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Illustration

新堂アラタ

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軍師は 何でも知っている

The
strategist
knows
everything

The Strategist Knows Everything

Gunshi wa Nandemo Shitteiru

Arc 2: Moving Forward

by Tanba

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Chapter 1: The Reconstruction

Part 1

A month has passed since the end of the civil war.

Veris has Kaguya-sama in place as the new king and the scars from the ex-king's tyranny and civil war is steadily being healed.

Though there were supportive voices of Dio-sama being the new king, Dio-sama declined using not being able to live for long as a reason. Actually, if everything is alright, he should be able to live for another 30 years but if that's exposed, the country will be split into two again. I went around persuading people supporting Dio-sama and managed to restrain the voices of objection against Kaguya-sama somehow.

The deciding factor is that she stood beside Dio-sama against the king, i guess. If it wasn't, it could have been dangerous. Well, as not facing the king means still being under Stratos's magic, I guess it would still be still in the midst of the civil war. If I think of it that way, I might have made quite the deciding action.

I am praising myself as there is no one who would praise me.

Being forced, no, being entrusted with government affairs that doesn't require Kaguya-sama's and Dio-sama's judgement, I have plenty of tasks that needs me to make my own judgement. If you are asking why I am forced to take those on, that would be because there aren't anyone suitable around.

There are very few remaining civil officials that worked for the ex-king. The rest were all judged from Dio-sama's impartial decision. As if we talked about bribes and threat, there would be no end to those sinful people, there wasn't really a need for impartialness. Almost all of them were given the death penalty.

The problem is the point where there are very little people that can take over. Kaguya-sama has Anna as her assistant, while Dio-sama has Earl Uren by his

side. Because of that, I am the only one left in the royal castle that have achievements from the civil war.

The rest of the skilled personnel were spread all over the country. That's because the country is still not stable internally yet. The reason why even Dio-sama who announced his remaining years is taking part in the work in the royal castle is simply because of being shorthanded. The surrounding people advised him to recuperate but Dio-sama does not agreed. Well, since the person himself has a weird confidence of not dying anytime soon, I guess that's natural.

In any case, due to that reason, any matters that the newly appointed officials are troubled with are all brought to me.

In other words.

"I think I am going to die from overworking...."

"What are you saying? Didn't you say at Castle Harpe that such plain tasks are essential to maintaining an organisation?"

"I was desperate that time. Life threatening at that. Right now, it's different! I want a break! After sleeping sufficiently, I longed to read a book..... "

Mikana mercilessly placed a bunch of paper of non-so-high-quality in front of me, and protested to me who sat on the chair while hugging my legs.

"I who is your assistant also did not rest. Do you have any complaints?"

"...not really but..."

"Then, please take a look at the documents. And please think about how to go about dealing with it."

Urged by Mikana, I reluctantly read the document.

The matters sent over aren't very significant. From the handling of a portion of the soldiers that turned into bandits during the civil war to written opinions

of citizens that lived in the center of the country which was the main battlefield of the civil war. It was determined to have Captain Ars's mercenary company to deal with the bandits. They have already subjugated 3 bandit group since then. I guess it's fine to leave it to them this time as well. It's fine to just leave the content in the corners of my head, reading the written opinion. Important matters will be conveyed to Dio-sama and Kaguya-sama from my mouth.

However, numbers is power. As concentration gradually drops, I can't think of countermeasures as time goes. As time goes, sleeping hours also reduce. As sleeping hours reduce, concentration is quickly cut off.

"The most important matter is insufficient civil officials.... That person has not come out from the castle?"

"Is it Bayd Fern-sama? Let's see. I heard about him not coming out obstinately."

"Being obstinate for what....."

The person named Bayd Fern, who has a hand in the supply for Kaguya-sama's army, is ignoring Kaguya-sama's request and locked himself in the castle.

It seems that he was displeased for having been given house arrest by Kaguya-sama. Though he should have been told that she was manipulated, he wasn't able to wipe off the distrust, I guess.

"I believe I can understand his feelings. If Yukito-sama also did that to me."

Since around the end of the civil war, Mikana have started to call me Yukito. As the surroundings were calling me Yukito, she seems to have been hooked into it. As the person herself and me did not feel out of place, I didn't see the need to say anything about it.

“I would shoot you.”

“Do you mean kill me? I might have a reason, you know?”

“Then let’s change that to thrusting. I believe you wouldn’t die from a sword.”

“Rather, as dying would have a better prospect, I will try not to transfer Mikana anywhere.”

“A wise decision. However, let’s see. I, too, desire a break soon. Or more like, I wish to see a face other than Yukito-sama’s.”

Mikana, who made a hurting comment without hesitation, took out a piece of paper from the bottom of the stack of papers that she passed me, as if remembering something.

“A petition from Kaguya-sama.”

“I don’t understand at all...”

He shook my head to the left and right as I received that paper. When a petition written from the King already doesn’t make sense, I also can’t make any sense of Mikana’s act of putting that paper at the bottom of the stack.

“Let’s see, ‘Would you accompany me to persuade Bayd Fern together?’ Despite bringing my substitute over, if I leave the castle, who’s going to settle this stack of papers?”

“Though I thought that you would reject it, so I left it at the bottom, I feel that even if Kaguya-sama make her way there herself, I don’t think Fern-sama would respond.”

“Ah, that’s true. But, there’s also the possibility of Kaguya-sama dragging him back by force?”

“That’s why there’s the possibility that the door can’t be opened. So Yukito-sama, please do accompany her and actually persuade Fern-sama.”

Mikana sighed with a tired expression. Either maybe due to the shock when she realized even the admired Kaguya-sama isn't perfect, or she is just tired from having to follow up with Kaguya-sama's action.

It felt like it's due to both. Kaguya-sama will put what she had in mind into action. Wavering and hesitation are things that she have no affinity with. Whether it's right or wrong, advantageous or not, her mind terrifyingly processes them rapidly including these calculations. However, the surroundings will be puzzled and hesitate. Also, their ability to process isn't that fast.

That's why to follow Kaguya-sama isn't something you can do half-hearted. Therefore, whenever Anna can't handle the follow-up herself, Mikana will be sought out.

Just a while ago, she suddenly wanted to go for a local inspection, went out at a crazy speed on horses, and by the time they returned on the day itself, even I feel pity for Anna. Though that goes for exhausted Mikana who returned from going with them.

Seeing that, Dio-sama was nasty for laughing all the while. Not smiling, it's laughing.

Dio-sama who is in a position to caution her, ignore it as it was interesting, so in the end, the one cautioning her was me. I did tell her to think about her surroundings but as it was not effective, the result of telling her to at least request for permission from me or Dio-sama was this petition, i guess.

The point about why she wrote a petition in a grand way is the question. Why is it not a decree? Could it be that Anna have finally snapped? Nope, i guess that's impossible. It's the loyal Anna who followed Kaguya-sama even when she is controlled. It isn't possible for her to explode from dissatisfaction.

If that's the case, I don't understand why a petition.

"Hey, Mikana"

"Yes?"

“Why do you think it’s a petition?”

“This is just my thought but, even though controlled, her dignity doesn’t allow herself to order to help her clean up her mess, on the other hand, her dignity doesn’t allow her to ask for it in person.”

“What a difficult personality.”

Being able to do anything is a common point Kaguya-sama has with the previous king and also Dio-sama. High pride is something that they do not share with Kaguya-sama. Because of her pride hindering, she wouldn’t become like the previous king.

The role of a brake that Dio-sama request of me is bearing that pride. Just that, once in a while, that becomes the reason for disturbance as well.

A person who lives burdensomely. That’s how Dio-sama phrased it and it’s right. And to say it further,

“What a troublesome person”

Murmuring with a sigh like that, Mikana got angry. Unintentionally my true thoughts.



The next day.

I was dragged along by Kaguya-sama with her favourite horse to the castle where Bayd Fern confined himself in. Anna and Mikana will be settling a large pile of work, under the supervision of Dio-sama and Earl Uren while we are not around. If it’s those four, I believe it’s fine for a day. The new civil officers should also start to get used to work after all. That’s why.

The problem is not at the royal castle. But my current situation.

I believe even riding on the horse itself was something forced on me.

Kaguya-sama is definitely bad at teaching people.

Though I wouldn't say other people can definitely do what I can do, I believe that things I can do easily can be done by others if they worked hard.

Plus, to reach an answer quickly, she have the tendency to skip the process. In other words, she doesn't understand why she have to explain how she come to such a conclusion. People only receiving a solution are usually flabbergasted. And then, seeing that expression, I finally realized Kaguya-sama isn't able to help the other party reach the process of the solution..

It's normal with prodigies. However, I hope she could be a little more considerate.

This speed is bad. If something goes wrong, I will be shaken off.

To not lose the horse Kaguya-sama is controlling, I let the horse I am on run. Of course, it doesn't follow my instructions. Due to that, all I can do is cling to it.

"Fuu, we have reached. Yukito"

"Please allow me to return...."

"What happened!?"

I requested Kaguya-sama who floated a smile to me. Car sickness at its highest level. Furthermore, due to putting in strength at the while, I am unable to make my body move properly.

In other words, I wish to return. Though just for 2 hours, it's nothing less than penance for me to go along with Kaguya-sama's speed. Mikana. You actually agreed to it to make me taste this, didn't you? You better remember it when I get back.

"Was, was it so bad...? I didn't plan to be moving at such a high speed though..."

“Even though it’s not a battlefield, I felt danger to my life..”

“So, sorry... I will take note in future...”

“It’s fine. I will return myself after all.”

If I ran by her side, she will definitely increase her speed due to her increased tension. To not run with her is the most wise decision.

“What!? Are you angry...?”

“I am not. Just that, I do not wish to die.”

“Aren’t you angry.....”

Having her said that, I looked at Bayd Fern’s castle. It’s not that big. The security is also thin.

However.

But the security personnel are all competent people. I guess he has quite the eye for people.

“Let’s quickly have him get out of the castle.”

“I wonder if he would allow us to enter the castle?”

The people surrounding the castle does not approach us. It’s like they are just protecting their own station. Seems like they received such an order.

“Since we have already sent our intent to enter, I think he would allow us to do that. Though I doubt he would welcome us.”

Even though the king came, he did not come to receive. Well, I guess we

travelled incognito so it can't be helped. Even then, though a bit late, a 10-men knight squad came chasing after us. They are the knights sent under Dio-sama's judgement. Kaguya-sama shouldn't know but there is the possibility of her knowing from their presence.

"I don't need any reception. It's no problem as long as he would leave the castle and come to the castle."

"I don't think that is something you should say as the person who got him in house arrest."

"Recently, why are you always throwing words of thorn at me? I will say it just in case, but I am also hurt you know?"

"I will say it just in case, but not everyone is able to do anything like Kaguya-sama, excuse me."

As I replied to Kaguya-sama who glared at me, maybe catching onto something, she kept silent, while showing an expression as if she was punished.

"Now then, shall we enter? Let's finish this quickly and return to the castle at east."

"Your words have thorns, you know...."

Taking a backward glance at Kaguya-sama who drooped her shoulder and felt slightly sad, I moved towards the castle gate of Bayd Fern.



Passing through the opened gates of the castle, Kaguya-sama and I walked around in the castle without being able to find someone to guide us.

“Bayd only leave people who he trust on his side. Though I can understand why he doesn’t have much servants, this is obviously done on purpose.”

“Kaguya-sama..... Did you really only put him on house arrest? Could you have done something that made him hate you way before?”

“What are you saying!? I have always trusted him and appointed him with a important post! I have also entrusted him multiple important tasks!”

While there are people like Anna who is happy about being entrusted with important tasks, there are also people who doesn’t want to work if possible. Either due to her overly good birth environments, or her personality by nature, Kaguya-sama thinks that diligence and acquiring achievements are natural.

Her vision in the battlefield is as wide as how narrow her vision of the ordinary is. No, rather than narrow, it’s the things she doesn’t know is way too much. Kaguya-sama is ignorant of the ways of the world.

“What’s important is how the other party feels. How Kaguya-sama think does not matter if you would excuse me.”

“.....am I that bad....?”

Listening to me, as if losing her confidence, Kaguya-sama cast her eyes down.

Today is a day where I can often see Kaguya-sama’s expression changes. Even though she is usually full of confidence, just today, she is seriously reacting to my words

“Do you wish for me to say no?”

“...I didn’t think that you would be such an nasty person. If I could nod to those words, I wouldn’t have so much trouble.”

“It’s regrettable to be called nasty. I was so gentle that the Celsus Maiden

gave me a stamp, you know.”

Saying that, I examined for Kaguya-sama’s expression. She is no longer feeling down. However, she is giving a very displeased expression.

It’s the expression of trying to squeeze out as much as displeasure as possible. Likely her mental state is about the same, I guess.

“Again, with the Celsus Maiden.... Don’t you get tired?”

Her reproachful eyes turned even more stunned as she glared at me. I have stepped on a landmine.

Kaguya-sama dislike Dio-sama and I talking about Sophia in front of her. Even bring up the topic itself as well. Though Dio-sama said she just doesn’t like to be left out, I feel that her reaction seems a bit too sensitive even then.

“Even though you say that, I believe there are not males in this world that would get tried of Sophia.”

“You are talented at making me irritated! Enough! Hurry up and find Bayd!”

Glaring at me sternly, Kaguya-sama went off quickly ahead. That’s bad. I couldn’t help expressing my thoughts. If I just apologized, she wouldn’t have gotten angry.

Pondering about that, I chased after Kaguya-sama.

Once in a while, Kaguya-sama might open the doors of the room to check if Bayd Fern was in, but it doesn’t seem easy to find him. And I, who was chasing after Kaguya-sama, is about to reach my limits. I really hope to find him soon.

As I wished for that, Kaguya-sama stopped. I know the reason why Kaguya-sama stopped.

That's because there is a wooden board hung on the door. The board says 'I am here....'.

I wonder why. The impression of the words doesn't feel serious. I heard that Bayd Fern was a person on his late 20s, and is Kaguya-sama's trusted aide and a wised person so I arbitrarily imagined him to be a quiet person that might have worn spectacles.

"Feels like one of those joke Bayd might come out with"

"My image of Bayd Fern is crumbling...."

Ignoring my muttering totally, Kaguya-sama opened the door relentlessly. Privacy seems to be of no concern here. Well, since he went to the extent of writing that he's here, I guess there is no problem in opening the door though.

"Bayd! I will have you come to the castle!"

"Eh.. I don't wanna"

Opening the push-only door, Kaguya-sama went in with lots of momentum and stopped. No, she was stopped. By a man whose dark golden hair reaches his shoulders. Probably, this person is Bayd Fern. He doesn't look serious from just his appearance. In modern Japan, he would be called frivolous man, I guess.

Kaguya-sama was stopped. My body knows that better than anything how difficult is that. If it wasn't for Sophia's magic power imbued in that fan, I believe I wouldn't be able to stop her. That's why I want to give my respect to Bayd Fern who stopped Kaguya-sama.

That method itself also deserves respect. Though I definitely not think of imitating him.

"W, wh, wha....!?"

“Uuunnn, I have always thought of groping it, you know. Kaguya’s breasts”

He’s dead. I shouldn’t be wrong to think that way. Kaguya-sama whose face turn bright red, slowly gave an increasingly stern expression and finally became expressionless. During those time, I really gave my respect to his actions of moving both his hands on Kaguya-sama’s breasts and enjoying the overflowing sensation on his palms. Though I won’t imitate even if I die..

“Die”

It was a cold voice similar to when she cut Stratos. Kaguya-sama clad magic power into her right hand, and punch at Lord Bayd’s face. But.

“It’s futile, it’s futile. Who do you think taught you magic arts?”

He singlehandedly stopped Kaguya-sama’s fist. I guess he invalidated the magic arts by offsetting it. Even then, it’s not normal to be able to receive Kaguya-sama’s fist.

Seeing his status, his combat ability is in the lower 80s. His wisdom is over 100 and magic power is also in the upper 80s, so he isn’t weak when it comes to fight. Why such a person continues to stay behind the scenes? No, rather than that right now, why isn’t he releasing his hands from her breasts?

I couldn’t help glare at her breasts that have obviously changed shaped. To tell a healthy male not to look is an impossible feat. Also, Kaguya-sama didn’t say anything about not looking.

“Let go! I hate it!”

“I got it i got it. It’s a joke, a joke. So don’t get angry and don’t glare at me.”

“Who gropes a female’s breasts as a joke! Who do you think I am!?”

Saying that with teary eyes, Kaguya-sama hugged her body with one hand and use her other hand to put me in between her and Bayd. As if a replacement for a shield.

“I was just checking if Stratos or the ex-king put a finger on you. Well, looking at that state, I guess it’s fine.”

“Of course! That’s way too rude!?”

“There is no reason for manners to a person who easily got caught in a Mental Manipulation-type Magic arts. Reflect on yourself for a bit. Now then, are you the rumored strategist? I also heard that Kaguya-sama is safe because of your as well.”

I shrugged my shoulders to Lord Bayd’s words. Rather than me, it’s better to say that it’s the fan I got from Sophia that helped. Without that, I wouldn’t even have my life.

“I am called Yukito Kurei. I believe you are Lord Bayd Fern, am I right?”

“Ooh. I am Bayd Fern. I already know what’s going on. Since I have already groped Kaguya’s breasts, let’s get to the castle quickly, shall we?”

Laughing while showing his full teeth, Lord Bayd said that while easily accepting our request. Before we even say anything.

What a person. In all sort of ways.

Part 2

Awesome. I really thought that from the bottom of my heart.

Lord Bayd settled a whole lot of work as if it's nothing in his allocated workspace.

He quickly finished what's important in his judgement, and accurately delegated tasks to people who are capable of them. Even though he can't see the statuses, his selection is perfect.

"Sorry to call you. I wanted to talk to you about something."

"What is it about?"

Taking the materials from the desk, Lord Bayd swam his eyes on the paper.

"From your report, this Stratos guys is still alive, is that right?"

"Yes, that's right. Controlling multiple people, he was moving around as Stratos while controlling multiple people."

Muttering 'I see.', Lord Bayd stood up from his seat, circled around the desk and came to my side.

And then, he placed both his hands on my shoulder.

"Then, why did you not suspect me?"

"...I heard that you were against fighting Dio-sama."

“It’s in the past. It’s been a month since you let Stratos escaped, right? In that interval, how can you be assured that I have not been controlled?”

Being said that, I couldn’t even make a sound. I definitely should have vigilant. No, as Kaguya-sama’s only accompany, being vigilant is natural.

His frivolous attitude from our meeting is no longer there. Even though his appearance has not changed, it’s as if he’s a different person. There is something in his eyes that allows communication with Kaguya-sama. Very likely, it’s fighting instinct. He is totally treating me as an enemy.

“I shall give you a warning.”

Saying that, he released his hand from my right shoulder, and held it in front of my eyes. And then, it was at the instant he bend his hand.

A short blade came flying out from his sleeve. Though I said short, there is at least 5 cm. I wonder if it’s a hidden weapon.

However, why did you installed it on his wrist.. No, actually why is he letting me see it?

“....what is it....?”

“At that time, I could have killed Kaguya anytime. When you were carefreely staring at Kaguya’s breasts. You idiot.”

At the same time he said that, he grabbed my neck with his left hand. If his left hand has the same thing installed as his right hand, I would have already have my neck thrust with a short sword.

In my head came an image of Kaguya-sama having her heart pierced and blood flowing all around. It easily came to me. And also made me dumbfounded.

“I have already heard and saw your battle records. You were vigilant to the point of being timid. However, you were not being careless. If that’s the case, what’s the reason of you not being vigilant against me? The reason is simple.”

‘You do not treat Kaguya as a master to be protected.’

Lord Bayd put in strength in his left hand, while saying that.

Having told that, I actually thought that it was true. Though I recognised Diosama as my lord, I have not recognised Kaguya-sama as one. As in from the bottom of my heart.

“...”

“What do you think other countries thought of you?”

“.....I do not know.”

“It’s Arkwright’s Strategist. Right now, there are only 2 person under the name of Arkwright, Diorood-sama’s mother, and himself. The right hand man of Diorood. That’s what you are thought of. Though what the other countries think doesn’t really matter, it’s troubling if you have that kind of mindset. The king of this country is Kaguya. Not Diorood Arkwright.”

“...I understand.”

Saying that, Lord Bayd released his hand from my neck.

And then he returned to his seat, took out a cloth and started to carefully return his blade back to position.

“The blade in the right hand has anesthetics applied to it. The one in the left is applied with poison. You aren’t going to say cowardice, aren’t you?”

“I believe it was a concrete countermeasure.”

I will put aside whether to follow his example or not. It's not really a situation to be speaking much. I wonder if Kaguya-sama is feeling down because she realized I didn't really recognize her as my lord.

How should I apologize? Nah, before that, could I swear my loyalty to Kaguya-sama? I have the Dragon's Scar engraved on me. I can only Dio-sama in regards to this.

"Kaguya was sent to me from the castle when she was 12. Using an excuse of having potential as a warrior, Rarior, my acquaintance, got her to escape from the castle. "

"So to escape from the King?"

"There's also that, but at that time, though still a child, it's not a place for a female. Well, the destination of escape is also not a place good for females as well though."

It can be easily guess on where that is. Kaguya-sama is the general protecting the country's border. What can be interpreted from there is:

"The battlefield....right?"

"That's right. Kaguya-sama went on his debut battle when she was 12 and turned into a general 2 years later. She became a general where attacking would definitely result in claiming new lands, and when protecting, the opposing army would definitely not pass. She has the talent for it and I also raised her as a general as well. Because of that, there were also plenty of things that I couldn't teach."

Making a slightly sad expression, Lord Bayd looked at capital from the window after sheathing the blade.

“If I make her into the strongest general, I thought even the king would not put a finger on her. That thought was totally smashed part. Recently, one of the reason I have left Kaguya-sama with Anna was because I thought that just raising her to become the strongest general was my job.”

“...have you been protecting her since then...?”

Before she became the invincible general, she had been targeted. Those words could be taken in that way. Lord Bayd nodded to my question.

I wonder what's the real face of this person, between the first time I met him, and the one right now. Both actually seems to be the real Bayd Fern. Just that both have different roles.

“My father was a big fool who gave lots of money to the previous king to gain favour. That's why the name 'Fern' is something that the people in this country hates. In addition to atonement for that, I took care of Kaguya-sama. Just that, I wasn't planning to make Kaguya King. Do you know why?”

“...is it because of Dio-sama?”

“That's right. The strongest general under Diorood-sama. That's the assignment I wished for Kaguya-sama to have. However, due to your trick, she ended up becoming king. Even though I didn't teach her the knowledge to become king.”

Lord Bayd slightly glared at me. Even if you tell me, with the situation right now, there are no other options that making her king.

“My apologies....”

“Don't just leave everything to Kaguya. Support her properly. As long as I am a

‘Fern’, the citizens would revolt if I surface. From now on, I will teach her the necessary knowledge as a king. From behind the scenes, I will support her so you do that from the front. You were the one who made her king. At least, do that much. This is an order as Kaguya’s Aniki-bun.” (TL: Aniki-bun means a older brother figure. There is no exact or roundabout translation I can think of so I decided to just romanji-nize it.)

Saying that, Lord Bayd sighed and sat down on the chair from the momentum.

If I were to say he is ill humor, he is definitely ill humour, but if I were to say, it also seems that he is displeasure about himself too.

“....sorry. I do know that it’s not your fault.”

“At the very least, the responsibility is mine. Leave the frontal support to me.”

“.....Kaguya and Diorood-sama. Whichever have a child, if it’s a boy, then have Kaguya stepped down from king.”

“A problem with the party might occur. There aren’t any appropriate choice within the country. Until ties with the other countries have been revived properly, the influential power of the other countries would also be harsh.”

“...Kaguya is like a sister to me. If possible, I wish that she could live normally. Come out with a plan. I will also think of it.”

‘Even if you say that’ was what I was thinking. Other than Dio-sama and Kaguya-sama, there are two other royal children. Both are both of their elder sisters, but both of them ran away to other countries.

From the perspective of ages, if you desire children, it would be those two older sisters, but I do not think the citizens would consent letting the children of royalties who fled for other countries during the difficult times of the country. I guess for the time being, Kaguya-sama have to stay in the position as king.

“That’s quite difficult.”

“True. As difficult as it is, let’s have a talk of something problematic while we are at it.”

Having said that, Lord Bayd took a piece of paper from the desk.

Going close to take a peek, there was a picture of a fan drawn on one of the paper.

“This is!?”

I took out the fan in my chest. When I compared it, it was the same.

“Divine Fan. Klarus. The treasure of Albion. I heard that you got it from the Celsus Maiden so I investigated about it but I caught onto something problematic.”

“Problematic?”

“The feature of Klarus is decomposing magic, and you can store magic power in that small magic stone at the bottom of the fan. With that, while being able to negate magic power, it can also function as a powerful magic tool. However, wouldn’t you have a doubt?”

“.....Are you saying why Albion made a item that negates magic?”

Lord Bayd nodded.

Like when you make spear, you also make shield, it isn’t weird for Albion, which create powerful magic arts, to create something to go against those magic arts. But even though it’s not weird, that fan is too strong, no matter what. If it can be mass produced, Albion’s dominant position will quickly disappear. It will instantly turn into their crisis of collapse.

“It was made 300 years ago. When Albion was still a town of Magic Arts. For many generations, their king are chosen from what they called the Five Noble Families. It seems that that fan is created from those founders. To eradicate the clan of the betrayer.”

“Clan of the betrayer?”

“No magician shall be allowed to hurt each other. That was the rule in the town of Magic Arts that time. There was a clan that violated that rule. The magic art they used was an original one, and they called it Inducement Magic.”

“Wha!?”

“To negate their magic, they created many similar weapons of the fan, with the help of the ancient sages. And then as the clan was annihilated, the weapons were all destroyed by the ancient sages. The blueprints of the fan was sealed and Albion took the fan as a treasure to safekeep it. Well, if I say it like this, you understand it, don’t you?”

Whoever doesn’t understand that is just an idiot. That Yuuri Stratos is either the survivors of that clan or a person who learnt that magic art. And to his luck, the fan being the weapon to counter that is in my hands. That’s why Stratos retreated.

However.

“Albion....is in danger....?”

“As his original motive is not Kaguya and Veris, his actual objective can be seen to be Albion. Additionally, thinking about the things he said to you, it is likely the truth.”

‘I just came to give my thanks. Thank you. Because of you, I could get my hands on something that I have spent a long time desiring for. Owing it to you.’

Stratos definitely said that. At that time I didn't understand what those words mean, but it's definitely words that know the fact that the fan is in my hands. Easily getting the fan off the hands from Albion, to the person who was troubled on the plans for it, I guess you would even want to give gratitude for it.

“You would curse your own existence some day’.... That’s what he said....”

“It ended up helping him out unexpectedly. Also.....”

Lord Bayd stopped speaking looking at my face. I believe I am giving an awful expression.

I felt as if I am losing myself from the anger and my own uselessness. Stratos came and told me directly. For some reason, I did not catch onto his intention.

I do not have much relations with Albion. However, even then Stratos came to give me his gratitude, and also left words that I will hate myself in times to come.

I only have one connection with Albion.

It's Sophia.

“That rascal....!! From the start, he was aiming for Sophia....!!!”

“As if he took over Veris, he could just go for a frontal attack with Albion, so that might have been his plan. But, the situation changed. If he can control the Celsus Maiden, it's the same as controlling half of the magicians in Albion.”

“I shouldn't have accepted it at that time!!”

Forgetting that I was in the presence of Lord Bayd, I hit the desk with all my strength. I ended up silencing Lord Bayd.

“However, without that fan, you would have lost. This country would have

been controlled by Stratos, and would have been used to attack Albion recklessly. It won't do anything to regret anything at this point of time. Calm yourself down for now."

"How can I stay calm!? Because of me, the situation is going to the worst direction!"

As I said that, I turned and started moving out of the room.

"Where are you going?"

"Obviously. To Albion. And to return Sophia this fan."

"You can just go Albion yourself. You know that, don't you?"

"BUT!"

"Yukito. Calm yourself slightly."

The door gradually opened, and suddenly, Dio-sama entered the room.



Lord Bayd stood up and bowed. I did the same actions as well.

"I could heard your voice from outside you know. You can't save Sophia like that. Isn't that right?"

"Dio-sama...."

"Diorood-sama. When did you start listening into the conversation?"

"From the start. Lord Bayd. I thought you were going to kill Yukito who made Aneue king."

Dio-sama said that while showing the sword on his waist. Don't tell me he was

planning to kill Lord Byad.

Lord Bayd shook his head while sweat poured from his face.

“I won’t do things that would cause a revolt.”

“Thank you. I am also tired of wars. Though that depends on the reasons.”

After Dio-sama said that, he instructed Lord Bayd to bring out the map.

Dio-sama received the map taken out immediately by Lord Bayd, and spread it out on the desk after looking at it for a while.

“Yukito. I will say it beforehand. I have no intention to forgive Yuuri Stratos at all. I would take pride to say that the anger I am carrying is even more than what you are feeling. That’s why, if he’s at Albion, I would also go to Albion.”

For the sake of killing him with his hand.

Saying that, Dio-sama’s eyes turn scarily cold. He had totally snapped. This is the first time I see Dio-sama this way.

“After Aneue, he has the guts to aim at Sophia-sama. Is he planning to make the females related to me unhappy?”

“Diorood-sama should be the one calming down.”

“I am calm. Anger is something to be stored. For now, there are 3 small countries left in the surrounding border. They are all showing hostility to Veris. If we don’t do anything about them, we can’t go to Albion. There are 2 choices. Annihilate or make peace.”

The first choice is impossible. If we think of the time of annihilation, Stratos would have casted the magic on Sophia before a path is made to Albion.

I believe we should make peace here.

“I think other than peace, there are no other choices.”

“I too think that way. First, it's to make peace with them. Then, it will be a visit to Albion. There aren't much time. What we can do is do it as quickly as we can.”

“If we rush too much, isn't there the possibility of increased failure rate?”

Dio-sama laughed lightly at Lord Bayd's words. The laugh could be seen as a bold one as well as a mocking one?

“My strategist would not fail. Especially if it's for someone important. Lord Bayd. Apologies, but Yukito will be my strategist for now. As always.”

“.....If we do managed to save the Celsus Maiden, what do you plan to do in the case Albion itself falls to Stratos's hands?”

“If he attack, we will receive him. If he doesn't, we will just leave him alone. For me, what's important is Sophia-sama's safety after all. I won't expose Veris to unnecessary danger, so don't worry.”

“I am relieved to hear that.”

Lord Bayd said that while bowing his head. However, if I am going to say about the face Dio-sama is making at that time, I would not believe in those words.

That face shows that he is planning to crush Stratos utterly. Dio-sama has reached the point where he does not plan to let Stratos run away no matter the means.

Even if I thought of that, I did not speak out.

I am also in a similar state of mind after all.

Part 3

The next day after Bayd came to the royal castle. Dio-sama and I left the castle and was taking a walk in the market of the capital. Dio-sama was wearing a hat, disguising as a merchant. For me, I was wearing a light green clothing of the island, unlike my usual. With just, we should not be exposed.... supposedly.

As Dio-sama's face is known to some extent, it's being covered by the hat, but for me whose image is more on my clothing over my face, I shouldn't be noticed if I do not wear black clothing and black coat.

"Well. What a great day for a walk. Yukito."

"Mentally, I wish to be left in a slump in my room though."

I replied tiredly to Dio-sama who walked by my side. The reason is because of what was said to me after leaving Bayd's room yesterday.

You should not believe in Bayd.

Having said that, I finally realized Dio-sama does not believe in Bayd. Even then, he was also trying to hide that fact.

I was done in again. For some reason, why am I always on the palms of Dio-sama.

"It's not something to feel down about. For me, everything other than Sophia-sama was as expected."

"I realized that for most part..... That's why I am feeling down...."

"Then, let's hear my strategist's opinion. Why did you not reject inviting Bayd whom I do not trust into the royal castle?"

Looking at his smiling face which is amused, I gave a sigh while getting even more disappointed.

“There are 2 reasons. Firstly, it’s basically just shorthanded. And next would be to let Bayd create a faction and rounding them up in one go.”

“That’s correct. As expected of my strategist. Amazing. Skillful. You fit the name ‘Arkwright’s Strategist’”

He’s definitely saying it on purpose. He is having fun watching me feel down.

After saying a few more harassing words of praise, Dio-sama satisfactorily started to explain everything.

“Since young, Bayd has been asking me if I have the thoughts of becoming the king of the continent. I replied saying that I have no interest. And then, three days later, Aneue was brought out of the royal castle. Because of that, I could only meet her 2-3 times a year from then on. Just from that, I could no longer forgive Bayd. Also, he is also from the clan that made Father the king. If possible, I wish to lecture continuously about the foolish things we have done.”

“Did you drag me out to mention such personal grudges..?”

“The main point comes after this. The clan of Fern was one that produces prime ministers-tier personnel 7 generations back. Veris’s most noble family of all.”

“And during the reign of King Braig, they were met with an unfortunate era. ”

I spoke of my predictions to advance the conversation. Dio-sama, not irritated by it, nodded while smiling and continued.

“Correct. For generations, Fern who holds power similar to the king, was

chased off in the name of national border defense by my father during Bayd's father's generation. Bayd was taken as a hostage and stuck in the castle close by for lengthy amount of time. Well, he's still using it though. So because of that, Bayd hates my father to a scary extent. Just that, even with that, my father had high opinions for Bayd's talents. That's why he became Aneue's teacher."

"You say that that king released Kaguya-sama but that doesn't seem believable."

"Father has no interest in adolescents. I think he started to have interest in Aneue when she's around 16. Though he tried making up a reason to call her back, Bayd purposely caused a war at the borders which resulted in her unable to return. I thought that this was something to praise him for. The only thing that I thought he did well on."

Totally looking down on him. From Dio-sama's perspective, Bayd is just a small existence. No, he was a small existence.

"It's forbidden to be over-estimate yourself. Right now, Dio-sama has only $\frac{2}{3}$ of your strength after all."

"That was not my intention but... it's as you said. I shall accept that. I will not underestimate Bayd. Anyway, Bayd raised her so she is docile. To say it accurately, other than things necessary in the battlefield, he only teach her basics of all other stuff. That's why Anue is so ignorant of the ways of the world."

Dio-sama shook his head as if lamenting. I don't really think that the person who always tease people would take advantage of that ignorance. At the very least, I think he does not think that ignorant is a bad thing. It seems that Dio-sama has many thoughts in regards to Bayd who induced her that way though.

"I understand. Having such trust from Kaguya-sama and having that self-

proclaimed brother entering the royal castle, and having told me about Sophia's situation, was it some kind of a plan?"

"You can't call him a brother. Isn't that right? I was deceived by him. It seems that it's true that the Fern clan has a group of spies under them. He definitely knows beforehand. He kept quiet to make us focus on just that."

"Well, with that kind of information-gathering ability, he should know of the close relationship we had with Sophia. And without letting us know of it beforehand, it's now no longer a time where we can gradually stabilize the country."

"That's true. Really, we got done in. If Aneue and Yukito didn't visit him, he would have leak the information somehow, and it will result in information flowing to the capital. Albion and I will direct ourselves to Albion and Bayd will gather his followers with a triumphant expression. And then Aneue would start to lose her power, and become a puppet king. The king Bayd desire is as such. I wonder if this is just one of the tactics he had thought of."

Looking around at the shops in the marketplace, we were making such conversation, but of course, we did take care of being heard upon. Even though talking in the middle of a crowd makes listening upon difficult, it's not perfect.

That's why Dio-sama and I requested a skillful support. It also includes the thoughts of trying see the prowess of these people.

"The secret organization that was used heavily during my grandfather's generation, Umbra. Their ability is authentically high. Also, due to their village being in Veri's largest forest, it was hard to make contact with them."

"Then, how did you reach them?"

"As the village was in the territory of Earl Uren, I entrusted it to Earl Uren after the war. During the war, they were reluctant to cooperate to avoid sacrifices, but I thought they would cooperate now. If it's them, they would not ally with Bayd. It gives me a peace of mind. "

Though he easily said that he entrusted it to Earl Uren, and even though the village it's in his territory, I wonder how much trouble did Earl Uren go through to get the secret organization to cooperate. I guess I should thank him when I see him next time.

“However, I heard that they would dispatch a skilled personel down but....”

I peeped to the back. There is a person who is following behind Dio-sama and I. Well, as the person knowing that there is someone following is obviously aware, but to those unaware, I believe they wouldn't know. After all, the sense of distance and how the person blend within the marketplace was superb.

“I was shocked when it was such a small boy,”

Dio-sama robbed the words I was going to say. However, there was a slight but definite difference to what I wanted to say.

“Dio-sama.... That kid is a girl, you know?”

After saying that to Dio-sama, I looked back at the person again.

Her stature is small. At most, to the height of my chest I guess. Her light brown hair that reach the back is done at a higher point. I guess, a pony-tail.

Her face gives off a child-like feel. No matter how one would try, she would only look like a middle school student. Or perhaps, even elementary school student. Though there are no one that uses elementary and middle school students in this world.

But, the age written on the status is 17. The same age as Sophia. And since her gender is written as female, it shouldn't be wrong. Her speed is over 100.

However, her combat prowess is lower 70s. It's definitely not wrong that she was sent as a spy. Though right now, her role is counterintelligence.

"....really...?"

"Really"

"To think I actually mistook her for a boy...."

Seems like he got quite a shock. And is feeling down. Well, Dio-sama has quite a lot of confidence in handling females, so I guess his pride in that direction was hurt.

"I trust my ability. Well, even if this conversation was heard, there isn't any problem."

"What disgrace. Yukito. I feel shameful of myself..."

"Please get over it.... Hey look, we are reaching the gates. Please quickly regain yourself."

Saying that, I dragged Dio-sama who looks like his soul has left him out of the capital.



Today, a training exercise for the army is being held outside the capital. Though I said training exercise, I guess education would be more correct.

The ones doing the instructing are Kaguya-sama's direct flanking unit and Captain Ars's mercenary unit. In other words, the 'Black Swan Flag' Army and elites of Dio-sama's rebel army. The combined numbers of both side are just before the 400 mark.

On the other hand, the opponent is the united front of the 'Black Swan Flag' Army and Dio-sama's rebel army, a new reformed Veris Knight unit of a 1000. (TL: Likely complicated here, the combined force of both army, excluding those

on the opposing side. Basically, 400 elites vs 1000 men of the combined front of both armies.)

“Who do you think will win?”

“I believe there is no need to ask.”

“Just tell me.”

“The side where Captain Ars is.”

“There is 2-times the difference in forces, you know?”

Even if I go easy on my consideration, Captain Ars’s win will not waver. If it was a 5000 vs 20000 battle, it would be difficult but the difference in the commander’s strength would not create much changes in a 1000 vs 400 situation. The battle is way too small.

As it’s a battle of quick wittedness over field of vision, Captain Ars’s side whose unit moves independently would be more advantageous.

“One person just has to defeat 2. Even if the one side is doubled the other, it’s a difference where quality can cover it up., ”

“Didn’t you say that war is all about numbers previously?”

“If the numbers exceed 5000, we can start talking about numbers, Well, that’s leaving aside magic arts.”

Magic arts is dependent on the individual’s talent. You can even say it’s the ultimate element. To take that into calculation would only make things even more complicated. If there are useful magic arts in the battlefield, there are going to be those that are disadvantageous. It’s not so simple.

“That’s true. If Aneue is there, both side would be annihilated.”

“Please don’t make me remember something unpleasant. I have a close proximity experience of it after all.”

“Now that you said that, that’s true. It seems the battle between Aneue and Yukito was already way back in the past to me.”

“Please don’t say it like you have aged. It just mean that the density of a day’s happenings is that high.”

As we are in the vicinity of the gate, we moved to prevent disturbance to the exercise. As we didn’t say we were inspecting, the only ones that can be considered as our escort is only that girl. Though that said, that girl would inform us in unusual situations, and even though Dio-sama could not use his original power, he is strong enough. It was a common agreement between Dio-sama and I that there will be no problem.

And also.

“We have a skillful bowman who is looking out for us.”

“True. It’s terrifying that we have no idea where she is.”

“Totally.”

Mikana did say, ‘I will be at a place not too far away looking over.’. And also said, ‘If anything happens, I shall assist.’, so she should be at a distance where her arrow can reach.

“It started.”

“Let’s see. General Paulus is leading half the cavalry and charging, and seems to be planning to crash the mercenary unit.”

The mercenary unit is the only unit that doesn’t ride a horse. If it is taken out, the difference in numbers would increase. From a consideration point of view,

he's not wrong. However.

"He's naive."

They are used to the battlefield. That's even on the dangerous ones.

Without doubt, they should have multiple experiences with the attacks from cavalries. That's why they should know of countermeasures too.

Normally, people on horses would swing their weapons down and use the momentum to charge.

Charging attacks going from top to bottom with the momentum is very effective. But, as long as you are on the horse, you have to control the horse.

In other words, delicate control is difficult.

"The horses are causing all the damages."

"The first charge couldn't be helped. They can only rely on individual ability to dodge that. However, from now on, it's the playing field of the battle-trained mercenary unit."

Likely the rule is to leave on taking a single hit from training sword or spear, people are gradually leaving the field.

General Paulus should have used the momentum and leave the area. Though he is likely reluctant to show his back to the enemy, that was fatal. In a melee fight, the horses are stationary. Being mentally stressed from having to control the horse while guarding against the surroundings, the knights were being hunted down one by one by the nimble movement of the mercenary soldiers.

"Oh, that was quick."

"Even the independent unit that moved to flank the sides of General Paulus's

unit is fighting with the remaining half of the unit, but the situation is tied.”

The one leading is likely the leaders of the Black Swan Flag Army, I wonder who it was. Even with the difference in numbers, to stop a free independent unit is likely difficult.

“They are faithful to basics. Without forcing a stop, they let them pass.”

“If they let them charge in, General Paulus’s unit which has been wrecked by the mercenary unit will rout. Though as it is, it will only gradually get worse.”

In the instant I said that, a large cheer came from the mercenary group. I guess General Paulus was taken down. As the general was taken down, the exercise quickly came to a stop. I wonder if the rule was to end when the general was taken down. And to charge suddenly is really like General Paulus though.

“Since you said you wanted to see a training exercise at least once, so I brought you over. Did you get anything out of it?”

“Well, to some extent, I guess.”

“I think your plan is interesting. I will entrust all authority to you in regards to this. I shall be Bayd’s opponent. As long as it’s regarding Sophia, there is a need to handle Albion as well. However, Bayd is likely not trying to destroy Veris so well, it’s fine not to be bothered about this side. To some extent, there is a need to verify the people that might be our enemies, so as expected, this side is going to take some time.”

Using Bayd, we will flush out all possible enemies and round them out in one go. That’s what Dio-sama is thinking. If it goes bad, we will be done in by Bayd but Dio-sama doesn’t seem to be worried.

That is likely not due to over-confidence or negligence. After being cautioned, Dio-sama no longer give that sort of look.

“While the army is welcoming its transition period, the domestic affairs have not stabilized yet. On top of that, we had to put our sights on another country, and the opponent is definitely a troublesome someone from an ancient race.”

“Truly a grim journey ahead. However, the shortcut is to quickly settle each of them one by one. Too rash, and it will only end in failure. Ah, but, having some form of acting of, ‘Oh, my brain is only thinking of Sophia-sama’ is required.”

“That’s not necessary.”

I am in fact doing just that after all.

Saying that, I look up at the blue sky. The sun is shining dazzlingly. I ended up remembering Sophia’s smile looking at the sun.

I wonder what is Sophia doing right now. Is she fine?

Only thoughts like these float in, and disappear soon after.

Part 4

Two months have passed since the civil war. The newly formed Veris army has again been deployed to various castle's of the national borders.

We, the Kingdom of Veris, make our next moves after the deployment of the army have been completed to some extent.

It's to recover the ties between the other countries. For that, we sent out an invitation to the various countries we wanted to make contact with.

It's an invitation to a party to deepen friendly ties.

For a while, Veris's invitation has been thought to be either assassination or kidnap and will never be accepted, but the Veris now is being recognised to be different from the old Veris. This party was approved by the various countries and have conveyed that influential personnels will be joining as the envoy of their respective countries.

However, there were countries that did not reply. Albion was one such country. Well, it's obvious though. The previous envoy being Sophia was being targeted. To Albion, it was likely a very disgraceful thing. I doubt their impression of Veris will be so easily changed.

"Ren. You there?"

"I am. Danna." (TL: Casual way of saying "Master")

This is my room where the sun has just raised. When the door opened, the young girl from the spy organization of Umbra came in. Almost without a sound.

Her name is Ren, and because she uses a way of speech similar to a male, Mikana also mistook her for a male at first. Seemingly due to being street

smart, she said that if she acts like a female, it can be quite troublesome. She was quite alarmed when I asked her whether if she was a girl.

“I have a request.”

“Make sure you pay for it.”

“I know that. ”

“Is that a message to the Elder? Don’t push such simple task to me. Can’t you just send a fast horse?”

Showing an annoyed expression, Ren gave me a bitter smile. For some reason, when I give her a task that is too simple, she will complain about it. Seems like she thought I was treating her like a kid.

“That’s true. Then, I will send a fast horse. Ren, please go ahead and inform the envoy of the various countries to gather.”

“Isn’t it becoming simpler!? Isn’t there task like tapping into the conversation of the prime minister or searching for neutral parties!?”

Ren was stamping her feet in the room. However, from my point of view, I do not want to do anything unnecessary when just a few days ago, Bayd was named the prime minister and is under Dio-sama’s jurisdiction.

Also, Dio-sama is already making contact with the neutral parties. Right now, what I should be doing is dealing with Albion and the preparation of the party.

“The prime minister is being handled by Dio-sama. What I should be focusing on is not the inside, but the outside.”

“Don’t say that.... I am starting to not know why I am here for....?”

Showing a down-hearted expression and lowering her shoulders, I feel like I did something bad. I do not have anything urgent for her to do now.

I guess it's fine to move a bit.

"Then, I will have you do something. I want you to find out the location of a person."

"Really!? I will go check on it immediately!"

"When Dio-sama and I went to see the exercise, there was a commander that made good movement. He is part of the regular army."

"The one who fought with that reckless guy? I just have to find out about that guy?"

"Investigate about him, and if possible, since I wish to meet with him, find out his location as well."

"I got it. I will get to it immediately!"

Saying that, I floated a bitter smile as I see Ren going out in high spirits.

"What an easy to understand kid."

As I say that, anticipating that she will return by afternoon, I decided to finish the work I have to some extent by the time she returned and started working on it.

■■■

"I have investigated.....it...."

Though she entered full of vigor at first, she slowly lowered her volume. Likely, it's due to me preparing for a trip.

What I am wearing right now is something similar to Dio-sama when he goes out, but the color is slightly different. It's deep green in color and was something Mikana selected for me.

"I was thinking that you are about to come. Wait for a bit."

".....I worked really hard to make it at this timing? Why are you able to anticipate that...."

"It's because I know you will work really hard."

Saying that while showing my smile, Ren accompanied me and left the office.

I could listen to the report while we walk and it's Ren after all. He likely got hold of the person's location as well.

"What kind of a person is he?"

"It's a 'she'. Her name is Nicola Rior. Daughter of a fallen earl. Her impression is rather vague and she's quite timid, you know? Her nickname in the army is 'Coward'. Is it fine with such a person?"

"It's fine. Being coward is not always a bad thing. So, where is she?"

"Orphanage. Seems like she is playing with the children there."

I was shocked from the unexpected location. The orphanage in this capital is something Kaguya-sama made. Though that said, it's not truly operational and I have also heard that they are lacking in manpower, but I wasn't expecting that people related to the army is helping out.

"Hey Ren."

“What is it?”

“Does she look kind?”

“... I guess so? It seems to be a day off but she use it to go to the orphanage. Well, it could also be that she doesn't have any friends.”

“I see. I am anticipating to meet her.”

“I am not so interested to meet her. Why do I have to follow you?”

Ren said that while putting her hands behind her head. Even though she said that, her footsteps can't be heard. It was totally covered up.

“It's fine to play with the children at the orphanage you know?”

“I won't play! Don't treat me like a kid!?”

“No, when I am talking, you will be bored, right? So it's to kill some time.”

“I won't be bored! I have to pay attention to the surroundings! It's enough! I won't follow you!”

Guess treating her like a kid got onto her nerves, Ren stopped her tracks and waved her hands with a spiteful gaze.

I smiled bitterly and negotiated.

I will buy something you like from the marketplace, so accompany me.”

“...it angers me that you are trying to bait me with things.”

“Is that a no?”

“...since I have not taken my lunch, treat me to lunch and I will follow you.”

After saying “Negotiations complete.”, I started advancing. Ren is also following behind. I could hear her footstep slightly.

Really an easy to understand kid.



Eating at the eatery the capital is famous for, we went leisurely towards the orphanage when our ears hear the high spirited yells from children.

There are many children in the orphanage that was remodeled from a small house. A number of people is required to take care of that number of people.

I guess it's insufficient manpower anyway. From the ex-king's tyranny, the population of Veris dropped drastically. Though wars were one of the reason, those who have connections with people outside the country all left Veris. The ex-king did not do anything to stop it. He most likely anticipate that a number of people with no connections and money will stay.

As long as you have a certain level of population, governing is difficult without firm policies. On that point, that ex-king does know about himself and the country.

"May I know what business do you have here?"

When I was pondering, an elderly called out to me. Likely the person managing the orphanage.

"I wish to take a look at the state of the orphanage, is that fine?"

"I don't mind but... who might you be?"

"Envoy from the castle. I was told to look at the situation of the children in the orphanage."

"It's different from the envoy from Her Majesty, right? I was told to be cautious of suspicious people though.."

I guess, the current me is having an appearance that looks at most like a merchant. If such a person suddenly visit the orphanage, it's definitely suspicious.

I took out the short sword from my clothing. As the short sword has the royalty's crest on it, it should be enough to show my position.

"Would you understand from this? If not, I can go directly to get the permission from Kaguya-sama though?"

"N, no! I am truly sorry to not know of someone your status! Please forgive me!"

"Please do not mind. In the first place, it's our fault to come down without acquiring permission beforehand. Is it fine to enter?"

"P, please do! However, what should the children do..."

"It's fine to let them be themselves. Please do not mind us. Just think of us as just guests. We would be returning soon. If you feel uneasy, it's okay to report to Kaguya-sama. If you tell her my feature, she should know immediately."

Unsure if the elderly woman realized my identity, after flickering her eyes a few times, she gradually bowed as if understanding.

I am the only person on Kaguya-sama's side that has black hair and black eyes. Not as an immigrant from the island, but if it's someone related to Kaguya-sama, they should realized immediately, I think.

"Again, I am sorry for my impoliteness."

"Please don't mind. We should be the one who should be apologizing."

Saying that, I faced my back to her.

Ren's delightful voice came from the back, wondering if it's because she was treated to lunch.

"Danna is quite cool. You are usually so plain though."

"It's not like I have any peerage, so I am just a commoner. And, saying I was plain normally is unnecessary."

"Got it got it. However, I can understand that you are a commoner. You are too courteous towards using us spies."

"Are others more cruel?"

It's normal since it involves money, and they usually find faults in our work and gives us unreasonable tasks and what's more, they don't care about any of our lives....

Ren twisted his face when she talks, as if remembering something unpleasant.

Towards such a Ren, I reached my hand out and stroked her head.

"It's fine. Dio-sama and I do not plan on sending you people to war or assassinate anyone. Though I can't promise that, I will try to make sure that there are no sacrifices on your side. With all my ability."

"...don't treat like a kid!"

Ren who shook off my hand, turned her head away. I guess I shouldn't do that to a 17 year old girl.

"My bad, my bad. You seem to be feeling down so, I couldn't help it."

"You would do it to anyone who is feeling down...?"

"No way. Only those that seems necessary."

"I also do not need it!"

“I got it. I will keep that in mind.”

As we make such conversation, we came close to where the children are playing. Within them, there was a shoulder-length golden hair girl who is drenched in sweat and totally spent.

She should be Nicola Rior. It's definitely that drooping big eyes that's giving her the weak impression. Due to her small stature, she doesn't look like a knight. If I am to say, she seems to be more suited to be a maid or what she is doing now, the caretaker for the children.

Nicola's light brown eyes caught sight of me. As she is tilting her small head, she likely hasn't realized that I am someone from the castle.

“Everyone! Not just that Onee-chan, how about playing with this child?”

“Hey!? Don't tell me that's the reason why you made me follow you!?”

I need to draw the attention of the children away if I want to speak with Nicola. Then a bait is necessary. The perfect bait for the entertainment-starved children is a playmate.

It's just time that Nicola is exhausted too. The children started moving towards Ren. Though Ren took off with a cramped face, maybe because it seems enjoyable, dozens of children started chasing Ren around.

“You really need stamina to take on children. Are you fine?”

“Eh? Ah, yes. I am still a knight even like this.... Likely I don't appear that way though...”

“Yes. I really can't see.”

As I tried saying it with a smile, Nicola started becoming surprisingly depressed. I don't think she has to feel depressed though

Nicola's status other than her combat ability is as high as 80-85. Her wisdom is somewhere in the 90s. In exchange, though her combat ability of 60 is unreliable, if you think of her instructions like mine, there is nothing to be disappointed about. Though I would take attacks from various things if I go to the front though.

"I really do think that I am more suited to be playing with children and it's more comfortable though... I was admitted to the army by my father, and ended up into a captain of a Knight corps. But since I am weak, I am not being trusted by my subordinates and as I am timid, I would quickly move to the back... "

"Is it hard for you to stay in the army?"

"My father.... Trying to push me who is in the capital far away from the ex-king, he sent me to the army. But since the ex-king is no longer alive, and my father is no longer around, I was thinking of resigning... Eh!? Why am I talking about such things to a person I just met! Sorry...."

Seeing the flustered Nicola, I floated a smile. She is likely not getting an active role due to lack of self-confidence and the fact that she is in the cavalry corps of the Black Swan Flag army. The role of a charge from a high speed movement does not leverage her ability. She needs a corps that requires her unique feature.

"I don't think being timid is a bad thing. In a battle, it's important. That's what ties to protecting your subordinates."

"Eh....?"

"From now on, this country will change. A unit that represents that will be created. Independently movable, using their own judgement, for the country, a unit moving for the citizens. What do you think of such a unit?"

"...I don't think it will materialize. Unless Her Majesty has deep trust, she

can't entrust such tasks to such a unit. There might be revolt and above all, this country is moving towards not fighting wars."

I almost laughed reflexively to her reply. This girl really sees the country's path firmly. Steady and certain. Her answer shows her personality.

Never risk herself, never venture into danger, dealing with things normally, fighting normally and winning normally. She is such a girl. Though that is only if her unit is stronger than the other, if such a general has subordinates, you can have a peace of mind.

"That's why we make a small elite unit, shrinking the army. And then, such small and deploy-able units can be given tasks and spur the country on. The insufficient manpower would disappear, so isn't it a good thing?"

"It won't go so well. In the first place, even if everything goes well, who is going to lead this unit? There might be the danger of causing a civil war again. Though that said, we can't appoint people with no civil war achievements as that leader would require status and ability."

"Is there no suitable candidate?"

"... just one person. I think if it's Arkwright's Strategist-dono, it should be fine. Though it might be pushing on the side of Diorood-sama's, I also heard that he has deep trust from Her Majesty."

Saying that, she returned to herself after going "Ha!".

Seems like having a serious conversation is embarrassing for her.

"I did it again.... I am sorry, I am bad at having a conversation, as I can't stop speaking..."

She indeed seems bad at having two-way conversations. But, since she

answered my questions, I don't think it's a fatal weakness. Or more like, it could be a beneficial advantage.

"It's fine. So? It's fine if it's Arkwright's strategist?"

"Eh, ah, yes. In regards to his abilities, though only for a few days, he had fought her Majesty before, and he also the the decision-making ability to retreat when possible without overdoing it. Moreover, he seems to be someone capable at raising the morale, so I believe he might be suited to be the commander for an isolated unit."

"Have you seen him before?"

"I have fought him before. I was in her Majesty's unit after all. Though that said, as I was in the fill-in 3rd battalion, I wasn't really part of the battle."

"Then, what kind of feature does he have?"

"Feature, you say? Black hair and eyes, yeah, like yours. He has slightly high and proper voice. His voice is quite similar to yours too. His stature is about yours and has an undependable-like atmosphere, yep, as expected just like yours. He doesn't seem strong at all, but it doesn't feel like you can win against him. He is a person that makes people hard to judge him. It's not like I have talked to him before..... Eh?"

Nicola looked hard at my face. And then she took some distance and started to look from top to bottom. Likely trying to imagine me wearing my black clothes and coat.

As I thought of being a tease, I took out the fan from my chest and show it to Nicola.

"If you think you are right, how about calling my name?"

As I grinned broadly, Nicola's face turned green instantly.

Part 5

A unit that act independently. In modern terms, they are the special forces like the USA's marines and the British SAS. I proposed to create such a commando unit and it was accepted.

Dio-sama's current post is the Supreme Commander of the army. In other words, Veris's highest commanding officer. That's why as long as I get the permission from Dio-sama, I can create the independent unit. Of course, I have to also get permission from Kaguya-sama though.

As Dio-sama would do something on that side, I have to think about what kind of unit to make.

I was told that the number of people in the unit that is allowed to move independently is 5000. Anything more than that would result in running out of supplies.

No matter how well you fight, there are definitely sacrifices. I can only cope with it. The problem is how much this army of 5000 can acquire achievements.

"You seem to be troubled?"

"Yeah... Of course while the individuals of the unit are lacking in quality, the commanders leading them are also insufficient. Splitting 5000 into 5 would result in 1000 each. Letting one general to lead each of them, as of now, what's decided are Mikana having the role of surprise attack or high-speed maneuvering, Nicola with her reliable instructions and tenaciousness of not crumbling and Captain Ars who has the experience to cope with any situations flexibly. These three. I still wish for 2 more, one that has overwhelming attacking strength and another who has high magic capability."

Mikana gave a sigh by my side. I can understand why. I am aiming too high.

I have already 3 generals that were hard to get. Even then, since we are moving independently, I want overwhelming strength.

“Am I not enough to answer Yukito-sama’s demand....”

“I am relying on you. However, I am not so optimistic that just you alone can defeat the enemy.”

“...I see. Then, to make you rely on me more, allow me to provide you some information.”

After saying that, she kept silent for a while. Somehow, she is giving an expression of not wanting to say it.

“If you dislike it, it’s fine, you know?”

“No, it’s not me, I believe Yukito-sama might dislike it....”

“What do you mean?”

“...I do have an idea of a good magician. Most likely, comparable to Kaguya-sama based on magic alone.”

“Is that such a person? Or more like, you actually know such a person?”

“I found out at work just the other day.”

From that, I understood. There was a job for Mikana that she has been spending time on for a while.

It’s the bodyguard for the women that entered the ex-king’s harem. As the number easily reached over a thousand, and due to people having died within those number, they were all gathered in one location and those that have a place to return to were sent back as courteously as possible, but of course, there were also those that don’t have such places.

As said previously, while there were people thought to be dead, there were also people whose family had perished, or have no idea where they are. And also those that were originally alone.

Mikana's job is to think of the future for such people.

"You mean those people who enter the ex-king's harem, right?"

"Yes. Her name is Erica Fanir. Feared as the 'Guren no Majo', and was the queen of the country Veris destroyed."

"Queen? How old she is?"

"I believed she will be 23 this year. She was forced to take a marriage of convenience at 17 and 3 years later, Veris declared war on them and the country was destroyed. Just that, she was kidnapped just before the proclamation of war and was said to have died. I believe it was the ex-king that kidnapped her."

Opposite to her plain tone, Mikana's expression has quite the anger. Well, though I can understand why, I am no longer surprised at what the ex-king will do. Or more like, I felt like 'as expected he did it'.

"Obviously there is no place to return to..... So how is she like?"

"She is calm. Could you meet and to talk her? She seems to be looking for a reason to live."

I nodded to Mikana's words. If it's a skilled magician, I would really love for her to lend her strength but before that, I am starting to be interested in what kind of a person she is.



I endured my sights from moving towards the voluptuous body wrapped in a black robe. To give such glances here is more than just impolite, it's the worst. After all, she is a person who have lived in a situation where such glances are forced on her on a frequent basis after all.

Erica is sitting on a chair. She tried standing up when I entered, but I stopped her with my hand signal, so it ended up in this situation of me standing, while she sits.

Her magic power is in the upper 90s. Even her wisdom and combat prowess. Though the others were quite high as well, the score for beauty that is over 100 was what my eyes set on. I scolded myself that I wasn't here to look for beauty.

Her platinum blond hair and black robe is atrociously contrasting, leaving a really strong impression. And her emerald eyes that look straight at me holds the profundity like a forest.

What a beauty, was what I thought. Of course, since it's the person that king chose, it can't be anything other than beauties, but recently, I who have been looking at Kaguya-sama and Sophia, have been becoming quite strict when it comes to the appearance of females. Even then, the fact that I also thought that she is beauty, is because she has something that the other two does not have. I guess I should say that she has a really strong glamor of mature women, compared to the other two.

"I am Yukito Kurei. It's an honor to meet you. Erica Fanir-sama."

"It's also an honor to meet you. The Strategist of Arkwright-dono."

I wonder if it's just me that within that high pitch that is a sensual feel to it. (TL: Direct translations was "wet", but it sounded weird english-wise so....)

Nope, it's not my imagination. Right now, she is readjusting her legs on purpose when she is wearing clothing with slits on them.

She is seducing me. As if I will have such idiotic ideas. I guess she is trying to see what kind of a person I am. I guess she could be thinking that I am someone

who came to buy a beauty that was once part of the ex-king's harem.

Well, it's not wrong to say I came to buy her though.

"As I do not have time, allow me to go straight to the point. Would you lead the magician squad of my newly formed unit?"

Unexpected was the expression written on Erica's face, and she who realized that I wasn't looking for her value as lady, blushed and stopped crossing her legs. As expected it was embarrassing, i guess. Well, I could see her thighs after all.

"That is to say.... That you value of skills as a magician, is that right?"

"Yes. Right now, there aren't such magician in Veris. Of course, if you reject, it's not like I would do anything, so please do answer honestly."

"Erica-sama. I will vouch for Yukito-sama's words as Yukito-sama will not break his promises."

Mikana said that from my back. After hearing that, Erica put on a difficult face.

Seriously, my request is not something to be praised about. Erica doesn't have much selections after all.

It's basically asking someone with no one to rely on to come to the battlefield. It's unfair. From a calculative view point, even though I am the one saying it, it's the worst.

But, it doesn't seem to make her feel happy to let her just sit here. Of course, it's just my own selfish speculation.

This person is not one without power. She is released from violence and power. She is capable for living freely as she likes.

“To be desired for as a magician is a first. Two kings have desired me as a woman.”

“...would you reject then?”

“Nope. I am glad. Though my choices are few, I couldn’t make any choices before. This is already on the better side. To fight on your side doesn’t seem bad. However, I do have a condition.”

Erica showed a single finger with seducing movements. Why I felt it was seducing is likely due to her breasts shaking when she moved her arms causing my eyes fly, i guess. Erica was just showing her fingers so this is totally my corrupted fault.

“I wish to have the freedom to research magic. I love magic arts. And that was something I cannot do until recently. Of course, I won’t put my hand on dangerous stuff, so don’t worry, okay?”

“If it’s just that, I don’t mind. Anything more?”

“More? Let’s see..... Right now, that gentleness of yours is plenty. It’s rare to find gentle guys these days.”

“I believe I was normal though....”

Saying that, she showed a smile to me and stood from her chair, and kneeled before me.

“Erica Fanir hereby vow my loyalty to Yukito Kurei.”

“Then, I will also vouched upon this name that I would not betray you.”

“Fufu, contract established. I am now your subordinate. Whats should I do now?”

“Then, would you stand up quickly? That clothing...”

I have problems placing my sights. Realizing it without being told, Erica gave a broader smile towards my reaction.



1 person remaining. I want a general that can lead the main attack. Contrary to what I thought, I couldn't find someone so convenient.

A talent that can lead a piercing and destructive charge while having strength on his own. Though previously I thought of General Paulus, he is in the border defense army. As expected, I can't pull a general for the border defense. I have already unreasonably took Captain Ars. I can either find someone who have not distinguished himself in the army or from outside the army itself.

"It seems quite difficult, isn't it?"

"Yeah. I can't seem to find the person I want."

As I walked with Dio-sama in the royal castle's corridor, I said that.

There are many people who possess personal strength. However, more or less, such people are too straightforward, and would not listen to my words. Their self-confidence is too high.

"Pondering on what I should do."

"Un.. Let's see. Wouldn't it be good to try changing your perspective?"

"Perspective, you say? That's true. There isn't any point to be too influenced by the current situation and it's not like it's necessary to complete it right now."

"That's right. Yukito just have to raise the person up. A powerful general feared by other country."

Saying that, he went towards the opposite direction after ending with “See you”.

Though it’s true that it’s possible for me to raise one, that would mean the person has to at least listen to me to some extent. The best would be someone younger than me. Including future expectations, it’s better for it to be as young as possible.

“I wonder what should I do.”

“Oi. Master. If you are troubled, shall I lend a hand?”

“Ren. Don’t suddenly stand behind a person, didn’t I told you that?”

“Isn’t it Master’s fault for not detecting it? So, if it’s searching for someone, I can help, you know?”

Ren said it with an excited tone. Now that I think of it, I have been assigning messenger tasks to him and tasks that can make full use of Ren’s ability.

“Even if you say that, it’s too vague.”

“How vague?”

“Younger than me and strong. Just that. The younger the better.”

“The lower 10s teen and strong you say.... I don’t think there is such a person? If there is, he should have distinguished himself, shouldn’t he?”

“Yeah, so maybe his status is low or he was late in getting achievements, or even....”

“I do know someone who is low in status and low in achievements...”

I reacted to Ren’s words. I basically do not care the status of the people under me. My own status is low after all.

“If I am not mistaken, he came from the remote areas of the village, and normal soldier at first, but due to his achievements during the civil war before, he came to lead a unit of around 50 people. His age is 15 but from his achievements, he is said to be able to promote a lot earlier usually.”

“What kind of achievements did he acquire?”

“He is part of the rebel army, you know. Though he didn’t participate in the central battle. Something like rushing into the enemy formation alone, and seems to have cut the magicians into pieces. Because of that, the army being unable to use magic lost. It is said that he did the same thing thrice.”

Though usually such rumors have something else in them, but if it’s true, that’s quite the ability. Also, his decision to target the magicians is also not wrong. However, he is slightly reckless, to say.

“I wish to meet him. Can you find him?”

“Give me a day. I will find him.”

“I leave it to you. What kind of reward do you want?”

“Prepare me a delicious meal, you got it!”

Informing me with that smile, Ren left without making a sound.

A simplistic kid as usual.



A few days remain before the party for the messenger arrives, I who didn’t have much time, finally found time to meet the rumored young man Ren mentioned.

As there isn't much time, I thought of just seeing the status and leave if it wasn't as good as expected, I shuddered at the intense training of the unit held at the outer side of streets. Nope, rather than the unit, it was towards the young man in the center that gave a really conspicuous colour to it.

"Seems like the rumors are more docile. Definitely."

"Certainly. How intense."

In a training between 50 fellow mates, the results can be pretty much seen by just the strength of the young man that charged in right at the beginning. He possessed the strength on par with Captain Ars.

As I doubted my eyes, I managed to somehow get to see the status from far.

Combat Prowess of 92. Though his wisdom is more regrettable than General Paulus, I could always teach him to get him by somehow.

It's the feeling of finding an unpolished gem. Or also, the finding of a raw ore

Even though his wisdom is low, the fact that he could destroy the weakest point of the unit, he should be one that runs by instinct.

"What boar-like movement. Master can definitely get him to drop in a trap hole, i think."

"Right now, it seems simple. But, if he matures, it will be difficult."

The young man went to celebrate with his mates after quickly ending the training in their victory.

"Roy, you say.... I guess he's the last one."

"Are you going to make him lead 1000 soldiers? Isn't it impossible?"

"I guess at the start, it will be 100. I will lead the rest."

“He seems like he doesn’t listen to instruction though?”

“It’s fine. That will have to depend on my ability and there are also outrageous people around too. If he gets too full of himself, he will definitely be in for a bad time.”

Saying that, I walked towards Roy.

From then on, after a few days, when the messengers arrived and the party is finally about to begin, our newly formed unit also established successfully.

The name is Independent Mobile Unit, Nox

In the end, the black robe that ended up becoming mine was cheaply mass produced and used as uniforms.

When they wear their black coat and form up, it really resembles the night.

After greeting and when I was about to think of merrymaking for the commemoration of the establishment, Ren came with an urgent message.

That there is a suspicious group at the national border.

Chapter 2: The Independents

Part 1

There are 3 small countries that exists between Albion that exists within the middle of the continent of Rodinia and Veris that rule the southern portion of the continent.

They are Kingdom of Morl, Kingdom of Canaan, Kingdom of Redonia. When the ex-king took the throne, there were 7 small country and within themselves, they created alliances but due to the ex-king, 4 of them were destroyed, and the remaining three also have their lands shaved away.

Of course, hatred towards Veris was deep. However, I thought that moving at this time might be too rash.

“Ren. Report with more details.”

“A suspicious group was caught near the border of Redonia. They seem to be pursued by what seems to be a mixed of Albion’s magician and Redonia’s army.”

“Albion.... How’s Morl and Canaan?”

“A portion of the national border defense unit will be linking up with the mixed unit. The pursued group should be entering General Paulus’s fortress if they continue their route. Well, that is if they are accepted though.”

Listening to Ren’s report, I ponder without saying a thing. In that interval, Erica made her prediction.

“Attack from the 3 countries using the attacked unit as an excuse.....? Even then...”

“The scale is too small.”

Mikana continued. Captain Ars kept silent. I guess he doesn't plan to interfere in regards to such matters.

I shifted my sights slightly. Having orange hair that shows the cheerfulness of the person himself, and eyes of his belligerent self. A young man with the same height as me, Roy entered my sights.

Wearing red shirt with golden embroidery and black pants, covered with a black coat, Roy tilted his head after listening to the conversation. Actually, I wanted to incline my head towards that badly conspicuous attire but since the person himself seems to like it a lot, I couldn't say a thing.

“Hey hey. Nicola-nee-chan. Would you explain it in simple terms?”

“Hmm. Simple terms, you mean the weirdness about it? All the movements.”

“But the enemy is here, right? Couldn't we just beat down all of them?”

“That's true though. We are an army after all. However, the enemy we should be taking down is also a puzzle.”

Even though he is only a captain of a 100-man unit, it was my instruction for him to be here together with the 4 commanders. I have conveyed that unless it was something urgent, he can ask questions. And he is to listen and think about it.

Nicola, who is beside him, answered him in simple terms as expected. The commanders had met each other before and Roy also got along with Nicola at that time. No, I guess I should say Nicola got along with Roy. (TL: I am having problems translating this, basically, Nicola, like an elder sister, tried to get him into the group and stuff like that.)

“Hey, Yukito-niichan. Is it not okay to just knock everything out from the

start?”

“Roy-kun!? You can’t talk to Yukito-sama right now!”

“Why? It was Yukito-niichan who said that I can ask questions, you know?”

“Roy. Try to read the mood a bit more. This is not a situation where we can use both your and my head, right?”

“Uncle Ars just find it troublesome, right?”

“What do you mean by that? Or more like, why am I an Uncle!?”

“27, right? Since it’s a difference of 10 years, you are an uncle!”

As it was turning into a fight from a glaring contest, as I was about to stop them, Mikana started tuning her bow. Just like that, Captain Ars and Roy stopped their quarrel.

“I thought it was a good chance to do target practice though.”

“Ara ara. Don’t bully them too much, okay?”

“Them being noisy is what’s bad.”

Though Mikana who said that was quite loud too, I won’t say it to save Mikana’s pride.

While everyone is making a racket, what we should do is pretty much decided.

Firstly, I have to go to the castle no matter what. Likely, this information is going to cause a disorder when known.

“Mikana. Let’s go to the castle. Roy, follow me.”

“Can I go too!?”

“Yukito-sama. To bring Roy as well is.....”

“It’s fine. It’s a good experience. Roy. Do not make a fuss wilfully. If you break this promise, I won’t feel like helping you, you got it?”

“It’s fine, it’s fine!”

Towards the reply, I unconsciously closed my other eye. I wonder if he really understands.

When I was about to say something, Erica approached Roy.

“Roy. Listen carefully.”

“Eh? What?”

“You are a captain of this unit. This coat you wearing is the same as those of the unit commanders. This means that you are a person who shares the burdens of this unit.”

“I heard previously! Responsibility, right?”

“Yep. That’s why if you don’t understand this, do take off that coat.”

Being told that, Roy gaped and changed his expression instantly and glared at Erica.

“Why!?”

“If you wore that coat and make any rude actions in the royal castle, it’s not just your problem. It will become a responsibility of your men and the person above you, Yukito-sama.”

“Wa, wait just a minute..... If I do anything, the others would be affected too ...?”

“That’s right. You are shouldering many things. Your men’s live, the unit’s fame, the responsibility of your own life and our expectation. If you do not have the confidence to shoulder all that, go and take off that coat.”

Roy faltered at Erica's words. Roy who usually goes with the flow, is treating everything way too simple. I believe there are many people who find that simplicity irritating.

If you incurred the imperial wrath, your head will instantly leave your body. Different to the battlefield where manners has no place in, it's the royal castle where manners are stressed even for just the outward appearance. Furthermore, the envoy from the other countries are also here.

I was thinking of bringing him to let him feel the weight of the responsibility while risking to some extent, but it seems that Erica's words has given him some kind of "damage".

But.

"Roy. Let's go."

"Eh!? Wait, wait a minute!"

"Was the "It's fine" just now a lie? You should start thinking more thoroughly before answering next time round. We don't have time so let's go. Captain Ars, Erica and also Nicola, please prepare for departure. Very likely no matter what happen, it will be us moving towards the borders."

Saying just that, I turned and strided until where the horse can go.

If we galloped till the royal castle, I don't think the horse can take it. This is a part of the forests that is in outskirts of the royal castle. If possible, I wanted to have the unit established in the royal castle, but due to the envoys coming a lot early than expected, it became such a weird style.

Though Dio-sama said that he will come during the final stage of the party, who would have thought that I would have to go and meet him for such a reason.

“Well, I was expecting it though.”

Murmuring that, if it's to my predictions, the situation is going towards the worst scenario. Re-verifying that, I quickened my pace.



The royal castle was in a commotion as if a bee's nest.

It was due to the move made by the Prime Minister, Bayd.

“To arrest the escorts, you say. Well, if the unit close to the borders are really an attacking army, then it's not a wrong countermeasure though.”

It felt a bit rushed. Would that Bayd actually not take into account that the information might be false before acting? That's impossible.

In that case, there should be some reason behind this move.

“.... a war....”

“Is something the matter?”

“I just thought that he likely saw an opportunity.”

I answered Mikana like that but Mikana gave an unclear expression to my expression. She doesn't seem to understand it. That's natural. I did that on purpose.

Perhaps Bayd thinks that it's fine even if we do get into a battle. Dio-sama said before. That Bayd yearn for a country that controls the continent. In this situation, it would be better to say that he has that ambition. It shouldn't be something pretty like yearning.

If it becomes a situation where we fight the 3 countries, Veris will definitely win. Even if Albion is supporting them from behind. And, if we can somehow overcome the battle with Albion later, we could really see ourselves unifying the continent. However, to have a war with Albion is bad. Bayd thinks that they can win but sadly, even with Kaguya-sama on the frontlines, the chances of winning is only 50%, or even lower.

Having a battle with Albion is something we have to stop no matter what. I definitely do not want to send my subordinates into a battle that we can't win.

What should I do then. It's simple. As long as we do not fight if the 3 countries that is our buffer between Albion.

Of course, if this is really the invasion of the 3 countries, then we can only fight but the situation is too weird if you think about it.

If the unit being chased is really a tactic from the 3 countries, there should be a limit of having a rough plan. There should be plenty of options to choose from. Above all, in regards to timing, to target now will only result in the abandonment of the envoys' lives. Even after the party when the envoy returns, the chances of the plan will not change much.

Furthermore, I am also bothered about the moving unit of Morl and Canaan being just a portion. Even if it's a scout, to siege the fortress that General Paulus is protecting, they have to put in more forces. If you say it's a estimation mistake, we can end it there but it's dangerous to think that the enemy is stupid.

"Yukito-niichan... I am starting to feel bad...."

"A good change. Don't forget fear and anxiety. Feel it and if you can't control it properly, it's not possible to command people."

As Roy said that following me, I frowned at the continuous gathering of the guards moving towards to the reception area of the party.

I don't think that's a need to mobilize so much people, as arresting them

should be simple.

What I can think of is two things. There are people resisting or there is a dispute within the Veris's side.. And very likely, it's the latter. I guess Kaguya-sama or Dio-sama is flaring up at Bayd's action. Probably, it's Dio-sama though.

"Mikana, Roy. Do not leave my back. And don't talk. No matter what happen, don't talk and move. I will do something about it."

Saying that, I looked at the door of the reception area. From what I can see, Dio-sama is covering up a blonde female. I guess it's the female envoy. I wonder which country is it. No, though I say it's weird, to send a female to Veris, that's quite the provocation or should I say, reckless.

"To arrest an envoy with no definite evidence, can't you understand that you will only lose trust!?"

"It's information that can be trusted. There is already an alliance army of the 3 countries and Albion at the vicinity of the borders. They have already recognize us as enemies."

Bayd who is wearing a purple splendour clothing of bad taste said that to Dio-sama in his full white clothing.

What a seriously troublesome man. When we prepared our army, he quickly decided to make use of it. How much does this man wants to unify the continent.

I walked slowly and passed the guards. Though I say that, it was only the initial portion before they immediately realized that it was me and opened the road for me.

Noticing the movement of the guards, participants of the party moved their sights to me and Mikana and Roy, those following me. Not giving a care to it, or displaying like I didn't care, I moved to where Kaguya-sama is giving a stern

expression is and was slightly behind where Dio-sama were quarrelling with Bayd.

Probably pondering who she should be supporting, I guess. It's definitely a difficult decision.

Kaguya-sama who wore a black dress that exposes her shoulders, which she definitely wouldn't wear normally noticed me and gave an expression as if she is slightly relieved.

I kneeled down in front of Kaguya-sama and apologized.

"Even though it is an emergency, I apologise to have come without permission."

"It's fine. Did your information net also caught something? Yukito"

Instantly. The reception got slightly noisy. There were nobles that seldom come to the castle and also envoys from countries, other than the 3 countries. They were murmuring my name.

"That is Yukito Kurei.... He is young..."

"As he was called the Strategist of Arkwright, I thought he would be more threatening."

"No, we cannot be negligent. He's the right hand man of Diorood-dono. He might be hiding his true nature."

Please stop talking at a voice level that I can hear. I am embarrassed listening to it. However, rather than my small embarrassed heart, there is something more important.

"Yes. There is a suspicious group at the borders close to the Redonia, and they were being pursued by the mixed unit of Redonia and Albion. At the same time,

as if to link up, a portion of Morl's and Canaan's unit are also moving according to the reports."

Again, the area was stirring up. This time it isn't just noise. There were screams as well. Looking around, there is a man that was hitting something.

He is likely the envoy of any of the 3 countries. If the 3 countries do invade, it will mean that he was abandoned by his lord after all.

"My father would never do such a cowardice sneak attack!"

The female behind Dio-sama stepped forward and said that in a loud voice towards Kaguya-sama.

Kaguya-sama gazed directly at that lady and called out her name.

"Princess Melissa. I believe so too. However, right now in this country, in my country's border, a conflict is about to happen."

"There is definitely some kind of mistake, or someone's plan. My father may be mediocre, but he is not reckless! We do not have the force to be able to attack the current Veris!"

"Aneue. It's as Melissa said. This situation is weird no matter how you think about it."

Dio-sama assisted Princess Melissa. However, with that method of assisting....

"Diorood-sama. Even if you are close with Princess Melissa, please restrain yourself to make statements with personal feelings in them."

"Prime Minister Fern. You make it sound like I made a statement mixed with personal feelings though?"

“Though it’s truly regrettable, Diorood-sama right now seems to have lost your cool.”

It truly does seem that way. I believe that’s not just the opinion of Bayd’s and mine. Not “Your Majesty”, but the fact that he called ‘Aneue’ can derived that.

“I just think that we should not move carelessly in this situation.”

“That would be too late. Since you have been given the command for the whole army, please think of the soldiers in the frontlines. The fortress should be capable of stopping the attack. However, just for a few days. And it takes a few days to travel from here to the borders. We have to move immediately.”

“Your Majesty. I affirmed to Prime Minister Fern’s words.”

“Yukito!?”

Without replying Dio-sama’s appeal, I looked at Kaguya-sama.

I can see that there are doubt in Kaguya-sama’s eyes. Because there are many uncertainties.

That’s why.

“Then allow this Yukito Kurei to be despatched as reinforcements. After that, I shall enquire the group and investigate deeply in regards to this invasion. Though slightly early, I would like to be granted the rights for my unit, Nox, to move as an independent commando unit. ”

“.....I do not wish to point my sword at the innocents. I wish to be just. I know that that is difficult. However, will everything be clear if I entitle you this authority?”

What return Kaguya-sama’s question was a silence from the reception area. It was a silence that you might delude oneself of hearing one’s heartbeat.

“I am unable to guarantee whether I am able to acquire the answer to your

request.”

“It’s fine. What I want is the truth. At this time, the movement by the 3 countries has too much uncertainties. The envoys have also spoke that they do not have any idea in regards to this situation. I am also bothered about the group that is pursued. That’s why I shall grant you the authority of independence. From now on, you shall be my eyes. See everything and convey to me. During this time...”

Move at your discretion and deal with the situation.

Listening to those words, I bowed down and muttered.

“At your will.”

After putting some distance, I stood up and faced my back to Kagiya-sama. At that time, my eyes met with Dio-sama’s.

Dio-sama slightly nodded. As expected, that was an acting. Bayd’s expression was disapproving towards granting of Nox’s authority of independence. Dio-sama also made use of this disturbance to assist in letting me acquire that authority.

With Dio-sama’s help, Bayd was not able to intrude. Next would be just the settlement of the situation.

“Let’s go. Mikana, Roy.”

It’s time for departure.

Towards my words, Mikana and Roy answered me by striding with vigor.

Part 2

To invade the smaller countries, the previous king moved the old capital to the current one as close as possible to the borders. To make it easier to command and also to be able to lead his army.

It's 10 years since then. Due to the King's invasion, the border has now moved far away from the capital. Even the nearest border with Redonia now requires a distance that takes 3 days to reach on horses. But if we were to think about the distance to the capital of a large country, it's quite close, i guess.

Trying not to insert a break in between, the Nox that I lead hurried towards the fortress.

There are two reasons. If we take too much time, there is a chance Bayd might do interfere and also the simple fact that I am worried of General Paulus who is protecting the borders.

From the scouting made by the organisation 'Umbra' Ren is from, the enemy has increased its numbers to around 7000 and they are moving to making their attack on the fortress. It seems like the units from Morl and Canaan were more than expected. On the other hand, General Paulus who defends the border have a little less than 3000 in the fortress. Originally, there was around 7000 man, but due to the escort of the envoys, patrol of the routes, the messengers to the towns and villages that the envoys will be passing through and etc, the soldiers have not been able to return to the fortress after being pushed with so much jobs.

Most of those soldiers are still in the capital as after the party, they are to escort them till the borders.

Though they are supposed to be replacements for them, the distance to the fortress is about two days. If we think about our advancing speed, the fortress is about 1 day long. That's why we will reach the fortress earlier than the

replacement unit.

In other words, at the very least for a day, it will be a battle of 3000 vs 7000. Plus, it will be a battle with the Albion's magicians against us as well.

"Listening to such an unpleasant report, it really feels like an invasion from the 4 countries."

"That's the only possibility I have been thinking of all this while though?"

By my side. Erica who is riding lined up by my side, said that with a bitter smile.

Apologies but if you ask me, that possibility is pretty much null. The attack this time is definitely being plotted. I have no idea who is it but most likely....

"I believed it's Stratos who had moved."

"That magician that controlled Kaguya-sama? But Morl and Canann's units with Redonia and Albion. Even if he's controlling them, isn't that a lot?"

"He manipulates people. And he will prepare a replacement of himself. Putting aside Albion, sneaking into the 3 countries will then should be of no trouble. The question would be why those manipulated people can use Inducement magic."

As I murmured that, Erica thought of a while and answered.

"Magic skills are techniques. If the control is perfect and the person has enough magic power, I believe controlling them should not be difficult."

"I see. That solves one riddle. And I am even more sure of it."

"Why do you think it's Stratos?"

I was asked the obvious question. After all, my judgement is this unit's top order. Decisions will be the objective so not being bothered about it is weirder.

Though I say that, even if I am sure of it, I do not have the evidence for it. If I think about the situation of the 3 countries, I believed that an invasion is impossible so why would it turn out like that. Thinking that, it can only be due to someone being manipulated.

"The border defence units of Morl and Canaan are currently in panic. Most likely, the units that linked up were moving on their own judgement. Redonia's border defence unit were also not moving in full. They seems to be bewildered. Their movement are not in sync. Perhaps, the 3 countries themselves are the ones that have the least idea of what's going on."

"From shaving off impossibilities, Stratos's existence floated into the situation?"

"It's because impossible things happen that I think it's Stratos. Just that, why would Stratos move at such a time. I just don't understand."

Saying that Erica said "that's true" and nodded her head, but a reason came to me.

It's Sophia. If within the suspicious group, Sophia is in there, then everything connects. Stratos would want Sophia to escape to Veris the least. However, if Sophia barely escaped, then I should think that most of Albion would have fall into Stratos's hand.

"Danna. Isn't fine to talk?"

"Did anything happen?"

Shocked that Ren could easily lined up with the horses by running, I asked Ren. To come here would mean that something had moved.

“The fortress that we have just passed through is starting to gather. Veris’s main unit, as said by Danna, seems to be moving in assumption that the enemy would siege the fortress.”

“Well, that’s true. How much has the fortress gathered?”

“Right now, it’s around 10000. I believe it would continue to increase.”

We have stationed soldiers in different cities of Veris. If we gathered them, we can easily exceed the 3 countries’ army. This is also the reason why I think that it is impossible for them to want to attack us. After taking down a fortress, what’s next would be Veris’s army that is prepared and waiting for them. No matter what you think, it’s too reckless.

“I got it. Ren. Can I leave you with a message?”

“Alright”

Even though he detests it, he is quite obedient this time. I guess at times like this, he do understand.

Or it could be the atmosphere around me right now is preventing that. I do know I am different than normal. People who know me would perhaps think that I am angry.

Well, I guess I am angry.

“Tell Mikana at the back to increase their speed. Erica, return to the lead and increase pace.”

“Should we hurry?”

“Just a bit.”

After giving instructions, I left the group. I dropped out from the sides.

Though the people surrounding tried to follow, I stopped them.

The sights started to gather on me. Erica returned to her unit, conveyed the message and regain control of her unit, which didn't took much time.

Let's do a side show while saying what's required.

"All troops of Nox! Listen while you move! The invading army is closing in on the border fortress! The attack could have already started! And the tactics taken by Veris's main army is that the fortress would be besieged!"

There I stopped my words. I can verify that many people are tipping their ears over.

I then accelerated the horse and advanced close to the lead.

"There are two units that can reinforce them! Right now, the replacement unit that is 2 days away, and us that is closing in to the fortress with a day's left."

Just a bit, there were soldiers cheering. Not enough. I would not do this sideshow with just this extent.

"The people in the fortress are all believing in reinforcements that they can't see!"

I slightly pulled the horse back. Putting whether I can be depended on aside, I am the unit's supreme commander. Showing one's appearance would raise the morale of the unit.

“What they are protecting, clenching to their teeth and enduring the attack is the country of Veris and all the citizens of Veris! Within that contains your land, families and what you people all love!”

The cheers are starting to increase. However, it's still sparse.

All the soldiers' morale have not increased. Long distance movement is accompanied by fatigue. However, morale raised to a high extent can result in forgetting those fatigue.

“Just from having the border fortress taken down, Veris would not fall! However, 3000 comrades would die! No matter what the reason the invasion is for, the 3 countries have deep hatred towards Veris! Those swords that contain those hatred is right now being swung down at those 3000 comrades! This battle is not a battle to defend the country! It's one to protect our comrades! The new Veris would not abandon their friends! It's a battle to show every country that!”

Reaching the rear, I have to return to the line from now on.

I saw Mikana's appearance who is looking after Roy at the rear. As our eyes meet, she raised her bow and answered.

As I floated a smile slightly, I gave my last words.

“All soldiers! Knights! Heed me! We have already regain our pride! Under our new King! This is our debut battle after regaining our pride! This battle will decide Veris's path! Save our comrades, and crush the alliance army attacking Veris! All units Advance!!”

Raising one hand largely, and swing it down largely.

At that instant, cheers were raising from everywhere. And the advancing

speed as well.

“....a battle to save our comrades....”

Though I said that, to me, it’s likely a different kind of battle.

For me, this battle is one for me to keep my promise.



The fire spell released on the fortress was taken down just before it reached.

“Awesome....”

“Consolidation magic. Very likely the magicians of Albion.”

At my side, Roy was leaning forward while staring at the battle. I am sure that the scene of him itching to go is not my imagination.

What a child. To think that after seeing such a large-scale magic for the first time, he would think of joining in.

We were now on the left flank of the huge mountain at the sides of the fortress. We entered the mountain such that we would not be noticed by both enemy and ally. The reason is simple. After all, it’s for a surprise attack.

“Erica. Is horseback consolidation magic possible?”

“I believe it will be difficult.”

“In that case, ignore that and after covering for the ambush team, go around to the side of the fortress and assist in the defense.”

“Acknowledged.”

The team that will be doing the ambush are Captain Ars, Mikana and Nicola. Roy's unit and the 900-man under my direct control will stand in front.

"Mikana and Nicola, prioritize taking down the magicians."

"Roger."

"Understood."

I look at Captain Ars that show a belligerent smile. It is filled with his exaltation, enough to make me think that we might be cut down if we approached him carelessly.

"Captain Ars."

"Yeah?"

"Hunt down as much enemy commander as you can. As long as they are an alliance, that should help dull their movement."

"Alright!"

To some extent, I have completed giving instruction. I will leave what's after for the commanders themselves to deal with. It was my plan to gather commanders that are able to make such independent decisions themselves. However, I won't know if they are able to unless I see them in action.

I wanted to observe various things during practices, but time did not permit. Though I say this at this late hour and it can't be helped, I just can't help being anxious.

Especially.

"Roy. Did you hear what I said?"

“Eh? Ah, just a bit”

Ahahaha, laughed Roy and every commanding officer gave a sigh. Though it won't help being worried, it shouldn't be a problem.

“Attack soldiers that are besieging the fortress. As you will be totally be on offensive, you wouldn't be able to intercept incoming attacks. That's why it's important to not go out on your own, got it? Always be moving with your unit.”

“I know that as you have been saying it all this time. Since I am an idiot, I don't really understand, but I believed in Yukito-niichan. I want to be a general. For that sake, if I listen to Niichan's instructions, I will be able to acquire war achievements, right?”

“Well, simply said, that's right.”

“Mum raised me alone. I will definitely let her live in comfort. That's why I can't die here. That's why I won't do as I like. That's why don't fail, Yukito-niichan, got it?”

What a cheeky thing to say. But, I am relieved from his words. He is firmly resolved in his own ways.

I closed my eyes slightly. It was wind that repelled the fireball. The wind was continuously repelling the incoming arrows, bullets and consolidation magic. Likely, nah, I am almost sure Sophia is there.

I wonder how long has it been since I said I will definitely go to Albion. The place is not Albion, but the battlefield though.

Sophia is right in front of me.

“Return to your positions. We will begin.”

Though I feel bad for the alliance, I will end this battle soon.



“Prepare the consolidation magic! Match the surroundings!”

Facing her hands towards the Alliance army, Erica gave instructions to consolidation magic.

When I checked, all the magicians’ mana started to reduce at an equal rate. There are 200 magicians within Nox. Out of them, there are around 100 magicians that are amateurs, still unable to use consolidation magic. I had Erica guide them for a short period of time.

They were unable to do consolidation magic, but they are capable preparing the supporting magic formation and tools required for consolidation magic.

Erica’s remaining 800 man are knights for protecting the magicians. They are to become to shields of the magicians, and legs. Their job also consists of helping out with the retreat when the magicians get exhausted.

After they release the consolidation magic, the knights will be transporting the magicians to the fortress.

The coat of the magicians, preparing the consolidation magic, started to flutter. The magic that is being filled with mana is slowly becoming larger.

“Ambush unit, being your assault! We will go too, Roy!”

On the timing where the magic is about to be fired, the ambush unit started to run down the hill at once. The one in the front is Mikana’s unit. If it’s the route that Mikana took, there shouldn’t be a problem of failure in running downhill. That’s why I took the 2nd unit to follow her.

On another hand, we do not need to hurry. We will assault only after the magic consolidation met its target and after the ambush unit went in.

“Is it okay not to go at the same time?”

“It’s what they call time-difference assault. When there’s an ambush, they would swing their conscious there and the confusion will increase. At that point, we will assault.”

Going down the hill with care, I explained to Roy.

Almost at the same time, a few consolidation magic met their marks in the middle of the alliance army with the sound of the explosions.

And then, with a large voice, the 3rd unit in-charged of the ambush, assaulted.

“Now then, shall we go? Roy. I left the lead in your care, got it?”

“Leave it to me!”

I waved my hand slightly. With that as a signal, the 1000-man unit increased their pace.

Even though Roy’s unit are on horseback during advance, as they can’t fight horseback, they are now dismounted as foot soldiers. My direct-control unit of 500-man are also now foot soldiers so those on horses numbered 400.

The reasons are to uniformize the pace and the worry of the possibility of having the horses stopped after attacking the besieging alliance army in close formation. Horses that can’t run does not function.

With that, our unit has lots of foot soldiers. And the vanguard is Roy’s unit, the foot soldiers.

“Attack!!”

“Osha!!!” (TL: Yosh!, Let’s do this, man!-kinda meaning)

Roy drew his sword from his waist, and ran down the hill and starting hacking at the unit attacking the fortress, with the his 100-man unit accompanying him.

To enlarge the opening made by Roy's unit, another 500-man charged in and finally it's the turn of the cavalries and me. Though that said, my job is not to fight.

I made the ambush unit and Roy's unit flag-less. Just a simple Veris's flag, but I did arrange it slightly from Kaguya-sama's Black Swan Flag. There is only that one flag.

That's why to announce it clearly, I shouted out.

That we are on the same side.

"This is Veris's Independent Mobile Unit!! Reinforcements have arrived! To all soldiers of Veris! This battle! Shall be won by this Yukito Kurei! That's why!"

Raise your voices

After that, bellow-like cheers came from the fortress and the units that assaulted the enemy army.

Part 3

Roy's unit that went off first was formed from the volunteer soldiers during the previous civil war. They are commoners and farmers, and not the child of nobles capable of complex tactics. Obviously, their movement is flawed. However, their explosive physical strength that can survive the battlefield is astounding.

When Roy who have been running continuously was targeted as he was thought to be the commander of the platoon, they were instantly countered. And as Roy was unstoppable, the unit was unstoppable. When the lead is unstoppable, those 500 soldiers running from behind were also unstoppable.

"As expected of Roy. He's going crazy in there."

It's easy for openings to be made in the midst of an attack. It takes time for thoughts to switch from an attacking state to a receiving state. And during that switch, the action to switch will also take more time. All the more when it comes to a few thousand soldiers.

I told Roy to not stop their run and break through to the opposite side. After that, Nicola will absorb their unit and take over command.

Using the 400 cavalries under me, I trampled the enemy units that was still in chaos after Roy's breakthrough. Though I feel sorry for the weakened segment, I shall have you taken out thoroughly.

"Destroy the stairs! While dealing damage to the enemies as it is, we shall chase after Roy."

"I shall not let you do that! Everyone! The Strategist of Arkwright is here! It's worth more than a famed General! Do you desire his head!?"

“So that is the unit’s leader. If I kill him, this unit shall shut down itself.”

Using the fan as a substitute for the commander stick, I raised my voice and pointed to the knight that was inspiring the surroundings.

Momentarily, the target of the 400 cavalries changed.

The 400 soldiers around me were formed from various units during the assault on the capital with Dio-sama at the time of the civil war. Dio-sama selected elites from the already elite-selected unit and made them join in Nox.

While each and every one of them are skilled, without doubt their combat prowess, they are also capable of team tactics, with each of them being qualified at being a platoon commander or even higher.

If I didn’t find Roy, I would have chosen 1 person from the 400-man as the unit commander. They are such people. The commander and his surroundings were instant-killed. As literally as it is, the moment they passed, heads are flying out casually.

“I guess I should say as expected. Should I just advance through just like that?”

“Please don’t make a joke. Please give us a chance to claim our achievement.s”

Erica appeared from the back on her horse. Gradually, her unit started coming over at the back. Guess that means that the consolidation magic had been released.

“That was surprisingly fast.”

“After the ambush of 3 units, the formation of the rear was in great chaos. If we smack a consolidation magic right in there, our allies would also suffer casualties.”

“I see. I guess it’s the same for the other side.”

The alliance’s magicians are unable to face their consolidation at us. That’s because there will be friendly fire. Without doubt, there will be sacrifices for their side than our side.

Furthermore, the rear where the magicians are being pursued by 3 units intensively. Consolidation magic towards the fortress have also reduced.

“However, there are only enemies in front of us. You purposely made it this way, right?”

Likely understanding my aim, Erica set a circle formation around the area I trampled the enemies.

Creating a defensive formation in front of the enemy. That might have been seen as a stupid thing to do at first. If we stopped, the enemies can calm down and cope with the situation coolly. That is the same as throwing away the advantage of the surprise assault. However.

“It helps that you already noticed. Prepare a consolidation magic focused on power.”

“Please leave it to me.”

It is said that consolidation magic, when used alone, is weak, and will have low effective area and range, but when used in numbers, it becomes a powerful magic that has the multiplicative effect.

Why is the effective area necessary? It’s to bury the enemies inside a castle or within an area at one go. Why is range necessary. It’s to allow magicians to fire one-sidedly from a safe location.

I am sorry for the magicians but I shall throw that safety away. In other words,

I made a plan to reduce the distance from our side and deploy consolidation magic.

Consolidation magic is different from the catapult and canons of the weapons. It doesn't take time to move and it's not like you can use it at close range. With the effect of consolidation, the range increases so long range attack can be done but that isn't that different from normal magic. If you are going to reduce its power.

"Everyone, concentrate! We shall blow the formation away with this attack!"

The magicians did not answer to Erica's call. That's because they were putting in their mana into the magic, clenching their teeth. This time, as there is no need for fine-tuning, all the magician are joining in.

The adversary of consolidation is, as expected, itself. Defensive magic from consolidation is pride with astoundingly high defensive strength. When both types of magic clashes, it becomes an endurance battle and the side that lost will take damage. Like during the time I took charge of the army in the civil war.

However, that's like saying the battle is already over before the battle itself. No, actually, the number and quality of the magicians is the deciding factor of the war. It's not really wrong to say that the side that gathers many powerful weapons will win. Just that, that is if they were used well, as the prerequisite.

There's no doubt, magicians decide the battle. Magicians are that strong. In that case, it is said that if the strategy revolves around magicians, weakness from numerical inferiority can be countered and gain superiority from an equal state.

The point is how one uses them so I thought of applying tactics close to a self-propelled artillery or mortar. If we can do something about the defence, we can apply its usage like a tank. Since they are human after all, we can't really use it as it is, but we can make movement at the speed of normal people. We do not have the choice of not moving.

“Preparation of the aria!”

Even though it’s an aria, they would just sing the name of the magic. That is the trigger.

Though it seems that a few officers of the alliance army knows what we are doing, they couldn’t break through the firm circle formation we have set up. And to not be able to break through means...

“It means it’s already too late.”

“Explode!!”

Voices overlapped from the rear.

From the middle of the circle formation, a large red body of light rises and with a shape somewhat like an arc, it landed in the center of the unit which was attacking the fortress.

Instantaneously. An unbelievable explosion occurred where even the aftershock reaches our side. That’s not the end of it. It’s a consolidation magic with Erica as its center and around 10 other magicians. There is at least 10 remaining shots.

“I do not resent you but you all gave me the reason to take you down. In regards to this battle, what’s important is just that.”

“Explode!!”

The red light that keeps ascending kept destroying the vanguard of the alliance army. The rearguard that should come in to reinforce and the central unit that commands the overall army should be getting trampled down by our ambush units.

Though I tried not to look straight at it, the location where the explosion is

directed is likely in a very gruesome state. Though I was the one who created this situation, seriously, even the place where the explosion is not directed at makes me want to vomit.

But, that's fine. You lose if you lose this feeling in a battlefield. If I forget this feeling, I feel that I would easily cause war. I would rather not forget this feeling than let that happen.

I think it's fine for those soldiers fighting in front to forget about it. But, I must not forget about this feeling. To fight against this feeling is also one of my battles.

"The result was superb, I guess."

"For now."

Likely due to the continuous release of consolidation magic, I avert my sights from Erica who was weirdly panting in a seductive way with a flushed expression and replied that. I do have the desire to watch her more but it's not that kind of time now. Though there is also a problem if it's really fine at those kind of times.

Very likely, Erica and I would not have such a time in our lives.

"Is Roy okay?"

"It's fine. I left him with a very kind Onee-chan."

Roy's unit that penetrated out from the side took the chance from the consolidation magic and assaulted again. Together with Nicola's unit which broke through the rearguard and came out from the sides.

Nicola gave instructions as required to the other units so that Roy doesn't push too far out, overrunning the enemy. Not specially fast and also not specially powerful. The only one riding with the momentum is only Roy's unit.

But, they are actually defeating the enemy efficiently. The reason why there is barely any momentum is because Nicola is grasping the reins of the soldiers completely.

“Caution and definite. How reliable.”

“That’s why I can have a piece of mind. The front line is pretty much collapsing from Nicola’s and Roy’s assault. What’s left is how well the back is doing though.”

“Then, there’s nothing to worry. When we made our move, Mikana’s unit has raided the magician’s unit and Ars’s unit cut up the enemy’s unit, drawing near to the general. He might be taking on the general about right now?”

“Though I don’t think the alliance army would end from taking down a general, I guess that might have assisted in preventing reinforcements from the back then.”

As I murmured that, loud cheers came from the fortress in the back and the fortress gates were opened.

I instinctively thought, “As expected”.

“What’s wrong!?”

“General Paulus had come out to fight. I think.”

“A general that defends the fortress to come out to fight.....”

“Well, the momentum is on our side anyway and if General Paulus lead around a thousand cavalry, it will end a lot faster, so it’s not a bad thing. Erica. Can I leave this place to you?”

Since the door is already opened, I have something that I wish to verify with my own eyes.

“Are you going to the fortress?”

“You knew?”

“I know. There is someone very precious, isn’t there? You were looking at the fortress as if looking at your lover, you know?”

“I don’t think that’s the case though.”

“A female’s eye will not be wrong. Go for it. This battle is already ending.”

At where Erica put her sights on after saying that was indeed the scene of the alliance army retreating. It’s dangerous for me, the commander to move for my self-interest. It’s foolish. There’s also the feelings of being sorry. However, in this situation, I am just being useless being here.

“If the enemy retreat, do not pursue them far. And quickly link up with all the other units. If the enemy make any unexpected movement, prioritise on the defense. Leave the countermeasures to me.”

“Understood. Is it fine if you leave what I can deal with on my own? I don’t really like to destroy a good mood.”

I gave a bitter smile to Erica saying that with a bewitching smile,. However, I am happy that she’s being considerate.

I nodded and went off with the few escorts I have towards the fortress.



In the fortress, I dismount from the horse and surveyed the surroundings.

Even though I can see injured soldiers and soldiers looking out for them, I do not see Sophia’s figure.

I guess, as expected, judging that Sophia is here from just the wind magic is

too rash. But, to cast such magic in such succession and short span of time, I can think no other than Sophia. At least, that is something that should be achievable by someone at the same level as Sophia.

Maybe worried about me who was restlessly looking around in the fortress, my escorts was calling out to me but I ignored them.

I hope that she's here. I want her to be here. I am troubled if she's not here. Such words and uneasiness gradually floated in me. If she's not here, does that mean she's still in Albion?

I might be able to meet her. The more I think of that, the more shock I received from not seeing her figure. The feeling I have right now is similar to when she tried to grip onto something but it slipped off your hand. Though the shock is 10 times more impactful.

What I tried to grab was a very important person, and a girl who I promised that I will definitely meet her.

“Sophia...”

At the time I murmured that and covered my face, wind brushed my face. The wind that was blowing my back suddenly blew from the opposite direction.

As if being lured into it, I looked in the direction of the wind.

On top of the defensive wall of the fortress. At a place where the injured was assembled, the wind gathered.

I quickly ran off. Though the escorts were calling out, I ignored them like just a while ago. I don't have the time to mind about them. Right now, I believe even Dio-sama couldn't stop me.

I ran up the stairs going up to the top of the wall. The defensive wall was a long straight road.

The people injured on the top of the wall were treated without letting them go through the unreasonable act of descending from the area.

Though the people treating were normal soldiers, there was a girl in white robes mixed in it.

Without minding to her white robes being sullied in blood, she was using magic while supporting the wound with her hand.

Though I could only see her back, there's no one I will mistake her.

"I have used wind magic to remove the broken blade pieces.....What's left is just the treatment of the injury."

".....thank you...very much.... Maiden-dono...."

"Take care. Who's next?"

"Sophia-sama. There's no longer anyone that is inflicted with serious injuries. I believe you should take a break."

Sophia's escort captain, Captain Larg, approached Sophia and warned her.

However, Sophia gradually shook her head.

"Because of taking me in, we dragged this fortress into the war. I wish to do at least what I can."

".... if that's the case, I shall verify if there's anyone with heavy injuries. Till then."

The words, "Please do rest", did not continue. My escorts shouted out my name from my back.

"Yukito-sama! I am troubled that you went off alone!"

To those words, Captain Larg and Sophia reacted. Both of them turned almost exactly the same time.

How long has it been. To see both of them.

I feels like it's been very very long. Since that day, when they went off from Earl Uren's castle on a carriage, I guess.

From that day on, I have been fighting all the time. With that promise supporting me.

I slowly step my right leg forward. And then, the left leg quickly moved. Though I want to quickly start running, I somehow manage to endure it.

Mikana gave me an advice. Even if Sophia is here, I should verify that she isn't controlled.

"Yukito....?"

"Kurei!? The battle isn't over yet, is it?"

"It's been a while. Sophia, Captain Larg. I have left the battle to my subordinates. I see it's really Sophia that was pursued."

As I was thinking of how to make contact with Sophia with the fan or pass her the fan, Sophia smiled at me and approached me gradually.

Though dirtied with blood, her beauty is not lost at all., she is now in front of me with her appearance I see everyday just like the time at the castle. I can feel that those days were blissful. It's because of those days that I fought. It's because I want to return to those days that I fought.

"You have slimmed down."

"There was a lot of work."

"You should have your meal properly, you know?"

While saying that, Sophia grasped the fan that I was holding with her two hands as if hugging it in her chest.

I opened my eyes to the unexpected action.

“With this.... Does this prove that I am the Sophia you know?”

After she said that, Sophia floated a kind smile, like a mother to a child.

This smile is the smile of the Sophia I know, without doubt.

“Sophia!”

I pulled Sophia with both of my hands, and hugged her tightly.

“It’s good.... That you are fine..... I was really worried about you....”

“I wasn’t that anxious, you know. Captain Largs was there and I have also decided to rely on Diorood-sama when the time comes. Also..... I believed that Yukito would come for me.”

And now you have came to me in reality.

As she said that, she raised her head and smiled at me.

I couldn’t stop the naturally overflowing tears. The feelings that I have accumulated ended up overflowing.

“...that fan. Even though it’s a precious item that protects you.... Because you hand it over to me, you got into a dangerous situation, didn’t you.....?”

“Please be relieved. The opportunity to use Klarus was pretty much nil, and above all, magic that uses words does not affect me.”

Sophia touched my face with her hand and said that while tearing up.

That was a very impactful sentence.

“You know about Stratos....?”

“Yes. Likely, even more than Yukito. Just that, I am uneasy as expected. But, I am already fine.”

Showing a remarkable smile, Sophia gradually put her arms around my head. It became a scene where she hugged my head.

“Because I am already in the world’s safest place right now.”

After whispering that in my ears, while Sophia said, “How embarrassing”, she doesn’t seem to unwrap her arms.

Part 4

As she watched the alliance army retreat from the top of the defensive wall, Sophia showed a sorrowful expression.

Actually, Sophia was distressed that the battle occurred and the fact that it was due to her that it became like this was causing her despair. However, contrary to Sophia's feelings, the morale of the soldiers fighting for Sophia in the fort was abnormally high.

"Raise the victory cheers!! Victory to the Celsus Maiden! Dedicated to the Celsus Maiden!!"

The highest one was General Paulus. Celsus Maiden's escort knights. It is without doubt a preferable development for General Paulus. But, it's not just that. Likely the reason for the high morale was due to seeing Sophia in close proximity.

I guess General Paulus and the soldiers were all taken out by Sophia's beauty. In regards to this, I am also unable to comment on another.

But.

"I wish they would read the mood a bit."

Getting hooked in by the people in the fortress, the members of Nox also started to call out Sophia's name, and as the situation seems to be getting out of control, Sophia was advised to show her appearance to the soldiers slightly.

Thanks to that, I was left behind.

“Haaaa~, I wonder why....”

“You don’t seem happy even though we have won? Master”

I am already used to her suddenly voicing out from the back.

I shrugged my shoulders, turned around and replied to the person who called out, Ren.

“I have never been happy to win a battle. Especially after a victory.”

“I see. Well, I like that feeling of masters. Since killing people makes the mood bad. The people there that are delighted about it must have gone mad.”

Saying that, Ren sighed like she was shocked. It’s rare to hear her opinions on such matters. Either she has quite the unpleasant feelings towards killing or something that differs her thoughts. Though I am bothered about it, it’s not something I can ask easily.

“You can’t kill someone unless you are mad. So? Did something happen?”

“After interrogating the enemy soldiers, it seems that they do not know the situation and was just following orders.”

“The one that moved was the commander.... No, I should say he was moved.”

Saying that, I narrowed my eyes and looked at the faint trail of the retreat of the alliance army.

They who became tattered and is retreating while using their weapons as a replacement for a walking stick, should have no idea for what reason they are fighting for, just following the orders that they received.

For their country, for their family for their loved ones, believing that it will be for the sake of something, they picked up their courage and challenged Veris.

Their resolve is without doubt for real. Perhaps, there are also people that anticipate this results too. Even then, they fought.

There are people who are making use of them. For their expectation, for their desire.

“Be it Stratos, or even Bayd.... Or even someone who I do not know of.”

I have no idea who it is, but I do know that that person is causing conflicts.

Including the fact that they rolled up Sophia, there is a necessity to return the various “debts”.

“For now, I will punch the person the moment I find him.”

“Though it’s quite the violent speech, that’s quite like master in regards to punching someone.”

“Is that supposed to be a praise?”

“To some extent, yes.”

Putting both his hands behind his head, Ren easily ran down the stairs of the wall saying that, and quickly disappeared from my sights.



There are very few private rooms in the fort. In the room assigned to me, the commanders of the different Nox’s units were gathered. The platoon leader Roy is also here as he is, to some extent of classification, a commander. Of course, as the meaning of it is mainly to let him listen to the conversation and learn, we are not looking for comments or suggestions from him.

The topic were the unit’s situation, tactics, training and also the cooperation

between the different units within Nox. The success of the strategy this time was due to Nicola's full support.

Though in the first place, she is capable of such a role and also the reason she was chosen as a commander, if we only leave such role to her and rely on her, Nox would not function in the event Nicola is unable to move.

So the discussion this time is to think about various things individually in regards to this.

However.

"Sleepy.... Please do such complex stuff on your own..."

"Same... Yukito-niichan. I am also sleepy."

Totally different from the female group that were taking it seriously, Captain Ars and Roy did not participate seriously while yawning disinterestedly. Well, it can't be helped, I guess. The battle was just over, and also Captain Ars and Roy was sent to pursuit the enemy, though lightly, the fatigue might have been great.

Though that said, the other 3 should be quite tired as well.

In the room, there are only 2 chairs and I am the only one sitting while the rest were standing. Though I wish to end this quickly, I can't end it while the conversation isn't stopping at a good place.

"Ara? If the commander don't enter the conversation, I won't sent reinforcement to the unit, you know?"

"Eh, is such threaten valid...."

Captain Ars said that while twisting into an unpleasant expression. He received the reply quite seriously I guess. The atmosphere seems to be turning bad.

It can't be helped. As it goes, it could affect the future. Judging that, I decided to end the discussion.

"I guess you are all tired so let's end this for today. However, please do this seriously tomorrow onwards."

"I know that. So then, I will go to sleep.."

"Me too!"

Captain Ars and Roy changed their sleepy face to a happy face and was about to leave the room.

At that time, a knock came from the door of my room.

"Hm? Who is it?"

"It's Sophia. Is it okay to enter?"

Instantly. Everyone's state, other than me, changed immediately.

Everyone wore the black coat that they took off and stood at attention. Captain Ars fixed his hair with his hands, Roy arranged his usual untidy clothing firmly while nervously looking at the door. I guess it's not my imagination that his face is slightly red.

"Is everyone okay?"

"Even if you ask us, I can't answer."

As I asked them silently, Mikana answered like that. The only person who would answer was only Erica. The remaining three were shockingly nervous.

“Preferring to leave would be my intention though.”

“Okay. Sophia. It’s fine to enter.”

Immediately after saying that, Sophia opened the door and entered.

Not in her usual white robe, she is wearing a green one-piece. Seeing the 5 people at attention, she opened her eyes shocked but when she saw Mikana, she made a smile.

“We meet again. Mikana-san.”

“It’s an honor that you remembered. Sophia-sama.”

From my memories, I don’t remember both of them talking to each other though. Well, Mikana was always by my side, so i guess that left an impression on Sophia.

“Now then, since it’s going to be early tomorrow, let’s dissolve for now.”

As I say that, Nicola quickly bowed to Sophia and me before going towards the door. However, Captain Ars and Roy actually stated something opposite to what they said just now.

“Supreme commander. I would like to discuss a bit more of the tactics though.”

“Yukito-niichan. I also do have questions.”

No matter what, isn’t that too frank?I could even feel their spirit so I ended drawing back slightly.

I can understand why. They want to see Sophia even just a bit longer. If there

is a chance, they are likely also thinking of becoming acquainted.

I can deal with Captain Ars tomorrow but I can't do that for Roy. It's somehow my responsibility after all.

When Roy first saw Mikana, he muttered that she is cuter than the village's cutest girl. To that, I said that there are more beauties in the world to keep his expectation up.

Next is when he saw Erica. He said that she is the most beautiful lady he had ever seen. To that again, I said that I know someone more beautiful. At that time, Roy felt that I was lying.

However, at the time he saw Kaguya-sama, Roy looked at me respectfully and said "It's her, right?". Though it would have been good that I end it there, as Roy's reaction was too pure, I couldn't help say that I know someone as beautiful or even more beautiful than Kaguya-sama.

After that, Roy was looking forward to meeting the beauty that is as beautiful or even more beautiful than Kaguya-sama. To the point it's so obvious.

And then today, that beauty is right in front of his eyes. As I kinda make him anticipate, it hurts to flatly handle it.

As I pondered on how to settle this, Sophia showed a slightly cloudy expression.

"Were you in the middle of an important discussion..?"

"Well, something like a war council, i guess."

"I apologize for my interruptions. Shall I come back again to talk to Yukito?"

Saying that, Sophia smiled, and turned back.

Realizing that the smile was something forced, I unconsciously grabbed hold of Sophia's hand.

"It's fine. It's already over. Right? Roy, Captain Ars."

Giving a scent of “Get out of the room”, I emphasized my sights.

Towards my eyes, Captain Ars shrugged and stepped back, but Roy did not. As I thought “this brat”, Mikana grasped Roy’s clothing and pulled him away.

Before Roy could protest, Erica spoke.

“Then, excuse us. Sophia-sama, Supreme commander.”

Erica bowed after saying that and went out with Mikana dragging Roy out of the room. Captain Ars dropped his shoulders disappointedly and went out of the room last.

“Is it really okay?”

“It’s fine. There were just trying to look cool in front of Sophia for a bit.”

“Is that so? That boy called Roy was trying to talk to you though?”

“Who he wanted to speak was not me, it’s Sophia. If you have the chance, try calling out to him.”

“Me? I can’t talk about battles, you know?”

“The topic doesn’t matter. If you would call out to him, he will be very happy. So, what’s your reason for coming here?”

Saying that, I urged Sophia to sit down.

Sitting facing each other, I examined Sophia’s expression.

Sophia won’t easily show her weakness. Especially in front of people. However, her natural smile and false smile is slightly different.

The false smile she made just now was something because she really doesn’t want to go back. I already told her that we will talk about Stratos and Albion tomorrow. If I think about it, there is only a reason why she would come here.

“Are you feeling anxious?”

“Yeah. I am anxious.”

Sophia gradually moved her hands in front of her chest after saying that.

“Is this a dream?”

“I don’t think it’s a dream. If it’s one, I will cry again.”

I tried joking, but Sophia just smiled slightly. There’s no spirit at all.

Though it’s also likely due to the multiple happenings, I also feel something different.

“What’s wrong?”

“Even Yukito who knows everything is unable to understand a human’s heart?”

“If I can read people’s heart, I would be able to conduct myself a lot better. There is no one who can understand the deepest of feelings. I can only predict. However, right now, I am unable to predict what Sophia is thinking. So, tell me.”

If words are not spoken, it will not be conveyed. If possible, it can be indirectly drawn out but Sophia is already used to faking surface expressions, so it’s difficult.

“...that’s true. Desire to be found or to be seen is my selfishness, isn’t it?”

“Sorry.”

“Nope, it’s fine. I came here just because I was lonely.”

“Lonely?”

That was slightly unexpected. It was expecting a total different reason.

Sophia knows that she is being targeted by Stratos. And, she was pursued by the army today and escaped into the fortress. If it's fear, I can understand but why is it lonely?

“Yeah. As I ate my meal in Albion, I remembered that Diorood-sama and Yukito is always by my side, talking while we eat. As I laid on the bed, I will always think of Yukito talking to me by my side. I have always long to return to those days. That's why..... it's lonely to not have Yukito beside me.”

“Sophia....?”

“Yukuto feels far away..... The Yukito who would talk to me by my side is now the continent's famed strategist.... I feel sorrowful as you are like a distant existence..... I feel lonesome.”

Saying that Sophia looked straight at me with an expression that she's about to cry.

I worked hard not to change. But driven by the necessity to change, there are places where I changed. For me, though it's not my intention to change so much, it seems that to Sophia, I seem to have changed.

However, it doesn't matter even if I changed. Though quite conceited, I changed for Sophia's sake after all.

“Sophia. Sophia was a distant existence to me, so I am trying hard to close that gap right now. If you see me changed, I believe that is the evidence of me getting closer to you”

“....what do you mean?”

“I have no interest in power and fame but to be able to go and meet Sophia,

all those are necessary. Right now, it's no longer needed though. Sophia is already by my side after all."

I am right now carrying many things. I have to help Dio-sama, and also assist Kaguya-sama in addition to for the sake of Veris. I also have many subordinates that I am responsible for. I can't abandon all of these.

"If you felt that I am going someday far and dislike it, I will no longer let you feel that way. It's fine. I will be by your side from now on."

I grasped Sophia's arm, stating that.

It's the hand I released once. And the hand that I regretted releasing.

I will never release it ever again.

Swearing in my heart, I gently caressed the Sophia whose gave a relieved smile.

Part 5

In a meeting room of the fortress.

There were General Paulus, the leaders of Nox, Sophia and her escorts and me.

The reason for our gathering was to ask her for why she was pursued.

“To talk about why I was pursued, I have to explain in regards to the current Albion.”

Sophia who said that, explained Albion’s situation in simple terms.

From what she said, Albion is said to have now split into two factions. Those that favor war and those that don’t.

And the opponent to wage war with is, well, let’s say it’s understandable or as expected, Veris. The deciding factor was the targeted Sophia. This triggered the extremists of top management of that country.

Sophia is pretty much in a situation close to house arrest and is said that she was not able to go out until recently. Just when she thought she has her freedom, this time she was told of Stratos from her retired grandfather and without preparation, she was to leave Albion under the pretext of participating in the party hosted by Veris.

“It is thought that as of now, most of the top management of Albion has already been controlled by Stratos. The problem is that the most of the citizens approve what those people say.”

“As it is now, it’s war..... Kurei. How should we move from now on?”

General Paulus fold his arms and thought but quickly gave up thinking and asked me. I couldn't help gave a bitter smile towards him giving up way too fast.

"Let's see. For now, taking that the war would reach the whole country, Albion should not confront us directly and initially it will be the war with the 3 small countries. Likely, the dealing with them. Just that, a direct confrontation of Albion and Veris should be avoided at all cost."

"We can't win?"

"It's not a problem of winning and losing. This continent is shaped like a diamond, and in the middle of it, it's Albion."

In front of my eyes, a menu appear and displayed the entire map of the continent. In the south side of the slightly irregular diamond shape, there is Veris and the road towards the center of the continent is being blocked up by the small 3 countries and Albion. It's not just Veris. While at the pointed sides of the continent that looked like caltraps are all big countries, all of them have their road towards the center of the continent shut by Albion which has taken up position in the center.

The 5 large countries of the continent. The 5 countries that is reputed like Veris and Albion reign the continent with an irregular balance. And the one that governs that balance is Albion.

"To the 4 big countries, Albion that is right in the middle, is a totally obstructing lid while at the same time, a shield that prevents attack from other countries. And that is something Albion understands, so even though they have the magic skills of their pride, they did not assertively make military affairs."

"Yes. As Yukito said, Albion knows that its own actions would result in a big influence on the continent so they have been moving in discretion."

All large countries sent out envoys to deepen relations, developed magic skills

and enhanced their own strength. That's why including Veris, the 4 countries does not make a move on Albion.

Whether the battle with Albion is a win or a loss, they know that they will lose in the end. If they challenged Albion, no matter who falls, a heavy loss will be incurred. Even if Albion is destroyed, or attacked when weakened or even lost to Albion itself, the weakened Albion will be invaded by the other countries.

As it will not be in their own countries' interest, they will never move from their side. That is the common point for the 5 countries. But there was a country that moved.

"Veris gave an excuse for Albion to attack. And there is a person that was spurring on it."

One of it being Stratos is certain. Because he is moving secretly, the discrete Albion started making their move. And there is more person who is burning with the ambition of uniting the whole continent and also one who doesn't mind sacrificing to no ends for that purpose.

"Veris's Prime Minister Bayd Fern. Looking at the fortress's decree, he has everything to do with it. Purposely thinning the border defense, he induced the small countries and Albion to attack. Also, he plans to bring it to war by killing pro-Veris influential men coming to the country."

Though it's totally speculation, I guess i am not too off the truth. This time, Dio-sama was the one who invited the envoys and those that came were mostly people who are closely connected with Dio-sama. Killing the envoys would weaken Dio-sama's strength.

Though Stratos is troublesome in his own way, Bayd is also troublesome for bringing war into his own country. Likely his aim is..

“If Albion and Veris gets into a stalemate, the other big countries would start to join in. And then, a world war that dragged every countries into it would begin. That’s why, we have to avoid fighting with Albion.”

After explaining so much, I looked at Sophia.

I’m sorry, but right now the most problematic one is Sophia. Sophia’s influence is strong. Very likely, if she were to grandly announce that she is against the war, regardless it’s the citizens, soldiers and civil officers will, people who are against the war will start to appear. That’s why she was under house arrest and that’s why she was set free. To stop Albion from the outside, as no matter how she shout on the inside, her words would be distorted.

However, coming to Veris is a problem. If Sophia criticise Albion’s actions from within Veris, her words would be made under the pretext of being kidnapped or threatened and the possibility of her words not being conveyed is high.

And it will give Albion the excuse of the rescue of Sophia. This is the worst point. Sophia does not only have influence on Albion but all magicians. Believing that Sophia was captured, magicians attached to Albion will come in great numbers. And of course, that includes Veris as well.

Just like how there were many magicians that joined Dio-sama’s army, catching the news of the ex-king assault on Sophia during the civil war, the chances of them turning into our enemies is rather high.

“First, what’s important is dragging time. General Paulus. This can be quite the burden on you.”

“It’s fine. If it’s for this country, I will fight no matter what. What should I do?”

“Hold the borderlines. No matter how much we discussed here, we can’t decide the movement of Veris. I will take Sophia and traveled back to the capital. And I will propose the actions to be taken from here on. All these require time.”

“Fu.. Leave it to me. If it’s just to endure it, there’s no problem. I will push all of them back.”

General Paulus who floated a fearless smile nodded to me and looked at Sophia.

“Perhaps.....it might make you quite unpleasant but.... I will definitely protect and assist you so would you come with me to the capital?”

“At that time, Yukito also said that and protected me. I will believe Yukito. That’s fine, fight? Captain Larg.”

“I don’t mind. If need be, we shall protect Sophia-sama. Only that, Kurei. If things get that way..... You understand, right?”

What the escort captain said about having to protect Sophia at all costs is likely if Sophia is being targeted for her life or being threatened. And in that case, Captain Larg will not go easy on me. But there is nothing to worry about in that case.

“Be at ease. No matter what happen, I shall protect Sophia. Now then, Nox shall return to the capital.”

“Ah. Please leave this place to me. Go and have your fight.”

General Paulus stroke hard on my back. That hurts considerably. Though I almost coughed heavily, I endured and returned a strike on his back. Though he doesn’t have his armor on, likely due to his muscles, there is no effect at all but it seems that my thought were conveyed to him.

General Paulus gave a broad grin, bowed to Sophia and left the area. A new army is already advancing towards our position. We do not have time. General Paulus and me, as well as Veris.

“We should depart immediately as well..”



Reinforcements are successively gathering at the border fortress. They were the soldiers that entered the fortress before in case the border fortress was broken through.

The army strength and count is not a problem. For an average opponent that is.

If it's to the extent of Albion sending out magicians, we could still do something about it. However, if Albion sent out General-tier personnels, things would get bad.

It's been 3 days since we left the fortress as I thought of those things. While the reports given by Ren wasn't much, we reached the capital with Sophia without a problem.

Normally, a unit can't enter the center of the capital. However, anticipating that Sophia might get into a situation, Nox entered the capital using that fact that we are an independent unit and the pretext that only Kaguya-sama can command us.

Though it's quite forced that there might be other problems later, I can't let Sophia run without military force. At worst, I will let her escape via the seas to other countries. To do that, I will still need military force as expected.

“So you wanted the independent unit rights to move at your own discretion after sheltering Sophia-sama. I am slightly surprised.”

Dio-sama opened the speech with that as he welcomed me, showing his smile.

To such Dio-sama, I obediently bowed my head. Though I have no intention to betray him, to protect Sophia, it's true that it was necessary for me to have my own war potential and I did not convey those thoughts to him.

"I apologized."

"It's fine. That goes for me as well. Well, Sophia-sama. It's been a while."

Towards Sophia who alighted the carriage, he said that, and smiled.

"Diorood-sama. It's been a while. I thank you for receiving me."

"That's still too early to say. That will be discussed at the top floor of the castle now."

Though Dio-sama said that without hiding, as if not bothered, she replied, "Then let's say that after the discussion then".

Not knowing whether if she believed in me, or believed in Dio-sama or Kaguya-sama, she was not agitated.

The highest possible scenario that can happen is the same treatment that she received in Albion. And to be made to say things convenient of Veris at very convenient times.

If we do that, we might be able to reduce the intensification of the war. Though it's just slightly in reality. But, I do not think that would be satisfactory with Sophia. Sophia, perhaps, has a different opinion with the surroundings and actually wished to stop the war.

"Yukito. Is Kaguya-sama a kind person?"

Suddenly, Sophia asked such a question. In front of Dio-sama, I can't say

anything bad though. But well, I guess to this questions, it's fine to answer honestly.

"She is foolishly kind."

"Fufu. Could it be that you are holding grudges from losing to her? Your words are slightly severe"

"I don't think that was the case though....."

Though it's true I lost, I don't think I hold a grudge against her. If I have to say, I believe that Kaguya-sama is quite high in regards to my thoughts of a certain person being capable of something. Of course, that's concluded from looking at the status.

"But then, I am relieved. I am good at getting along with kind people."

"Please wait a moment. The reason why I haven't been called 'Dio', is because I am not kind?"

Dio-sama who was walking in front, turned around with a shocked expression and said that. Dio-sama have been requesting Sophia to call him by 'Dio'. And Sophia have been rejecting him entirely.

"I believe I won't call Diorood-sama that way for life."

"Why!?"

"You sent Yukito to the battlefield. I won't forgive you for that."

Sophia said that to Dio-sama and averted her face after giving a 'Pui' (TL: I think it's like you are teasing someone with the tongue sticking out.... Kawaii na....)

To the point as if a 'Gan' sound effect was produced, Dio-sama could be seen to be feeling down from his eyes. No, since he placed his hands on his knees, he should be really down from what I can see.

"Yukito. My wish is for peace and tranquility. I just want to live with those of importance silently and at ease."

"I am also the same. Sleeping tightly, reading a book and living withmy important people carefreely. Ideally, it's the lifestyle we had at Earl Uren's castle."

Expressing that, I floated an embarrassed smile. As expected, this is somewhat embarrassing.

However, seemingly looking satisfied to those words, Sophia gave a wide smile.

"Then, I shall wish. For peace. That's why Yukito, please grant my wish. Please materialize my dream."

Saying that, Sophia put on the blue shawl for attendant use in splendor.

As if a switch was hit, her glance changed. They are eyes that I saw once before.

Ones that were shown when the villagers were taken as hostages.

"Diorood Arkwright-dono, Supreme commander Yukito Kurei. At this moment, the Ventus Prophetes's Sophia Leedsberg wish to seek an audience with Veris's King, Kaguya Halberd Her Majesty. May you lead the way?"

Though I thought of that when Kaguya-sama broke away from Stratos's control, it feels like a racoon was deluding us.

But, why can females so easily change themselves? Well, Kaguya-sama is slightly different though.

It's strange.

I thought of that from the bottom of my heart as I see Sophia gave her gratitude with her elegant smile.

Part 6

There is Kaguya-sama sitting on the throne of the Throne room and to her right is where Bayd is standing. Then the various influential people who lined up on the left and right of the room.

At the point of sheltering Sophia, I have already sent Ren to report the situation so the people that have gathered were quite something.

I am walking just behind Dio-sama. It's arranged to have me report first, before allowing Sophia to enter the throne room. Well, though the arrangement were made by Bayd.

"Captain of Nox, Yukito Kurei. I have returned."

When I confirmed that Dio-sama has stood by the left side of Kaguya-sama, I went down on my knees and greeted of my return.

"Thanks for your trouble. So, would you report the situation? And also the reasons for your actions and etc."

Kaguya-sama slightly narrowed her eyes.

Well, I guess it's the obvious reaction. The independent unit had come right to the front of the royal castle. And also, it was with the rights of the independent unit that signifies her trust, so Kaguya-sama should have plenty of things to think about. I really do have the awareness of doing something inexcusable.

However, if I don't do that, I will never be able to keep my words.

I have to show my resolve no matter what.

“Yes. Then, as simple as I can, allow me to explain the situation at hand. Albion is currently pondering whether to make war with Veris, and is more inclined towards making war. And I believed that it’s Stratos who is behind the scenes.”

“Stratos... What a vexatious name. So? What’s his aim?”

“Without doubt, I believed it’s Sophia-sama. And one other aim might be also to create the seeds of conflict on the whole continent.”

Stratos’s aim is not clear. But, what’s definite is that he’s aiming for Sophia. And the fact that it will lead to war. Though I am not really sure what is his intention but for now, it’s fine to leave it that one of his objective is war.

“I see. If Albion moved, it will be a war of the whole continent. Having Albion attacked Veris is an effective way to cause a full-fledged war.”

As expected, when it comes to military affairs, her calculations are abnormally fast. Though it’s annoyingly strange why she can’t do that normally, she is after all someone specialized in war and also that it reduces the time needed to explain, I guess it’s fine.

I nodded in a grand way and started explaining in regards to Sophia.

“It’s as you said. And to prevent the worst situation, Sophia-sama have come to Veris. There is a possibility that within Albion, her words might not be conveyed. That’s why her motive is to spread her words from the outside to stop the world.”

“And so, she was pursued. So I should say that the other 3 countries is either taking advantage of the situation or have been controlled by Stratos, I guess.”

“Affirmative. I also believe that the thinned defence of the border is also one of the reason. Because of that, we weren’t able to push forward and also retreat.”

While implicitly saying that it's his fault, and looked at Bayd with a glance, Bayd acted aloof as if it has got nothing to do with him. What a shrewd guy. What an obvious way of feigning ignorance.

Guess it's a waste of time to handle him right now. For the time being, let's ignore him unless he do something to obstruct me.

"It is as said.... However, it's not like there's no way out. If we can cooperate with the other countries, we might be able to avoid a war. Within the 5 big countries, there are 3 other big countries excluding us, Versi and Albion. The Empire of Aether to the east, the Dominion of Imperieuse to the west, and the Commonwealth of Lucrum to the North. Among them, the envoys from the Empire of Aether and the Dominion of Imperieuse are still here. I believe if we were to punish the envoys of the 3 small kingdom's alliance, they would have returned to their country quickly. Your actions on that point is definitely an achievement. But why....."

For what reason did you move your army into the capital.

What strong words. It's not like she raised her voices or she said it loudly. Just that, that voice that sounded clearly and the penetrative glance makes one think that way.

But, it's enough to make her think that way. After all, trying to make Kaguya-sama think that way make me understand something. I ended up realizing it.

Right now, she doesn't think of me as an ally. Though likely not as an enemy, I believe it's quite close to one. If I do not make a mistake in replying, it's highly possible to withdraw from this place. Nah, an even worst situation is possible.

Dio-sama also stiffened his expression slightly. As expected, even Dio-sama is afraid of the current Kaguya-sama. Bayd floated a slight smile. It seems enjoyable to him that I had provoked Kaguya-sama's displeasure. This guy is totally looking at me as an enemy. Really what's with this. This country, that is.

The ex-king, Bayd... every one of them are too faithful to their desires. Do they have any considerations of the surroundings?

Why do I have to be doubted even though I am moving for Veris. I seriously can't understand that. Though I can't accept that, I can't let this misunderstanding continue.

"The reason I moved my army in is to protect Sophia-sama."

The throne room instantly froze. A few stern glances concentrated on me. Nah, I can't be bothered with those. The problem is the one that is looking down on me.

"Did you....think that I would harm Sophia Leedsberg.....?"

"Then allow me to inquire. Where is the Imperial Escort Captain, Anna Dietrich?"

The person who I wished to be here is Anna. But she isn't. Then where is she. That's simple. She's likely fortifying the surroundings of Sophia.

"She's the escort of Sophia Leedsberg though?"

"Despite the discourtesy, allow me to ask.... Did you not mistake it for surveillance and isolation?"

Though Kaguya-sama raised in anger and glared at me, I then, for the first time, matched her glance and confronted her.

"Yukito.....what are you trying to say....."

"For the country's benefit, you were advised... you accepted the advice to use

her. And because I believed you have accepted it, I have moved my own army into the capital. If you were about to make that error, I would stop it with force.”

I raised my side up from a kneeling position and stood up. Without Kaguya-sama’s permission, it’s a rude act but the first one who was impolite was Kaguya-sama.

“I thought that you believed me that’s why you granted me the rights to my independent unit. However, it seems that I was wrong.”

“Yukito.....?”

“I said that I would protect and help Sophia-sama and she believed my words and have came to this capital. I would protect her under my name and pride. I swear under this name that I would definitely save her. However, it seems like you would understand my determination and vow.”

There is initiative in an conversation. Previously it was Kaguya-sama but now, I have the initiative.

Though I feel sorry for Kaguya-sama, I will not go easy this time. About pride and determination, honestly, I can’t be bothered. Right now, for some reason, she was able to accept advices even when she is slightly smouldering in anger.

I guess she’s not thinking what Sophia would be thinking being surrounded by a unit of Imperial Guards. If Sophia ever abandoned Veris, we would not be able to stop the war. Nah, it could actually intensify the whole situation itself.

We have to gain Sophia’s trust no matter what, so why is she making such a foolish move.

She should be more capable and should be able to do it better.

With a bit of irritation and distrust, I looked at Kaguya-sama.

“Though it seems that you are feeling distrustful of me, it should be the other way round.”

“Yukito! Calm down right now.”

“Please be silent. This is my problem.”

Actually, making Nox enter the capital is supposed to be some kind of restraint and also the last resort. That’s why even the unit officers were made to standby outside the royal castle. We do not intend to do anything within the royal castle. It’s an expression of that meaning.

But, this person doesn’t seem to understand it.

That’s what I thought from the directed suspicious glance.

“While you might have been probing for my loyalty, I was also probing for your feelings.”

I gradually took out the short sword from my chest and took off the coat I was wearing.

Though both of these are things Dio-sama have given me, it’s also fine to say that these items are what signifies the authority I have.

In other words, these are the everything I have as the commander of Veris’s Independent Unit, Nox and the Strategist of Arkwright. If I throw these away, I will be just Yukito Kurei.

“Whether I should serve you.”

“.....are you saying..... I am not worth to be served....?”

“At the very least, from your actions this far, I believe that possibility is rather high.”

Towards those words, Bayd grinned widely and pointed at me while alerting out loud.

“What blasphemy! Guards! Capture Yukito Kurei! ”

Showing a slight reaction to Bayd’s words, I turned my head to see the closest approaching guards and I pointed back at Bayd while announcing.

“There’s an insolent man that grope the breasts of his master, so is it fine to not capture him?”

“What!?”

Kaguya-sama blushed while shouting that out. Bayd stiffened his expression. During our first encounter, though he put a facade of being a frivolous person to let our guard down, those actions are quite the disrespect.

“.....is that true? Prime Minister-dono”

Dio-sama asked Bayd with a sharp sense to it. Well, i guess it will end up that way. Though I didn’t say it to keep it for use next time, I didn’t expect that I would say it in a situation like that.

“Now then, let’s have that later on. I only wish to hear one thing. Are you going to make use of Sophia-sama? Depending on your answer,”

You will lose a retainer.

I gave a kind of threaten. It’s sort of nasty, but I doubt it will be conveyed to her if I don’t do till this extend.

I do not wish for this person to take a foolish choice.

Towards my words that holds such a wish, Kaguya-sama slightly flinched.

The feelings reflected on Kaguya-sama's eyes were panic and fear. That made me even more irritated. Why do you need to feel afraid? What's the right decision is already obvious.

What I can think of to avoid the war is what Kaguya-sama said previously, and that is to cooperate with other big countries. And, not letting her be a negotiation chip, but allowing her to enter the table of negotiations, letting her give an impression of supporting Veris, which will make other countries change their impressions of us. Well, if Sophia is not here, the chances of them not supporting Veris is very high. That's how bad the impression of the ex-king is.

That's why it's important to give as much respect as possible, and allow Sophia to assist voluntarily. Unwillingness can be seen by those who would. And now, I guess it's best for me to think that the other countries already know that she is under heavy surveillance under the pretext of escort. The other countries also do have spies. If they know about the borders' happenings, they would at least send out spies to the royal castle. And then, there would also be people who would sell this information to these spies, and with abilities as close as Ren, infiltrating the royal castle shouldn't be difficult.

Thinking that much, I realized that Kaguya-sama was looking at me as if trying to cling to me.

"Yukito..... Over me..... You would take side with Sophia Leedsberg....is that what you are trying to say....?"

"Depending on your answer. Please do not disappoint me. Kaguya-sama."

There were no one who criticize me for such rude words. After reaching this stage, everyone here finally realized it. My seriousness.

To catch me immediately right here is not difficult. It's actually easy if you think about their honor. However, everyone was thinking about what's next.

Whether my subordinates outside would move. Whether I have prepare something. Such suspicions bring about more suspicions and many were tied to the ground. Within the, Bayd was also one of them. Though I said saying something as idiotic as “He grabbed her boobs”, that’s still not the most important thing.

I could have killed you anytime. That’s what Bayd said. And he should have prepared that weapon even right now. It should have enough force to destroy Kaguya-sama’s trust instantly. I believe Bayd would want to avoid that too.

At this place, the only person that could move is Dio-sama but Dio-sama can’t move even though he knows that I am doing this without a plan.

Sophia, the highest wind magician, can pick up long distance conversation if she desires.

And Dio-sama knows that. If he made any careless comments, he could be found out so he have not said a thing. Dio-sama likely wants to side with Kaguya-sama, but that would imply on using Sophia. He can’t made a move.

That’s why the only one who can restore this place is Kaguya-sama.

“Please answer me. Will you use or not. If not, please promise it. Otherwise, I shall relinquish my role.”

I stared at Kaguya-sama’s eyes. I won’t allow you to lie to me. I will definitely see through your words if you are trying to run away from this place. I believe such strong determination should be conveyed to Kaguya-sama.

Everything is already thrown on the table. What’s left are 2 choices.

At the instant I thought of that.

A gentle came blowing into the royal throne. At that instant, no one knows what happen, and became bewildered, but there’s something calming about this wind.

After returning some of my composure, I realized.

I looked at the exterior of the board. The piece that shouldn't have move had moved on the board on its own. And the initiative have left my side.

"It's a calming wind. It has an effect to calm the nerves."

A really comfortable voice resounded the Royal throne room. Everyone all looked at the opened door.

A white robe with green shawl. Wearing the uniform of the Celsius Maiden, her appearance was more dazzling than a jewel, and more beautiful than the best flower that blooms strongly in the wild.

If she was to be compared, her beauty is as radiant as the sun and as mysterious as the moon.

Sophia Leedsberg has entered the Royal Throne.

Everyone gulped at her beauty and was rooted to the spot by that appearance.

"It's an honour to meet you. Kaguya-sama, your Majesty. I am the 'Ventus Prophetes', Sophia Leedsberg."

(TL: After searching a bit, I realized it might have been in Latin. It should translate to the Wind Prophet.)

Kaguya-sama did not reply. After all, for her to be her, means that the escort group has been broken through. But the disturbance could not be heard and there was no report.

"I used magic and slipped out. As the situation seems to be turning rough. Have everyone calm down?"

As she floated a smile befitting a saint, Sophia kneeled by my side with elegant movement.

“Time is against us for this situation. Due to that, I moved at my convenience. Allow me to apologize for that first.”

“Sophia-sama...”

“Do Diorood-sama knows that I have magic that allows me to pick up long-distanced sounds”

“...I have heard it from Yukito.”

“Understanding the impoliteness of my actions, I have used that magic to listen to the conversation. That’s why I do understand how the people here wish to use me and how everyone wish to move from here.”

Sophia’s voice was replied with silence in the throne room as her voice vibrates through.

While Dio-sama and I knew about Sophia’s magic, Kaguya-sama and Bayd were unable to hide their shock. And, Kaguya-sama who gave a fleeting glance at me, showed a comprehended expression. Then, her expression quickly turned to one of loneliness.

I guess she understand the reason of my commitment. It’s for Sophia to hear those words.

The word of the king cannot be easily revoked. Though I acted upon those thoughts, it was destroyed from various angles.

“Yukito. I am really happy about your feelings. However, I didn’t come to Veris to bring discord. If you opposed Kaguya Her Majesty, people who longs for war will benefit from it. Please, would you return that coat and short sword to its original place? ”

Saying that, after wavering for a bit, I returned my short sword to my chest and put on my coat. My plan is already in a mess. I think it's best to leave it to Sophia here.

"Kaguya, Your Majesty. Would you forgive Yukito's behavior?"

".....are you asking me to believe him with unchanged views after having done that much? The Yukito right now seems more like your retainer."

"Are you not able to see through his true motive? Are you not able to understand it without telling you?"

Sophia strengthened her words slightly.

Though on her knees and looking up, Sophia's appearance looks a lot bigger. I guess this is Sophia being the "Celsius Maiden".

"Of course, I do understand that he is trying to correct me. But rather than for my sake, isn't it for your sake?"

"That's not it. Yukito..... He wished that Kaguya, Your Majesty, is just. He wants you to stay strong and confident for someone who defeated him. That's the image of a ruler that he wish for in Kaguya Your Majesty, and because it got astrayed, Yukito is confronting you. The name that shook the whole continent, The Strategist of Arkwright. If you plan not to use him, I would like to receive him as my retainer."

Sophia showed a challenging glance to Kaguya-sama. Likely lighted the fire in Kaguya-sama, she too returned the glance and announced.

"It's none of your business! Yukito is my strategist! I won't let you have him!!"

"Then you will forgive him?"

"Obviously! I am not that petty of a ruler!"

Kaguya-sama stood up from the throne and said those words. Hearing it, Sophia floated a smile.

“Then, I am relieved. Let’s have this conversation end here. I wish to stop the war. If I can realize it, I don’t mind being used. I believe that Kaguya-sama would like to avoid war.. is what I am thinking but?”

“It do not have plans to cause war like I am fond of it. Especially if it’s going to drag in the citizens.....”

“Then, allow me to assist Veris. Except please promise that you will still use Yukito as an important strategist. If Yukito’s not around, I believe the negotiations with the other countries would not be settled. In that case, I would not cooperate. Can we have this promise?”

This place was being engulfed by Sophia. Obviously, it includes Kaguya-sama as well. I wonder if it’s more correct to say that she was in the palms of her hands.

I used my position to make Kaguya-sama not make use of Sophia. Sophia consent to letting herself be used on the promise of my safety.

In the end, the result wasn’t very different. Even if she is used, as long as she is fine with the war not occurring, the most important thing is that Veris can avoid the war. This very point.

Though I worked really hard to avoid Sophia being used, seeing that the person herself accepted it so easily, I am in a mood where I have no idea what to say. How should I say, I am feeling blue?

Also, seeing her appearance of being able to easily negotiate like this, I have to somehow change my evaluation of this lady.

“...I accept. I guarantee that there will be no change to Yukito’s position, and my trust in him.”

“Well then, negotiations is completed. I thank you for accepting me. Kaguya Your Majesty. And also everyone of Veris.”

Her appearance of speaking and standing up was dazzling like the sun.

Chapter 3: Change

Part 1

My grandmother is scary when she is angry. To the point that she is the scariest among the people who I have met. Though I said that, it's not that when she's angry, she would scold or change into a really scary face or something. It's also not because she would turn violent.

It's just staring at you continuously in seiza position, opposite of me. Without a word. Until she knows I know I was wrong.

If I tried to talk or changed my posture, she would sigh with dejection, so I can only endure without being able to do a thing. It was really like a time in hell. However, it's always my fault when she was angry at me.

If you ask me why am I remembering this, it's because I am in a similar position right now.

I was the one getting made at, and Sophia being the one who is mad. I was left on the chair in front of her, and without saying a word, she have not been answering my question. All she did was just stare at me.

But I do know she's angry. After all, her face was totally written with "I am angry right now."

Though it's not like I do not know why.

I got it. I will apologize. I won't do something like that again.

"...."

"You were angry because I didn't consider about myself, right? I won't do that again."

Saying that, I gave a smile but Sophia does not make a reply.

To ignore is said to be the best tease, so this is really intense. And in this case, her glance is onto me so it's even more intense. She will definitely know if I was ignoring it.

I, who understand what it means to have no island to cling on by feeling it on my body, hung my head and decided to wait until Sophia gave in. But, earlier than I expected, Sophia gave in. No, in this situation, saying that she gave in is wrong.

Since she has not forgave me after all.

".....I am happy that you are doing something for me."

"Eh? Ah, is that so?"

"Yes. However, please don't misunderstand. The matter this time does not make me happy at all."

Thinking that I found some hope, it seems to be just me. Being told that she is not happy at all with a serious face is quite hurting. I was doing it, thinking for Sophia though.

Even though I thought of doing it for Sophia, I guess that doesn't mean it will make her happy. This is what we call doing something that's none of your business.

"Sorry...."

"I hate to be used in Albion and also to have my freedom taken away from me. But, here in Veris, that's fine. Do you know why?"

Towards her question, I slightly pondered. What's not in Albion, is in Veris. I think that there are plenty of things, but at the same time, not so much as well. But, it's definitely something special.

After thinking to that extent, I realized. I see.

“Because Dio-sama and I are here?”

“Yes. That’s right. Because I have people I can rely on and friends that are by my side, so no matter what happens, it’s fine. But, this time, Yukito didn’t notice such of my feelings.”

“No, that’s because you said to grant your wish....”

“You promised that you would stay by my side. But if I haven’t force my way in, no matter what kind of result Yukito got, you would have been chased out of the castle, right?”

I frankly nodded to her words. Though it’s not a definite 100% possibility that I will be chased out of the castle, I will be dismissed from my role as Nox’s commander. And the trust from my surroundings will also be lost. Nah, right now, Veris’s influential people should be gradually losing trust in me.

But, it doesn’t really matter. Creating Nox, the position as a strategist, and even bringing Veris up were all for going to see Sophia and built to help her. It doesn’t feel regrettable at this late hour for me.

I will let Dio-sama take over Nox, leave the castle and assist Dio-sama by settling as his advisor. That was something I even thought to.

But, Sophia doesn’t approve of that.

“I definitely promised to stay by Sophia’s side, didn’t I? I thought that I might have been able to stay by your side nonetheless. Was that bad?”

“It’s bad. Please don’t leave me alone.....”

Sophia floated a sad expression. I was the one who made her show that expression.

I was planning to protect her even with this body. But, Sophia wish that I

would include this body within the realms of that protection. I guess self-sacrifice would only bring self-satisfaction.

I really didn't think of the people who would be left behind. At that time, I was thinking of nothing other than protecting Sophia.

"Sorry. I was about to break a promise."

"...I will just forgive you this time. There's no second time, got it?"

Towards Sophia who finally have her smile returned, I replied it with the same thing.

Thinking that it's over, I stood up from my chair but Sophia grabbed hold of my clothing.

"Is there something?"

"...there's one more important matter to discuss."

Sophia spoke with some hesitation.

Seeing such a Sophia, I returned to my seat and looked into her eyes.

"Important matter?"

"Yep..... It's regarding Kaguya-sama."

Due to the unexpected name coming out from an unexpected person, I wasn't able to hide my astonishment.

I wonder why would Kaguya-sama's name come out from Sophia's mouth. No, rather than that, why would that be an important matter?

“Did she did something to you?”

“She didn’t. Yukito, what did Kaguya-sama did to you?”

“What she did? Uhm.... What do you mean?”

“Did you not notice it yourself? Yukito is carrying a lot of negative feelings towards Kaguya-sama. To the point you can feel it from your words and way of speaking....”

Pointing that out, Sophia cast her eyes down sadly. On the other hand, having pointed it out to me, I started to remember my actions towards to Kaguya-sama until now.

Yeah, I guess, what Sophia said was right. I treated Kaguya-sama badly, and I do have some thoughts on why in my heart. To say it simply, I hate her. That person.

“...that’s true. I hate.....Kaguya-sama.”

“Yukito. If it was the Yukito that met me not long ago, looking at the current Kaguya-sama.... I think you wouldn’t have abandon her. Do you know why?”

“....I am not sure. Do Sophia know?”

“.....You are gentle. You could think from their point of view. It’s that gentleness that saved me. Have Yukito... thought of thinking from Kaguya-sama’s perspective? Like how you did for, could you read her true feelings that are hidden?”

Every time she pointed it out, her expression turned even more sad.

If she feels bad saying it, she can not say it, you know. Though I thought of that, I think it’s not wrong that she’s saying it for me. I did not consider a single time what Kaguya-sama was thinking. I did not try to read her hidden thoughts at all as well.

When I met Sophia for the first time, I realized Sophia can’t helped but be

uneasy. The reason why the surroundings did not notice was because they have the recognition that if it's her, she will be fine. They were too conscious of Sophia's strength and did not put her feelings into consideration.

Thinking like this, I realized it. Like how those people did not see Sophia's feelings, I also did not see Kaguya-sama's feelings.

"...I did not. I didn't think of doing that."

"Why?"

".....I thought Kaguya-sama would be fine and maybe I might have hated her, I guess?"

"Why did you think she would be fine?"

".....she is the person who defeated me."

".....why did you hate her?"

".....Because she killed my comrades..... Nope. Not only that. She was the trigger to the whole civil war. She created the reason for me to enter the battlefield. Including all that, it's because I couldn't forgive Kaguya-sama..."

I finally understood. The negative feelings that I got from the civil war was not in my calculations. I thought that all the reasons were due to Kaguya-sama and stroke every of those feelings at her.

But, just because I realized it, I can't do a thing. The fact that one of the reason the civil war happened was without doubt because of Kaguya-sama.

"Are you not able toforgive Kaguya-sama?"

"....."

"It's because I am a stranger, I can understand the danger of Veris. The power struggle of Diorood-sama and Prime Minister Fern under Kaguya-sama is amplifying, and proposals with such various intents included were passed down to Kaguya-sama. Kaguya-sama should be unable to believe anyone right now.

And....in this situation, it is suggested that Yukito might leave Kaguya-sama.”

“What.....should I do?”

Without knowing what to do, I asked Sophia.

But I was replied with an unexpected answer.

“I believe this should be something Yukito think about.”

“How strict.....”

“Yukito also replied the same thing to Kaguya-sama, right? Even though she sent you a glance, hoping to rely on you, you did not reply. That’s a very..... sad thing....”

Hearing that, I finally understood why did she tell me about Kaguya-sama. A mirrored image. Kaguya-sama and her.

They are definitely similar. Especially the point where they were influenced by their surroundings.

“I know that saying this to Yukito who saved me is rude and also showing ingratitude. But even so, I hope that Yukito can save Kaguya-sama.”

Please be kind to Kaguya-sama.

Though I nodded to relieve Sophia’s plead, my heart is still in the midst of a hurricane of feelings going at each other, having not come to a compromise.



A few days have passed since the negotiations.

The power struggle from Bayd and Dio-sama instantly intensifies. Dio-sama started to crush Bayd's influence. In full force.

The trigger was the very fact that he fondled Kaguya-sama's breasts. For Dio-sama, I guess it's something he cannot ignore.

On the other hand, Bayd is desperately trying to hold onto his influences.

He was explaining that my words have no credibility and was trying to condemn me to alleviate the situation. And I guess it's fine to say that the method was going well to some extent.

In front of Veris's influential people, I used words showing that my unit and I would disaffect and threatened Kaguya-sama. And what's more, after that, as I was protected by Sophia, I was labelled as a betrayer that supports Sophia. It's painful because not everything was wrong.

There's also the rumour of assisting Sophia to overthrow Veris. Even if I tried to deny, there is no one who can ascertain if that's the truth. I am totally left behind. Though that said, it's not like it's out of my expectation. After doing all that, it's totally unexpected that I am still in the castle though.

There's one more unexpected matter and that's Kaguya-sama's reaction. In regards to Bayd, many people have come to ask Kaguya-sama for the truth everyday, but Kaguya-sama does not respond at all. While she does not cover up for Bayd, she also doesn't say that my words were the truth. She doesn't seem to be joining in this dispute at all.

Because of this, it became the talk of the capital. As Kaguya-sama who is the only one who can settle this situation is in that state, there's no one who can put a brake on this situation. Naturally, this rumour is changing to something that's not really good for Kaguya-sama but even then, Kaguya-sama is not touching this matter at all.

While observing the situation of Kaguya-sama and the royal castle, I was thinking of what to do after this. Right now, I am the commander of the unit stationed in capital, with no work in the royal castle. In other words, I am free.

I told the members of Nox to take a rest in the capital. After a while, I have to also move as the commander of Nox but I still have some free time.

And to such a me, a visitor came.

That person's name is Claire Arkwright-sama. Dio-sama's mother and also a mother-like existence to Kaguya-sama whose mother died early.

Likely due to knowing her strong influence on both of them, she is always living at a corner room of the capital but she suddenly came to my room in the royal castle. Of course, it's going to be quite an uproar so I am shocked.

"Is there something that matter today?"

"I have heard about you. Quite the plenty. Yukito Kurei."

"Then.... I believe I do have some idea on that matter. Have you come to scold me?"

To my words, Claire-sama shook her head left and right. With a slightly depressing expression, Claire-sama stood up from her chair and looked straight at me.

Her glance that seems like it can see through your heart, is similar to Kaguya-sama when I confronted her on the battlefield. As it seems like she can see through anything on my side, I can't stop my heart from getting anxious..

"What I came for today is to apologize. In exchange for my rude children who couldn't reward their benefactor, I came to apologize to you."

"....what do you mean?"

Unable to read what Claire-sama meant, I bewilderedly asked in return. At times like this, my skill can do absolutely nothing. Even if I can see all sorts of information, I can't read the heart of people. And, in situations like this, what's useful is experience, and in that regards, the person in front of me is higher than me by a dozen times. After all, she have been lying to her feelings under that king all these times.

“As literal as it means. You have saved Dio and also Kaguya-sama. In truth, though you should be granted with the most respect, those children were too preoccupied with their own stuff. Without thinking about you.”

“..... they have been considerate to me. ”

“I don’t really like deceiving yourself. You hate it, don’t you? About Conflict. If there’s a reason to fight no matter what, you would do it reluctantly but you would not take the initiative. Isn’t that right?”

Her eyes are saying to not lie. I realized that I would still be exposed even if I lied. So I honestly replied.

“As you said.”

“You have been exhausting your strength for Veris till now because of.... Sophia-sama, right?”

“....yes”

“That’s why after saving Sophia-sama, you tried to step back from battles. At the very least, you are trying to leave the position of requiring to fight wars. Was what I said till now correct?”

It’s not correct. It’s a definite yes. She’s right on the money on all aspects. Is my heart so easy to understand?

“Yes. Everything you said are accurate.”

“You have the face of ‘Why I knew’. It’s because you are similar. You and Kaguya.”

Saying that, Claire, again, gracefully bowed her head to me.

“Yukito Kurei. Please allow me to apologize. Being pushed into a war that you did not want to fight, and even now, exposed to meaningless criticisms, I am sorry from the bottom of my heart. And, this is a unfair wish from a mother. Please do help Kaguya. That girl is.”

Trying to step down from the throne.

Claire-sama showed a bittered expression looking at my eyes, releasing those words..

Part 2

The stars turned the dark sky into a glittering night.

At the highest floor of the royal castle is the Throne room. Just before the one way path towards the Throne room, there is a window where if you go out of it, you will be able to reach a place by using the path above the one-way path.

The place called the Platform of Star Viewing is a resting place only permitted to the king. Being on the peak of the highest point in the castle of the capital, its view of the starry sky is superb and no matter how much money you have, it's only something that can be seen by the King.

That's the place Kaguya-sama took a liking, as I heard from Claire-sama. Whenever something unpleasant happens when she was young, she would go there when it's dark, and had a habit of looking at the stars. As the ex-king had no interest in stars, the people who knows of Kaguya-sama's actions were few and people who would fault her for that seems to be nil.

I am now going towards that place. Moving on all fours on the unstable path, I moved forward without releasing my hands and never to look to the down, and only to the front.

Even though it's not a path that should take that long, the reason for the time taken is not really due to my chicken heart, it's because of my movement safety protocols were at its top form.

As it's also the path taken by the king, I wish that they would take in consideration the safety precautions for the road. If a strong wind blows, I only think of an image of someone getting blown off to the ground.

As I am having a hard time, I finally reached the platform of Star viewing. Not such to say as expected, or as usual, Kaguya-sama is there. Sitting on the prepared chair, Kaguya-sama is either looking at the stars or ignoring me, not trying to face me.

Her appearance with only a single thin clothing seems cold. Nah, likely

because it's cold, both her hands were hugging her own body and likely being insufficient as well, both her legs were on the seat, becoming a pose like PE sitting position(explained later). However, even then, she does not stop looking at the stars.

I took off the coat that is weaved from feather and tried putting it on her shoulders. But, doing it silently was a bad move.

“Uwa!!”

Kaguya-sama screamed and looked at my direction, and was further shocked realizing it was me, she lost her balance on the chair. Putting my hand around her shoulder at once, I somehow managed to prevent her fall.

“I, I'm sorry. I didn't expect you would be that shock....”

“Yukito...? Why are you here? It's forbidden to enter this place other than the king, you know...?”

“Claire-sama said that it's fine if it's just once.”

“Mother? I see.... She have created a chance for me to talk to you....”

Saying that, Kaguya-sama gave a sad smile. Recently, I feel like I am always seeing that expression. Not just Kaguya-sama, many people were making such sorrowful expression. That's likely the current story of Veris, I guess.

“With the current situation of the royal castle, it's difficult for me to meet Kaguya-sama after all. If we meet, we have no idea what kind of rumours they would make.”

“.....Sorry. I am not sure what I am supposed to do.... I only know how to keep silent....”

“Please do not mind it. It's not the best way but also not the worst too. In this

situation, what Kaguya-sama say would be accompanied with a huge danger. Keeping silent until the situation calms down, and from then, should you make your speech.”

“Yukito....?”

Seeing her unexpected expression, I felt a slight pain in my chest.

It’s surprising. For me to be advising Kaguya-sama.

I have no idea what to do. I usually say that to Kaguya-sama. To that, I do have the answer but I did not give it out. I would usually tell her to think about it herself.

Thinking that it is for her own growth is nothing more than an excuse, and truly, I just find it annoying to teach her. And enjoying to shake off her clinging eyes, seeing her troubled look, I was satisfied.

Such a disgusting act, to think I can actually naturally do it without realizing it. And even then Kaguya-sama is desperately trying to find an answer and continued to display her own answers. Towards those answers, I have always completely rejected it. Nope. That’s wrong. With words like this.

“Yukito. You do not need to mind what Mother said, you know? I will put a word for you. That’s why it’s fine not to force yourself, okay?”

Thinking that my change was due to something Claire-sama said, Kaguya-sama replied that way. It’s not really wrong. But that’s also not totally correct. Claire-sama was the trigger. Sophia as well. The trigger for me to start thinking.

That’s why this change is something from myself. It’s not something because I was told to do so.

However, before I could convey that, Kaguya-sama drooped her shoulders and started chatting on her own.

“Mother said to pay respect to me, didn’t she...? It’s fine. I am not a suitable king to you. A stupid girl that doesn’t deserve any respects...”

“...That’s not correct.”

“It’s not wrong, isn’t it!? This castle is already running even without me! That’s because everything is being put in order by Dio and Bayd! What’s required of me is a puppet king!”

“I believe that’s... slightly mistaken.”

If I think about it without my personal feelings, I believe Kaguya-sama is precious to Bayd. Though he is currently prioritizing his ambitions right now, even then, it’s likely without a doubt that Kaguya-sama is his important sister figure.

I believe Dio-sama is also thinking of her as his important elder sister. Right now, the fact that he is trying to crush Bayd is the best proof. Just that, since he seems to be unnecessarily anticipating something higher from Kaguya-sama, he’s on a direction of not giving much advice, so Kaguya-sama likely misunderstood.

Bayd is doing it to reduce her burden, while Dio-sama is desiring her independence, so they were actively clearing the work away. Dio-sama is perhaps waiting for Kaguya-sama to speak of her dissatisfaction at the current situation or trying to break the current deadlock. No, wait a minute. That’s why he left Bayd’s faction alone. And because of losing his patience, the royal castle now is in a situation where both factions are in a fierce confrontation.

“There’s no misunderstanding! Even you..... Are also dissatisfied with me as king, right.....?”

“I was the one who support you to become king.”

“That’s right.... Then as I was unable to show you the anticipated appearance, you treated me only? Because I was pitiful and undependable.....?”

You were unable to believe in me?

Her words are filled with strong emotions. Guess it's her feelings that she has been hiding all this while.

The feelings that shouldn't be displayed as a king is now pouring out here.

"That's not it."

"Then, why!? Why can't I acquire your trust!? Is it because I am so far from your desired king!?"

"That's wrong too. The reason why I didn't trust Kaguya-sama is..... simply because I couldn't forgive you."

I couldn't forgive you. Listening to that, Kaguya-sama was dumbfounded. Well, of course. When she was released from the control of Stratos, the battle at the capital, the fight with the ex-king and till now, no matter how it was, Kaguya-sama were under the same flag. We have been fighting by each other. Such a person said that the other couldn't be forgiven so it's going to be a huge impact.

"If you have been firm, there wouldn't be a civil war. Because you came out, I was thrown to the battlefield. From your attack, people who I fought with died. I couldn't digest all that."

".....yukito... is that.... true.....?"

"Yes, it's true...."

"I ...see.. That's true. As you said. It's all my fault. If I don't exist, nothing would have happened. If I have been level-headed, If I killed Father before he does anything.... No, if I have just presented this body, we would not be in the current situation."

Kaguya-sama leaned against the back of the chair. Guess if she doesn't do

that, her balance will collapse.

As I waited for Kaguya-sama to calm down for a while, Kaguya-sama drew out a short sword from the scabbard at her waist and pushed it out to me.

“What are you doing?”

“...You hate me to the depths, don't you? If it's now, I won't resist.”

It's fine to kill me.

Her eyes were filled with resignation. Hating myself for making her show those eyes, I wanted to leave the area so much but the one in the most pain is Kaguya-sama.

The relationship between Kaguya-sama and I have to be renewed for once.

I took the short sword, and returned it to her hands as it is.

“What's wrong...?”

“I have a few things to apologize for as well. And tons of stuff to talk about. To do all that, this short sword is not necessary, so I am returning it.”

“...did you not hate me?”

“I disliked you. To say if I hate you is going to be questionable, but disliking you was a definite thing. I was convinced that everything was your fault. I was depending on you like that. I hit every feelings that I can't sort out on you.”

I gradually knelt down as I said that. And then putting my right hand in front of my chest, I placed my left hand on the floor.

It's a bow towards one's master. To say things in circles and saying them to Kaguya-sama were my hopes on wanting Kaguya-sama to understand. That I have such feelings in me.

Even then.

“If you are fine with such a me..... Kaguya-sama. Please grant me your permission to work for you?”

“.....didn't you dislike me...?”

“‘That's what I thought' is what I am trying to say. The civil war, the fact that I went out to war, and the fact that my comrades died is not totally your fault. It took me quite some time to realize that. No, I didn't realize it. I just wanted someone to throw all my unsorted feelings at.”

People who served Kaguya-sama should consider me, who participated in the civil war, as a detestable enemy. Even within Nox, there might be some of them who were such people. However, none of them said anything about it. I believe it's not because they were afraid of me or the captains of each unit having stopped them. They have likely sort out their feelings.

Perhaps they were all more matured than me. Or I could just be too childish.

“Yukito....”

“I am truly sorry..... For giving you such harsh experience.”

At the instant I spoke, tears came flowing down quietly from her eyes as the amount increases gradually.

“...why..... Didn't you say it earlier.... No one taught me anything. I have no idea who I can depend on. I was anxious, it was painful....but even then, I tried hard to be a good king...”

“I know. I also realized in regards to that.”

“...I tried to live up to your expectations....”

“I truly apologize....”

Kaguya-sama then wiped her tears with both her hands. But, soon a new stream of tears were formed. Next, a sob was leaked out and the start of sobbing was heard.

This is the first time I saw her like this. I never thought she would have such an appearance.

Why did you not answer my eyes of reliance. Why did you not realize my wordless message. No, why did you cornered me till it reaches this stage.

Without being able to control myself, I hurt Kaguya-sama. And again, I was unable to notice the change in Kaguya-sama. Why did I not realized it all this time. As this time, the one who cornered her was me, it was nasty.

I might have also cornered my best friend just like that. Without realizing it, it might have been that he was cornered so he stabbed me. What the hell did I meant by wanting to understand his feelings. What arrogance I have.

Even if I have the skill to see through everything, I ended up making a lady cry like that. And I was unable to stop those tears too.

I am the foolish one. Kaguya-sama was desperate. She was in dire distress over her subordinates that does not move to her instructions and is always working to death as a king, but even then, she is always pondering how to move as a king. And also about how to make her surroundings accompany her. Even though I knew that. I.....

“Kaguya-sama. I have inquired from Claire-sama that you are planning to step down from throne.”

“...I am unable to..... put this country in order.....”

“You will put them in order. This time for sure. Though my poor ability, I shall teach you the way. I will help you. That’s why do you have the spirit to try hard one more time?”

Even though I didn’t help her previously, now I say that I would help. If it was

me, I wouldn't believe in such a person.

However.

"...will you really help me....?"

This person would actually believe it. She really doesn't know how to doubt people. Though this might mean that she isn't suitable to be a king, it's better than having to be suspicious with every single person. Besides, if she doesn't know, I just have to teach her.

"Yep. For real. However, you shouldn't believe in people so quickly, you know. There are people that are trying to deceive you."

"...how do I decipher that?"

Wiping her tears that were finally stopping, Kaguya-sama asked that. To such a Kaguya-sama, I smiled slightly while replying her.

"You would try to read the opponent's movement on the battlefield, right?"

"Ah. I do."

"It's not that different from that. Thinking about what that person is thinking and always be pondering about it. By doing that, Kaguya-sama would be able to see through their lies shortly. You can do it in a battlefield. You should be able to do it here too."

"This is not a battlefield and I feel apologeticto look at the surrounding comrades with that kind of eyes."

"Then, let me judge those around. In return, please always doubt my words and actions."

"...do we have to doubt someone? Are we unable to trust our allies?"

She displayed her eyes of reliance. That was quite the difficult thing to ask. However, since she have already asked, I can only answer. Truthfully.

“Though that’s the best if we can do that but that’s impossible. Human have emotions and due to that, people create society. Dio-sama had said it before. A world where you can trust everyone is as dangerous as a world where you can’t trust anyone. This is likely because no matter which the society will collapse. If there aren’t any opponents, the outlet for the negative feelings will be lost. Well, though it’s possible that in a world where you can trust anyone, there isn’t any negative feelings, the main thing is that both sides are hard to anticipate so they are both dangerous. It’s natural since it’s the extreme ends of both side after all.”

“It’s a bit complex, you know... Say it so that I can understand it.”

“Okay. To say it simply, Kaguya-sama’s wish will not be granted.”

As I replied, she commented “is that so” and went into a state of feeling down, *Shunnn*.

“Would you prefer words of comfort?”

“...it’s alright to say it honestly. I do understand that to believe everyone is impossible. But I would never doubt you. That’s what I decided now. With no doubt.”

Saying that, she looked straight at me with her eyes that were swelled from her crying.

As expected, this person is really straightforward. To the point of being awkward.

Her way of living is sure difficult. That’s what Dio-sama spoke of about

Kaguya-sama. It's really as he had said. Alone, you won't see such person with such difficult way of life. But she just needs someone to support her.

Though I could have been that someone, I have always run away from it. If that happen, I would no longer be able to run away from anything. But, I have decided to stop running away.

Just as I thought of that, a gentle wind blew.

There's no need to even think of who is the one that caused the wind. It's likely Sophia. Perhaps, she has been listening on to the conversation I had with Kaguya-sama.

Sophia has always been the reason I fought. That itself has been denied by Sophia. That it should not end.

That's why I should fight for something bigger this time. Carrying every bit of it.

For Veris. That's something I have spoken of for a few times. But I have never really fought for Veris at all. It's because of Dio-sama that I am in Veris. However, it's not right to have such casual feelings any longer.

"Kaguya-sama. I have a small request though?"

"What is it?"

"Can I name myself as the 'The Strategist of Veris'?"

Hearing that, after being slightly astonished, she nodded, and burst into a smile

Part 3

In the early morning.

I went to visit Dio-sama's office.

"I wasn't expecting you to return me the coat and short sword so early in the morning."

As I kneeled down, I could hear Dio-sama muttering. Though surprised, he wasn't angry.

"It isn't something I would need right now."

"I see. So? What would you be returning to? My conversation partner? Or as Sophia's attendant?"

"Nope. I am not returning to any role, but to graduate from my current role."

"Graduate?"

Dio-sama asked a question in return. I guess that means he didn't expect it.

"Yep. I am thinking of graduating from my role as the Strategist of Arkwright who fought with Diorood Arkwright during the civil war."

"Graduate from the Strategist of Arkwright? Are you planning to become an even bigger existence?"

"In the first place, I was just following the flow and was fighting only for Dio-sama and Sophia. However, though getting thrown into flow, I did protect some things. Also, I know that my current self was hurting someone. So I thought it's

time to resolve myself.”

Saying that, I stood up.

Dio-sama looked at such a me while smiling. He seems to have sensed many stuff from my words.

“To resolve yourself.... I never expect to hear Yukito say that.”

“Well, it’s just a feeling that it would be good if I can do that.”

“You have no confidence?”

“Honestly, no. I don’t like being burdened with responsibility. I am worried if it will overload my capability.”

“You will be crushed if you do it alone. It’s the advice from the experienced.”

As he said that, he took out a piece of cloth from the table.

“I shall return this. Since I have also returned the coat as well.”

“You were still holding onto it? I thought you would have already thrown it.”

“Of course not. This is the item which we swear to live on on. I won’t throw away such a thing.”

He passed it to me after saying that.

The nostalgic feel of the cloth flows through the hand. I quickly put on the haori. I wonder why I have a better peace of mind than wearing the coat.

“What are you going to do with the command of Nox?”

“I shall leave it to Dio-sama. Just that, as only Kaguya-sama can make the commands, please do move on her words.”

“Understood. For the time being, I shall take charge of your men. But, for just a while, you know? I can’t really put in order so much people with such unique characteristics.”

Dio-sama laughed, saying that. I don’t think those words were truly intended. He should be able to do it if he tried. Just that, the extra effort he has to make for it is quite of a waste.

It’s not like Nox has the ability to move at one’s will, even for the army supreme commander, Dio-sama. It’s still under Kaguya-sama’s direct control. That’s the case even if I am removed from the position of Nox’s commander. I guess it’s difficult for Dio-sama to move them.

“Let’s see. They are the people I gathered. After settling various stuff, I am thinking of leading them again. Until then, please do take care of them.”

Saying that, I bowed towards Dio-sama and faced back to him and left the office.

■■■

My next destination is Bayd’s office. However, close to the office, I was called out to.

By the person himself, Bayd.

“Do you have business with me, right?”

“How did you know?”

“You are approaching my office. Isn’t that obvious? So? Having taken off your coat, what is it that you want?”

“I am here just as Yukito Kurei. I was thinking of making a deal with you.”

Bayd’s brows moved slightly towards my words.

Because of my coming-out, Bayd is in quite a pinch. He most likely thought of that matter when it comes to a deal. In truth, it’s right.

“What’s your motive?”

“From now on, I shall teach Kaguya-sama everything that she needs. Of course, that will make your plan of making Kaguya-sama your puppet a total failure.”

“And you want me not to obstruct you? Then, what would you do for me?”

I chuckled towards Bayd biting on the deal. Likely due to the pinch he is in, he bit on quick. I guess he had quite the bad memories from my coming-out. Well, he was left off because it was in that situation of my coming-out. Normally, it wouldn’t be just bad memories. It would certainly be execution.

“Not a thing. The only thing I will do is to teach Kaguya-sama various matters. That’s why no matter what rumours you made or say that my words are just lies, she would not bother.”

“It would be easier for me if you would say that you lied.”

“I can’t do that. Because I would not allow liars to stay by the side of Kaguya-sama. I do believe there’s no loss on your side? After all, if you think about world domination, it’s necessary to have a strong and brilliant king. I am going to be raising one, so I think our interests should be inlined though.”

After thinking for a while, he looked at me with half-opened eyes. He is trying to read my aim. I am sorry but I do not have any. As I have said, I just want the time to be able to teach Kaguya-sama various stuff and does not want to be

disturbed.

“What do you benefit from it?”

“I can raise a king that I want to serve. I have no interest in power and the higher status. It’s easier to do things when the higher-ups are excellent, you know. Unlike you.”

“You really can speak. I wonder how much of that are true. However, that’s fine. I got it. I won’t stand in your way. In return, do not make any other moves. Devote yourself as Kaguya’s teacher.”

“As you wish.”

Smiling slightly, I faced my back to Bayd. Though just a verbal promise, for this level of matter, such aloofness is more than enough. If broken, the one who will receive the worst damage is him. Though even not, he will still take some.

With this, the preparations is pretty much completed. What’s left depends on Kaguya-sama.

Well then, it’s time to study.



As I entered Kaguya-sama’s office, Kaguya-sama is inside looking through the documents with Sophia by the side, assisting Kaguya-sama.

How should I say this, it’s a good view. For the eyes. Though it’s already a sight of sore eyes for rare beauties like them to stand alongside, it’s even better that both are closely smiling together.

“How’s work?”

“Because of Sophia’s help, it’s going really well.”

While Kaguya-sama said that with a smile, Sophia also smiled gently. As if an elder sister is looking at her younger sister. Though Kaguya-sama is the older one.

“Is that so? Then let me help too. Let’s get this over with quickly. It should be rather quick with this amount.”

“Only this amount.....? You mean this?”

Kaguya-sama’s face cramped. There are 3 piles of documents on the table. There were more when I was doing all sorts of stuff in the castle. Even with Mikana’s support, a day is enough to complete them.

“I can’t imagine how long it takes just to look through the whole pile though....”

“That’s the point. First, you do not need to read every single thing.”

“Really? But, I won’t understand what the document is about, isn’t that right?”

She smiled bitterly when tilting her head. No wonder, she took some time for the work. She likely read everything single thing about the received document. That’s why she also realized that there wasn’t any important matters sent to her.

“You just need to get the main point. For example....”

I took out one of the document and read briefly. I am quick at reading articles. It’s obvious as I was able to read the information and status that was on the display which will disappear soon.

“This is a type of request where there are troubled immigrants near the borders and are requesting for permission to set up a temporary shelter. What would you do?”

“Etto, I permit!”

“Okay, then let’s go on with the next one.”

After having gotten permission from Kaguya-sama, I stamped on the document. I believe the time taken was around a minute. Though I would like to increase the pace, I guess it’s like this since it’s at the initial stage.

“Yukito. If you are going to take that role, then I won’t have a job to do.”

Looking behind, there was Sophia with her swelled cheeks. Certainly if I am going to be the one explaining the documents, Sophia would have nothing to do.

“Sorry sorry. Then, can I leave explanations to Kaguya-sama to you? I will do my own work.”

At the side of Kaguya-sama’s desk. At the table where usually an assistant would settle himself, I left the bundle of documents there, shook my head and swung my arms.

During the period when Kaguya-sama is pondering about her decision, Sophia started reading the next document, summarising it.

I think of Anna who is supposed to be sitting on where I am for a bit.

Right now, as the Imperial Guards is being entrusted with the security within the castle, Anna is engaging with the disputes happening in the castle. It’s because of the struggle between Dio-sama and Bayd. Due to that, Anna was

being removed from her assistant role to Kaguya-sama and was unable to bear it. Though it seems that that was the case since before, it seems that there were days where they don't even meet. Seriously, I feel so sorry for her.

Anna believed that it's her life to assist Kaguya-sama and it should be a job just for her. The fact that I am teaching Kaguya-sama various stuff by her side, is something she can't stand. If I don't follow up somehow, she's definitely going to nuts.

After thinking so much, I realized something. Within the job scope of the Imperial Guards, there's also to guard Sophia. Naturally, there's also Sophia's escorts but none of them were seen at the front of the room.

"Sophia. Where's your escort?"

"As Kaguya-sama said she didn't need her Imperial Guards, I also conveyed to my escorts that 'I will be fine.'".

"Ah, is that so....."

What a harsh thing to do. Kaguya-sama and Sophia too. Surely, the Imperial Guards and the escorts should be feeling down. Though it's true that they are so strong that they don't need them, even then, it's going to be a shock that the target to be escorted that they are unnecessary.

Let me go console both sides after this. And have both of them have their escorts attached to them from tomorrow onwards. For people who hold pride in their jobs, there's nothing worse than having their job taken away.

I guess I have to teach this firmly as well.

Thinking of that, I started to settle the documents quickly that were in front of me.



Finishing work quickly, free time were used for studying. It's something I have mentioned to Kaguya-sama. Originally, Bayd and Dio-sama only passed on work that Kaguya-sama is capable of completing. That's why creating time isn't difficult.

"To start off, let me explain the current situation of Veris's capital. In the capital, the power struggle between Dio-sama and Prime Minister Fern is unfolding. "

"I wonder why are they fighting each other...?"

Kaguya-sama muttered, while showing an expression that doesn't understand.

Now then, how should I explain this. This fight is not a normal power struggle. It's not that Dio-sama wanted power. Just that, he wanted to crush the opposing faction. On the other hand, Bayd is trying to defend against Dio-sama's attack and wanted to keep the immense power in his hand.

To say it simply.

"I guess they didn't like each other."

"Yukito. That phrasing is slightly..."

As I was faulted by Sophia, I decided to explain in more detail. In regards to this power struggle, it's still not Kaguya-sama's time to move so I don't really want to take so much time.

"From the previous civil war, there are people who made achievements and those that didn't made in the country. Naturally, people with achievements were favoured and those that did not were discontented. Dio-sama's faction is mainly made of those that did acquired achievements or those that wanted to

follow Dio-sama and Prime Minister Fern's group are those that aren't of those groups."

"The civil war triggered this?"

"Yes. People who followed Dio-sama is trying to prevent themselves from being threatened, while Prime Minister Fern's followers want to receive better treatment so they are trying to grab onto power at this stage. It's fine to let them go on with the fight from now on."

As I said that, Kaguya-sama started thinking. It's a better reaction than nothing. Likely, she's thinking why it's not necessary to bother about it.

"Kaguya-sama. Right now, Veris.. Nope, what is it that Kaguya-sama wants to do the most?"

"Let's see.... To avoid fighting with other countries.... I guess?"

Kaguya-sama replied to Sophia's query.

Towards that answer, she nodded and smiled.

"Yes. That's why I believe we do not have the leisure to care about the fight in the capital right now. "

"B, but if we are fighting among ourselves, not to say a war, even negotiations wouldn't go smoothly, right?"

"It should be fine. The leaders of both factions are superior. In the emergency of Veris, they likely would take a temporary truce. Also, we do not have the spare strength to point at their fights during the negotiations with other countries. Because our work would increase."

I showed Kaguya-sama a piece of paper, saying that.

It's a map of the whole continent shaped something like a diamond. Though it says it's a map on the display, and only I am able to see it, it's a rough sketch of the map that I have drawn.

"Is this the map of the whole continent?"

"Yep. But it's a rough one though."

"I believe there should be map of the whole continent stored in the library, should I bring it over?"

"It's fine. This is enough."

Saying that, I pointed at the East of the continent that wrote 'Aether'.

From now on, it's diplomacy. First, Veris have to make the Empire of Aether an ally no matter what. Why do you think is the reason?

"It's because they have a strong navy right?"

"Yes. The world's most developed navy is very likely to suppress Veris's coastal around easily. And if Albion took a pincer attack with them, Veris will perish."

"If it's about the navy, wouldn't the Dominion of Imperieuse be the same?"

Sophia questioned. To that, Kaguya-sama replied with a slightly good mood.

"Even if the Dominion is our enemy, the Empire should be capable of taking them out. However, if it's the other way round, we'll be giving them the ability to embark our lands. That's why it's important to gain the Empire as an ally first. And the thoughts of not wanting to fight the Empire would make the Dominion our ally. In that case, Albion will be surrounded by 3 sides. Albion wouldn't carelessly step into Veris at that point.."

Likely because it's finally her field of expertise, Kaguya-sam replied promptly. Perhaps, she might have the nature of those people that thinks well in sports, but not so well when studying.

To teach such people, it's best to teach them using their expertise as an example.

"As you said. How do you think you can make them your ally?"

"That's...."

Her expression changed from a elated one to a troubled pondering one. Her expression is really changing today.

Though Sophia was also thinking, it doesn't seem like that got any of those thoughts that go, "That's it".

Going by standard practice, it's to send an envoy and deepen friendships, but right now, there's no time.

"What's important is to explain the merits of uniting with Veris. Though their navy is strong, any other thing aren't that prominent. Especially the fact that they did not fight a war for about 10 years, their soldiers' experience aren't enough. On the hand, during the previous king's reign, the army of Veris have been fighting throughout the period. In terms of experience, we are the first among the 5 big countries. In a 1v1, I believed we wouldn't be defeated."

"Would that be a merit to the Empire of Aether?"

"Experienced and superior commanders are rare. They are aware of their own weakening army. They likely do not wish to fight. However, the situation is changing. As it is, even if they assist in taking down Veris, what's next is them being the target. So what can they do? Assisting Veris, the situation would be turned into a stalemate. And then, they would wish to redo their outfitting and training for the army during this period. And that is something Veris can assist.

Just by dispatching talents. That's the merit to explain to Empire of Aether. For now."

After saying to that point, while looking at Kaguya-sama who's agreeing to it and Sophia, I muttered in my heart that, "I doubt it's going to be so smooth though."

Part 4

3 months has passed since the border attack from the 3 kingdoms.

As long as there is the possibility of a pincer attack from both land and sea, the strengthening of the defence of the coastal areas has to be achieved. Because of that, Kaguya-sama has went down to Earl Uren's territory for a inspection on the strengthening of coastal defense, while taking a breather since a week ago. With Kaguya-sama's speed, she should have arrived yesterday. Of course, the Imperial Guards are with her.

Earl Uren's territory is located the most Southern area of Veris. It faces the sea and is also prosperous in trade. However, its preparation against coastal attack is far from sufficient. I gave a few important points to Kaguya-sama and based on that, I requested her to see what can be done to stop the invasion.

Including the required facilities and human resources for defending against the invasion, it's also essential to think if it's possible to defend the attack even then. In the event of a negative prospect, it's necessary to think of an alternate plan and the movement of every forces have to change to match it as well.

I came out from Sophia's room. Though it's morning right now, it's not like I was always in the room. Though I have some business to do, it's already over.

"It seems that you are still playing with various petty tricks, aren't you?"

Captain Larg, who is the room's guard, called out to me. The reason why he's slightly unhappy is literally because I have been moving around alot.

"Sorry. But all of these are necessary."

"You said that yesterday, did you? Stand in our and Sophia's shoes."

"I am sorry for Captain Larg and the rest but I feel that Sophia seems to be

enjoying quite a bit.”

As Captain Larg sharpened his eyes, I shrunk my shoulders, and murmured “Scary, scary”, made a 180 degree turn and moved away from Sophia’s room.

If I stayed here, I am going to get beat up by the guards. It’s bad for the current situation.

As I was about to quicken my footstep as I thought that, I was called out by an unknown man.

“Please wait.”

“.....May I inquire who are you?”

The words that float to me was “butler”. Sharply worn black clothing, and a well combed-down golden hair. However, from the information that is displayed, this man is not a normal person.

His name is Bascal. His combat stats is over 90. The same as his magic power. There’s no way I would have missed him with his kind of capability. In other words, it’s someone that I have never met even though he was in the castle. He’s most likely a guard for an envoy.

Not a single envoy that have come to Veris have not returned. Because we have no idea which countries are our allies or our enemies. We can’t simply return the envoys that entered the country back to their countries. It seems that as the envoys themselves seem to understand the circumstances around it, they have not been complaining in that decision of Veris.

“I am the escort of Liasha Donahugh-sama, the envoy from the Empire of Aether. My name is Bascal. Liasha-sama have requested to be able to speak to you.”

Seems like the Empire of Aether have made their move. It looks like it was worth purposely trying to avoid contact. If the other side got tired of waiting, it's more advantageous for us in the negotiations.

However.

"I am really sorry, but I have work after this, is it okay even if it's during the night?"

"I am ordered to seek your presence as soon as possible."

"Even if you tell me that, I was told to refrain from communicating with the envoys on an individual level and I have to also work hard in the absence of Her Majesty. However, is it of an important matter?"

After I firmly replied, Bascal kept silent slightly and gradually made his statement.

"As it is regarding the survival of Veris, please do meet her at once."

"What a serious matter. In that case, let's see. Once there's a break in my work, I shall visit your side. Is that fine with you?"

When asking for the time of visitation, the other side should be prepared to match us. Since we got the initiative, they wish to negotiate at our preferred timing.

"....I understand. However, please do come by noon."

"I shall do my best."

Saying that, I bowed, and I advanced towards the office that was prepared for me.



“Ren”

“Yep, yep. As Danna said, they started moving.”

“Yeah. Since we will be negotiating in the envoy’s room, standby around that area.”

“Roger that!”

I was talking to Ren who did not show her appearance. I guess it’s just her mood that she didn’t came out. I quickly ended the conversation to prevent the fact that Ren was by my side to be exposed to the other side., if we took too long.

Their side also has a spy on the same level as Ren. I am moving under that assumption.

The envoys aren’t here to deepen the relations with Veris. They should be here to investigate the secrets and also military affairs. Very likely, every envoy has brought in one more spies in.

While Sophia used magic, Kaguya-sama used her sharpened senses and confirmed a few spies. And maybe the spies realized it, when Kaguya-sama and Sophia are by my side, they wouldn’t approach. But it’s different this time.

To request for a visitation when I am alone should mean that I am to come alone. To bring anyone might result in the negotiations in failure.

The envoy of the Empire of Aether, Liasha Donahugh, is the niece of the king of the Empire. Her father is the younger brother of the king and is the superior admiral that unify the navy. Unlike his elder brother, he is sharp and due to this excellence, he was ostracised by the previous king and was called the person that couldn’t be king.

For such a person’s niece to come to Veris, it shouldn’t be something as

simple as deepening ties. And to move at this time.. Nah. It should be “To not move until now”, I guess.

“Do the Empire have intentions to forge friendly ties....”

It was confirmed that it is imminent the small countries alliance are forming up an official alliance army near the borders of Veris the day before. The initial attack was explained as an arbitrary decision made by the unit commander, but I doubt it's the same this time.

The trigger was Bayd's thinning of the borders' defence. It's likely Stratos's behind-the-scene actions that causes the state of affairs to move. And then, due to not being able to stop the momentum of the affairs, the alliance received support from Albion and is trying to attack Veris.

If I were the one writing the script for this situation, it would be time to bring in the Empire of Aether or the Dominion of Imperieuse as allies. Getting any of them who holds strong navy forces, they can attack in a pincer attack. Then, by implying an attack on the other country, they can stop their movement.

Veris would really like to request aid from the Commonwealth of Lucrum in the North to defend that and attack Albion in the rear but they have been getting small skirmishes from the island since 30 years ago and their sea route has been pretty much sealed by the island's ships. Due to that, as Albion has been sending goods to the Commonwealth via the land route, they are Albion's most deeply tied countries within the 4 big countries. Either penetrate through the island's ship encirclement or penetrate through Albion, but even if we could send down an envoy, the chances of them joining in the fight on Veris's side is low.

Though we sent out an invitation to deepen ties, the one that came was a low-ranked official who also only came to greet and returned immediately. Because of that, they managed to get out of Veris but I was thinking that rather than coincidence, he might already knew that Albion is sending the alliance to attack.

With that, the only one Veris can request for aid is the island but there are almost no exchange and Veris caused a very problematic situation in the island.

Kaguya-sama's mother was an inhabitant of the island and having come into Veris by chance, she was abducted by the ex-king. Towards the island's bitter objections, Veris showed response of ignorance and after a few years, Kaguya-sama's mother died from sickness and it was explained that she was taken as a prisoner by bandits and when they arrived they were too late, when they returned her body to the island.

It might be possible to cover it up with just that, but a blacked-hair and black-eyed princess, that was Kaguya-sama was born which can only be possible by a person from the island. To some extent, if you have enough imagination, they should be able to notice what the ex-king has kidnapped Kaguya-sama's mother.

After that, the island and Veris has little to no communication, and once in a while, visitors might come in by boat but they just come and go.

Requesting for assistance from the island might result in getting attack instead. That's why we won't be requesting help from the island in this situation. Unless we get back to an even state of war at the very least, they will attack us without question.

"But we are really surrounded."

Murmuring that, I looked at the paper that shows the whole continent which I showed Kaguya-sama.

Though the Empire of Aether and Dominion of Imperieuse do not carry much animosity to Veris, we aren't really close too. They wouldn't think about joining Veris in this unfavourable situation. Even if there are some, they are few.

At the point when Veris triggered Albion, we are already in a bad spot. Even after the ex-king fell, and Kaguya-sama took over the throne, there was no change in Albion's thoughts towards Veris. And Veris that is hurt from the civil war is nothing more than appearance right now.

Bayd realized that but even then, was trying to drag the whole continent into the fight but it wouldn't make it in time. The encirclement should be almost completed. Since before I came here. At the point where the ex-king's reckless actions were not stopped, Veris is pretty much at its limits.

To reverse this situation is difficult.

“Well, making complaints doesn't help the situation after all.”

Since I have already decided to fight for Veris, I can only do it no matter how difficult it is.

Muttering that in my heart, I left the office, and approached the room, Aether's envoy had prepared.



This is the first time I am seeing silver hair. It's different from Erica's platinum blonde. Pure Silver. It's so transparent I felt as if I could see myself like in a mirror.

The person in front of me is Liasha Donahugh. Covered in black gothic dress, she was sitting on the chair while looking at me as if appraising me.

Though her combat capability is below 50s from the status screen, her wisdom is over 100 and magic power is shown to have an extreme stats in the 90s. She is the type that shows her strength as a strategist or commander leading from the rear. Thinking that she's only 14, this numbers are even more shocking. That's because it means that those numbers can still grow.

Slanted red eyes with the silver hair. Her face that still holds a slight childish look, has a bright future to look forward to in years to come. Her charm as a lady is dispensing, but in regards to just beauty, at this point, Sophia and Kaguya-sama wouldn't lose to her. Well, towards not winning, I doubt Liasha Donahugh would be satisfied though. For some reason, I feel like she doesn't

like losing. This person.

Proud. That was my first impression of Liasha Donahugh. In actual fact, she is distinguished so there's no problem, but it just feels that she has a self-important attitude.

After thinking about it, I realized I have not introduced myself, so I kneel on a single knee and greet.

"It's nice to meet you for the first time. I am Yukito Kurei. Princess Laisha, your Highness."

"It's not my first though?"

Slightly lifting her corners of her mouth, Her Highness, Liasha, laughed. As expected, her way of speech is self-important.

"Please excuse my impoliteness. But for someone like your Highness, I believe I won't forget you after having seen you though?"

"I am the only one. I saw you when you entered the party. You seem to be only concerned of the Dark Princess, and did not notice me."

Though I would put in a bitter smile to those words mixed with slight teasing, seriously, please refrain from such teasing in such places, plus it's in front of people who I just knew. I am troubled with what to react.

"Now that's a regretful thing. It's a real pity to not have seen your Highness's dress appearance."

"How honest. Seeing you that are being waited on by the Celsus Maiden and the Dark Princess, you wouldn't be charmed by me, would you?"

I am seriously not waited on. I murmured that in my heart. And I changed my thoughts a bit. Recently, people who knew about Kaguya-sama, Sophia and I being together are limited. It's not something that the envoys that are being restricted in the capital should know.

I guess they definitely brought in spies.

“‘Waited on’, I am the one serving them.”

“As her teacher, she wouldn't oppose you and I heard that the Celsus Maiden made tea for you, you know?”

She really do know a lot. She isn't even hiding the fact that those were information gathered by the spies. Either she has confidence that those spies can't be found or she isn't bothered about being pressed for an answer. Well, no matter which is it, she knows that those were just trivial matters.

“Is this necessary for the upcoming talks?”

“It's necessary if you are talking about whether it's essential. You do not want to lose your precious king, right?”

The atmosphere changed. The one that changed was Her Highness, Liasha. I can feel a sense of pressure that seems to squeeze the heart. In a situation like this, you can't stand up even if you want.

Her eyes looking down at me who sat down on a chair was sharp. Just looking at her eyes is suffocating.

“...what do you mean?”

“Veris is pretty much surrounded. You should know that best, isn't it? And also to break through that, it's necessary that you acquire our cooperation, the Empire of Aether.”

“...it's as you said.”

“Then, let’s enter the main subject, Yukito Kurei. Right now, there’s Aether’s best fleet at the coast of Veris. Prepared to move at any time.”

Unconcernedly, the contents that seem natural to be spoken of was to let me know that the Death Reaper’s sickle is coming down on Veris.

“Are you saying you will be on the side of Albion?”

“That depends on your answer. If Veris is willing to be our vassal nation, then the fleet shall destroy the Dominion’s fleet coming in a few days time. However, if you reject...”

Your king at Earl Uren’s territory shall turn into a wasteland.

What’s on Her Highness, Liasha’s face was a smile. What a terrifying person. This is not even a threat. This was just her giving a choice. Moreover, to me.

“I do not have such authority....”

“No, you have. If you assent, the Dark Princess would not reject. And even if there are objections, you are capable of disposing them, right?”

After carelessly making comments like that, Liasha rushed for my answer by asking me, “So what’s your answer?”, while still floating that smile on her face.

“There are no reinforcements, you know? I also do know that the Celsus Maiden had caught a flu yesterday. Even if she heard this conversation, she wouldn’t be able to come. It’s the same as the spy outside.. As long as my spies are here, it’s impossible for anyone to enter.”

“I believe that’s the case. Sophia and Ren wouldn’t be able to enter. Especially Sophia.”

Saying that, I looked outside the room. It's a weather that is appropriate to be called fair.

While looking at that, I grinned broadly and informed Her Highness, Liasha.
(TL: Okay that's it. I am changing 殿下 Denka from the english version of His/Her Highness, to use the romanji version. To some extent, it's actually used like dono and sama, but usually for royalties.)

"However, do you know? A storm suddenly occurred at the coast of Veris. Isn't the storm the natural enemy for ships?"

"What? I did not hear of such...!?"

It seems that she finally realized what my words meant.

It's impossible for a storm to occur suddenly. Unless something man-made was done, that's right, something like wind was blown.

"Impossible! Isn't the Celsus Maiden and her escorts still in the castle!? You should have checked her condition this morning!"

"She's like the wind. Having the habit of leaving her escorts behind and going someway on her own, it's troubling. After I verified, her room this morning was also an empty husk. Though I hid that fact as it will cause an uproar. Now then, I wonder where did she go? Since she can move at high speeds with the wind, if she went out by night time, she might have linked up with Kaguya-sama. Really."

What a troublesome person.

Saying that, I looked up at Liasha and gradually stood up.

Part 5

Though Liasha-denka placed more effort into discerning me, I have already seen Denka's hand. And she also understands that the hand is unable to win against me. While fear is necessary, it's also important to inquire in a more cautious manner. This is the time to take back the initiative.

"The 1st fleet should be the fleet of the 'Child of the Tiger'. I believe it's bad if they met a storm here, isn't it?"

"...it doesn't seem to be a lie."

Narrowing her eyes, she murmured that. Perhaps, it would have been seen through if it's a lie. Well, since we are already predicting an attack coming from the coasts, I wouldn't do something wasteful like leaving Sophia in the castle though.

"When did you foresee it?"

"It's not that I foresee it. I just assumed the worst scenario."

The worst situation for Veris right now is in the case when the Empire, the Dominion or both of them are already an enemy. If it gets to that, it's more difficult to receive attack from 2 countries coming in from the coast than receiving a land attack from 3 countries receiving aid from Albion. That's why I have sent Kaguya-sama to the coastal area. and matching it, I am also gradually sending units that were crammed into various castles to the coastal area.

And I made Sophia, the trump card, be behind the scenes and the defence for the coastal area is now complete. As long as it's on the surface of the sea, the ships would be affected by wind and waves. Sophia, the strongest wind

magician, can create winds of absurd level. Even if they are able to penetrate through that and reach the shore, Kaguya-sama would repel them. This is the measure thought of to counter the 2 big countries.

Though it's a plan made totally dependent on individual qualities, since we have lost in terms of numbers, we can only outdo them with quality. Though if we even lose on quality, we would have no room for recovery, we can only give up on that point. It's no longer a problem that can solve with a strategy.

"So you move, assuming an attack from the alliance of the Empire and Dominion.... You believed that the escorts of us and the dominion would move, isn't it?"

"Let's see. If you did not move, I will just throw you into the prison and if you do, I will just negotiate as it is. Be it Liasha-denka or the escort from the Dominion, your statuses are high. I believe you wouldn't not be informed of anything, so I thought that you would make some movement."

Leaving the envoy in the enemy's territory while attacking would usually result in he/she being executed or thrown in jail. If the invasion is decided beforehand or even having that possibility, the envoy should have been informed already. Especially someone with high status. Of course, by making use of that mentality, we can assume the attack coming, and preparing it such that it's fine for them to attack prior to the invasion.

"So to make the Celsus Maiden who doesn't need her escorts attached to her all the time, was to make the impression that as long as the escorts are there, she's there as well. To think I made a mistake like that."

"When a smart or strong person fails, one of the factor is definitely negligence. That's why I made much effort to make you have the wrong impression this time. It's good that it works well."

Actually, Sophia is not in the room.

If this is a place free to move around, then Liasha-denka shouldn't have fall for such a basic trick. But his is the royal castle of Veris. No matter how skilled their spies are, the information they can gain is limited. In that situation, they wouldn't verify matters that they are firm of. And just as I thought, Liasha-denka did not put all efforts to check if Sophia was really in the room.

“Who would have think that the Celsus Maiden that left by your side would go out of the castle. Thinking that you were being cautious, you would have left her by your side, wouldn't it?”

From the outside, it definitely looks like I am being cautious.

Sophia is a person from another country and is a magician that is capable of picking up sounds from far. Having such a person in the castle is nothing less than dangerous. That's why I left her on my side. That's how Liasha-denka concluded.

Well, if you were to ask me, I can't say no totally. In regards to the voices, I can only give up. As long as I can't find out whether we are being bugged, it's endless to try to counter it. However, in regards to written materials, we can add some improvise to it. First, important undone materials are to be in Kaguya-sama's room. And within them, the important ones will be handled by me. It won't stop Sophia if she gets serious to investigate the insides of Veris at this level but in that sense, she have my trust.

People in the castle, or more like Bayd and Dio-sama as well, would not pass over important documents to Kaguya-sama if they know Sophia is in Kaguya-sama's room. Actually, as we wanted time for study, we were anticipating the effect on this. In actual fact, since Sophia started helping, Kaguya-sama's work has reduced. Bayd and Dio-sama has likely adjusted it.

It's not weird for people outside to think that Kaguya-sama and I left Sophia on our side due to that, because they did not know our circumstances. It's just weird, and as it's doubtful that everyone thinks that way, I didn't really count

on it.

And that has proved to help turning the tides on Liasha-denka to a good direction.

“I wonder. Just that, Sophia is assisting us assertively, without doubt. That’s enough power to turn over Albion’s capability.”

“I see. So you mean you can deal with Albion any time? And then, right now there is another troublesome thing.”

“Yes. They are the Empire and the Dominion. Whoever would become our ally, we would be able to turn around the force that were initially planned on the coastal region.”

Saying that, I looked at Liasha-denka suggestively.

Pondering for a bit, she returned my glance with eyes filled with resolution.

And

“Very well! That role I shal...”

“I am thinking of discussing it with the Dominion.”

Liasha-denka’s face stoned. And her expression with composure previously was lost, lifted her brows and Stood up from her chair.

She glared at me and voiced out from a position where it’s dubious whether she can reach my chest.

“Are you making a fool out of me!?”

“Of course not. Just that, if I think about it calmly, I believe it’s better to cooperate with the Dominion.”

As I said that, Liasha-denka further lifted her brows. Her beautiful face is already a waste. Approaching me as if to bite me, Liasha-denka commented.

“What do you mean?”

“The Dominion’s forces is split into 3. The navy, the army and the magy. All three forces are strong so they would even give Veris’s elites a tough battle. On the other hand, though the Empire do have the strongest navy, the rest of their forces has the lowest proficiency. It’s true that Veris wishes to ally with the Empire’s navy but if we support the Dominion appropriately, they should be able to win even the navy of the Empire. Especially with Sophia around. And the Empire with that navy defeated will have no tomorrow. So who should we cooperate with, you should know that by now, don’t you?” (TL: Naval=navy, armed forces = army, so mage = magy. Please comment if you have a better idea.)

After giving a thorough explanation, I lightly pushed Liasha-denka’s shoulder to separate her from me. There’s no deep meaning in it. It’s just that her face was so close I am getting slightly embarrassed.

“...but, the Dominion should be allying with Albion. We, the Empire, were invited like that.

“It should be to the extent of attacking the coastal waters of Veris as well. If they know that Sophia is here and that preparations has been done, their thoughts should change. Rather than Veris’s land, the lands of Albion are more attractive. And, the Dominion have the power to do that.”

Even if they end up attacking the Empire’s navy upfront, the Dominion should ally with us if we promised them with Veris’s assistance and Sophia’s support.

Of course, that’s if the Dominion is to become our allies.

“...then what should the Empire do....?”

“I would advise that you think about it yourself. However, isn't time sparse? Even if you tried your best, you would still take 6 days to reach the coastal area. By the time Liasha reached, wouldn't the 1st Fleet have already started their attack?”

“Gu.....”

Liasha-denka bit her lips in regret. The act of negotiating at a tight schedule resulted in a backfire. They did not suspect their dominant position after all. Everyone thought that Veris is in a bad situation and though the truth is not wrong, if it's just facing the Empire alone, we can do it no matter how many times. And as long as the Dominion's navy does not come in with the Empire's, there's no problem.

Instead, it might be better for negotiation if we took out the Empire's navy. And we can point out to them that Sophia is actively assisting Veris and the fact that Veris is still a strong country.

“Liasha-denka. As I have duties on-hand, I shall excuse myself.”

“W, wait a moment!”

Liasha-denka grabbed my hems of my clothing. There isn't much Liasha-denka can do at this point. She no longer have the rights to decide after all. No matter what conditions were put out, there will be no firm promises. And I have no thoughts of accepting it.

Though the method from now on will be quite violent, it would be quite a forceful plan like taking me as a hostage of sorts and slipping out of the castle . So, I looked at Liasha-denka's eyes and after understanding her thoughts of doing exactly that, I informed.

“I believe it's best that you do not make any move. The escorts outside have

been suppressed.”

“what...?”

“The spies shouldn’t be able to approach. Because in the surroundings, ”

There are 5 of Nox members.

In that instant, Liasha-denka’s hands lost her strength. While she should have known of Nox’s previous war records, Ars and Erica are people who were well-known personally. To fight them is just reckless no matter what.

And sorry about that, but it’s not a lie. I have request beforehand for Ren to to call out to them. I won’t request Ren for such rough matters. This is to ensure that I do not lose Ren’s trust.

“Do you have anything that you wish to say?”

“....what is your wish? You have a demand after all, don’t you?”

Though it’s still possible to try to refuse her purposely, I do not have the interest to torment a younger female and even more so that I will also be troubled if she despaired from being cornered.

So this is the turning point.

“Yes. A very simple one.”

“....what.....?”

Slightly, Liasha-denka’s eyes wavered. Having her absolute dominant position taken, her safety is at my discretion.

Well, it’s not like I planned to do anything to her.

“Since Albion had gotten in touch with you, then the Dominion should have been contacted as well?”

“Of course. As there is the possibility of cooperation, contact has been made secret.”

“That is even in this castle?”

She kept silent. She likely understands what is it that I want. Pondering whether it's okay to say it so easily.

However.

“Denka. I dislike doing things like the ex-king, you know?”

Liasha-denka instantly twitched her body in shock and took a distance of a few steps. Though her eyes were as if looking at a beast, I couldn't really care at this time.

“... I do not believe you were a person who would do that though...?”

“If necessary, I will do anything. Towards people of other nations, and especially to those that threatens. In the basement of the castle, there are many weird drugs and tools stored here that were gathered by the ex-king. Though I am troubled on the disposal of these items, to check their effect is also a plan.”

Just like that, thinking of the ex-king, I tried floating a smile.

It seems to have quite an effect. Losing strength in her legs, she ended up sitting on her chair.

“Denka. Please answer the question.”

As I say it with a slightly stronger tone, Liasha-denka started to speak gradually.

“...we have contact with the Dominion’s envoy. But the other party does not know about the details. He seems to be only told to escape if the matter of the invasion was found out.”

“The envoy of the Dominion should be the 4th Imperial Prince.....Are they using him as a sacrificial pawn?”

“Most likely. So it’s impossible for you to negotiate with the Dominion through the envoy, you know?”

“No, it’s enough that you told me that. The fight within the Dominion itself is also quite intense. There’s plenty of chances to take advantage of it.”

If the 4th Imperial Prince is to be abandoned, a ripple of some extent is going to be caused in the internal of the Dominion. There might be people of a faction that will use that as a trigger to show movements of attack in regards to it. In that situation, they are no longer in a state for war. Though the Dominion has one of most lands of the 5 big countries, if because of that, they lost their footing, they will take time to recover.

“But, an information to this extent is insufficient to cooperate with the Empire though.”

“What!? You! I have already honestly told you our relations with the Dominion, haven’t I!?”

From that reaction, she doesn’t seem to be lying. Her reaction is too honest. What a simpleton. Well, if this is the castle of the Empire, the position would have changed though.

This is my home town. With lots of comrades. I would not lose to an opponent whose movement and information were restricted.

I only have one more thing I wish to know.

“Now here’s the last question. Depending on the answer, I might be unable to guarantee your safety.”

“....”

“The Empire’s navy, is your father the one leading the 1st Fleet?”

Maybe due to how unexpected that question was, Liasha-denka blinked her eyes a few times before nodding.

Part 6

In front of me is a tall man with shoulder-length silver hair. His age seems to be from the late 20s to the early 30s. His actual age should be surely around that range.

The name of this man is Arnold Donahugh. The Supreme Admiral of Empire of Aether and my enemy.

After the conversation with Liasha-denka, I quickly head towards Earl Uren's territory with Roy as my escort. Using the advantage of small numbers, I managed to reach the territory around 6 days and sent an envoy to demand the admiral's lone presence in exchange for the return of his daughter, Imperial Princess Liasha to the 1st Fleet that started filling up at the coast.

As I was watching out on how he would respond due to his rumors of being a sharp brother of the king, he came alone. And he was also alone as requested.

Though I did think of the possibility of him coming, I didn't expect he would really come. It's to the point that I thought if it was due to his cute daughter, but his eyes was on not Liasha-denka. It was me.

He acknowledged me as his enemy and have come here to fight. To fight with our best weapon.

The statistics shown on the status screen are all high. His combat ability is within the 90s. His wisdom is over 130 and magic power were over 100.

It was handed down that the first king's of all the big countries other than Albion, were of the Ancient Races. So maybe due to that, those who have the blood of the royalty have status that easily overshoots 100, which is rarely the case. As of now, those who overshoots the 100 bar are pretty much royalties. Maybe it's really due to the Ancient Race's blood. The exceptions are few and within those, though one is Sophia, including herself, they are the exceptions of exceptions. In regards to Sophia, her existence is even more precious than Ancient Races, so she can't be a representative of average humans though.

Well, this topic is currently unnecessary. The problem is a person with higher wisdom than me challenged me to an intellectual war.

Admiral Arnold sat down on the chair facing me and on my side are Sophia and Kaguya-sama with me sat down. Even then, he doesn't shift his sights from me.

What a troublesome person to be eyed by. Though it's my own fault. After all, I took his daughter as hostage. But as a person that leads the 1st Fleet, he should have already expected the current situation. The fact that Liasha-denka will be taken hostage and be dragged out for a negotiation. Nah, it could be more like he's the one who directed it or aimed for such a situation. The Empire's aim should be not by force, but by negotiations after all.

Though it's unknown of how far the 1st Fleet's ability led by Admiral Arnold, it's almost definite that it won't be easy to win. And Admiral Arnold wouldn't make the foolish decision of taking the Veris's army alone. Without cooperation, they should make us fight the Dominion and when we are exhausted, they would then come in for the finish.

As long as the highest authority of the navy is here, it's possible to react to any situations on the frontlines. That also, at the same time, means that the situation discussed with Liasha-denka would not happen.

The state of affairs has returned to its starting point. No, I should say it has not changed. Even though it moved a little, the Empire and Veris have not made any visible move yet. Matching the movement of the opponent, and changing the formation, but no attack has been made. That's because the first that moved would be on the disadvantage. And since we do not want to move first, we are baiting the opponent to make the first move but here comes Admiral Arnold with a smile.

What a dangerous person. Right now, Liasha-denka is being placed on standby on the next room. And on our side, we have two trump cards in the form of Kaguya-sama and Sophia. Even then, this person doesn't extinguish his smile.

"I am Arnold Donahugh. Pleasant to meet you. The Strategist of Arkwright."

“I am Yukito Kurei. Your Excellency. I wish to be named as The Strategist of Veris right now. So please do call me by that from now on.”

“The strategist of Veris, you say.... Were you no longer satisfied with being under Diorood-dono? Or were you being considerate towards Kaguya-heika?”
(TL: From now on I will translate it like this for honorifics. Example: Heika means his/her majesty and I will translate it like this if referring to it as a noun itself, but when it's used as a honorific like in Kaguya's case here, I shall use the romanji version of it.)

“I shall leave it to your imagination.”

Before Kaguya-sama make any reaction, I replied in an instant.

After showing me her slight discontent, she introduced herself and Admiral Arnold bowed in reply. He doesn't seem interested in her reaction as he doesn't give any signs of saying anything further.

Though that said, that's not the end. From now on, I will have to consider Admiral Arnold trying to fluster Kaguya-sama and Sophia. That's likely something to convey that that's just a light jab, I guess.

I have requested Kaguya-sama and Sophia to leave this to me. Likely, unless something quite serious, both of them shouldn't be making unsafe comments. Though I asked them to keep up their appearances, this should be difficult for the honest and clumsy Kaguya-sama. Her reactions will definitely leak to people who can understand them.

Even right now, her brows is slightly shifted and her fist is slightly strengthened. Though I do not have the composure to understand what reason would make her that way to this extent, she is definitely not in a good mood. Nevertheless, I still need her to keep quiet.

“Umu. Then I shall just speculate at my discretion. Including the matter of the Celsus Maiden as well.”

“Allow me to introduce myself. I am Sophia Lisbert, Donahugh-kakka. It's a

pleasure to meet you.”

“She’s a lot more mature than Kaguya, Her Majesty it seems.”

“I wonder? If you are talking about maturity, your Excellency’s words feels like a kid.”

Towards the harsh comment and extraordinary smile that Sophia has made, Admiral Arnold replied with a even more deep smile. A smile that I can’t understand his thoughts from.

“Since the introductions is completed, shall we start our negotiations.”

“True. I am also a parent. I am worried about my daughter.”

There’s no sign of that on his face. His attachment to his daughter is so different to some ex-king I know. Both are on the extreme sides, though I am not sure if his daughter is happy.

“She’s fine. She’s in the room beside us. As we are somewhat in the middle of a war, she’s under our custody. The soldiers seems to have misunderstood that the Empire has attacked so including the intention of letting them understand, we have requested for your Excellency to come alone. This should allow the soldiers to feel at ease. After all, there are no high-ranked officer that enters the enemy castle alone to attack.”

Admiral Arnold doesn’t break his smile from my shameless chatter. No, since it changed from a gentle smile to a fearless one, I guess I should take that as a change?

“Though I could be that very first person to do it?”

“What a joke. Do your Excellency think you can win a war against Veris?”

As I replied with a slightly provocative comment, he thickened his fearless smile and placed his elbows on the table and supported his jaw on top of his linked hands.

“Our navy is the world strongest. I do not think that Veris’s navy could compare to us in regards to quality and quantity though?”

“As you have said. ‘Do you think you can win a war against Veris?’ was what I asked. Veris definitely do not have a strong navy. We do not have a war in the sea for a very long time and the navy were pretty much only in name. However, we do not have the strongest soldiers with Kaguya-heika as the core. You wouldn’t not know, would you?”

“Of course. Veris’s soldiers are rumored to be the continent’s strongest. They are a country that spends their time having wars after all.”

“Exactly. Unlike the Empire that enjoy their peace, we, Veris, have many enemies so without any choice, we picked up our weapons.”

His words on Veris doing nothing but battle is sarcasm towards us being battle junkies and creating useless wars. And in regards to my words of them enjoying their peace is also sarcasm towards them being weak and also a country that is only strong in their navy.

I slightly aligned my sights with Admiral Arnold after getting into a situation of throwing sarcasm at each other. It’s that we are glaring at each other. We were just trying to read each other’s thoughts. And I couldn’t. Most likely it’s the same for the other side.

The ending of this negotiation should be what conditions to have the alliance formed. If we face each other, both countries have no future. Even for the Empire’s Child of the Tiger, 1st fleet that would be safe when on the sea, but once they come ashore, they will definitely take some casualties against our defence. And that’s something very critical to the Empire. Conversely, even for Veris, and even upon taking the possibility of grouping up with the Dominion to

take on the Empire, we will lose the coastal area and have the flow of logistics and soldier transport hindered, so we will end up losing the war.

After acquiring Veris, the Dominion and Albion will determine to target the Empire. It's just a problem with sequence.

And both countries that are cornered, understand that it's the best for both countries to ally each other and repelled the enemy. After all, Admiral Arnold with the highest authority and I comprehend the situation.

Here, both countries' honour and Admiral Arnold's and my greed started coming out. Both are hoping to be in a superior position than the other. That's of course. Though allies, we are still enemies that are trying to survive this ordeal. If we are not in the superior position, it will be troubling when the alliance ends.

And depending on who holds the initiative, the other countries' viewpoint will change. Especially, the Dominion that is going to side with Albion will change. If they see that this alliance is advantageous, the Dominion will desert Albion. But, the one negotiating with the Dominion at that time would be the one who stand at the top of the alliance.

That's why the more you think of the future, we have to take the upper hand right now. And this is also for the pride of the country.

Perhaps both Admiral Arnold and I couldn't be bothered with the negotiations with the Dominion. What we can get by being the one to negotiate with the Dominion are just mild amount of reinforcements and also honour. We were thinking of something else. No, at the very least, I am.

That is.

"Though Veris who picked up their weapons are strong, we are tired from long battles. We have also made sacrifices from the previous civil war. To be truthful, Veris is being stretched thin from the fight with the alliance from the small countries and Albion who is orchestrating this."

"I see. But to be frank too, the only ones with actual experiences are only the 1st Fleet from pirate hunting, and the other soldiers, due to the continuous

peace, are weak. Just like what Strategist-dono has said, we are in a situation where it's not possible to fight against big countries."

The most important point is to not lose as much as soldiers as possible. Or how much we can shave the opponent's number while protecting ours.

The Dominion's navy will definitely come. For Veris, we would like the Empire to take them. However, the Empire would not want the Child of Tiger's 1st Fleet's number to exhaust. Frankly speaking, they would really want the 1st Fleet to pull back. After all, the fleet is required for national defence. If they exhaust at a place like this, the country would become unprotected.

Veris that wants the Empire to face off with the Dominion. The Empire that wants to stay as a spectator and hold the condition to be not attack by Veris. Drawn to such a situation for both countries, Admiral Arnold and I are trying to trick each other into making one step into the anticipated scenario that the other is thinking of

"Our Empire has few commanders, and as a matter of fact, the 1st Fleet wouldn't function without me. "

"How funny. Even after leaving the fleet, the 1st Fleet moved in ranks without a single disorder. That's the ability of the world's strongest navy. Please do show me the strength of it. "

"Hahahaha. It seems that Strategist-dono is good with his words. However, didn't Strategist-dono mention it just now? Our Empire has little experience of war from the long years. When enemies are around, the soldiers' movement will dull from fear, confusion and anxiety. As there are no enemies now, they could move as according to training. This is why we wish to show this as an the evidence that we do not see Veris as an enemy."

Even though we behaved modestly and flatter, Admiral Arnold made no reaction. Even though I thought by asking them to show their boasted power of their navy, they would move, he doesn't have any openings as expected.

Though I am regretting with heartburn for not attacking at the start, I reminisced that even if I say something like wanting them to be our shield, he would be able to evade that even then. At that point, with the same meaning of having our intentions spoken, we will have to make a commitment. After he evaded that, the situation would be disadvantageous.

“We do not doubt the Empire. Just that, Veris has many enemies. Right now, though supposedly confidential information, the Dominion’s navy seems to be enclosing this position. We do not have the navy to counter them.”

“What are you saying? If it’s Kaguya-heika that leads the elites of Veris, they should be repelled easily. After all, you can do the same to us after all.”

Having said that, he grinned and struck both his hands in a grand way.

He moved. The moment I thought that, Admiral Arnold said something unexpected.

“However, we would not stay silent for the Empire’s beloved Veris to be stepped upon too. Under some conditions, do allow our famed world strongest navy to rout the Dominion.”

“That’s truly thankful. So what’s those conditions?”

In addition to Liasha-denka’s safety, we also have the know-how to temper soldiers.

New tactics using Nox’s independent system and magic arts. All these can be materials for the negotiations.

If it’s bargaining, we have the advantage. As if what I thought was clear as day, Admiral Arnold made a statement.

“It’s the assurance that your side would not betray us. Of course, one that

would accompany us. Simply a hostage. From the Empire, my daughter, Liasha, will be left in Veris as it is. In return, we would like a royalty to accompany us.”

Admiral Arnold’s expression turned rather delightful after making that statement.

There’s only 2 royalties that could move for Veris immediately. Kaguya-sama or Dio-sama. Kaguya-sama is the king. It’s not possible for her to become one. However, to let go of Dio-sama right now, it’s also not possible for Veris. We won’t be able to maintain ourselves. Both of Dio-sama’s sisters are now in the Dominion after they were released by the pro-Veris faction of the Dominion. It’s impossible for them to be recalled at this situation. Even then, we can’t present a fake royalty too. The other side has presented the daughter of the supreme commander. If we do not answer with sincerity, we have no idea what kind of bad reputation we might get.

“However, Diorood-denka seems to have an important role for the country. So we shall compromise in regards to that. A person that does not hold an important post but as important as a royalty.”

Saying that, Admiral Arnold pointed at me, smiling.

“That is you. Strategist of Veris.”

And he stated that.

Part 7

“Objected”

“I shall object that.”

We were tricked. At the moment I thought of that, Kaguya-sama and Sophia on my left and right made such statements. Just that, with that, they will drag the conversation further. At this rate, we might end up making a big promise we have to commit later.

Though that said, it's difficult to stop both of them who are furious from that joking request. Both of them have lost their composure in an instant. It's going to take some time to have them calm down or to calm them down. During this period, Admiral Arnold will definitely make the next move.

But, I wonder if it's okay for them even if it end up in war. As long as Sophia and Kaguya-sama are here, it's not difficult to defeat the Empire's navy with the current military strength. Of course, though it will make the fight with the waiting Dominion difficult, I do not think the Empire's 1st Fleet have any reason to sacrifice themselves to support the Dominion.

Admiral Arnold smiled and replied Sophia and Kaguya-sama.

“Then War?”

“Of course.”

“War is impossible.”

As Kaguya-sama was about to nod to Admiral Arnold's words on impulse, I interrupted her at the best timing as silently as I can.

Though it's fine for Veris to fight the Empire, it's the Empire that can't have

that happen. That's what I thought but I might have to re-think that. From the conversation till now, Admiral Arnold doesn't seem to show any hesitations on going to war.

Though it might be a bluff, I do not have the means to expose that. I have not learnt how to read the thoughts of the other party from their faces yet.

Since I can't predict, I can only try to anticipate in my own way with the information I can acquire. For that, in the current situation I will need to sort out the information but I wasn't given the leisure to do that.

"Then you will accept the hostage demand?"

"Please don't joke around. Even though the hostage is your Excellency's daughter, Liasha-denka, Liasha-denka does not hold an important position as the Empire's pivot. I do not hold one as well but, I am currently sitting here, negotiating with you. Though it's weird to say it myself, I am quite an important existence in the country."

"That's true. However, Liasha is also considered one of the indispensable person in the country. She's the captain of the newly released warship model that just commissioned the other day. She's also entrusted with the independent fleet's command. Is that insufficient nonetheless?"

How shameless. It's fine for her to leave the country so she was sent as an envoy, isn't she? Even if you gave her a forced post, that fact would never change.

Liasha had already left the country for a month after all. And from seeing how easily he can nominate her as a hostage, I can understand slightly how Admiral Arnold evaluate Liasha-denka.

"I apologize but it's not enough."

"Fumu. In that case, is this the breakdown of the negotiations as expected?"

As expected, he's trying to go to war. Why. Even though it's their side that's going to take the largest casualties. Is there any plan to this? No, if they have a counter for Sophia's wind magic arts, they should have invaded at once. With just that, they would have routed us who are using Sophia's magic arts as the key point of the defence.

Are they stalling for time? Are they preparing something? Or are they waiting for something. Nah, in that case, they should have waited in the ocean. The other side has the initiative of attack. They should have no reason to stall for time.

I don't know. Why is this person trying to go to war? Could it be that he has no aim and just a battle junkie?

"Donahugh-denka. Since a while ago, you seems to have been speaking like you wanted war? Could it be that you wish to create unnecessary sacrifices?"

Maybe she's angry, Sophia made such a statement. Since the talk about hostages, her anger has been accumulating considerably, and I guess it's reaching its limits. Nominating his daughter easily might have also spurred on her anger as well.

"I do not wish to create sacrifices. But, if necessary, I will have to. Of course, with the smallest amount."

Saying that, the expression of Admiral Arnold looking at Sophia overlapped with Dio-sama's expression.

I guess saying that is overlapped is wrong. It should be it looks similar. When Dio-sama wants to do something, he would not waver when it's necessary. And after deciding it, he would give a expression showing his resolve. That's the same expression Admiral Arnold is showing.

That statement is likely his true thoughts. And if we use this to think about it,

it would contradict with his actions all this while.

The sacrifice of the 1st Fleet is not the smallest amount of sacrifice. And it's not something necessary. Then, why is he trying to bring war with the 1st Fleet that is supposed to be unnecessary.

Having reached that thought process, I recalled the conversation I had with Liasha-denka. At that time, under the presumption that she couldn't investigate due to her disadvantageous position, I stalled for time and made her think that Sophia is in her room. With that assumption, it led to her defeat.

If I were the one being done in, how would it be? The fact that I was already trapped before the negotiations.

Right now, there's a chance where I am standing at the edge of the cliff without knowing it. I might have been looking at only Admiral Arnold and not anything else.

I didn't doubt what I should have doubted. It's Liasha-denka's words. I wonder if Admiral Arnold really told Liasha-denka the truth. If he provided her with fake news, obviously, I, who thought it was true, were deceived.

Then, taking that what Liasha told me was a lie, then what's the lie? Though I can't deny that Liasha-denka is inexperienced, she is smart according to her status. It's going to take a bit to deceive her. Even if it's her father.

Also, after listening to it myself, I do not think Liasha-denka was lying. At the very least, Liasha-denka felt that it was the truth. That's why what she said were all true. And it was changed after that.

Peeking a look at Admiral Arnold, he's sitting with an air of composure. His smile is to prevent people from sensing his true intention. His words is to confuse and prevent analysis. And his provocative actions were to attract attention to himself.

So he doesn't want us to take notice of something? That's simple. It's the 1st Fleet. Nah, either it's a fleet that raised the flag of the 1st Fleet and decorated itself as one or a fleet where only the ship themselves comes from the 1st Fleet but everything inside it including the sailors were changed and different. Well, no matter which, Admiral Arnold doesn't want us to take notice of the 1st Fleet

that we thought it was in Veris's sea.

Telling Liasha-denka the truth and changing it afterwards. In that case, Liasha-denka would confess that information to Veris without suspecting it. And Veris that was under the impression that it was the truth, would request for negotiations, thinking that the fleet in the sea was the 1st Fleet. In actual fact, it ended up that way.

Towards Veris that thought that the Empire wouldn't want to hurt the 1st Fleet, Admiral Arnold would bring the situation to a fight and lose. Admiral Arnold can only make such moves in the case of a war. And Veris, having the trump card of Sophia expending her magic power would allow the invasion of the Dominion. Taking advantage of that, the Empire would either also attacked Veris or actually attacked the Dominion and save Veris, turning into a situation where the alliance would be made with them in the superior position. I believe that there are many other alternatives. After all, even if it ends up in war, the Empire's losses wouldn't be great this time. It was planned this way. By Admiral Arnold.

It's a plan that make used of Sophia's wind magic and also having the confidence to have the chance of escaping certainly. That's probably correct. If you know it's coming, you should be able to run away.

If we wanted to preserve Sophia's magic arts, they would attack and if Sophia's going to use her powers, he can escape even if he sacrificed the main fleet. There wouldn't be a problem if we can pinpoint the ship Admiral Arnold boarded, but I doubt he would allow us to detect him that easily.

Even if we use a large-scale magic and cause a storm, they should be capable of sense it beforehand. If not, he wouldn't be able to stay so calm. This person knows what is going to happen to his life that he can compose himself. And he has the confidence that as long as his life is fine, the Empire would be as well.

If he's assassinated, it would be taken as Veris assassinating the negotiation envoy and result in no other countries willing to entitle a negotiation front with Veris anymore. And Veris would be taken down by the other alliance. From Veris's perspective, we definitely can't do that.

But, if we allow him to just go, no matter what methods we use, he should be

able to escape. The ocean is like their backyard. Even if we give chase with our navy, we can't catch up with them.

In the end, whether the negotiation breaks down or was a success, it doesn't matter for Admiral Arnold. It's fine as it is if in the superior position, Dio-sama or I are being taken as hostage. If it doesn't work, we go to war and lose one of our trump card. While their side take minimum loss.

No matter which, it would only be the Empire's gain. And Veris's loss.

If it continues like this, that is.

"How about we end this facade? Your Excellency"

The talk about hostage was suggested by Admiral Arnold. And from then on, the initiative has been in Admiral Arnold's hand all this time. We have to move from now on to take it back.

"Facade...what a fitting phrase? "

"Totally. Though I totally didn't realize it until a while ago."

The instant I said it with a meaning that goes "You have been seen through", Admiral Arnold's slightly opened his eyes. Though it went back quickly, he is definitely surprised.

"I see. No wonder Lia wasn't a match for you. "

His atmosphere changed. Lia should refer to Liasha-denka. The words now felt close and with love.

His provocative smile turned into a gentle one and Kaguya-sam and Sophia who were tensed up from the change also changed their demeanor. Most likely

they felt lost at the sudden change.

Though I thought some form of acting was included, it seems to have been quite the serious act.

“Honestly, I am also tired. So let’s end this here for now.”

Saying that, Admiral Arnold rotated her shoulders tiringly and also supported his weight with the chair’s back slovenly.

“...if it continues like this, your Excellency would have won? Why did you react to my words and stopping lying to us?”

“That’s simple. You realized that you were deceived. Likely you wouldn’t be in line for the next negotiations. If you release some form of information to the Dominion, the Empire wouldn’t be able to create obligations from Veris. And the Empire would be on its path to ruin.”

“That’s what Veris could do at most.”

“Even that is a problem for the Empire. From the start, the Empire has no approach for survival, other than allying with the Veris. But without needing to ally with the Empire, Veris has the power to take on Dominion and Albion. A power the Empire doesn’t have. Before the start, the dominant position has been set. Any more tricks will only create a more inferior image, right?”

I can no longer see the previous appearance of Admiral Arnold who smiled powerlessly. I can’t think of them as the same person. It’s as if he aged for another 5 years.

But what he said was true. If it continued like this and acquired the displeasure of Kaguya-sama and Sophia, even if it’s okay now, it won’t go the same way the next time.

“Yukito. Would you explain this to me?”

If you looked at Kaguya-sama from the side, she's making a frowning expression. On the opposite, Sophia was making a puzzled expression. They are likely unable to understand the situation.

“Kaguya-heika. We, the Empire, have lead a fleet pretending to be the 1st Fleet to Veris. And even if this fleet is being annihilated by Veris, it would not become a big loss. After all, we have chosen personnels that would not be regrettable, even if lost.”

Admiral Arnold's back left the chair and started talking. But, maybe being a hunchback, his back has a slight bent to it.

“What!? Then are you saying that we have been under a misconception since the start...?”

“That's correct. So if they can negotiate to ally as a dominated side, then the alliance would be form. If not, initiate the war and reduce the numbers of Veris. Veris, having their numbers reduced would have a hard fight with the Dominion. At that point, the real 1st Fleet would ambushed and destroyed the Dominion attack, and bring the negotiations to a situation where Veris is obligated to the Dominion in the dominant position. That's the plan I have crafted.”

“Then in the form of having the dominant position. In the case we decide to agree to the matter of the hostage, what do you plan to do? Were you thinking of fighting the Dominion fleet with a incomplete fleet?”

“It's not necessary to win. Once we can form the alliance with dominance, there's no problem even if we were defeated against the Dominion's fleet. The 1st Fleet will soon arrive in Veris and attack the Dominion from the rear while they were preparing their land assault.”

No matter what situation it turned to, it doesn't matter even if we lose. The plan was made under such thoughts.

In Admiral Arnold's plan, victory is not important. And there's only one thing that has to be done no matter what. That is the safety of Admiral Arnold. If he can protect that, he can bring the result into a more favourable one.

From the appearance of answering Kaguya-sama's and Sophia's question, he seems undependable but what's changed is only the outside. He has not changed. A smart person is always a smart person.

"Strategist-dono. The facade is over. Where do you think this negotiations can be agreed upon?"

"Let's see. The Empire and Veris shall form an alliance upon a non-aggression pact and a promise of reinforcements when required. Towards the public, it will be that the negotiations have broke off and the Empire has retreated. That would be the best, I believe."

"And then the approaching Dominion fleet would be attacked from the rear by the 1st fleet, I see. If Sophia-sama create a storm, the Dominion fleet would be in great chaos. Annihilating them is easy. However, the Empire would be at risk."

If the Empire opposes Albion and the Dominion, obviously, they will be targetted. Ablion have not make their move yet. Their invasion is most likely definite.

"Yes. Towards preparation against Albion, allow Veris to assist. And in addition, we shall include the provision of techniques in that as well."

"In that case, the 1st Fleet shall be sent to include Veris in its defence space at all times. However, doesn't Veris have little leeway for military strength as well? Thinking of dealing with Albion, isn't it meaningless to send out a lesser group

of units too?”

If we allow the attack on the Empire by Albion, Veris’s coastals that will be protected by the Empire’s navy would retreat to its defence. In that case, Veris will be again taking a pincer attack and this time, for sure, it will be taking it singlehandedly.

To prevent that from happening, we have to send quite a powerful unit to the Empire. And the Veris right now is in no condition to send any reinforcements to fight Albion. In the main army that is.

There’s one unit that is being taken charged by Dio-sama as the supreme commander. And there’s few people who would question their abilities.

“Let’s see Nox as the reinforcements. Doing that, Albion wouldn’t be able to cut down the Empire’s strength and Veris’s wouldn’t be so pressurised.”

Just a problem though.

“Yukito. Who would take the command then?”

“You wouldn’t say yourself, would you?”

The problem of persuading the 2 person on my left and right.

Epilogue

If I were to go to the Empire alone, I won't be able to do anything at all. But, if it's as a general leading Nox going to the Empire, there's tons of stuff I can do. And to that, the risk for Veris is small.

Thinking about the fact that the Empire's 1st fleet will be sent, it isn't a minus for Veris to send Nox to the Empire in terms of logistics, weapons supplies due to the difficulty in chain of command and also the suspended state of the unit itself. Rather than having a unit that's not fighting on standby, it would be better for it to be dispatched to an allied country.

Of course, it's not like there's no demerit. The main one is the main commander that is me, have to go and I will be unable to perform my role as Kaguya-sama's teacher and also not being able to stay by Sophia's side. Well, from Veris's point of view, it's just a small problem, but the people in question doesn't seem to be of agreement of it.

"I definitely object that."

"That's right. I would definitely not approved that."

Taking break from the negotiations, I stated that to Kaguya-sama and Sophia after moving into another room.

Admiral Arnold should be now meeting up with Liasha-denka. After saying that we wish to take a break, Admiral Arnold requested to meet her. Different from his previous farce, he was having quite a worried expression, so I led him to her room, apologizing for not noticing his farce.

And when i entered the room where Kaguya-sama and Sophia is, that was what I was told. Though I was slightly irritated by the fact that they did not even try to read about my plan, thinking that they were worried about me, I

managed to keep my calm.

“There’s only Nox which we can send to the Empire if we limit ourselves to a unit of above average strength. A unit with similar strength would already be in the frontline so even if we try to substitute, it will take some time.”

Before I get a recommendation of sending a unit other than Nox, I said that to seal that route.

Very likely, Kaguya-sama, who was thinking of that, was out of words, but the opponent is not just Kaguya-sama.

“What does that got to do with Yukito going to the Empire?”

I am the supreme commander of Nox. Though previously that is. Well, as long as there’s no successor, it doesn’t really matter. The most important point is that I am the only one that can put them in order and lead them. Just with that reason, it’s enough. After all, I am the only one capable of it.

“There’s no one else that can lead Nox. The only way is for me to lead them. And also Nox is too strong. Problems will definitely occur with the Empire. It’s also best for me to be there to solve those problems. If the Empire is defeated, it will be Veris that will be in danger then.”

Sophia kept staring at me. Nah, her eyes were narrowed and gave a suspicious glance, so rather than staring, glaring might be a better word.

I understand the meaning of the gaze. And though it’s something I definitely do not want to hear, having her motive of not wanting me to go to the Empire, she spared no hesitation.

“Didn’t you say you will stay by my side?”

Pouting was something that she rarely do. Though there’s also the fact that Kaguya-sama and I are in the area, not just that, I can see through her intention of showing her pouting self to trouble me.

Those not used to Sophia’s appearance, will find her pouting expression lovable as well, but luxuriously, I am used to seeing the normal Sophia. I do not find this situation of her pouting lovable.

I did say I will stay by her side. I definitely said that. That is serious and is not a lie. But, the situation will change. And that situation has changed.

It is a very important promise. If it’s just my personal problem, I would still take it as my priority, but if I do not and let another go and it failed, I won’t be able to meet my eyes.

With Nox’s strength, even if Albion attacked, it shouldn’t be difficult to defend if we managed to coordinate with the Empire well. What’s difficult is the method to solve the problems on the coordination itself and supplies. That’s why I have to go even on just on the role of negotiation.

There’s no other candidate. Though there are people that can go, there are too many problems for Veris if they left.

“I want to be by your side. But, it’s my selfishness to be fixated on that. If Veris is gone, we would lose our place to be together, so I hope..... you would understand that.”

Saying that, Sophia bit her lips while still having her pouting expression, and gradually retreated a step. Sophia hate having ill will towards those close to her. That’s why I said it like this, knowing that it will make Sophia gave up.

Though I feel apologetic to attack her weak point, I have no composure to be able to consider her mental state this time. I know that we can’t make a compromise, so it’s better if we finish this topic quickly.

Thinking of that, I looked at Kaguya-sama, at the side of Sophia.

“I still have tons of stuff that I have to learn from you, you know....?”

Now, Kaguya-sama is troubling me. I wouldn't want to leave if I can not go. Just that, if I have to, then I can only follow that path.

If you wish to hold me back, I hope they can think of a reason to hold me back. It won't solve the situation by just saying “You can't” or “Stop”.

“Please be at ease. Kaguya-sama is someone capable of making quick decisions and actions by nature. If you do not waver, you will have no problem, even without me.”

In sports and also martial arts, sportsman that were instinctual by nature, lost their distinctive feature because they think too much. Kaguya-sama who turned into a king is exactly in that situation. Thinking too much, she started unable to find an answer so I taught her the way to think.

But, in the first place, the talented Kaguya-sama would be able to arrive at her answer without thinking much. Whether it's instinctual or maybe her brain came out with an answer instantly, her answers are always on point. However, as the process of her thoughts were totally skipped, once she started doubting her answer, she ends up in a maze of thoughts due to not knowing what's wrong with it.

”But I feel insecure without you around. What should I do about this anxiety?
”

“There will definitely be a time where even when I am not around, you have to make your decisions. It's just sooner than I thought. Everyone would be anxious for the first time, after it's scary. But, if you run away from it, nothing shall start.”

As I said that, Kaguya-sama, as if she dropped something really precious, showed an unsettling expression.

Until now, Kaguya-sama have been making requests and thoughts of her feelings, and I have been teaching the methods of achieving those. Now, Kaguya-sama have to think about it herself. The current Veris is not in a situation to be able to support her fully.

But.

“I, who you defeated, can guarantee that Kaguya-sama will be fine. Please do be confident of yourself.”

“I only managed to defeat you because you were not used to leading the army. If it’s now and each of us having an army of similar strength, I would likely lose.”

“Though that’s quite an honor, both of us fighting each other would be something impossible for the days to come. If you really felt that way, you should feel proud and hold confidence to yourself all the more. Be proud that you defeated me. And I shall work hard to feel proud that you defeated me as well.”

Right now, if we were to lead armies of similar strength, I wouldn’t be able to defeat her. In a battle, I can’t really find a way to win against Kaguya-sama. During the pre-battle phase, I might be able to do something, but in a direct confrontation, not just me, I believe there’s likely no one that can defeat her. That’s how strong I think Kaguya-sama is in battle.

That’s why it’s fine for her to have more confidence, however, it seems that even now the effect of seeing her own weak-mindedness during the civil war is still dragging herself, still unable to retrieve her confidence.

Just looking at the status, I can see how brilliant that person is. However, the person herself have no way of knowing that. There won’t be any effect with me

telling her those figures.

That's why one has to realize his or her own strength by oneself. That's because without knowing oneself, they can never be able to make the right decisions. What they can do and what they can not do. Expanding on that, what the opponent can do and what they can't. Pondering about all these is what's important.

Knowing that, there's one side of me that it's a good chance for her to learn but also another side that thinks that it is a little early. Just that, no matter what path Veris will go, Kaguya-sama's growth is indispensable.

There will be a time where Kaguya-sama has to make plenty of decisions alone. Experiencing such times without me would benefit for those times.

"Regarding my matter..... I do understand that I have to do something about myself. And also how you thought about it. But, what about yourself? You.."

"That's right. Didn't you dislike war....!"

Having her words taken from the previously silent Sophia, Kaguya-sama lightly glared at Sophia.

Sophia covered her mouth with both hands, as if saying "oh dear!", opening her eyes wide.

Smiling bitterly at those two, I looked straight at them.

"I wish to believe in humans. That's why I wouldn't want to fight. But, there's things I have to protect by fighting and there are people that I also wish to protect and not hand over. Therefore.."

There's no problem.

I smiled, stating that. Though I decided to move for Veris, I will never be able to fight for a country. That's why, I will fight for whoever's precious to me.

Anything more, it will be to prevent fights from happening.

With gradual movements, I kneeled on one knee, left hand on the floor and placed my right hand on my chest.

“Though it really hurts to leave everyone’s side, I have to go. Please forgive my worthlessness.”

“Yukito....”

“Even though there’s one thing I have to protect with the promise with Sophia, I can’t follow complete every single promise..... It’s my inability, isn’t it?”

“....even if you say that, I won’t forgive you... Didn’t you say there won’t be a second time....”

Sophia uttered, with a voice about to cry. I definitely say that when I flared up against Kaguya-sama the other time, that there won’t be a second time.

If I don’t compensate properly, I don’t think she will forgive me.

“Yukito. It’s fine if you have to go. But, you will definitely return, right?”

“Of course. Though it depends on the situation, I believe it should be around reinforcement dispatch of around half a year to a year. The Empire should also withdraw their fleet back to the country around that period. While it also depends on the war between Veris and Albion and its small countries alliance and also the war between the Dominion and the Empire, which would make it earlier or even later, I wish to go ahead with the mindset of that period of time..”

Even soldiers are humans. There would definitely have people who longed for their family. As well as people who can’t fit into the foreign country. Taking those into account, I anticipate the period of half a year to a year. Any time longer would be difficult so I doubt we would be staying any longer than that.

“One year..... I wonder if Veris can hold go without you around?”

“Please hold on. I shall also return in high spirits one year later.”

Saying it strictly, Kaguya-sama smiled and muttered, “I guess so”.

Kaguya-sama seems to have come to an understanding to some extent. What’s left is Sophia though.

“I have to wait again, don’t I.....”

“Yeah.. Again, isn’t it?”

Even when leaving Earl Uren’s castle, she was on the side on being sent out and after that, she was on the role of waiting.

“I shall wait for a year. If you don’t come back by then..... I will be going over so please resolve yourself.”

“Got it. I will work hard not to let that happen again.”

I stood up, making that statement.

After that, the Empire left Veris while staying cautious and disappeared into the seas. On that other hand, Veris stayed vigilant against the Empire’s navy, while guarding against the supposedly incoming Dominion’s navy and started preparing the coastal defenses.

A week had passed since then. While intel of the Dominion’s fleet being captured arrived, a few ships not hanging any flags were inconspicuously setting out towards the Empire from Veris.

On the deck was a teenager, wearing an eccentric attire of black short sleeved hakama for horseback riding, and above it was a black coat that acts like a mantle. Until the lands of Veris disappeared from his sights, his black eyes

continued to look upon it.

The teenager sighed lightly when the land of Veris could no longer be seen and murmured “Alright” with a strong tone.

He sent his sights towards the path of the ship’s course, which is the Empire, and directed the fan held in his right hand towards the same direction.

“Full speed ahead! Nox shall begin our operation to the Empire from here on! Raise the flag!”

After the teenager’s voice resounded, all the ships raised the flags of Veris.