castle behind them, and joined Rufus-sama and the others at the entrance of the forest.

“What about the Demon King?”

“Dead. It was over all too soon.”

In that conversation between Rufus-sama and Greed-sama, the princess knew that the Demon King was killed by the Hero.

Happy ending.

..... Please wait for a moment. The Demon King had been defeated by three people?

..... Indeed, the ruination of the Demon King’s castle is a fit ending of a solid story.

But—— can I butt in with my tsukkomi?

Isn’t the fight with the last boss an all-out battle?! Don’t they usually gather and join forces to fight the strongest enemy?!

Yet, why are you splitting the team into two, and then fighting and killing before joining forces!?

What is the point of having six people in a party?!?!?

Wait, was it really the Demon King?

I don’t like the idea of two middle-age machos but, it’s possible——that it was the Demon King’s shadow or the middle stage boss, right?

He was a fake and it is a pity he was still alive.....

But assuming that it was a fake, it does not change the fact that the boss should be strong enough to set up a castle. That fight was quick according to Greed-sama.

..... *Then who really was it?* I want to know, but I guess it would be better not to know.....

I'm also curious about the meaning of "natural walking disaster" that the female thief said.

And I'm also curious about the desperate clasping of the hands of the party members in the hall.

But at the same time, a warning bell rang inside my head. *I should not get involved.*

After a little trouble, I have finished asking about the story of the Demon King's subjugation before the princess could go back again to her affectionate storytelling about Rufus-sama.

"Wh-what kind of person does Greed-sama seem to the princess? You were together on your way back home, weren't you?"

..... I couldn't win against my curiosity.

Later, when I remembered this moment, I want to kick myself.

I thought, "*Why did you want to know!*" or "*Ignorance is bliss!*"

However during this time, I still don't know about such future.

The Hero was an outrageous person, and the more I know about him, the more I draw away from him.

Before everyone knew, that strongest but the most unfortunate hero has seized the reins; moreover, it was also unnoticed that the fate of the world was seized by this hand.

———Really, really, it seemed like I knew it.

CHAPTER 8

I ONLY HAVE A BAD FEELING

“Greed-sama? Yes, well.....” Putting her hands on her cheeks, the princess looked somewhat serious.

Did I ask a question that was hard to answer?

By the way, my impression from our few interactions, the Hero.....

Is an exceptional beauty.

Is surrounded by a sparkling aura.

Has a dazzling smile.

Is strangely jealous, however.

And is very mysterious to the max.

——That is what it feels.

“The more I tell you about him, the more I do not know that person.” While the princess was making an introduction, Greed-sama seem like——a different person.

He’s always calm. He hardly shows his smile. He has no facial expression, thus he’s nearly expressionless. His words are polite but he lacks sociability. He takes no notice of women, even if they swoon at him. Of course, he doesn’t smile—except for one thing.

I opened my mouth unconsciously.

Errr..... who is he? Is he the Hero? Is he Greed-sama?

Doesn’t Greed-sama, who grasped my hands in the hall, always smiled? Doesn’t he have a dazzling smile?

However, as I was told, Greed-sama did not change his expression that much when he first came to this castle.

I interpreted it as being tensed. After all, when I spontaneously said to the Hero, “Please help the princess!”, he said with a smile.

“It’s all right. Because I will definitely save your princess.”

Certainly, Greed-sama was smiling that time. I saw it properly with my eyes.

“That’s what I’m saying!” The princess, who was listening to my assertions, suddenly raised her voice. “He only smiles when he talks about you.”

“P-Pardon?”

“Well, that was when we were together. I did not have much opportunity to talk with Greed-sama, he only expresses his smile when the topic is about you. Normally, he is nearly expressionless. I was surprised at the difference. But for Rufus-sama and the others, when Greed-sama smiles, it was a big fuss. Surrounded with a creepy feeling, Renas, the priest, would start praying, ‘Goddess, please protect us!’. Then the elf Rufaga turned pale and said, ‘A harbinger of natural disaster?’ I was slightly astonished at their exaggerated reaction just because Greed-sama smiled at my precious lady-in-waiting.”

Well, that—.....

“At least, I think Greed-sama’s attitude is nice. Being outspoken about his feeling only to you is a proof that he getting serious with you.”

“Is, is that so?”

To the smiling princess, I could only smile drily.

Princess..... Please be a little doubtful.

For him, who is usually reticent and cool, to be hot and shy towards the woman he likes, the meaning of the big fuss created by his friends is different.

However you think about it, isn’t everyone’s attitude something to fear of?! The comrades who are afraid of the Hero who smiles at me——

What to do.....? I only have a bad feeling.

I don't feel happy even *juuuust* a little bit on who the Hero especially likes.

It is rather scary. I dread.

I regretted my curiosity. The more I know, the more ... what is it, I feel like I'm getting caught in the depths of something. It might be better not to know any more than this.....

That was what I thought that time.

What the princess said to me totally reversed my defensive instinct.

"If you want to know more about Greed-sama, you may ask Rufus-sama, Milly-sama or Renas-sama. That's because they are Greed-sama's childhood friends."

By the way, Milly-sama is the thief and Renas-sama is the priest.

"No, that's....."

"I came!"

I held back when the words I was about to say was interrupted by the sudden arrival of a third person.

Being startled by the appearance before us, a beautiful woman with an unusual short-cut burning red hair and brilliant green eyes was standing with a radiant smile.

It was Milly-sama, one of the Hero's friends, with the title <Role: Female Thief>.

But can I use *tsukkomi*?

When did you enter the room?!

"An-An escort soldier was standing outside the room....." I murmured to myself.

If there's a visitor, they will let you know. They will never let people in without warning. Besides, we didn't hear any sound of a door opening.

"Fufufu. There's no door that will not open for me." Milly-sama laughed daringly.

I was convinced with those words. I forgot that she is the female thief.

Although her profession is a “female thief”, it is not a thief that steals money. Those who possess special skills belong to a guild (occupational guild). According to what we saw, she possesses the skill [Unlocking Doors]. Whatever door with a sturdy lock that comes into contact with her hand, whether a treasure box with a magic or a safe, it will immediately open. It is also probably because she also has a [Spy] skill (a.k.a. Stealth) that she was able to enter the room without being reproached by the soldier.

When this [Spy] skill is activated, it is difficult to be recognized by the enemy. Creeping up and disturbing without being noticed, it is an ancillary skill that can do that, and in the Thieves Guild, it is one of the “Three Major Skills” alongside with [Unlocking Doors] and [Acrobatics]. By the way, [Acrobatics] seems to be a skill that makes it easy for people to move to and from high places.

“Actually, I went to the room to meet Aria, but I was told that she’s with the princess. That’s why I came here, but it was troublesome because a soldier is standing outside the princess’s room so I used my abilities to enter.”

There was cuteness in her beauty as she stuck her tongue out with a “tehe”.

As a lady-in-waiting, I have to reproach the person who entered the princess’s room without permission, but I guess I have to forgive everything since there’s no harm done.

Beauty is an advantage. Even if I do that “tehe”, no one will seem to forgive me—wait, did she just say she will meet me?

Why, I wonder..... Again, I only have a bad feeling.

“Is, Is there something that I can do for you?”

Milly-sama smiled and told me, who was 99% sure that she will inquire about the Hero.

“Yeah. Well, you see, since we’re gonna be acquainted for a long time, shall we become friends?”

..... Shall I insert tsukkomi?

Is it already decided among them that I'm going to marry? Is there no choice to refuse?

..... No, there may be practically no room for refusal.

“You know, that—”

Suddenly, Milly-sama's smile disappeared and looked at me seriously.

“I have something I want to talk about. What exactly we will talk about—it's about Greed. Because I do not want you, Aria, to make a mistake on how you will handle Greed.”

How to handle? What is the way to handle, I wonder?

“At any rate, that guy is a natural walking disaster.....rather, he's like an ultimate weapon.”

.....

.....

.....

..... It seems like it's how to handle the ultimate weapon.

CHAPTER 9

SPIRITS PLUS HERO EQUALS NATURAL DISASTER

It seems that the Hero is the ultimate weapon—it's not that easy to happily agree by saying, "Yes, that's right."

What does "ultimate weapon" mean? It is not because the Hero exists..... as the trump card against the demons.

Is it just my imagination..... or did it really seem to be a disturbing plan?

"Uhm... Milly-sama? What is an ultimate weapon?"

I knew I would regret it later that I should not absolutely ask her, but I could not help asking.

"Hmmm... How should I say it?"

Milly-sama scratched her cheeks while speaking, as if at a loss of words, and sighed lightly. It seems like she was thinking about how talk about it.

Because it looks like it would take a long time, I led the princess and Milly-sama to the sofa, and I stood behind the princess's chair.

That's because Milly-sama, who was hesitating and spoke to herself, "I think it's better to talk in order", suddenly broached the subject to the princess and me.

"Hey, does the two of you know that Greed is said to be the strongest among all the generation of heroes?"

Though a little surprised, I nodded when we were suddenly asked.

That's right. Greed-sama is said to have the strongest power among the generation of heroes who received the goddess's oracle. Greed-sama's predecessors seemed to have to train first in order to master the power that was given to them after receiving the oracle of Refelia, the goddess of light. However, Greed-sama masterfully uses the power of the goddess without training and possesses the ability to defeat the top brass

demons in one match. So, it is not unreasonable to be rumored to be the strongest among the heroes.

“Greed is different from the other heroes so far. It is already different from the start. Because he received the protection of all kinds of spirits since he was born.”

“The full spirit protection, was it?” I widened my eyes in disbelief.

Spirits—they have great powers found in nature that surrounds the world. The powers that make up this world. However, they have a clear intention; sometimes they become friends of humans and protect them, or become enemies with humans and trifle with them with menace, a whimsical existence.

They are familiar to humans, but they are distant beings. Such spirits are very hard to please, and rarely show up in front of people. Only special people can see and hear their voices, even among the priests. Although they give protection to the humans they like, I heard that it is also rare.

But there is an exception in everything. That is the existence of the Hero.

The Hero was the one chosen by the goddess. For the Hero who received protection and power, the spirits are friendly and he can definitely receive spirit protection. Protection literally means “protection”. If something happens, the spirits will use those powers to protect. And in rare cases, at the intention of the protectionist, they sometimes lend their powers.

However—there’s only one or two attributes at best. Even that is considered a miracle. It is known how difficult it is to receive spirit protection.

And yet, Greed-sama has all the attributes, even before receiving the goddess’s entrustment.

..... Let me say it clearly. It is nonstandard at that time. They broke the rules!

By the way, it seems that the Hero 200 years ago was a fire spirit type user. The spirits who gave protection to the Heroes of the previous generation are mostly fire or light types. Some received wind protection. But no matter how inhuman Greed-sama is, who also has darkness, earth and water type aside the aforementioned types..... no, no, I wonder how to understand the out-of-bounds Hero.

“Greed-sama is amazing, isn’t he?” The princess said with a voice filled with admiration.

“Until Greed received his role as the Hero, he hardly used the power of the spirit. Well, let’s say that he doesn’t need to use it.....”

Oh! Suddenly Milly-sama’s tone became weak. Moreover, my eyes are swirling.

When Milly-sama speaks in this way, it means she is excited.

.....The bad feeling is right on the mark.

And without looking at me, Milly-sama continued speaking.

“Well, the spirits... you know, they like Greed so much. Whether he is going on a rampage or using his powers arbitrarily against his will.”

Ugh! I heard something outrageous. Going on a rampage or using powers against your will! Somehow, I feel I’m starting to understand the meaning of “walking natural disaster”.....

Then, to summarize the story Milly-sama is hesitating to say—

It seems that since childhood, the useful spirits that protect Greed-sama used their various powers depending on his emotions. When he is having cheerful emotions such as being happy and having fun, although it is not a season where flowers bloom, flowers and plants would bud all together the next day. On the contrary, if he has gloomy feelings such as sadness, it would rain continually and then eventually, a storm would come.

However, the most troublesome of these emotions was the feelings of anger.

When they were 12 years old, something happened.

The four of them, Rufus-sama, Greed-sama, Renas-sama and Milly-sama, went to Lake Mainau located at the south of Elysium to play. They seem to have been involved with the stupid son of a bad village chief and his child, who were living at a nearby village. They picked a fight with them and attacked them.

Since they were still normal at that time, and of course they were not delayed, the

stupid son held Milly-sama, who was just a village girl at that time (according to Milly-sama herself) and blocked the counterattack of Greed-sama and the others.

Yes, it was a picture-perfect solid story.

For sure, the idiot son must have said this. “If you do not want this girl to get hurt, throw away your weapons!”

Greed-sama and the others couldn’t move while Milly-sama is being held hostage. The stupid son and his friends rushed to attack them.

At the unmistakable dangerous trouble, the spirits ran amok.

“It was when Renas was beaten when Rufus started chanting to use magic but did not make it in time that Greed lost his temper. When a trembling anger dominated the bank for a moment, a large water column rose with a ‘don~’ behind the lake and came to attack. It hit the stupid son and the other children while it avoided us. The trees were knocked down and they were washed away to the village. However, that was not the end.”

It seems that the spirits could not forgive the stupid son and his friends who tried to hurt Greed-sama (although Greed-sama didn’t seem to have suffered a scratch).

According to Renas who can hear the voices of spirits, the anger seemed to be not only for the children, but also for the village itself which was violent, and the spirits seemed to talk about taking away the lake from those who live from the grace of the lake.

After the water column pushed the stupid son and the others into the village, she suddenly realized that a basin without a single drop of water was spread out in place of the lake.

“Well, that surprised me. It was done by the water spirit, and the lake was totally dry and the fishes were jumping around here and there. But I thought that the spirit was too bad to kill a large amount of fishes, when suddenly, a huge tornado appeared, sucked up all the fishes and disappeared somewhere. It was just a huge depression that has nothing left behind.”

Milly-sama brightly laughed, but I was not in a laughing mood.

Instantly drying up all the lake water, how the heck—?!

“Th-The spirits do all that without permission.....?”

Milly-sama nodded at my question. “Yes. Greed did not order them to do it. Greed was just angry like us. At that time, Greed was just imitating our emotions. They got mad based on our emotions. It felt unforgivable. The spirits who felt it showed their power with their own will.”

I felt dizzy. While holding my temple, I remembered something from what I heard right now. Biting—I unconsciously had a faraway look in my eyes.

.....I now understood the meaning of “walking natural disaster” Milly-sama referred to.

Yes, comprehension dawned on me down to my core. The spirits who can perceive feelings and act rashly even though the person himself has no intention or order——

Indeed, it is not anything but “natural disasters”!

At the same time, I somehow understood the reason why Milly-sama, Renas-sama and Rufus-sama got attached to Greed-sama until now and abandoned their life.

That’s right. You cannot just leave it alone like this. It is a natural disaster that walks.

Likely, human beings will perish before the Demon King and the demons could die, right? Hahaha.

Laughing inside with a dry laugh, I carelessly forgot. The story is not yet over.

That’s right. The other monicker, “ultimate weapon” ——

CHAPTER 10

THE HERO IS THE ULTIMATE WEAPON

PART 1

“Oh, there is virtually no such thing right now, right? Since Greed also became the hero, he began to actively use the power of the spirits and he can control them.”

Is it because I was far away? Milly-sama, who seemed to be frightened, became Greed-sama’s follower in a panic.

However, I feel like it is right now.....

“Milly-sama, Greed-sama usually does not have a lot of facial expressions to make sure that the spirits do not react to emotions and run wild?”

The princess, who was listening silently, unexpectedly asked. Milly-sama nodded in agreement.

“That’s one reason. Since he grew up in an environment that is not ordinary, originally he was a boy with little emotions but after the incident in that lake, he really stopped showing emotions. Look, he’s using honorific language, doesn’t he? That also, he is doing it deliberately to control himself.”

“On purpose?”

“Yes, yes. He acts as if he was raised like a prince like Rufus, but do you know that Renas, Greed and I are from a village in Elusion’s countryside? Usually, there are no refined guys who can speak such language. Even Greed has referred to himself as ‘me’ [俺 : ore] in the past, and that word is considered as boorish.”

Greed-sama’s boorish language..... I cannot imagine. Because he was using polite language to me from the time he first visited this castle. Just like that time when I was imploring about the princess, his calming tone was very kind and gentle.

Besides, with Greed-sama’s appearance, crude language does not suit him. Greed-

sama is a handsome person with blue and green eyes. Although it may seem rude to call a man beautiful, but the exquisitely arranged facial parts are just like artworks between his straight nose. The finest gold hair borders his elegant face. It is not a golden color, but a clear, pale light cascading down his back, almost like a moonlight.

This is what I heard at a later time, but the spirits like Greed-sama's hair so much and they seem to hate and find it annoying if his hair is tried to be cut.

So the person himself said that having a long hair is cannot be helped but gets in his way, so he made a compromise to tie it in the back.

Not knowing such a thing, with a feeling of losing as a woman to his smooth and shiny hair, I was exposed to sudden super heavy, local rain and my whole body got wet as soon as I got a pair of scissors. But that was another story.

Well, even if he keeps it, Greed-sama's beautiful appearance does not make him look like a bumpkin.

The man, who wears a legendary silver-shining armor that can only be worn by the generations of heroes, is brimming with grace and elegance, and coupled with his polite language, it was as if he was a prince appearing in a story.

Beautiful, elegant, strong, gentle—the ideal prince.

That's why, everyone thought, including me, he is suited for the princess. Even now, imagining the two of them standing side by side, flowers seem to bloom in my head.....

Aaaah! Indeed, I don't need to do this! It is no good for me to be next to him. Even if others approve, I cannot approve.

“Princess, Aria, both of you live in the castle, so you make use of polite language on a daily basis, but speaking honorific words for us people from the countryside is a lot tiring. It is necessary to think and think about what to say in your mind. But for Greed, it seems just right to suppress his feelings. Surely, since he began using polite language, the spirits did not use their powers at their own will. It looks like the limiter became an alternative. Thanks to this, whenever Greed is about to lose his temper, they understand his words, so it's like killing two birds with one stone.”

“U-Uhm, in other words.....”

“Yes. When he gets angry, his language returns to the one he used in the past, which is before being chosen as the hero and it also gives us time to prepare of our minds.”

Milly-sama cheerfully laughed.

“Even if he gets angry now, he can control the powers of the spirits by the language, so don’t worry about them behaving recklessly. Greed also became angry with a certain overlord and his daughter but he was able to precisely control the powers of the spirits. The castle, well, collapsed, but no one was injured.”

Although the castle collapsed.....?

—Just now, I heard something disturbing!

However, I cannot use tsukkomi. Better not to know the details is appealing.

And yet...

“What do you mean that the castle collapsed?” It was the princess who became the tsukkomi.

Princess, I wanted you to read the atmosphere that I do not want to listen!

And to be honest with the princess’s question, Milly-sama told the story.

“There was an overlord at the border of the country of Ringal. He has a daughter. Her personality is the worst but she is a beautiful woman, and one day, a demon kidnapped her. So, the overlord just asked us to rescue her as we passed by. Because he was a bad lord who takes heavy taxes and imprisons anyone who goes against him, I did not want to get involved, but the reward was good so I decided to accept it.”

Yes. Even though the goddess gave the oracle to remove the threat of the demons, the hero was blessed with powers but they do not do unpaid work. Unlike in the story, even the Hero’s party needs to eat and sleep. The stomach does not get full and the beddings cannot be secured just from gratefulness.

While the landlord is absent, they can search the house but they cannot steal any items or money they have found.

So they will claim the reward for proper work. Of course, my country will also pay

them for rescuing the princess.

“The demon that beat the overlord’s daughter was not a big deal and she could be easily rescued, but it was a hard work since then. As usual, the daughter fell in love with Greed. Although Greed was expressionless as usual and ignored her, but the foolish daughter orchestrated a machination and as soon as she was brought back to the palace, she promised her father that she would marry Greed and arranged a multitude of lies. The father is *a* father and knew his daughter’s lies, and thinking that it would be advantageous to become a relative of the hero, he rode on the opportunity. Of course, we refused. That kind of thing is not a joke. However, as soon as Greed refused, the overlord became more difficult and said, ‘Take responsibility for toying with my daughter!’ I regretted with all my heart that we saved such foolish daughter from the demon.” She w

Remembering what happened in the past, Milly-sama smiled.

As I thought, many people think to become a relative of the Hero. I was a little astonished when I heard this story.

.....After all, aren’t we convinced and got excited on our own that the Hero who returned home with the princess was in love with the princess?

PART 2

Although the situation is different because the foolish daughter of the overlord was interested, is it not the same as trying to marry him to the princess without listening to his story?

Well, the Hero would propose to me, the lady-in-waiting A, immediately after that and the development went diagonally upwards.

“Then, how did it go?”

“The foolish overlord told us, ‘If you don’t want others to know that you took advantage of my daughter, just marry her’, and Greed became irritated. The castle began to collapse as soon as he said, ‘Shut up.’”

“Can’t he control it?” I unintentionally used tsukkomi.

“We also thought he’s going on a rampage. But that was not the careless act of the spirit who responded to the feelings of Greed, but it was what he did with his intention.”

Milly-sama, who smiled at my tsukkomi and shook her head, said scary things.

“While the rest of the castle is collapsing, Greed sparingly told us the crime committed by the lord on the spot. Such as secretly raising the taxes in the country and putting it in his pocket, imprisoning or killing the people who oppose him in the dungeon of the castle, kidnapping a girl he liked and forcibly made her his mistress, received a bribe from an unscrupulous merchant and tolerated his crime, etc. Greed can combine the ability of the soil spirit and the wind spirit in order to use [Analysis] skill to extract past memory and information. The lord, who didn’t know it, saw Greed has scary eyes that can see. Because he can see through and expose anyone’s bad business other people were not aware of. On the contrary, we calmed down. Because even though Greed was angry, we saw that he controlled the spirit properly.”

—Eventually, the castle collapsed.

Yet no one was injured, and all the people and soldiers who work in the castle stood dumbfounded in front of the overlord’s castle, which was turned into a mountain of rubble. Greed-sama protected them with the power of a spirit. By the way, the overlord

and his daughter, their accomplices, and those who tormented the people, were imprisoned in a dungeon that did not collapse.

Although they are alive, they must have felt the terror until the rubble has been removed and they were rescued. And even if they were rescued, they were to be imprisoned again soon. Greed-sama used the spirits to deliver the information about the overlord to the great temple of the goddess, and the temple conveyed it to the king. Of course, the position of the lord was revoked, and now it seems that a new overlord governs the land. The new overlord is neat, and the people were able to finally live with peace of mind.

It was a happy ending.

.....except for my heart.

Ruined the castle and used the [Analysis] skill and the powers of the spirits to extract the necessary information, and protected people from being injured. Greed-sama simultaneously completed those tasks.

That is no longer within the standards. Out-of-bounds.....?

Finally getting dizzy for real, I covered my face with my hand.

The spirits sense emotions and act recklessly. That is indeed a natural disaster.

However, it already exceeds the limit of natural disaster to use the power of the spirit that is the power of nature itself at will. It is already—a weapon. It is definitely a weapon.

..... Oh, I feel I understand why Greed-sama's friends were desperate at the hall.

Indeed, it would be easy to ruin this country using the powers of the Hero.

As expected of “walking natural disaster”. Truly the “ultimate weapon”.

—Wait, what? I removed my hand from my face.

“.....the ultimate weapon?”

I understood the weapon, but why is “ultimate” attached to it?

At such thoughts, Milly-sama shrugged her shoulders and looked up.

“Oh, that’s because even just being able to use the powers of all types of spirit makes him invincible, he also has the power of the hero, you know? With no opponent to oppose him, there is no doubt that he is the strongest in the world. Think about what will happen if Greed goes out of control.”

The opponent that would face Greed-sama, who has beaten the Demon King, should at least have a level of a god or a spirit. If ever Greed-sama forgets about himself and went on a rampage.....?

It would be, the [Hero’s rampage = the destruction of the world], right?

—Truly the “ultimate weapon”.

The world will end if it is activated, right?

Ahahaha.

Haha.....

Ha.....

.....

“Princess.”

I straightened my back, turned to the princess, and bowed my head deeply.

“Please excuse me. I will end my duty today.”

“Aria?!”

Regardless of whether the princess is taken aback, I continued.

“Thank you very much for taking care of me until today. I am sorry that I will not be able to see you living a happy life with Rufus-sama, but I pray for the princess’s happiness under a distant sky. Oh, then I will leave this country as soon as I greet parents. So preparations are necessary, and with this, please excuse me.”

I slowly lowered my head again and walked towards the door.

—However!

“Resistance is futile, just so you know.”

Before I knew it, Milly-sama was standing in front of the door and blocked my way!

“For Greed to fall in love with a woman, it must be a miracle that the goddess created for the world, no, the humanity! That’s why, Aria, sacrifice anything……No, no, be a stopper for Greed!”

“—It’s impossible for me to do it.”

To be an ultimate weapon’s wife, it’s really impossible!

Such a big role for a mere level one lady-in-waiting is impossible! Absolutely impossible.

“Saying it is impossible, it is not for you to say. Because the future of humanity is hanging on your hands, Aria—”

Milly-sama, whose face seem to be smiling or not smiling, grasps both my shoulders, as if saying, *You. Can’t. Escape.*

My disappearing act failed. I will be sacrificed.

“Eeeep-! It iiiimpossibleeee!”

That day, my screams echoed in the princess’s room many times—

CHAPTER 11

THE EVALUATION FOLLOWS A DOWNWARD CURVE

The next day the princess returned home safely. I was summoned by the King while I was preparing the princess's tea.

Summoned by the King.

Normally, His Majesty, the King hardly summons me who is a mere lady-in-waiting. Within six years, I can only count it with my hand. Moreover, the reason was about the princess as expected.

As you can see, to what a lady-in-waiting A implies, I am the first lady-in-waiting of the princess. I am the one who works closest to the princess.

..... It is only I who was employed the longest.

In any case, the only reason why I was summoned by the King until now is about the princess. The most recent summon is about 'that'. During the audience of the Hero where he was requested to save the princess.

At that time, the king did not know that I have pleaded to Greed-sama to rescue the princess, and I was called to explain the details of the abduction. Despite having listened to it all, I was grateful to Greed-sama who listened from the beginning to end of my explanation with a meek expression.

On the contrary, after his audience, he especially came to me and said, "I will certainly save your beloved princess. Please believe me and wait."

....My heart throbbed suddenly.

That's right. Because I am just an 18 year-old girl!

A good-looking guy saying such things, one must be dead if she can stay calm.

———Oh, if I think about it, my evaluation of Greed-sama that time kept on rising!

The peak is when the princess is rescued and came back. That time, I was filled with desire to prostrate myself in front of Greed-sama. As expected of the Hero, I thought he was wonderful.

I was immature then..... No, though it was only one day ago!

I never thought that he, a natural disaster or a weapon, would propose to an ordinary person like me, and I can't see through the thoughts the owner of the concept in breaking through the solid story. Thanks to that, it went to a downward curve and cannot be evaluated anymore.

And again, it is a summon from the King.

I have a premonition that this is not about the princess. Because today, it is about yesterday.

Maybe I am not allowed to refuse.....?

Huh? Isn't that right? It is a summon of the King to not to refuse, right?..... Sigh.



“Ah, Aria. It is good that you came.”

I was called to the office. Opening the door and entering inside, reflected on my eyes, who bowed, was His Highness standing in front of a big window.

He greeted me with a smile. He was in a good mood. The King being in a good mood is a pleasant thing for a retainer, but for me, it is a situation that can make me feel bad.

I wish he had been in good humor because the princess was rescued safely. Well of course, the King would welcome back the princess whom he loves, and would also be delighted and relieved at seeing her safe and sound.

But I think that it is not what the king thinks of in this place now.

“Take a seat.” There was a smile on his good-looking, middle-aged face as he pointed out the luxurious sofa.

The King offered a seat to a mere lady-in-waiting. It can't be a normal occurrence.

Because it is common to declare the business while standing.

———So he has already decided. There is no doubt that this meeting is about the Hero.

I sat down on the sofa as I was told while crying deep inside, “Noooo~!”

The King immediately sat at the table across my seat and opened his mouth, looking straight at me.

“Well, I think that you understand about the matter why I called you, it’s about the Hero——Greed-dono.”

Here it comes——! I thought.

“I think that everyone and I, including you, were surprised at Greed-dono’s proposal. However, it is a great honor for our country. I am extremely happy for Rufus-dono and Louise.” The King said in a good mood.

I see. Ugh.

I felt a little frustrated.

This country will be more advantageous than the other countries if it can become related to the Hero in addition to being determined to become related to the royal family of Elusion. As a King, it is a great achievement.

“It seems you’re putting your reply on hold, but I command you as a king to marry Greed-dono.....”

The King spoke such scary words. It goes without saying that my face stiffened.

The King’s order is issued! Or so it felt. I cannot escape this anymore. Because I’ll be charged with treason if I go against it. I clenched my fist tightly on my knee. I was prepared to be commanded. Since the king is only thinking about the country, I cannot hold a grudge.

I do not..... w-want to resent.

“However, Greed-dono expressly wishes to not to force you.”

I quickly raised my head at the final important words of the King.

Greed-sama..... He said those, didn't he?

—Suddenly, my evaluation of the Hero got better.

“Therefore, I decided to leave it to your feelings. However, I earnestly want you to keep in mind that we would like to have a relationship with Greed-dono for the sake of our country.”

I apologize for using tsukkomi but, while saying that you will leave it to my feelings, you clearly forced the second half, Your Majesty.....

“And I thought that I need to ask your father, Viscount Milford, about his opinion that you received a proposal from Greed-dono. I sent a messenger at once.”

A high-class envelope was placed on the table. That large envelope made from a parchment seems to have already been opened. However, what I am concerned with was the seal pressed on the wax. That is undoubtedly the crest of our Viscountcy of Milford.

My eyes widened. That's because—

“Isn't it a little fast.....?”

It was just yesterday when the Hero proposed. Even if the messenger flew, the Viscount of Milford's family seat is in the countryside at the edge of this country, and even if one rides on a fast horse, it will take at least three days one way.

Why is my father's letter yesterday here today, even though it should take six days for a round trip?

“We had the royal family's magician, Famir, fly to the Viscount of Milford's estate.” The beaming King said. It is an expression that says, *I thought well*.

The number of magicians is absolutely small, and of course, this also applies to this country. Their work encompasses the maintenance of the boundary of the castle and resolution of magic cases.

Famir-sama, who has the strongest power among those magicians, serves as a royal

family's magician. He is generally the adviser of royal guards and the consultant of magic and demons, but it was he who suffered the greatest damage during the princess's abduction. The middle-aged macho Demon King forcibly broke the barrier of the castle, and dispelled the guarding magic of Famir-sama on the princess and abducted her.

As one would expect of a degenerate Demon King. Although it is a macho Demon King. That broken magic backfired on Famir-sama, and he suffered a great deal of damage. It was unknown if how many days he would stay unconscious.

Recently, he finally returned but I heard it was hard for him to catch up in strengthening the barrier of the castle after he took a break.

To use Famir-sama as a messenger instead.....

Noticing my silent censure, the King panicked and said. "It can't be helped, because there were no other magicians who knew the Viscount of Milford's estate."

Magicians can transfer to anywhere in the world at any moment using the teleportation magic. However, this magic has drawbacks; the caster can't go to places he does not know. He can only extend a magic circle to places he'd been to, to places he knows, and to places he can recognize. Because Famir-sama is friends with my father, it is natural that he knows Milford estate. However, it appears that magicians other than Famir-sama do not know the very rural terrain of Milford estate.

While thinking, *I'm sorry it was in the countryside*, I noticed that it was not a problem.

"Why is there a need to hurry? You don't even have to get my father's reply."

I think it's better for a messenger to use a fast horse. Greed-sama and the others will stay in this castle for a while. There should be no problem if the letter containing the answer will be received after one week.

That's what I thought, but I was astounded to hear the answer of the King.

"To tell you the truth, it was Greed-dono's request. I have been asked to send the letter of Greed-dono in order to get permission to marry you from your parents. I thought that it would be desirable to get it as soon as possible, so I requested Famir."

.....My evaluation of Greed-sama dropped to the bottom at once.

Even though I have not yet given my reply, asking my parents' permission to marry.....

Telling me that you do not want to force me, yet what are you doing, Greed-sama?!

.....That's it, right? You're removing the obstacles to your objective, aren't you?!

Although you told other people not to force me, you're actually that type of person who intensely charges, right?

But just say it clearly. It is compulsory!

Because it is no longer a national authority to send a letter through His Majesty, the King, for permission to get married.

It is the same as saying, "There's no way you can refuse marriage that Your Majesty also desires, hmmm?"

How shall the Viscount decline? *Ah*, I thought with gloomy feelings. *I wish I could run away from this castle and stay missing.*



At a later date—

It turned out that it was not Greed-sama's true intention to get permission to marry me using the national authority.

It seems that Greed-sama was trying to send a letter himself, not through the King. However, the Prime Minister who heard it thought that if he ordinarily sent a letter of marriage proposal, Viscount Milford might refuse on the grounds of being bothersome, so he appealed to the King. The king, who showed a similar concern, decided to send Greed-sama's letter to my father using Famir-sama.

It seems that Greed-sama himself is satisfied to use a fast horse for a messenger.

.....However, my evaluation for him remains low.

Even though I have not given my reply yet, he's still planning to get permission to get married from my parents.

Jeez, I'm concerned for the future.

Sure enough, this was only the beginning of the courtship behavior of the Hero towards me.

CHAPTER 12

THE VISCOUNT OF MILFORD

Even though I wanted to escape from the castle, it seems impossible to do.

“Even if you escape, there are spirits, so it is easy for Greed to find your whereabouts. Or maybe useless?”

The words Milly-sama said yesterday keeps revolving in my mind. Based on what she declared, then there’s nowhere to escape wherever I go anywhere in the world. To escape from the Hero, perhaps the only way is to die.....

To be honest, ever since the event in the hall, I was hoping, wishing as if clinging to a rope, that they’d notice the misunderstanding and cancel the marriage.

I wonder if sending a letter to my parents for the permission of marriage is due to Greed-sama’s unparalleled determination that he felt. I remember such feeling, it is like being surrounded by walls in every direction then it narrows. It is practically unavoidable to feel that an encircling net is being formed.

Greed-sama’s proposal in the hall, Milly-sama’s stories, and then the words of the King and the letter of my father.

.....As I thought, I should have just refused it all in the hall.

But how could I have refused with that atmosphere? Even if I turn back the time, I don’t have the courage to refuse.

..... It may have been a different story if someone else liked me. But then it will become a triangle.

Although the one that I love is in my heart, the maiden heart is wavering after being proposed to by a strong and handsome Hero. The one that I love and the Hero that loves me. Will the wavering maiden choose to love or to be loved.....?

Oh, I’m sorry. In escaping reality, I fell into a delusion!

But, I think I would have chosen the one that I like. That would be the reason for refusing the marriage. Or if I insert a punch line “In fact, I was secretly longing for the Hero”, it may become dramatic as a story.

—The Hero who gave us the hope of light. But he does not a suit with myself who is an ordinary mob character. There must be another person who can make him happier. So I am shedding tears and refusing the courtship of that person I yearn for—again, I’m sorry. I felt cold as I said that myself!

Who is that character?

I used tsukkomi on myself, but such punch line does not exist. Absolutely none!

—Next!

The Hero is handsome. *I don’t deny it. His good looks is bad for my heart.*

The Hero is strong. *After all, he’s a walking disaster and an ultimate weapon.*

The Hero’s future prospects is promising. *Even if he is not the hero, being loved by spirits so much, he is in great demand from other countries.*

Being desired by such a Hero, I am the luckiest maiden in the world! *There’s no such thing!*

To the future that I am unlikely be able to escape, I tried to at least suggest those things to myself, but it seemed to be useless. I cannot help it but keep going on using tsukkomi.

I hate this side of me. This side of me who is being a tsukkomi even during escaping from reality!

Oh, I guess I just have to give up and accept it. While sitting on the sofa of the royal office and going along with the joke that is otherwise known as reality escapism, I was filled with trepidation as I think of the future shrouded by dark clouds.

“This is your father’s reply. Aren’t you curious?”

Even so, the king told me not to touch the letter sent by my father.

While shaking my head in low spirits, I sent a gaze filled with hatred to the letter with the seal of my Milford family and said.

“I can’t read it but I think I know the reply. The content is, ‘Because it is troublesome, I leave it to my daughter’s will. Ha ha ha., isn’t it?’”

The King smiled wryly at what I said. “‘Ha ha ha’ was not included, but if you take the flowery words and euphemisms, you’re exactly right..... As expected of that Viscount Milford’s daughter.”

—That Viscount Milford.

I am a normal viscount’s daughter, like the other ordinary mob characters. But my family members—especially my father and older brother—are somewhat unusual. To the extent that the King and other nobles call them using the article “that”.

The Viscountcy of Milford is an old family lineage that exists ever since the time of the founding of the kingdom of Schwarze. But really, it is just old. The actual situation is that it is a rural noble family who dominates the territory which is located at the southern end of the country, and does not have industries or special products. Moreover, the title has been Viscountcy ever since the foundation. It is said that it is not possible or impossible if there is no ups and downs in the ground.

Why is my family called “that”? It is all due to the characters of the heads of the family of the successive generations.

It is troublesome. It is about negative principles. They do not show any interest in things other than their own hobbies and live appropriately according to the motto “Put off till tomorrow what you can do today”. The heads of the family for successive generations possess such temperament. It also manifests itself in my family precepts, I think.

“If difficult problems arise, postpone it!”

I remembered when I replied to the Hero’s proposal, I also said that.

Because such words are in the family precepts, it is important to know the characters of each generation. It would have been troublesome for everyone to resemble each other. However, even with that kind of trouble, the head of the family will do it, and sometimes it seems that he remembered the King. Conduct himself well with

neighboring countries in the scene of warfare, like avoiding conflict.

However—the grounds for using “that”—although the King offered to elevate the rank, he refused it because it was troublesome. I bet he thought that it was troublesome because he would have to participate frequently in the events in the castle. Doing tasks when he feels like it but does not lust after power, an eccentric viscount who does neither harm nor good. That was the moment he was recognized.

Since then, it seems that the family of the Viscount of Milford came to be called “that”. I knew that such articles were attached for the first time when I came to the castle.

“Is that the daughter of Viscount Milford? Can she become of service in the castle? What if she resigns because it is troublesome?”

That was what I was told. If you think about it, they were rude.

Only my father and older brother are troublesome. My mother and I were extremely ordinary mob characters. It seems like a prominent personality that manifests only in the men of the family. I think if they did not receive curses, they’re commendable men with only negative principles.

When I came to the castle to become a lady-in-waiting, at the beginning I became acquainted with the royal family’s magician, Famir-sama, and I spontaneously begged him to investigate the curse. That experience was nostalgic and painful.

Because Famir-sama said, “There is no curse. It’s just that the temperament was incorporated into the gene.”

Gene, what a troublesome level...!

A curse is one hundred times better. I’m not sure if this is pathetic or ridiculous, but I seriously thought about breaking off my relationship with my father and older brother. Just looking from the distance, the extremely troublesome work might be the important points in the story. Living with such people is not fun.

With these men who say their favorite phrase, “Eh~, it’s troublesome.”, how much have they made me feel irritated? I think that my Tsukkomi attribute was absolutely cultivated by that two.

Such a troublesome father and older brother cannot force me to marry because they

received pressure from the royal family. Since it is troublesome to leave the judgment to them, it is easier to see fire than to leave a reply. There is a possibility that they excused themselves from it because of the reason that the Hero proposed marriage himself, and said something like, “Eh, it seems troublesome to become a relative of the hero.”

Thinking now from this, it is doubtful whether the Milford estate will be safe or not, so they replied, “All right!” to the King’s request.

“Well, that’s why Aria, everything depends on your judgment. Please decide carefully.”

“.....Ah, yes.....”

After listening to the King, I left the office. It felt like my all my HP were depleted. Better yet, it might be better to say I was forced to marry by the royalty.

If that’s the case, I give up.



I headed to the princess’s room and heaved a deep sigh. Along the way, the soldiers and the maids were looking at me with curiosity and were whispering among themselves and I felt more depressed. Apparently, yesterday’s case seemed to have spread in the castle in a blink of an eye. It was me the whole time.

Don’t tell me, is this the end of my plain life.....?

I was planning to meet an ordinary person like myself, get married and plainly grab the ordinary happiness. Well, let’s just say that the plan is not yet decided.

It was shortly afterwards that another shock hit me like that—



After entering the princess’s room, shortly after calling out, “Princess, I returned now,” the princess who held a large paper her hand ran over to me.

“Aria, there’s a big trouble! An extra scoop about that marriage proposal was published in the ‘Hero Times’..... You were mentioned, Aria!”

The princess thrust out the paper towards me while shouting.

“—Huh?”

I saw the top page of a newspaper held in front of me and I became wide-eyed.

『Urgent news!

Finally, a passionate love affair with the hero, Greed.....?!

Ms. A works as a lady-in-waiting of Princess Louise of the Kingdom of Schwarze. It seems that they have met when the Hero was asked to rescue the country's princess, who was kidnapped by a demon. The hero, who splendidly rescued the princess, seemed to propose to her at the hall of the royal castle. Will they get married soon?! The Hero Times will continue to pursue this delightful news. 』

There was a big portrait of a woman who looks like me next to the article. However, the eyes were hidden with a black line in the picture.

If I was my ordinary self, I would have unleashed my tsukkomi. However, my mind is blank at the moment.

“.....”

“Aria, your soul left your body. Get a hold of yourself.”

I heard the voice of the princess and I felt my body trembling. It seems that the soul that left came back suddenly.

.....

.....Wha—

What the hell is this.....?

—A few seconds later, my scream echoed in the room of the princess.

CHAPTER 13

THE WORLD AND THE HERO

———The hero is one of the world's systems for it to have balance.

This was said by a certain person. The "White Sage", who is the comrade of the hero of the previous generation, Ren Shiroasaki. He is said to have accidentally fallen into this world from a different world, and now, he is considered a legend.

I don't know if it's true, but it is certain that he is the one who brought the concepts that have never existed in this world. The word "system" is one of them.

According to his book "The System Called Hero", this system seems to be "a set and mechanism that function as a whole while individual elements interact with each other".

I don't understand difficult things, so I understand that it simply means a mechanism...

According to Ren Shiroasaki, the demons seem to have an ecology that periodically forms flocks once every several hundred years. The reason is unknown, but it seems that the White Sage thought that it was the preserved instincts of their species or it was incorporated into a gene.

The flock is formed around the strongest individual, and that is the Demon King. It is unknown whether they form a flock because of the Demon King or a leader is necessary because a flock is formed. It is certain that the actions of the demons in this period are mostly due to the will of the Demon King. That is the so-called attacking humans. As Ren Shiroasaki also said, because it is also a flock behavior for breeding, it seems that a part of them is inevitable to be offensive and ferocious at that time. However, for humans it is nothing but a misfortune. When the flock is breeding, it is the instinct of the demons. The demonic powers of the demons are high; its power has various influences. Not only to human beings, but to the world itself.

The world was created by the powers of the spirits. Spirits sustain the world with magical powers. Some human beings, like Rufus-sama, also have magical powers which are of the same kind as the powers of the spirits and can be controlled by the spirit, so the equilibrium of the world has been maintained.

However, the powers used by the demons are different. Therefore, it seems that the balance of the world cannot be maintained. In other words, when the number of demons increases, not only human beings are exposed to the danger of extinction, but it also leads to the collapse of the world's balance itself.

So, the system that the world created is the hero. To maintain the peace in the world, he is the system for eliminating the Demon King who is the leader of the group and to eliminate the demons. So if the Demon King is born, the world creates the hero. They can be said to be two sides of the coin; they undoubtedly exist as a pair.



...Okay, I do not know if the things the White Sage were saying were true, but it is certain that the existence of the Demon King and the Hero appear periodically in this world.

There were twenty heroes on the record. Their gallant figures were widely known all over the world in “hero’s tales”. However, in the end, I think that there was a hero in the ancient times when that was not included in the record. Anyway, it seems that the world has become such a mechanism.

Well, the White Sage left not only the concept of the system. It seems that he was a person who came from a world where civilization has advanced a lot more than here. And the most widely known thing he brought was the “newspaper”.

Until he brought in the idea of a newspaper, the general public came to know information from hearsays from the travelers, from the chat of people living in the neighborhood, and from the only bulletin board that the royal family rarely set up. But it is not known how reliable the information is; sometimes it was altered for the convenience of the royal family, so it seems that the citizens were not trusted.

That’s why Ren Shiroasaki launched a newspaper guild and decided to disseminate information to people in the form of articles. The information paper examined by a third party without the intervention of authority such as royalty— the “newspaper” spread quickly in the continent, branch offices of the guild were established everywhere, where the newspaper closely attached to that country and the regions were created.

By the way, there is a newspaper “Schwarze Weekly” that has a long history in our

kingdom of Schwarze as well. The newspaper, to which the royal family also subscribes to, is published once a week and I read it after they finished reading it. Living in a castle with little amusement, it is also one of my enjoyments.

The problem is the “Hero Times”, a newspaper launched by Ren Shiroasaki himself. That being said, he launched the newspaper guild after the hero of that time had defeated the Demon King, but it seems that it was a limited-time newspaper with contents close to the memoirs based on the memories of the journey. That newspaper got a favorable reception. The rumor has it that the people of those days knew the information about how the hero fought with the demons or how many party members he has, since they only had to read the “hero’s tale” that will be published at a later date. They were hungry for information about the hero. The people were crowding over the “Hero Times”.

And it seems that this newspaper that was published later came from the origin of the earlier publication of the “hero’s tale”.

Then, Ren Shiroasaki’s “Hero Times” was a limited-time publication, but it was decided to restore it after 200 years.

——Yes. It was published during the era of the hero of the previous generation.

People sought information about the hero, and the newspaper guild decided to release an issue in response to that. The reporters in charge of the “Hero Times” dared to interview without regard to the danger and informed the hero’s success throughout the continent.

And now that we are the era of the hero Greed, “Hero Times” was published once again, and the reporters are running around gathering Greed-sama’s information. Along these lines, the “Hero Times” is also the source where I got to know the age and the place of origin of the Hero.

——However.

I never thought that I would decorate the page.

“What the hell is this——?!” I loudly screamed out in front of the princess.

While describing the content of the article, this picture! Black lines covering the eyes, suspicious to the MAX! Moreover, the exposed part—the lips were drawn in an arc that

looks pleased. What's with this smile?! Despite my figure in a maid dress, I feel a strange awkwardness at the smiling face that has no fragment of modesty.

I will not smile like this!Maybe.

“Your features are also written, Aria.”

The princess, who had the piece of newspaper article in her hand, read aloud.

“It says, *‘Brown hair and brown eyes. She is 18 years old and has a subdued appearance. She has been serving as a lady-in-waiting of the princess for a long time, and if one will take a wife, she might be the best person.’* Anyway, isn't it favorable to you, Aria?”

“Is... that so?”

Describing me as subdued, is it not a desperate representation of the euphemism for ordinary?

“Even so, I expected that one day you would be known, but it was quicker than I thought.”

“.....You're right.”

“Surely, someone who was in the hall yesterday must have leaked this to the reporter. Otherwise they will not be able to release this extra news today.”

Unlike regional newspapers, the “Hero Times” is a large newspaper issued uniformly in any country on the continent. It is not a common thing to prepare everywhere in half a day or so all at once. The information was brought immediately after that incident in the hall and somehow they managed to finish today's publication.

..... I thought a little of a scary thing.

The “Brave Times” is a newspaper published throughout the continent. To put it bluntly, citizens, not only of our country but also of the other countries in the continent, will know the proposal of the Hero. Then, I will not be able to refuse all the more!

And then, forgive me for being presumptuous but, the Hero or one of his friends deliberately sent the information in order to force my hand... What a plan...

...Do—Don't tell me...?

No matter how it is, they won't do it to that extent, right?



“I do not think so.”

When I told her my concern, the princess shook her head as she said it.

“That’s because Greed-sama and Rufus-sama seem not to like reporters of the “Hero Times” very much. On our way back home after they rescued me, those who wanted to know the information afterwards were stumped.”

“I see.”

I was relieved, but at the same time, I was ashamed of myself who doubted. It seems that, due to the letters, I was keen on him.

If you think about it, there is no way for the Hero to be friendly to reporters who were hovering around him for the article that they have to publish. Unless it is a person who has an intense self-expressing desire, it is not possible for a person to feel good about being written here and there.

“Aria, surely you’re tired from the trouble since yesterday. I’m fine today so please take a rest.” The princess, who turned to look at me with compassionate eyes, suggested to me.

Of course I said that I am okay. The maid is not supposed to take a rest at this moment. However, if I am told, “This is my order”, I will back down. At the princess’s words, I dared to go back to my room.

It is rare for me to return to my room during the day with an almost sturdy body. Usually I stay either in the princess’s room or in the waiting room next to it, and just comes back to sleep here. So it felt a little strange to spend in my room at noon when I’m supposed be working now.

Ah, being a lady-in-waiting despite being a nobleman’s daughter, I am the senior lady-in-waiting. A private room was pretty much given to me..... Although it is very small.

Speaking of which, it is a simple room that has only a chest, a bed, a side table, a full-length mirror and a small desk. In other words, it is dreary but because it is only a space to sleep, I do not care much. If I liked this, I would have sewn something cute and it will become a small space filled with lace and small items, but unfortunately I do not have that kind of hobby.

In terms of colors, there is a tea set with a little value on the side table. Simplicity is the best.

Sitting in that simple bed, I sighed. Because I was told by the princess, I changed my maid uniform, thinking that I would not be called anymore. However, I am not a sick person, so I opposed the idea of changing into nightclothes. So, what I am wearing right now is a simple, plain dress. I often wear it whenever I go out of the city on my day off and when I go shopping, and as I wear this, I am like a mob, no longer looking like a naturally-born town girl. Because I come from a noble family, it is very convenient.

Having a plain face, hurray! Being a mob, hurray!

.....However, now that my picture is on the newspaper, although black lines were put in the eyes, it may not be easy to go out.

I sighed deeply again. I really wonder what Greed-sama liked about me. If it is a beautiful woman rather than me, I guess it is understandable.

.....Then why can't I honestly be happy?

If you only look at his face and title, there is no objection to take him as a partner. Well, he may be a natural disaster or an ultimate weapon, but still there are women out there who are good ladies. Yet, I just feel embarrassment for being liked by such a handsome man, that's how it is. Even if I tried to make self-suggestion starting with an example, "Hero is handsome", am I not finished as a woman if there's not a fragment of throbbing yearning born?

I have no choice but to sigh. I regret that I am not a person who is only interested in looks. If I were seduced by Greed-sama and the Prince's demeanor and face, then flow of the story would have been easy. The marriage would have been decided when the proposal caused an uproar in the hall, and I think it will not become a problem even after hearing that he is a walking natural disaster or an ultimate weapon.

Maybe. If I came to like it, all things will be overcome with love. Maybe.

That's because in love stories, it is a solid plot where "two people who are in love will overcome the difficulties".

.....But, it is unlikely for me to overcome without love.

Oh, perhaps it is better to ask Famir-sama to prescribe me a love potion. Then if that happens, we will have mutual love and then we'll begin our clichéd and lovey-dovey newlywed life. Hmp!

It was then when someone knocked at the door of my room while I was in my sulking mode. One of my colleagues must be worried and came to see the situation. That's what I thought, so I got up from the bed and opened the door without checking who the other person was.

.....I opened it.

And then regretted it 100%.

Because on the other side of the door, the person who was smiling gently was the Hero—Greed-sama.

CHAPTER 14

THE SMALL ROOM, THE HERO AND I

Wearing a soft smile, he looked at me as I stiffened by the open door and said.

“When I went to Princess Louise’s room to meet you, I heard you returned to your own room.”

Ah, the sparkling halo, the halo that shined when Greed-sama smiled.

“I-I see.....”

I pulled my face for a smile.

Since we met yesterday in the hall, the Hero has not showed up in front of me and I was slightly expecting that he changed his mind.

.....Looking at the feverish light that remains in the blue-green eyes of Greed-sama, I can see that they have not changed at all.

What’s with this very sweet, enchanting gaze?!

“Wh-What can I do for you?”

I gulped as I asked him. But, as soon as I said that, I realized that it was a foolish question. There’s only one reason for him to meet the one he proposed to, right?

The Hero gave me a bright smile and replied. “I want to see your face.”

As expected, that’s it. Right?!

“And, have you forgotten? Did we not agree yesterday that we would get to know each other better? How would we know each other if we don’t meet?”

Saying those words with a refreshing smile, I mentally gulped.

——To get to know each other better.

.....I did say that. Indeed.

I said that in order to postpone the issue! I didn't imagine that my own words would strangle my own neck. I want to chastise the me at that time. No, I feel like I want to kick myself from behind! Why did I say that?!

I was innocent at that time, even though it was just yesterday.

At that point, Greed-sama knew a lot of things about me—including my three sizes, while I did not know or have any idea that he is a walking natural disaster or an ultimate weapon. Had I known, I wouldn't have said those self-destructing words such as knowing each other better.

.....No, if possible, I want to not to know everything forever. I want to return to myself who did not know anything. Urgently.

“By the way, talking in front of the door, why don't we enter the room?”

While I was lamenting deep inside, I was taken aback by Greed-sama's suggestion.

That's right. We were still talking in front of my room with the door open. This is the place where the rooms of the employees are located. Right now, most people are working at noon so there are no signs of people. However, although many are out of their rooms, it does not mean that there are no people at all. Those who have their day off and who have night shifts are still in their room, and it is not strange if they happen to pass by the corridors at any moment.

Also, the employees in the castle like rumors very much. It is proven on how the events yesterday have spread in the castle in no time. From yesterday until today, it can be said that the flowers have bloomed on our gossip. If they happen to know the current situation—Ah, I shivered.

I'm not mistaken that they will listen attentively!

“I'm sorry. Although it is a small room, please come in.”

I hurriedly shifted my body sideways and let Greed-sama enter the room. But, the moment I closed the door and looked back over to Greed-sama, I just noticed the situation. At the same time, a warning bell rang in my head.

—A young man and a young woman, just the two of them in the same room.

I broke out in a cold sweat.

The other person is the Hero. But yesterday in front of many people, he confessed to me, proposed to me. He and I alone in the same room.....

Mo-moreover, isn't the bed suitably arranged next to Greed-sama's back? But then, that is because the bed occupies most of this narrow room!

.....This... Perhaps my chastity is in jeopardy?

Oh, no! Restricted by the Hero!

That being said, he is a healthy man. Of course, there is desire, right? Even with an ordinary female mob character like me, there are still plenty of things to worry about.....

Hiii.

I am afraid of Greed-sama's feverish gaze directed at me! It feels very dangerous!



—To escape from reality, let me present to you Greed-sama's appearance.

Today, Greed-sama is not in his armor. But he still has his sword in his waist. There is no need to completely arm himself inside the castle, since there is a barrier that prevents the invasion of demons. So today, he is just wearing a simple white shirt and black trousers. However, good-looking people suit in anything they wear.

They are not expensive clothes that the royalty and aristocrats wear. They can be found anywhere, clearly indicating that it is in the level where it is worn by commoners, but the elegance is not marred at all. It is as if a noble person put on the clothes of a commoner on purpose.

Moreover, I saw his bare chest and is this what they call awfully sexy?—Somehow, it made my heart throb and shudder. He must be releasing some kind of pheromone.

Although he looks slimmer than the royal soldiers, I can tell he has muscles just by

looking at his flexible movement. It is full of ruggedness that attracts women.

“Aria.”

The escapism from reality came to an end when that man with an erotic aura approached me with an enchanting smile on his face.

Heeeeh!

I unconsciously stepped back—until our advancing-retreating came to an end. It was because I’ve hit my back against the door.

Ahhh, me, why did you shut the door?! I could’ve escaped if it wasn’t closed!

But, but, it’s because I did not want other people to see me meeting the Hero!

And while I was busy panicking, the Hero—

“Aria, my beloved.”

Because my escape route was cut off, I could only look with mortification at Greed-sama, who was giving off large amounts of pheromones as he drew nearer.

——Is this the end of my chastity after all?

CHAPTER 15

I ALMOST LOST MY CHASTITY!?

“Uhm, uhm, Greed-sama, please calm down.”

I said to Greed-sama who was standing in front of me while my back was stuck to the door. And while I said that, I was also using tsukkomi deep inside.

For now, you calm down.

Certainly, there's just the two of us in the closed room. And yet the other person is someone who proposed to me. However, it is too early to immediately suspect the danger of my chastity.

The other person is the Hero. He is the savior of the world.

But he has a feverish gaze! He has a lot of pheromones!

But to think that my chastity is in danger right away, I think I am overconfident.

.....That's why, that's why, calm down, me!

That's what I told myself. But, it was impossible in this state where my vision is filled with the bare chest that was visible from an opening in Greed-sama's shirt. Since Greed-sama is tall, my eyes are just at the level of Greed-sama's chest. Thanks to that, I could not see the bed anymore, but in other ways, it is very bad for my heart.

Such as looking at the collarbone from the opening of the shirt or his Adam's apple when I raise my gaze a little!

.....What exactly is this extreme sex appeal?

However, I have no courage to raise my head and look at the face of Greed-sama. Please try to imagine.

Seeing that dazzling face up close? Although I've seen beautiful faces like the princess's, but the opposite sex is another thing. I will never get used to it. To be

honest, this castle has a high ordinary mob rate, and there are less handsome men. Perhaps the prime minister?

The princess has two elder brothers, but these two unfortunately have ordinary appearances. That's why my colleagues were excited at the Hero's party.

I do not think that it is a good idea for my mental health, in my non-immune state, to look at that sparkling handsome face at a close range. Certainly, he has taken my hands closely, but at that time, there are a lot of people around us and I was disturbed by the marriage proposal so my brain is not functioning well.

Will I be able to withstand this.....

Because a mob cannot bear the aura of the main character!

For the time being, in order to prevent him from approaching further, I said while sticking out my hands forward.

“U-Uhm, shall we discuss for no—oow?!”

.....The reason that the sentence ended wrongly was because the flailing hands were taken suddenly.

I put out my hand to prevent him from getting any closer and I don't want our hands to be connected—somehow, like in the hall at that time, the Hero took my hands.

Hiiii! Like, like something is caught!

“That's right. Let's discuss..... about the future.”

Covering my hands with his both hands, Greed-sama, who was gently smiling, said as if implying something.

Was the final word “future” pointing to “after marriage”? That was just my imagination, wasn't it.....?

By the way, it turned out that he was smiling because, as I slightly raised my gaze, the Hero's very well-shaped lips formed an arc.

But please, do not raise your eyes any more than that and check it out.

My instinct refused.

Regardless of his feverish gaze—Because it is also a perfect destructive power, I want to hold back! Because if ever I see again that intense, dark gaze, the one he showed me in the hall, I have the confidence to scream.

Well, let's leave it aside for now. The problem at this point is Greed-sama's words.

I remembered when he said about the future. He sent a letter asking my father for permission to marry without my permission. So I decided to ask about that. Of course, I did not look up at Greed-sama.

“G-Greed-sama. Well, I heard that you sent a letter to my father...”

“Yes.”

Greed-sama nodded in approval. I could not detect any guilt from his attitude or tone.

“The Prime Minister arranged it. It seems that Famir-sama delivered it using magic, so today, I received a reply.”

Yes, I have also confirmed that there is a letter..... I have not seen the contents, though—!

“According to your father, he told me that he did not intend to find fault with person you chose. A villager who is not even a noble like me is proposing to a lady who is a daughter of a nobleman, but your father would not order you and it doesn't matter to him if his daughter said that it is good. Your father is wonderful.”

Greed-sama smiled.

.....Something good, is this it? Since it is troublesome, saying that he'll leave the decision-making to the daughter, such was the interpretation when it comes to the Hero's filter.

I could not understand what I was saying for a moment. Ahaha.

.....No, that is not the problem!

My father's troublesome opinion does not matter! It is the problem that Greed-sama

voluntarily applied for!

“Isn’t it unfair to apply to my father before getting my reply?”

As I protested, I did not look at his face as usual, but I said it to his white shirt.

However, Greed-sama’s reaction to it was unexpected.

“.....Huh?” It was a strange reply.

“When asking a nobleman’s daughter’s hand in marriage, I heard from Rufus that one must first ask the parents for permission and not to the woman..... After proposing directly to you yesterday, Rufus said that I need to get permission from your father, the Viscount of Milford.....”

“Th-That..... That’s true but.....”

Certainly, he’s right. Parents often decide marriage partners rather than the nobles’ own intentions, so it is customary for the nobles to visit the parents first if they are going to propose marriage.

And I am also a lady of nobility. It is reasonable for Rufus-sama to think so.

.....I have forgotten.

My father and older brother do not depend on such tradition for marriage any more, since the family name has too much negative image. Having not enough appearance or figure to overcome it, I thought of looking for a partner by myself or becoming a spinster.

All that is necessary for marriage is my will. And that’s it.

In short, I was not even aware of the customs, that my father’s permission is necessary for my marriage. I completely forgot and here I thought the Hero did something selfish.

But, it looks like Greed-sama was just trying to follow the customs—

Aaahhh, I’m sorry, Greed-sama!

Thinking about it, there was sincerity in the Hero when he first proposed to me, even

though it is done in front of the crowd. Well, there was an option to apply to the parents first according to the custom of the nobles, and to become engaged without confirming my intention.

.....Well, since my parents are like “that”, first of all it will not develop in such a way.

However, it is certain that Hero was not at fault. I hung my head apologetically.

And at that time, the hands of the Hero wrapped around my hands suddenly caught my eyes, and I became conscious of the feel of Greed-sama’s hands on my hands.

Greed-sama’s hands were very warm and a bit rough. I know it feels a little rigid. It is typical of those with swords. While grasping the sword and swinging it, callus can be formed and the skin peels off with friction. And the healed skin will become thicker and harder in order to withstand the impacts. That’s what every royal soldiers and knights have. If a sword is used frequently for a long time, it is almost like a medal without exception.

Such was also like the hands of the Hero. The moment I noticed this, the fear I felt to the barely understood Hero suddenly faded. The hands wrapped around my own are unquestionably that of a human.

The Hero, who possessed irregular powers, the strongest in the world, a natural disaster and a weapon——is Greed-sama, but it has not been possible for him to master his powers without any effort. If he did not practice swinging the sword with all his might, there is no way that the skin of his palms to become thicker like this. It would have been flawless and he wouldn’t have accomplished everything.

.....That’s because he is a human being.

Even if he is receiving spiritual protection, it does not change the fact that he is human. His hands seemed to tell me this. And this somewhat rugged hand protected the princess, and us.

For the first time, I now saw Greed-sama not as a hero but as a man. So far, aside from natural disasters and weapons, the Hero felt like a distant existence that was painted as a legend like a celestial being.

The filter went off, and I now felt that I was able to recognize the Hero—Greed-sama—to be a more familiar being for the first time. Without thinking, I looked up at the Hero.

.....I felt conflicted as I looked at his heated blue-green eyes and I regretted that for a bit, but I answered with full sincerity.

“Indeed, it is customary for nobles to obtain permission from the parents, but I do not need permission from my family, as I am planning to choose someone on my own. Greed-sama also, please do not mind my father.”

——*Did I say that?* I thought. I wonder if this line somewhat creates a misunderstanding.

That’s right. It’s as if, “Even if my father disagrees, I will not change my feelings towards Greed-sama”.....

.....

.....

“Aria.”

A slightly husky voice escaped from the Hero’s beautiful lips.

No, the problem is—the eyes. The eyes of Greed-sama! As soon as he heard my words, a hot flame glowed in the depths of Greed-sama’s eyes.

N-noooo! It is sweet! Too sweet! His bewitching hot gaze, it is capturing me! Fear came back at once, Greed-sama!

That’s because his eyes were trying to invite me. Despite that, I know. Somehow, cold sweat is dripping down my back, and I cannot avert my gaze away from the eyes of the Hero. It’s as if they’ve been glued.

My eyes, my gaze, my legs, my body—and even my thoughts cannot move at all. I suddenly felt like I couldn’t think of anything. Nevertheless, just the movement of Greed-sama in front of me feels strangely clear. Greed-sama, who seems to tower and lean towards me.

His incredibly long eyelashes softly fluttered, and his well-shaped lips went down and aimed for my—

I suddenly gasped.

.....I'm in trouble again.....maybe.

CHAPTER 16

THE PRINCE CAME BEFORE I GOT IN TROUBLE

Whoa! Hero-sama, you're eyelashes so long as if they harbor murderous intent!

——As usual, I would have escaped reality and probably thought about such a thing.

However, this time it is useless. Because my brain lost its intelligence, I just watched absentmindedly the beautiful face of Greed-sama approaching without retorting.

Thanks to that, Greed-sama's face filled my field of vision; the movement before and the slow lowering of his head, "Greed-sama only"*. It is near—to the point where I can see his closed eyelids and that long eyelashes casting shadows on his cheek.

It is obvious whatever you are trying to do right now! Even though I am a mob character, you are about to steal a kiss from a maiden!

I'm in trouble———!

I said in the corner of my befuddled mind when that happened. The door where I was stuck was violently beaten and someone called.

"Aria, Aria, are you there?!"

Knock, knock.

I felt the sound and the vibration of the knock on the door on my body.

The Hero stopped on his tracks and I heard a small clicking of the tongue, and at the same time, my mind became clear. Like a mist clearing up in an instant, I was able to think again. Cold sweat broke out as I came to understand the present situation and saw Greed-sama pull away.

It was dangerous.....!

Stopping before we barely had contact with each other, it was a situation where I couldn't have escaped if it was too late by even one more second. After all, if he kissed

my hands he could say that is out of deep affection, but if we had kissed lips to lips like lovers or a couple the price decided for that is to exchange our vows.

At least, among aristocrats. If it is witnessed, it can lead to what we call “betrothal”. The betrothed couple wears bracelets, but kissing in public is an act comparable to that.

Kiss in discretion! That is the slogan of those nobles who play around.

“Aria, Aria, you’re there inside, right?”

Knock, knock. The door was hit again, and a voice called.

Oops, I seemed to forget but that voice is my savior. I must thank that person!

“Ye-Yes, I’m here.”

While I was replying, I thought, *But . . . huh?* Since that person is calling my name, then we know each other. A Master’s voice.

However, the Master in my memory is one of those who should not come in a servant’s room—

Eh?

“I’ll open this.”

“.....Very well.”

It was Greed-sama who responded to the person outside the door. Even so, I did not answer the Master, but I answered with a questioning look to Greed-sama beside me. I do not know why I tried to obtain permission from the Hero like this even though I am in my room. Is it because of the lady-in-waiting’s guts?

It seems to be useless because the Hero has an intense charisma. Dominating the atmosphere, it made me think of him as the Master. Particularly like that of a king or a prince of the story. Being a lady-in-waiting for six years, there’s no way I cannot obey.

No, no, no, of course, the Hero is not my master!

While I retorted in my thoughts, the Hero drew back and I moved away from the door.

“I’ll open it now.”

Because the all the doors of the servants’ rooms open outside, opening the door by turning the doorknob prompt the people in front of the door to pay attention——

The person on the other side is, as expected, someone who is not supposed to be in a place like this.

It was the second prince of this county, Alfred Rafia Schwarze-sama.

CHAPTER 17

THE STEALTHY PRINCE

The King and Queen of this kingdom have four children. The First Prince, Enwald-sama, and the Second Prince, Alfred-sama, the First Princess, Mariage-sama (pronounced as 'Mariajuu'), who married the prince of the neighboring kingdom and the Second Princess, Louise-sama, who I am serving.

Enwald-sama, with his own high aspirations, is studying abroad in the large country of Linash that is famous for its strong army, so he is not in the castle right now. Louise-sama being kidnapped by the Demon King was hidden from Enwald-sama, so right now he is focusing on brandishing his sword without knowing anything.

As for Mariage-sama who lives in the neighboring kingdom, she knows about the kidnapping but she is the crown princess and cannot spare a little time to visit her country on her own. She was pleased to hear that the princess was rescued but it seems it will be a long time for her to see her safe sister's face.

In other words, the only ones in this castle right now are Alfred-sama and Princess Louise.

"I'm glad you're safe."

Alfred-sama heaved a sigh of relief when he saw my face.

Safe? Despite what he thought, I sorrowfully sighed when I saw again the shadow of Alfred-sama standing alone in the hallway without his guards. It looks like this person slipped through the eyes of his guards again.

"Alfred-sama, why are you here? Where are your guards?"

When I asked, Alfred-sama looked behind him as if he has just noticed and awkwardly laughed when he confirmed that no one was there.

"It looks like they were left behind as I hurried here. Perhaps they were not able to find me. Well, it usually happens."

“.....I see.”

Certainly, once they lose sight of him, it is difficult to find him. I deeply sympathize with the escorting knights. Surely, the captain of the knights will get angry at them because they did not fulfill their duties. But it is unavoidable for the knights to lose sight of him.

[Stealthy Prince]

It was Alfred-sama's secret name. Even though he is called by that, he is not involved in spying activities. As if having a [Stealth] skill, he has a weak presence in every situation. It became impossible to detect his presence even just by walking in the hallway as soon as the escorts looked away. The head court lady and Grand Chamberlain, along with their subordinates, give up if they cannot find him even if they have business with the prince. When they noticed, he was already nearby and it was bad for their heart. There's no way they can mention it.

Also, the princess and I repeatedly almost have heart attacks many times. Before we knew that someone entered the room, we suddenly heard a voice. I think that life span of the Princess and I had definitely shortened by several years due to Alfred-sama.

Yes, I think that Alfred-sama was surely at the hall when the Hero triumphantly returned yesterday. Or rather, there's no reason for him not to be there. That's because his little sister is back.

Unfortunately, not even once was I able to detect his presence. Other people are probably the same.

His lack of presence is said to be one of the seven wonders of the castle. And it is his appearance that further enhances his lack of presence. He has a bright orange hair similar to the princess and green eyes. His parents were handsome and beautiful while his older and younger sisters were peerless beauties.

And yet, Alfred-sama has an average face. Like the very ordinary previous king, his grandfather. It is a mob character's face. Although his appearance is not bad, should I say that he doesn't have any special features.....? It seems like the owner of that appearance is not remembered by other people.

If he put in the middle of the town with his ordinary appearance, there's no doubt that he will assimilate. I am familiar with his mob face, but I cannot stop thinking of him as

a royalty. Appearing suddenly before a person with his lack of presence, I think it is almost fatal. However, I cannot voice out my sentiment.

By the way, the First Prince, Enwald-sama, is also rather mediocre. It seems that all the genes for beauty had gone to the princess. But Enwald-sama possessed something that Alfred-sama did not have.

That is——presence.

Enwald-sama, who is a hot-blooded type of person with his head full of swordsmanship, possessed an impressive presence. It is oppressive. He has too much presence.

It is probable that all of Alfred-sama's presence was taken by Enwald-sama in the queen's womb, and everybody secretly says——*If Enwald-sama and Alfred-sama is combined together and divided by two, the quotient is exactly right.*

.....That's what I also thought. Unfortunately, he is a prince in many ways. That is the Alfred-sama before me.

Although they said about addition, I'm sorry but his personality is good! He is gentle, sincere and serious. Despite his lack of presence, he does not put a strong pressure and there is even humility in his behavior. He must have been a good civil official—had he not been a prince.

Even though everyone sees him like a civil official, Alfred-sama became a security officer in the castle in behalf of Enwald-sama who is studying abroad. It was very busy after the princess was kidnapped and I haven't seen his face for a while. There is also the possibility that I just didn't notice his presence.....

But why did Alfred-sama come to a place such as this?

I tilted my head in confusion as I look at the prince who is standing in the hallway. He is still the prince even with his mob character's appearance. Here is the building where the servants live and it is not a place where a royalty is supposed to be.

"I rushed here when I heard that the Hero is coming....." Alfred-sama said in a serious manner.

Ah, I said as I understood. He came here because he has an urgent business with the

Hero.

“If you’re looking for the Hero, he is here.”

I shifted my body sideways to let Alfred-sama pass. Alfred-sama stepped into the room without hesitation. He looked closely at Greed-sama who was standing calmly inside the room.

I closed the door and turned again towards the peculiar men who were in my room. The two men silently stared at each other for some reason. I wonder what’s the matter with them.

.....There are three adults in a narrow room and if there is an emergency, I wonder if they could go to some other place and talk with each other.

That’s what I’m thinking while observing them but, I thought that the two people here are the opposite poles and I felt an indescribable feeling.

One was born only as a villager, but has outstanding abilities and charisma. Greed-sama has a prince-like appearance.

One was born as a prince, but his presence is weak and his charisma—what’s that? Can it be eaten? Alfred-sama has a mob character’s face.

.....Destiny is ironic.

That’s what I thought at the moment.

CHAPTER 18

THE PRINCE VS. THE HERO

After all, the reality is not like a tale. I felt regret while watching Alfred-sama and Greed-sama who were silently looking each other in this narrow room. Despite that, why are they not speaking a single word? Alfred-sama has supposedly gone to this place because he has a business with the Hero.

.....Don't tell me, he can't talk because I'm here?

He might want to talk to him man-to-man or discuss about important secrets. If so, it is a small room but I am willing to offer it to them.

It was when I opened my mouth to tell them about it.

Alfred-sama suddenly turned towards me and told me unexpectedly, "Aria, are you alright? Did he do something strange to you?"

"Huh?"

I don't know what to say and I stared at him blankly.

"I'm saying, did he, to you?" Alfred-sama said to me and pointed at Greed-sama.

"Huh?"

I stared at him again in puzzlement. I did not know exactly what I was being told.

But, to understand the meaning of Alfred-sama's words, I recalled the scene earlier in my mind. That scene was the close-up of Greed-sama's beautiful face approaching. The feeling of his warm breath on my lips——

Aaaaaahhh! He did! He did something strange! He nearly kissed me!

I felt the heat rush up into my face. Although it was an attempt, surely that time, Greed-sama... to me.....

It looks like my face suddenly turned red. Alfred-sama's expression changed.

"No way, had he done something already? Argh, I heard from Louise that the Hero went to Aria's room. Even though I hurried because it was bad for you to be alone with him, perhaps I'm late....."

"Ah."

Although I do not understand well after being told quickly, apparently I vaguely understood the reason why Alfred-sama came to a place like this and it was different from what I thought.

Moreover, it seems that I have given a strange misunderstanding because I was blushing.

The Hero said spoke before I could say anything.

"That's right, Prince Alfred. I haven't done to her anything..... yet."

Greed-sama faintly smiled as he spoke.

Yet? It feels like he'll wait for an opportunity to do something to me from now on.

——I was sought by a handsome Greed-sama. If I was an ordinary maid, my heart would have been taken.

But I felt chills for some reason.

It was said that a senior maid who previously had a lover was "thrilled by his yearning gaze and words", and it appears to be a different kind of trembling with expectation.

The sugar content is zero. Zero.

While shivers run down my spine, Alfred-sama, who felt disturbed by Greed-sama's meaningful speech, looked back with a glare at the Hero.

"I will not allow such unjustifiable things in this castle. Besides, Aria has not given her reply thus far. She is not your fiancée yet."

"Of course, I am aware of that. That's why I think we should get to know each other."

“I’m saying that being alone in a private room is not allowed.”

“Oh.....”

At Alfred-sama’s words, Greed-sama snickered. But his eyes . . . his eyes were not smiling at all. That, it was absolutely a superficial smile. Greed-sama, who has a fake smile, told Alfred-sama meaningfully.

“It is upsetting to be upbraided by you, Prince Alfred..... Have you forgotten about the night after Princess Louise was kidnapped?”

“.....Na—!”

Mr. Alf Reed exclaimed as soon as he heard the Hero, his face turning red. I don’t know what they are talking about. The night after Princess Louise was kidnapped?

But Alfred-sama looked like he remembered something. Suddenly, I began to feel disturbed.

“How did you . . . N-no, that . . . I-I came with good intentions.....”

He was flustered as he explained. Cold sweats are appearing, Alfred-sama.....

On the contrary, Greed-sama is calm and composed.

“I also came here with good intentions.”

He said with a smile that didn’t reach his eyes.

Is it just my illusion that he was going to kiss me a while ago? I instinctively retorted in my mind.

However, I was sorry for Alfred-sama for being reproached like that, so I decided to lend a helping hand.

In other words, changing the topic.

“Co-Come to think of it, it’s been a while since I saw you, Alfred-sama.”

Alfred-sama’s expression clearly showed relief, unlike his upset appearance that he

cannot conceal earlier.

.....Really, what did you do the night after Princess Louise was kidnapped?

Anyway, it doesn't matter to me, whose head is only filled with the princess.

"Yeah. It's really been a long time since we've talked like this." Alfred-sama smiled wryly.

"It's because you are responsible for the castle's security." I said, nodding in agreement.

It is the duty of this person to defend the castle against the demons in collaboration with the wizards while also being in command with the royal soldiers and knights who were prepared for human intruders. So after the barrier was broken by the macho Demon King, Alfred-sama was very busy at that time when Famir-sama was not present.

And yet, he was a very kind person who told me not to mind. He was an ordinary young man who is not noticeable except for being a royalty, but his character compensates for that. Despite his lack of presence, I think that many people adore him compared to Enwald-sama.

"No, I'm not really that busy but....."

Alfred-sama said as he smiled weakly, looking troubled.

"Just when I thought about seeing you, various problems occurred. Water fell on me suddenly, things flew at me at a sudden gust, my foot suddenly slipped and I fell down the stairs. Also, a lot of people spoke to me more than usual until I ran out of time. So I could not meet you in the end."

.....E-eh, I think I've heard something extraordinary just now.

Water falling, sudden gust blowing, foot suddenly slipping——

Is it just my imagination, or are some external forces at work.....?

CHAPTER 19

I DIDN'T KNOW.

I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND.

I DIDN'T HEAR.

.....No way.

“A-Alfred-sama, was that after the Hero and his companions went to rescue the princess?”

Cold sweat dripping down my back, I asked Alfred-sama nervously. While wishing that my assumption was wrong.

However—

“Yes. Now that you mentioned it, you’re right. Perhaps the last time we talked was the day before the Hero came.” Alfred-sama said, smiling bitterly.

Deep in my mind, several spirits who were giving protection to Greed-sama were flitting. By the way, it was not known that this generation’s Hero have a full spirit protection. It was not written in the “Hero Times” what kind of spirit protection he received. Most of us thought Greed-sama would have the protection of one type of spirit, either fire or light, based from the patterns in the past.

Therefore, Alfred-sama probably wouldn’t have thought that the Hero was involved in the various “problems”.

But that is obviously——right?

To confirm my suspicion, I shot a glance towards Greed-sama behind Alfred-sama. Greed-sama also seemed to be looking at me, and gave me a soft smile when our eyes met. It seems like a wholehearted smile, unlike what he showed to Alfred-sama.

.....There was no malice or anything contained in his smile, but I am convinced that it seemed like there was a sense of accomplishment in there.

There's no mistake that he is the cause of the disturbances that happened to Alfred-sama here and there. Whether he ordered it or it was done without his permission, the spirits made those obstacles in accordance to this person's feelings.

Obviously confusing the government and the people. He's using the spirits for his personal interests.

.....I wonder if it is okay for a Hero to be like this, Greed-sama.

Even so, what I do not know is the reason why Greed-sama disturbed Alfred-sama to the point of harassment. The presence and title of these two are contrasting, but that is not the reason for doing things like harassment. To save the princess, he was already in the situation where he confronted the Demon King. Then, there is only one thing to think about.

——Am I the cause?

I never thought of this even in my dreams, but is it possible that Alfred-sama——

I do not want to have such conceited thoughts, but I can only think of it. Certainly, the ratio at which Alfred-sama talks to me than the other maids is high. But I am the first lady-in-waiting and am always near the princess.

No way, no way. I never thought that he was thinking of me as special, yeah. I swear to the goddess.

Look, a mob is a mob. I am not the heroine. Alfred-sama and I.....

In my mind, various thoughts swirled around. I am confused with my feelings.

I am sorry for acting like a girl who dreams of a solid story where she is loved by the prince, but in the happy thoughts I am thinking right now, I am not struggling with the Hero's proposal.

Thinking about the prince..... it is somewhat troublesome. That is what I first thought.

Even though his presence is weak and he has a mob's appearance, Alfred-sama is the prince of this country. He may be the second prince but, if ever something happens to Enwald-sama, he is an important person that will succeed this kingdom. It is necessary for his marriage partner to be a daughter of a duke or a marquess, or a

Princess of another country. Because if something happens, Alfred-sama's lady will become the queen of this country. If the Second Prince takes a viscount's daughter as his wife—such thing cannot be permitted. It was different from the case of the Hero. Everyone will oppose it.

Even I myself want to decline. I don't even have the skills to become the Hero's wife, and I also don't have the skills to become a queen, no matter how I think about it.

I reiterate this many times because it's important. I am a mob character. This character is a small fry who dies at the very beginning when they get involved in battles.

The Prince's beloved.

I'm sorry for being involved in this controversy. It is very impossible to become a concubine.

Frankly speaking, it is bothersome. Yes, I'll say it, the known Viscount of Milford's family motto.

Bothersome.

——So, I decided not to ask anything.

I didn't know about the identity of Alfred-sama's beloved and the Hero's sabotage. I didn't understand. I didn't hear.

Once I reset my head and discard everything in my memory, I asked Alfred-sama in order to change the topic.

“Uhm, by the way, Alfred-sama, what was your purpose in coming here?”

At first, I thought that he came to see Greed-sama but it seems different. Clearly.

Perhaps Alfred-sama came to such a place just like he said earlier, that it was dangerous for the two of us to be left alone in my small room.

“A—, That.....”

Suddenly, Alfred-sama expressed a weak smile that seemed bashful.

“Both Father and the Prime Minister are hoping that Aria would marry the Hero, but if you don’t like it, I want to tell you that you can clearly refuse. I said that in the hall, but it did not reach you at all in the hustle and bustle.....”

Oh, so you were exactly at the hall, Alfred-sama—Ah, wrong. That’s not it, though I just used tsukkomi.

It just made my heart skip a beat. Telling me those kinds of words, Alfred-sama is the first. He told me clearly that I could refuse, silently pressuring me deep in his heart to dissuade me from forming a relationship with the Hero for the sake of this country.

“Alfred-sama..... Thank you very much.” I replied to Alfred-sama with a smile.

Of course, as Alfred-sama said, it is not a situation where I can easily refuse, and there is also that tsukkomi part of me that says, “if I refuse, what then?”, but I would like to express my gratitude to Alfred-sama for considering about my feelings. It’s because it is only Alfred-sama who told me this.

He has a mob’s face but he is a nice person. If ever he was not a prince, he couldn’t even become a baron, a viscount or an earl, but nothing can be done about it.....

Oops, I didn’t hear anything, and I didn’t know.

“And so, Aria, if you.....”

It was when Alfred-sama took a step forward, his face slightly blushing.

“Prince Alfred.”

That voice echoed around the room.

.....It was Greed-sama’s voice. It was a very, very peaceful, calm voice.

However——

It felt like a kind of flag was raised.

CHAPTER 20

THE SECRET OF THE STEALTHY PRINCE

The Hero is jealous. This was his behavior in the hall, as what I already knew. I remembered my current situation and my behavior, and I felt my blood draining from my face. I smiled at another man..... right? Moreover, it is in front of Greed-sama's eyes.

.....I wonder, the flag that was raised, is it Alfred-sama's death flag? Or is it the destruction flag of the kingdom of Schwarze? Or maybe is it——my abduction and confinement flag?

Being a tsukkomi despite this situation, I nervously looked at Greed-sama. But what I saw was a quiet, serious looking Greed-sama. I was afraid, but then his eyes did not bear the dark flames I half-expected.

Those eyes were calm—is a good impression, but he was looking at Alfred-sama with a glass-like gaze that did not reflect any emotions. Alfred-sama turned to look almost the same time I looked at Greed-sama and seemed to be frightened when he also saw it.

Well, that's obvious. It is certainly scary to look at the expressionlessness of the person who just falsely smiled a while ago. But, if what the princess said is true, it seems that this is the usual Greed-sama.

“Prince Alfred.”

Again, Greed-sama opened his mouth, with the same expression and unfathomable, indifferent voice. But the words that came out of his mouth the next moment were unexpected by both Alfred-sama and me.

“I heard that the person-in-charge for the security of this castle is you, Your Highness. So I think that it is quick to tell you directly. There are several loopholes in this anti-demon barrier.”

“——Huh?”

Alfred-sama was astonished. That's right. Being told with unexpected things, Greed-sama's words are not processed in his mind at all.

.....Even though I said that, I am also astonished like him. For both of us who became dimwitted, Greed-sama politely rephrased from the beginning.

.....He was already scary and indifferent.

"The magicians of this kingdom have put up an anti-demon barrier but there are inadequate parts in some places. Probably it is because there is a difference in the ability of each of the magicians. The barrier is mottled, wherein there are tightly stretched parts and thin parts. It can withstand if it is just an ordinary demon, but a high-class demon can break through the thin parts of the barrier."

"What did you say?"

Alfred-sama, who understood the Hero clearly, was amazed. It's pretty obvious. There was a hole in the barrier in which the magicians have slept less for a number of days. It can't be overlooked by the person-in-charge of the security.

Although the Demon King was slayed, it is fatal in this current situation when the major subordinates are still alive. Well, because it is enough to consider that they may hold grudges and attack.

"I suggest that it is better to consult Famir-dono and immediately take counter-measures."

"Y-You're right. H-However....."

"Your Highness, you know that you cannot put up a barrier right away due to the size of the castle. I think that it is the first priority to take countermeasures as soon as possible.

".....Mm. I understand."

Reluctantly agreeing, Alfred-sama went towards the door.

I also knew it for the first time in this uproar but it seems that it is very difficult to keep a 24/7 effective barrier over a huge thing like a castle. So after it was destroyed by the Demon King, the magicians constructed the barrier using magic without rest

and sleep for several days. As what the Hero said, if it still have a lot of holes.....

It somehow felt like it was just his way to make Alfred-sama leave but he cannot lie about such a thing, so it is true that there is a thin part in the defense. This is indeed important. It is a situation where countermeasures should be taken as soon as possible.

“Listen, Aria, be careful. Just scream out loud if something happens.”

Lastly, Alfred-sama told me when I saw him off the door, leaving my room.

“Y-Yes.”

About shouting, it is also very troublesome to let other people know that we are alone in a small room. As I look at Alfred-sama leaving, I entered tsukkomi mode. Or maybe, should I be careful with Greed-sama’s restraint?

.....If it’s restraint, I expect it. Because I am alone with Greed-sama again.

I remembered that I was going to be kissed just before Alfred-sama’s intrusion and I felt that something cold accumulated in my stomach.

Will the same thing happen again?

The crisis of my chastity, again.

Somehow restraining His Highness, it was of no concern to him. At this rate, should I escape . . . to a place with a lot of people? But if he kissed me in public, then that is the end. The outer moat will be completely filled (He would perfectly remove the obstacles). Even the inner moat is also likely to be filled up. With soil called resignation.

While thinking so, I looked back. And then in place of his expressionless face a while ago was a glowing smile.

I was startled. How should I say it . . . isn’t it scary for his expression to change before and after?

.....I now understand why the Hero’s party members made a fuss.

The sudden change of his default inexpressive face will surely make others pull away. Draw back.

As I trembled from his sideways glance, Greed-sama said with a smile. Which . . . is another unexpected thing.

“Please be careful with Prince Alfred.”

“——Huh?”

“He has a [Stealth] skill.”

“.....Huh.”

Alfred-sama’s [Stealth] skill.

I was surprised, for I had never heard of such a thing for the past six years. But if he has a stealth skill, then I can agree why he has a weak presence. After all, stealth skill is a skill that makes sure that one is not noticed by eliminating the presence.

Then the stealthy prince is truly a stealthy prince, isn’t he?

But—

Skills are not easy to acquire. A person needs to train and it is not necessarily obtained because of compatibility. Because I have a zero magical power, my dream of having a skill is still a dream, a far, faraway dream. And I have never heard that Alfred-sama has a magical power.

Famir-sama also said. The only ones who have magical powers in the royal family are the Queen, the First Princess, Mariage-sama and the Second Princess, Louise-sama.

In other words—only women have magical powers. It is a level that is not enough to be a magician. You can’t feel even the slightest power on the men.

Alfred-sama, who should not have magical powers like me, how did he master that skill? How did he get the skill in the first place?

“He was born with it. The hidden skill, that is. So I don’t think Famir-sama is also aware.”

“B-Born with it.”

“Yes. Sometimes, there are humans who are born with a skill.”

In other words, ever since Alfred-sama was born, he already has a [Stealth] skill.

“In the case of an inborn skill, it is always active. Or, it is usually dormant but it will be activated by some kind of trigger. In the case of His Highness, it is the former and it seems that it is always activated. Nevertheless, the skill is usually controllable with magical power as one grows..... However, His Highness has no magical power so it is not controllable.”

I see, I mused in agreement. In other words, Alfred-sama, who has no magical power, cannot control the [Stealth] skill he was born with—so it is always in a continuously active condition. That’s why he has a lack of presence.

That’s because the [Stealth] skill is that kind of skill.

“I think he is vaguely aware of his own skill. There are times where he deliberately uses it to escape the guards and acts as if no one knows about it.”

Greed-sama said with a faint, wicked smile.

“Thinking that it is all right since he won’t be noticed, perhaps he visits your room around midnight and watches you sleep, right?”

.....

.....

.....

——What did he say?

My jaw dropped.

CHAPTER 21

WHICH OF THEM SHOULD I BE CAREFUL OF?

Alfred-sama visited me in this room in the middle of the night while using his [Stealth] skill so nobody can see him and watched my sleeping face when I was in a deep slumber.

That's what Greed-sama said!

Th-That, that... isn't it dangerous to go through such precarious situation?! Especially by me?!

"Is, Is that true?!" I shuddered as I asked Greed-sama.

Greed-sama nodded at me and said, "I swear to the goddess and the holy sword that it is true."

The Hero swore to the holy sword, not to mention the goddess, so it is not a lie or joke but the truth. But . . . I wanted it to be a lie!

I thought Alfred-sama was harmless because he is mob-faced. Isn't creeping into a woman's bedroom at night an imprudent act? Scary! I thought it was only the Hero who is scary, but actually there is someone who is closer to me.

.....I'm simply shocked.

".....When did it happen?"

"It was on the night the day after Princess Louise was kidnapped."

Ah, I replied when I understood. So this is what the Hero said a while ago. And then the very flustered Alfred-sama somehow justified it by saying, "I did not come here with bad intentions".....

Alfred-sama, you're not here but please let me retaliate. Even though I am a lady-in-waiting, you invaded a woman's room so you have no excuse for that.

“It seems that he was worried about you who is in low spirits because of the princess and came to check your situation. And since it is pitiful to awaken a sleeping lady..... which was his excuse to himself, he entered your room without knocking.”

Greed-sama said with a chuckle. But the laughter did not reach his eyes. Also, anyone who saw this scene where he tells such things is scary enough.....

After all, the Hero has not yet arrived at this kingdom the day after the princess was kidnapped, right? It was before the King had just sent a messenger to the Hero, right?

He can see the past by using the power of the spirits to use the [Analysis] skill but still, it is scary! Even if I understand the known reasons, it is scary!

“Fortunately, just looking at your sleeping face made him happy. But we do not know what will happen next time. That’s why the spirits caused him trouble each time he went to see you. In order to protect you.”

“.....Thank you very much.”

Completely exhausted, I expressed my gratitude. I’m grateful that he protected me. Alfred-sama looked harmless—although in truth, he was not harmless—but he might take a turn for the worse and attack me. It is safer if I don’t meet him.

That’s why I’m grateful. I want to thank him. However..... why is it that “which of them” comes to mind? I have full of feelings of doubtfulness to either of them.

“But today, I was a little careless. Apparently, it is unfortunate that I have to tell Famir-dono to strengthen the “protection”..... what an unnecessary thing. I failed to stop him from coming here after all the hindrances.”

Greed-sama said that with a smile. But he smiled more cheerfully and added———

“But don’t worry. Such protection can be broken any time. I will never let the two of you meet again in a popular place even if there are lots of people.”

“P-Please wait a moment. Breaking the protection.....”

I panicked. It reminded me of when the macho Demon King came. The Demon King, who destroyed the barrier and abducted the princess, damaged the protection that Famir-sama built with magic. Famir-sama’s magic backfired on him, and he became

unconscious and had just returned recently. If Alfred-sama's magic protection was broken, then Famir-sama will again.....

"Please put your mind at ease. Nothing will happened to Famir-dono."

Knowing what I meant to say, Greed-sama softly smiled.

.....His smile was gentle. It was gentle, but—

"He will not even notice it. I'll just "fix" it a little and leave the framework of the protection. It will only become ineffective when he tries to approach you. It's all right, because I will not make a blunder that will make Famir-sama notice."

"Is, Is that so?"

Greed-sama, you're forthrightly saying something amazing to me. Its gap from your gentle smile is extreme.

As I mentioned earlier, Famir-sama is the most powerful magician in this kingdom but.....

"But, Aria, you also need to be careful."

"Eh?"

Before I knew it, Greed-sama stood in front of me and took my hand. I didn't have time to be startled. Because my hands were taken before my brain could understand the situation!

Taken aback, I looked into Greed-sama's face and he told me as he peered into me.

"Do not let your guard down around Prince Alfred. No, not only around him but also around other men. Please never..... smile towards another man again."

.....The eyes of Greed-sama looking down on me were filled with dark light. Compared to the expressionless glass-like eyes, his eyes contain emotions. And yet, these eyes that make me think of a very, very dark abyss somewhat reminded me of those glass eyes. Why are his eyes like these?

.....But I'm afraid to say it clearly!

I couldn't respond out of too much fear, and Greed-sama narrowed his eyes that are still filled with dark flames and spoke.

—In a small, low voice.

“Otherwise, I am not confident that I could suppress myself.”

I shivered when I heard his words. It felt dangerous at once. Probably, it was instinct.

And perhaps due to my defensive instinct, I spontaneously replied.

“I will not, I will not, I will not smile to other men! Only to Greed-sama!”

—So I said.

Ah, when I thought that I might have pressed some kind of switch, it was already late.

“Aria.”

The moment I heard Greed-sama call my name, he has squeezed me to his chest.

Nooooo!! Am I stupid?! Don't I have a learning ability?!

While being held in a strong chest, I can't help but be sarcastic to my own self.

CHAPTER 22

THE SOUND OF THE OUTER MOAT BEING FILLED

Greed-sama protected me from Alfred-sama. But who's going to protect me from Greed-sama?

The answer is – none. There is none!

So is my chastity in danger again? I must survive this on my own!

I struggled. I twisted my body. However, as expected of the Hero, he was not bothered. We are bound tightly together!

This is dangerous! I don't care if Alfred-sama is here now! Please come back!

That's what I thought when a knocking sound was heard.

But I'm saved! was what I thought when what reached my ears was—

“Aria, I'm coming in. How are you?”

It was the voice of my colleague, lady-in-waiting B. And as soon as she said those words, the doors opened before I had the chance to respond. *What is the significance of a knock?!* I have no time to use tsukkomi at this sudden event.

“I came to see your situation because the princess was concerned about your condition . . .”

The lady-in-waiting B Belinda Arsworth, who is a daughter of a baron, entered as she spoke and froze when she saw us. While I was breaking out in a cold sweat, I could not help but think that bad things are occurring one after another.

Belinda is one year younger than I. A beautiful woman with fluffy pink hair and pale aquamarine eyes, she was hurriedly engaged to the eldest son of an influential viscount family the other day and decided to resign after marriage, but she is a cheeky person who loudly squealed at the Hero in the hall.

Without noticing my discomfiture . . .

“Congratulations, Aria! How wonderful it is to be wooed by the Hero! Of course, it is fine for you to do it, right? Invite me to your wedding, okay?”

And so forth. Too late, she has already given me her blessing like a friend would.

Argh, I’ll say that my relationship with her is good.

However—she’s talkative. That was the small, irritating flaw that spoiled her character. Moreover, she has a tendency of not listening to other people’s story. It may be because of the flowers growing in her head.

While we are still pressed close together, Belinda’s gaze moved from me to the Hero, who is holding me in his embrace. If I wasn’t restrained by the Hero’s hug, I would have grabbed Belinda’s shoulder and shake her, and work out the details to her.

“I’m sorry for interrupting. Ohohoho. Since the nuisance will disappear, please take your time.”

The strangely smiling Belinda retreated backwards while looking at us with a I-know-how-it-is look. And contrary to when she came in, she quietly, quietly closed the door as she went out of the room.

While saying, “Well then, please excuse me.”

The door closed slowly with a little sound. Right after that, I heard the sound of her footsteps running on the corridor.

I’m doomed. For sure, this story will be well-known in the castle at once. The Hero and I, hugging each other in a room, just the two of us——

I have a very bad feeling.

Belinda . . . The bed is still tidy, so I want to firmly emphasize that there is no evidence of using it. At least.

And Hero-sama, how long are you going to hug me?!

“Greed-sama, please let go of me!”

I struggled. At this rate, I will be carried to the bed..... if that really happens, it is very troubling!

However, while the Hero did not do anything to my resistance and just kept me firmly restrained, he ignored the fact that I am resisting him and said.

“Once I deal with the remaining demons, I will return to Elusion at once. When that time comes—I want to come home with you.”

I didn’t know what to say for a moment. It’s because I don’t have a line to counteract the current situation.

Greed-sama continued when I became confused and stopped resisting.

“Since Rufus and Princess Louise will likely decide to marry, you are coming along with her too. The Princess will feel reassured if she has an acquaintance in an unfamiliar country.”

“P-Please wait!”

Going to Elusion . . . That . . . Is Greed-sama under the impression that I accepted his proposal?!

I have no intention of accepting it, mind you!

I felt a sense of danger. If I will be swept away as it is, would the engagement become gradually established in this way?

.....No, it’s not just my imagination!

I felt that the outer moat was being filled! I can hear the sounds of it being filled in my brain!

We need to sit down for this and talk about this properly. Before it’s too late!

“Uhm, Greed-sama, I still haven’t replied to you yet—”

“And this is an amulet. Please put this on.”

“You’re going to ignore this?!”

Completely ignoring me retorting, the Hero slipped a gold bracelet he got from out of nowhere in my left wrist. While restraining me with one hand, his other hand moved deftly with a click.

.....Huh?!

I looked down on my wrist, dumbfounded. At the same time, Greed-sama took his hand off me, took a silver bracelet from his waist pocket and put it on his left hand. I didn't notice that, since I was staring at the glittering well-made bracelet on my left wrist. It was a bracelet with a motif of the goddess Refelia's flower called Reelis flower. The pattern of a number of overlapping petals and leavers are splendidly carved. It surely came from the hands of a renowned artisan.

The inside of the bracelet was engraved with letters. It was Greed-sama's and my name, with words of blessing. I realized what this bracelet is and my enlightened mind blanked out. Even words of tsukkomi did not come to mind.

Slowly raising my head, I saw the silver bracelet shining brightly on Greed-sama's left wrist. His bracelet has the motif of Moonlight flower that symbolizes that god of darkness, Atillard. The workmanship of the engraved small four-petal flowers arranged in a row was also splendid. Perhaps inside the silver bracelet, Greed-sama's and my name and the words of blessing are engraved. Because of that tradition.

Bracelets that symbolize the couple of gods, Refelia, the goddess of light, and Atillard, the god of darkness. A pair of bracelets.

——Bracelets that are worn as a proof that a man and a woman will exchange a vow in the future.

.....Why is it in my arms?

——While I was watching the bracelet in stupefaction in my own room.

In the princess's room, a conversation between Princess Louise and Belinda is taking place.

“Princess, this is serious! The Hero is in Aria's room and he is hugging her in front of the bed!”

“Eh?! Is it not a mistake? And where is my big brother? With the two of them alone, I thought he went to her room while saying that he is concerned about Aria’s reputation ...”

“I did not see Prince Alfred. As usual, I may have missed him when we passed by each other. But I am certain that the two of them are embracing each other in Aria’s room! For sure, she is receiving his courtship!”

“Is it true? Since Aria should have backed away from Greed-sama’s confession, I did not think that it will be easy for him to make Aria receive.....”

“But I couldn’t think of any reason for them to hug each other!”

“.....You do have a point.”

“Right?! From now on, everyone will be busy with Princess and Rufus-sama’s and Aria and the Hero’s engagements!”

“That’s right. It will be encouraging for me to go to Elusion if I will be accompanied by Aria. . . Are they really hugging?”

“By the name of the goddess, what I said is true.”

——It seems that the outer moat of an unknown place is filled.

CHAPTER 23

JOB CHANGE

PART 1

In this world, men and women who are getting engaged wear bracelets that symbolize the goddess of light Refelia and the god of darkness Atillard.

No, not rings. It's because a ring is mainly used as an accessory or for magic. It is a magical tool, a generic name for ornaments that stores magic, and it is a very precious thing where the trapped magic is activated when a key spell is casted. If there are some magical powers that can be activated, it is a convenient thing but it is a product which can be created basically only by magicians. And because they mainly make magical tools for themselves, it became horribly expensive.

The reason why magicians make magical tools is easy. It is to simplify the spell that is necessary to develop magic. If they try to use magic, chanting for a long time is difficult. So, they put each magic they deem necessary in an ornament, which was specially processed in advance. So that when they have to use it, they can just cast a simple spell that will be the key to activate the magic while touching the magical tool. That's why the magicians often wear more rings than the noble family. With this explanation, Famir-sama seems to carry a lot, too.

Looking at the aspect of convenience, it is easier to carry a ring than a bracelet. Also, in order to activate it, they need to touch it as they cast a spell and if bracelets are used frequently as magical tools, it will clank a lot when the need to use it will arise. If that's the case, there is also a possibility of making a mistake while using the necessary magic. In order to prevent that, the ring is a more convenient magical tool. Because at least ten can be worn.

That is why a ring is a magical tool. Therefore, the bracelet became the symbol of marriage in order to avoid confusion, and making a bracelet as a magical tool is rare.

In short, what I wanted to say is that a bracelet is either a proof that it is sold out* or completely worn as an ornament. And if it is an accessory, it is worn on the right arm if one is still unmarried. Only married people put it on the left arm.

That's right. In other words—wearing it on the left wrist is a proclamation to the world that it is already sold out*—

[T/N: 売約済み [baiyakusumi] – according to Jisho, it means sold out. But looking at the context, this could also possibly mean that a person is already committed to someone.]

“N-N-Na, na!”

I screamed when I looked down at the brilliantly shining bracelet on my left wrist.

“What is the meaning of this?!!”

“It is a magical tool. It will serve as an amulet.” The Hero quickly replied.

Wait, this is wrong!!

“Isn't this an engagement bracelet?! But I don't remember in the slightest that I consented to get married to you!”

“As I said, it is a magical tool. I asked an artisan to make me a pair but I was misunderstood and it became this form.”

Uwa~, I dislike him for saying such a falsesounding excuse with a smile, this bastard—I mean, this person!

“But he made a fortunate error, right? In this form, no one will think that this is a magical tool.”

“Re-Remove it!”

Whether it is a magical tool or an amulet, the day he puts this thing on—

I paled. Imagining myself wearing this and wandering around in the streets makes me cry. I felt around the bracelet with my right hand and searched for its joint. Since there was a sound a while ago, there should be a clasp somewhere.

However—no matter how many times I've searched with my hand, there is no joining point that I could see with my eyes!

Since it became like this, I will forcibly remove it! When I tried to pull the bracelet out

of my hand, the circle became smaller and it got tightly attached to my wrist!

It somehow looked like an elastic bracelet—Ah, no! It seems that a magic was applied so that it will not come off! Is this bracelet cursed?!

“Greed-sama, please remove it!”

I raised my left arm and held it out towards Greed-sama. But he shook his head.

“I won’t. Because this will protect you.”

“Such a thing—!”

“Please listen.”

Greed-sama, whose smile disappeared, told me with a serious look. No—it was an order.

I instantly closed my mouth. Because the one standing in front of me was not the gentle young man who proposed to me but the one who fought the Demon King and, undoubtedly, the “strongest Hero”—Greed-sama, the human whom the goddess have chosen.

Greed-sama is not a king. He is a commoner, born as a villager. And yet, there is a sort of intimidating feeling that I had never even felt from His Majesty the King which made me obey him. No, the sense of intimidation is not an appropriate presentation. I felt that the gravity of his divine powers made me follow him unconsciously and moreover, lower my head to him unwillingly. His strong charisma can never be matched with any mob character. I can’t help myself but want to kneel on the ground right now.

But I firmly endured. I’m only Lady-in-waiting A, but even so, I am Lady-in-waiting A. There is a reason why mob characters cannot stop becoming mob characters!

It is easy to be swept away. But this is about my future. Although it is true that I cannot refuse in this situation, still I cannot allow anyone to decide about my life without my permission.

Eh, the outer moat is already filled? Whatever, the inner moat is still here. I will keep this moat safe!

I got through with my desire to bow down and looked up at Greed-sama. Or perhaps, I was glaring. So Greed-sama told me with seriousness.

“You will be targeted in the future by demons and humans. You are an important person more than what you think. Please be aware of it.”

“—Huh?”

I’ve heard words that are impossible for a mob right now. Such as the words ‘targeted’ or ‘important person’.

“You may be already targeted. Because of the article from the ‘Hero Times’, your existence has become known to the whole world. Honestly, I was going to give you this bracelet when you have accepted my proposal but I cannot afford to wait for a long time.”

—The article from the “Hero Times”.

Remembering, I understood what Greed-sama was trying to say. And I felt the blood drain from my face.

Yes, thanks to that article, Greed-sama’s proposal became known to the world. My existence and also my name.

The brave man is the last fortress of the world. The power of the Hero was desired in any country. Besides, for the demons, this situation is not good for them should they want to get revenge on Greed-sama for killing the Demon King. So, they will take away the Hero’s important person.

In other words—I will be targeted. By both humans and demons.

“That is why it is an amulet. It is paired with my bracelet, so that if you call me using that bracelet, I will come to you immediately.”

While saying that, Greed-sama took my left arm and gently stroked the golden bracelet. What shines on his left arm is the paired silver bracelet.

“I will definitely protect you. From demons and humans.”

“Greed-sama.....”

“So please, you must wear that bracelet.”

“.....I understand.”

I nodded. But in the corner of my mind, I was mentally retorting. *Huh? Isn't it because of the Hero that I was being targeted, is it? I wouldn't have been targeted if the marriage proposal wasn't made in front of the public, right?*

However, he cares about me, and his feeling of wanting to protect me was fully conveyed. So I felt a little happy. Well, I am a woman in the first place. I am weak towards the word 'protect'. Besides, because such words came from a handsome person, it is impossible for my heart not to tighten with emotion.

Towards me who was palpitating, Greed-sama gave me a pouch and said, “Here, please take this.”

Due to the incident of the bracelet, I received a palm-sized bag with both hands with slight caution, and my eyes widened when I peered at the gold characters written on the dark blue fabric.

“The finest tea leaves from Mindalk.....?!”

Actually, my hobby is “to make tea”. I like to mix some kinds of tea leaves to enhance the original flavor, so whenever I have my day off, I go out to the city and buy tea leaves in the tea house.

That's why there is a bit pricey fine tea ware set placed on the bedside table that does not match this simple room.

And a tea aficionado like me is salivating over the tea leaves of Mindalk inside this dark blue pouch. These tea leaves, which can be taken in the mountains bordering between the countries of Mindalk and Lexarida, are fragrant, mellow and sweet special-grade items. It is a rare item that is also called 'phantom tea leaves' because it has a low yield and is difficult to obtain and has a high price.

“Wh-Wh-Why did you give this to me?”

I reverently held the dark blue bag that contains the tea leaves and looked up at Greed-sama. He looked down on me with such a gentle smile.

“I heard that your hobby is making tea. Did you like it?”

I nodded vigorously. Greed-sama smiled deeply.

“I see. I’m glad. Just shortly after defeating the Demon King, I bought it when we passed by the border of Lexarida. Because you told me before that you wanted this tea.”

.....Uhm, I think the princess doesn’t know that I wanted tea leaves from Mindalk, but I shouldn’t ask or think about from whom he got this information! I want to become honestly delighted at this embodiment of greed here.

“Thank you very much, Greed-sama.”

I thanked him with a smile. In response, Greed-sama also smiled. And then he happily said, “I’m glad that you are pleased”, suddenly crouched and pressed his lips on my right cheek—and drew back immediately.

“I take that as your thanks for the tea leaves.”

Greed-sama chuckled with mischief when he saw me gaping. I felt my face immediately began to burn.

Aside from kissing lips to lips, a kiss on the cheeks is a sign of dear affection so it is a sight that can be seen on a daily basis. It is done between men and women, between parents and children and sometimes even between the people of the same sex. So, it does not have any particular meaning, there is no need to be shy, there is none but—I don’t even understand why I am blushing with so much embarrassment.

“O—, u—.....”

While firmly clasping the bag that contains tea leaves with both hands, I was worried about what to reply, and with my face beet red, my eyes wandered around.

I am obviously acting suspiciously. I think so, too.

But, how do the women in the world respond in such cases? How do they cope when their cheeks are kissed as their thanks for tea?

——Don’t tell me that the right answer is, to also give back a kiss in the cheek?

We-Well, that is scary because a different flag might be activated again, you know?

I was thinking about such things in a little confusion so I did not notice—Greed-sama seems to love it but he was wearing a dark expression as he looked down on me.

And after going out of the room with a refreshing smile, leaving me behind whose redness of the face has still not faded, and while looking at his bracelet behind the closed door, Greed-sama said, “I apologize for forcibly binding you to me, Aria..... But I believe this is the best I can do..... No matter what we exchange, I will definitely protect you.”

Is what he mumbled—

Around this time, my heart was pounding and I was upset by the embarrassment of his kiss on my cheeks that I have completely forgotten that I got the highest quality of tea leaves in my hands.

—And also about the significance of wearing a couple bracelet.

PART 2

The next day, what was waiting for me when I went to the Princess's room was a commotion as if the engagement has been established.

For some reason—rather, I know the source of the rumors—the rumor was spread far and wide at a fearsome rate because I went to work wearing the bracelet of the goddess Refelia, so it's no wonder other people misunderstood. Even if I tell them that is an amulet, a magical tool, no one will believe me.

—But, but! I do not mind dreaming that this bracelet operates on a different manner.

To me who desperately explained amidst the fuss of my fellow ladies-in-waiting, the words of the female thief Milly-sama who barged into the room was the finishing blow.

“Aria, you got the bracelet?! Congrats! Earlier, when Greed was doing [Analysis], you underwent a job change!”

“—Huh?”

“Job change. Your occupation has changed, Aria. Or should I say, it is more like it was added?”

“What? Added?”

Not understanding her meaning, I gaped. Occupation? My occupation is a lady-in waiting, but what was added to it?

Milly-sama told the befuddled me with a radiant smile.

“The [Fiancée of the Hero] was added. Congrats, Aria!”

“.....[Fiancée of the Hero] . . .”

.....

.....Fi—

—Fiancée of the Hero?!

Is, Is that . . . because of this bracelet . . .

Oh yeah, that's right. Whether it is a magical tool or an "amulet" as what the Hero insisted, wearing the bracelet on the left wrist means that it is an engagement bracelet!

.....Ahaha!

Hahahahahahaha.....ha.....

I felt dejected on the spot; my knees and hands fell on the floor.

—What to do?

Engagement? Is the engagement established?

Is the outer moat filled up? Eh, completely? My mob life's biggest—no, including the scene in the hall, this is the second shocking event in my mob life.

A beautiful woman approached me, who was shocked about the engagement—it's the Princess.

Princess Louise came beside me, who was crestfallen, and not minding that her dress would get dirty, she kneeled and asked me.

"Aria, do you hate Greed-sama?"

I slowly raised my face.

"I—don't hate him."

It is mysterious. Even though I'm driven into a dilemma like this, even though I was in trouble, I don't think I hate Greed-sama.

Is it because he saved the princess? Or maybe because I remembered how he comforted me when I asked him to help the princess? At that time, he was certainly my hope. The Princess was kidnapped even though she was by my side but Greed-sama gave me, who was in the abyss of despair, a light of hope.

.....Of course, it is not because I got the finest tea leaves, okay?

The Princess smiled when she heard my answer.

“That’s what I also thought. Even in my eyes, you do not seem to hate him. Is that why you cannot refuse him bluntly?”

“It’s only because it is a situation where I can refuse easily.”

The other person is the Hero, a state guest. There’s no way I can treat him cruelly.

“But if you really hate him, Aria, you would have told him blatantly. But since that is not the case, doesn’t it mean that deep inside, you are responding to Greed-sama’s feelings? It’s just that right now, the situation changed quickly and you just don’t think about it because of what you heard from the people around you. I think that it will surely bear fruit if you deepen your relationship more slowly over time..... I also wish that Greed-sama shouldn’t have carried such things hastily and should have waited for Aria’s heart to decide. I wonder why he is in such a hurry.”

After thinking for a while for the words to say, I replied. “Maybe he does not want to be married on the same day as the Princess’s marriage.”

Well, he told me about going home to Elusion with me.

“My marriage is still being discussed by the two countries so it is not going to happen soon. So I think there is plenty of time.....”

After mumbling suspiciously, the princess suddenly smiled at me and said. “Although it is not good for you, I was thinking, what if Aria will come to Elusion with me? Actually, Rufus-sama seems to have decided to visit the territory including the summer villa and the village where Greed-sama lives. So with the villa as the residence, Rufus-sama, as well as Greed-sama and the others, thought to make it as their base. Everyone will live together while there is no request for the suppression of demons, Aria.”

My jaw dropped. Since when was the future of the Princess and Rufus-sama laid out? It was just a few days ago when I was proposed to in the hall, right?

.....You work fast, Rufus-sama!

“Ufufu.” The princess laughed delightfully. “I will feel reassured if Aria will unite with Greed-sama and come to Elusion. Living without having to change our lifestyle until

now, the two of us will wait for the return of the Hero's party while drinking tea. Won't it be fun?"

A life that is same as it is now..... As soon as I thought about that, a certain image appeared in my mind.

—It was a beautiful afternoon. I brewed a carefully selected tea as usual and handed it over to the princess, who was surrounded by elegant furnishings.

The princess smiled as she drank it. However, she suddenly looked out the window, frowned and said.

"I wonder if the Hero and the others are all right."

To appease the princess's anxiety, I answered with a smile.

"It's alright, Princess. Because Greed-sama and the others are not mob characters."

"You're right. Our husbands will not be beaten so easily."

Face to face, the Princess and I laughed with each other.

Such a gentle afternoon scenery, surrounded by favorite things and people I like—

My heart shook.

—It seems nice but that won't do.

It was a life that is almost the same as now. However, there are no haughty daughters of nobles who say hateful things! I will not receive a scolding from the senior lady-in-waiting!

"See? Isn't it nice?"

Apparently, it seems that I said out loud my delusions. The Princess grabbed my hand and smiled.

"Ye-Yes, it seems nice....."

Forgetting about something, I returned a smile.

Milly-sama, who was observing us, mumbled, “Hey, although you said, ‘*our husbands*’, is that okay—?”

She used tsukkomi, but it did not reach my ears.

The brilliant, golden engagement bracelet caught my eyes and remembered something I had forgotten—that is, Greed-sama is going to be a constant in that life—and I threw the delusion I had five seconds ago into the trash bin in my brain.

“It’s not nice after all——!!”

Six seconds later, my scream echoed throughout the Princess’s room.

My name is Aria Milford, 18 years of age.

My occupation is Princess Louise’s lady-in-waiting A.

But apparently, it seems that my job was changed into “The Fiancée of the Hero” from now on——

SIDE STORY 1

EMPTY HEART

PART 1

From the moment I was born, there were beings following me and talking to me. At a first glance, these beings have the same appearance as humans like me. Their parents' sizes also do not change. However, they are transparent and fly above the sky, and each have a "color" according to the type, so they are obviously not humans.

Those who are of the "wind" type are green.

Those who are of the "earth" type are brown.

Those who are of the "fire" type are red.

Those who are of the "water" type are blue.

Those who are of the "light" type are gold.

Those who are of the "darkness" type are black.

They, who have different colors of hair and eyes depending on their race, always stay by my side and bother me with their chatter.

"Greed!"

"Hey, Greed, look!"

"Yes?" I reply, and they'd smile delightedly. I don't know what they are glad about.

It was immediately around that time when I realized that only I could see them. It was my oldest memory, when I asked my father "what they are". I can recall clearly the reaction of my father at that time. I asked at the table during meals. Father breathed out somewhat tiredly, silently placed the spoon he held at the table and said.

"They are probably spirits..... Greed, you have a special power. It is a great power

bestowed by the god.”

Mother stopped eating and watched me and Father alternately.

“We were thinking that there must be a meaning to it since you were born with that power. Otherwise, it is impossible for a couple of farmers from the countryside to have a child with a power like you..... Listen, Greed. Someday, a time will come where you will have to use that power. Because that is the reason why you were born with that power.”

Looking confused, it was as if those were Father’s words to convince his self. Those were the words that I remembered first.

And those were also words of curse.

—I was born to be given power by the god.

In other words, I do not need to exist unless I have power. I felt equivocal about myself. A person who possesses enormous powers exists for some reason and it is unnecessary to be born unless there is a reason for that.

That’s why my parents tolerated my existence while fearing my powers.

A childhood friend in the village was hugged by his parents. Scolded when he is mischievous. Praised him with a smile if he did something good. But my parents won’t do that.

Because they do not know what will happen if they hug me. Because they do not know what to do if they scold me. Because it seems they do not know how to praise me. Since they don’t know, they don’t do anything, they can’t do anything.

“The spirits will protect that child. They will do something for sure.”

That’s what they thought. *There’s nothing we ordinary humans can do for special humans.*

.....That’s the circumstance; it was close to abandoning childcare.

Now that I grew up, I got to understand the confused feelings of my parents who did not know how to deal with me.

In an agricultural village at a remote countryside, a child was born to them who can read characters without decent education, and has received too much protection from the spirits. Every time I cry, they greatly fear that their son will cause a small tornado or an earthquake. It's no wonder that they act with great caution. Besides, it is not only my parents who have this kind of attitude.

The adult villagers around us also treat me pretty much the same. The children of the same age as me and their parents are in such a state, so they do not approach me. Renas and Milly and their parents are the only ones who freely associated with me. Because of them, I do not feel loneliness and sadness.

To my parents, I only felt sorry for them and felt bad for having a child of bad luck like me. Even so, it was not some faint emotion, only emptiness was occupying most of my heart.

Renas and Milly would say, "You were brought up by such parents, so your emotions must have developed poorly," but I don't think so. For example, don't all people who were abandoned by their parents and brought up in the orphanage grow up on their own?

I was not interested in anything and I am not confident even with the friendship Renas and Milly felt. I could only feel joy, sorrow and anger in a part of my heart, just the superficial layer. These feelings haven't touched deep inside my heart. My emotions were not frozen.

There is simply—nothing. Just emptiness, like a gaping hole.

That was me. I thought I was somewhat broken. A defective human. I do not understand the pain of others. I do not understand compassion. I can't understand why everyone can smile or cry. The love that Renas and Milly felt for each other and the reason why they think the other person is "special"..... I do not understand at all. I was tired of being myself.

I got to live a little bit easier after I decided to abandon my emotions since that one incident in the Lake Mainau. Until then, I was concerned about the people around me so I faked my emotions.

I observed the emotions of Renas and Milly who were closest to me. If they laugh, I'd also laugh. If they are having fun, I'd also act like I'm having fun. If they grieve, I'd also become sad. If they get angry, I'd also become irritated.

I'd synchronize emotions with them and imitate them. No feelings have ever arisen from my heart.

But in response to such false emotions, the spirits exerted their powers—

When I witnessed that all the villagers who lost the lake due to the rampage of the spirits prostrated themselves on the ground and asked for forgiveness, I realized that feelings are really a nuisance. That's why I stopped pretending.

I broke my promise with Renas's father, Priest Lyell, but I thought that would be better for everyone. If I have an empty heart like that of a doll, the spirits will not act recklessly. This power will not cause trouble to others.

However—at that time, the situation in the village had changed somewhat. Girls of my age, who were supposed to avoid me, were starting to follow me. I would gloomily ignore them, but it was not only women. With the women following around me, I became the subject of hostility of boys of my age, who had ignored me until now. Of course, I ignored it all.

Renas laughed and said, "It is jealousy."

"It's because you are popular with the girls. You perform better than anyone in whatever you do so they are jealous."

The man involved actually said similar things.

"So irritating! What's with that blank expression? I started learning swordsmanship earlier than you, yet why is that your improvement is ridiculing my efforts? . . . It's so frustrating that you look as if it is natural. You don't know how it feels. You can do anything and you have everything!"

It is certain that I learned swordsmanship and magic without much effort. On the contrary, I simply wonder why everyone could not do it.

But—

Only during this time did I want to laugh a little bit at the words of that man.

The words "You have everything."

Surely, I have everything that guy wants. Whether it is swordsmanship or magical powers, everything was extraordinary.

—However.

What does that mean? A person who would not exist if the world does not need his power. In reality, I do not have everything.

I am empty, like a cup without a bottom. Whatever you put or pour in it, everything just goes through it.

Do I have anything?

Nothing.

.....All I have is a broken, empty heart.

PART 2

As what my father said, perhaps my empty heart will be filled when I discover the reason why I was born with power.

.....I don't know.

The moment I received the goddess's blessing, everything started to move.

『Become the Hero, and bring stability to the world.』

Although it is called the goddess's blessing, it was not as impressive as what it was described in the legends. It is close to a disaster suddenly befalling without a warning.

That day, I was suddenly hit by an intense power and will of different types of spirits in a forest. It seems that it was the selection that time. I also noticed that I gained the power of a hero which I do not want. I inherited the skills that the heroes of the past had.

At the same time, I understood.

Contrary to my expectations, what was given to me was not the power to defeat the Demon King and the demons. A different power was included in it.

—It was [Creation].

It was the third power, which was neither a spirit's nor a demon's power. In other words, the power of the hero that was bestowed by the goddess was a piece, a part of her powers. That's the reason why I can just basically create something new. It is not a power to destroy something.

The hero is supposed to possess the ability to defeat the Demon King, but perhaps because someone from the generations of heroes received the power of the goddess, he was able to create the power that will beat the Demon King.

The hero also possesses various special skills. The sword and armor of the hero are all created by the successive generations of heroes. The goddess did not give the power to beat the Demon King nor did she provide the equipment for that. The heroes themselves created everything using the power of the goddess. That's why those items

can only be used by those who have the same power, and those are the heroes. The conditions for the selection of the hero by the goddess is perhaps possessing magical powers and having a body that is able to endure the [Creation] skill. Only those two.

I don't have a will or a character. Much less the desire to defeat the Demon King.

The power of the goddess was heterogeneous. The goddess who gave me the power of the hero is the one who controls the light. And yet, the power bestowed upon me does not contain any elements of light at all. The power of the hero is a completely different thing; it is not the same as the power of a demon or a human being, not to mention the power of a spirit of light.

Then what is the power of a hero? As I pondered over that, I suddenly understood that there was another aspect of the goddess of light Refelia—she is also the Creator deity. I understood. That it was a fragment of the power of creation.

—However.

"Greed is the hero!"

"Greed, you became the hero!"

"Amazing. As expected of our Greed."

The spirits shivered with delight.

Annoying.

I don't understand the fun in this situation. Although I was given the power of the hero, my heart still remained empty as usual. It wasn't filled. When something was poured, it only flowed out of it.

Even though I got this kind of power, it is just troublesome. Neither the Demon King and the demons knew about it. I only have to do it as I liked. That's what I thought.

—A change occurred.

My parents, who knew that I was chosen as the hero, looked at me with a happy face probably for the first time.

“I see. Then you being born with that power has significance after all.”

“Surely, in order to become a hero, in order to beat the Demon King, the goddess must have left a child like you to us.”

Knowing the reason why their child was born with an immense power, they felt relieved. Being just a couple of farmers, they are parents who cannot accept that their child possesses power.

“Why our child?”

“Why was he not born like a normal child?”

I am aware that they grieved in their hearts. Finally finding clear answers, they accepted me. A child that the goddess sent to the world to defeat the Demon King. It seems that they were able to acknowledge me for the first time by thinking that they just borrowed me.

But not as their son—as the hero.

“She probably gave you power to defeat the Demon King and to bring peace to the world. It was really like that in the end.”

Old memories were revived at the words of my delighted father.

“Because that is the reason why you were born with that power.”

“The reason why I am born with that power, the reason why I am alive, is to beat the Demon King.”

That idea was deeply engraved in my mind. That is why I am convinced why I possess such power.

“That’s wrong, Greed!”

“That’s right. Your power and your birth are totally unrelated.”

“Stop thinking that defeating the Demon King is the reason of your existence. You are not a tool.”

Milly, Renas and Rufus contradicted me. I am who I am, and I don't need reasons to exist, they said.

Then why is my heart still so empty?

Since it is just a "system of defeating the Demon King and the demons", a heart is not necessary. Such ideas were stuck on me.

And because I received the power of the goddess, there was no choice but to become the hero. My friends were worried about me so they accompanied me in my journey. I tried to stop them because of the danger but they didn't back down.

—From then on, my journey as a hero began.

The battle against the demons was a lot easier than I thought. It is thanks to the weapons they made through [Creation] and their skills. Thanks also to the power of the goddess, I seemed to have improved in using the powers of the spirits.

.....No, the power of the spirits did not increase. The degree of our synchrony became stronger. It was always necessary to control our synchrony.

But fortunately, I was able to beat the demons at the moment just by using magic and the power of the hero. From the original four-member travelling group, the members increased to six when the elf Rufaga and the female warrior Farah joined us in the middle of our journey.

The elf Rufaga served as our guide and supervisor, while Farah offered to join in order to help awaken her childhood friend who was cursed to sleep by a demon. We complemented our abilities and worked well as a party.

In the end, we received a request to defeat a demon. There are also demons that interfered with us. Since it is one of the upper echelons, the request was gladly received as it saved us the trouble of searching for it.

Of course, I was able to defeat it.

And before we knew it, we were dubbed as the history's strongest hero's party.

"You are called the strongest, Greed."

“Greed is really amazing.”

The spirits laughed boisterously. As usual, their presence was annoying but I became more familiar with them than before because I actively used their power.

—Perhaps, it was an omen of an upcoming change.

Did it start at the time we were called the strongest? I began to vaguely fear that this journey is coming to an end. Fear, anxiety, whatever it is called. But I am certain that I have never felt this emotion ever since I was born.

I am surprised myself. I have never felt afraid to fight the Demon King. I felt uneasy that my journey would end once I defeat the Demon King.

To lose the reason for my existence—

PART 3

“Being born with the power to defeat the Demon King is the significance of my existence.”

That is why if the Demon King disappears from the world, I will lose the meaning of my existence. If I have to fight him for the sake of the world and humanity, if it is their dearest wish, then it must be fulfilled.

But I have not chosen to fight for the sake of the world or the humanity. It was a battle for the sake of the reason of my existence.

If my fight with the Demon King is over, what will become of me?

—An empty person. A person who has no reason to exist or to live.

Yes, that’s what I thought. I’ll return to my former self. To my broken, empty self. I will only return like before.

But somehow, I felt afraid. I don’t want to go back. I want to be someone who has a reason to live.

Therefore I hesitated to defeat the Demon King. My reason was that it is still not the right time.

I avoided squaring off against the Demon King. If the Demon King of the present age is of the same strength as the Demon Kings that the previous heroes have defeated, while knowing that it is enough to defeat him—

“They’d be shocked when they hear about the strongest hero.” I said in self-derision. Though I do not possess anything—I am afraid to lose.

.....Really, having emotions is just a nuisance.

That time came. A messenger from the Kingdom of Schwarze visited the inn we were staying. The Second Princess Louise was kidnapped by a demon and they requested for our help.

.....The demon probably took her for himself.

I wonder if the messenger realized that the hero who is supposed to be brave and the strongest than anyone was upset at his words.

That night, there is an unconvinced expression on my comrades' faces, who were gathered in my room to decide on what course of action to take. It was not only I who was afraid for this journey to end. They also know that when I defeat the Demon King and the demons, I won't have a reason to exist anymore.

That's what I fear. About what will happen after I defeat the Demon King.

"Should we refuse?" Renas asked. "I feel bad for the kingdom of Schwarze but I think it is too early to fight the Demon King.

"Th-That's right! I also think it's too soon." Milly agreed with Renas.

"Is it really the Demon King? Personally abducting someone was not done by the Demon Kings in the past." Rufus interjected.

"But I heard that this Demon King is an eccentric. There were times that he went off on his own." Renas added.

Their opinions were divided. Should we decline or decide after confirming the facts?

"Greed, what should we do?"

After exchanging opinions for a long time, Farah quietly asked me, who has kept silent all this time. If the opinions are divided, the leader, the hero, will decide. Because that was the established rule.

I thought for a while before I spoke.

"Let's listen first to the story..... After determining if the demon they saw is really the Demon King—that's the time we will decide if we should accept the request."

The next morning, we headed to Schwarze together with the messenger on a carriage.

I did not expect the destined encounter waiting for me there.

Schwarze is a rich but a small kingdom. The castle is also small compared to the palace of Elusion. However, because of the personality of the King, it gave an overall gentle

impression and my friends, majority of which were commoners, seemed to like it.

The spirits are also pleased with the people here. A calm and good nationalism can be felt.

“I will now show you to the drawing room.”

It was what the messenger said after we got off the carriage and stood at the courtyard, looking around.

“Hero-sama?Is it you, Hero-sama?”

A person who came out of the small entrance for employees asked me.

Reflected in my eyes was a small woman looking at me. Her light brown hair was arranged and she was dressed in a dark blue maid uniform.

.....My heart pounded heavily for some reason.

“I beg you, Hero-sama.....!”

That little body ran towards me as if it was bouncing. I used my [Analysis] skill at once when I saw that woman. She might be a person manipulated by demons who could potentially bring harm. Demons have red eyes which can't be hidden even if they use magic, so they can never get close to me at all. That's why they occasionally manipulate humans through magic. Because of that, it was customary to scan humans who approach me.

My [Analysis] skill activated and characters appeared in my mind—

《Aria Milford》

Race: Human

Occupation: Princess Louise's lady-in-waiting

Social status: Viscount Milford's daughter

Age: 18 years old

Hometown: South of Schwarze, Viscount of Milford's estate

LV: 1

HP: 10

MP: 0.01

Status abnormalities: None

Skills: Tsukkomi EX

Apparently, she was not being manipulated..... What is that displayed skill [Tsukkomi EX]?

While pondering about that, she went straight into my bosom.

.....Somehow, my heart pounded heavily again.

“I beg you, Hero-sama!”

Within my arms, she looked up to me and clung. The moment I looked into her brown eyes brimming with tears—the world changed.

My heart swelled.

My soul trembled.

An intense feeling overwhelmed me.

—I found it.

Emotions I have never felt filled my chest. Something overflowed.

Great joy. That pleased me.

.....Something filled my empty heart. Filled it up.

“The princess was . . . The princess was abducted by a demon who claimed he was the Demon King!”

The woman in my arms appealed.

“Aria, I understand your feelings, but this is the courtyard.....”

I silenced the messenger who spoke in a reproachful tone. I wanted to hear her voice more. I wanted to keep her in my arms.

“Beside me . . . Beside me, the princess was.....!”

Her body that was leaning on my chest was soft and warm—my heart and body ached for those feelings.

Just like now, a lot of women have clung to me like this. Sometimes they'd confess that they like me. But my empty heart has never reacted at all. She is completely different. I don't want to release her from the shelter of my arms. I felt the thrill of pleasure when I saw myself reflected in her brown eyes. I never thought I wanted her to burn me in her memory.

Ah, I said as I understood. This feeling is overflowing.

Is this an emotion? When you "think" about another person?

—I found it.

I acquired an emotion, my empty heart shouted.

—I found it. Something that I want. Something that I want to obtain.

—And the reason to live.

"I beg you, Hero-sama!"

She looked up at me while she still clung to me. Her teary eyes and gaze made my heart and body ache even more.

"The princess . . . Please save the princess! From the hands of the Demon King!"

—Demon King.

Even when I heard those words, I did not feel the fear and anxiety that I've felt up until a while ago. On the contrary, I don't need to anymore. Because I found it. That's why the Demon King is not needed.

I'll defeat him quickly—for her sake.

I gently touched her back to calm her. Feeling her warmth in my hand, my heart became full.

"It's all right."

I smiled unwittingly. I saw the startled expressions of my friends at the periphery of my vision but I did not pay attention. The only one who is important in my eyes is her.

“It’s all right.”

When I repeated those words while smiling, hope sprang in her eyes. When I saw it, I felt my own smile becoming more natural and deeper.

I felt love for the first time ever since I was born.

For your sake, I will defeat the Demon King and the demons—

“I will definitely save your princess.”

—If you become my reason to live.



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