

The Stone of Days

# 세월의 돌

— 운명, 그리고 영원 —

전민희  
장편소설

# THE STONE OF DAYS

BOOK 01

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# The Stone of Days

(세월의 돌)

by

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(전민희)

# Synopsis

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A story about a young boy named Fabian Christian who is living arduously with his mother and managing a local general store.

One day, Fabian comes across a monster and has the fight of his young life.

What came out of it? A flaming sword only he could wield?

This would be the start of Fabian's legendary journey alongside a girl named Yurika.

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# Volume 1, Part 1

# Prologue: The 14th Arund Elder Sage

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The Elder Sage Star “Nansigro Ho” ruled the starry night sky on the last phase of the Arund month. The Arund elder sage’s “Elder,” the Chief of Order, is a benign elder who controls all life and outcomes, representing the bridge between life and death. The visage of this Arund elder is of a common white beard and white hair, but the signs that he displays occur in two different ways. The first pose is when he sits proudly on his chair like a benignant ruler with his large white robe. The other appearance consists of a shady black robe with a large scythe, imposing the will of a Grim Reaper. The scythe he holds is called “The Scythe of Time”, known otherwise as “The Scythe of Harvest.”

The meaning of Arund isn’t bright. However, if the dark Arund represents misfortune, then the cause of that misfortune originates from the elder sage Arund. He is the irreverent god in this era, one who should avoid the antipathy of spiritual beings for his own good. On that year, the frosty chilling wind covered the ground with ice, as the world entered an ice age.

The maxim that symbolizes Arund can be summarized as “the old watches for tomorrow as he falls asleep.” This remark embodies all action and results – Good work bears good results, and from bad work gives rise to bad results, accompanied by grace for good, and revenge for evil. Besides, the 14th Arund rests after his long journey, rewarding him with a name and the result of his acts of good and evil, sealing his destiny. The 14th Arund returns to his original throne and borrows the wisdom of the past to monitor the future. The Arund symbolizes the color white, but also silver.

– The Sorcerers’ Interpretation on each Arund Month of the

calendar,

Among them, the 14th

# Chapter 1: Delivery (1)

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*I dreamt a dream  
I heard a voice.*

*[The world you are intimate and fond of  
Don't expect much  
As it'll soon shatter into pieces like glass]*

*I woke up  
Only to forget*

*- Reminiscence*

---

“I can't lower the price for even 1 Rojond?.”

Like that, I eject the bargaining tape from the radio with this reply. Recognizing that this fellow is making his first visit to our village, I say this and see a voiceless shocked state. Stupid fellow. Come on! Try and bargain with me. If you try your best, you can at least get a discount of at least 80 Rojond.

“But, I... ..”

No, I was mistaken. Even shaving off 20 Rojonds would be a relief for the fellow. Internally, I tried to analyze this fellow's demeanor and contemplated hard if there was anything else I can sell to this fellow. Since the weather has become colder lately, maybe a leather deer hat or a pair of snowshoes might entice this fellow.

“Isn’t it too expensive...? The last village I went to sold this bundle for 3 Jonds.

“That’s the market of that village.”

I kept my nerves in check as I glanced over to weaponsmith Killen with a nonchalant expression. If it was my mother, she would never be able to hold such a face.

“But, to sell a bundle of herbs for 5 Jonds. That’s just robbery!”

It doesn’t make sense, right? So what are you going to do? But, it’s true that with that money, you could craft a knife with some old, cheap materials. It’s no surprise why the lad is so flustered. But, who am I? Anyone that somewhat knows me can pinpoint that I am a talented merchant, the famed “Big Deer’s General Store’s Fabian” of this area. With a slight grin, I relayed my argument.

“Look here. Where do you think herbs can be harvested around these mountains covered in snow? The yield here isn’t even half of what it is in other villages. Not only that, the import rate is extremely high... can’t you see that, adventurer? No matter wherever you go, the passage fee is expensive. After the snowfall 5 days ago, nobody in the village would dare go harvest any herbs. Among those dangerous mountains, it takes a great deal of attention and effort harvesting herbs through the snow. One slip and you can kiss your life goodbye.

Dramatically, I used my thumb to make a slitting action across my throat. It should be about time. The wind should.... Good, it's blowing.

The severe winds from the mountains suddenly crashed again onto the windows, shaking it violently. The traveler, alarmed, looked back.

“But still, to sell it at that price is just..... Can't you consider my circumstances as well? It's not like I'm a rich adventurer, but just a humble traveler passing by. If I had the money, of course I would offer the money in full.

Oh, this man has some skill. But, to make light of this Lieju merchant would only make you suffer even more. This time, I looked up to him with a miserable expression.

At this time, the look of my face, no matter how much I would see and run in the sun, I wasn't the type to tan easily. This came at an advantage. Usually, when these useless bums attack me, far from help, it'd be a relief if no one would interfere. With this face, in contrast to my neighborhood who had tanned dark faces from the sun, the effect was that much better.

With that, I slowly began my tirade of words.

“As you may well know, in this mountainside village, the products of this general store has such high price volatility. When some goods come in – the prices suddenly become cheap, and when goods are in demand, the goods suddenly rise in price two to

threefold. You just came at an unfortunate time. It's not like you can't skip on your necessities. When you're trying to make a living, with such an unstable market, it's hard for us merchants as well... of course, if I could give you a cheap price, how good would it be for both sides. However, having to listen to my frightening mother's scolding, and if worse, I might have to venture out to pry for some herbs. But, if your circumstances are still poor... I'll prepare for the worst and can offer you them at a price of 4 Jonds 80. Ah, ah, I shouldn't be like this... .."

Dear mother, forgive me.

My somewhat good-natured mother (not below the average mother, not above the extremely kind) forgive your wicked son for selling you out.

After this tirade of speech, the majority of the people won't really listen to the story until the part where I'd offer them a discount. Thus, after such a long-winded speech, most would take the goods at the price I would call at the end.

After a brief moment, the adventurer nodded. I thought the adventurer would pursue further for a discount of 30 Jonds, but it seems that this fellow is a kind person.

But, at this point, if he wanted another discount, then he'd probably had to hear my second tirade.

"So, here are your 5 five bundles of herbs. Please have a pleasant journey. If you have anything you would like to ask, please don't

hesitate to ask, and please do look around the shop once more to see if there's anything else you'd need... ..”

What else do you think he bought? Of course our famous local hat made out of deer leather. The price was 8 Jonds.

With a bright smile, I bid him farewell. The man carefully packaged his herbs in his backpack – It must be more precious since it was expensive. With the deer hat over his head, he slightly bowed his head and headed towards the entrance. I quickly walked up and opened the door with the pose of a talented merchant.

Therefore, today I had made a profit. It was a good morning.

“Fabian, Fabian – Come over here!”

“Yes – I'm coming!”

Holding chests stacked as high as my shoulders, I lifted my head out of the storage and replied with a loud voice. Afterwards, I laid the chests down, I focused on slowly reducing and separating the number of herbs from the herb bundles. The reason why my mother called was obvious. It was to make a delivery.

It was no mistake that I was born to be a merchant and vendor, but those deliveries..., I can never quite like them. Ah, let me correct that. I dislike doing deliveries during the summer. Whenever I buy some goods, those people that won't come over and ask for delivery during the spring, summer, and fall are those

that I detest the most (Don't even mention it when it's raining!). The winter, though, was okay since I have developed my own method. Of course, it's because I hated delivery so much that I researched and made it in the end.

In order to deliver, you need to be faster than the wind – which is what my mother told me. You need to run, be really strong or be smart when carrying those goods, and be as intelligent as Ezekiel who memorized over a hundred books when remembering the delivery list. As usual, among these three, there isn't a merchant more capable than me.

But before I go, I need to finish this. My mother stacks up too many herbs per bundle. She has that habit of bundling too many.

I am a Rieju merchant.

Ah, okay, this isn't Rieju. This is “Big Deer's Habiyanak,” this continent's small village located below the apex of this snowy mountain. But, as a merchant, I proudly say these words like any other merchant.

I am a Rieju merchant.

Of course, I haven't been to Rieju once. But my mother's hometown is from Rieju. Of course, my mother wasn't a merchant in those days. She lived until she was five over there. Then with what evidence can I call myself an honorable Rieju merchant?

That is because of my mothers' parents, who were merchants at Rieju. (Hmm, what type of merchants were they again?)

Riejura is the language that we merchants admire. If you were to question me as a merchant due to working at a small countryside village, then I have nothing. But, if I work hard, one day, won't I be a true merchant? No, no! Not a general store owner! But a great merchant travelling across the continent, spending a large pile of gold coins as expense.

I may currently be "The Big Deer's General Store's" great merchant Fabian... ..

"Fabian!! Boy, hurry and come out-!!"

Ugh... For now, I will continue my story as I run. For now, I finished allocating the herbs. Organizing the herbs in the storage, and carefully hiding them under a secret hole underneath the wooden boards, I rolled a stone over it, quickly dusted off my hands, and jumped out through the window.

With over 18 years of experience, I realized that once my mother called, it's best to appear in front of her as quickly as possible. Although at first glance, she might still look like a young virgin... no that's too much, but more of a new bride-to-be mother who does not hint any sort of inferiority. After more than ten years since settling here, her personality changed so much: she probably has leftover energy after physically putting down another merchant. (Nah, maybe her personality hasn't changed and she was originally like that. Don't ask me. I, myself, just told you this based on her claim). But if someone, who meets my mother for the

first time, sees her slender figure, and her beautiful face, and tries to seduce her, seeing that foolhardy plan, I just stare at him pitifully with a bored expression.

And, lately, there's a reason why my mother is so hot-tempered these last few years.

Once you see our store sign "Big Deer's General Store," the situation becomes clear. Usually, in such a small village, a grocery store with a store name and sign is a rare sight. Usually just "Grocery Store" is enough, but only we have a name. Why is that?

It's because we have a competitor – one with an extremely heinous name! Its name is "Deer's General Store."

If anyone hears the name, they'd think that Deer's General Store had opened first. But that's ridiculous.

The reason why we even hung a sign was because that store had opened three years ago. Of course, later, we would hang up our name, but since we didn't have a name, we had no choice but to do so.

Making the billboard itself costed a lot of money. Our carpenter Nasret told us that it was a first building such a thing. The fact that we had a large log in the middle costed us even more.

Sometimes, my mom would produce an elegant smile while she packs the goods for these adventurers, but as expected, there was

no competition against the ultimate talent of Mr. Kumentz in dealing with customers from the 'Deer's General Store' (Mr. Kumentz didn't even see us as a competitor). As a merchant who has no other place to go, I don't revere my mother as much in that regard.

My mother was waiting for me in front of the storage as I approached from the side. As if the place where I have to go would have a lot of snow, she was holding a pair of snowshoes. With a long dress and her long hair tied up, even a lord's wife wouldn't have the beautiful slender figure that she possessed. But, that's only from the back!

My mother saw me. At the tip of her dress had stains of melted snow, slowly revealing those small patterns. The cold wind caused her cheeks to dye a flustered red. Not only that, it seems she spilt something in front of her dress. Anyways, my mother spoke back.

"It's a delivery."

... .. Usually, it would be a small cart full of items tightly wrapped up...It seems today was different.

"Take this book and deliver it to the lord's castle."

"Who specifically do I hand this over to?" I unconsciously spouted out.

"Who? Who do you think it is? Boy, then do you want me to

deliver it to the Lord?”

Hmm...That wouldn't be ideal.

“... .. I'll deliver it to the gatekeeper and return.” I accepted the snowshoes from Mother and the book. It's only one book, so I could just walk to the castle. No, among the Habiyanak, aren't I also the fastest? It's been awhile since I had such a light load. I guess I'll have a nice light jog.

Finding a string, I tied up the shoes and book together, and flung them over my shoulder. Then, I headed towards the door. Mother, noticing what I was about to do, wasn't pleased.”

“Hey! You're gonna ride that again? No, it's dangerous. “

“Hehe... Have I ever fell in front of you before?”

“But still, Fabian. With all that icy snow, once you fall, you're going to break a leg, and if you break your neck, you'll pass away just like that.

“Do you want me to prepare a splint just in case?”

Despite her personality, she couldn't convince me not to ride it. Ever since I was 7, I was like that. Opening the door, I went inside my home.

When a generation descends, it is said that a person becomes wiser, and the world is supposed to become good. The magician Ezekiel called “The eternal redeemer” sealed all of the monsters during his journey 200 years ago when the world was corrupted. Compared to that legendary era, if there is something worth noting, it’s that there’s nothing interesting to see here, I guess.

Pleased in finding the thing I was going to ride at the corner of the store, after rubbing it close to my face lovingly, I brought it out. Let’s go now.

## Chapter 2: Delivery (2)

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“HAHA! Habiyanak’s fastest quick service is leaving-!”

“Shiingg Shiingg~!” I slid down the slope. With my ears red and my face frosted from the icy wind, I could feel that my upper body was burning from the cold. Quick service, a word I made, already it has become a common term among the villagers. Especially, among the merchants, it was a good word competitively. But, of course, the King of Quick Service was always me.

“SWOOOOONG – CHAA – CHAJAKJAKJAK !!!”

The first part that I did with the thing I was riding was to cut the large plank long and feed it oil, nevertheless, cracks would appear constantly, and due to a big accident, I made the decision to switch it to iron. I’ll explain what accident it was later, but anyhow, I made a request to the blacksmith to make it sturdy and light. But iron is iron, so it is still quite heavy.

This shape was something that went through several remodelings, but when it was first made, it had a long rectangular shape. But, now it has a curved end on both sides. Not only did it slant upwards, but I had to also adjust the size repeatedly. Now, it’s the envy of all merchants in the village.

Name? “Snowboard!” (Of course I named it myself).

The Habiyanak village among the whole region is closest to the snowy mountain. It’s located at the highest location, and the

reason for the envy of many neighborhoods is precisely the downslope that our village has. In other words, this snowboard is most suitable for riding downhill. The lord's castle is at the base of the mountain by Rose Ember Village. Of course, the road back is uphill, so I have to walk half the time. It's why I brought these snowshoes.

Sliding down in a S shape, I arrived at the center of the village. Entering the alley which comprise of large alcohol pots, I easily slid past the people with my snowboard. The clothes were raised up as they were left to dry on hems. Although some were displeased by my dashes through the crowd, the majority looked on in amusement. Why? Since it's exciting to watch.

I didn't ride this as well in the beginning. Although at the start, I had the mindset of sledding down without falling out, but in order to not die riding this, you could say that I practised endlessly. My mother keeps mentioning that it's a miracle that my head is still attached to my neck. Not only that, once I had changed it to iron, she mentioned that my arms and legs must have undergone rigid training. My arms? It's because I have to run with them!

But still, with this, I can at least do delivery with ease.

In a matter of minutes, I quickly flew by as the remnants of snow bounced off from beneath the board. I can already see the entrance of the village. Today's speed? I haven't stopped once, so I should be close to my best record. It feels great! But still, I should be careful not to break my neckbone.

“Big Deer's General Store Fabian-!”

Who called my full name? I was about to turn my head, but I had already passed him as I stopped casually at the base of the hill.

The amount of effort I had to use to make myself look cool while stopping was indeed bothersome. But, I wonder who that is?

“Mm, It looks like I wasn’t mistaken.”

Wow, it must be warm to put my hand on his head. Staring at his shining strand of hair as if it was standing on fire, I stared at the lad with a blank expression. I’m sure that he’s the one that made me stop, but I can’t seem to recall meeting that face at all. I wouldn’t forget that unique strand of hair. But, how does he know my name?

“People mentioned that if there was a boy passing through with a strange board Jjogari (shit), that it would be you.”

My question was already answered.

“What business do you have with me, sir?”

“Ah, I just have an errand of an item to give.”

Mm... ..., if I had met this person in the summer, I wouldn’t forgive him. Acting in a normal merchant demeanor, I opened my ledger and pretended to attentively listen.

“Please, speak.”

“Hmm, I need a needle and a thread. Oh and a net, a bundle of that.”

“What use do you have for this net? Fishing? Catching bears? I also have very large ones.”

“No, what I need is a fine net.”

“Something very large?”

“Something very small. The smallest one.”

“...A sparrow net?”

A strange person. He’s going to catch a sparrow in winter? I rechecked his appearance again. Leather pants and a jockey with a hood underneath a woolen fabric robe, equipped with some sturdy looking boots. From the looks of it, he looks like an adventurer. Hmm? I wonder if there is some sort of use in catching sparrows? Other than that, I can’t seem to see what other purpose he has for such a small net. While I was trying to solve this mystery, the man nodded his head.

“Mmhm. A sparrow net would be good.”

Seeing how serious and honest his voice was, I couldn't help but to stare back at him again. His grey eyes looked ordinary, but they were sharp. Extremely sharp – something that you couldn't find in this neighborhood. The moment he nodded again, his eyes suddenly changed into a strange light... .. In my experience, we call that “bloodlust.” This is a bloody person. I quickly changed my attitude.

“Ah, yes of course. I do have a very good one. Where should I deliver it to then?”

“Flame Snowy Mountain. Inn, 2nd floor east last room. Find Mirbo Genz.”

It sounded like a hunter's name. But for a sparrow hunter is just... I see. As for this man, he might've caught those sparrows with that look alone. But if that's so, then what's this net used for? Mm.....

Before stretching out my imagination even further, I should quickly ask a question.

“When should I depart?”

“From now to any time. Just bring it before the sun sets.”

I nodded my head. The snowboard, once stopped, needs to go to the top of the hill to ride it again. As I was about to run up the hill, Mirbo called me again.

“Wait.”

What’s this? What’s with that murderous voice?

Already cold from being on the slope of the hill, I looked back. He had a casual expression on.

“...On the way...”

Something feels ominous.

“...Buy me 1 Jond worth of steamed sweet potatoes.”

Why can’t my ominous feeling ever be wrong?

I could now start to see the Lord’s castle. Along the way, there was one order – truthfully, there were two. At this rate, there should be more tip – without any more troubles, I arrived at Rose Ember Village. The Lord’s castle wasn’t exactly big, but it still had the largest building. Over there was the gate.

Sliding down, I stopped my snowboard. In this territory, among the 4 villages, Rose Ember Village was the one that had the most changes. Not only did it have the lord’s castle, but it also had many renovated shops, and new ones. Foreign merchants when coming up north, would always visit Rose Ember village, even if they didn’t bother with Habiyanak village.

Someday, I should be able to open a store here.

The people of Ember, unaccustomed to see me with my strange board Jjogari, (Wait, that's what Genz said), took glances with interest. Holding the snowboard by my side, I walked up to the gate.

“Is that Fabian? Delivery?”

In front of the gate appeared a soldier. Erent is a Habiyanak native. Being able to be the soldier of the lord was a great achievement. But, the adults of the village don't really have any interest in becoming soldiers of a lord. They probably wouldn't care even if they were given the opportunity to be soldiers of the king. Alas, even I would rather be the greatest Rieju merchant which is much more interesting than becoming a grand mage like Ezekiel.

“Yes, it's delivery, Erent hyung.”

A soldier beside Erent looked towards me.

“Have you come from Big Deer General Store?”

Mm, it seems he's using polite language since he does not know me. I nodded my hand, and untied the string to bring out the book to hand over. But, the man shook his head.

“No, no. Go in and deliver it personally.”

“Me? Personally?”

“Yes. He wants the book delivered directly.”

“Who do I deliver it to?” Uh, these words unconsciously spouted out again. Oh well.

“Deliver it to the Lord’s Son, Arnowalt Ksendawni Ember.”

Why is his name so long? Sheesh, what’s he going to do with such a long-ass name? Eat it when he’s hungry? Stretching out my shoulders back, I nodded several times.

## Chapter 3: Delivery (3)

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As a result, passing by the fountain, I entered the Lord's castle alone.

No, no, if someone heard of this, they'd probably think that it'll be my first time entering such a castle. Actually, it's my second time entering a castle. The first time? Mmm..... It was when my mother carried me inside after applying for my birth registration.

Anyhow, this castle is amazing.

The luscious green grass encompassing the massive, wide lawn fascinated me. Woah, there's no snow on it either? Wait, there's no roof. Just how many workers do they employ to shovel out the snow?

The northernmost country, Isnamir, in the province of Gray County had winter as long as 5 months. In the spring Festival "Frاندiloa," it's still very cold during the 3 Arund months of "Arna" (Despite the eloquent name, most people just call it the third month). The amount of snowfall is so large that it's difficult to differentiate which places in the city are actually residential. It's hard to find a place without snow...No, except here.

Among the grass, at the center lay a pathway of paved stone. It was inexhaustibly long.

"Mmm..., Ugh... Kuh....."

After walking down the paved stone for a while, I got sick of walking. Despite seeing the large spire attached to the castle, the distance between the castle and I wasn't shortening at all.

Why does this castle's front lawn have to be so long?

I didn't have too much knowledge regarding the castle. But still, I have occasionally read the tales of knights and heroes. In those stories, most castles have moats around them, and a large drawbridge that can be raised up or down. In my mind, if it was like that, then it would be easy to defend. But this castle is only beautiful by frame. There's no moat, the walls aren't even high, and the houses of the villages are built outside leaving it exposed. What's more, this front lawn is uselessly long.

To make matters worse, what dissatisfied me the most was that this castle located at the end.

Since it was so boring, I decided to check the cover of the book.

'Sermuz's Swordsmanship Exercise Manual 3rd Volume'

– Mabril's Shining Sword, Written by Kardan Maifehu –

Hehe, haven't I read this already three years ago?

I have never, NEVER wanted to become a warrior or a soldier in

the past as well. That hasn't changed today. But, there's a good reason why I had read this three years ago.

Of course at our store, there's a stockpile of swordsmanship, archery, martial art manuals that had aggregated. Despite having such a large hoard, it doesn't sell as well.

There's never a lot of people come up to the far north to this village just to buy manuals on swordsmanship or some other training manuals. It's not like our village is some grand military affairs headquarters, or a place where a strong force is developed or trained. Not even monsters appear around here. In my estimation, selling 1 – 2 manuals per annum is good enough. The lone manuals that sell are hunting manuals? Due to interest, I did flip through some of these manuals, but with the demeanor of flipping through them as if they were a collection of children's stories.

So what reason did I uselessly finish this to the last page? The ultimate annoyance, the dirt-like guy in my life, the criminal born to wash my sins clean, who else but that "Deer General Store" guy. If not, why would there even be a reason?

Mmm, I was a bit too emotional.

Anyways, I did kind of summarize it, but the Deer General Store has a son who is bigger, stronger, taller, and older than me. His name? Gepper Kumentz. When he first moved in, he was a quiet, absurd boy that wouldn't cause provocation (Whenever he saw my mother, he looked as if he was planning a suspicious ploy). When I first met him, if it was possible, I told myself that I shouldn't bump

into him.

But of course, the world doesn't move as I plan it to be.

I can't remember it clearly, but due to a minor fault, I realized I was on the ground getting beaten up (What I can't understand is the reason for him hitting me). After having his way with me, he took the snowboard that I was using and broke it into pieces. He probably wasn't fond of me coolly riding the snowboard for some time now. At that time, it was made out of wood, so the poor thing had no chance. My poor snowboard.

Anyhow, that was the first time in my life where I never had felt such rage boiling inside.

If you think about it, it was quite a mysterious happening. Burning with rage for vengeance, I read every single manual in the store. Once you start something, you should begin systematically. After reading the manuals, wouldn't the next step be actual practice? I'm someone that will pursue till the end once I make a decision.

Look at me now. Finally, I've reached the end of the paved pathway.

“I have a delivery from the Big Deer's General Store.”

To make the butler in front of me to not ask any questions annoyingly, I put on an honest face as I concluded those words.

“Follow me.”

Thus, I walked past the center of the castle. The castle was built of stone, adorned with the helmets and armors in the corridor, shining with deer and boars heads hung with short swords on the walls. What a waste. As a matter of fact, I do have a sword beside my waist as well.

After reading countless swordsmanship and spear manuals that didn't fit my style, I ended up with a sword by my side. But comparing those decorative swords hung on the walls to mine is awful. Those would barely qualify as daggers, with how short they are.

But still, they would be useful when encountering a wild cat in the mountains.

Past the corridor, we entered a round room. The ceiling of the hall was very high. It was disturbing. The echoing footsteps also bothered me. Alas, in that room were two people waiting for the butler.

Wearing a warm goose coat stood a boy around my age, and alongside him was a tall middle-aged man with a nasty impression.

“Ah, so you have finally arrived.”

What do you mean finally arrived? Was this book really

something that valuable? If I recall, this was a book that was lying around untouched in our store three years ago.

After considering what I should do, I brought out the book and extended it forward.

“Keep your manners. In front of you is the Lord’s son Arnowalt Ksendawni Ember.”

Aha, so it was you? No, your family would be that old man?

Seeing that the lord’s son was similar to my age, I took a glimpse at the boy. Did the lord have such a young son as him?

Well, you look quite pretty

“Well, you look quite pretty.”

To have my thoughts uttered back at me suddenly caused me to become extremely flustered. But those words came out of the lord’s son. Then who did he say it to? Me?

“I have waited for you, store clerk.”

I have a name you know, though it is a bit short.

“For me, sir?”

“Mmhm, I have heard stories of you.” Arnold signalled pointing to his ears.

Of course, you listen with your ears. What do you think you use, your nose?

I just waited for him to quickly state his purpose. I need to quickly go back and aid my mother since she won't be able to sell the goods for the proper value, especially with items passed down from generation to generation, which is my specialty.

“For now, hand me the book.”

I handed over the book. Due to the confusion from before, I extended only one of my hands. This time, I presented the manual to him politely with both hands protracted.

“You are the quickest amongst the Habiyanak, right?”

“Of course.”

If there's a question regarding my confidence, my reply will always be firm.

“And riding that board... you...just.....”

Arnowalt with his goose fur coat and his arms crossed in a S

position was quite silly.

“... .. roam around?”

“Yes.”

If possible, a short reply will hopefully result in a shorter conversation.

“I see. It is as I’ve heard.”

Arnowalt, with a small grin turned to the silent man with a threatening face.

“Teacher Tadea. Useful, don’t you think?”

“Yes, Lord Arnowalt”

Useful? What exactly do they mean? When I was having these thoughts, Teacher Tadea slowly approached me. Seeing him up close, he is indeed very tall.

“You.”

“Huh?”

“You will be the Young Master’s sparring partner starting

tomorrow.”

“HUH?”

What are they saying? I’m not sure they’re talking in my language.

“Starting tomorrow, you will eat breakfast in the castle and will spar with the Young Master. You will be given a sword, so you can come empty-handed. Consider it an honor. Now leave.

After finishing, the two turned.

Ah, it was good that the conversation was short, but if this decision was to be this simple, what am I supposed to do?

But then, who would oversee the store then in the morning?

“But, but...”

“What?” he glanced back threateningly.

## Chapter 4: Delivery (4)

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“You see... ..I’m a merchant.”

“It doesn’t matter what you are. If you’re needed, follow orders as it is. We didn’t ask you based on your status.”

No, that’s not what I’m trying to say.

“Sir, it’s not that but... ..”

“Now what?” Stammered the man. That man must have been a former soldier. You think you’re the only ones with a loud voice?

“I need to look after the store!”

“WHAT?!”

He was indeed taller than me.

Teacher Tadea was about to explode in rage, but what made the situation more severe was how the delicate looking Lord’s son was frowning intensely as three lines of wrinkles formed on his forehead. I could sense that something ominous was about to happen. Teacher Teadea, noticing the Young Master’s expression, politely stepped back.

Compared to before, Arnowalt spoke in a tone quite different

from before. It was a tone so unbelievable that I questioned how such a voice could come out from a boy similar of age. Even if you were older, it's nearly impossible to make that kind of voice. Why? Since there won't be a need to.

“HOW DARE YOU IN THE PROVINCE OF EMBER DEFY ME?”

Big Deer Habiyanak, Rose Ember, Laurel's Bay Grillard, and Snowflower Sedanborum – these four villages together were called the Province of Ember. Wait, I shouldn't even be leisurely explaining this.

With a grimace resembling an old man, he angrily bellowed again like an adult noble. Although his tone was like an old man.

“DEFY ME AND ONLY PRISON AWAITS!”

Yup. That's what I expected.

I let out a long sigh as I sat on the castle floors.

Returning back from the castle was indeed long-winded as well. It was exhausting before, but I won't explain just how long it was this time around. Maybe, it was because I was walking sluggishly that made this trip feel longer than usual.

The soldiers opened the gate, which was at least a few times the height of an average person. And in front laid the front lawn.

Starting tomorrow, I'll have to take this path. Just how did this happen?

There are a few ladies who seem to be the maids of the lord. They peek at me and chuckle. While not turning their heads towards me, they whispered quickly. But I know.

Even if you whisper quietly like that, I can hear everything. How dare they say that I'm cute, sheesh.

Feeling down, I trudged across the paved path.

“Are you leaving, Fabian?”

Oh, have I already walked across the path?

“We're switching shifts now.”

Erent Hyung. How could you shatter that illusion so fast.

“Why did they look for you?”

“It's too appalling to even say it.”

Of course, if I were to say the truth to Hyung in detail, then considering how hot-tempered and horrid their personalities were,

they would involve Mother and threaten me. From now on, being beaten up near death when sparring, I'm not even sure if I'll be treated any less than a dog. As for the important part, if I were to mistakenly hit him, the slander and derision that would come out of his mouth might actually become a reality.

“Alright. Then don't say it.”

You're too kind, Erent Hyung.

Separating from Hyung, I slowly walked towards the gate. Numerous thoughts popped up. Arnowalt, can't you just fall and break an arm? Now, how am I supposed to call you? Lord's son Arnowalt? Or that long name that I can't seem to remember? Wait...don't tell me I have to call you Young Master?!

Thinking about it, he didn't even ask for my name. It's way easier to memorize, sheesh.

I returned to the store when lunchtime was around the corner.

“Fabian, boy! What took you so long?”

Although my mother may talk like this, she's at her greatest gentle state. Maybe it's because of the interactions I had with intensely cold people that had distorted my view for the negative. At least I didn't point at my ears like Arnowalt, or listen through my nose. Anyhow, the sleepiness made her voice that much sweeter.

“Mother.”

“What’s wrong?”

“I love you.”

It’s only a guess, but with that look I can tell that she’s suspicious of something. In order to resolve her suspicions, I’ve initiated Project 1 into action.

“Let me prepare lunch.”

“When have I ever prepared the food? You always prepared it.”

When did my mother get so eloquent at speaking?

Face to face, I ate lunch with her. Two loafs of bread, and one may call this the epitome of luxury: sheep butter, two potatoes, and two apples. “A simple lunch,” is what my mother’s slogan was... .. But why does breakfast and dinner have to have the same slogan as well

I briefly explained my situation to her as simply as possible.

“You training with knives?”

Seeing my mother's simple appreciation, I exclaimed as some of that precious loaf of bread spewed out.

“Mother – What are you saying? — !!”

My mother spoke without a single hint of worry in her voice. In her opinion, (as some potatoes popped out of her mouth), she thought that when I mentioned knives, she thought of the kitchen knives considering how rarely I do hold knives even in the kitchen (There's a misunderstanding. She prepares the meals more than I do). She mentioned how I'll probably leave the castle due to the lord's son being bored after playing around with me for a while. There should be a limit to how lightly she thinks of me.

Of course, it's not like my mother knows about my conflict with Gepper. Whenever my mother would arrive, that guy is the type to scream for help (Seeing how Mr. Kumentz acts, it's no wonder Gepper's demeanor is the same. At least he has some expensive) so of course she has no idea. Thus, it's understandable that she would misunderstand the knives I mentioned as the loaf knives in the kitchen.

However, there was a time where I did nothing but worry Mother as a son... as I reminisced about the events from three years ago.

I quickly scoured around my surroundings as I was stuck in an alley. I looked at those 4 guys across from me. One of them, I knew for sure. The rest of the three – I don't know them. Well, technically I've seen of those guys before, but the rest of the two faces were a mystery. It starts now. I know them all, but I do greet them from time to time.

At that moment, Gepper having suffered a few defeats from me, decided to finish this once and for all as he and his lackeys came to our house. Of course, they came when they knew that my mother wasn't around. Do you think I would let them leave my place and chase after me? That's silly. Why would I abandon such an advantageous post? Mother could come back home any second now, and there could be the Lord's men among the passersby. All of this would confirm my safety that much more.

“Stop spewing nonsense and draw your knife!”

It would've been nice if I could've had a knife that was appropriate to that immature speech of theirs. Seeing the knives those guys were holding, I quickly gathered my thoughts. Among those weapons of theirs was a large wooden stick, carved with a sharp tip. Do you think I wouldn't know that you stole that from Nasret's front lawn? There were no sticks as large as those, except for maybe a few logs where I lived. Only when you herd pigs do you have the need to use that. Maybe I should ask.

“Perchance, were you a pig?”

“What, what did you say?” screamed the ringleader of that group as he unsheathed his knife. I didn't particularly say this to him, but look at him stuttering. He's one odd kid. Well, it wouldn't make sense to say this to the rest who I don't even know personally. Admit it, you're the one that most closely looks like a pig. Mmm, what wonderful reasoning.

“Pi...I’m a pig...?”

The agitated Gepper, holding that large stick that still resembles unchopped firewood, rushed at me. It’s interesting though how he has his left foot forward with that knife as a right-hander. After that beat down 5 months ago, thanks to you, I completely studied all those sword manuals from my store. It’s time for you to figure out what misery is.

And if the trouble is a mess, then nobody’ll will praise you.

“Iyayab! (TL note: War shout)” Coolly screaming, I forced his long stick into our house’s eaves, and at that precise moment, I quickly hid behind the entrance door.

At that time, I really wanted to thank him for his sluggish movements, and began to wonder who to turn this blessing towards.

“You’re a coward, Fabian!”

Oho, when you see those gangsters fight in those pubs, do you just stand there and observe? If so, then I should show you a thing or two of what I assimilated from those sword manuals.

“Iyayayab!” This time, Gepper, with great unrest, took a step back. Oh what great timing!

Subtly jumping on the edge of the barrel, I kicked his body. I

could feel the barrel being flung backwards from the impact. Please, please don't break too much, my water barrel. If you break, I'll have to go and get you fixed.

So, seeing a great opportunity, I rushed at Gepper's head at an angle and smashed it with a firewood log I had previously hidden behind the barrel.

“Puuhk!”

On the moment I aimed for Gepper's head, the two dumbfounded lackeys quickly swung their sticks towards me. It's already too late for me to turn. What was I supposed to do here? Oh yeah.

I was supposed to do this!

The moment my log collided with his head, I dropped my weapon. With that weight gone, I quickly ducked my body down as much as possible.

“Puhhk!”

It was the sound of two sticks colliding. Soon, they would aim for my back. I can't escape from either side. The only side I can escape from is backwards, but it was already too late to turn.

Even so, I was twice as fast than Gepper.

“Oh, oh, oh, OH!”

Holding his head in writhe was the bent-over Gepper. Since both of them were much taller than me, of course their legs would be longer as well. I guess I was very thankful for that, since there was a lot of space I could roll my body through. With my lowered body, I quickly escaped between Gepper’s legs.

“Truly, co..., cowardly... ....”

Puhhk– ouch, my head.

I rolled way too far and accidentally crashed into my neighbor’s fence. But bravely, I quickly jumped back up and faced them. To be honest, I stood up without a moment’s notice since I was somewhat nervous of what Gepper would do. I was right again. The object that was flying towards me was none other than a stick.

But, I was empty handed.

“Haah!”

Twisting my right leg diagonally in a slanted position, I launched a kick to the guy’s right arm. The moment my leg stopped its momentum was when it collided with his fist. The stick that he couldn’t hold on to flew backwards over his head. Byebye~ although it was a pity I couldn’t wave it goodbye, at least I can follow it. Avoiding the bull-like forceful punch from Gepper, I swiftly jumped over the fence of my small home.

“Tuktuk-Puhhk!”

Uh, that bastard’s trying to destroy our fence. But, within these fences held my trump card!

At this time, I had reconstructed my snowboard out of iron. Picking it up from the ground, I swung it hard at the fallen Gepper who was trying to recover with all my strength. In this vicinity, no one had this much arm strength that was of my age other than me. It’s all thanks to this iron snowboard...no, to be precise, it was all due to Gepper.

However, I didn’t ignorantly aim for his head, since the amount of money I’ll have to cough up for medical fees would be astronomical.

“Keeeeuuaaaaaaaa.....”

While trying to get up, the iron board smashed into his arm, flinging him back onto the ground motionless.

I wonder when he’ll wake up.

Silently cracking my chin, I waved at the other boys that were fleeing back towards the alley.

With difficulty, I woke up from my pleasant recollection. The

accomplishment of punishing and taking vengeance against Gepper Kumentz after an arduous five months – this could result in being a very precious memory, but in Arnowalt’s case, that would be different.

Of course, explaining this to Mother would wholly worry her, but since this has already occurred, there’s no need to exacerbate her. So I adjusted my focus to savor the precious bread I was eating. Yeah, what difference would it make for her to know that her son was actually a fighter.

Mother began to rise from the dining table.

“And if you start to observe swordsmanship a bit, won’t it help when you’re herding pigs later on?”

That...what could she possibly mean?

Halting in the midst of cleaning and entering my room, my mind wandered again. I feel like I might have to think twice before coming up with an appropriate reasoning next time.

## Chapter 5: Delivery (5)

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“So it’s you, Fabian. 2nd floor.”

‘Flame Snowy Mountain’s’ innkeeper Gorman, who was laboriously serving glasses of beer, pointed upstairs. Usually, I would aid in serving the beer and be treated to a few glasses, but now wasn’t the time. I nodded my head. Although Gorman may look extremely busy with the way he’s serving, but in reality, he’s not. There’s only one explanation – his mother was about to come out.

I ascended up the stairs.

Mirbo Genz didn’t exactly state how many sparrow nets he needed. He had just asked for one net.

But, even if I were to bring 20 extremely large bundles, I won’t complain.

It was the last room on the east side if I recall.

“Mr. Genz, Mr. Genz!”

I knocked on the door, only to receive no response. Did he leave? But, the door was unlocked.

Is it because he went to bed a bit earlier this evening?

“Mr. Genz~.”

I opened the door and went in.

The room was clean, too clean as if it wasn't rented out. Whenever I entered an inn, I had always wanted to stay in an inn once I do leave for my journey outside (wherever, even across continents!).

The room was as if it wasn't touched after Gorman's wife had prepared this room since it was neat and tidy.

How do I know this so well? During the summer, when tourists that come to sightsee for the snow, the inn becomes really busy. That's where I come in. Even when I help and take some of the profit, they really don't say anything. They know that merchant Fabian doesn't work for free. Not only that, no one has the dexterity to learn and act on the job as quick as me. By hiring other people, they know that it'll only slow them down.

Of course, it's not like I'm blinded by money. As a merchant, I know how important it is to maintain good relationships with people. So, occasionally, I visit and help from time to time.

There was an item strung with a white cloth on the table.

“Mr.Genz~!” I called out once more. No response came as usual. Wanting to put down the nets on the table, I pushed the bundle to

the side. Whew, this thing weighs quite a bit.

I set the package vertically. Since I had brought so many bundles of nets, I needed all the space I could afford. Breathing in, I lifted the nets and placed them on top of the bed sheets.

Afterwards, I leisurely sat at a nearby chair in wait of Mr. Genz.

I dozed off for a moment there.

I woke up from a strange rustling sound.

As if he spoke the words “So you’re finally awake,” Mirbo Genz stared at me as he peeled off a steamed potato. While I struggled to escape the drowsiness, he silently brought the steamed potato towards his mouth.

How hard is it to say “Here, have one?”

Mr. Genz’s weird taste – Half Water sweet potato, and half Night sweet potato. How picky. Getting this caused me to get a scolding from the sweet potato selling Ahjumma, and not only that, I’ll have to return the basket as well. How shameful.

Not even caring what I was thinking about, Mirbo Genz was already peeling his third sweet potato. Now, I finally woke up from the drowsiness. Seeing that hateful attitude, I was determined to get full value for my sparrow nets.

“Each net is worth 6 Jonds, 120 Jonds for all.”

No response. Did I set the price too high?

But to relinquish this position isn't what Merchant Fabian is going to do.

“And the ahjumma said that they don't sell 1 Jonds worth of sweet potato, so I gave them 1 Jonds 50. That basket is the portion for 1 person.

He was still quiet.

“And Mister, I expended too much of my time waiting for you here. With the time I waited here, I could've sold a lot more goods.”

I didn't know how long it has been. It's just that I made a conjecture based on how dusky it was outside. With the backlight highlighting his face, his figure became more mysterious. Although I was a bit mindful of the sword by his waist, but I need to first finish what I started.

But why isn't he saying anything?

Is he angry?

“.... ... I have to go now. If you’re not going to compensate for my time, then just calculate the price of the sparrow nets and sweet potatoes, and send them to me later.”

“You...”

Ah, finally he said something. Looks like he didn’t fall asleep while eating that potato. But if he did, and it wouldn’t be possible for him to be having his fifth.

“... Did you move it?” Mirbo pointed at the white packet on top of the bed.

Aha, so it was that. Since I was here a while and moved that, he’s suspecting that I might’ve stole something. What do you see Merchant Fabian as? It seems that you don’t know much since you recently arrived, but I’m not that kind of person. If there’s something missing, just tell me instead of showing that vicious side of yours.

The answer that came out from me was, however, different from the thoughts within.

“... ... Yes.”

“Hm... ..”

It seems he was immersed in his thoughts. But even then, he was peeling his seventh sweet potato. He really does eat fast,

considering he hasn't drunk a single glass of water yet.

“Leave.”

“Yes?”

What kind of nonsense is he spewing?

While I was urgently restraining myself from releasing the thoughts I had, Mirbo rose from the chair. Opening the backpack that I'm sure I haven't seen in this room before, he pulled out a leather pouch.

Opening it, a dusky light gloriously filled the room with its splendor with colors of red, blue, yellow, and many others respective to their own light.

Among them, choosing one, he pulled it out, which he eventually placed into my hands.

Was it.....a jewel?

In front of me, flashing brilliantly of a navy-blue light was a small marble smaller than the palm of my hand rolling around. It was an absolute pure, round marble. At maximum speed, I searched through a dictionary of common sense inside my head. Aha, I'm putting a bit too much pressure on my brain. In order to be a great merchant, I did memorize some of the stuff that I might need. I've even had the chance to see some gold coins that were

impossible for a general store merchant to see. And now, a jewel falls into my hands?!

Seeing me hesitating in a flustered state, he looked at me curiously, and came to his own conclusion.

“There’s no need for change.”

Riding my snowboard, it had been a long time since I had felt slight guilty. For 20 sparrow nets..... that man... what exactly is he going to do with those?

Most people, when feeling that they are getting scammed, would raise their voice and change their expressions to see how the opposition will react. I’m no exception as well. For 1 Rojond, concealing your inner feelings is a basic standard for a merchant.

But still, to meet an opposition that doesn’t care whether you try and scam him or not made put me in a predicament. Especially when you go out strong like that.....if I were to have released my inner thoughts.....It’s a relief considering how I even had suspicions.....

Ah, let’s stop. With those 20 bundles of nets, it’s good for him as well as he can trap a lot of sparrows as well.

I still had to walk up the last road before reaching home. I tried to not pay attention to the jewel until I had shown it to my mother, but my hand keeps reaching towards my pocket in my trousers.

Initially, when I received that shining stone, I did have thoughts of whether or not it was fake. It's not like I've ever heard how a fake jewel looks in my life. It's just that the jewel was so spectacular that it made me have those thoughts.

I had nothing to say considering I had never left my hometown once in my life. It's hard enough to even see a jewel as a noble, so a fake jewel was out of the question. Who would even bother trying to deceive normal farmers and herbalists here with a fake jewel? It'll be much more profitable to try and deceive the nobles.

But still, after being perplexed for a while, I half-tumbled down the stairs from the second floor as if it was going to collapse at any moment, and called for Gorman's wife's younger brother Dick remembering the stories that he followed a jeweler in his younger days. Taking him to a corner, I showed him blue marble, only to receive an odd look.

“It's been awhile since I've seen a real jewel.”

Those were the first words that came out of his mouth after playing with it for some time.

I wonder how much this is worth?

One time, he followed a bragging jeweler for a while, but he admits that he knows nothing about the emotions of jewels – if you don't know what merchants like us are, it's all about the money. So it's natural that he won't be able to spread the word about this

jewel and keep it a secret since it'll only bring him trouble as well.

But, no matter how much I rely on this point, it doesn't help that I still need to learn how much this jewel is really worth. Due to how much it's glowing, even Dick doesn't admit that it's a jewel, which comes to show just how great of an item this thing is. Of course, I'm not a fool as to incur the wrath of others by showing this around.

But what about it?

With mixed feelings, I pondered endlessly as I headed towards the front door.

## Chapter 6: Delivery (6)

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“I’m home.”

“Come eat dinner.”

What is this?

That’s my dinner set?

From the dining table was a whiff of juicy steak, and cooked asparagus where you could still see the butter melting lustfully on those veggies. Finishing off this set was a delicious raspberry pie.

I kept my distance from the dining table.

“Please tell me. I’ll forgive you for anything that you have done wrong.”

“This boy, is this how you treat your mother’s sincere cooking like that?”

Well it’s true. My mother’s cooking skills can easily beat most cooks that are chefs. So much so that it would’ve been good if she had set up an inn or restaurant instead of a general store. Hmm, if that was ever a possibility, then I’d be Habiyanak’s best waiter.

“Alright, Mother. Are you perhaps travelling far away? Is that

so? Even if you're not here, I'll take good care of the store. Well, compared to Mother, I am technically better... ..”

At that moment, I quickly evaded the bombarded pieces of bread flying towards me.

Before the food gets cold, I need to eat.

Especially when it's a dinner set where it's hard to eat such a feast for at least a few months. Slicing through the soft plump meat, I quickly chewed the meat and stuffed myself with some pie while I was cautiously deciding when I should tell her about the jewel that Genz gave me. Mother was comfortably slicing that luscious steak as she ate.

But was a jewel always this heavy? It felt as if the jewel was about to rip through my pockets and plummet towards the ground. Even in front of such a delicacy, I couldn't stop myself from holding the jewel inside my pockets. Anyways, I need to finish my meal so I forcefully contained myself and focused on the food in front of me.

No words could describe how delicious this steak was, even if half of it wasn't going into my mouth, I wouldn't have been able to control myself. Seeing how my mother wasn't saying anything, it seems she was wholly focused on eating as well.

“I should be the one asking you to spill it out. I'll forgive you.”

Finally, Mother is learning from me.

“What I want to know is what day is it today?”

“It’s the 7th day of the 14th month. Last year on this day, there was a haughty rumour between you and the weaponsmith’s daughter Benya Killen. I hit you in the head after seeing your agonized feelings considering how you constantly told me to eat with a lighthearted expression... ..”

... Now you know where my memory came from right?... Wait this isn’t the time

“It’s....You know that’s not what I mean!”

I don’t even want to share with you about what happened with Benya Killen. Because of that girl, I’ve been cold and gloomy (those emotions don’t even match). Lately after seriously reconsidering being kind to girls to the point where I’m not even interested in girls (have I really?). Thus, I’ve been labelled as a weirdo.

“What I want to know is that why are we eating such delicacies that I wouldn’t be able to even smell occasionally. Is today some kind of holiday?”

“I wanted to use some of our savings. When God gives us luck, it’s not appropriate to ask why. Why you ask? If you keep asking, I’m going to take these away.”

I immediately shut myself up.

Anyhow, it's still somewhat suspicious. I wonder what she is thinking as she eats. They say that when people are about to die, they start acting strangely. Wait, maybe... ....Nah, what kind of nonsense am I spouting?

Oh, could it be that Mother caught on that her son had just earned a fortune?

Anyways, I need to have her feel reassured that our family savings won't just disappear.

Quickly bringing my mother into the bedroom, I took out the jewel from my pockets and showed it to her.

As expected, my mother was worried.

“So you're saying he just gave you that?”

“Of course he did pay for the nets.”

“This boy, you overcharged again, didn't you?”

Well, whatever. This isn't the time to answer that anyways.

“It's still good right? Look, how much do you think it's worth? Seeing how large it is, it should go for quite a bit. It's said that the price of jewels are determined by what they are made of. I

should've asked for the name of this jewel then. My mistake. But still, at that time, I was too flabbergasted as well. What should I do?"

"... .. You can just ask Dick from the Flame Snowy Mountain Inn. "

Puhaha. Holding in my laughter, I simply nodded my head. Still, a promise is a promise, so I'll make sure to keep it a secret.

"I already asked okay. He told me that he's unfamiliar with it."

"How much did you ask for?"

"Eh... .. I asked for 4 Jonds 50 per net."

"Mm... .. 5 jonds per net I see."

Hehe... Mother, you still can't read your son.

"Yes....."

"Seeing you nod like that without a fight, you called for at least 5 Jonds 50."

Mm, it seems that mother is using her wits quite a bit.

“Stop it. At that rate, you’ll probably raise it by another 100 Jonds.”

Taking out a sheepskin, she started to calculate. Mother, unlike me, isn’t as fast in calculation. Mm, I shouldn’t mention about the sweet potato delivery. I wonder how much I received just from tips in this errand.

“With this large of a jewel, no matter how cheap it is, it should go for at least 500 Jonds. By no means... ..”

Mother, anything but those words... ..

“We need to return the change.”

Hearing the one phrase I did not want to hear, I jumped up from the bed and grabbed my mother’s arm.

“MOTHER!”

“Mmhm, I see that you’re worried as well. With our house, we don’t have the money to give change for this.”

... .. Well, for me, that’s good at least. What’s important is that we don’t return this jewel.

“I agree, so there’s no way to return the change right? Not only that, he even specifically told me that he doesn’t need change. He

probably knew that we didn't have the change, so he didn't want to be annoyed. Not only that, you don't even know how threatening frightening his face is... .."

Well, truthfully, he wasn't exactly that dangerous...

"You, I thought you were smart, but I see that you're an idiot."

"What?"

Mother, why are you saying such a thing...

Mother stared at me admonishingly.

"If you don't have the money, then you can return the value with goods right? You're a merchant, and you don't even consider this... .."

MOTHER~~~ NOOOOO-!!

No, what do you mean no? I'm currently weaving more sparrow bundles.

Since Mr.Genx might depart tomorrow morning, my mother asserted that I had to finish weaving all these bundles by today. Of course, I hinted that Mr.Genx wouldn't need any more sparrow bundles, but my mother displayed an apathetic expression. In my opinion, he doesn't even need an extra! But my mother isn't

someone that can be convinced easily.

“Boy, what are you going to do when he asks for more sparrow nets?”

... ..My mother is always like this.

Originally selling 20 bundles of sparrow nets, there's not too many left in the store – in fact, the ultimate disaster was this – No sleep for tonight. In order to make 500 Jonds worth of nets, just how many more bundles do I have to make...? No, if you recall my mother's calculation from before (5 Jonds per net), I'll have to weave until I have a value of 400 Jonds worth of nets. Then, how many is that...80 bundles?!

Sigh, I should've just confessed that I received 6 Jonds per bundle.

Although it is a bit unreasonable, since my mother was also a merchant, she did support in having a higher profit. If I convince her about the charges related to the sweet potatoes, delivery fee, and waiting fee, I could at least curtail the amount by 100 Jonds (20 bundles). Then, I would work on these a bit more heartily.

In the end, after Mother and I weaved about 10 bundles, we were finally able to go to sleep. Even attempting to weave 80 bundles in a day is crazy, no less impossible. The words that my mother spoke before I fell asleep was quite a sight to behold.

“Mm..., Fabian, did he perchance not ask for any bear nets?”

“AHKKKK~!”

Alarmed from my scream, my mother who had briefly slept jumped up from the bed. Her eyes, though, were still closed.

“What’s wrong, boy! It’s often said that I still need time to digest the food from yesterday for at least another month.”

Despite her brief sleep, she still was able to articulate what she wanted to say without mispronunciation... But still, I had to say it.

“I’M LATEEEEEEE~!!”

Skipping breakfast, and quickly splashing some water onto my face, I frantically rode my snowboard down. Usually, this would feel unbelievably fast, but why does everything feel so slow today?! In these moments, being a magician like those from the stories wouldn’t be bad at all. That...what do you call it.....Yeah, Teleport, that.

I don’t think that our Lord’s precious son would simply warm up with his teacher while waiting for a commoner like me. Anyhow, I can’t be late for even a minute’s worth of teatime.

UhUh, Move aside!

Swiftly, I quickly went past the apple cart. I was already at Rose Ember. As it was morning, it was quite difficult having to weave by these group of vendors.

Seeing an apple, my stomach started to grumble.

I wonder where everything I had eaten yesterday had gone to. Far from being a month, that food doesn't even last me through a day.

When I arrived at the castle, my appearance was an absolute disaster.

My hair was still a mess from when I woke up, my face was unwashed, and my clothes were still the same from yesterday night. I probably look like a bum. But still, rather than having a noble wait, it's several times better listening to their mockery instead.

“Mm, so you've come.”

Why is that person here?

I stood dumbfounded without words as Arnowalt stood in front of the gate with a smile. Why has he come out? Was it because I was late that he wants to lock me up? Seeing his expression, I was relieved that it wasn't the case.

“Ah, since you were late, I was planning on bringing you here,

but you've arrived. Come in."

This feels...like a game between goblins.

In a neat swordsman robe more graceful from yesterday, I followed Arnowalt towards the rear of the castle. Waiting on the grass was the teacher from yesterday with a solemn expression. Noticing my presence, he extended a "Fleuret" towards my direction.

"Don't be late."

Why is everyone so tolerant?

But soon, that thought would be proven wrong.

## Chapter 7: Delivery (7)

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The Fleuret that I received didn't have any sort of sharpness except for the tip where the sword was somewhat pointy. With this, I probably couldn't even cut through a net... Damn, I weaved way too many of those nets.

But what made me dumbfounded was that Arnowalt was holding a "Long Sword".

Just comparing the two by weight, there's no competition. The long sword is clearly superior in all aspects, and if he swings that sword at my Fleuret, it'll probably break just like that. What's even more of a disparity, that sword just from its appearance seems that it's worth quite a bit.

Shouldn't they at least give me an Epee? I doubt that the tip of this fleuret can even pierce through anything.

"This, I'm supposed to fight with this?"

"Of course not."

Oho, are they going to hand me a different weapon?

"When did I say that you will fight the Young Master? You just have to diligently avoid his attacks so that the Young Master can practice. Do you dare to attack the Master? Is that what you're implying?"

“Start!”

What do you mean start? Am I supposed to start dancing now? Uhk, wait a second. It seems those words were meant for Arnowalt.

As soon as those words left Tadea, I saw Arnowalt’s long sword thrust towards my left shoulder. Holy, what the hell. Making me forget what I had initially thought, I tried to foolishly defend against the sword with my useless fleuret as I stumbled like a fool.

Damn. It’s useless.

Can you even call this thing a weapon? It’s not even worth being classified as a weapon...No, I should at least pay my respects to the dead. The deceased fleuret’s two pieces of corpses crashed onto the ground tangled up. Good bye, my weapon. I at least paid my respects.

“Hehe, are we already done?” spoke Arnowalt as he straightened his position up (Well, to be honest, it only made him a tad taller) while lowering his sword. The cloth on my left shoulder suddenly was torn apart, as my left shoulder became exposed to the air.

Drip.

Hmm, what’s this?

“AH... ....”

So all that running, fasting, and panting heavily in the morning to not be late was for this reason?

That morning scenery froze for a short moment in front of me.

Arnowalt looked alarmed as he cringed back from the sight of blood. The injury wasn't light at all as the blood flowed down past my elbow, soaking the cotton in blood.

“You said you were quick, but it seems that was only a hoax.”

Soldier-like, Tadea seemed accustomed to the blood as he uttered those words surly. Considering that Arnowalt had the title of a noble and not a commoner, he quickly readjusted his emotions and firmly swung his sword towards me again.

This time, he targeted the wrist.

This morning, even if they were to kill a commoner's child, they would probably forget such a “thing” existed by lunchtime.

My muscles shook intensely as I tensed up much more due to the stress.

This was the first I ever felt this way even after that intense battle with Gepper from before.

As Arnowalt with his novice-like strength aimed for my empty-handed right wrist like a wild beast, I quickly gathered my thoughts and came up with a few hypotheses.

I could tell that Arnowalt was too frail in contrast to the heavy long sword that he was wielding.

But even then, seeing how he'd swung that sword with all his might, it shouldn't be easy trying to control it.

I can't inflict an injury to Arnowalt either (No other method exists anyways).

Then, in order to end this fight, my only option is to make him drop that sword of his own accord.

Waiting for the moment the sword was about to hit my wrist, I lowered it towards the ground and rolled to the side. Crumpling up my body as best as I possibly could, I quickly rolled towards Arnowalt's right leg.

“Ahk!”

Expecting a hard impact from his sword, Arnowalt moved forward as he concentrated on preparing for the worst. However, the moment he lost his balance from the impact, he made the mistake of trying to raise his right leg to avoid me.

He lost his balance, but due to the long sword being stuck in the grass, he could not fall. As a result, his wrist stretched out unfortunately, causing him to drop his sword in agony.

“IT HURTS... ....”

I knew that the sword wasn't that sharp. In contrast to a double-edged sword which main strengths lies in its piercing, this long sword didn't have the same kind of cutting force. So, no matter how sharp you make the sword, it's all for naught.

Of course I had already considered these points before executing my plan. As expected, since I had curled up my body, Arnowalt's long sword had only lightly grazed the cloth on my back, so there wasn't much too much damage.

“YOUNG MASTER!”

Shocked, Teacher Tadea [TL Note: Reminder that he is a teacher & not a servant] dashed forward to support Arnowalt back up. One failure caused Arnowalt to revert back to his childish ways from his once proud demeanor, as he collapsed on the ground.

“Have you hurt your wrist? Where is the injury? Where... ....”

Tadea, like an idiot, grabbed Arnowalt's wrist and spun him around once, which caused a deafening scream echoing throughout the backyard.

“AHYA!!!!!!!!!!-!”

It seems he had sprained his wrist.

I couldn't return to the store as fast today.

Not having to go and negotiate – Isn't there a better term – with Mirbo Genz regarding those sparrow nets was encouraging at least; however, having the old butler follow behind me through the long corridor made my mood dreadful. Anyways, for all this effort not to go in vain, it would be best if Mr. Genz had left the inn this morning.

Still not being able to wash my face, I walked down the corridor famished with my wrinkled clothes across the splendid blood red-like carpet. Slightly moving my left shoulder caused blood to gush out from my wound. Roughly bandaging it so that blood won't spill out, (They probably also didn't want to see their beautiful carpet stained with blood). But, to hold my snowboard with my right arm made it uncomfortable.

Seeing how the wound was still hemorrhaging, it must be quite serious. But, of course, Arnowalt's stretched wrist ligament was a shocking incident inside the castle. Sigh, I didn't expect how inflexible Arnowalt's body was in my calculations.

Get the doctor immediately! Bring everything (Why?) over here! Amongst the chaos, I quietly tiptoed out in an attempt to escape, only to be held back by the old butler.

“Where are you planning to go in that state?”

If there's a person that's actually close to being humane in this castle, it has to be this old butler. What was his name again? It was pretty complicated. Anyways, the doctor that brought a roll of linen cloth and started to wrap Arnowalt's sprained wrist – treatment, my ass, he probably told him to not move his wrist – called for me after.

“Aigoo, what's going on?”

Since I rarely get injured, I didn't know how the doctor from Ember looked. Contrast to my own expectations, he was a very young man. Probably just entering into his thirties?

“Actually making me use a mana circle for the Young master while leaving an injured patient here...these nobles tsk tsk... ....”

Oh, he's remarkably brave.

Laying me down on the bed, he started to flush the wound and wrapped it with a clean cloth as he compressed it with a tourniquet comfortably. After roughly finishing the treatment, he just quickly went over the usual guidelines to eat well, to not lift anything heavy with my left arm, etc. as he talked about the interesting, but unlikely post-measures that can arise.

“So, what's your name?” Asked the lonely-looking doctor gently. Hehe, this was a first that I was actually asked for my name in the

castle. Let's say my full name for once, although I kind of wished that my name was really long as well...

“I am Fabian Christian.”

“You came from Habiyanak?”

“Yes.”

“You, you're a clerk?”

Huhuh?!

Although I was staring at the ceiling per his instructions, but that question caused me to turn my head towards him as I let out a painful groan.

“Uhk....”

The doctor, seeing his patient groan in pain didn't show much of a reaction (Huh? But he's a doctor?) and asked again with a gentle smile.

“You may not be a clerk, but anyways you're still related to commerce right?”

“... That is true, but how did you know?”

This time, I carefully answered him as I stared at the ceiling firmly. But, it seems that the doctor though was fond of questions, and not providing answers.

“Aren’t you told by others at how intelligent and quick you are with calculations? You’re pretty quick physically as well, right?”

“... ....”

I nodded my head again, only to let out another groan due to my shoulder tensing up. Seeing me in that state, he assumed that it was true and asked again.

“And don’t you covet money quite a lot? Well, when I say covet, I mean it like making a profit as a clerk is what I’m saying.”

What the hell is happening here? Forgetting about the pain, I nodded again.

“How do you know all of this? Are you a fortune teller?”

“You don’t live with your father, right?”

Aigoo. Just answer the damn questions!

## Chapter 8: Delivery (8)

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But, the last words that he spoke were shockingly true (Since he passed away, isn't it obvious that I'm not living with him?), I was resolute for an answer as I looked at him determined. The doctor laughed as he scratched his head.

“It's because your face says it all?”

“Is my face some sort of family registration census?”

The doctor suddenly burst into laughter.

Well, of course that doesn't make any sense. Even with the family registration census form, all you could get is the person's name, where he lives, and birthday. Not only that, he just learnt my name. So, the chances of him knowing me beforehand is slim to none.

“Puha, Puhaha, PUHAHAHA... Look, here Fabian. What benefit of the doubt would I get from doing a background check on you? Are you that great of a man?”

Although I became a bit flustered – it was only a speculative thought, and maybe it's due to excessive blood loss, but I was pale for the majority of the time – I was more concerned with satisfying my curiosity.

However, I couldn't match the doctor's level of curiosity.

“So you weren’t born here then?”

I don’t think so.

Whether he made a mistake or not, until I solve this mystery, I wasn’t going to leave as I silently expressed my adamant determination, but the doctor just kept laughing, seemingly having no interest in giving an answer.

“It’s called “Physiognomy.”

“Physiognomy? What’s that?”

“That...I’m not too sure how to describe it as it is quite complicated.”

Nauke (the name of the doctor) said such a thing existed. Just by looking at the face, you can determine the person’s past and current situation, and also predict the future. At first, even I didn’t believe it to be true, but seeing how I’m guessing it right, I’m just enlightened by it.

“Hahaha...doctor you’re too funny. What part of me can you say that you can just easily guess? Especially when you’re not on the same level as the one that taught you. So, just because it’s interesting, you take any person and mess around I suppose?”

Hmmm... so he's just implying that I looked interesting to mess around with. Suddenly, I felt sad. No, I expressed a disappointed look.

"If it was all a joke, then I will take my leave."

"Uh, wait a moment."

The doctor carefully stood and grabbed my back, causing me to nearly die from the impact. Is that person actually a doctor?

"Even if it was a joke, I was correct, weren't I? Don't make such a melancholy look. It pains me."

Well, technically you did get one of them wrong... ..

"Okay."

I'll answer him with at least that I suppose.

"Hehe...how interesting."

Doctor Nauke with a smile scratched his head as he wondered how awkward the situation had become.

"Don't be like this. I'll explain it to you."

Thus, I was able to teach one person how to answer questions. What a rewarding day it was.

That night, I dreamt a strange dream.

[You, were you born at a place far away?]

It was the doctor. I nodded my head.

[I was born in Big Deer Habiyanak.]

[You were born from the forest, right?]

Wondering where the teacher that I spent quite the effort teaching on how to answer, he was, as ever, only asking questions.

[What nonsense are you saying. I was born under a roof.]

[Those that received you when you were born were the elves, right?]

Aigoo, so frustrating! I waved my hands in denial as I articulated loudly.

[I, WAS, BORN, AND, RAISED, HERE!]

[YOU WILL SOON LEAVE HERE!] The doctor stubbornly

shouted.

At that moment, I woke up.

Despite it being a chilly day, I was sweating. The nightmare wasn't too terrible. I slowly recalled the contents of that dream.

I'm going to depart here soon?

My god, I'm going to leave such a beautiful place? (Of course this excludes Arnowalt and Teacher Tadea).

If I were able to travel and make branches of Big Deer General Store after making a lot of money across the continent, then I would maybe consider the idea.

Turning my body sideways in bed, I took a glance at my mother. Though it was dark, I could faintly see a sleeping figure without any sound or movement.

As if it was a corpse.

Hey, what am I saying!

I must've have not slept enough. Taking the water cup that I always prepare for my mother who wakes up often in the midst of her sleep, from the ledge above her bed, I gulped down the water. The cold water plummeted down towards my stomach.

Simultaneously, my half-conscious brain became clearer.

Hehe, I wonder how she'll react when she wakes and looks for water.

With a clear mind, I thought of exploring why I was having such dreams, but the thought of having to meet the doctor that would needlessly ask questions, I could only deem it a mystery. Have I ever thought of leaving before? No matter how much I think about it, other than the time I weaved those sparrow nets with my mother overnight, there was none.

Speaking of nets, weaving all those nets happened to be useless as I recalled back to yesterday. After returning back from the castle, due to my mother's tirade of words, I walked towards Flame Snowy Mountain Inn (After seeing my injured arm, my mother forbade me from riding the snowboard. If I had injured myself from the snowboard, I would most likely never see it again. Has any of my premonitions ever been wrong?

“I don't need any more nets.”

As if he was departing in a short while, or as if he just returned, Mirbo Genz spoke those words as he sat in his tidy room. Of course he wouldn't need any. I nodded my head, and soon I broached the subject with a curious face and asked about the jewel's name.

“It doesn't have a name. And it should cover up for the value of the nets.”

Anticipating such an answer, I nodded my head again and turned to leave. Confirming that he doesn't need any change is plenty enough. But Mr. Genz looked at me as if had something more to say. As I was about to close the door, he called for me.

“Wait. Come here and touch this for a second.”

It was the white package from before. What a strange request. Walking in, I lifted up the package. Strange, it wasn't as heavy as before.

“Isn't it heavy?”

“Not really.”

“Hmm, I see.”

He then waved me away. As I was about to close the door, Mr. Genz quietly uttered, as if he was murmuring, a single sentence.

“..... the life of a fairy.”

“What?!”

## Chapter 9: Delivery (9)

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Although I couldn't catch on to the early sentences Mr. Genz had uttered, but it seemed that he had nothing more to say as he didn't bother seeing me leave. So, in the end, I headed back home. While returning, I mumbled constantly, trying to make up what he was trying to say then.

Yeah. Because of what he said, the statement that I was received by the elves, and that severe warning from the dream. There's no mistake. But, fairies and elves are undeniably different. Ah. Sheesh. (I have not seen either species).

This was the limit to my thoughts. Tucking myself in bed, I resigned myself back to sleep.

“Mother, apparently a term called ‘Physiognomy’ exists.”

My mother and I prepared a simple breakfast and sat down. The menu had two loaves of bread, a rare delicacy of goat cheese, and two glasses of water. Our motto of a meal? (‘Have a light breakfast!’)

“Physiognomy? What's that?”

It piqued her curiosity. My mother, despite having it come out of his son, politely expressed her interest even if it weren't of any use to her.

“Well, you see. You can see a person’s past, present and future by just looking at their face. It was very interesting. Other than one fact, he got everything right.”

“What do you mean ‘look at your face’. Is your face some kind of birth registration census?”

Ha, haha... it must be true that I’m her son.

“Mother, apparently it can predict the future as well. What census paper would have the outcomes of our future written?”

As I was saying this, I realized that even the thought of it was crazy. The future, what do I know what will happen in the future.

I should’ve asked if I were to be a famous great merchant at Rieju.

Suddenly, I felt greatly interested in this so-called Physiognomy. As well, she showed a timely response in the ideal moment.

“If that’s true, then it is very interesting.”

That respectful tone, I really respect that. That’s exactly the figure of a merchant. In other words, my mother doesn’t believe me at all.

“So, what did he say about you?”

“Ah, hahaha...so you see, he didn't get everything right. He said I was a clerk, fast at calculating, Father wasn't here with me, and I was speedy (I excluded the part where he said I coveted money). He got all of that right.

“Oho, he got all of that right?”

Mother was applying the last piece of cheese onto the bread. It couldn't be that she would talk to me like this just for that bread? I grew suspicious.

“(For now, let's try and forget about that piece of cheese) Well, he told me that I wasn't born here. I couldn't believe it. Haha, yes it's quite hilarious. So I told him that I was born under our roof.”

Thinking about it, those words were spoken from my dream.

Mother was lowering her head as she was eating the bread (with the cheese) and was busy chewing. It seems she had nothing more to say.

She didn't ask any more probably because she had attained what she needed to do.

I gave up trying to say anything else.

“... .. I will go to the castle now.”

Despite hurting my arm, they never told me not to come, so I had to go. I quickly left the dishes to my mom and picked up my snowboard. Mother looked at me with a hostile expression.

“No.”

“I’ll do the dishes.”

While rolling up my sleeves, the wound in my left arm throbbed painfully. With tearful eyes, I held my arm. My mother folded her sleeves and without looking at me, said it once more.

“No.”

Okay, okay. I just don’t have to ride it.

As a result, I lost to her as I waive my stubbornness after ten or more years. How strange... .. Mm, maybe I’m about to die as well.

Why was the castle so far away?

In a long time, I looked at the scenery around me as I walked on. The city of Rose Ember was bustling as usual. Today, my mother told me that she would manage the store alone adamantly. So, after I finish with the errands at the castle, I have nowhere to go. The reasoning was simple. Despite having hurt my arm, the fact that I was going to go to the castle because the Lord’s son had

called caused her to feel pity for me. Sigh, with that kind of emotions, I have to understand her stance.

Since I have a lot of time in hand, maybe I should sightsee at Ember Village.

I arrived at the castle.

Even when arriving at the backyard, no one was waiting for me. Since the Lord's son Arnowalt had sprained his wrist, I wonder if he was sent back home.

Sitting on the paved floor, I momentarily waited.

What's that stain on the grass?

Standing up, I headed towards it.

After carefully inspecting it, it was a faint stain of my blood from yesterday. Unnecessary anger rose from within me as I looked at my stiff left arm that I couldn't use. This Lord's son Arnowalt bastard (hmm this nickname sounds even stranger), I'll never get hit by that careless sword again. From now on, you won't be having any fun either.

At least I wasn't this frustrated when I had fought with Gepper.

“Oh, isn't that you Fabian?”

That voice that started out with a question. I've heard it too many times.

“Oh, is that you, Doctor?”

I can do it too, you know.

Dr. Nauke stopped in his tracks, and gave me a warm expression as he looked at me. Does this old man live here? No, I'm sure that the 'Lord's Son bastard' (I shortened it coolly) sprained wrist is the reason why he's still here. What a pitiful doctor. Ah, since I've seen him anyways, I should ask about that physiognomy.

“Have you come to look after a patient?”

“Haha, ain't I already talking with a patient? How's your body?”

That must be one of his abilities. Skillfully asking a question while replying.

“It's so-so. Although my shoulder is a bit stiff.

“You walk around putting too much strength on it, right?”

I made up my mind and was determined to review yesterday's lectures. In just one day, how could all that education go for naught?

“Mr. Nauke. Could you tell me a bit more about physiognomy in detail?”

“Physiognomy? Why?”

“Sheesh. I told you not to keep asking questions. If you could really see physiognomy, then look at me and try and see if you can see my future.”

“The future. Why are you so curious about the future?”

At this time, I needed to take the initiative with a question. Ah, sorry for acting like a specialist in education.

“Do you think I can become a wealthy merchant?”

“A merchant, I’m not sure... ..”

Oh, it’s working.

Seeing the result of my initial initiative, I listened attentively in wait for his response, making sure not to miss anything.

“... .. like this, then maybe.”

“What did you say?”

“If you work hard like this, then maybe.”

Hehe, everyone knows that. I made a dumbfounded expression towards the doctor. Looks like I successfully conveyed my feelings.

“You’re asking who wouldn’t know such an obvious thing, right?”

I chuckled a bit. It did get relayed.

“That...It’s because I’m not at a higher level yet.”

“So, if you’re at a higher level, you can learn about the future?”

“Of course.”

“Then is there no one that can reach that advanced level? Someone that could tell me whether I will open a shop at Rieju, or a shop at Ember – stuff like that.”

“There is.”

“Hehe, if the fee’s too expensive, don’t tell me. But if it’s not, can you tell me where I can buy it?”

“It shouldn’t be hard.”

“Where is it?”

Like the times I spent memorizing the delivery lists back home, I attentively closed in and listened.

“Mmm... .. Do you know a place called Harashiba? It should be somewhere there...”

“WHAT, are you joking with me?!”

If this wasn't a joke, then he was just messing with me. Pouting, I glared at the doctor with a sour expression.

Harashiba isn't a city that's in Isnamir. Assuming that I was able to instantly recognize this city from another country due to my broad knowledge is a miscalculation. Any fool would have heard of this city name at least once. Why? Since it's the capital of Seremuz.

The flower of Harashiba. If you interpret the meaning, it's the city where flowers reside, and the only place on the continent where you can actually see flowers. You won't find any other flowers anywhere if those flowers don't exist in Harashiba. But the distance wasn't the main reason.

Seremuz is home to the Mabil species, the most vicious warriors among the 5 subspecies of the human race. Even the normal citizens will probably be hailed as the strongest in our villages, or so I've heard from my mother. I have no clue though on how they

can raise flowers considering their viciousness. Anyhow, if you compare them to our nation's people, which are made up of the Elabida race, the playing field itself is different.

In short, it's a city where you should never consider visiting.

I wore a frowning expression.

“It's as if you're telling me to not even try and dream about having my future told.”

“Haha, don't be so emotional. Of course, I'm not saying for you to go to Harashiba. I'm just saying it. I have an alternative for you.”

“What alternative is this then?”

# Chapter 10: Delivery (10)

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My little sister from Laurel Bay Grillard.”

“Your sister can predict the future?”

That’s strange. Although Mr. Nauke is a doctor, I thought that predicting futures was more suitable for old grandmas and grandpas. Anyways, seeing how he’s not that old (Well, he’s a lot older than me), his younger sister should be a young virgin. A virgin fortune teller, huh. Sounds pretty silly if you think about it.

“Mmhm. Ryujia is quite famous at Grillard. Well to be honest, she’s not as famous if you consider her talent, but that’s because she doesn’t want to be well-known. Anyways, she’s different from a “half-and-half” person like me.”

“What do you mean by “half-and-half?”

“I’m not an official doctor, if you didn’t know.”

What a relief. I was wondering how this lunatic was supposed to be a doctor. No wonder my arm is so stiff, is what I had almost thought.

“Where does she live in Grillard?”

“If you go ask, they’ll know. Just say the name Ryujia Nauke.”

Alright. Considering how much time I have in hand today, I might as well go there considering I haven't visited there for quite some time. But, would the fortune-telling fee be expensive? If I say that I know her older brother, wouldn't she give me a discount? I should bring this up...

“Ah, wait. I forgot to tell you some important news. The Lord's son Arnowalt wanted to give you a message that he won't be able to practice today. He will rest for about two days, so come back next week.”

Hehe, I've already presumed that it would be like this. But, it seems that the teacher also addresses him absurdly, similar to me. Maybe I should teach the doctor my newly invented nickname.

That “Lord's Son Bastard” not only does he have a slow body, but he's also quite a crybaby.

“Then, I will take my leave.”

Picking up the bag he put down, he advised me to be careful with my arm as he returned back to the castle, swinging his arms. I excitedly waved at him shouting,

“If I say your name, I should get a discount, right? It's alright for me to trust you?”

But, thinking about it, it was a strange situation. For some

reason, I think I got infected by his “questioning disease.” Hmm, how’s a person who calls himself a doctor lower himself into spreading diseases instead of actually treating them?

Laurel Bay’s Grillard was located below Ember village. I just needed to cross over that pass. The road was flat and to the side was a thick, harmless peak. There wasn’t a special name for it as it’s commonly called “Grillard’s Peak.” It’s not even that long of a path as well.

But still, it feels quite far today since I don’t have my snowboard. Sheesh, it’s all my mother’s fault.

On top of the uphill pass was a thick carpet of snow covering the scene.

Thump, thump. The sounds of the snow being stepped on trailed behind me.

Reaching the peak of the hill, I looked down on Grillard from above.

If it was like any other day, it would be so nice to slide down the snow. Oh well, I can’t do nothing about it. Thinking about it, it sure has been a while since I was last here.

Grillard was great for farming as it was the warmest among the 4 villages in Ember. Since Ember is the only place where the Lord lives, many gather around and live there; however, even then, this

village has the look of a traditional city. If you consider Habiyanak a mountain village, then you can easily label this place as a farm village.

Looking down, I could see the roofs in Grillard being covered in snow – colors of white, light brown, and chocolate. Behind it was a green lake, sparkling like a thin silver plate.

It looks peaceful.

“Hey, the boy over there.”

Is he calling for me?

I turned towards the source of the sound behind me, with my back facing away from the village of Grillard. Seemingly arriving from Ember along with a man beside him... ..

It was the lord’s son.

Ah... .. Of course, I couldn’t use the nickname that popped up from my head, I quickly lowered my head.

“Ah, hello.....”

Let’s stay still. For now, let’s not use the first half of the nickname. Then what do I call him?

“Intelligent Sir Arnowalt.”

I don't think I should call him that as he may misunderstand.

“Ah. Yes. Sir Arnowalt. The weather is quite pleasant.”

I just spewed out some random nonsense. In my head, I started calculating why the guy that had hurt his wrist and had cancelled practice would suddenly stroll here.

On a white horse, not bothering to get off, he looked down on me. Looks like he's a beginner considering how he was holding those reins.

“What are you doing here?”

That's what I wanted to ask you.

“Ah, I am on my way to Grillard village.”

“How's your shoulder?”

I suddenly doubted my own ears. With that peculiar tactic, I concluded that I must come for practice tomorrow.

“It is tolerable.”

“Indeed.”

Arnowalt nimbly jumped off the horse. On his arm was a metal cast that was tightly enveloped. Sheesh, talk about exaggerating.

Arnowalt stood beside me. Not knowing what to expect, anxiously I slightly distanced myself from him without him noticing.

He, not caring about me, looked down on Grillard. Unlike his usual actions, he was admiring the beautiful nature and nature as if he had the habits of a noble.

“Wonderful. My splendid territory.”

... So you were appreciating your possessions.

“How is it? Isn't it splendid?”

“It is a wonderful place.”

I will answer, but why am I replying to these conversations – it'll only prolong them? If you came on a horse, ignore the people walking and just quickly trod by.

“Hey, do you happen to know about the Green Jeweled Knight?”

“I do.”

Considering our age, there is hardly any child that hasn't grown up without having heard of the Green Jeweled Knight's story. Well, even the adults know that story. If the adults don't know it, then who's telling the story to the children?

The Green Jeweled Knight.

The meaning of the green jewel varies from person to person. From interpreting the knight in holding a normal green jewel to a symbol that embodies the meaning of spring (well, in other words, it basically symbolizes the advent of spring following a harsh winter), there are five or six complicated interpretations that are there.

The Green Jeweled Knight is unique from the regular legends as it isn't about a hero from the past. This figure appears from a dark past, when our country's female shaman had written a prophecy. But the story was very interesting, accounting for countless hymns to be written, which caused many to forget that it was even a prophecy. Thus, as if it was an actual hero, that story became the envy for all aspiring to be a hero.

“I am fond of the Green Jeweled Knight.”

Arnowalt looked at me as his eyes sparkled. At this time, I can't seem to feel that he is no different from a regular boy; however, I've had the experience to know that he can transform into a silly old noble in a moment's glance.

So, I just smiled politely, replying him that I too was fond of the Green Jeweled Knight as well.

“That story to many knights is like a road of recognition. A sacrificial – one that does not lose one’s wit – heart is incomparable to a sharp sword. For you commoners, you may not know it but, for people of high status like us, there’s not many that aren’t fascinated by this.”

I want to have a test that decides which one of us can memorize that prophesy faster.

“Like the Green Jeweled knight, I want to become a loving person that can protect the lowly people.”

I suddenly snapped out of it. No matter how I see it, there’s something wrong with that scene.

Oh grand young one – thoroughly following Arnowalt’s expression – after looking down on my possessions, I will set up a noble cause to knight you. The commoner boy, realize what his role is, would kneel down and say this.

Perhaps.....

... ..

Ahk! Oh great and exalted knight. Please allow me to serve you eternally from start to finish...something like that!

# Chapter 11: Delivery (11)

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Scared out of my wits, I glanced over at Arnowalt's face. Touched by his own noble purpose, blushing, he stared across the roofs of Grillard below him. Seeing me with that noble face from the side, it was as if...he was expecting some sort of remark from me!

Imminently, I stammered as I tried to think of a way to change the subject.

“Ah, so...you see...ugh... ....”

Befuzzled, he gave me a confused look.

“So you see... ... AH! So the jewel that is embedded on your sword had that kind of symbol!”

I narrowly remembered the large green jewel that was embedded on that long sword from our previous spar – whew, ~ to even feel cold sweat.

That jewel was green.

... It seems Arnowalt had thoroughly believed in the simplest of interpretations.

“So if there's a day where a disaster occurs in this province, then I will expect myself to bravely step forward and face it.”

“... that is a good purpose.”

Why would I care what kind of resolve and purpose as long as this province doesn't fall upon a disaster?

... .. I'm just glad to have escaped the crisis at hand.

“It's a bit cold. Let's descend.”

Is he saying that to his servant? It seems that friend over there is holding the horse's reins, waiting like a mute.

But why is such a high-status noble staring at me?

“Ah, my apologies. I had a misunderstanding.”

It seems the circumstances were shortly revealed. Arnowalt, probably having confused me for his servant, turned and called for his servant with a slight gesture. Approaching, he, with a magnificent form – something even I couldn't imitate – mounted on the saddle.

The white horse was quite splendid as well.

“Alright, I will expect to see you the day after tomorrow... ..”

Leaving me with that remark, Arnowalt decided to end his stroll as he lightly trod down. The servant that had walked all the way here chased after his master as he ran with all his might.

I temporarily wondered why Arnowalt hadn't ended the conversation sooner and let it draw out for that long. I came to a conclusion.

That bastard, there's no mistake that he still doesn't know my name!

---

Ha, I never imagined that doctor Nauke's sister would be this young even in my wildest dreams.

Putting on an expression as if I had come to the wrong place, I stared at the little girl before me. I wonder if she's 12 yet as I inspected her absentminded, somewhat small eyes. She looks young, but at the same time she doesn't as well.

It wasn't hard to find Grillard's Ryujia Nauke at all. The first store at the village entrance was an inn that had the sign 'Grillard's Green Flag.' I entered and asked the first person I saw, and that person immediately directed me towards the small one-storey house at the corner of the street.

There was a grey wall that consisted of horizontal and vertical block patterns, and behind that on top of the house was a large

chocolate-colored roof.

“Do you happen to be Ryujia Nauke?”

“Yeah.”

Needless to say, fortune tellers would always use impolite language irrespective of their age. So, I began to use impolite language as well determinedly as I was older.

“I am called Fabian from the village of Habiyanak. I have come here per recommendation from your brother. You happen to know Ember village’s Doctor Nauke I presume?”

“He’s still my brother, so how would I not know him?”

What a strange way to say it. So it seems it’s true that even children change a bit when they receive a divine power.

Sitting down on an armchair by the fireplace, as if ignoring my existence, she gazed into the fire. On her lap sat a small knitting set. Behind her on the wall was a portrait weaved by threads of fabric. The portrait illustrated a man wearing a magician’s robe-looking uniform, equipped with a sword by the waist (Is that a magician or a knight?) standing besides a small silver-haired girl.

Although I didn’t ask for her permission, I took a seat that looked like it was for customers and dragged it towards her. As I was about to sit, a question emerged from within me; there was no hint

of anyone else living in this small house.

“Do you live alone?”

“Yeah.”

“How old are you?”

“I’m gonna be 15 soon.”

She was much older than she looked. But still, it wouldn’t be easy for a 15-year-old to live independently. Well, I did come here for some business as well, not to imitate the role of a brother.

“Can you use ‘Physiognomy’ as well?”

“You shouldn’t ask stuff like that.”

Hearing her reply, I could relate it to something. It seems, unlike her brother, she has the habit of just replying. Not only that, she doesn’t allow you to ask either.

“Alright. Then can you lower the price?”

“Why should I?”

She’s tough.

“Since I’m your brother’s friend, I thought you would lower the price perhaps.”

“No chance that’s happening. If my brother thought like that, then he’s sorely mistaken.”

Ryujia articulated her words thoroughly as she calmly looked at me. Not having much to say after seeing her stare at me, I started to scrutinize her as well. Although her grey hair was tied up, compared to her age, she was short with a small face. Other than her eyes, even her figure was small, especially those lips of hers. Despite that, her voice is pretty firm.

“I see, so you covet money quite a bit, huh.”

I’ve already heard that from your brother, so there’s no need to pay to listen to that.

“Hmm, I guess I’ll give you a discount. It’s 10 jonds usually, but I’ll make it 8 Jonds 50.”

“Haah, why is it so expensive?”

I wondered why she talked about a discount despite knowing that I fancy money a lot.

“That’s because I don’t want you to be annoying and

bothersome.”

Do fortune tellers even read minds? 8 Jonds is of fair value I suppose. But, unrelated to my thoughts, I automatically started to negotiate.

“That’s still too expensive. Let’s agree on 5 Jonds.”

“If you want to, pay the 5 Jonds and have a try.”

“Your brother didn’t even receive a single Rojond.”

“That’s because my brother is a [half-half](#).

(TL note: To clarify, not a proper doctor, but also not a fortune teller).

Indeed, it seems they are siblings.

“You’re younger than your brother. What evidence can you prove to me that you’re better?”

“If you don’t believe me, then you can return back. Why are you even here then?”

After saying that, she turned around suddenly away from me. I was a bit flustered. To meet such a sensitive fortune teller is a first...no, meeting a young girl fortune teller itself was a first.

Despite that, to simply back down. I didn't want to hear a rumour that a native of Habiyanak was sent away after visiting Grillard.

“Alright, then let's do it like this.”

## Chapter 12: Delivery (12)

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Without raising her head, she replied.

“Speak.”

“First, you have to guess my past. After hearing them, if you match an important event correctly, I’ll give you 30 Rojonds per correct answer. How about it?”

“70 Rojonds.”

“Then 50 Rojonds”

“Deal.”

Ryujia who previously returned back to knitting raised her head. Whew, she can’t be compared to the girls in my neighborhood. After focusing on preparing and strengthening myself mentally in anticipation of what she will potentially point out, I nodded for her to begin.

Ryujia raised her head from the knitting she’d been working on.

“Then, let’s begin.”

“Good, from this it’s now 3 Jonds 50.”

Ryujia, different from before, was quite excited. Of course. I did kind of combine all the points she made out into one, and despite some of the more important points she spoke about, I tried to keep my composure. Nevertheless, I could sense that the girl in front of me was slowly revealing her true self as she became more determined to try and milk as much money out of me as possible. Against my will, I was in quite a flushed state.

“... .. So, you don't have a girlfriend? Not even once till now?”

“... .. 4 Jonds.”

Ryujia – how formidable you are. After guessing what dishes I make, and my birthday, if you combine everything she said together, she had already matched 8 of them. Now my proposed 5 Jonds was only two answers away from being taken.

“ I see, so...your father... he doesn't live with you, but he still lives somewhere else right?”

“No, you're wrong. My father had already been deceased ever since I had been born.”

“What?”

Ryujia, tilting her head, frowned.

“No, he’s definitely alive.”

“Stop saying such nonsense. We even have a grave.”

“That’s fake.”

“Stop with the farfetched allusion. I might start subtracting 50 Rojonds if you keep on like this-.”

“...No I’m certain...”

Ryujia, with an unsatisfied look after hearing that I would subtract 50 Rojonds away, started to attempt and find something else as she inspected my face. Why did you even try to make such a farfetched claim in the first place?

“Your mother and father didn’t have an official marriage? Right?”

“I don’t know about stuff like that. I can’t acknowledge it.”

“Sheesh, you’re just saying that since you don’t want to reveal it, right?”

Ryujia was slowly stripping away my mental fortitude. I need to start being more focused. It’s a mental attack.

“Do you have evidence that I lied? A fortune teller should know that at least, right?”

Stuck in a dilemma, Ryujia took a glimpse at me and skipped the question. Of course. How would a fortune teller that can't tell whether her customer is lying possibly know the past?

“Mm, Mmm..., you, you weren't born from this village?”

“What are you saying? Didn't I say that I came from Habiyanak. I was definitely born in Habiyanak. I can't acknowledge it.”

So, are you saying that I was born in Grillard? Looks like this girl is using whatever means now.

“No, it's not that. Weren't you born in a place far away from Ember?”

“I told you I was born in Habiyanak.”

Coming to think of it, didn't the doctor in my dream say that as well?

Making a weird expression, Ryujia apologetically looked up into my eyes. It's as if she wanted to know something.

“Were you born from the forest?”

Momentarily, everything stopped. Wasn't that what was said from the dream as well? I had a strange feeling. If you think about it, Ryujia's voice was quite similar to her brother's voice.

It's strange, very strange.

To hear these words twice now.

Seeing me speechless, Ryujia asked again for the second time.

“Is it, ain't it? Are you telling me that you didn't even know where you were born?”

“Ah.. ... I'm not really sure....”

Why am I like this? Wasn't I born under the roof of my house when I was born? As a result, it was hard to come up with a reply. I was somewhat very confused.

At this time, Ryujia, despite being at such a young age, gazed at me with eyes as if she had lived for a very long time.

“Don't...know?”

The chilly wind shook the windows.

In the end, I negotiated with Ryujia for 7 Jonds. For some reason,

I feel like taking a loss. Although 7 Jonds isn't a lot, compared to the useless mental attacks I was afflicted upon, I feel like I could have settled down to 6 Jonds. Sigh, to spend this much time trying to get a discount of 1 Jond 50, Fabian you sure are not of your right mind.

“Good, now try and prophesy.”

“You could be a Rieju merchant, and could not be one.”

What the heck was she saying? Is she determined to revert back to a traditional prophesy-like tone? At once, I began to counterattack. Considering our last exchange, it seems that she was used to employing these kind of methods.

“You seem like a real fortune teller, and then again not a fortune teller at times.”

“Stop joking around.”

Conflicted inside, anger rose as the wood plank started to burn from within me.

“Then what the hell did you just say? Say it so I can understand. Don't you know how to interpret prophecy to a normal person like me?”

“Normal? Haha, what nonsense are you spouting?”

It seems Ryujia had quite a brilliant look in her eyes. Where have I seen those kinds of eyes before...ugh, it's very shaman-like.

“You're not normal at all. Even the distance between you and the word normal is too far to count.”

What nonsense is she saying exactly?

“...I think you're the one that's not normal.”

“And who doesn't know that?”

Ha, that firm voice again.

“Considering how such a talented fortune teller girl isn't normal, aren't you extending too much trying to drag me in as well? Why don't you try your brother? If you talk with him, you can see that he has some strange qualities.”

“...Anyways if you think that you would live normally and quietly, you're gravely mistaken.”

It was as if it was a threat. What are you going to do if I live normally? No, if you consider a great merchant travelling across the continent, then you're right to say that's not normal. Okay, Ryujia. You're right. I'm not normal,ahaha.

“No, not like a merchant.”

Wait, did this girl just read my mind?

“Alright, you are perceptive . Explain it to me specifically so I can understand.”

Ryujia without hesitation spoke.

“You’re going to leave this village soon.”

Huh.

‘Why would I?’ I asked myself.

So, opening my mouth, I spoke.

“Mmhm, after this, I’ll be returning back home.”

Ryujia, as if staring at a hopeless fool, turned her head away. Ah, there’s no need for you to be angry.

Nevertheless, she continued her prophesy. That’s natural. After taking my money, it’s only fair to finish what you started.

“..... Next year, you will see a lot of amazing things. You will leave this village, and meet a lot of new people.....but above all,

you will mature and grow up a lot. A lot of difficulties lay ahead, but also a lot of hope.”

Hmm, I immediately expressed my opinion.

“ ... Isn't there a realistic prophesy that could make the person in front of me shut up?”

After hearing this and that, due to having an unsettling weird feeling, I burst out at her in vain. Anyhow, after speaking those words, feeling a bit sorry, I looked at Ryujia.

Ryujia calmly gazed at me. Why is she like this? No matter how you look at it, I can see that she has a lot of complaints.

So after gazing at me for quite some time, with a clear and high-pitched voice, she firmly shouted. Her eyes looked as if she was in the mood of yelling “Great!”

“Today, you will experience and overcome a trial of life-and-death!”

Oh, oh. In that instance, as if I was in enemy territory, horrifying goosebumps spread across my body.

# Chapter 13: Delivery (13)

---

This feeling, it's too strange.

As I struggled walking up the peak (I was sure I went up here easily before) with a gloomy expression, I looked back down to Grillard outlined by a few lights. I've already experienced a life-and-death situation. Look at this arm! If that Lord's Son wasn't as much of a fool and had properly aimed at my arm, I would already be left with a detached arm. And while that guy starts to rave in pain about his sprained wrist, I might've bled to death.

But, now I have to overcome another crisis?

No wonder I'm so wholly disturbed. I'm certain now that I don't have a normal life.

Without much of a reason, I muttered endlessly as I was reminded of these prophecies. If it were to happen today, then doesn't that mean I have less than a few hours? In that span, something must happen, right?

Just then, to the forest right of Grillard's path, a suspicious sound resonated.

My footsteps came to a halt.

G, Grr, Grrrrrrr..... ..

Ominous. Since I was born, I've never heard of such a queer sound. Currently, I'm in the center of this uphill pass exposed. This is really bad. What do I have with me? Pig..... no, a knife that's used to kill a wild cat.

G, Grrr....Gggggrrrrrrrrrrrr...

No, I must not get close. Can't you remember what Ryujia told you?

However, not even realizing, I had taken a step forward.

Ggrr. K, Krrr.... Keuk, Keuk!

One step soon became two steps. That large looking tree trunk. Let's hide behind there.

Before I could initiate my plan into action, I automatically withdrew the thought. A horrifying scream echoed through the pass, catching me flat-footed.

KE, KE, KEUAAAAAK! KYAOOOOOOOO!

A beast.!

I dropped down. At this time, I too had to move like a beast. I tried to lower myself onto the ground as much as possible. The smell of snow and dirt was appeasing.

All of a sudden, the ground rattled as I could hear someone running, burning that sound into my ears.

It definitely wasn't from me.

“HAYAH!”

A short, resolute scream dismissed the night air. The sharp, blue rising moon reflected a long thin piece of iron, as that clear light shone onto the scene in front of me.

Ohoh, that is?

And the way it moves.

My body was in perfect harmony with the ground, as my clothes were being soaked by the snow.

KYAAAAA-KYAAK-!

I didn't know that a loud sound could shrink in volume like that. A crisis must've occurred.

I could hear footsteps nearing me. It was the urgent footsteps of a person. That person was running.

Don't come! DON'T COME!

Tuk.Tuk,

Those Tuk tuk sounds were beads of sweat that dripped down my forehead.

Finally, I've arrived in front of it. Of what? Not of two legs, but instead I faced a horrible fate!

As tall as the mountains and a body as large as the trees was a being that poised to strike in front of me. White fur, and...ugh, it's difficult to even speak. Despite wanting to cough, nothing came out from my voice.

What's on my mind right now? Only one thing. The words Ryujia said – today, I will overcome a life-and-death situation, right?

So if I were to overcome that crisis, that means I won't die, right? Right?

I was lying down watching as I was having these useless thoughts, and this monster was confronting a man. Did it notice my smell? No, I'm currently in harmony with the ground. Please don't notice that I exist.

It's about 10 cubits tall. That large silver fur and mane, – even if you make over 10 rugs, you'd have leftovers – and snout made it look as if it was a lion and wolf mixed together, but the horror was

that it was at least ten times in size. Why? Since it was as large as a lion and wolf adjoined together!

And when it opens its mouth, you can see 20 sharp fangs that could swallow this landscape up. Those... those are fangs huh. They're incredibly brilliant and shiny. The sharpness of those things made me feel as if it had already pierced through my neck.

And the two large front legs have those sharp crescent-shaped claws, as if each one was a dagger. I bet you could even grind a field with those. His front legs, compared to his rear, are at least twice in size. Oh, among the animals I mentioned, include the monkey as well. Such a strange form. I'm surprised how those traits can be balanced together.

And its posture is of a bear.

I never heard of such a monster in my life among the thousands of monsters that Ezekiel had sealed, he wouldn't have met such creatures.

But...the number of monsters I know is but a few.

However, I can't be shocked for too long. Then, I heard a voice.

“Is that you Fabian?”

Who recognized me?! Please pretend you don't know me. Ground. I am a part of the Earth. But, still, I had raised my head to

see who had called.

Uh, who's this?

# Chapter 14: Delivery (14)

---

“Mr. Genz?”

“Call me Mirbo.”

Is this pity? Is it because I'm about to die that he's gone soft? No, it doesn't matter that you are pitied when it's about time to die, but I can't accept the humane pity when it's assumed that I'm going to die. The reason is because I'm not going to die, that's why!

“Stand up. Take a knife.”

“Yes...Yes?”

My voice – not lying about this – was as quiet as a mosquito.

“I had already known about your presence.”

Without saying anything, he pierced that point straight through my heart. I really didn't want to think about it now that he said it. Oh well.

“What's that thing?”

“Don't need to know other than the fact that's it's trying to kill us.”

Well, what's the point of figuring out what the monster is after you're dead. I'm not the type that has to know what the other monster is before I'm satisfied. I'm just currently in the disposition of wanting to live, that's all.

I rose up. I didn't bother unsheathing my knife as it was extremely shabby, so there was no need. Mirbo? Regretfully, his sword was also destroyed as it was laying on the ground, shattered into pieces. Our survival rate had probably gone down by at least 5% I presume. Then, our death rate in this battle should be around 95%.

From his belt, he drew out two short weapons. Silently inspecting it, it was a double-edged hand axe. A strange weapon indeed. It's a first time I'm seeing someone fight with those. Since one of those blades are as big as the canines of that beast, it must be quite a remarkable weapon... so I thought.

But then, why is that monster just standing around watching while we are conversing and withdrawing our weapons?

"It's monitoring us. To see if there's another enemy. That little fella is quite sensitive."

Today, I've met quite a lot of people that had replied to my thoughts. When you're about to die, strange things...ahhhh, I shouldn't be thinking like this. But then, it seems that Mirbo knows that strange beast.

“Fella...it must be a familiar face for you?”

Due to my outrageous expression, Mirbo put on a frown as he was dumbfounded by what I had said.

“... .. Yes.”

At that moment, the white-furred monster – since it doesn’t have a name, I’ll call it whatever – was done monitoring from the side.

Krrrr.... KYAAAAAAAK!

100% real. As if I was a paralytic, my legs shuddered violently as the vibrations of the sound made it difficult to stand. Mirbo with his hand-axes had a slightly lowered stance.

“Since your weapon is longer than mine, stay in the back. I’ll go attack it first.”

That’s very pleasing to hear, but in this situation, what’s the difference between dying now and later... no, I shouldn’t be having these kind of thoughts before a fight... ..

“Taboo.”

Instead of a spirited yell, he spoke that single word. Ha, I was surprised at how Mirbo had swung for his left leg immediately against that massive silver-colored beast – the same beast despite

changing its name.

Such a dangerous technique.

Monsters, who aren't stupid, wouldn't stand to watch something 1/3 his height pierce his left leg. In order to swipe him with his paw or hand, whatever you call it, the monster lowered his stance. His head was right in front of me, close enough that it was nearly touching me.

Wait, what's happening? What should I do?

Countless thoughts passed through my head, but in that moment, there was only one thing I could do. I know. But still... ..

Eh, whatever!

I ran towards the tree I had targeted beforehand. Lightly using my left leg to jump on the tree, I jumped towards the monster's mane, which was at the height of my shoulder. Fabian, you lunatic. Not even going to Rieju once, you throw your body towards the beast's mane just to end your life.....

I caught it!

I shook it violently. The beast raised his head. What's next? Of course he would scratch his head. Wait, Nooo – I usually shampoo my hair before I go outside, alright! –

Madly holding on, I crawled up to the top of its head. I had forgotten the pain in my arm already. The hind leg that nearly hit me while I was climbing started to shake.

Koong!

The monster suddenly leaned over to his left.

“AHHHHHHHHHHHHH!”

Mirbo attacking the silver-maned wolf-like beast's – I think I have a thing for naming – left leg wasn't a good sign. Usually, you need to take the whole picture into consideration, but right now he's only viewing this fight from his perspective.

That's that, but wasn't my scream really long?

Kuaang – Dudududududud-!

My knife slipped out from my waist!

The knife fell out from my sheath after getting tangled up with the mane. It's because I had frantically moved my legs and arms while holding on. Although I couldn't see it, I could hear it falling. Fortunately, – what's so fortunate about this situation – I was able to determine that my knife fell since it occurred after the beast's long roar.

Clank~

Now, what do I do up here?

“Fabian-!”

Since I assumed that the monster couldn't talk – just in case – was that a shout from Mirbo? What's this? My instincts are quite excellent, aren't they?

“Jump from the back!”

“Uh, It's too high!”

It was so. The monster was now standing upright. But still, I didn't have too long to think about it. The monster's front legs would soon attack where I am.

“AHHHHHHHHHHH”

With a bizzare shriek, I fortunately landed on top of some branches. Although my body was aching – especially my arm that wasn't fully treated as it was the most critical –, with difficulty, I controlled my consciousness and looked down. Mirbo, was constantly jumping around avoiding the beast's attacks so nimbly that he was easily qualified to take my honorable position (the role of avoiding Arnowalt's sword) at the castle. It was a sight to

behold. Should I stay here for a bit and watch?

“Fabian! Come down and grab the sword!”

That sword, would that be of any help? Especially against a monster that’s as big as 20 pigs combined together.

Let alone being of use, I need to first find where that sword is!

During the battle, I couldn’t find the knife no matter how much I looked for it. Not only that, it was getting dark as there was nothing but moonlight to illuminate the day. Of course, the moonlight is so grand that it can reflect that silver-furred leather of light throughout Grillard’s peak.

Damn, at this time, if you read those storybooks, aren’t there brave comrades that would say ‘I’ll buy you time so hurry and run away!’ Wasn’t it something like this as well? “You’ll only be a burden if you stay here!” By chance, ain’t I a burden Mirbo? I can kindly disappear if you so desire.....

I don’t have time for these thoughts. I need to quickly depart from this spot after seeing the large leg of the beast flying towards me. For me, as long as the situation permits it, I’ll run away. So I ran with all my might towards Mirbo. Indeed, it’s more suitable to have a role of a child and run away to call for help, repeating the same old cliché.

Puuk!

What is this thing that's blocking my way?!

Having nearly fallen flat on my nose, I pulled myself up together and looked at the item I tripped on. It's the backpack that Mirbo had laid down. Beside it was the white parcel that I saw before...

Wait, it's sparkling?

Since I was running so frantically, I didn't notice it beforehand, but in that white parcel was an item that was emitting a bright red light.

What, what's this? If it's something that can help me right now, anything would be fine.

With one hand I grabbed the white package that I had tripped over(usually, I would never do such a thing since it is someone else's possession).

The white string slipped to the ground unfastened.

A sword?

Ho, it's really, really hot!

Due to the sword suddenly becoming red-hot, I nearly threw the sword onto the ground, however at a moment's glance, I became

more comfortable with the temperature of the sword as I barely held it up with both hands. Due to the sword's luster, even my hands were dyed in red.

Pabak-!

The moment I grabbed the hilt of the sword, the flame suddenly sprung up a cubit above the blade as if it was alive.

Thanks to it, I nearly dropped the sword again. My god. A flaming sword?

Only with two hands was I barely able to swing the long double-edged sword. To be honest, I was quite doubtful how I could swing such a massive sword with my strength!

To be able to touch such a thing was a first.

Ugh, this is bad. My left shoulder was battered into such horrible shape right now, and to see that this was a Two-handed sword as well was troublesome.

Ever since I removed the cloth, the light was mysteriously shining as if it was breathing. No matter how frantic Mirbo was, he would probably be able to see this light.

“Fabiiaiiiiiiian?”

Looks like he was anxiously searching for me. In other words, he's probably asking where I am. After much effort, I recollected myself after being lost in my own thoughts about the sword.

Well, since this weapon is pretty amazing, I guess I can at least do the favor of returning this to you.

I resumed my run towards Mirbo.

“Fa...bian?”

When I maintained a decent distance and stopped behind the monster, Mirbo who had hid his body in the trees gave me a sidelong glance, spoke those words in alarm and shock.

Because of this sword?

Paahk-!

All of a sudden, the sword, as if it was wanting to boast, shone its great brilliance and spilled out in every direction.

Incomparable to before, it was as if there was a forest fire. The light was so strong that it even dyed my face in red. Ugh, what should I do? At this rate, won't I possibly be burnt to death?

Suddenly, it was as if something boiling seethed out from within my body!

“Fabian!”

Due to losing myself in the splendor of the sword, Mirbo’s voice could only be heard as a small whisper. However, I don’t think that his voice was quiet at all. The monster, bleeding profusely as both his legs were cut like pieces of paper, struck the tree in front of Mirbo. The two large trees that looked as if they would be a handful to cut, were split in half like chopped firewood, as pieces of wood splintered from the impact. Despite that, it looked as if Mirbo was trying to garner my attention.

Even then, to pay attention to both sides simultaneously, Mirbo was only human.

“KUK!”

I can’t seem to assess the situation well. The burning sword in front of me was covering my sight too much, so I was far from keeping my sanity. But, I could see Mirbo with his hand-axe on his right hand, throwing it towards the monster’s left shoulder while simultaneously kneeling down holding his stomach. I wonder if the axe had properly hit? No, before that, he’ll die at this rate!

The monster’s front legs struck downwards above him.

“AHHHHHHHHHHH!”

I too screamed without knowing. The monster’s front leg

flinched. At that moment, Mirbo dramatically rolled his body towards the side.

However,

The monster was looking in my direction.

# Chapter 15: Delivery (15)

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Grrr.... GAAAAAAAAAAA~!

As if wanting to give a reply to that roar, the sword 's flame – Pabak! – surged out. I had no clue how to control and use this sword at all. Mirbo who was leaning on a boulder covered in mud was staring at me.

“Lower your body!”

Despite being in such a state, his voice was quite composed and acute. Nevertheless, due to the injuries, the strength of his voice was fainter than before. It looks as if his stomach was slashed by the monster's claws.

Thinking about it, what assistance would it bring for me to lower my stance? As if the flames were dancing, they surged around the sword.

But for now, let's heed to the advice of my senior.

Spreading my legs and lowering my stance, I held the double-handed sword out front. Since I'm right-handed, the right hand was in front. However, for two-handed swords, it was proper to leave an interval of a fist on the hilt, as per written on the swordsmanship manual.

Despite grabbing the sword like that, swinging it upwards and

around, the weight was not light at all. While needlessly trying to display an intimidating stance by swinging the sword, I ended up just grazing the ground.

Pisshhiiiiik...

This...It's the sound of snow melting.

Considering how it wasn't relatively hot holding the sword, I was shocked to see steam rising up from the snow as it melted.

If that's so? Then, try and have a taste of my sword!

Rushing towards the monster, I dragged the sword along the ground so I could perform an uppercut slicing maneuver. The body of this blade was mercilessly long, measuring at about 3 cubits. To be able to carry this weight and move, there was no mistake that this was all attributable to my iron snowboard which I carried, rode, and ran with.

How is it, furred monster? How do you like my magnificent stance?

“It's right leg will come first!”

Mirbo's voice. How does he know this so well? Can I trust him? Whether I do or not I should trust him for now, I couldn't afford the time to scrutinize about this at all.

The monster that was running towards me didn't consider the state of his right leg and struck downwards askew towards my side.

My opponent is at least five to ten times stronger!

I wonder what type of animal that it is? Wolf? Lion? Monkey? Bear? Anyways, it'd all be the same either way. What I need right now is!

The one that's closing in on me is the front paw.

If that's the case...

At once, I retreated one step back with a jump.

And then seeing the paw piercing towards the ground in front of me, I countered with all my strength. Due to the length of the blade, with a Puhk, I feel like I've penetrated in about three fingers deep.

A bear's paw is soft and delicious (isn't that what someone had once said)!

?-!

Kweeeeeeeeeeeek!

Like a stream, the blood sprayed into the snow as the monster's scream was quite different from before. Its blood had splashed onto my face. Strange, why is a living beast's blood so cold.

“Retreat! Fall back!”

I was on the verge of doing so anyways.

Quickly I withdrew backwards. I hope that the blood did not spill onto my hair. After retreating, I finally understood why Mirbo had said that the right leg would advance first.

Mirbo's axe had pierced the monster's left shoulder. The blood there was already bleeding profusely as the white leather fur was soaked in blood.

Kuruk, KEUA~ KAAAAAK! Kurrr...

The monster, with its injured arm, swung at me. At this point, I could move quickly without having to ask Mirbo. Gripping the sword tightly, the monster's arm clawed past me to the right, overextending more to the right. Evading backwards and pouring my strength onto both my shoulders (In order to do this, I had to clench my teeth in pain with endurance), I slashed the sword horizontally. Thanks to that, the monster spun half a circle. Then, in that last motion, I shifted my weight and turned my waist halfway.

KUUUUUK!

The arm that was clawing towards me for the third time – I faced it head on as I executed a full slash from my right to the left. Tufts of white fur flew into the air.

Thuk, Grrr—

It felt like I hit bone, as if I had slashed through the texture.

Ah...this time, I had left a cut far too deep.

The monster's arm was weakly dangling from the side. It's blood gushed out in front of my feet like a waterfall.

The reason why I was able to perform this action was because the monster had only attacked with his right arm as well as the length of this blade had given me leeway.

Inflicting it with three severe injuries, the monster didn't move. Strange. The larger the monster, the more enraged it should be. That fellow, as if knowing the state of it's own injuries, actually stopped for a moment. The snow covered ground was smeared in blood, and more blood.

However, even the brief respite didn't last long.

KYAAAK!

The white-furred massive beast rushed forward.

Despite having three large wounds bleeding out, it surged in towards me with one dash. The brilliant silver mane, soaked in blood, was flowing off into the night sky. Strange. Compared to the other monsters that I've seen, this one gives off a different feeling .

However, there was no time to analyze this situation.

“Fabian, hold the sword to your right and charge straight ahead!”

What, what did you say?

Right now, that beast is rushing towards me. But, you want me to help it by charging towards it? Is it because the beast is hurt why it might be difficult for the beast to reach here?

The monster was now three paces away!

But even then I still temporarily doubted the croaking , struggling voice of Mirbo. Did I hear something ridiculous? No, it's precisely because I understood why I was so alarmed!

“...Then...Twist your body and escape through the gap between the monster's armpit and right arm!”

I got it!

Though the brilliance of this plan doesn't make the danger I'm in any less.

I had already recognized that the beast, after having the axe embedded on its left shoulder, is not able to use the left arm to attack at all. There's no mistake that Mirbo had already known of this long before. However, I will give its right arm an even bigger wound with this attack. The edge of its elbow was tattered with blood gushing out.

If so, how should I act exactly? I should attack from the left this time!

“Of course...except, I think it's too risky!”

What if the beast goes crazy and attacks with his left arm?

Even so, the success of this plan lies in a quick strike!

Too tired to think of the situation, I charged forward forgetting about the moment I was in. Even if it's an action that can't be done by an intelligent person, there is no word that can be spoken of, and no spirit to break, so do not speak!

I grasp onto the sword tightly, so much so that the back of my hand was trembling with its weight.

There was now a distance of about 7 more steps to go between the beast and I. In a state of ignorance, I lifted my sword chest-high and thrust slightly upwards.

If I stab directly, I would pierce through the beast's waist.

Two steps, one step, finally...

Then... In front of me was a large furred-leather!

Pook!

Not even having the room to withdraw my sword, I braced myself from the impact and just pushed on. And once I felt that half of the sword had stabbed in, I turned my aching body sideways with all my weight behind it dragging the sword along the beast's stomach. .

Feeling the weight of flesh parting as the sword slid along.

The flame that surged out of the sword plunged inside the beast's body, causing me to feel as if my surroundings had dimmed in an instant. Instead, the flesh of the monster began to turn a dark red.

Blood!

Puaaak-!

Blood sprayed out like a fountain. The blade of the sword had cut halfway through the beast's body, and likewise, half of the remaining sword was still hanging outside. In an absolute crisis, the beast desperately raised its right arm.

“Fabian! Drop the sword!”

Ah, ah, you want me to drop a sword as great as this? It seems expensive as well...

But then again it's not mine. Oh well, the owner did tell me to drop it.

Dropping the sword, I rolled forward down the hill.

The blood that poured out from the beast gushed over my head. Since I didn't have any thoughts of drinking blood, I closed my mouth firmly. By the way, the blood seems to be a bit warmer than before.

WOAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA! KUK!

The beast that had half of his waist cut collapsed to the ground and sputtered a shrilling cry to the heavens as if it was a slaughtered cow. And, then...

It was rolling down hill towards me!

# Chapter 16: Delivery (16)

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While frantically tumbling down, only to see the beast rolling down faster towards me. I fumbled through my mind, trying to see if there was a way to roll faster. However, there was none.

Ah, let's see if I am able to just change the direction.

I catch sight of a friendly looking boulder over there. Well, friendly you say?

“Ahhhhhhhhk!”

(Since the sound of crashing into the boulder was louder, you could skip the yell of my voice.)

I barely avoided crashing onto the center of the boulder, yet it still clipped my ankle causing me immense pain.

However, it would be revealed that the pain in my ankle wasn't even a problem.

“Hiiiiiiiiilk?”

Below the boulder was a ledge.

And the clamorous monster fell off that ledge as it is.

KYAAAAAAAAAAK!

That beast must be feeling the same as me.

Kya? Ting, ting, ting, ting, tuk?

And it must be in such despair now.

Tsk tsk, what a pity.

“Fabian!”

From above the ledge appeared a face. Feeling relieved, ...Whew, I had nearly just fell off like that.

Recollecting myself as if a king had come to save me, I waited for Mirbo to come down.

My whole body, legs, waist, shoulder – all of them were aching like crazy. From my left shoulder, the wound had reopened, causing it to bleed again.

Can anyone carry me?

But...it seems that Mirbo wasn't in a state to help.

Across his stomach was a visibly large bloodstain. It seemed that his wound hadn't stopped bleeding. How did he scream in such a gruesome state? Unbelievable.

"I'm fine. Let me get up myself."

"It's good if you get up but..."

"But...?"

"Regrettably, before coming back up, could you go down for me?"

What the hell is he saying? Can't you vaguely hear the monster's scream from below?

Kyaoooooo...Kuguuuuuuuu...

"It would be nice if you could retrieve the sword stuck in his waist."

What, I mean why? That's not my sword, right? Not only that, weren't you the one that told me to abandon it?! Why would you give me such a task...?

"Sadly, it's something that I'm unable to do."

I know that too. The fact that you're severely hurt is clear, but wouldn't it make more sense to retrieve the sword after that beast had died? Or retrieving it yourself when you've properly recovered. You shouldn't have told me to let go of such a valuable weapon in the first place! Was it because I might've died? I mean, what's your problem?! Can't you see that we're trying to kill the monster? Whether I die then or die later, it's all the same!

Although I continued to clamor endlessly in my head, no words came out of me. I was too exhausted to reply as I had used up all my voice from screaming.

“It's not because...I'm hurt that I can't go down.”

Then?

“It's because I can't touch that sword with my hands.”

With a flabbergasted expression – although it would be a sight to see me have a dumbfounded and flabbergasted expression at the same time – I stared at Mirbo. In my head, I vigorously thought of how if I didn't grab the sword with my hands, then what exactly could you grab it with, my feet or my mouth, as I argued internally.

“How come?”

“If I had known the cause, don't you think I would've wielded that sword already?”

That is indeed true. That unbelievable sword that Mirbo had... it truly was amazing. Despite the tremendously large size of the monster, you rushed at it with a longsword that shattered in a second. After breaking that, you started to wield hand-axes. So it must be the reason why, despite carrying around that white-clothed parcel, you hadn't brought out the blade contained within even once.

“I was surprised that you could hold onto such a sword. Though I think that there's some backstory to this, let us talk about it after you retrieve the sword?? It would seem that I must explain about how I had attained the sword in detail.”

“... ....”

Because of that, I climbed down the cliff as fast as I could. If my body was in my usual state, it wouldn't have been so hard to climb down – since Grillard's Peak doesn't have too much rugged terrain – but right now, my entire body was in tatters so it was quite a struggle.

However, the closer I climb down, the noisier it gets.

Krr, Krrrrrrr-Kyaooooo....

The subsequent loud screams, it's such a pain. Really, I can't stand it.

Keuuu...Kuguuuuu. Kuluk, Kyaooo...

“AHHH-Just shut up!”

What did I just say?

Krrr.....

Strange, it's as if it had understood what I said. The monster's wailing had decreased in volume.

Was it dead?

If that's so, then there's nothing I should expect.

I've almost finished climbing down the cliff. I could see a pool of blood flowing out from the white-furred leather.

Are you dead?

It must be.

However, it seems that through the monster's body, I could see the contours of some trees. Was I hallucinating? No. Huh, what's going on? If that's so then.....

It's invisible!

That large monster had disappeared from the spot where it landed.

Flabbergasted, I momentarily stared at the broken and crushed landscape of trees and snow as the pool of blood began to congeal.

Wait...

My god, it's freezing?!

However, the monster was nowhere to be seen.

Where did it go? To the sky? I can only see the stars of the night sky. Then, into the ground? But, I don't see any holes that it could've possibly entered into.

Thankfully, it seems the sword that was stuck in its waist hadn't disappeared with it. Approaching the spot where it dropped, I grabbed the sword and examined it. Where did the flame go? The sword, although extremely heavy, looked the same; however, there were no traces of how it was from when I wielded it. What is happening here?

“Mirbo!”

The moment I grabbed onto the sword, I felt a wave of complete exhaustion hit me and I wanted to sit down.

But, not in this place. Look at that blood. Despite that it's freezing, that bloody smell was oscillating throughout these surroundings. That cold blood. If that blood was normal, there's no way it would freeze that fast.

It felt as if the air had become several times colder.

---

Fabian, what's happened to you? HUH?!"

My mother was frightened out of her wits. It's understandable how she'd be surprised, really. Seeing her son limping full of bruises and wounds amounting up to a bucket of blood as if I had returned from a slaughterhouse... which indeed was not the case.

My neighbors, one by one, supported my mother who was about to faint. From the time I entered the village entrance, no to be precise, all the people that followed me from Ember village to the soldiers at the outpost were all making a large fuss in front of our store. Although it would be nice if I had done something for a good cause, the soldiers were wondering what kind of mess I had caused.

To return in this bloodied state, the only place where I possibly had come back from was the pig slaughterhouse. No, even if there, it would be beyond that capacity.

Me?? Leaving a trail of blood into the village, I was in the midst of returning back home.

“You must be curious but... ....”

## Chapter 17: Delivery (17)

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I opened my mouth and smiled towards the soldiers. What more can I do? If the monster's corpse was still there, I'd tell them to go see it; however, the only evidence remaining by the path was a frozen, bloodied ground. Anyone that wouldn't be suspicious of this situation should have their brains checked.

"The details...later..."

Alright, good. I need to now collapse. Then, I can think about what to do later. But...but, why am I not fainting?

It seems that even fainting wasn't as easy as it seems.

"How can you even ask my son that in this state of time! Especially to a boy that has returned back from near death...I won't send him anywhere so leave and come back later!"

I should say that I'm so proud to be the son of the world's best mother at this time. Folding her arms on her waist, her angry face looked stern as if she was the halo of an angel.....such a beacon of light.

Although her skirt was stained by my blood, there was nothing that could interrupt her from acting on her heavenly abilities.

To be able to bathe and then sleep, I'm thankful for anyone that could offer me the chance to do so. Nothing else matters right now.

So as for the details, let's do it tomorrow. Alright?

So when I woke up in the next morning, I really couldn't help but admit that I won't be able to have the same feeling that I had when I went to sleep yesterday.

Not only that, the dream that I had dreamt last night... not only did it not lessen my worries, but it amplified the horrible memory I had from yesterday. It was so realistic that after I had woken up, my body was still cold that even the bright morning sunshine didn't feel warm at all.

The dream was like this. Last night, in order to retrieve Mirbo's sword, I had climbed down the cliff. It was the same till then. But?

I was thinking.

Is it dead?

[...Fa...b... ..]

I stopped my tracks as my body froze on the spot.

[...Fa...bian...was it?...]

Speak!

Mo, Monster say something!

I, I really abhor these kind of situations! Mi... let Mirbo resolve this situation! I have no relationship whatsoever with this friend. This is our first meeting alright! So, can I go? I can go right?

However, I stood aloft on the spot against my will. The flaming sword half-embedded in the monster's stomach – wait was faintly shining. The sword, compared to it in reality, was larger.

And the monster horrifyingly opened his mouth and continued speaking.

[You...and me...we have no....relationship... at all... ..]

Yes, you're exactly right! So we should stop the conversation. I'm fine.

However...

[Who...are you?]

This is a really stupid question for even an idiot to ask. If we had fought and battled up to this point, and you then ask that question? It's not like you were ambushed by some wicked people and was injured as if you were a victim. Wait, so I'm the bad guy? To be a fool in my own dream...

At this moment though, my thoughts weren't that complicated

It's not like the monster had the strength to lash out at me.

If I was the monster and I had enough strength, it's a fitting distance for it to lash out at me.

But still, it seems that the monster had already had no interest of doing so.

[I am...the protect...or...kuluk...that protects...the fairies... ... Ejoli....]

Although the words spoken were quite scattered, since the voice was so loud, I had no problem understanding the contents. Of course, if he had stopped talking in between, then I wouldn't have comprehended.

[You...have to cleanly finish my body...or else the fairies will remember my blood... ....]

I jumped up alarmingly.

What is it saying? What are the fairies going to do to me?

I have little information on what kind of existences fairies are. In particular, I had no clue on whether or not that race was one that

exacts revenge or chants curses. Thinking about it, an image popped up in my head, illustrating those fairies, the size of my hands, starting to attack me from the rear end of my buttocks. Haaak, such a frightening scene, even if it was only a dream.

Above all, there was something that I was curious about.

“Why Mirbo?”

[Enmity... ..]

That was all.

After that, it was the same as reality. The monster had disappeared, and after I had grabbed the sword and pondered why it was so heavy, I returned back to Mirbo as if I was a traveler fallen ill returning back to one's own village. While dragging that enormous sword.

Currently, that sword was leaning on the wall.

I'm not sure either. I wonder why I had to keep the sword as well. The only concrete detail that I could understand was that Mirbo wasn't able to touch the sword at all – when I first grabbed it, I could feel its extreme heat as well – but besides that, there was no appropriate reason as to why I had to keep that extremely deadly sword.

And since the sword's owner was me, I had to now take

responsibility for explaining the cause of that bloodied ground at the uphill pass by Grillard's peak. Was there some sort of reason as to why Mirbo did this, other than him being shrewd?? When we entered Ember Village, saying that he had to find the doctor, we went our separate ways. Unlike me, he wasn't bloody from head-to-toe so he didn't leave a trail of blood. As long as he treated the wound of his stomach well (in fact, the claw that had caused that wound wasn't minor at all).

I wonder if he's still in Ember. Though I have no confirmation, besides from whether Mirbo was trustworthy or not, I believed that he was still in Ember just because I wanted to.

Of course, there was no mention of us meeting again, if he had really disappeared, then I was in a predicament where I might have to leave through the backdoor and flee towards the snowy mountains.

Where was I injured exactly again? Am I even in a state to flee?

“Ughkkkk!”

It seems that I had sprained my ankle. And.....

“Akuu, ughhhhhhhh...”

It seems that there's certainly something wrong with my shoulder. To swing that sword when my shoulder wasn't even fully recovered. Anywhere else...?

“It hurtssss! Aigooooooooo....”

This time, it was my wrist. Considering the situation, it seems that I might have to call Arnowalt, hyung.

While I was calmly inspecting my body, twisting my body this way and that, outside the bedroom – to be honest, it was a room partitioned off with a door in front. It’s because I’m living with my mother that I at least have a room like this – wait, I smell something delicious. Since the smell was coming from outside, the source was probably related to the kitchen excluding the possibilities of it coming from the kitchen, living room, outside, etc....why am I analyzing this?

“Fabian – come out and eat breakfast! If you’re not feeling well, I’ll bring it to you!”

Hmm, it makes sense, yet it doesn’t make sense as well.

Earlier, after carefully inspecting my body, considering it the latter, I delivered myself outside the room.

For now, I had moved out from the bed.

It was a relief that I wasn’t in a state where I couldn’t move around after struggling with all my might. With my arm stretched out, dangling like a fool, I approached the sword leaning by the wall. I wasn’t in a state of holding and playing around with it.

After touching it with my right hand, I started to doubt what made me wield this sword last night.

But still, hmm, it has a strange appearance that's for sure.

There was no mistake that it was a two-handed sword from its size, but strangely there was no pommel on the hilt. How do you even hold it with that heavy weight? There was no mistake, however, that it was a sword for those with extreme arm strength.

The blade, too, was thick and immeasurably broad. It would at least be wider than the palm of my hand. Since it's like this, the weight? It should be pretty crazy. With my current strength, I can't even lift it.

And it wasn't just the shape that was strange.

The middle of the blade was deeply carved in (And still it's this heavy), and between it were strange inscriptions. I definitely was oblivious as to what they meant. And those words were inscribed in black. After carving out the iron, it was as if someone was trying to fill it with something – anyways, it was black.

As for the technique, of course I didn't know what it was. In my life, the best sword I have ever seen was the day before yesterday, which was Arnowalt's long sword.

Above all, the strangest part was that no matter how you see it, there was no traces of that flame on the sword. It was just a

massive iron block of metal. No matter how you look at it, there were no holes that could possibly emit those flames. Just in case, I inspected it carefully. This large, heavy thing was so normal and ordinary that it nearly made me suspicious that it was all an illusion.

Hmm, I was lost in thought while looking at the blade of the sword.

Somehow, that flame, did it have a similar role to the blacksmith's anvil? No matter how much I swung with it, there was no trace of it having been chipped. It was flawless.

And if you think about it, it was me that swung this flaming, shining sword around. Ha, it would have been so cool to have shown this in front of others. But now, whether or not it was witnessed or not, the evidence of the large white-furred leather lump had disappeared, and the taciturn, who occasionally gets confused, Mirbo of little words being absent was a bit of a shame.

There were no burns on my hands at all.

Anyways, it was an impressive sword for sure.

Suddenly, a thought had appeared. Could it be that this is what you call a legendary sword?

Hehe, to even imagine that a legendary sword looking so plain and ordinary was silly (It doesn't look expensive at all. Sigh, since

it's heavy, it must contain a lot of iron.)

And how can you claim that a legendary sword would fit my image?

But still, Mirbo had claimed that this sword was mine.

No matter how much I think about it, I can't understand. If I can't understand, then at least explain it well. Coming to think about it, we were both exhausted then due to being injured, and confounded from the events that had transpired, which might have caused us to not know what to say. Maybe it wasn't like that for Mirbo, but that was how it was for me.

If Mirbo had indeed disappeared, then this is quite a dilemma. Hmm.

For now, the first step was to take this to the blacksmith and ask, which was the only thought I had at the moment. Sigh, I'm such a senseless guy.

Mirbo slowly opened his mouth.

“That sword... ....”

Finally, I had waited for this. Please if you know anything, tell me. I'm so curious.

## Chapter 18: Delivery (18)

---

I had the feeling of wanting to listen to “The Legendary Renowned Sword” (which is an ominous phrase) out of curiosity again that I may or may not have right now. I loved old stories quite a bit. And since it said sword, it reminded me of Magician Ezekiel’s story and his legendary sword. So, I was quite curious of the story which involved this sword.

Of course it was disgraceful from me to start calling it a legendary, renowned sword. It’s probably because when I was staring at it before in my bedroom, I over-analyzed it. Or this might be a newly developed disease.

Anyways, you, what’s your real identity?

“It would be nice if I had a story that could explain about that sword.”

Mirbo began to start talking about that ominous subject. Thus, in other words, he’s speaking as if he doesn’t know as well. Then, who do I listen to exactly?

It was a huge relief that Mirbo after getting treated at Ember village didn’t secretly leave the village and had instead returned to find me... ..but right now we were walking towards Grillard’s Peak together with the guards of Ember Province as we walked about halfway there.

Mirbo looked calm. Despite having a large bandage wrapped

around his stomach, his condition wasn't too bad. Probably because he had fought in quite a lot of battles before, he was quickly recovering. Sheesh. Compared to him, what am I? I was currently being carried by Erent hyung towards the Peak.

At first, I thought of broaching the subject of the dream I had, but decided to stick with getting an explanation about the sword for now.

“I was in Seremuz when I had obtained that sword. It's already been 5 years. However, from then on, I've always kept it wrapped up in a white cloth as I travelled. At first, it was an item that I couldn't even grab onto properly even with cloth wrapped around it.”

This fella. I looked back and glanced over my shoulder at the sword. Though I could barely see the hilt of the sword, this was a sword that you couldn't even touch? Seems like a lie.

Anyhow, Seremuz huh. Mirbo, you've travelled through quite a number of places. To have returned from such a warring country like that...hey sword, you came from quite a far place huh.

“If you can't believe it, try touching your friend hung around your back.”

From the entrance of my house, Erent hyung who had volunteered to carry me smiled as he resumed his walk. Seeing that he wasn't interested in touching it, I asked.

“Aren’t you going to hold it?”

“I’ve already tried to touch it, but it was to no avail.”

“Huh?”

I cautiously brought my hands towards my back. Even if my wrist was hurt, it was better than my battered left shoulder. I touched the handle of the sword. Nothing happened.

“When you were about to leave your house earlier, I tried to grab the sword out of curiosity...I had to quickly drop the sword though as it felt like my hand was burning. It was as if it had just come out of an anvil, red-hot. Fabian, when you were swinging this sword, frankly even I couldn’t believe it. Then again, seeing you carry that sword behind your back.”

Erent hyung, amongst our Habiyanak, was most proficient in the way of the sword, so he became a soldier of the Lord. Although I assumed that Erent hyung wasn’t as proficient as Mirbo in my opinion after witnessing him in yesterday’s fight, it wasn’t comparable to me at all. Whether Mirbo or Erent was better, ‘I,’ compared to these two, was just a merchant vendor who didn’t have the right to say the word ‘swordsmen.’

“I remember when you came to deliver those nets to me in my room.”

“Of... .. course.”

I remember. At that time, I lifted the sword and moved it onto the bed. There was no mistake that Mirbo was greatly alarmed at that time. Even while eating seven steamed sweet potatoes, he was lost in thought for quite a long time.

Right, from what I remember, I had grabbed onto the sword wrapped in a white cloth unlike Mirbo.

“I was very shocked at the time.”

I know, I know already.

“That sword, like the soldier had said, if someone that doesn’t qualify tries to touch the sword, it becomes severely hot. I’m not an exception.”

Mirbo, opening his hand, showed it to me. Across his right hand was a clear, burn scar that ran horizontally in the center. Momentarily, I was lost for words.

My god, there was no mistake that Mirbo had tried to hold onto the sword despite having it burn his hand to this state. If that was me, I can’t imagine me doing the same thing.

“I had tried to endure.”

You must have.

Lately, I feel like my thoughts have been conveyed quite well.

When Mirbo had talked up to this point, we had arrived at the entrance of Grillard's Peak. Over there were passersby that had reported to the guards after discovering the massive bloodied field waiting for us.

“Over here.”

... ... Even if you don't say it, I know the location quite well.

It was close to lunchtime. But, due to last night's bloodied smell, I had no appetite for food.

“It would be nice to eat lunch first.”

Mirbo... your stomach is quite impressive.

We had climbed up the pass. There should be quite a lot of blood even if it was at the center of the uphill pass. It was precarious to examine the surroundings yesterday due to the darkness and the blood that was flowing like a fountain. But... huh?

The whole pass was clean.

This, what exactly happened here?

Looking back, Mirbo was quite surprised as well. It looked as if he was in a state of deep thought. But, the people that had discovered the blood in the morning was quite an attraction.

“Here, so what I mean is that there was quite a lot of blood spilt here... .. so, it was as much as when you skin a deer. But, where did it all go?”

Deer you say? Then the thing Mirbo and I had encountered was at least ten deer heads combined like massively huge... ..

Mirbo tapped my shoulder.

UGH...!

“Ah, my shoulder wound had reopened... I can't even move my right arm... ..”

I complained about my situation as if I was dying, but Mirbo wasn't even paying attention to what I had said. Lowering his voice, he spoke in a rather small tone that only Erent hyung and I could possibly hear.

“... .. The blood is returning. To the thing.”

What is he saying? Mirbo had said this while looking at my face.

“You’re making such an expression even after seeing the corpse disappear yesterday.”

I did understand what you said, but it’s just that I can’t understand it overall?

Eh... .. although I’m saying something strange, should I talk about my dream from last night?

“Mirbo. I had dreamt a strange dream last night.”

“... Did a white-furred leather appear?”

Huh, Mirbo and I had similarly called the monster’s name out loud together.

“Yes. It was the same incident as yesterday....”

“It spoke.”

“Uh, what’s happening?”

I was extremely shocked. How...then did Mirbo dreamt the same dream?

“The same dream?!”

## Chapter 19: Delivery (19)

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Mirbo, not concerned with the wound on my shoulder at all, tapped me once again. Thanks to that, I let out another breathless cry.

“You didn’t even talk about your dream, so how do you know that I had the same dream as you?”

Mirbo was chuckling. In any case, he was laughing a bit more now from yesterday.

“That is so but I am only guessing of what dream you’ve dreamt. The words that beast had said as well.”

“Uh, there was none!!”

I was going to say something to Mirbo until I’ve heard the shouts that came close to screaming from the guide. Anyhow, with the conversation that Mirbo and I had shared, I too had a rough estimate of the situation.

“It, it was surely somewhere here....”

I could see three people below the cliff flabbergasted as they wandered around the broken tree branches. They were the workers, or reporters now, that were delivering goods to Ember from Grillard. They were very perplexed. The ground that had once been covered in blood – now had only faint bloodstains

remaining. The bloody ground was quite similar to the ground in his dream. The guards climbed down the cliff in great numbers. They too were extremely astonished as well. If it were a drop or two of blood from the time it was discovered in the morning to now, then it's understandable why it might have disappeared. If they had not seen me last night in such a condition covered in blood, they might've become very angry and misunderstand it as a lie.

But now, they were unable to get angry. Below the ledge, there were traces of a lot of broken and crumpled tree branches and shrubs.

They were talking in whispers wondering how large of an animal must've fallen through the area to be in such a state. But, if they hadn't seen this in person, they too might've not had believed even if I had told them to.

It reminded me of when I had mentioned about the white-furred white monster. They looked at me with questioning gazes of 'are you crazy?' as they looked down on me snorting. Damn, no matter how you look at it, it's going to be extremely challenging to explain my position.

“There's a huge problem.”

“There's going to be a huge problem.”

“There's already a huge problem.”

“There’s an even larger problem right now.”

This was the conversation that Mirbo and I had discussed while looking down at the scene. We had no answers at all.

Probably, the bloodstains that the workers saw weren’t even half of what we saw yesterday. In other words, do we even have enough proof to explain these quickly disappearing bloodstains?

... not good. Maybe it’s going to end here.....

“Uh, Fabian-, I think you have to come to the castle with us.”

I was wrong not to have been a prophet.

---

I was informed that we were going to stay at the castle as guests for a day.

Sheesh... ..., it doesn’t feel any better saying it like this.

It was a splendid room. On the walls were antiquated chains covered in soot, a fireplace that looks extremely difficult to find as if an ancient artifact, a window the size of a palm that identifies just how blessed one is to be in this room compared to being in the cold outside, and then... ...our warm straw bed for the night.

Mirbo, leaning on the wall, didn't show much of an expression.

The dinner that I had just a moment ago – it was an amazing meal. Well, I didn't know just how frugal the lord's castle had practiced – but after I ate, I had stopped complaining from being worn out. It was a bit of a relief that Erent hyung went to Mother to deliver the news about my situation. It popped up in my mind of the morning when my mother hid a worrisome face after seeing the guards arrive in front of my house. Due to me staining a lot of blood on her clothes, she had worn a fresh outfit from the laundry, a white apron that I have not seen in a long time.

“Causing a ruckus wherever you go, huh? Quickly come back and look after the store!”

Sigh, if only things were easier said than done. I wonder how surprised she would be after hearing how her son had become a mysterious guest of the Lord. Her life cycle would be shortened by a few days at least. Ugh, it seems that a year's' worth of filial piety (really?) I had practiced was going to disappear like that.

However, that's only if I was guilty. I'm innocent, but what's with this state?!

Ah, I'm getting enraged again. Let's be quiet until my stomach settles.

If you look at it, the same person that is innocent is quietly sitting over there.

“Mirbo.”

He slightly turned his head towards me. If you think about it, it was quite a significant change. Before, whatever I had said to him when I first visited, he wasn't one that would satisfactorily reply to me even once, but to see a response with a single word.

Is this what you call fighting side by side in a battle...

“You must retrieve that sword.”

Mirbo had stated that he travelled with that sword for 5 years. There's no mistake that it's an amazing item, but how frustrating must it have been for him not being able to use it. I was able to make a rough estimate of how great his affection was for the sword while carrying it around in a white cloth (it would've been a hassle to carry even one sword if it was me).

However, the fact that the owner of that sword was merely a merchant vendor of a general store. For some reason, I felt a bit apologetic..... but I wasn't sure exactly who I had to apologize to.

I was certain that he had transferred the ownership of the sword. On the day after the battle, after taking a glance that I had retrieved from under the cliff, he told me to 'have the sword.' And after that, he started to show no interest towards the sword.

Despite him being the person that had a burnt scar on his palm after attempting to wield the sword.

“Mirbo, are you giving that sword to me?”

“To ask twice, you are quite a fool.”

“... ..”

My judgment was clearly not mistaken. Hmm, should I try broaching a different subject? It's already chilly, and with the way the air is, it's only going to get colder I presume.

“That sword, you must recover it without fail.”

“... Of course.”

When Mirbo and I had come in front of the Lord, it was likely that the Lord was quite tired of handling the situation at hand. With a tired expression, he stated ‘I’ll handle it tomorrow’ causing us to be in this predicament. Why the hell does our province work like this? Our lovely lord, then I suppose that your son will presumably be attended by another idiot as his sparring partner?

Fortunately, at least the soldiers had confiscated the sword after the lord had disappeared. If it weren't so, at this time, the lord might've taken it to his treasure storage or whatever it's called while comforting me not to worry about it.

“Uh, what's this sword?”

A soldier who had tried to initially hold up the sword wearing a gauntlet couldn't endure the heat and dropped the sword on the floor while simultaneously hollering in pain. The soldiers looked back at the man.

“What, what's wrong, Yasbalt?”

“It's extremely hot!”

Seeing Yasbalt scream like that, the soldiers had realized the fact that the perfectly normal looking iron sword possessed a strange trait. Erent hyung had with difficulty stopped the other soldiers from attempting to hold the sword at once (I had realized then that Erent hyung was the lieutenant of the guards protecting the gate). And he presented the burn mark on his hand – which wasn't as extreme as the one on Mirbo – out to them as an example.

As a result, after the commotion had settled down, Erent hyung passionately delivered a story somewhat intimidatingly on how this strange, unique sword can only be possessed by its rightful owner or else trouble would occur. As is often the case of people living in the mountains, our people were quite weak to superstition. Although there were a few skeptic grumbles, the majority had expressions of consent.

However, to bring the sword into prison (to now reveal this, sigh) was something that could only happen outside of reality. I had settled the matter for the time being by entrusting the sword to Erent hyung. Most likely, I will be able to retrieve it once I leave

here.

... .. if only it was discovered sooner that I am innocent.

“This sword, where did it really come from, Mirbo?”

Mirbo didn't look towards me. Has he returned to his former habits?

But, not long after, he stood up and approached me.

“I guess I should tell you the story.”

## Chapter 20: Delivery (20)

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A cold day without the luxury of food passed by with an interesting legendary story as the topic of conversation. Such was our first prison experience. Ah, my attitude of trying to be optimistic in a situation like this was surprising.

“I can’t exactly explain where it came from. I assume that you’ve probably heard about the Sjoren Mountains in Seremuz? And within those ranges is the highest peak, Jungsk-Rite. Usually, it’s known as the snowy mountains, but that’s usually for those that have witnessed the perpetual snow at the top of the peak. Originally a volcano, below Jungsk-Rite is a large, wide terrain. Below that is a stalactite cave I had entered.”

I really loved legendary stories, especially those that had treasures in it. Whether it’s a legendary renowned sword, or the jewel of a dragon, the thought of selling it gave me glee.

So...if that story was like the fella behind my back, I would feel at rest.

“I was searching for it. Finding it, I entered inside the cave and explored deeper. The interior of the cave was adorned with many beautiful stalactites and stalagmites. There were so many jagged limestone pillars popping out from the walls that I could only slowly advance a few steps at a time. And I was in quite a predicament of not knowing what to do since my torch would burn out after a while, so I had to make constant trips back and forth. Even so, because of my efforts to find this place, I had no choice but to delve deeper.”

Mirbo paused for a moment before resuming his story.

“... to find a sword like this was beyond my wildest dreams.”

The fact that Mirbo’s voice was quite gloomy was in fact all a misunderstanding.

“Due to the countless battles I had fought while trying to reach that location, the blade of my sword was completely blunt, so I abandoned it while leaving the cave. No, to be honest, I made a grave for each one. Even up till today, I had damaged so many swords, but I always made a grave whenever I had thrown it away. You need to handle it like if it was an extension of your arm – a sword is a part of your body. Despite that sword being the best among the swords I had ever wielded, it was a fight so intense that it caused it to break.”

So it seems Mirbo was quite a sentimental person, hehe.

“What did you fight?”

“Golem.”

Ha, no wonder the fight was so intense. My body shuddered. Although I’ve never witnessed a golem in real life, I am wary of the golem’s massive thick skin. Of course, these were from legendary tales as well.

To be honest, I have heard the majority of the monsters' descriptions through stories, but I have never met one once. If you exclude the beast from before, as if the monsters had hidden themselves somewhere, they don't appear as often in comparison to that legendary age. "The Eternal Redeemer" Ezekiel had sealed a plethora of them up. And, unfortunately, it included the treasures of those monsters as well.

Despite being this kind of story, the story was greatly ordinary in my eyes of what Mirbo was telling. Even if he were to say that he had met stuff that could be natural monuments in this age.

"Of course that wasn't all. That beast was a decisive fella that was determined to break my sword."

This mister knows how to joke? Mirbo wasn't laughing.

"Although I've entrusted it to the doctor at Ember Village, the axe I used against it was pretty useful as well. "

If you're talking about the doctor in Ember Village, Doctor Nauke? Haha, for some reason, I want to laugh. Doctor Nauke is someone that only asks, and Mirbo is a Mister that doesn't answer. If the two met, they must have developed a new way to communicate with each other.

"That gentleman was quite a difficult person to talk to."

At times, it's as if Mirbo reads my mind.

“... ..so I had continued to delve deeper with a sword that had lost all its blade, and a torch that ran out of oil. You’ll probably be fine with me skipping the exploring part. In the end, I arrived at the end of the cave.”

“So what happened?”

As if I was listening to a fairy tale, I watched him like a child would do.

“It was quite an expansive room, different from the path I had travelled. And in the center of that... ..”

Mirbo displayed a self-satisfied smile. That old man seems to be smiling more lately.

“Last night when we encountered the monster, you ran away and brought back my sword. That flame I saw, something that even I could never produce, it wasn’t the first time I had seen it.”

I had a rough guess.

But still, to say that I had fled, it was a bit harsh. I had just wanted to go and call for help... .. mmm, I should stop since it’s poking at my conscience.

“It was burning at the center of the room. The rooted sword, as if

it had sprung up from the stalagmites, compared to my miniscule light of the torch, was surging such flames like a grand spectacle. Until yesterday, that was the last day that I had seen it wreathed in such flames.”

“After that?”

“The sword never blazed again. From the day I had broken all the stalagmites in the cave and pulled it out.”

A bit later, he added this to say.

“But the beautiful flames that were shining in your hands yesterday weren’t the same from what I had seen before. The flame I saw last night was burning at least several times greater than what I witnessed five years ago, the heat of it so great that I was enraptured by it on the spot. I knew from that moment. I was forced to concede that the sword didn’t belong to me. And then.”

What is he trying to say?

“It was then I thought that I should let you live.”

Ahhhhh... all of a sudden, I didn’t want to be near him.

The sunlight that was blinking through the window had eventually disappeared. The rustic stone floor of the stone prison in the castle began to release the old, chilly air. My whole body shivered from the cold.

“Cover your body with that bundle of straw.”

It was reasonable advice. I had loosened the sheaves of straw, and after spreading them out on the ground, I double-folded it as I covered it over my body. It'll probably aggravate my wrist and shoulder. It seems I'll have to pay the doctor quite a bit of money this time.

After making my seat, I leaned onto the plain, cold walls as I called over to Mirbo.

“If our bodies are side-to-side, it'll a bit warmer.”

Mirbo obediently came closer to my side and laid down on the straw. He pulled over the straw onto his body. If it wasn't so cold, it would be quite a nice atmosphere to talk. The situation was quite strange. I never had thought that I would ever enter a prison cell in my life. I was supposed to be an honest merchant.

To leave such an irreversible stain in my life, sigh.

Whatever, let's think slowly. It'll be alright tomorrow.

“I said to give me breakfast-!!” as I roared for the fifth time, dropping down onto the straw bed below me. What has exactly happened? The sun is about to rise.

As a merchant with over 10 years of experience, I have a set habit of rising up early. Aigoo, I'm so hungry.

It's already been almost three hours since I have woken up.

Mirbo rose up and was measuring how much he had grown overnight... .. was not the case as he was trying to look at the tall window whose height was higher than his as he called for me.

“Fabian, it would be good for you to take a look outside.”

## Chapter 21: Delivery (21)

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Although I had no strength thanks to lack of food, I approached the window anyway since what he said was right. Mirbo stooped down, making me sit on his shoulders and lifting me up without difficulty. Despite not having breakfast, he didn't look tired. Not only that, his wound shouldn't have fully closed up yet... .... I'm speechless.

I looked out through the window.

“Huhuh... it's quiet?”

Since the prison was an empty basement, the window was only high enough to reach the feet of the people on the street. But thanks to the street being slanted downwards, (if it had rained yesterday, then I really couldn't say the words “thanks”) I could somewhat see the situation beyond the window. Outside of the castle rear was a backyard. Across the backyard to the rear were walls that weren't so high.

Looking at it closely, the place where Arnwalt and I had practiced with the sword wasn't far from here.

“Is no one there?”

“No one is passing by. I wonder how much time has gone since sunrise?”

“Maybe enough time to eat breakfast seven times over.”

Hearing those words in my vulnerable state coerced my stomach into launching a surprise attack on my body.

Mirbo paused before asking again.

“Can you hear anything?”

“Mm...I don't hear anything.”

Then again, this is strange. Around this period, there should be servants and maids, etc. that should be sufficient time for them to come and go.

Not only that, is Arnowalt taking a rest day from his swordsmanship practice? Mm, if that was certainly so, you're using me as an excuse to fool around for a few more days, huh. This brat.

The backyard was undesirably empty.

“Come back down.”

I threw my body down onto the sheaf of straws. Aigoo, I'm so tired. Even though I was on the top, why do I feel so tired? Mirbo, with a calm expression, was in thought for a moment. Then, he suddenly dropped down onto the floor.

So you too were... ..not tired.

He had placed his ear onto the floor.

“I can’t hear any footsteps at all.”

Since I was lying down anyways, I directed my ear onto the floor as well. Despite having really sensitive hearing, I couldn’t sense any sort of vibration.

Mirbo rose and sat down.

“I’m not sure what’s wrong, but something must’ve happened.”

It seemed so. But what could it be?

I tried to ponder intensely, however all I could think about was yesterday’s breakfast of chicken soup that my mother had made, and the steak and blackberry pie the previous night. But above all, the ultimate luxury of ‘goat cheese’ applied on top of that slice of bread...aigoo, I shouldn’t have thought about it.

As a result, for about half an hour, thinking about that kind of food, and those types of food – it’s not like I even know a lot of food types. I’m just glad that I had thought up all the types of food I knew within half an hour – but instead of appeasing the hunger, it encouraged my stomach to crave for more. Finally, Mirbo opened

his mouth.

“It’s blood.”

“Huh?”

What are you saying suddenly, blood you say? To say that you want to drink blood...shouldn’t be the case...hmm, what could it be... what were the types of food made by blood again...

Ughhh, this isn’t it?

“Battle? Ambush? War? Monster? Bandits?”

“It’s something that we don’t know exactly.”

“Through what evidence?”

Mirbo, looking at me with an irritated look, uttered something absurd.

“What’s the most employed position in a castle?”

“Well, there should be more servants than nobles I suppose.”

“Right. There should be more servants walking around before nobles. Then, since we’re in the castle, there should be more

opportunities of them appearing than nobles.”

“So?”

“Among the nobles and servants, there’s those special people right? Not the ones that feed and dress you, but the servants that protect your life.”

“Soldiers?”

He’s making such a strange analogy, this old man.

“So which type of servants can you see the most in prison?”

“It would be soldiers, of course.”

“Then, the fact that they’re not here means?”

“They have a task to do I suppose.”

After saying that, I felt a deadly premonition so I quickly shut my mouth up. It wasn’t a difficult mystery. But then, I feel like it’s going to be something impossible to think about. I don’t want to lead to such a conclusion. Can’t I just assume that today was the Lord’s knighthood ceremony, or that they had left for a group picnic?

... .. it doesn't make sense even when I think about it.

Mirbo added more.

“There should be only a few reasons why the soldiers would leave the castle unattended. And ... ..”

And?

“... Early in the morning, there were tumultuous footsteps ringing. Definitely, Although at that time, we didn't have a rough estimate of what that was, but I thought it was something very urgent.

Ohoh, my heart started to jump!

Mirbo's deduction was becoming clearer with those certain, concrete details.

No matter how much the Lord was apathetic to the defense of the castle, the nobles' castle is indeed the nobles' castle, so they wouldn't leave the castle unprotected. Criminals like us... NO, I'm not a criminal! ... .. anyways, the fact that the work force had all left without delivering breakfast was due to this. Or they could be currently concentrating on defending the outer castle walls... no, then there's no way it would be this quiet.

... .. And we don't have such a thing as outer walls for our castle.

“It’s something huge.”

Those were the last words Mirbo left me with. Afterwards, he was silent for quite some time.

What is it? What is it? What could it be? What could it be?

The more I thought, the more I became uncomfortable.

If everyone had left, who exactly is going to release us? At this rate, are we going to be treated like criminals without the opportunity for us to properly give an explanation? If an incident did happen, where could it have happened? Ember village shouldn’t be this quiet, right? Then?

Habiyanak, Sedenborum, Grillard, it’s one of those three.

Oh, Habiyanak... .. it can’t be.

If something had happened, what could it be? It wasn’t like we were some border frontier, or had a resentful relationship with another province either. If you exclude the monster from the day before yesterday, a pack of monsters that I haven’t seen in my life was moving somewhere in a group, then it wouldn’t have been so quiet yesterday without any sort of rumors. But, to see that all the soldiers had left their post must be something, a serious situation, a grave concern!

Ahah, my head is about to explode.

I mean, to say it precisely, due to the strange worries I had, my chest started to tighten, which started to make it hard to breathe.

I wonder what happened to my mother.

Mirbo, brace yourself if you've gotten this reasoning all wrong. As payment in worrying me this much, I'll firmly... ..

No, please be wrong. Then, it would be good, and I won't quibble over what I had been worrying about.

As usual, there was no indication of a rat moving.

It was getting close to lunchtime.

I had forgotten about my hunger.

---

Rattle, rattle.

I hear a strange sound.

Daeng! Daeng!

What's this sound?

AHHH... AHHHHHHHK!

That's some...shrilling scream!

I quickly rose from the seat. It was dark. I rubbed my eyes. I could see the moonlight leaking through the window. Since when did I fall asleep, as if I had slept for an eternity.

Mirbo was already awake. He had quickly waved to me in the shadows.

“Over here.”

Mirbo and I attached ourselves to the dark walls where there was no moonlight. My chest was thumping loudly. I was very nervous, especially having woken up after starving for the whole day.

“Shush!”

I know. However, without me realizing, I nearly made a sound as I quickly covered my mouth with my hands. The shadow in the moonlight, sseuk – it moved.

There was something outside the window.

Churrrrr-Rattle-

A hard item was scraping along the ground outside the iron grating of the window. The metallic object made a sound like it had just collided with something.

Let's be calm, be calm.

... .. However, neither Mirbo nor I had anything that could be called a weapon. In this prison, there was nothing that you could usefully employ as a substitute for a weapon. There was nothing but straw.

Although the shadow reflected only the legs, certainly... it wasn't the leg of a human.

Moving with half-bent knees, and the strange projection of the feet that couldn't be called shoes. But then, it was lowering its body? Is it trying to look inside?

It was that time I heard it.

Chuk – PUAHHHK!

“Kkeeeeeeeeeeu... ..”

I froze on the spot. A long metal object stabbed through the small openings of the window – it had pierced through the body of the

figure that was standing outside the window.

Hoodoodook-A dark red liquid splashed into the prison.

“Eub.....”

## Chapter 22: Delivery (22)

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Posted on June 17, 2017 by Calvis — Leave a reply

All of a sudden, Mirbo's hand flew towards me and covered up my mouth. But, the physiological functions of the human body were inevitable.

“Heeub, Euuub.....”

The wretched smell started to rise. The long object that pierced through the windows several times, was pulled out of the body. There was something stuck on the window. The corpse that didn't have the chance to properly scream once was lying outside of the window, as the blood-colored body dyed the moonlight red as drops of something dripped onto the ground.

Tuk. Once more, Tuuk.

There was a damp item full of something nearby. I had no intention of confirming what it was. As well, the liquid was continuing to trickle down?? Blood, blood.

This, this situation, I, I really can't endure it.

All of a sudden, the interior of the prison brightened.

“Is someone in here?”

Ohoh... I forgot what to say.

After clearing away the corpse to the side, the figure began to bend down and look through the window into the prison. It was a low whispering voice... a person, it was a person!

I immediately tried to go out into the moonlight, but Mirbo fiercely grabbed my arm back.

“?!”

A deadly silence flowed out from him.

“Is there no one there?”

No response. No, in wanting to respond, I that had squirmed in pain for a whole day without food (although that's the same for him), not sure where he was able to bring forth that strength, was grabbed back by Mirbo who had intercepted me with his iron-like arms.

It was then.

“...Fa...bian?”

My...name?

“.....!”

If I was used to starving like Mirbo – then I would never check in reality, however if you see it in the current situation – I wanted to know the unknown person who had called for my name. However, I was in an utterly exhausted state both physically and mentally, so I could not make a judgment call on an appropriate decision at all.

The voice.

“Who are you?”

It was Mirbo’s voice that had asked. It was the same feeling I felt when I had first met him. A person who had the same personality of a killer. And that bloodthirsty voice was leaking out. Thus, the air became colder while I was unable to speak.

“The person that asks like that isn’t the person I’m looking for.”

It was a different voice. A bass voice that was strong and powerful, a voice full of dignity. Shadow. The shadow that was closing in on the window.

Soon afterwards, the moonlight was wholly obscured.

“Who might you be?”

There was no yield from his voice at all. However, how long can we stay like this without having anything in our hands?

The person that came in search of me, is he the one that's trying to save me or kill me?

Again the strong and livid voice. As if the voice was one of the night's darkness.

“If Fabian is inside, tell me.”

“I have no interest.”

It seems Mirbo had already decided on what to do, as he quickly flicked the question aside. There wasn't even the slightest hesitation.

“If that's so.”

All of a sudden, the window became brighter. The person outside came closer. What exactly is he trying to do?

This is hard to cope with, feeling anxious.

Dururu-dududududu...

Tuk!

The iron grating of the window was shaking, and it fell apart. Mirbo's arms covered me instantaneously as he twitched slightly.

What...kind of strength could you have to rip off that iron-barred window just like that?

The man took the iron window bar and hurled it back into the grass. Then, without hesitation, he jumped into the prison cell at a breath's time without much difficulty.

Tadang!

It was dark. A black colored cape fluttered. A butterfly, a large bird, a kingdom's flag.

It settled down.

"Is that you Fabian?"

After looking at Mirbo who was turning me sideways with both arms with a glance, he started to focus on me.

It was too dark so I couldn't really see the person's face. However it was a figure with a strong features as the moonlight painted a thin line of light around him. An extremely tall height, eyes that could penetrate darkness, over his head flowed dark black hair.....!

His hair was just like mine.

“So it’s Fabian.”

The Calm Sea.

End of Volume 1 Part 1.

# **Volume 1, Part 2**

# Chapter 23: Necklace Of The Four Seasons (1)

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## Necklace of the Four Seasons (1)

Oh! Arundnayan!

Pure raw brilliance of hidden secrets!

When the four scattered jewels awake from their slumber

They sing of the necklace, for the end of the world

A celebration of the death of a majestic star...

Oh, have you already forgotten?

The treasured promise of 200 years soon to be fulfilled,

When the forgotten races of my people restore their memories

Dark-black feather, uplift the sacrifice on the altar

To open the eyes of the seasons... ..

Kingdom of Isnamir, The Prophet of the Seventh Constellation

– Hell Wiss Karmohad in the period of <Arundnayan> Year 13-14 –

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That man knows my name. Where did my name come from?  
However, at least it wasn't from this person. I know that for sure.

“You grew up well.”

“... ..”

“Just a bit more and you can surpass my height.”

Something feels strange. Unfamiliar. I never expected to hear such words once during my life. This situation hadn't even occurred in my darkest dreams.

“I am your father, Fabian Narshinyak”

Really? It doesn't seem real at all.

When I first heard these words, I felt as if my real body was far away, as though we were performing a play. Leaving prison, – the man that claims to be my father has amazing strength – we circled the castle once and headed towards the front yard.

I couldn't understand this sudden situation at all.

Right now, that unfamiliar person that's walking beside me is my father who shares my blood? And my family name is not Christian, but Narshinyak?

Where did he come from? Why did he live apart from me till now? Why did he only come find me now? I wasn't in the mood to ask any of these questions for now.

The empty castle's front yard left us walking endlessly on the long paved path. How silly. Considering when we were being judged whether or not we were guilty and to agreeing to stay for the night due to the Lord's will, we then destroy the castle's property – the iron-barred window was actually the Lord's property – and leave the castle casually through the front yard by

the aid of a person who brought us unconvicted prisoners out.

And no one was trying to arrest our group.

“What has happened exactly?”

Mirbo. From the time we had left the prison cell, he still hadn't lowered his guard down. It's probably because of how he usually functions. That's why he had survived to this day.

“The province has been attacked!”

“!”

Mirbo's conjecture was right. I urgently stopped and stood.

“Umm, where? To who? My mother! Did you meet my mother?!”

The man stopped on his tracks. The person that is my father, the strange man that emits this unfamiliar and unreachable feeling.

However, other than the fact that the person was not my reflection, the color of hair that you couldn't find anywhere else, those eyes that give off the same vibe. That dark blue color revolving amongst those dark, shady eyes.

But, compared to what I have, his hair and eyes give off a much

more secretive feeling. I never thought about that once of myself.

Mirbo had also said one word when coming out of the prison and seeing his face in the light.

“Resemblance.”

‘Father’ was momentarily silent. Stopping, he calmly looked at my face. His hair, as if they were of those countless stars, was a part of the night sky, as if it was himself.

“Fabian, calm your mind. Calm down and listen to what I have to say.”

What are you going to say? Something sad? A truth I never wanted to know?

I don’t want to hear a bit of it. I don’t want to hear it at all.

My body, slowly but surely began to shudder.

No, I abhor this kind of feeling.

“I wish I could calmly share my story with you and explain why I had revealed my existence so late in front you. I wanted you to understand and give you time to search for me, and I also wanted to help you as well. However, it’s not the time for that.

What time? What time is it then!

Mirbo was looking at a different direction. He made an expression as if he already guessed what the story was about! Even you have the capacity to make wrong assumptions as well!

I barely refrained from collapsing and stared at my father.

“Habiyanak?? Do not go back.”

“WHY !!!”

I was surprised myself to hear such a tremendous voice. Despite not having the strength or health to uphold myself after starving for three straight meals, I didn't expect myself to have this much energy left over at all.

“... Do not look.”

See what?!

My body trembled with such intensity that it was recognizable to anyone. It was as if the ground was lashing out at me excitedly. I clenched my teeth.

“..... What... happened?”

The voices that leaked out of my mouth sounded strange. It was as if I was not myself. I was unfamiliar with this body, the place that I lived.

Afraid of this critical moment.

No!

“NOO~!!! “

My head slowly became empty. My knees started to yield, I stumbled a step back defeated. My body was heavier than anything in the world at the moment.

Mirbo had turned his face towards ‘Father’. And then he calmly asked.

“From what were they attacked by?”

“Corpses, no the deceased, it would be appropriate to call it an assembly of the dead.”

“Are you talking about zombies?”

“No...it’s a bit different.”

These two people, as if I didn’t exist in front of them, began to

share their information. I was not even curious of that.

I didn't need it by any means. Whether zombies had attacked my village or something else, whether that information was obtained by the death of a person, nothing mattered to me. If I go see it, there's no need for words. Even if you tell me to not see, I must go and see for myself what has happened no matter what.

I turned my back towards them and started to run towards the gate.

“Fabian! Where are you going!”

Ahah, why is his scream so similar to my voice to that extent.

I didn't turn back, but paused in my tracks.

“I am going to Habiyanak.”

“Don't go.”

“I will go.”

A brief silence.

“... .. You might die.”

That's probably so. Yes, you may not care about the life and death of your wife whom you've been separate from for 18 years.

However, as for me, the one whom for the last 18 years she held and scolded me, the one I parted from yesterday afternoon, the one that had cooked for me warm soup, the one that always worryingly said to return safely, the one who wore a white apron with hair flung back, my one and only mother!

There was no need for a reply.

"Fabian."

This time it was Mirbo. What are you trying to say this time?

"Fabian, you didn't forget to retrieve the sword, right?"

Mirbo didn't hold me back. That's it. You were that kind of person. That's why I like you.

I didn't feel the need to talk with the two any longer.

I ran towards the interior of the castle. There was no one that had grabbed me. Guards, servants, nobles, there was nobody.

It was hard to pinpoint the geography of the castle as I became a bit confused. But in a while, I realized something was dragging me towards a direction. This, as if it was so certain, was searching for

me, or so I thought. Trusting my heart, I followed the trail that it led me to, which didn't take too much time.

Soon, I had entered the barracks of the guards. And without hesitation, I chose one of the doors. It was locked. I kicked it. No time to waste. None. Even if the lord's wealth was here, nothing mattered to me.

Unable to count how many times, I kicked the door as hard as I could until I couldn't feel anything in my feet. The locked door handle finally fell off.

Shaking the door until it was about to break, the room within had signs of it being a complete mess. Among the four beds was an object wrapped in white cloth waiting for me.

Although my whole body was sorely aching, a burning aura from that sword shone up to my chin, because of it, the pain from my body seemed to have disappeared somewhere far away, as if uncertain if it was mine.

Loosening the string, I held the sword.

This hot feeling, good.

I rushed outside the castle. I couldn't even remember how long the front yard of the castle was. As I had not had a single drop of water the entire day, I exhausted whatever saved up energy onto my legs as I concentrated on running, carrying the sword with

both hands.

Ahah, slow, too slow. Damn it, I wish I could throw away this heavy body and fly off.

The drawbridge was lowered as it was. I quickly jumped over it.

The fastest path to Habiyanak, is that straight uphill road.

The ever-crowded village of Ember, those many merchants with their signs.

However, there was really no one that I could see on the streets.

This ominous presence, it was as if it the air itself was pressurizing my body until it was about to burst.

What's that buzzing, roaring sound that I hear?

“Fabian.”

Outside Ember on the corner of the road was Mirbo and a blue-black haired man who stood waiting. Those words, I could barely hear it.

“We will go together.”

# Chapter 24: Necklace Of The Four Seasons

## (2)

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What was that? What was that building over there again? It was definitely... a blacksmith I think.

However, you couldn't call it a building.

That thing? Wasn't that the inn?

I don't get it, I really don't know.

Even if this was our village

I was walking up 'the road' which I had excitedly rode down on my snowboard for deliveries.

However, the frozen snow that was here upto the day before yesterday was nowhere to be seen. Only traces of it being melted were left. How can that much snow melt that fast and disappear?

That question would soon be resolved.

Everywhere on the streets were full of burn marks. And that musky smoke that drifted from building to building. The man that expressionlessly scoured the surroundings as he walked besides me spoke.

“Looks like someone had a bit of knowledge on how to exterminate zombies.”

It might have been so, but it seemed there was no effect since these creatures were a bit different from zombies. From the entrance to here, I have already seen a dozen or so bodies in the process, but there was none that that I couldn't somewhat recognize.

Corpses.

To see a corpse, even seeing one person dying was a very uncomfortable thing. If it was a murder, the emotional impact that it brings could not be compared with the previous one.

And, if that person was someone you knew... ..

“Mr. Gorman!”

Suddenly my body rushed out, causing me to nearly slip on the floor. The melted snow was starting to freeze again. It was a chilly day that could make your teeth chatter. That checkered outerwear was too familiar. Why the heck did he always have to wear that coat so much, and not change into a different one making Gorman's wife scold him for that. Gorman was the person who would say it's okay if it's dirty since I like wearing it.

I grabbed his shoulder and shook it. The grey apron that

encircled his massive body swayed sideways, but there was no response.

I raised my head... let's stop.

After taking in a large breath of air, I rose.

I could feel the warmth of the snow.

I shook my head to dust it off.

Still, there's still...something left I have to check.

“Let's go.”

I should go.

The last 18 years of my life, to see it vanish in a moment like an illusion.

I must check.

The people that asked me if I was okay wasn't just the two of them. After I have passed 20 or so corpses, I felt as if I didn't have any sort of feelings at all. Maybe my heart is becoming similar as well.

Among the corpses was 'Deer's General Store' Kumentz as well. I wonder where Gepper had gone to.

I continued to walk.

It was too quiet.

Nothing could threaten me. I wasn't in danger at all.

The sinless Lord who has done nothing, I thank you.

But it soon turned out that my thoughts were wrong.

As soon as I saw the store sign "Big Deer's General Store," I could feel the heat burning my body hot. At the same time, hot tears streamed down my face

The roof of the store was blown away.

This, it can't be...

It can't... BEEEEEEEE!!!

Not aware where my strength came from, I began to run. In strides, I climbed the hill towards the store. I didn't slip...or fall. I just have to go up and...open the door... ..

From behind, the one that claimed to be ‘father’ grabbed a hold of my arm.

“Don’t look, Fabian.”

When I came this far? Don’t look you say?

What! My mother is a...alive, like before... she’ll be in front of the store...sitting on that chair!

No, be.... she’ll be under the bed, or in the storage...she must have...hid, definitely... ... she was waiting, desperately waiting... there for me!!!

I was screaming something but my voice was thoroughly cracked, I too didn’t know what I was saying.

I completely.

All my strength surged through me.

I broke free of the brawny arm in a moment’s breath and opened the door.

“Ah... ....”

The world stopped.

---

[Fabian, Fabian, this boy, aren't you going to deliver.]

[Sigh, Mother-he won't buy the sparrow nets-!]

[How do you know that well? Hurry up and quickly go and come back like mother had ordered you to.]

[Mother, you're really... ....]

Mr. Genz definitely didn't need any more nets.

Without much choice, I quickly picked up my clothes and prepared to leave. On the store chair was my mother in wholly pure-white clothes.

[Mother, where did you get those white clothes from? Woah-you look like an angel, but I don't think you can handle the dust in the storage.]

[That's all you got to say, boy?]

[Hehehe, it was a joke, Mother. You're much more graceful and cool than the Lord's wife.]

[You compare me with just that?]

Mother rose from her chair.

That fair that trailed that dazzling, snow-white nape of the neck. That smooth, graceful grey hair that shone. No, her whole body began to shine.

When was my mother so cool like this?

[Humph, and you compare me to that of a lord's wife?]

Wings...

From both her arms surged out a large, snowy-white pair of wings. Blossoming her wings, the whole store became full of light. After moving the wings a few times, she began to float as if she was about to flutter.

With that appearance, where exactly is she going?

Ah, my eyes.....!

[The words of an angel.]

There was no roof on the store. Mother fluttered her wings once. Instantly, she flew upwards several times my height.

[Mother...! Where are you going!]

My mother didn't reply.

I foolishly stood staring at the skies. That small dot in the sky was my mother flying away.

My mother, without an answer, grew distant.

There was no answer ever again.

---

“Mother!”

Ahah, I was grabbing onto the empty air in front of me.

The blanket that fell from my arms, this was the inn.

That unfamiliar, cold room. That neat, but cold room.

However, I wasn't in an inn to leave for my adventure.

I had no home to return to.

No energy to rise, I didn't even have the spirit to.

I wonder how many days it has been since.

Among the four villages, the only village that didn't have severe damages was Grillard. This was Grillard's "Green Leaf" Inn. It was as if the village, known for being the warmest amongst the four, was bragging its name (if you think about it, when I had come to Grillard earlier, there was an inn that was named the 'Green Flag').

I tried to sweep my hair back, but both of my arms were too heavy, so I gave up. As if I was a patient about to die.

Lying down I stared at the ceiling which had the words 'Green Leaf' engraved.

Every morning, due to being too busy, I didn't even have the time to admire the ceiling in my room. I didn't have the energy to turn my head.

As if, my spirit had entered a body that was not mine. I wonder what it's thinking?

...'I wonder what it's thinking' is probably what's it's thinking.'

In the meantime, what did I eat, how much did I sleep, I did not know at all. It was even unknown how I had arrived here. And I'm confused how I know where this place is. If I were to search my memories, maybe there's something I can find... I really don't want to do that.

I don't want to remember at all.

I heard knocking at the door.

I didn't have the energy to reply. Lying still, the door knocked once more.

Idiot, I don't know what it is but just come in.

The door, with a click, opened.

It's a girl with a face I know.

“Ryujia... Nauke?”

# Chapter 25: Necklace Of The Four Seasons

## (3)

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I was flabbergasted after speaking. It wasn't because of the person that appeared before me. Was this really my voice?

It sounded grotesque and felt like metal was grinding inside my throat.

But my counterpart was even more alarmed at my alarmed state (If so, why did you even bother knocking?).

“You were awake?”

“... ..”

After considering how to reply, I ended up finding nothing to say. It didn't help that I didn't want to hear my own voice so I just stayed silent. The girl approached my bedside.

It seems there was a chair by the bedside. I could tell she was trying to sit on something.

“How... .. do you feel?”

How do I feel?

While trying to figure out my own condition, I was suddenly ambushed by unendurable thoughts.

“Uhk... ....”

My chin suddenly lifted towards the air as I let out a strange sound, causing Ryujia to be surprised. Not having the strength to raise my head, it hung back down onto the bed. I couldn't breathe. Ryujia arose from the chair urgently, trying to calm me down while grabbing my head.

“Fabian, Fabian, it's okay, it's okay.”

“What... is okay?”

All of a sudden, those memories of Ryujia fortune-telling materialized in my head.

Ryujia had once told me. Would you be fine with living as a merchant vendor, and inheriting the store later as you age and die?

I shook my head.

Then how do you want to change your life exactly?

Slanting my head slightly, I asked what she meant by “changing” and asked her for an explanation. She frowned as her forehead wrinkled, and was briefly in thought before opening her mouth.

“What it means about changing is that it can be a good thing, and it can also be a bad thing. Also, the things you love could actually be a bad thing, and the things you hate could in reality be a good thing as well. What changing really means literally, is the word itself. When you’re willing to change, you need courage, danger, and yourself.”

Unable to understand what she said, I got frustrated and asked her to move on the next story. Assuming it wasn’t something good, I told her that I would think about it before deciding.

But, my life completely changed. What I want, what I didn’t want. I couldn’t decide on anything.

Something began to surge in me.

“Uhkk... ....”

If there was one thing I didn’t want to remember, only one thing,

It would be discovering mother,

Her chest pierced in the center.

A large hole like an abyss.

The cold, frozen blood that had encircled her.

My chest began to heave up and down. So much that the bed shook. As my body began to tremble intensely again, Ryujia waited for a while before acting unexpectedly.

She climbed onto the bed with her bent knees, and laid down beside me just like that.

Then, with her body, she persistently grabbed onto my trembling body.

“.....”

I could feel her arms wrapped around me.

Her scent that had entered my nose in a split second. Her hair had scattered onto my face and pillow. Compared to before when her hair was firmly tied back, I didn't know but her hair was very long.

Warm.

Soon, I became quiet.

My head started to circle around.

My convulsions soon settled down. Decreasing bit by bit, I gradually became still.

And the body that wasn't mine, that hardened body, step by step, slowly returned back to me.

That initial feeling of extreme pain. Where it hurts, I didn't know for sure.

And the feeling I felt next... ..

I discovered myself gradually feeling the silhouette of her body.

Ahah... Oh my, oh my, this can't be... ..

But the warmth slowly allowed my body to start circulating. I wonder if the blood is as red as my face.

“Your face... ..the complexion is returning.”

Ugh.....

If I could, I would stand up all at once, but I didn't have the strength to do that. Thankfully, Ryujia rose from the bed. Her hand that was tidying up her scattered hair.

Ah, I'd rather close my eyes momentarily.

With my eyes closed I could hear her voice. Her voice was so

elegantly calm that I feel myself beginning to calm down without realizing myself.

“I am a prophet. In other words, a fortune teller, as you may well know.”

Sure. Hmm, come to think of it, you're not a person that's close enough to me that would come and find me here. Then, what exactly could have happened?

“You, do you remember when I told you your father was alive?”

Ah, come to think of it, she did say that.

I opened my eyes and looked at Ryujia. She was sitting on the bed as she looked down at me. Those eyes of hers reflected a deep calm well. The last time she prophesied, I never saw such eyes before.

“I saw your father.”

Yeah, the one that called himself father.

I could consider not believing it. However, I thought it wasn't that important. The motherless me, in front of my father that had appeared. I had no feeling. I feel empty. Why, why do you have to appear now? Why couldn't you be with us in the beginning? Why would you come at such a time and muddle my emotions like this?

Damn, was this fate that I can't have both my 'mother' and 'father' at the same time?

“And... ....”

Despite what I was thinking, and what expression I was making, she continued speaking without any response to those.

“Your fate, I can feel it.”

“What...are...you saying?”

Ahah, I really abhor that metallic voice of mine. It sounds like a person that had fallen ill on the road.

“In a prophet's life, we make countless prophecies when we prophesy, however not all of those people's' stories become important. On some days, I had prophesied for 20 or more people. And I forget afterwards. The next time they look for me, unless they specifically explain, there are times when I can't remember what I had said at all.”

Sounds dubious.

Ryujia continued to talk.

“Fabian, when you came to me, at first I couldn't feel anything, but when I continued with your prophesy, without realizing, I

could feel a strange impression emerge from me. After you returned, I thought of this for quite a long time.

Exactly what? Although I wanted to initially nod my head, I was too tired so I blinked my sleepy eyes.

“Prophets too can feel the fates of their own lives intertwined with another. Although that had never happened to me once before, I knew such things still existed. You.”

This feeling, it’s strange. Ryujia’s voice, as if she had made up her mind.

“As a prophet, your fate and mine are intertwined.”

# Chapter 26: Necklace Of The Four Seasons

## (4)

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Ryujia continued to speak. Even the part where she knew of my destiny the most compared to 100 different other people gathered. Despite being lost in the fog of my obscure state, I understood all of what she had said. I wonder if the Ryujia who had said all of those things was really younger than me. What uncanny hardships could a prophet have had that could cause that kind of speech, that kind of expression, that kind of tone to appear.

She finally ended off after calming down with that firm, unique voice of hers.

“I will prophesy your fate one more time.”

“One... ..more time?”

“Not now. After a bit more preparation, at a certain time. I will, deeply, do it to the best of my abilities with all my devotion. I need at least one more month to prepare, so please don't go anywhere until then. Although this prophecy may be important in your life, but it's a ceremony equally crucial to me as well. As a prophet, my fate is bound in it as well. If I say something wrong, then that influence will befall onto me as well.”

Concluding what she said, she rose from the bed. Then, without much of a goodbye, she headed out the door.

The door closed.

Turning point. So you call this a transition period. It's as if all the original contents were spilt out, and changed anew. I can feel that ripple.

How do I say it – the thing that's waiting for me?

Complicated.

I just want to return to the beginning. I want to revert everything back.

Waking up early to manage the store, to go deliver, I want to do that.

This world is too cruel.

I want to go to the place...where my mother is....

[Fabian.]

[Yes, Mother.]

[Have some of this. I boiled some chicken soup. With that body, how are you going to properly deliver things?]

[If I can't make any deliveries, then it'll get complicated for the store. That's why you're making this, right?]

[This boy.....]

Although I could hear my mother's voice, I couldn't see her figure. After looking around restlessly, I called for Mother.

[Mother, Mother, where are you?]

[You don't have to know.]

[Just stay there. Just concern yourself with your own work, boy.]

[What, what are you saying, Mother? Your work is my work as well, what nonsense are you saying?]

Inside my dream, I angrily searched for Mother as I circled the surroundings. But, despite it being my dream, I had no strength in my body.

[Mother, it's too tiring. Just take me to where you are. I think I'm just too sick.]

But, my mother didn't reply. Exhausted, I collapsed where I stood. If only things could happen as I wanted.

[Fabian.]

Suddenly, my mother had called, causing me to spring back up.

[Yes, yes, Mother. What's wrong?]

[If you're sick, you need to get better quickly.]

[Help me get better, Mother.]

My mother started to get angry. It was scary despite it being a dream.

[Do your job yourself! If you're sick, hurry up and have some soup so that you can get better and come to your senses!]

[Soup.....?]

I didn't see any soup. But then, I could smell it. Where could it be?

[It's in front of you! Hurry up and eat it!]

My surroundings became faint.

I could feel myself slowly starting to wake up. About half of my consciousness had returned back into my body. But, not all of my

consciousness had recovered. I was stuck between the boundary line of dreams and reality. Already a couple of times, my mind was still in a blurred state.

In spite of it being a couple of times, what emerged in front of me was that familiar background of our store, my mother's corpse lying down lifelessly like a broken doll on the floor, and the large frozen bloodstain as if a sword had pierced through a hole in the middle of that chest.....this was reality, a reality I couldn't avoid.

Ahah, Mother. Can't you stay in my dreams like this?

“That is... this wave suddenly swept across the area. Whether it was a type of walking undead like a zombie, or type of species like that of a specter, there's no way of me knowing for now. What's certain is that of these species' intention, 'purpose' if you like to call it, they possessed such a thing. I'm not sure what situation it is, but it's appropriate to say they have probably traversed over the White Mountains. Especially if you consider there was no information of these creatures in other places. Shut up and kill, you can't communicate with those at all.....”

“What was their appearance like?”

“If you follow the reports of the eyewitnesses, their outer appearances were variously shaped, as if they were lumpy mixed plaster. Although their outer frameworks were similar to a human, half of it was rotting, and that vile smell ... .. there's some that had admitted that these weren't originally human, but of a different species. In reality, it was as if the orcs had made a promise with those things when they attacked Ember. Of course,

most of the orcs were cleaned up by the soldiers, but still ... those things were very different from regular undead as fire had no effect, and they had organised planned movements as others have repeatedly reported.

“Was there no sort of hint as to what their purpose was?”

“Their purpose.....hmm, it would be appropriate for it be to be something like shut up and kill. And they were extremely strong, as tools and swords had no effect at all. As to parts of their body well, it was reported that as if they had a will of their own, they started to attack humans.”

“How did they attack?”

“It was truly appalling, for they used weapons. Although the majority were empty-handed, a few had knives and spears which they flung people over their heads. It was commonly pointed out they their strength was two or three times stronger. Even those without weapons would rip a person apart with their bare hands... is what the witnesses reported.”

“Mm... And their numbers were very large?”

“Yes. I’m not exactly sure, but there should have been over a hundred.....”

“And not even one had died?”

“We can’t know for sure. But, it seems there’s no corpses... .. it should be correct to say that nearly all of their forces were intact when they moved out.”

“And there was no commander?”

“There were those that wielded swords on horses. Since their bodies were covered in dark clothes, we’re not sure if they were of the same species, but anyways, it seemed that they were the ones giving out orders. There were some eyewitnesses that had seen this from afar. As those on horses trod there and back, as if they were encouraged to do so.....”

“Where have they headed towards?”

“Honestly, I don’t even know. We can’t even determine where they had come from in the first place.....”

Next door, I could hear two people having a conversation. That voice, who was it again? Amongst the two, one voice was quite familiar, no the tone in which he spoke.....

It was Doctor Nauke.

It’s a good thing that not many had died.

On the table besides my bed, someone had left a bowl of soup. As I had fallen asleep again, though I didn’t see who had brought it here, there was still steam rising from it assuming that it hasn’t

been that long since it had arrived.

It was the smell of chicken soup.

As my body was in a better state (don't ask whose assistance it was), I lifted myself up halfway. But, even with just raising my upper body up, my head spun as if my surroundings were shaking.

But still..... I can't just die, right?

Considering how relieved I was at knowing that Doctor Nauke was alive, I wonder how delighted my mother would be in knowing that I'm alive.

I could recall my mother's voice in my dream telling me to come to my senses and have some soup. But, other than that, I can't remember much else.

Ahhhh, I guess I must live on like this.

I tried to hold up the bowl, but it was too heavy as I couldn't pick it up. Embarrassing, considering how I had wielded a sword that was over 3 cubits long. Come to think of it, where did that sword go?

I looked around the room carefully, but it didn't appear before my eyes.

Huh, I can turn my head it seems.

This time, I was determined to raise the spoon. I wonder if I can hold this up somewhat. It would be nice if the soup bowl was on my lap. What an impossible task.

“Fabian? Are you awake?”

Ahh, that questioning voice is so pleasing to hear.

“You’re awake, huh.”

# Chapter 27: Necklace Of The Four Seasons

## (5)

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Doctor Nauke opened the door, and seeing me struggle, he kindly helped me out. Come to think of it, I'm meeting a lot of acquaintances today.

After attempting to arduously hold up the spoon, I decided to stay still and allow Doctor Nauke to feed me. In other words, I figured out what to do.

I asked him while rolling the soup around.

“It seems I have seen all my acquaintances today.”

Uhhk..... my voice was still the same. It was alright in my dream.

“Uh, not really. Ryujia came here yesterday?”

Huh, yesterday?

I must really not be alright. Perplexed in the moment, I decided to attack Doctor Nauke's spoon while recollecting my senses.

“Haaa.....so it was like that.”

“Mmhm. Did Ryujia say she was going to conduct a prophesy for you? Do you have the fee?”

“Eh... .. yes?”

I didn't even think about that. Well, since she said fate and stuff, so I thought she was doing it for free? It seems that Ryujia is a much more formidable person than I had imagined.

But that's that. My store is ruined, so what money could I possibly come up with?

After uselessly thinking of such things, my mouth had opened.

The soup started to spill out my mouth.

“Eeeub.....”

Doctor Nauke, after taking a glance at my face, resumed his normal asking tone of voice.

“Fabian brat, didn't you know that if a fortune teller doesn't receive her fee, her divine powers would weaken?”

“... .. eh....”

“This time, it seems that Ryujia is properly preparing for

something huge. You need to firmly prepare for the fee as well. If anything, after your body heals up, won't you help with my work and earn at least a tidy sum? I can help you with that at least?"

"... A doctor's assistant?"

"Brat, even that isn't as simple as it looks. When I take my money out, I usually take it all out. Where do you think my sister's personality came from? You saw it too right?"

"... ...."

I had realized. Although the Nauke family had two different methods, but they have amazing ways of appealing to shocked people, no, at least convincingly on how to handle people like 'me.'

As I began to think about money, I had strangely become more rational.....eh, Doctor Nauke sure knows how to grasp my personality well.

"... .... We're still famous fortune tellers... ...."

"Haha, then can I expect something grand then?"

"... ...."

Doctor Nauke, who was relentlessly feeding me soup, chronic questioning disease had not been treated at all.

If only this body wasn't that of a patient, I would attempt to treat it right away.

“That's that, I met your father... ....”

The soup was finished. Doctor Nauke kindly wiped my mouth with a handkerchief and laid me back down while I was starting to think about the existence that's my father at the same time. Mister Nauke, I wonder how you saw my 'father' as.

“He comes here every day and stays at the main floor of the inn before returning. Although I told him to just stay at the inn, he told me that you wouldn't be in the ideal condition for him to be able to do that as he had so said. As for the explanation, he said he would delay it until you were fully recovered.”

That dark-blue hair. I turned my head and saw my hair scattered on the temple. Since my hair wasn't that short, it wasn't difficult to see strands of hair lying around. Raising my head, I lightly touched it. Smooth. Although I've heard that my hair was lovely a lot of times, strangely, I haven't heard that once from my mother.

I wonder why. Was it because she didn't want to remember my father?

What relationship could the two have had, to eventually not be able to see each other once despite my father having come here.

“Perhaps, he could be still residing downstairs. I’m pretty sure that he stays here until dinnertime. He has all his meals here so.”

My body was becoming warmer. Although my bed had quite a few warm water bags, they didn’t have the effect that this chicken soup had. My blood began to circulate... .. if you think about it, the chicken soup seems to be more instantaneously effective as well... ..

Uhk, I shouldn’t be thinking about this.

“Fabian, your complexion looks better.”

... as if you weren’t an acquaintance.

“How long have I laid here for?”

“Hmm... .. it’s the 5th day.

“That long, I’m amazed how I’m still alive despite not eating for that long.”

“I’m amazed as well. But, if you were to see the mirror, than you see something more amazing.”

“Show it to me.”

“Be patient. If you receive another mental blow, I’m afraid it’ll be even more difficult to recover this time.”

To say such fierce comments in such a normal tone of voice was quite surprising.

“... how much... damage occurred?”

Doctor Nauke scratched his head. He was smiling slightly. But feeling something unfamiliar, I decided to ask again as I analyzed his face once more.

There was a long wound that ranged from the top of his head to his ear below.

“The damage to Big Deer’s Habiyanak was the largest. I’m not too sure, but it seems that it’ll be difficult to recover for many years. After that, it’s Snowflower Sedenborum. At least there were a few survivors there. The people at Rose Ember, though, didn’t have too large of an impact as the majority had already fled, so not a lot had died either. As for Laurel Bay’s Grillard, well... ..it’s as it is.”

I was sure it wasn’t there before. Probably a knife scar? But, the man was smiling as if it was nothing.

I wonder if there were no survivors in Habiyanak.

“Habiyanak.....”

He shrugged his shoulders as if he knew what I was going to ask. Afterwards, he quietly lowered his head.

“Excluding you, there has been one other confirmed survivor.”

“Who?”

Who could it be.

“Flame Snowy Mountain Inn’s Gorman’s wife.”

“Ahhh.....”

The image of fallen Mr. Gorman lying down in the snow on my way up the road grazed past in front of me. Tears began to flow down my face slightly.

“But, her condition is as if she’s already dead. Not only is she severely wounded, she’s barely conscious. It’s a miracle for her to even be alive, probably due to her younger brother. It seemed that the man had protected her with his body.”

I see.

The energetic and feisty image image of her materialized. Lefty Gorman was her name. I remember Mr. Gorman calling her ‘Lefty!’.

Come to think of it, Dick was dead as well.

Dick's appraising, no I wonder if that jewel appraising shop is still there.

“Fabian, it seems certain that your recovery has improved greatly. To be able to hear these reports like that.”

Is... that so?

I could feel the nape of my neck becoming cold. Those dead people.

I could feel my rough face, to be able to feel was evidence that I was indeed recovering.

Raising my lower lip momentarily, I stared at Doctor Nauke. I wonder what you've lost.

But then, if you think about it, Doctor Nauke was indeed a doctor.

He had fixed his disease by himself.

He's replying very well.

“By the way, do you perhaps know where Mirbo Genz had gone to?”

“Mr. Genz... the man that carries all those sparrow nets you say.”

# Chapter 28: Necklace Of The Four Seasons

## (6)

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Huh? How did he know?

Did the 20 bundle of nets not fit into his backpack?

To suddenly feel a sense of guilt at this time.

“He came to retrieve his stuff a few days ago, but after that, I’m not sure where he had disappeared to.”

I see, so he had already departed.

That person doesn’t like to wait around it seems. Although he wasn’t someone that I was close with. Still, I kind of missed him in the end.

Sigh, I might end up yearning for all the people in the world at this rate.

..... I don’t want to long for the dead.

“Have soup until tomorrow, and if you continue to improve your condition, starting the following day, you can begin to have regular meals. Since your body was in a fragile state and you’ve been in bed for so long due to mental shock, since you have such a strong body constitution, it seems that you’ll recover shortly.”

Alright. Dead people pass on, and the survivors struggle on as well I suppose.

I wonder if the person I truly miss was not Mirbo, but...the fella beside me.

“Do you know where my sword is perchance?”

“If you mean that appalling sword that you were holding, it’s under your bed.”

“Huh?”

So it was like that. Well, who could take this really?

“Well then, it’s time for me to leave. Take care of yourself, Fabian.”

Doctor Nauke rose, and left through the door.

The door closed.

I should climb out of bed. I should quickly get up.

And go see Habiyanak.

I have to look at what happened at everything with my own two eyes.

That man is my ‘father.’

One day passed on just by having soup, until finally I’ll be able to have bread for dinner. Although somewhat uncomfortable, I could walk around. Doctor Nauke had visited once more and half-jokingly claimed that it was a miracle. Well, it wasn’t only just the doctor’s assessment. Nearly everyone in the province that had visited Green Leaf Inn was surprised at my speedy recovery.

To have been in a deep sleep for five days, it did seemed surprising to many how quickly my body had recovered in a day. But, I already knew.

I had overcome what I needed to overcome, since my body condition wasn’t even a problem now.

Over there my ‘father’ was sitting down.

“Fabian. You’ve recovered well.”

Just like that. The existence that spoke, was most likely the origin of my bloodline.

“It was said that you’ve been here a lot.”

“.....”

My father became silent from my words. Compared to talking with my mother, there were a lot of things that were different. But, I need to get used to it.

“I have a lot of things to ask.”

“..... I suppose so.”

“Can I ask?”

“Go ahead.”

I slightly breathed in. Outside the window, it was already dark. A candle that was lit on the table was accidentally bumped by a woman working in the inn due to the strong winds, causing it to flicker on the table.

Although many people frequent here in the day, the hall of the inn was now quiet. Sitting at one side of the table across from me was my ‘father.’ Other than the two of us, the innkeeper was sitting at the bar.

Due to having only a few candles lit, the hall was quite dark. Like the first time, I was staring at a figure where the light was shining on that vivid, lean face of his. As if I was having a dream, I had purposely asked that man to stay after dinner, and was sitting opposite of him. All of this was a reality.

..... The fact that Mother wasn't here was also a reality.

“Why did you leave?”

I asked. The first question left my mouth.

“It's not me who had left. It was your mother that left me.”

“Why did my mother leave?”

“... .. She's ... Ijinz was... ..”

My mother's name.

Although I knew it, the name that I've only heard a few times in my life was spoken by that man. It was surely my mother's name, but for him to say it in that accent was quite unfamiliar. In my memory, my mother was always 'grocer's wife' or 'Fabian's mother,' and if not that, then it would be that wrong title of 'Christian's wife.'

Would he have called her 'Ijinz!' like Mr. Gorman had done to his wife?

“..... The fact that she had a baby, well the fact that she had you was something she couldn't acknowledge. We weren't in an official married relationship, you see.”

So what Ryujia had said was this, huh. I can clearly remember now.

The fortune-telling that Ryujia will do, I must listen to it.

“Although I loved her, we were not married. Ijinz, if it weren’t for me, would have become a female shaman.”

A female shaman! My mother?

It was a truth I had never thought of. Why?

“Why? What do you mean by a female shaman?”

“A female shaman is what you would call a ‘White-Clothed Dunarion.’”

Ah, I think I remember that word.

“Ijinz of the Christian family was a merchant family that resided in the city Rieju which did merchant trades between Isnamir and Seremuz. When Ijinz was five years old, the Nim-Narshinyak moved over there causing the circumstances to tip quite a bit, but they were still a reputable family. The reason they had moved over there was for Ijinz, since she was timely given a grant by the visiting Dunarion on becoming a female shaman.”

That grant, what utter nonsense if you see the results. Far aside of becoming a female shaman, she became a capable owner of a general store.

“Dunarion’s devotion was so great that your mother’s parents despite Ijinz being their one and only daughter, brought her to Nim-Narshinyak that resided in Dunarion’s temple, where she grew among the female shamans. So she grew up while learning many things from the female shamans while believing that she’ll be a female shaman for sure.”

It’s complicated. I never heard from my mother her side of anything not even once in detail. I was totally unaware as well that our capital’s central defense army was the Nim-Narshinyak that had moved over to Rieju.

The white-clothed Dunarion, I think I’ve heard of it before?—? Right, I’ve heard it from my mother once. One day, she spoke those words in an indifferent attitude, although I can’t remember why she said it. I’m not sure. And, I didn’t hear what kind of people they were as well.

Then... the reason my mother didn’t become a female shaman?

I stared directly at the person in front of me.

His lips began to move. The words ‘right’ formed from his lips.

“Right. After knowing she had you, she fled. Virtually

abandoning the blessed festival of becoming a female shaman two days before.”

It was all because of... .... me?

“Afterwards, I’m not sure how she bore you and came to this place at all.”

“Why didn’t you try and find me then?”

It felt as if my voice had become somewhat sharp.

“What do you mean as if I haven’t? Don’t you know how much I wanted to find her? You probably don’t know how much I searched and wandered. For her, and for you.”

Me?

So no less than 18 years after, now you find me?

“I have not married until now. Your mother was my one and only true love, and you’re my one and only son. Do you think you would know my heart that had waited for our reunion for so long, and finally arriving here only to see the corpse of Ijinz? I don’t know what to do now either.”

Stop, just stop!

Trembling, I tried to stand up, but I couldn't. There was something that was pushing up to my neck, but the squeezing of the chest didn't help at all. Indeed, the one thing I hated the most to think of.

Why did my mother have that expression, lying on the cold floor with that remorseful, cold expression?

That chest, as if two fists had gone through it, that large pierced hole which had once hugged the young me.

The coagulating blood splattered on the cold floor.

“Uhhhk.....”

‘Father’ was bowing his head. As if he was the one that had took my mother away.

But that wasn't it.

A few streams of something hot scribbled down from above my cheeks. Continuously, without stopping.

Tears started to pour out that I had not properly done so before. Not one or two drops, but a river of tears started to drain everything out of my body as the boiled up storm in my chest welled up. My eyes, my worn-out body, my feelings were being completely melted onto the floor, all the emotions that I wanted to forget about that had wholly unfolded into tears, the time when I

climbed up the hill in search for my mother, the time my mother was lying down on that cold floor, and the five days that I was lying down, all the tears I couldn't cry properly.

I cried.

# Chapter 29: Necklace Of The Four Seasons

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The wind was cold. I've lived under the White Mountains for the past 18 years, however today was the first I had felt such cold winds. After seven days and nights have passed by, I was now walking on that uphill road again. That slow slope when you climb up or go down was no different from before. That incline of a road that I had went up at least once a day for deliveries. The road that once had those merry, boisterous people that waved at me while I rode my snowboard, although there was always a few that swore insults. However, despite it being daytime, it was very quiet as if it was in the middle of the night.

Besides me was a tall man with a face all too similar with mine walking.

Many of the people had said this when they first saw him – I didn't know that Fabian's father was alive, but the fact that such a wonderful father existed for example, they resemble each other so well that anyone could recognize who the father and who the son is, and..... so far as to even say that it would be better to live with him than my mother. What exactly do they really want to say?

My outer appearance hardly resembled anything of my mother.

I wonder where all those people that busily travelled along here had gone to? The fact that it was too quiet was as if I was in a dream.

“Fabian.”

Now, there’s only one person here walking besides me that could call my name.

“Yes.”

“Would you like it... ..if I wasn’t at your side?”

I raised my head and stared at the person’s face who spoke those words. Those keen eyes and the shape of his nose, such a face looked like a sharp, carved knife. That noble impression that doesn’t belong in this kind of village at all, and that splendid attire.

Did I really look like that? But then, that dark-blue hair, and those pupils... my bloodline that I couldn’t deny.

“... No.”

“..... you don’t speak much.”

Ah, that’s the first time I heard such words in my life.

My ‘father’ who doesn’t know what kind of person his son is at all.

My ‘father’ that had never held my hand once.

I wonder how the feelings of a man that had longed for his lost love for 18 years would be like. It really is a hard problem to guess.

I wonder if that feeling would be similar to a person that had lost his mother who loved her son dearly for 18 years.

And I wonder how he would feel to see his son not officially say 'father' once.

Do I have the right to make this person more distressed than he currently is?

We were both, whether who came first or not, grieving and heartbroken.

The village, in short, was devastated.

Although there were some houses that weren't destroyed, the majority had collapsed, and there was no homes that could be determined as livable. Over there was carpenter Nasret's home, over there was the aunty that sold steamed sweet potatoes, and over there was also the famed grandfather Rayane that no one could imitate shoe shop that made shoes out of leather.

Everything was bitterly destroyed.

One more slope and we will be at our store.

The majority of the corpses in Ember were cleaned up by the villagers at Grillard, and tonight would be the one dinner when we hold the mass funeral. Of course, my mother's corpse was already at Ember.

The reason why this funeral was delayed was because the Lord's family had fled and was late in returning back. No, I should say that in present tense not past tense. Since they are not returning now either.

Unable to stop waiting as the corpses might rot away, all the village chiefs had decided to gather and perform the funeral. Well, village chiefs... were of Ember and Grillard. Habiyanak was now a village that had ceased to exist, and Sedenborum was one that only had 10 or so survivors left.

A good reason why people agreed to have a joint funeral service was..... since there were so many families that didn't have a single relative left.

As if they were buried under the season. No, they were just forgotten as if they hadn't existed originally.

I stopped in my tracks. There was a truth that I thought long and hard about last night.

“Can.....”

I hesitated. It wasn't an easy task. This wasn't a word I had spoken once while I lived.

We both stopped walking. The store sign had collapsed, and I looked up at 'Big Deer's General Store' roof which was blown away. It would've been nice if I could skip over there happily.

He started to meet my gaze.

"I.....call you that?"

I had deliberately avoided using that exact word. However, he understood even though I hadn't said it.

His face cleared up for once. For the first time.

"Of course."

Right. I shouldn't have the right to hurt you just because I was hurt. To determine who was more agonized by this is a foolish thing to do. You probably tried, although I'm not sure if you did your best, you still spent some time trying to look for us.

There could be a different reason as to why you hadn't married yet. It could also be because a problem occurred that made you unable to marry as well. But, still, aren't I your one and only blood relative??

You could probably have been busy with other stuff, looking around for our mother and son while searching the entire continent. Or you could've been stopped by a relative that persuaded you to give up. What can they say now that you have found me?

Since you arrived so late, I would never hear you shout mother's name 'Ijinz!' once, although I would hear you speak of 'Ijinz' whenever you mention her. Although this long period is not enough to reward you with that, but now it's unavoidable right?

Mother, you, who wanted to be a wife initially, had a child and raised him with love for 18 whole years, right?

So I will call this person the name that I couldn't say for 18 years. Mother, you won't hate me too much for this, right?

“Father.....”

# Chapter 30: Necklace Of The Four Seasons

## (8)

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“Haah-!”

Having to shout this out, this is quite a pain. Apparently, I can't concentrate well if I do not make a sound. Sigh, if there's someone who has the ability to come and go mentally from one thing to another, tell him to appear in front of me.

Putting my left foot to the side, I stepped forward and turned my body sideways onto the left side. At that time, my right foot drew a circle and pointed towards my left as well. Simultaneously, the sword I wielded with both hands swung horizontally from the right.

Look at this, this is how you're supposed to slash! By having the sword swing horizontally!

I can't afford to lose my grip strength!

“Ahhrahh.....”

Uhk, a strange scream came out. That's because my body had been forced along by the sword's weight. While I was careful to follow the instructions, I didn't have the time to worry about how I would scream.

Aigoo !

It's as if my waist had been crazily twisted to the left. Although I did barely stop myself smoothly from rolling to the side, I could hear my bones collide within my waist.

Uhk.

“Ughhhhhhh.....”

Aigoo, my back.

To try and swing this heavy sword horizontally while trying to control this without having my body twist away as well was insanely difficult. If I continue like this, it's either my left or right spine that's going to break at this rate.

Shouldn't I be practicing with a lighter sword first? Don't you think so, you ignorant large man.

Mmmm, my father hadn't returned yet. Now?

“All right?—?”

For a while, I layed down on the grass and stretched out. The winter grass wasn't too soft as I could feel my bones ache. And the frostiness of the ground caused chills to rise up.

To repeat the same actions every day for hundreds of time, my back and shoulders are throbbing unconditionally in pain. The skin that ripped off from my hands in the beginning were starting to heal at least. The first few days, just by practicing on swinging the sword down, I couldn't feel anything in my palms as they became wholly numb. Whenever the sword moved, it looked as if there was intense rubbing between my palm and the hilt. No, to put it simply, just by practicing with this heavy sword for the day would definitely cause you to be in this state.

Well, despite running with that iron snowboard every day, my hand was like a hand of a lady in the prime of her youth compared to my father's. No, now this hand could only be compared to a patient of leprosy.

But at least the dirty blister marks were starting to settle down.

As for the store, it was just left at the state in which it was. The place I'm residing in is Grillard's General store owner Mr. Cindebolp – a family who had known my mother for a long time. When I had moved into their house, I first went back to our store and brought back a few things, but I still do not want to return and clean up just yet.

After that incident, there was no one that had frequented Habiyanak as if it was a ghost town. Even if no one said anything of it, after recovering the corpses, the road to Habiyanak became shut off. At this rate, I realized that our village might become a natural part of the White Mountains at this rate.

By chance, I felt my other arm by my side. I'm not sure if it's my

misunderstanding, but it's much stronger and thicker than before.

If I was like other children growing up with the mindset of becoming a swordsman to pursue their dreams, maybe I didn't have to go through such hardships right now. Nevertheless, as someone that was thinking of becoming a general store owner along with my changed fate, I became like this. No, has my fate really changed?

Am I practicing like this in order to be a swordsman?

I became lost in my thoughts.

In that brief moment, I was sighing, to have an amusing debt.

For the past 18 years I was someone that had only learnt of how to sell goods, approach customers, and negotiating the value of those goods. Outside of that I do have a few more small techniques, but those were negligible.

But whether it's my life or my home or my store, they all, without any hope of returning, vanished from my life like a dream. It would've been nice if a fire had destroyed the store instead. Then, at least I could construct a new home in place of the burnt building, and be stubborn enough to buy the goods again and set up. Even if it would take extremely long to complete, at least everything can be restored in time. Since there would be people that would give me the courage, and those that would help me as well.

But what I had lost was the foundations of my life, that entirety.

The Habiyanak village that disappeared. My acquaintances. And my mother.

Do I have the strength to rebuild another village? All the people I knew and spent time with, the many relationships that I valued which had frequently entered my life, could I actually restore this? Could I make my mother that had been by my side this entire time return to this place?

There's nothing I can do with my current strength. At least I can raise my swordsmanship.

Extending my right hand, I started to grab the hilt of the sword. It hasn't been long since this had been a part of my life. From the time I met Mirbo at the inn to now, it hasn't even been half a month, and compared to the 18 years, it's a period where I don't care whether I have this or not. But right now, this is the tool that can sustain my life.

To repeat it again, from morning to night, other than practicing the sword, there was nothing else I would do.

“Ahah.....”

Nothing, this feeling of having to restart with nothing.

What am I doing exactly? Why do I have to practice the sword?

It's as if I was a baby born anew, as if I had just come out from the caves after 18 years of seclusion. Well, it's not much different in real life. 18 years of managing a grocery store to a reclusive monk in meditation that is.

Suddenly, I thought of my father.

I had already vaguely expected it. That my father would leave someday. To the land he belonged.

From the moment I first saw him, my father's splendid attire – inside the prison, I initially saw a dark-blue cape and a rare silver full plate armor engraved with sentences and inscriptions that allows you to switch from a sword to a magician's staff – made me think that there was no mistake this man was of a extremely high status, but it was a sight to see my father bowing down to the people, especially to those who had somewhat grasped what kind of person he was. Not only that, the chiefs of Ember and Grillard came in search of my father and requested him to be the temporary representative of the province. Of course, my father rejected their request with a single sentence.

“I don't want to reduce the time I spend with my son, who I was separated from for 18 years at all.”

To the far southern province, where the capital of Blue Country was, the most famous Nim-Narshinyak Salvation Knights leader was my father.

Ahhh, whenever I say this, it doesn't feel real. When I first heard of this, I was greatly shocked, but now when I say this, I could feel my face flushing.

Anyways, although I'm saying this as if this story was relatively uncommon, but when I first heard of this from my father, I remember not believing the story at all and staring at him suspiciously. So, I asked.

“If you had such great strength, then how did you not find my mother and I?”

My father had always had an apologetic expression on his face whenever I brought forth this kind of conversation. It was always the same, so it was a bit uncomfortable.

“The time when I fully inherited the position was a mere 5 years ago. Before then, I had secretly tried to find out by using other people, but it did not work. For the last five years, it was extremely busy trying to seize command in inheriting such a large organization.....”

When the relationship of my mother and father was first discovered (of course, it was brought out to light after my mother fled. My father fairly 'with courage' revealed his relationship with Ijinz to the high temple of Dunarion. If you see my father's face now, I can't possibly imagine him in his twenties. Hmm) it was rumoured that there was criticism that arose within the territory of Nim-Narshinyak. Even though he belonged to the famous Knights of Salvation that could refuse the king's orders, the subject of criticism became so large in hand that he was nearly expelled.

My mother, a female shaman who couldn't marry and she wasn't a silly person from Blue County, but Purple County which had the largest religious sect where she is highly revered as the shaman of life 'White-Clothed Dunarion.' To have such a woman bear a child and then flee, the aftermath must have been significant. I know as well, but the ire of society are very frightening.

That father, who had overcome all those disturbances and time to become the leader of that organization, just how difficult of a task it must've been.

“... So after the power had stabilized to some extent, I was finally able to search directly now.”

While I was reminiscing to what my father had said in retrospect, I could suddenly hear footsteps approaching. Mm, it's probably too late to stand back up. Seeing how these sounds are now very close that is.

..... Still, it's better than continuing to lie down.

“Father, you've come?”

Urgently rising my body, I saw my father walking towards me equipped with his plate of armor. Even now, it will take some getting used to to see such an elegant, refined figure of my father at times. But, there was one thing in his hands that wasn't usually there.

An bottle of wine in this daylight, what could've happened?

“Fabian, want to walk a bit?”

It's a relief. It seems that he had nothing to say about me skipping practice and lying down.

I'm not exactly sure but if I was a subordinate of the Salvation Knights of my father, then I felt that I would already be receiving a harsh scolding. To lie down on the ground stretched out during practice, pack your bags and go home immediately!

... .. cowering from that useless imagination, my shoulders shrunk back without reason as I trailed behind my father.

While I followed from behind, the 'Grillard's Green Flag', a bar located on the border of Ember emerged. My father entered first, so I followed in.

“Sit.”

The owner Mr. Srems was a bit clumsy while managing the bar. It has only been a few months since he had inherited the place after his parents had passed away. Mr. Srems after wiping his hands on his apron for some time, ran towards our table.

“What would you like to order?”

My father was slightly smiling while looking towards me. Then he spoke.

“Bring us two glasses, and what’s the most delicious pie here?”

“Glasses..... Ah, and all the pies are quite tasty.....would you like to try the custard cream pie?”

So we faced each other with a custard cream pie and the bottle of wine that my father had brought.

He took off the cork firsthand. As the cork was pulled out, an unfamiliar, but strong scent leaked out. It was a smell quite piquant yet unique.

“Over there in the south, if you travel to Harmatan Island, there’s a castle and territory that the Narshinyak family have lived on past a hundred years from generation to generation. The Yemorand Province is the administrative district of our country, and the castle’s name is called Pia Yemorand. You may very well know, Pia Yemorand is the name of the star in where the 11th Arund ‘astrologist’ had reigned. Currently, my friend is managing it on behalf of me so I only visit there once a year or so to take a look.”

The wine was poured onto the glass. It was a ripe grape color.

“This is a famous wine that originated from that place.

Yemorand wine is the name, which is famous even in the land of Mabril.”

My father raised his glass, which I imitated.

Thick but aromatic, and looked quite strong as well.

“In order to prepare for this journey, I had visited the province of Yemorand to acquire an exceptionally great bottle. This had been sealed for 87 years from this year. You could say it’s a bottle of wine that’s incredibly difficult to assess in terms of value due to how rare this is.”

“... ....”

Thinking about how much of what I’m swallowing are essentially gold coins, it almost made me choke in my throat as it struggled to go down.

“..... This is the bottle I prepared for the three of us when I would meet you and your mother.”

“... ....”

The silence this time weren’t from the gold coins stuck in my throat. There was something larger that made it difficult to breathe.

“Fabian.”

My father called for me who was continually keeping silent.

I should reply. In order to swallow up the clogged wine in my throat, I emptied that expensive wine in a breath's time. You're not supposed to drink wine like this, but I had not much of a choice.

“... .. Yes.”

The sunlight that shimmered through the open window glittered on the floor.

On the wooden table was my father's hand. It was the hardened hands of a warrior that had endured countless battles and hardships, which he could destroy the table within an instant. Nevertheless, it was peacefully placed on top of the table.

But, it was a hand that would return to that world sooner or later.

“I long that you would sincerely think of me as your father.”

I am honestly thinking like that as well.

I don't want to be a burden in your life. I don't want to be a question that you have to solve.

But I also need you. Since I would be alone, awfully lonely. You are the only string that connects us in this world.

What irony.

“Yes..... you don't know how glad I am that you haven't abandoned me or my mother, still being alive safely. Through these gloomy events, I thought about this too. I should be grateful towards the heavens that had separately kept Father alive, as if a miracle, and if you had come late, then I might've reverted back to my old self and expect myself to restore all these earlier mistakes to their original state, and be excessively selfish, is what I had thought.”

Since my father's glass was empty, I poured him another glass. I also ate a slice of custard pie. As I performed these routine activities, I tried to think about this from my perspective and tried strenuously to accept it. And I tried to make the right decision.

“I have something to say to you today, and something to show you as well.”

# Chapter 31: Necklace Of The Four Seasons

## (9)

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Our conversation flowed like the changing seasons.

I'm sure that no one is oblivious as to how seasons change. It's not the theme of life. Without you realizing, it could be spring one day, and fall the next. Another day, you go out with some light clothes, only to feel the cold air around you.

“Father, you would probably sincerely think of me as your son. I, too, sincerely think of you as my father. But... ....”

Those contradictory words that were hard to explain, I decided to say it in the end.

“It seems... ... that I don't really think of myself as your son, father. Though I need a father, I do not want to rely on you and become a burden. The fact that you need to leave soon, I know that too. Even if you leave me be and depart, I won't say anything. I.... .... am a person from here and I have sustained myself well to this point. Going forth... I can do well.”

Those last words were a lie.

And I was wholly unsure if what I said was what I really wanted. It's just that the whole situation was distressful.

... .. After my mother had passed away, I have a lot more tearful moments nowadays.

“... ..”

The eyes that stared at me for an instant, shook.

But soon, it returned to that gentle light from before. I wonder what he was pondering in that short amount of time. What could he be thinking in front of his foolish son? What had caused his heart to move?

“Don’t say such words.”

After putting a piece of pie in his mouth, he poured wine into my empty glass.

“I initially had the mindset of bringing you with me. To come all the way here to meet you, do you expect me to leave you here alone? And are you telling me to return to my province alone?”

“That’s... ..”

I had nothing to say.

I listened to the words of my father.

“Fabian. I have plans on raising you as the successor of our family.

Moving to a world that I thought I could never move to. After thinking of the place I belonged to was shattered, to be invited to such a high place.

I was lost for words as this was too unfamiliar, but my father had showed a slightly melancholy smile.

“It seems that you’re not very happy to live with your father.”

“No, it’s not like that... ....”

“Then, did you really think I would leave you here alone and go back?”

My father was now obviously laughing. He was joking. The relationship between my father and I, was it originally supposed to be something like this? It’s possible that he would see this pessimistic son of his as silly. Adequately, he was a wonderful father who I couldn’t reach out to.

After exhaling a long breath, smiling, I brought the glass to my lips.

“Look at this.”

Putting his hands under his shirt, from within the armor, he drew out the necklace he wore on his neck. Taking off the silver chain off his neck, he placed it on top of the table and pushed it towards me. Tak, as I could sense that it was quite an item just from its heavy sound.

At the end of the chain was a large black disk-shaped ornament that was as large as my palm. It was an item that emitted an unfamiliar feeling, as if it belongs to a different world. Especially, that pure-black, dark light that was absorbing the light.

“What’s this?”

I extended my hand to grab it. Then, I lifted it up.

I did not have the ability to recognize the level of craftsmanship, for I was only at the stage to see a few black lines on it, but I recognized in one glance in exclamation of just how admirable this piece was. I inspected it carefully for a while. Those pieces that were so small that you couldn’t see its detail from afar.

My fingers followed the disk up. I could feel those smooth concluding bumps with the edge of my finger.

Rotating it backwards, I could see the engraved name in unknown characters, as well as the symbols of the fourteen months that encircled outside the black sun evenly apart.

My fingers stopped at the dent at the center of the disk.

“It’s called the Necklace of the Four Seasons, and amongst the treasures that are passed down, this one is the most valuable. Look at it carefully.”

Listening to what my father had to say, my fingers began lingering on the four pillars of the cross engraved on the dent. And on the head of that cross was a diamond-shaped gemstone embedded in that spot. A green stone with brilliant shades of sunshine.

Having green on top of the glazed black stone was a very unique attribute.

“Four seasons... .... Then this would be spring?”

Though I might have said this because I did not know what it meant, my father nodded.

I see, four seasons huh. Then where are the jewels of summer, winter, and fall go to?

As if my father had expected what question I had, he soon said this.

“The rest are scattered among each of the continents. So that the necklace original hidden abilities are lost, so it has no strength, but it is still a beautiful ornament.”

Honestly, even if you say it's just an ornament, it was such a beautiful item that it would be of great value. At least, that was how it was in my eyes. And the green jewel that was delicately embedded needed no extra words. Earlier like this wine, there was no mistake it would be 'incredibly difficult to assess in terms of value.'

But, I wonder what powers this necklace has?

"That 'spring' is what I had discovered in this journey. I found it at a female shaman village far west, near the borders of Rojondiawa. Maybe, all these coincidental incidents were what led me to find that jewel, and so I still marvel at what happened then to this day.

Coincidence. That's quite an ambiguous word.

Tenderly holding the necklace, I waited for my father to give me more of an explanation in detail.

"This necklace that has been passed down by our family for the last 200 years, was a one-of-a-kind, unique item that even the nation's King desired to possess it. In here lies the 'Magician Ezekiel's' hidden magic sentence that he left behind. What that sentence is, there has been no record of it, other than the fact that all the secrets will be solved once you find the Four Season stones and fill it up. This tradition has been told from father to son even till today. Of course, there was a lot of controversy leading up to the authenticity of those words, so this has been passed down as more of a relic."

What... .. did you say?

I briefly shook my head, and asked again after swallowing my saliva.

“The Eternal Redeemer, Ezekiel?”

My father slowly nodded his head.

The thought of this item being related to that legendary person caused me to inspect the item in my hand once more. Surely, considering it was passed down for that long a period, there were no old traces at all. But, those peculiar patterns seemed ancient. Though I’m not sure if I have the ability to sense such a thing.

My father resumed his explanation.

“As you can probably guess from me finding one, the main reason that had allowed me to depart from my province was my promise towards the elders of the family on finding the four jewels and embedding them onto the necklace. In our family, it had been passed down that the person that would complete this necklace would be granted enormous powers, yet as it is only a legend, no one knows for sure. And it’s also unconfirmed as to what type of power it brings. But, due to the great affinities that the elders have towards this legend as anyone would have some sort of affection towards a legendary story, the chiefs had all welcomed my proposition. As you may well know, a lot of impressive knights are dispatched. And isn’t our family the center of excellence among

the Salvation of Knights as the best knights in the continent? Despite that, the expectations to complete this necklace is still not completely lost.”

It would've been impossible for my father, the leader of the knights as well as the head of his family, to leave everything behind and travel all the way to this faraway place. For some reason, I feel a bit sad. This necklace, it's countless times more important than the existences of my mother and I.

My father resumed.

“To be honest, there were a few people that did attempt to achieve this mission, but they all failed. You can recognize that just from seeing the necklace at this state. For 200 years, this necklace has preserved itself in this condition while being passed down.”

I nodded my head. I understood. I wonder how frustrating it would be.

How do you find three more jewels in this wide continent? And it's not like they know what they look like, no information at all.

Asking my father like this, he laughed.

“Every item that's called a treasure has their own unique traits. This necklace basically possesses the attribute of returning to its original form.”

“Returning to its original form? What do you mean?”

“Did you really think this necklace was like this originally? What I want is to see this necklace slowly restore the rest of the jewels and reclaim its completed appearance. It has been passed down that several signs will appear to the one who wears this necklace due to Ezekiel’s special spell. I can sufficiently certify this ambiguous claim when I departed in search for the first jewel. I left for my journey without any information, and yet I could feel a path opening automatically in front of me.”

“Eheh... ....”

It doesn’t seem real. To hear the same story that was spoken of for over 200 years, and still my father had directly experienced that. Was it true, really?

And the necklace creepily felt as if it was alive. Could it be that this necklace has a will of its own and desires to return to its original form? Though I’ve heard stories that were continually repeated over time, this kind was a first in my life.

# Chapter 32: Necklace Of The Four Seasons

## (10)

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I've been reasoning why my father would be talking about this for a while, which led me to a conclusion. My father, in the end, needs to complete the legend of this necklace, and in order to do so, he was willing to take me with him. He needs my assistance.

A journey with my father, huh. And to travel with such a strong father would definitely allow me to learn a lot, and restore the lost time I had. It'll be a hundred times better to enter his province together then enter it first only to not be welcomed.

But as if my father was having a difficult time saying so, all he spoke about was the legend of the necklace. I'm fine.

With the thought of aiding my father, I opened my mouth.

"It would be fun to find those jewels."

"Is that how you think?"

My father's face brightened. See, my reasoning was right.

For now, since I had already helped, I decided to continue.

"If it were me, I would be interested in pursuing such a wonderful story in search of that quest since I have nothing to do

here now.”

Wouldn't I be a good son with this much?

“Fabian.”

My father suddenly called for my name seriously. At that time, I was on the verge of returning the necklace to my father's hands.

“For you to think like that, my mind is much more at rest. Yes, I believe in my son. I wouldn't be troubled at all entrusting such a thing to you, and I wouldn't be worried about the treasure as well. You are my son, the Knights of Salvation Leader's only son.”

“... ..?”

What, it's as if this conversation is heading towards a strange.....

In the moment when I was thinking of such things, my father's face had a smile as he spoke like this.

“You can do it well right?”

“That..... is.....”

This wasn't it. No, this definitely wasn't it.

While I was wondering how this conversation had become like this, my father firmly placed the necklace into my hands, causing my thoughts to be wholly blown away. Although I hid my worrisome expression while I barely displayed a smile, I was very flabbergasted internally as I searched for a solution.

“I love you, Fabian. And I trust you. I believe that you have the capability to protect this valuable family treasure. I will joyfully wait for the day you return. Probably, it’ll be a very joyous day.”

I, I can’t turn this back!

Though I did my utmost best trying to scramble my brain for any sort of assistance, I only had this to reply eventually.

“..... Yes, I will try my best.”

Ultimately.....

My father brimming with happiness was staring at me.

On that face, there was no hint of doubt at all, so I was quite puzzled. What did he believe that could allow him to trust me to that extent? Who am I to be entrusted of such an enormous responsibility?

“Fabian, why don’t you try this on.”

After viewing my hands for a bit, he took out a gauntlet and directly equipped it onto my arm after pulling me in.

Ah... ..

“To see your palms like this makes me feel sorry. And to wield such a sword without a gauntlet, how can your hands possibly withstand it?”

I lowered my head and inspected the gauntlet that fitted well onto my hand. I was lost as to what to reply with.

My father’s gauntlet, although it was somewhat deteriorating, it was an impressive work by the artisan as the leather and chain seams were quite smooth and sophisticated. It wasn’t an item that a young swordsman should touch. In addition, my father did have a long path to go so I wasn’t uncomfortable at all with it on my arm.

I barely found a sentence that I could possibly speak.

“How..... about you father?”

“I have this don’t I?”

My father laughed as he held up his silver plate and his other gauntlet. I thought that it was quite an uncomfortable item to wear

normally. Why? Since I had sold those before.

Of course the items that I had sold measured against the two gauntlets my father possessed couldn't even be compared.

“... .. I'll use it well.”

“Alright.”

My father brightly smiled. As if he was sufficient for him to hear that I would use it well.

I looked back at the hand that my father had unequipped his gauntlet from. Despite it being bare-handed, his hand looked much more robust and strong than mine.

Could I be able to do everything as well as my father? To be the successor of my father, an impressive knight, and the family head, all of these?

Well the start to all of this would be to do well with the task I've undertaken first.

With my unfamiliar hand equipped with the gauntlet, I began to touch the necklace again. It felt as if it this was already my possession unlike before.

Something's about to commence.

Outside, I could see Mr. Srems closing the window due to the wind.

But I wonder what kind of winds are blowing in my head. The green wind that was beginning something. The blue wind that was foreboding something.

End of Volume 1, Part 2

# Volume 2

# Prologue: The 1st Arund Troubard

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.....The Star of Constellations ‘La Trouba Drooe,’ (often referred to as ‘Drooe’) is ruled by Arund. At this time, you may see the aurora lights to the north if you are fortunate. The weather that anticipates for spring is soft and peaceful. The weather is merry which allows for nice vacations without much trouble if you exclude the occasional snow.

If you meet the Troubard in this weather, there is a custom to ask for a song to be made, in which he makes it with the strength of the guardians as a present. The Troubard of Life is what the exalted Troubard is also called. It seems that the minstrels are preparing a gathering, although the place and time is not yet revealed.

“From long ago, the songs passed down have slowly been to let known of its existence” are summarized orally: to reveal the reason to explore fate, to feel power and strength, to coincidentally meet the shadow of yourself, to enter a restless wandering, and to allude to the future with the past. This Arund’s symbol of meaning is the color purple.

– The Sorcerers’ Interpretation on each Arund Month of the calendar,

Among them, the 14th

# Chapter 33: Silver-Haired Yurika (1)

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Now, should we try the story of that knight?

From Winter comes Spring, Nisroeld leaves and the Frand flowers bloom

The person's story that everyone is waiting and will be waiting for?  
Opening the closed time in order to retrieve the four seasons

The story that the 14 stars secretly passed down

I can do it. In my song is the whisper of destiny which

Is hidden, and who has passed it on?

In my mirror I see the future of the world's people

The power of prophecy that grants vision

If you want to hear my story... ..

– Isnamir Kingdom, Isna's Female Shaman

'Le Gloshu' Ellijong's Prophecy <The Green Jeweled Knight> Year 1

---

It has already been a month since I had started training in swordsmanship with my father at my side.

The first Arund month 'Troubard' had quickly passed by. It felt like it was the new year the day before yesterday, but this month is already ending.

In this year, I can't say that I wasn't happy. If it were previous years, there would've already been boisterous parties, and many places to watch the fun from. But, this time, there was no such

festival due to the deaths. The people here didn't even reach half of those last year. It was too obvious. The people of two villages were, in short, 'massacred.'

It's quite a bitter memory thinking about it again.

Sigh, rather than having these useless thoughts, let's just quickly fill up the daily amount of practice I set up.

Above the hills overlooking the green lake, I was more focused on training in the sword than before. The amount of practice, of course I had set it myself. I'm not sure if it was too much, but in the beginning, it felt as if my waist was going to break every day, but I've been seeing the effects lately. After knowing what I had to do, I began to consistently train saying that I needed to be stronger.

I held the sword firmly as I could feel a quite warm wind blowing past my cheeks.

“Kyaaaa-!”

Ugh... even in my eyes, this is some sort of dragon's cry.

My father was leaving tonight. I never expected for him to continue staying here in the beginning at all..... the funeral ended, one season was nearly up, so when the 14th Arund 'Elder Sage' was completing its last task, my father brought up the fact that he had to leave. I confidently nodded my head. After my father had

entrusted me with the necklace, I was able to change with accepting the fact that I would be away from my father quite comfortably. It was a considerable, surprising change even from my perspective.

A strange truth materialized after having the funeral. The fact that someone had pointed out the countless number of tombstones that didn't have a body to bury, the strange aspect despite having recognizable corpses that were subtracted, whether it was a relative or anyone else, from the collection of bodies.

The numbers were far too low.

The rest of the corpses were either burnt, or maybe it was because they were too crushed and dismembered I thought, but maybe the monsters might've ate the corpses, or possibly they were taken as the monsters crossed the province to be eaten alive while the hostages screamed in pain and fear. Despite not wanting to imagine any more displeasing memories, the scenes of their suffering hadn't fully dissipated yet.

My mother's chest... .. and that wound, where the blood had frozen up, it was quite certain that the monsters had some sort of strange abilities. No matter how cold the weather was, for blood to immediately freeze afterwards is something that could never happen.

Back to talking about my father.

To complete the necklace and return to the Knights of Salvation

Organization Nim-Narshinyak, and to inherit the head representative of the household. This is the plan of my life that will unfold before me in the future. This isn't the plan that I had set up.

Of course, I don't think I'll be warmly welcomed if I do go to that place in my opinion. I wonder what the majority of their expressions would be if they hear that their family relic was entrusted to me.

Blue County, in contrast to the Gray County that consisted of a few villages, was a different province. If there was an area that could be considered somewhat central, there would be a few small villages that exist around it. And townspeople that live in Blue County have a large difference in their speech, mannerisms and thinking compared to those of the rural villages. Although it was occasional, I could feel a sort of gap whenever I saw those sorts of people. Even if they weren't of nobility.

In such a place, if it was an 'illegitimate child,' the amount of criticism that one would receive from society was honestly something that I shudder to think of.

But now, I think that my father had deliberately entrusted me with this task of fulfilling the wishes of the family despite knowing the truth.

I am only eighteen, and I didn't possess much ability to carry a relic so ridiculously dangerous that even the nation's King had coveted. But to be entrusted with such a quest by the head of the family, this would also become quite a great adventure. At first, I

felt as if I was taking over the job, but when I thought about it again, I realized it was more of me embracing my father's burden.

In spite of not knowing whether I could surely complete the task or not, he had laid aside all those countless number of knights in his family and entrusted this to me. And if I were to lose this necklace? The thought of it was appalling. My father? It would be a punishment that was incomparable to the incident he had with my mother. If you consider the cruelty of those people above, he could probably be forced to step down and be expelled from the family.

This was surely an enormous gamble, this task.

To realize that by succeeding in this task would allow me to receive recognition, it was a truth too monumental for me fulfill.

Ah, when I think like this, my simple mind becomes complicated and heavy.

“So you were here today as well.”

My father had climbed over the cliff, equipped with his cape and plate of armor. Aside from the fact that today was the day he would depart, there was normally no way to take off those things. That appearance, on the other hand, was quite cool. You know, if you walk around in full plate armor, they say that you can't be a considerable trader. Well, it was the person who had first ripped off those iron window bars..... (I suddenly thought about it, on the day my mother's body was found, how exactly did I break away from my father's grip?).

“You’re training quite hard.”

I wonder if my father knows how much guilt, and also a sense of duty it reminds me of whenever he says those words?

Like I said before, I wasn’t very enthusiastic with practicing in the sword since I was young. Other than the Gepper Kumentz incident which had me practice with whatever means, I wasn’t too acquainted with this kind of weapon. If you’re talking about this fella in my hands, the moment I try to practice by raising the sword up, it was extremely difficult, despite trying to be friendlier, to have an affinity for it.

But after seeing my father’s face, these feelings have changed.

But after a bunch of strangers had killed my mother and destroyed the village, those creatures whose identities even the elders did not know of, were beasts different from zombies or specters. As someone who wasn’t accustomed to monsters, this disaster made me think that it was all just a natural disaster. Even when I try to forget a tiny bit, all my feelings would surge out after seeing my father’s face. As my mother’s face and my face coincide, those complicated emotions sweep me aside.

As a swordsman who wasn’t an examiner, the reason I began to swing this sword day and night. Those rooted emotions that were far more than the task of the necklace.

Maybe, maybe because I’m a rural merchant vendor, like those

children who lost their parents in those legendary stories (these children will soon in the continent, at least in their province if the scale is small that they became heroes) would say ‘I will definitely have my revenge – !!!’, such resolve didn’t burn inside me. When I first heard those stories, it sounded so natural, but immediately returning back to my story, to consider killing hundreds of these monsters, chasing them down for a lifetime wasn’t something that could be decided by yourself is what I’m saying.

That is true. It’s a sad story. I’m not a legendary protagonist, or the subject of a hero, I was none of that.

But that doesn’t mean my hatred towards these monsters was lacking at all, absolutely not. Even if there’s someone that would think of me as strange, I don’t think that such a kind of revenge is ‘possible’ for me. As well, realizing the difference between story and reality was so painfully sick, I humbled myself in swinging the sword.

I won’t forget. I will reward this disgraceful heart of mine with these painful emotions and the confidence to not have revenge.

Whenever I see my father’s face, and that noble excellence that he displays, I desired to be the same and yet not be in such a ridiculous state, and will myself to train harder and faster.

But a strange truth was revealed.

After these large monsters had left our villages, they were nowhere to be found. Despite a month passing by, there were no

news of a province being similarly ambushed at all. As if they had evaporated in the middle of moving towards the next province. Where to exactly, where did they go?

Then to see the mother I had lost to these monsters disperse like a dream, who should I hate in order to receive the rewards from my heart? What if people would totally forget this incident after some time had passed?

Then, the surge of resentment in my heart would rise even more!

I swung my sword vehemently without any purpose.

No matter how you think about it, it's laughable. Am I waiting for these monsters to rampage across the continent wherever they go, killing the mothers of children?

Not sure, I don't know.

“Fabian, won't you stop and have a spar with your father?”

“Yes?”

My father's abrupt offer caused me to hesitantly lower the sword. To have a sword spar with my father walking in that full plate of armour as if it was nothing.

To journey across the province escaping from somewhere (it

could be the capital) and not returning yet was a spar wholly different from the time with the Lord's son.

“I don't think I will be much of an opponent?”

“I'm just saying let's try. Seeing you practice, I wanted to try and spar with you once.”

“Aha.....”

There were no spectators above this cliff.

Those light clouds slowly flowed endlessly through the sky. This hill on the edges of the Ember province, which had a few traces of footsteps in the snow, just like a gateway. There was no indication of anyone around.

I'm not totally sure about my father's feelings. Since he's leaving after one month, is he wanting to see how much I have improved?

“Sounds good.”

As his son, I doubt he would try and kill me.

## Chapter 34: Silver-Haired Yurika (2)

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I gripped my sword properly with my left hand on the end of the hilt, while my right held above it, separating the two by the length of a fist. I wonder if it's due to the nervousness, but I could feel my palms beginning to circulate with a burning sensation of heat.

My father's sword was a saber. It was quite dubious whether my sword could properly be sparred against in terms of quality. And, the saber my father held wasn't a magnificent precious sword, but just a regular one. The sword doesn't quite go hand in hand with my father's appearance... .... I think that my father should spar with a sword as great as mine.

My father was a sword length apart from me, and calmly said something contrary to my expectations.

“Once we start, be prepared to win and knock me down.”

You weren't kidding.

“To start, I will be thrusting down onto your left shoulder, so let's see how you receive my sword.”

Mm, it's the sword form I practiced recently. So, I will go for the right shoulder, turning my falling sword to the left...

Sseuk.

When my father's sword swung close towards my shoulder, I had shrugged back my shoulders. His saber narrowly grazed me.

Eh... .. I don't think this was the swing that I practiced.

Turning, I spun around a quarter of a circle. The position of my father facing me also moved towards me at the same angle.

“Next!”

In a moment, my father closed the distance quickly as he thrust his saber down onto my left shoulder.

Ahhh!

I needed to quickly switch feet and move, but my feet weren't moving as quick as I thought. I lost my breath while evading the stabbing saber narrowly. Ah, I'm sure that there's going to be some scolding.....

“Fabian.”

My father, after separating his distance from me, spoke as he aimed his sword at me.

“What did I say about what you need to do with your feet?”

“... .. to fix my feet on the ground as much as possible. To move as if you were dragging your feet on the floor.”

“So you haven’t forgotten.”

Eh, my memory is quite good... it’s just that I always forget at the most critical times.

Nodding his head, my father returned back into the fight.

“Now, let’s start for real.”

From that quiet tone came my father immediately thrusting his saber towards my side. With two steps forward from his right foot, he swiftly arrived in front of me.

“Haya-!”

While I was concentrating on his feet, I quickly evaded the sword that was thrusting towards my shoulder. As if I had forgotten the lessons my father had just taught me, I was reminded sharply that I had forsaken my position as if I was at the level of having a street brawl with children... ..

“Raise your sword up!”

He quickly rose his sword again and thrust it towards me. Seeing this, I realized that when the sword came at me, I need to either

evade or raise my sword. If not, I will either be injured, or even die... .. Ahhh!

I realized I could've been injured or killed while trying to repeat these obvious words. Thanking the heavens for helping me realize the truth, I raised my sword over my head. Diagonally, as soon as my sword clashed indirectly , a fragment of the saber's blade breaking off could be heard. My sword scraped through the saber's blade.

Gugugugug-

I had recollected myself.

Those two hilts of iron chunks were clearly sharply-edged swords. And the blade of my sword was a monster that couldn't be chipped.

My father's?

Although his weapon was a normal saber didn't really match with his splendid plate of armor..... No, no, the saber was a good sword. It's my sword that was so absurd.

I could get hurt, and killed!

Moving my right foot one step back, I lowered my stance. Keeping the weight of my balance in check, I aimed for the moment the collision between my sword and his would be raised

up.

As I slashed my sword diagonally upwards from my right, I strengthened my grasp.

“Haiya!”

My sword attacked upwards, drawing a large, oblique semicircle.

My father’s saber was only one-fourth in size compared to mine in terms of the blade’s thickness. If I attack with my sword relentlessly straight-ahead, then he’ll either be flung backwards or have his saber broken. My arm strength was quite strong after all.

My father, with a sideways step with his left leg, pivoted towards me. He quickly lowered his stance.

My sword slash was slow. I couldn’t react fast enough. Since my body wasn’t quite accustomed to it yet.

My father’s sword flew past mine below, as he aimed for my left waist.

The serrated blade that was coming from the right with his left knee greatly bent down.

“Take my blow!”

Uh, what should I do at this time? At this time.

I recklessly grabbed my sword and pushed it towards the saber that was flying towards me. Damn, it's such a great shame for my sword to not have a pommel in this moment.

Ahhh, I regret not equipping my gauntlet as well!

Kakwang!

Ugh...Ah..... It was so painful that it forced my mouth open.

The handle part, the source of that serrated sword that propelled towards me, I had recklessly pushed my sword in that manner. But, due to my miscalculations, my hands slipped, causing the majority of my grip to be loosened. In this kind of spar, it was definitely necessary to have a gauntlet on. Wanting to strengthen my hands as close to my father's hands as possible, I had not equipped it on when practicing despite receiving the gauntlet.

Although I barely fended off my father's assault, my waist remained exposed.

And my fingers felt as if they were on fire.

“Ughhhhhh.....”

In the midst of my painful groan, I heard my father speaking in a

very calm manner.

“If you attack like that, you’ll act without planning the next step at all. If your opponent still has energy left in this condition, and is still holding onto his weapon, then it’s no different than the opposition gaining victory.”

That main point was quite stabbing. I too was having that kind of thought... Ahhk!

My father walked up to me and grabbed a hold of my hand.

“It seems my blade scraped the flesh . But it’s not a huge wound.”

Ah, so this was the difference between a father and a mother?

I lowered my sword with difficulty. Although I tried to open my hand, I was too dazed, but my father literally opened out my hand.

“Ahhhhk!”

My father started to touch each finger separately after opening my hand.

“Are your fingers fine?”

“..... Probably.”

Other than the fact that it was excruciatingly painful, the wound wasn't as significant. On the contrary, the blisters on my palm that were disappearing seemed to be more bloody in appearance.

To say it again... .. my palm was that bloody.

“We'll start again. Even if you have such a wound, there's no opponent that would let it slide.”

Although you're technically right, can't you return back to a father than an enemy?

My father not even hearing what I was thinking – if I think about it again, of course he couldn't hear my thoughts. I was too accustomed to having people know what I was thinking about – raised his sword again.

I have to continue. Well, there's no opponent that really would step away from this.

A momentarily thought.

Attack was the best defence!

“I'm coming!”

With the sword raising upwards in a flash, and one short step,

and one large step, he instantaneously advanced forward in two steps with a balanced stance.

Rapidly closing the distance.

A sword that slashed through the air from the right.

“.....”

My father who silently placed his sword onto mine diagonally. It was a perfect stance that wasn't even a tad wrong from the manuals. Probably, as the two blades clash, he'll slide it towards...  
...

Clang!!!

That severe, cutting, metal-cracking sound.

“Ah.....”

My father's saber broke apart just like that.

Two large pieces crashed onto the ground. Of course, it was just the blade. My father was still gripping onto the hilt.

As if I still lacked much training, it wasn't going as I had planned.

But I couldn't distinguish whether this worked out for the better or for the worse.

“Your arms are trained well it seems.”

There was a slight impact on my father's arm. Literally throwing away the sword onto the ground, he momentarily dangled his arm.

“I'm, I'm sorry Father. What should we do?”

My father smiled. I wondered how to describe that smile.

“To break like this means that the two swords are levels apart.....anyways, excellent. Although there's no guarantee that you'll win wielding against a similar sword, this fight is no different than the fact that you won. It seems the rewards were there for the one month you trained diligently.”

While I was briefly confused in the moment, my father approached and inspected my sword. The way he looked at me and at the sword was levels different. Unlike me who was wielding it forcefully, he looked at it as if he was looking at his child.

“It's a good sword. Despite breaking its opponents sword, there isn't a single chip. It seems that it wasn't made by any normal blacksmith. You said that Mr. Genz gave it to you?”

“Yes.”

“Handle it with care. It’s not easy to try and grab hold of such a sword in your life. Even I who had devoted myself to the sword up to this age had only heard about it through stories, but this is the first that I encountered such a sword in reality.”

This fella is that great of a sword?

... But why does it feel as if this sword is becoming heavier as I listen to those words.

Sword, lose some weight, just some. What did you eat for your weight to become like this, possibly.....?

... While I was holding a silly conversation internally, my father took his eyes off my sword and walked back to the backpack he put down under a tree when he previously climbed up the hill. He brought something large out of it.

Huh, what’s that?

Something that I only heard about.....

# Chapter 35: Silver-Haired Yurika (3)

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“Morning Star!”

“Yes.”

My father from my words smiled as he stood with his previous stance. Wait, he’s going to spar again with that?

He proved me right.

“Now, let’s resume our fight. Since I won and lost once, I will do my utmost to claim this round.”

Please, not with that warlike tone.....

“I’m coming!”

The Morning Star, a long stick with an iron ball attached at the tip, and if severe, would have a variety of spikes embedded in, was an appalling weapon to even look at. For my father to have such a weapon above all things.....

Ahk, I shouldn’t be standing like this!

It was coming straight down!

“Ahhhhh!”

I placed my right foot forward, and simultaneously shifted my left hand from the hilt to the end of the blade. It would be quite a big problem if my hand was cut off.

Although it's as if the sword was a long rod, I can't face it head on. The impact will be too large.....

Tikang!

“Ugh.....”

Although I told myself that I would avoid a frontal attack if possible, the impact onto my elbow was immense. I could feel my bones trembling. The aftershock that jarred from the arm up to my shoulder was so immense that it could make me drop my sword.

But... if I were to drop it.....

I had first released my left hand grabbing onto the blade.

It was a sword too heavy to be held with one hand, as I stopped it from vibrating by shifting my left hand onto my right arm. To be precise, I was supporting my wrist as I went in.

This...wasn't the end.

The sword that clanged head on with the briefly deflected morning star was striking downwards again diagonally.

What, what a monster.

Slightly withdrawing my sword to the left, I slashed horizontally. I thought that it would've been nice if I had asked the sword in advance. Well, for example. 'Are you confident you won't break while clashing with that?' etc.....

“Uhhkkkk.....”

There won't be many that would be making such a screaming noise while wielding when you're not even hit.

My slashing blade precisely clashed against the tip of his morning star. I'll aim for the joint, no even half of it.....

I'll strike it!

“Chaaaat!”

My calculations were wrong. I had struck the metal ball aside at a breath's time. The trembling morning star, as if it was playing ball.....

To play ball with that metal ball, no.....

There was no time to recollect myself.

It was aiming towards me again!

This time from the opposite side!

Tikang!

An impact that was indescribable in words transmitted into my arm a second time. Although I was in the same stance as before, this time I did something reverse and deflected the iron cudgel head on. Ah, was I getting the gist on how to block against this thing?

Again!

Tukang!

In this attack, two spikes were cut off by my sword as they flew off the side of the hill. I sent praises at the cutting power of my sword. Although my grip was trembling, I gripped the hilt even tighter. My father wasn't really playing around with his attacks. Everytime I fend off the morning star, it feels as if I had overcome a life-and-death crisis.

Those earnest eyes of his.....

It's as if he's really determined to kill me.

“Mmm!”

After the morning star had interchangeably clashed against my two-handed sword about five times, that frightening metal ball punched straight for me.

S, so...

Although I had to think quickly, I couldn't come up fast enough with a decision on how to block this time.

For now, I brought my left foot forward as I turned my body halfway. I faced against the attack with all my might. The morning star wasn't light, and even if it did have some force, it wasn't fast. However, that was only when it swung it down.

This time, it was piercing towards me.

“Ahyaaaaaah!”

This time I didn't decide to withdraw, but instead aimed for the hand that was holding the rod. I swung forcefully onto the head. The moment the two weapons collided, I had pushed onwards to the body. One step, two steps...

“Hayaaah!”

My father's strength was quite strong. He bent and pushed down the morning star towards the ground. Both weapons tried to endure as they exchanged blows against each other as hard as they could. That screeching, appalling sounds of the two metals colliding.

Guguguguguk...

Ah, it's as if my arm is going to fall off. It's no mistake that it's a miracle that I can endure this long.

Unable to withstand the pushing force, I looked around my surroundings in hope for a different solution as I quickly searched through my mind. Compared to earlier, it seems that I was much more composed now when thinking.

To deflect this to the side with strength alone.....

I turned the blade slightly sideways as it made the two blades slide down. Cheuuuk-it nearly reached his hand.

But my weapon was a sharp blade, and my father's was a 'rod' that had a metal cudgel attached at the end. And the only person who could touch this sword was me.

Right before my hands met my father's, I quickly pushed the hand that he held the rod with upwards. That power to flip it up.

“Mmm.....”

My father stopped his attack and was checking my stance.

“Just now, that was a good stance. Excellent. However.”

“.....My, my arm hurts too much....”

“It’s because you forgot one thing that I had taught.”

What was it? Aigoo, can’t I put down my sword for a moment?

But, I was holding the sword up, barely holding on. Although I strengthened my wrist, I could see the end of the sword shaking. Why? It was because I was extremely out of breath!

“Yes, it’s the exact reason why your sword is shaking.”

I tried to control my breathing and calmly move my sword down. But, strangely, it wasn’t settling down as fast as I thought.

“It’s because you forgot the method of how to breathe.”

I regathered a bit of strength and pulled away from my father’s morning star.

“What did I say on how to breathe when you receive a blow?”

Ah, that's right.

When I exchange blows against my father's sword, the impact was a lot larger than I had originally thought. It was because I had breathed in too much air from being anxious.

"I need to exhale."

"Yes. When you swing down your sword, and when you receive a swing, you need to exhale. When you're aiming the sword at me, that's when you breathe in. When you shout, there's a relationship between that and breathing in. That's why, when sword meets sword, the impact is less."

My father briefly stared at me and added another sentence.

"And if you carelessly move like that, you'll breathe as if you're a bull. If possible, use minimal movement. Do you understand?"

"... Yes."

Seeing how often I forget, to spend my life chasing those monsters would really not be appropriate at all I suppose.

But, I still won't give up on myself.

My father resumed his lecture.

“Fabian. You can’t say that sword is yours yet.”

## Chapter 36: Silver-Haired Yurika (4)

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Yes. Since Mirbo had given to this me without any explanation and left, in the end, it's not a weapon I had chosen. If I did choose, I would've definitely gone for something lighter. But he say he would give me this one. I wonder if I could wait a bit after maturing (Not the sword, me I'm talking me) before I attempt to wield it.

“Your body can't handle the weapon you're holding. Although such a weapon doesn't exist, it's no use. Rather than attempting to face an enemy with that, it'll be better for you to abandon it and run away.”

That's...a bit harsh.

I looked down on my sword anew.

Although it's because I can't fully digest the level of this thing, if you honestly scrutinize it, this fella has quite a few cool attributes. The fact that no one else can touch this is cool, and the strange inscriptions engraved in the center is attractive (but where will I use this for?)?

... .. And if I do throw this away, Mirbo will get extremely angry at me.

“What if I don't want to throw this away?”

“... .. then you’ll have to digest it.”

“That is correct.”

My father came close to my side. Although the wind was blowing, I couldn’t feel the coldness at all. The soon approaching 2nd month, of the Darkness of Arund, had black rain come down. Not snow, but rain. The weather was gradually getting warmer.

“To undergo such rigorous training with that sword, there’s a significant meaning that it’s already in your body. In other words, it has become a part of you.”

My father, standing, looked down at me. Although I was standing, it was far beyond me to reach my father’s height yet.

“Why do you think that your body needs to be sturdy in order to train in the sword?”

“That’s..... because I need to carry the sword, right?”

That’s right. That was the one that I was the most serious problem. My father made an expression as if he was taken back.

“What point is there to just carry the sword. Similarly, are you saying that if you run without it, then the enemy won’t be able to chase after you?”

Oho, that's quite a good solution... .. I'm sorry, Mr. Sword.

“Your sword has both advantages and disadvantages, so you need to think well on how to use those. What's a trait of a heavy greatsword such as yours?”

“Heavy... and it's slow. But, there is destructive power.”

“Right. If you keep trying to swing that sword from side to side, how will you not damage your back?”

Hearing that, I finally realized why my back felt as if they were going to break. This was quite obvious, yet it was something that was difficult to implement I realized.

“For a two-handed sword, you have the most power when you swing from above. And the power from the bottom-up is also fine. To slash horizontally, it won't be too slow once you can swing that sword as if you were holding a long sword.”

“I understand.”

After my father had pointed out that advice I really had to remember, he resumed after briefly staring at me with that morning star held naturally. If it was me, I would lower it down first before I spoke.

“How fast can you move?”

“Fast?”

If you meant speed, I had confidence. If you mention the speed at Habiyanak, I'd be flying.....no, Habiyanak is no more.

After breathing in, I was lost in thought.

“If it's running, I have confidence.”

“That's of course good as well. But what I'm actually saying is your hand, wrist, arm, shoulder, waist, etc. I want to know how fast you can move those instantaneously.”

My hand, wrist... mm, so, how should I say this... ..huh, how can my waist accelerate?

No, that's probably not what it means.

“To move fast... I need to avoid the attack and strike first.”

“There are also times when you have to move slow, Fabian.”

In my father's eyes were a significant, serious light aflame.

“Remember this. You need to know the limitations of your speed so that you can consider on how to react in an emergency.”

Though it was a saying that I kind of understood, I decided to memorize it. Speed, I need to know how speedy I am.

Should I twist my waist?

“Also, you will also have to undergo painful training at times. That’s because it will awaken your senses so that your body won’t be injured, and protect you in an actual battle. A body under sheltered swordsmanship that hasn’t been injured in practice will be easily exposed in any real fight.”

All of a sudden, I thought of Arnowalt.

“Why that is, the moment those people are inflicted by even one wound, that person would completely forget the swordsmanship he trained and practiced in.”

Arnowalt, if you could point your ears here, listen! This is wise advice, a maxim! Write it down, write!

In substitute of Arnowald, I showed emotional expression of gratitude. In truth, there was no need for words of how inspired I was. My world, for me to be someone that fought against a longsword with a fleuret, due to the author of Arnowalt’s swordsmanship teacher. Compared to that, how great is my father?

“I will surely remember it.”

“Alright... ....”

My father suddenly cut off his words as he looked sharply at me. Why is he like this suddenly? Did I do something wrong?

My father suddenly moved his mouth as if wanting to articulate something, which caused me to have an ominous feeling to graze past the back of my head.....

“In other words, I think it’s quite a good way to learn what pain is in advance!”

“AHHHHHHHHHHH!!!”

The instant my father grabbed my hand, I could feel a grip that brought forth extreme pain.

... ..

... .. For a moment, I wish I could faint... Ahhhhhya!

It was too painful for me to do that.

And then after saying a few more advice on how to handle the sword and the task of my mission in detail, he soon departed. If he was by my side for a bit longer, I already know that I could learn a lot more. But, as the leader of the knights, he can’t vacate his

position for too long, as he continued to look back towards the cliff as if he was somewhat at unrest till the end.

The sight of my father's back soon disappeared towards the side of the green lake.

Don't worry too much. Father, you have your own responsibilities to take care of. I have my own as well. So I will do my best to do well. The mission that Father entrusted to me, I will definitely complete it coolly.

For some reason, I was very confident today.

## Chapter 37: Silver-Haired Yurika (5)

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Flipping the sign, before writing, I was lost in thought.

‘Exceptional Sale for Service!’, ‘General Store Owner is Crazy’, Mm, or ‘There’s Nothing else that’s Cheaper or Better!’ Should I add a few more exclamation marks?

‘The Best Treasures in the Continent, Storage Clearance Sale!!!’

Was the exaggeration a bit too severe? Then let’s induce some sympathy.

‘The Will of Life Reborn in the Land Devastated by a Terrible Disaster’, ‘Life Lives On the Land of Calamity,’ or also... the blade that rises from my chest cuts sorrow... ..

How melodramatic.

The clear skies. Today’s weather was quite clear. And that brisk fresh air.

In the midst of Troubard Arund, people are confused, as if they could feel that spring was about to arrive. In this time, the weather was greatly peaceful and good, as snow didn’t appear as often. As such, it occurred to me that the weather would continue to get warmer as it transitioned into spring.

But that's a ridiculous saying. Before the start of spring Arna Arund lies in wait of the Darkness Arund. Amongst the year, it's the continent's most apprehensive period and weather, a month that brags of its severe weather.

In front of the fallen sign, I was uselessly wasting away my time while being trapped under the peaceful weather that felt like Spring.

I cleaned up the store.

Before the month of Troubadour Arund passed, I thought I should arrange and tidy up all of the leftover items. To throw away the goods that I had bought of which didn't match my personality. The things my mother had taught me are still there. Hmm, does that even make sense.

After the items were somewhat rearranged, other than a few possessions of my mother and others that I needed, I decided to either throw the rest away or give them to someone who needs it. Whether I should nail boards on the front of the store or burn it, I haven't decided yet. Though it will soon be decided.

Finally, I will leave for my journey taking this ambiguous, yet significant mission at task (actually, the most important task is to not lose the necklace in my opinion).

That warm and peaceful air. I can't believe it's still winter.

It would be quite nice to go on a vacation in this weather, but the fact that the Arund of Darkness is arriving worries me a bit to be quite honest.

The snow had nearly completely melted.

After my father had left yesterday, I began to tidy up the store from today.

To live with my father for about one and a half months.

Truly, the existence of a father definitely has many differences from my mother. Since the time we spent together was short, we weren't as intimate as I was with my mother, however the weight of calling him 'father' was quite unconventional. That was what I honestly realized in this short moment.

And the lessons my father had taught me, reminded me, and made me think of.

The new things that I had to do.

The blue sky that still emitted a colder air.

In the center of the sky was a black winter bird that flew by.

I rose myself up from these ruins. And then I looked up into the skies. Our store was built on an elevated area – I could nearly see

all of the village from here. The low hill that led to Ember, the destroyed roof of that carpenter's room, the empty long alley, that slope that was connected to the White Mountains. All the stuff that surrounded my view. Even if I were to forget some of the memories they left me, I wanted to remember all of these one last time.

But now, those memories don't bind me down anymore.

The brisk air was good.

I deeply inhaled one slow breath in. I entrusted the tails of my hair to flutter in the cool mountain winds.

I'm fine now.

Even if all the people I once knew had departed to a different world, I'm fine.

Even I don't have the strength to exact my mother's revenge, or that indomitable will that could fill up my body, I will do the things I have to do.

The cool breeze gently whispered as if it were foreboding spring.

Even if that feeling was slightly wrong.

After dinner, I went into my room that was in the interior of

Mr.Cindebolp's home. I decided to officially start selling tomorrow, and so I had moved all my items to Grillard for the whole day (Mr.Cindebolp called me a fierce boy after seeing me transfer all those goods, but I thought of it as a compliment). There's no way there would be people who would come to buy goods at that ghost town of Habiyanak.

I sat in my room. In this room, there was no bed. Well, there was no room for a bed anyways. I pulled the blanket over my head in the corner. It's the one I use to sleep with.

Turning over the blanket, I crawled in.

I began to play around with my somewhat unfamiliar necklace on my neck. It's a habit that was recently formed. In case I might lose it while not having it on, or in case I might miss some sort of hint that could coincidentally help me, I could not have the necklace separated from my body.

As my father had done, I wore this inside my clothes. Since this was so unique and noticeable, it would be quite problematic to have to this exposed. I'm not sure what the stones that are embedded on the necklace exactly are, but they're quite heavy.

And the three empty dents. My homework.

To be honest, I had no hobby in wearing such a heavy necklace (It's the same context of me disliking the heavy sword). I'll admit that it's beautiful. If I were to complete the other three dents, I wonder just how heavier it'll be.

Those 4 shining stones that I have to find, I wonder where they are. Will this necklace truly lead me to the right path?

I lightly touched the commendable green jewel already in place. The more I see it, the more I feel just how much of a treasure it feels as I can never get tired of seeing that mesmerizing color of light.

As if spring had sprouted around like a newly born, glazed green leaf, a light that was fragile yet filled with life. And it was an opaque light that you couldn't see through either. Different from a normal (Never! This is an exaggerated lie) transparent jewel, that odd and faint sparkling above that dark background was quite unusual.

Beautiful.

But, it must be very expensive. No, it's probably immeasurable in value.

... ..

If I sell this for a bargain, I'm confident I can leave a profit that will last me for a very long time (the problem was I'm not sure what the true value of this was). What words I would use to advertise dimly materialized in my head.

Of course, I wasn't really on thinking of doing that. I was scared

enough to lose this item. To. Sell. It. Frankly, that was an illusion I couldn't even dream of, but only imagine.

When I first received this from my father, those first words that ran through my head unfortunately was 'Not for sale' this. No matter how I think about it, I think that I prefer selling items far more than keeping them. Not because of the money, but just the fact of 'action of making profit' that itself was a job that was quite exciting to me. Maybe if I stare at this which I can never get bored of, maybe these feelings don't matter with this.

If you think about it, I really did decide on a good occupation.

But now, I will be turning a new page in my life. In other words, the lingering attachment I have for the past would be meaningless. For a moment, if I recall the words my dad said before.....

“Fabian. If you can complete this necklace, come to Nim-Narshinyak. Of course, I would like to take you right away and announce you as my son, but if I were to do that, the pain and difficulties that you will have to suffer from the eyes of society, I can't do that to you for my own selfish reasons.”

Right... in fact, though it was quite thoughtful, it was also ambiguous.

I can roughly guess my father's thoughts. My father, of course, appended this at the end of his words. If, you can't find it for a long time, you can also just come to Nim-Narshinyak. However, I didn't have such thoughts at all. Maybe it's because of my rusty

shabbiness, but I was determined to be adventurous. And I had the desire to definitely succeed wonderfully and be acknowledged. I had the aspirations to satisfy the expectations of my father.

So I stared at the pointy ornamented necklace that looked perfect for scratching my head quite seriously. I can't afford to sell it, or leave it, or ignore it, but I have to carry it with me cautiously with a care of never losing this item (in other words, a very troublesome item).

For my father, in order for his son to receive recognition, it was a very expensive gamble for him, and it was a priceless responsibility that I uphold to while not falling short of my father's expectations. I must find the other three stones and most definitely return to Nim-Narshinyak.

Although I can't foresee that type of noble lifestyle, I just want to be besides my father.

Whether it was due to the fact that it wasn't warm inside the blanket, I couldn't fall asleep. But compared to my bed from my old home, it wasn't like it was extremely warm either. It was just that if I could return to that place, I had the feeling that I could comfortably fall asleep.

The surroundings were dark, and the window was tightly closed so that the cold wind wouldn't be able to come in. I was thinking of the moonlight shining down above the roof. That clear and brisk cold air, the weather outside would probably be clear.

Those countless black designs above those scattered stars.

I could imagine them all over the place as I closed my eyes.

“Now, I sell cheap, I sell cheap I say! Welcome, what would you like? Over here, miss. I have a lot more goods that are better inside. Don’t just leave like that, have a look around. If you think another opportunity like this will come again, you’re greatly mistaken. The headstrong auntie over there! I have a pile of useful things that can last you a lifetime, a stockpile.”

Although there was some exaggeration in my words, if you didn’t say it to such extent, then you wouldn’t be able to sell your goods. Hmm, whether that’s certain or not. So if you’re wondering what kind of goods I have.....

Herbs, hat, gloves, belt, flint, torch, lamp, oil, sheepskin, paper, quill pen, ink, rope, snowshoes, travelling backpack, types of nets, staff, ladder, boots, towel, oil used for leather, hourglass, types of manuals, instrument, doll... .. whew, subtract the rest.

The goods sold well. I discounted a tenth of the expensive ones, and as for the cheap goods, I sold them for roughly about the original value. With the techniques I came up with last night, the goods were selling so well that I wanted to discard all of my plans and decide to keep doing business.

My plan was like this. At first, sell some expensive items and advertise them at an extremely low price to force a large crowd to gather. Then I place out the daily necessities that everyone needs

and make them buy those by making them follow my lead. And I never advertise with my mouth other than the miscellaneous goods I have. Isn't this a great, wonderful three-in-one tactic? No matter how urgent my position is on needing to leave, I'm one that will never sell for a loss.

“Now, it's a clearance sale, clearance! I'm totally selling these goods at a loss. These items are looking for owners that aren't even half price of their original value. The sale period is only 3 days! Don't lose this opportunity.”

By evening, I calculated, guessing that it would take about three days to sell these items, and saw that more than half of the goods I had placed for sale were sold on the first day. To have this large of a crowd at a general store caused many to visit and gather seeing what kind of items were on sale. I was in a situation where I had to seriously consider extending the period to five days and sell the items that Mr. Cindebolp would hand over in replacement.

The next day, around lunchtime, nearly the same amount of goods was sold.

Since my throat hurt and I was quite tired, I went outside and sat on top of a wooden box eating an apple. In my sight far away was the cliff where my father and I had sparred and parted ways, and across that was the simmering green lake that looked as if it was purely sparkling. The warm sunlight was shining down with the wind not cold at all.

Today was the 20th day of the 1st Arund. Today was the day where troubards that were met by girls, would sing songs that

alluded to their future husbands. As for me, since I wasn't a little girl, it wasn't much to pay attention to, but strangely, there weren't a lot of young women here. I wonder if they're at the corner of the village.

Tomorrow was the day I would leave this place. To eat an apple like this while laid-back didn't make this feel as realistic, but since I had already selected all the items I need, and readily prepared my traveling clothes, it was certain that I was leaving.

The time was thought to be early tomorrow morning. Then, I wouldn't needlessly have to bump into a lot of people.

I had already shared my farewells to everyone that I somewhat knew, and I had no problems not returning back to this place again if that were to be so. Since I didn't have any sort of debt, or was leaving behind anything either.

It would be nice if the weather tomorrow was as friendly as today.

Now that not a lot of customers are coming, since I'm bored, I guess I should wield my sword.

Entering inside the store, I brought out my sword. Unlike before, this fella didn't feel as heavy as I once did. I grabbed the texture of the hilt that I was nearly accustomed to with my nearly recovered palms.

“Hiyab, Hab!”

Raising the two-handed sword over my head properly, I repeated the process of swinging it up and down. I was now accustomed to the weight of this sword, and this was a way to increase my arm strength. Moving the sword up and down, the stress wasn't too large as well.

“... Hayab, Heuyub....”

..... Okay, there was some stress.

After about the 50th time, I lowered my sword and rested. Due to the stamina I had spent selling, I could feel my arms becoming heavier. The rest of the 50, I'll do it once I have dinner.

“How's that practice with just that?”

Sitting on the floor, I was too tired to bother turning my head so I began to roll my head. A woman, and that voice was of a girl. But, it's not a voice I've heard recently?

Strange, girls that spoke to me like that had nearly all perished over a month ago.

“To collapse after barely doing that fifty times, it's better for you to rather abandon your sword and run.”

Huh, I've heard that a lot from somewhere.

I turned my body towards the person that came to me and stared at her face.

## Chapter 38: Silver-Haired Yurika (6)

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It was an unknown face.

“An unknown face?”

What nonsense did I just spout out? Speaking as if there was a person besides me, the girl put on a flabbergasted expression.

“If it’s an unknown face, then are you saying that I can’t speak to you?”

“‘Why are you speaking informally’ is what I indirectly referred to.”

“Then, aren’t you using informal language as well?”

“I was just making it clear to you that people reap what they sow.”

For some reason, it feels like it’s been a long time since I spoke in such a manner ever since my mother had passed away.

To suddenly appear in front of me (frankly, it hasn’t been that long) and make me feel like this, she had no interest in the truth at all as she slightly frowned her eyes somewhat suspiciously.

Those eyebrows, clear and beautifully outlined, as if they were

drawn.

“This kind of conversation... it has been a while.”

Huh, the same thoughts as me?

The girl that suddenly appeared slowly walked towards my side, and without hesitation, sat on top of the box that I was on earlier. Then, she grabbed an apple from the few I had just taken out and bit into it.

I was dumbstruck.

“Delicious. It’s been such a long time since I ate an apple.”

“It’s only been 10 minutes since I ate one.”

“So what?”

“Well, if you’re going to eat, you might as well eat.”

Huh, why am I like this?

“Thanks.”

Turning her head towards me, she smiled upright. The apple’s red skin and that white teeth in contrast were surprising distinct.

That smallish face with that beautiful and bright features. And...  
... evening sunlight as if they were embracing the sparkling silver  
hair of winter color, and below that were green eyes of summer  
light as if they were the green stones of the elves engraved  
delicately.

A day of discovery I could never have guessed.

... .. When did I get enthralled and write a poem in broad  
daylight?

“Can I have another apple?”

“Ah, of course.”

Eh, didn't she just grab and ate one before without asking?

She grabbed a large apple that couldn't fit into her hand and  
began to take it to her mouth. The sound of that crispy-aromatic  
apple's skin was coolly ripped off.

Despite being in this vivid reality, what was the reason which  
made me feel that I was seeing things? Although today is the day  
where girls are foretold of their future husbands, but there was  
never any say that boys would meet their future wives.

... .. staring dazedly at the apple-eating girl, I couldn't feel any

sense of reality.

“Ah, delicious, delicious. Live ones are sure delicious.”

Hearing her murmur such elongated words, I involuntarily asked.

“... a strange taste. Apples are alive?”

“Of course, right now I can hear this apple is pleading to let it live.”

“Haaaaaaa.....”

Well, is she a mentally strange child? Let's ask one more time.

“Alright, what is the apple saying?”

“That she's too young and beautiful to die yet.”

The apple was already halfway into the child's mouth and gone (if that's so, then what's the opinion of the apple's remaining half?).

Truly, she's a very strange child.

I slowly walked backwards. If you think about it, this unfamiliar

girl has more than one or two strange aspects.

First, her outfit was unusual.

She was wearing a dress that had a variety of dark colors quite different to the color of her hair, and adjusted from top to front was a hood in replacement of no sleeves, with one side completely open like a cloak. As if to prevent the eyes of men, inside the open side of the dress was light blue pants and on her feet were short, black enamel boots. It was a very clear and impressive contrast.

Inside was a long sleeved black jacket, and an uncommon, strange, peculiar silver ornament item that sealed the waist. On her wrists was a silver ring bracelet, two of each on each one, and likewise, there were silver earrings hanging as well.

To have such an attire, what exactly is this child?

“Thanks for the apple. I ate well. Since the fella was pleading desperately not to die, it was much more delicious than usual.”

I brought forth my index finger by my head and drew a circle.

“You, are you this?”

“Ah how unfashionable. Anyways, whenever I try something like this, a future door of hardships always opens up.”

“What, what are you saying?”

“I’m Yuri, Yurika.”

... this conversation was a complete mess.

Wanting to confirm if I had misheard, I asked again.

“What?”

“Ah, Yurika. Yurika Obernu. You can call me Yuri if you so like.”

Ah... it seems like a pretty name.

Uhk, this isn’t the topic.

“Not that, what do you mean by a future door of hardships opening?”

“Don’t attempt to know so much already ahead of time. You’re Fab... no, what was your name?”

Did I just mishear? I’m quite sure that she was going to say my name as if she knew it.

Whatever, I must’ve misheard.

“Fabian.”

“No family name?”

“... Christian.”

Until I finish the quest my father entrusted me with and return to Nim-Narshinyak, I had decided to use my mother’s last name until then.

“Ok, I see. Nice to meet you.”

The girl who had revealed herself as ‘Yurika’ rose from the crate and grabbing the last apple with her left hand, she extended forth her right hand for a handshake. Shaking her hand, Yurika’s silver bracelets clamored. The sound of the silver colliding was greatly faint.

“That’s that, what did you come here for?”

“Ah, I came here to buy an item.”

“There’s not much left.”

“I’ll search among the remainder I guess.”

Although she was a girl that spoke very gently, shortly, I would soon realize that compared to her generous voice was a sharp eye that was totally irrelevant to one another (in the end, I decided to believe that she tried to be generous at first). Yurika, in front of Mr. Cindebolp's store, was looking around, checking the unsold items. As if there was a reason why those items were unsold, there was no interest in her eyes.

She came empty-handed in front of me and shrugged her shoulders.

“What's this. I came here hearing that it was cheap, but there's nothing useful left.”

“It's your fault for not coming earlier. There were a lot of decent items, but they were all sold. If you want to obtain something good, you need to be diligent.”

“Even if I came earlier, I don't think there's anything that's worth choosing.”

“What evidence do you have to say that?”

“Just by looking at it, these are clearance items from a store that's about to close.”

She guessed it right?

Since it wasn't something worth hiding, I just told her the truth.

“You’re right. I’ve finished clearing out the store today. It’ll be closed tomorrow.”

“Why?”

“I’m planning to move.”

“Where?”

“Into the world.”

Hehe, saying something like this made me feel like I became something.

From Yurika’s lips were somewhat pouting as her expression had a ‘trying to show off’ kind of meaning, full of hostility as if I was in enemy territory. Making such... an honest face like that, to make a person feel ashamed.

“Okay, I hope you move out well. I have to go.”

Yurika, without asking me, grabbed the last apple and made a simple farewell wink. At last, I noticed that her body moved gracefully light and fast. Before I was able to reply, she quickly turned a corner inside the village and disappeared without looking back.

It should be quite eye-catching roaming around with that kind of outfit. Maybe it's a trend in a city, but in this neighborhood, all the clothes worn by girls here are all the same I say.

And she's also striking in appearance as well.

A traveler?

All right-Fabian, stop your futile interest, stop.

## Chapter 39: Silver-Haired Yurika (7)

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It was certain that she wasn't one that lived in Grillard.

I couldn't keep that resolution (that useless interest I had) I made from earlier in the end. While I was eating dinner, Mr. Cindebolp's son Seba hyung called me over while I was in the midst of tidying up the goods, as if he had a joyous thing to say with the blushing face he had.

“Fabian, did you see that girl?”

“Which one?”

Well. I already guessed who Seba was already referring to when he said ‘that girl.’

“Ah, the girl that was walking around the village at lunchtime. Didn't you see a girl that had silver hair and wore a black dress?”

“Ah.....”

I acted as if I knew. Despite Seba hyung being 27 in age, he was handsome, unmarried man without substance. Well, the problem was that his expectations are too high.

“You saw right? Pretty? Living for 27 years, it was a first to see such a beautiful girl in my life. Despite someone trying to speak to

her, she didn't bother opening her lips. Those pointed lips, they were so cute... ....”

For some reason, I thought of wanting to brag.

“Yuri? She spoke to me pretty well.”

“What? Her name was Yuri?”

... That was a mistake. Seba hyung who was attentively looking at me while planning something made me worry a bit that I might not be able to leave the village tomorrow morning. That's that, but please Seba hyung, I would really like it if you can stop with your newly created habit of addressing me as 'Knight's Leader son.' Other than the prophets, I really can't tell whether the meaning of those words contain ridicule or admiration.

I can easily find Ryujia's house.

Although I wasn't confused before as much, thinking about it, the sentiments of searching this place were quite anew. Right, it was the day when my 18 years of life suddenly had events happening that I'd never imagined.

Ryujia, as if she hadn't moved from the spot since I first visited, was sitting down in that chair naturally.

“Ah... hello.”

For no reason, I stammered my words (frankly, there was some reason as to why). Ryujia just nodded her head in her seat. Looks like then and now, her unchanged and unconcerned manners were still the same.

“I was waiting. I heard that you were departing tomorrow.”

She had probably heard of this from Doctor Nauke.

“Follow me. Let’s go to the back room.”

A back room actually did exist. Following her, she pulled down the large tapestry that was behind her the last time, and behind that was a door. Since the door was quite small, I barely made it through by crouching down.

This, it was as if it was a small prayer room.

There was a pure white cloth spread over a small table. And on the table was a small knife for which purpose I was unaware of.

But, the place was reverse due to it being on the other side of the wall. And there were no chairs so I had to sit on the floor.

Since there were only two candles alight in the room, it was a bit dark.

“Sit down over here.”

I sat on the red-colored cushion that she pointed to. Heeding my father’s advice of not allowing my sword to be apart me, I laid the sword I had brought over to the left of me (I couldn’t lay it down on my right. A trained warrior wasn’t supposed to was what he said).

But what made me feel uncomfortable was that the cushion was in the center of the room. Despite not having any spectators, it felt as if I was a sight to see. I disliked these kind of scenarios.

Ryujia seeing me sit in my spot, went towards the wall and kneeled. Then, from out of her pockets, she brought out 4 pinkie-sized jewels and placed them on top of the table arranged one after the other. Like the time I received the jewel from Mirbo and the necklace I was entrusted by my father, although they weren’t shining as great as the ones I’ve seen, but they were still sparkling stones. The first one was purple, the second yellow, the third a dim grey, and the last one was of a red color.

This is starting to become interesting.

Other than the knife and four jewels, there was nothing else that was on the table. The room was wholly clean as well. The atmosphere was strangely different from before (the time when she foretold my future). And come to think of it, Ryujia’s lips and clothes were different as well.

She had a long one-piece dress entirely gray as if it was a night

gown. And it extended down all the way to her waist without a single strand of hair or jewelry on.

“Fabian, when I start the ritual, you can’t move or talk at all. And later, when I instruct you, go and bring over the bottle of liquor.”

I looked over at the place Ryujia pointed. There was a small closet with its door closed. It’s probably in there I assume.

“Then, I’ll start.”

I completely lost the opportunity to ask about all the strange things here. If I say ‘Wait’ now I wonder what she’ll say.

But, how long will this take? What should I do if my leg goes to sleep? No, what should I do if my back gets itchy? How about when I need to go to the washroom?

While I was asking myself with these plethora of thoughts, Ryujia rose from her kneeling down and stood up. Then, she opened her mouth and began to speak.

Isnae-Draniaras, the first soul after time has opened

Parting from the chains of life as those gods that overlook

In the center are the humans that are received as friends

One that wants to talk with Yenichetri's daughter

You, dear \*\*\*\*\*

Be in peace forever again by sitting in the wagon

Those who plead for foresight

The ones who have the right to light the future

A friend's gift is slowly arriving noticeably

The love and hatred of the forgotten humans long ago

I ask for the feet to be briefly soaked

I had no idea what she was talking about.

And when she said ' You, dear \*\*\*\*\*', not sure which name she had spoken, but it feels as if it's some other country's funky pronunciation. In other words, that system of language couldn't be translated to my understanding. Well, I think it was Elelel ... something like that. I couldn't really speak that pronunciation.

But while I was perplexed in the moment, Ryujia's white drapery was beginning to change. It was as if something had moved a bit ... as if something shone ... getting larger ... ....

It was fire!

Shocked, I nearly jumped up from my seat.

It was real. A flame had appeared from behind a white, pure cloth, which soon quickly grew into a bonfire. Where is it burning from? Not a picture, not a light, but what's really behind that drapery.

I really wanted to look around the drapery and see, but Ryujia's words made me barely hold my curiosity in for now. Ryujia who had her eyes closed, suddenly began to laugh.

Hik, I'm scared.

"... despite how disappointed you are, your words are a bit harsh."

Who is she speaking to?

Whether those words were meant for me, I seriously thought about it. The question I had was solved by her clear words beforehand before I could do anything.

"Fabian, bring me the bottle."

So, the words that she spoke earlier weren't for me.

I rose up and opened the shelf. Inside was a long glass bottle with and a small cup Thinking that she'd probably need both, I took them out. Inside the glass bottle was half full of that yellowish liquid.

Mm... suddenly, I was trying to analyze what that liquid was automatically.

“Thanks.”

Ryujia didn't even bother to look at me as she lowered the bottle onto the table. Am I supposed to answer? Since the words that she said earlier about not making a sound were weighing on my mind, I silently returned to my seat.

It totally feels as if someone was ordering a child to do some chores.

“... Then, first have a glass of alcohol.”

Ryujia without opening her eyes suddenly grabbed the bottle and started to pour that yellow liquid. I didn't know where she placed the bottle, but I was absentmindedly staring at her pouring into the cup.

It looks like a ghost.

She stopped once the glass was full. Ah, the alcohol seemed quite strong with that strong scent. I can smell it all the way from here.

As if it was a flowery scent, it was very thick and somewhat fragrant.

What was it made out of? I don't think it's fruit wine... huh?

Ryujia suddenly grabbed the glass and sprayed it over the white drapery.

“Tsssssss.....”

I initially wanted to ask what she was doing, but I constrained myself as I was totally flabbergasted at what happened to the drapery.

It was not soaked at all.

It was as if the alcohol that was poured had disappeared completely. What magical place could it be behind that drapery? A time travelling establishment? Or if not that... there's no mistake I've read too many novels.....

Once sprayed, the flame grew in size suddenly, as it started to wholly brighten this room as if it was a large candle.

As if the air in the room was somewhat surprised, there was

strange pressure. It was as if the whole village's air was suddenly locked into this one tiny room.

“How was it? You're not sure how long it's been since you drunk the welcoming alcohol? In my opinion, it should be quite a long time... ....”

Ryujia, please reveal who you're talking with, please!

I'm getting the chills seeing you mumble like that with your eyes closed.

Who's drinking that alcohol exactly... ....

The transparent flame ball behind the drapery, as if it was being welcomed, suddenly became much more clearly defined. I rubbed my eyes and stared again. As expected, it was as I saw it to be.

“Then, I need to first present the offerings. Don't grumble about it just because you're displeased. ”

Ryujia continued to mumble by herself as she grabbed the first jewel with her right hand, the purple one. And then, she started to recite similarly from before.

“The one that was sharing his story

Wonder what day today is

White snow, in the center of Nisroeld

From the old song a new one is born

The new song makes you realize your own existence

The Troubad Arund

In the heavens, the one that sings about the world La Trouba  
Drooe

The noble purple offering which

Matches you. ”

Ryujia poured the alcohol over the purple jewel and lightly threw it inside the drapery. Well throwing it in was a bit misleading, but there's nothing I could do. There's no other expression for it.

The jewel disappeared once it touched the flame.

I, not even surprised anymore, just blinked my eyes once more. I think Ryujia was determined to show something amazing.

Ryujia grabbed the second jewel.

“The conversation I share

About what kind of being you are

Oh noble that is in the center of Isnae

The most high Isnae-Draniaras

The soul that has separated from the chains of life

The one that looks into humans’ tomorrows

In the heavens, the one that speaks of the future Kitiani

The secret yellow offering which

Matches you.”

Likewise, she threw the yellow jewel, which disappeared in the drapery. I started to think. How much would each one go for?

“The one that sits in front

What kind of person am I

To be indebted by the human’s will

And be baptised by the soul's breath

Like an illusion lost in the alley with one light

The old mother of Yenichetri's daughter

The one that remembers the past Fubiani

The settled gray offering which

Matches you.”

Is Ryujia talking about herself this time? If it's Fubiani' I'm guessing she was born on that Arund? Then, that last jewel .....

Before I was able to finish my thought, Ryujia went into her last recitation.

The one that speaks to me

What kind of person are you

That was caught in the gamble of a long fate

What awaits him is a blade and sword

The one that receives that will is Fabianne's flame

The one that grabs that sword slashes through time

The one that blocks the heavens, the destructive Fabianne

The ardent red offering which

Matches you."

Was that ... for me?

Although I didn't understand what it meant, I predicted that last prophecy had something in connection with me.

Although it's true that I was born in Fabianne Arund, to say it so grandiose like that made it seem as if something really happened.

At that moment, a sudden voice could be heard.

[I see, so you are Fabian?]

