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# Third Prince Elmer

— *Assassination Arc* —

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## II. Assassination Arc

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## 2-1 Explosion and Plans

It was agonizing. The time limit mercilessly approaches.

“It’s in six months.”

Having an audience with the King became customary now. The conversation should have ended with ‘There was nothing strange in particular,’ but today, it didn’t only end like that.

“There had been a discussion regarding the matter in question. In case an [Explosion] doesn’t happen in half a year, I entrusted Ricardo to take care of the situation. Consult with Prince and discuss the particulars with the him. Report to me by then. You’re dismissed.”

With that, the audience was over.

Matthias left the King’s office and returned to his Master’s room in the Green Water Palace to finish his work as usual. Late at night, he went to the Lapis Lazuli Palace located just a little away from the center of the Royal Palace.

When he told the gatekeeper he wanted to meet with the place’s Master, the gatekeeper rushed to call the butler in a panic. Matthias didn’t worry about since it happens every time. Moreover, he previously received a complaint like ‘here comes the irresponsible adult again’ because of his way of visiting, but even those two do the same thing as himself. Before, those two came over to play without sending a notice first and the surprise they gave Matthias’ house’s gatekeeper was even greater. The gatekeeper who had been working there for a long time strained his lower back, and had to be given several months of vacation.

The butler came and guided him inside. Every time he sees it, he always thought that lapis lazuli was a very appropriate name for this imperial villa. It gives of the feeling of slipping into the depths of the sea.

<Note: Lapis Lazuli is one of the most sought after stones in use since man’s history began. Its deep, celestial blue remains the symbol of royalty and honor, gods and power, spirit and vision. It is a universal symbol of wisdom and truth.>  
But when Matthias said it to this place’s Master, he replied that he likes the

design of this imperial villa but he would prefer if it was smaller, he said this with a troubled laugh. According to him, it was lonely and he didn't like that.

Matthias was ushered into the designated room. It isn't a guestroom nor a bedroom. It's a small room.

So it was here after all...

This room had been used by the three of them since Ricardo and his mother lived in this imperial villa. Before they entered the academy and became schoolmates and even before Fer was elected as First Retainer (Matthias was taken along since they were always together in the academy), they would take refuge in this room when they sneaked out from their lessons. Every time this happens, only the butler knows where to search for them.

Ric and Fer were looking over some documents between them as they sat opposite each other.

"Yeah. I heard from the King today."

Matthias locked the door and sat beside Fer. He didn't think that he would come back here one day with this kind of mood.

"I thought about a plan that considers the conditions given by the King."

"Conditions?" Matthias reacted.

"The assassination should be executed away from the Imperial Capital. Perform it secretly as to not attract public attention. Conceal it as much as possible. Lay out a public statement with no inconsistencies, if in case it comes to light. These are the King's orders."

Ricardo conveyed the words of his Father King more negligently than usual. He continued it in a manner that made his dissatisfaction clear.

"As I thought, I don't really want to do this plan... I understand that a prince unskilled in using magic would be a weak point that foreign countries would take advantage of, still..."

"If his existence is not known to many, it's better to take him outside of the Imperial Capital and quietly live there, isn't that right? "

Fer crossed his arms as he continued Ricardo's words. This time it was Matthias

who opened his mouth.

“Who are the people aware of the Prince’s existence?”

“Everyone from the royal family knows. From the Four Colored Houses, everyone up to our generation knows. Especially, those like us who are concerned with the state’s affairs. Rumors spread among some of the aristocrats working in the palace during the prince’s birth, but everyone thinks it’s a groundless rumor because there was no eyewitness. The populace doesn’t have any information at all.”

“Is that so? That’s amazing. But to go to that extent, what’s the reason...?”

The birth of a prince or princess isn’t something that can be concealed easily. No matter how isolated the Inner Palace is, there was a large number of servants, and the news of a woman of noble relations becoming a mother spreads with surprising swiftness. To begin with, concealing such a happy story was never heard before.

<Note: Inner Palace – the word used is ‘koukyuu’ which refers to a place reserved for the royal harem.>

“This may be because it’s the Third Prince’s mother...”

Ricardo muttered those words.

Coincidentally, Ricardo was aware of it... No, even if he never went to the Inner Palace, he can remember someone resembling that woman.

It’s not only Ricardo. Fernando does remember, too. Matthias never personally met her, but heard stories about her.

The woman who died giving birth to the Third Prince, what was she thinking about during her last moments? Was it her family? Was it the King? Or was it her son who she had not seen yet?

Truly... She was a genius who always found something enjoyable in the dull Inner Palace. She was given the nickname “Sun Princess.”

Was it associated with her aloof blond hair? The meaning was stifled no matter how many times the King questioned.

“Father King most likely... he can’t accept that Sun Princess-sama lost her life

giving birth to a prince who can't use magic, and he can't bear to think about the Prince. That's why after meeting him once, he locked him up. However, it's still unusual that he hesitated until this period. Nevertheless..."

Explosion usually happens in the age of three. Having that during four years old is rarely ever heard. But his father's hesitation had been extended up to six years old.

His Father's orders this time told him nothing about his younger brother.

Ricardo only knows his brother's age, but not his name and magic power. Even his appearance wasn't known. Matthias also said nothing about it.

"Even so, right now we can't do anything rash."

Matt's voice was firm.

"Matt, are you really going to be alright? It's been decided you'll do it."

Matt stayed quiet for a while when he was asked, then nodded slowly.

"I understand. Then, first..."

The conversation's progress focused around Fernando.

"... the route is here?"

"No, that's too close..."

"How about here?"

"How about the guards?"

"The coachman can't be a soldier."

"... how many people?"

"One is enough."

"Is it alright?"

"We're travelling incognito."

"It should be someone young so we can bribe him to stay silent, in case it's exposed."

"A coach and other necessities is being prepared by Mother."

They were able to roughly plan.

Fernando breathed out a sigh. When he looked up, he met the face of Matthias.

“...are you going to be alright?”

“We’re able to think this much. It’ll be alright.”

... That’s not it. I wanted to know if you’re alright. But Fernando wasn’t able to say that.

He noticed that Matthias had bitten his lips so much that blood came out.

## 2-2 Audience and Shedding Tears

Training was concluded with the voice of the Platoon Leader.

He was already dead tired but his superior was calling for him. Moreover, he doesn't know the reason at all.

Alois, who had been working as a soldier in the royal palace for still a short time, didn't have any idea.

His friends and his seniors told him 'Good luck!' and 'We'll collect your bones!' and said these words while patting him on his shoulder. Even those who aren't particularly close with him gave him eyes full of sympathy, which made him think that they may be good guys after all.

They aren't as cold-hearted as he thought.

The Platoon Leader left the training grounds and entered the royal palace, but they passed the room which Alois thought he would be taken to.

Where could they be going...?

He cannot yet understand the structure of some parts of the interior of the royal palace, but this place should be where the rooms of distinguished persons are.

While he thought of this, the Platoon Leader stopped in front of a big door.

"Please pardon my intrusion. I have brought Alois."

When Platoon Leader called out, a voice from the room was heard, and the permission to enter was given.

Alois, who can't comprehend what was happening, noticed that a hand was placed in his shoulder and saw that the owner of the hand was the Platoon Chief.

The Platoon Leader whom he thought was going to enter the room with him, lip-syncs "do your best" and leaves with extremely quick steps.

He thought while watching the figure of that back which was becoming smaller.

Aren't those eyes similar to the eyes of a friend just a little while ago!?

Having been deserted by the Platoon Leader, Alois kept standing in front of door in a daze. Finally, he came to his senses.

He knocked once again and set foot inside the room.

"P-p... please pardon my intrusion!"

Alois immediately lowered his head deeply. Before his eyes, what appeared was the dirtied carpet, and he suddenly saw his lifetime's worth of salary fly away at that.

This... this might be bad.

He thought that it was the room of a high-ranking aristocrat. He saw his legs trembling in nervousness and willed them to stop... he silently prayed they stop.

It was just his imagination. Surely, the person in the room isn't fond of his carpet! Get a grip, Alois!

"Raise your head."

He timidly raised his head in accordance to the voice.

Before his eyes, there was a gentleman with deep blue hair.

... He was done for.

He never met him personally, but he immediately knew. This hair color, age and features. There was no mistake that this was First Prince Ricardo.

In his heart, he uttered farewell to his family.

Father, I'm sorry. Mother, Elder Sister... the guts you drilled into me, there's no question you're the ones who made me a soldier. Thanks to you, my lifespan seems to be ending earlier than planned. I resent you. I'll become a ghost and haunt you no matter what.

"Are you Alois?"

The voice heard was not from Ricardo-sama. Alois turned his head slowly with a \*gigigi\* similar to a broken machine and confirmed the owner of the voice.

... really, it's no-good.

It was Four Colored Houses' Fernando-sama. He's the genuine thing.

To be brought in front of such people with very high standing, he was extremely confused.

"A special mission will be given to you. You are to guard a carriage. It's travelling incognito, so you must absolutely not tell anyone. It will take one month. Tell the other Imperial Guards that you will be visiting home. An authorization has been given, so you don't need to worry. Moreover, you will the coachman in-between the journey. Do you understand?"

As he heard the words of Fernando-sama, Alois understood that he won't be immediately killed for the time being.

"Another person will stand guard, but you will know who it is on the day of departure, because the person was entrusted to him. Don't speak of this even to your superior, understood?"

Fernando's intimidating air and Ricardo's seemingly gentle smile made Alois tremble violently in terror.

"I understand!! I'll absolutely... take this to my graveyard!" That's why, please release me immediately...!!

"I'm glad you understand. Departure will be in one week at four o'clock in the morning. Your dismissed."

"P... please... please excuse me!"

After lowering his head deeply at a speed that made one worry that it might stick into the floor, Alois headed towards the corridor.

The two people left were just Ricardo and Fernando.

"Why did he cry...?"

"Could he be scared of Fer?"

"I'm normal, normal!"

"At least, it's not my fault."

The both of them became worried if the soldier was going to be alright.

Because there were only one person qualified, it would be a problem if that

person is troubled.

“But that guy recommended him, that’s why...”

“That fellow is Fer’s cousin isn’t he? On the contrary, I may be worried.”

“There’s no need for that. But... As expected... It isn’t alright at all.”

“What you’re saying is a contradiction. Still, he’ll be together with Matt that’s why he’ll be alright, I think. Moreover... the objective is... they’re travelling a wasteland.”

“That’s right.”

As of right now, the soldier who was running in the hallway while crying, that is Alois.

Even if this guy is like this, it doesn’t particularly mean he has no ability at all.

Rather, his greatest aspiration, it is a road that has great obstacles. One should exert himself to gain a position inside the Knight Order, pledging allegiance directly under the Royal Family, that’s why he is surely skilled.

Writing, ‘It is to be away as much as possible from my scary mother and elder sister’ in the reason why he wanted to be in the Knight Order, the top management of the military found it amusing and decided to approve his admission—.

## 2-3 Ordinary and Journey

It's shaking. Right now, I am riding a carriage for the first time in my life.

My impressions were 'the horses are cute' even so 'it's surprisingly spacious' also, 'my butt hurts'.

It's a pain that words cannot express. My whole body seemed to have locked on my butt. Still, this is just the first day of travel.

In the morning, I woke up as usual and was change into different clothes than the usual. I didn't usually put on any footwear. But even though I have no memory of trying it on, the beautiful leather boots perfectly closed on my feet.

"... today we're riding on a carriage for a long journey... blah blah blah (I didn't hear the others)."

I was looking curiously at the boots that I didn't notice Matthias-san was giving a long explanation about how we're going out today.

Matthias-san talked very long about how we would need to travel by the carriage for a very long time, and I who is currently 6 years old, this is the first time I am going to take a step outside of this alternate world since I was born. Matthias-san princess-carried me to transport me. I am a child, so I'm light. However, if that's the case then I didn't need to wear the boots, I thought about this fact.

Also, I was really surprised that I can't almost see anything outside, in the first place it was too early in the morning so it was still pitch-dark, then I noticed the carriage.

"Please, no matter what, do not go outside."

He left as soon as he said that, but I'm not stupid enough to jump out of a running carriage. Something like that shouldn't be done. Or could it be that in this world, it's normal to jump out of a running carriage?

However, right now I thought about it.

Even if I do not voluntarily jump down, if my butt continued to be encroached

as it is, I may likely do it.

Alternate World's Style of Getting Off Technique.

Even though I escaped reality for a long time, the pain in my butt never changed.

I've been shaking in the carriage for one week.

My butt is being iced while I lie face down, reaching this situation, I think it can't be helped.

It hurts, you know?

While my mouth strained in tension, I thought that right now I'm pretty amazing. 'How to say this?'... like, this is not something abstract, but it's something concrete and accurate. Right now, I feel like if I open my mouth to speak, all the contents of my stomach will come out.

So for the sake of preventing this, I'm closing my mouth with utmost effort.

Still, my hands are shaking. Because my hands that are holding the reins are trembling, the horses sometimes turn back their heads to send annoyed looks.

Stop trembling and shaking! It's confusing! The horses seemed to be saying.

I get it!! It's hopeless even if you say that!! Because, you know? Just look at the person sitting beside me!!

Slitted eyes and tight lips. The face that is so beautiful that one can't help but instinctively admire it. Though it doesn't seem so at first glance, it is actually a balanced body forged by training. Deep crimson hair similar to fire blazing brightly.

I-it's the actual Matthias-sama beside me!!

It's impossible not to be nervous!!

When I arrived at the place indicated by Ricardo-sama and Fernando-sama, the carriage was already waiting there.

Because I was told that everything necessary was already prepared, I wasn't carrying anything.

One week ago I recalled a nightmare which sent me into a shivering fit, while

such things happened to me at that time, I thought whether I ever walked into a major incident in my life even once.

I leaned against the carriage and closed my eyes to avoid looking at Matthias-sama's figure.

I have confidence that I have lived an ordinary life until now.

I was born to a countryside's aristocrat. Even though I say that the rank is aristocrat, it's more of a case of a feudal lord, and has not much difference from everyone around.

Father cultivates the field, Mother do the household chores. And then I have one elder sister.

When I was a child, every morning all the adults work in the fields. I helped them while playing, I enjoyed myself while looking for nuts. Once a week, I fall into a river and becomes covered in mud, Mother gets angry. My first love is a beautiful elder sister from the neighborhood, of course that love never got fulfilled.

When I grew up a little, I was thrown into the military, everyday I was made to train until I'm dead-tired.

The reason I want to join the Knight Order, that's because I saw a magic battle tournament at that time.

It became impossible to take my eyes off the fight. Standing in the center of the flames that made the whole grounds seemed to be boiling due to the extreme heat, it was West Vern House second son, Matthias-sama.

He showed such overwhelming strength in the tournament that he became the overall champion. I, who was hesitating at that time whether I should go home to work at my parents' or continue my service, after seeing that, submitted a notification for transfer for the Knight Order. As one would expect, reasons were needed before the approval, so I wrote two reasons.

After that, I somehow managed to be accepted into the Knight Order, right now, Matthias-sama who is the person I was admire is right beside me.

This might be just a dream.

I was filled with anxiety, so I thought of making sure that this is reality.

I slapped my cheeks with both my hands as hard as possible.

At that moment the horses neighed, raised their feet high and then stopped.

“What is it? Do you want to switch?”

Matthias-sama, who sent me a puzzled look, addressed me as such.

“N-n-no, I-I’m o-o-ok-okay...”

I answered while shaking.

— I forgot that I was holding the reins.

When I slapped my cheeks, they were incidentally pulled back.

Are you bullshitting me!! The two horses that turned back their head at the same time to send that look, once again galloped. The journey continued.

Even so, this might be still just a dream.

One more time, should I confirm it again?

## 2-4 Combat and Change

One day, the travel had approached its final stages.

Sitting next to the soldier Alois, we advanced while exchanging conversations every now and then.

I considerably liked Alois.

At first, I had frequently seen some strange behavior from him, but when I talked to Alois, I discovered that he had a naive and sincere personality.

It's a type of personality I hadn't been around due to living in a society filled with aristocrats. Moreover, he seemed to enter the Knight Order due to his admiration towards someone. I was told this while Alois was biting his lips intensively.

What was that for? Although I didn't understand what he was saying, I thought about that matter. After graduating from the academy before I became First Retainer, I was a member of Knight Order and I had acquaintances who are ordinary people, I wonder who replaced me? There are several eccentric people in the military's top brass. Even if it's difficult to become like the person he admires, I think it's good that there are types like him in the Knight Order.

Because of that, it's all the more reason I didn't want to let him join in a journey like this.

This guy, right now he doesn't know who the person he's guarding.

Because he was prohibited to inquire, and an important person never made an appearance, I didn't think he understands.

This guy, because of how much of a good person he is, my heart sinks heavily as the days pass by.

Elmer-sama never did laugh or cry after all. Even if it's was the first time he saw a carriage, he never even showed any surprise.

However, when I carried the meal over, I was bothered he won't be able to do it without a lady attendant, but Elmer-sama took the tableware and started eating

by himself!

Elmer-sama was able to do it by himself perfectly!

My heart danced in both surprise and delight, but then I sobered up when I remembered the current situation.

Elmer-sama's new side. There might still be ones that I haven't seen before.

There is no such thing. I tried to reject that idea.

It's painful to look at his figure, even the coachman found it necessary to stand after a while. Even so, Elmer-sama opened his eyes where does not reflect anything, and not moving an inch, he continued to sit still. Still...?

That appearance is soon to be disappearing in my eyes.

When I was asked by Fer, I hardened my determination to do this by my own hands. Still, even if it's just a short time, even if I never gave out my heart to Master, I knew somewhere deep inside me that I didn't want to end Elmer-sama's existence.

Even if no one understand this, this is my resolution as a First Retainer. This might be seen as nothing but a warped desire for monopoly. But's that's fine. Something like that is inconsequential.

"Matthias-sama! Matthias-sama!"

It's seems that I have been lost in my thoughts too much. I didn't even notice Alois, who was sitting next to me, call out.

"Sorry. What is it?"

"The bridge is falling. What should I do?"

He said so and when I looked ahead, the river is swelling with water, the bridge has lost about 3/4 of its center.

Looking at it, I just realized that it was raining, just how much inattentive was I? Because it already began, we can't get off here either.

"There should be no a village or a town around here. It can't be helped, we can't stay here as it is. Let's alter our course."

I took out the map, and confirmed there were two roads. After deciding on a

road, the horse was made to run once again.

While paying attention for a landslide, we advanced through the mountainside. The rain was rapidly getting worse.

It happened at that time.

“Uwaaaaaaaaaaa!”

Alois shouted, and the carriage stopped.

Before our eyes... was a monster.

It's A-Class!

I jumped of the coachman stand immediately, and then invoke a magic. I was just opening my mouth to recite an incantation when I noticed it.

— Aa, today is raining, isn't it?

Luck isn't with me. A person from West Ven House uses magic to manipulate fire.

“Alois, what's your attribute?!”

I asked Alois, who even though he was shaking, had drawn a sword in his hand. For a mere soldier a Class A demon would be hard, still, as one would expect from the Knight Order.

Alois, even if you do not yearn to be someone, you're already a splendid Knight, aren't you?

“It's... fire...”

Alois answered apologetically. So it was the same?

“You don't need to worry about it.”

And then, I cast a spell.

Even though it's a rainy day, it doesn't really mean one can't cast magic. But that would need a lot of magical power. Furthermore, the strength drops.

Still, if it's just one Class A then it will be fine.

I'll have you experience the power of someone who came from the West Vern House!!

I finished chanting the incantation, and the magic square expanded. Red burning fire wrapped around the monster.

As expected, it takes time to burn up fully, it already lost one half of its body, but despite burning, it still attacks this way.

It pulled out the trees that had been growing in the area, and then threw them. Before even reaching their target, the trees had already burned into cinders. I saw Alois doing his best beside me.

With a shout that made one's hair stand on ends, the monster fell down.

As expected, I used too much magic. The aching joints of my body tells so.

A Class A is at a level which needs a subjugation corps formed by the country. Moreover, these bad situation.

I looked back behind me to confirm the safety of two persons.

As for what I saw, it was a gigantic stone.

No!! A boulder is flying towards the carriage!

The carriage that took a direct hit, was blown away lightly, similar to a toy, it rolled and turned over sideways.

I rushed over in panic.

In the middle of it, in the crushed carriage toppling sideways, I saw Elmer-sama come out. Blood was flowing from his white cheeks. As I thought how relieved I was that he was fine, at that time...

My eyes were seized with the sharp claws of a monster.

It was an A-Class monster.

Beside it, there were others. There were two more.

It was a big demon who threw the huge boulder, and two small ones who can kill Elmer-sama at any moment.

Even if they're small, those guys are strong. Those kinds are guys who crushed several villages, aren't they? Perhaps they went to close too the forest?

Several things came to my mind.

There's no time to cast a spell anymore.

My body moved without my permission, I pushed down Elmer-sama to the ground and covered him.

At that moment, my back became hot and felt like they're being burned. Even if I can't see it, I understood that it was torn. It hurts so much that I felt my head cracking with pain.

Somehow, faced down below me, I confirmed Elmer-sama's safety.

When I thought about it, even if I saved Elmer-sama, Alois wouldn't be able to do anything alone against an A-Class monster.

If I ignored that, I can stop everything without doing something personally. We'd be able to run with just two people.

However, I wanted to protect him. I won't regret anything.

"Elmer-sama... you're safe... what a relief..."

I let out in a severely hoarse voice that I didn't even recognize it was mine.

I can't speak anymore because of the pain.

Elmer-sama tried to get up, and I slipped down him.

My wound was touched with something.

Elmer-sama's right hand, what was clinging there was bright red blood. Aa, that is... my blood.

And then I saw Elmer-sama's expression strained.

It's your first time seeing blood, first time seeing death. Are you able to feel fear?

For the first time in my life, I saw Elmer-sama's emotions. I'm glad I was able to see that in my last moments, but as expected I wanted to see your laughing expression.

"Elmer... sama...?"

I felt the temperature in the vicinity fell. Goosebumps rose in my body, and the air I let out turned white. It wasn't my imagination. It was... terribly cold.

I understood that Elmer-sama had stood up.

“It’s... im...possible... stop, pl..please... El...”

“It will be fine. Thank you for saving me.”

The voice that interrupted my words spoke quietly that it resounded in my ears.

I looked up at Elmer-sama in blank surprise.

The wound in his cheek from a while ago rapidly disappeared before my eyes.

When he stood up, light reflected Elmer-sama’s eyes, and it became sharp all of a sudden that the blue of his eyes felt like it darkened. The hair that I cut before they grew past his shoulder, lengthened. Meanwhile, the cracking sound of something breaking could be heard and in the center of Elmer-sama, the earth’s surface had been changed into a ground of ice.

What... is the... meaning of this?

My body that exceeded its limit isn’t able to let out my voice anymore...

From then on, my consciousness faded, and everything came to an end—.

## 2-5 God and Falling Sideways

Today and yesterday, there was nothing different these days.

I experimented which postures would give the least burden to my butt. On the first day, I made a reflection about it and since no one can see me, I spent my time on my knees and various other postures.

The very same day, I thought that the best position would be the one that would not need my butt to be seated so I spent the day on my knees doing dogeza.

<Note: dogeza – full body prostration, a Japanese tradition> Compared from the start, the shaking of the carriage settled a little, and the posture on that day was unexpectedly good, but whether or not I'm going to use that is still being considered.

Suddenly, the carriage shook greatly, and my nose hit the seat. Imagine it. Because doing the dogeza requires my face to be near the seat, the weight of my body that jumped up was received at one point by my nose. Tears welled up due to the pain. I held my nose and raised my face, enduring it desperately alone.

When the pain settled that it became just a tingling ache on my nose, I worried if my nose was bent seriously, and moved my face to a sparkling, polished metal fixture.

...so this is my face, huh?

The innocent face of a child looked back on the golden metal fittings. Because I lived a life not looking at the mirror, the face that I haven't seen for a while now had grown up. It's so cool, you know? That is, in the Earth.

However I, who had gazed at the face of Matthias-san all the time, do not know if whether my face is good-looking. Aa, I should stop thinking about his good looks. I'm become depressed.

While I breathed a sigh, this time the carriage started toppling sideways with a *guruguru*.

I wasn't able to do anything, and rotated with it. In the middle of it, my cheek was grazed with one of the nails. Reflexively, the hand which was holding my nose, moved slightly.

"What!?" I panicked.

When I went out of the carriage in a hurry, I was reminded of Matthias-san's words.

——— "Please, no matter what, do not go outside."

It can't be that, I'm not allowed to go out yet!?

In a case like this, where the carriage is falling I wasn't told if it's alright or not. Still, is something like this normal? I was expecting something like 'Thank you for coming' welcome reception, or could it be that I was expected to master how to roll in a carriage!? Amazing, alternate universe!!

But... when look I was looking at my face, I heard someone cry out. My nose was still aching at that time so I wondered whether I misheard.

The conviction that something had happen arose.

I moved my hand that stopped awhile ago, then pushed the wreckage of the broken carriage and crawled outside. The part of my body exposed outside got wet with the rain, and my body became slightly cold.

Finally, I set foot outside the wrecked carriage, and then I lifted my head. My field of vision was bad due to the rain.

I noticed Matthias-san running towards me.

I didn't understand why he was so much in a hurry, so I moved my eyes to his previous line of sight. Similar to the ones I see in movies and anime I watched, standing there were ugly monsters.

Though I understood that I must escape, still, I wasn't able to take my eyes off the monsters. I have frozen up in fear.

Leaving after images, before my eyes, what approached me were those sharp claws.

At the same time I heard that shout, something collided with a thud against

me, the impact making me fall. My field of vision was turned to the sky covered with heavy clouds.

No way!?! At that time, a bad premonition filled my chest. The body of the person on top of me convulsed with a start and I, who understood what happened, tried sitting up in a panic.

“Elmer-sama... you’re safe... what a relief...”

A feeble voice reached my ears. The voice that always resounded with dignity.

When I started to stand Matthias-san slid down, so I immediately sat back down.

Something slippery spread on my hand. The heat was transferred to my cold fingertips.

My hand was dyed bright red.

The meaning of it, I knew even if I don’t think of it. It’s something I know well.

At the same time, I thought about Matthias-san’s words.

Is it my name here? Even if it’s something I’m not accustomed to hearing, but when I was called out for the first time, I realized. This is not a dream, I’m definitely right here, what is before my eyes is the reality.

For what reason!?! Why... did you... protected me!!

When I clenched my hand filled with blood tightly, a drop fell suddenly, and it disappeared when it meld with the puddle.

Six years ago, I personally experienced ‘death’.

This time, instead of me, it was another person who took my place.

My body felt hot.

I won’t let him die. He can’t die.

Dying would mean everything is lost. It’s different. A deep scar that will never vanish is left behind between family and friends. I have learned it.

He should have them. The family I no longer have, a lover and friends. I knew neither Matthias-san’s family name nor age.

But, he had always looked after me.

You shouldn't protect me then die!!

I must take you to the hospital as soon as possible!

For your sake, I... everything that gets in my way ...

Because my head had flown into rage, even if I can't match these guys using novice magic, the idea of running away never came into my mind.

"It's... im...possible... stop, pl...please... El..."

Even if Matthias-san told me to stop, I can't just withdraw as it is. I can't abandon him no matter what.

Fortunately, today was a rainy day.

Aa... it really is hot...

Though I don't know how much of my magic is influenced by adrenalin, the monsters that was just before my eyes were easily knocked down. As I thought, the rainy day made it easier.

I checked over Matthias-san's condition.

Is that Soldier-san nearby? I thought about that person. I don't think anyone would just accidentally pass by this forest. Maybe I never met him because I had never gone out, but it must be a person who was traveling together with us.

Can you treat them? I tried to ask. If he's in the military, then he must have received some medical training. But he began to let out a cry before listening to my words.

"Uwaaaaaaa!!!"

He was unable to stand up due to fear, and pointed to something above me.

Judging from how surprised he is, there's no mistake that...

"Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!!!"

...it was a monster.

Turning my head gently so I wouldn't shake Matthias-san whom I was carrying, there was a monster whose whole body's surface had clinging eyeballs, and then

those eyeballs were completely stabbed with ice.

Of course, those are my ice.

I knew this one was there since a while ago, but I didn't know if it would attack so I left it as it is. Its weak point was obviously its eyeballs, and it was weaker than the ones a while ago... because it was too big, I thought it was pretty similar to a Mountain God-sama.

Aa, it is, isn't it? Like it came to confirm who was making a ruckus in its territory.

It was because the yell of that person awhile ago was clearly filled with terror, so I somewhat felt a bad premonition and at once, I sent my treasured ice lances towards my back. With such a large target, I thought some would surely hit.

But I didn't think everything would hit.

Since the problem was already solved, right now it's time for Matthias-san's injury! As I thought so, I called Soldier-san.

"Immediately, I'll treat him right now!!!!"

Just as I spoke, the man who was paralyzed with fear grasped the ground, then fell back down again but managed to recover and he began to run towards the ruined carriage. I thought he was finding something similar to a treatment kit. But for some reason I was worried about how Soldier-san's expression towards me was similar to the expression he had after he got a glimpsed of the monster's appearance a while ago, so I wondered if I was similar to it.

Do I have more than two eyes?

Did I have such a scary looking face?

Anxious, I touched my face for confirmation.

## 2-6 Treatment and Princess

I cut the thread with the scissors.

“This... I think this would be fine. After a rest...”

Until now, I never thought that a day would come that I will need the military's lectures and practice on medical treatment, but from now on I'll never think that way.

“Thank you very much for treating him.”

The person I had very anxiously looked at said so to me with a relieved expression.

Because you see!! Being useful to Matthias-sama... and the feeling of being thanked by a Princess.

<Note: Yes, Alois used Princess (ohimesama, お姫様) to indicate a certain someone. XD) Suddenly, a monster showed up. It was not a monster I have ever seen before.

That's why, I learned that it was an A-Class from Matthias-sama's words.

A monster of that extent turns up inside the country once every five years. At that time, the military assembles a subjugation corps, and then exterminate it.

That sort of guy came across two of us. My hand holding the sword kept trembling, no matter how much strength I placed on it.

Furthermore, my attribute is fire. Even if the strength of my technique is high, the rain will weaken it.

In other words, it can be said that a significant part of my war potential can't be used.

But, Matthias-sama is different. He has an extremely natural-born fire attribute, despite that a powerful magic engulfed the monster in a blink of an eye. Even if it's just a little assistance to a someone like Matthias-sama, I let my sword be clad in fire and fought, too.

The monster was defeated. If that was true, then it seemed as if it was a miracle. But reality is harsh.

When the carriage that should have been protected was attacked, unlike me who was unable to move, Matthias-sama's facial expression changed, and then he started running. The carriage rolled as if it was something light that it can be held by one hand. The truth is, I didn't really know what was inside the carriage. Although one would say I am the guard, I never heard anything about it, this is because during the travel, the topic was never talked about. Nevertheless, since meals were always served everyday, I thought there must be a person inside.

Why did that person never came out even once?

It must be a young woman who hates someone of low social standing, the face they owned must be something that cannot be revealed, I thought about various reasons.

However, falling down with a rumble, what came out of the broken carriage was... a five or six year old child.

The slender and helpless form of her was protected by Matthias-sama and narrowly escaped death, but the moment she saw that monster it's as if she became an entirely different person.

<Note: Alois used kanojo (彼女), which is a feminine pronoun, to refer to Elmer probably because of his shoulder-length hair. XD) Her eyes narrowed in rage, and in an instant the place around her became a prison of ice. The breath that came from my mouth turned pure white, and my hands began trembling from both terror and cold.

Never allowing a counterattack, white ice tightened around the demons, ending their lives instantly. I noticed my hand was shaking but it wasn't trembling out of terror towards the monster.

It was out of fear towards the powerful strength before my eyes.

It felt like the power of a King.

It's different from Matthias-sama, this bone-chilling strength.

Then and there, everything had been placed under her control, it had naturally

brought me to my knees.

As the demons burst open, the girl tried to help the injured Matthias-sama. Before I noticed it, she had turned back to her previous countenance.

What is it? While holding Matthias-sama, she began to talk about something.

Even if you ask what she said, I who tried to come approach near her, drowned out her words because of my voice.

As soon as my eyes saw it, I cried out, no human wouldn't be paralyzed out of fear by that, you know?

This time it was a demon I had known from before. I learned about it. 50 years ago, the neighboring country had taken enormous damage from it, our country sent subjugation corps and allied forces were expected to seal it.

It wasn't possible to suppress it.

What should be specially noted about it was its size.

The eyes attached to its large build similar to a moving mountain, enables it to see from all 360-degrees directions and can see through any offensive attacks. Therefore, it's impossible to continue attacking until it receives a fatal wound.

I remember reading about it and seeing a cut-out illustration of it.

It must be really the truth.

However, it does not apply to this girl.

Even if it saw the attack, it wasn't able to even attempt avoiding it.

I, right now, must have just witnessed a historical moment.

The girl attacked without looking back, but she recalled to turn around to look when it collapsed and made the earth tremor.

I was dumbfounded, looking at the sky where the demon disappeared from, I heard her voice.

"Immediately, I'll treat him right now!!!!"

Panicking, I got up to retrieve the tools. I hurried, but I felt the sensation of my foot being twisted, and I wasn't able to advance forward.

From the packed luggage in the carriage that fell over, I retrieved the medical supplies and before long, I was able to get it.

“For now, we must go to a place where we can nurse Matthias-san properly... Where do you think should we go? Um...”

Gratitude was expressed to me, and I who had a blank expression, straightened myself performed a salute. I’m not yet ready with my self-introduction!!!

“I...I-I-I am, the guard entrusted this time, Alois of the Knight Order, reporting!!”

“If I may be bold to ask!! May I politely call you Princess-sama?”

When I said so, for a while she displayed a slightly troubled expression, then nodded.

I felt immature thinking that this person is the same as the figure awhile ago.

What a relief. It may be better not to be aware of her name so I can’t reveal it. From now on, I should get a grip on myself!

“Then, let us proceed. This way please.”

Since Matthias-sama is in this situation right now, we should head back to the Imperial Capital. I concluded so, but Princess-sama prompted that there was still a problem.

How will we transport the injured Matthias-sama? Though I immediately stitched up the wound, we need to carry him as soon as possible and head towards the nearest village.

Noticing me who was trying to carry Matthias-sama on my back, she tried to say something, and her pink lips parted.

But what she let out was a strange melody of verses similar to words, and I wasn’t able to understand any of the words.

However, as a result...

From under her feet, a long straight line of road made of ice expanded. It was everywhere.

What is this!?

It's magic. Though I didn't understand what was said, I am aware what she did emitted was something extraordinary.

To be honest, my head seemed to have already reached its limits.

I thought of only one possibility. Then, It became impossible think of the rest any longer.

— She seemed like a fairy or something of that kind, I'm sure she had greeted this world.

That's why, the world welcomed her. If that's the case, then it's understandable, isn't it?

I understood that I was just dumbfounded myself since a little while ago, but I got shocked again when she stepped firmly on the crisp ice.

What she had in her hand seemed to have come from ruins of a carriage, a wooden plank. After placing Matthias-sama on it, she advanced forward.

She went ahead through the red carpet laid out just for her sake.

The setting sun has begun to already wane.

I, Alois hurriedly chased after them.

She didn't stop advancing.

It's already pitch-black, only the light from the flame invoked in Alois' right through magic illuminated the way.

Alois wondered were Princess-sama got such marveling strength.

Moreover, reaching this far, she never parted with the lift carrying Matthias-sama. It can't be helped, so Alois picked out everything necessary for camping from the ruined carriage.

Suddenly, the Princess-sama walking by his side stopped.

... As expected, she might have just reached the limit of her physical strength. They have walked this far. He thought that she was already excellent.

"Princess-sama, should we take a rest in this place tonight?"

But, an answer didn't come.

When he looked at her she was looking at the sky, with a plop, she let go of the handle of the improvised cart.

Her appearance looked strange. She wasn't ignoring him, instead the words didn't reach her ears.

While looking up at the sky, she opened her mouth.

Her murmured voice was clearly heard this time.

Immediately after that, he heard an ear-piercing sound, and promptly checked if his ears were broken... that was how it's supposed to be but before his eyes, he saw that spectacle and this time he suddenly fell on top of Matthias-sama.

## 2-7 Return and Intrusion

“Uooooo! We’re flying! We’re flying!”

Moving against the wind, we advanced in the utterly dark sky.

I was so overjoyed that I wasn’t interested that I was repeatedly hitting Kioran.

I wonder why I haven’t thought about it earlier. Even though we keep walking silently in the darkness, the end can’t be seen. Incidentally when I felt all my physical strength disappear, I came to realize it.

If we can’t go on foot, then we just need to fly.

When I summoned Kioran, he showed a displeased appearance, but when I persuaded him that there was an injured person, he reluctantly consented.

It has been decided that the unconscious Matthais-san will be transported while being carried gently (here, I have to remind him) by Kioran’s mouth, then I turned around to tell Alois-san to get on but he suddenly fell unconscious on top of Matthias-san.

In that short interval I took my eyes off him, I was so surprised that I thought there was a surprise attack in the dark, but he seemed to be just asleep for some reason so I tied him to Kioran’s body so we can proceed.

Holding on to Kioran’s back tightly, I turned around to confirm that Alois-san has not fallen.

Aa, I’m extremely tired.

I’m really very tired. I’m sure when I walked with Alois-san, I had a terrible expression.

The wind feels good.

Thereupon, I suddenly noticed. At that time, I wasn’t able to talk to Matthias-san about it when we flew off, but now that I think about it, where are we heading, I wonder? This is bad. What do I do?

“Kioran~ sorry. You see... I forgot to ask where we’re going.”

I called out to Kioran, and he let out a ‘hmmph!’ as he breathed from his nose,

an unpleasant cold air was breathed out.

“Could it be that... you are aiming for somewhere?”

This time he answered with a low growl.

“Oi, don’t bite on him!”

Kioran, who forgot about Matthias-san, seemed to roar.

After a while passed since we began flying in the air, a voice who belonged to neither of us was heard from the back.

Alois-san woke up.

“This place... where on earth, what is...”

Those words were murmured by a small voice and no sooner than that, as he looked down below, his head immediately dropped once more.

Even as I sidled up to him to ask if he was okay, a response didn’t come back.

Surely, he’s just sleeping for a second time so there’s no problem. This sensation is just like my situation when I go to school in the morning.

Since I do not have anyone to talk to, it can’t be help so I started thinking.

Regarding the words said by Alois.

What did he mean by “Princess”?

It was said so spontaeniously that I was stunned. Though I did not understand what he meant by that, I was not able to decline his earnest face. And his eyes had become bloodshot.

Alois-san is an unusual person, isn’t he? Even though he seemed to be a good person... let’s be careful for the time being. If he sees me as a girl, then I won’t say that I’m actually a guy.

After a while, Kioran began to lower the altitude towards the place where light gathered in the utterly dark ground.

The air resistance became stronger that I shut my eyes unconsciously. There was a floating sensation as if my internal organs are going to come out. It’s similar to the feeling when a roller coaster drops, I feel sick.

As I desperately endured it, Kioran stopped gently.

When I opened my eyes, it was dark, but the landscape seemed familiar.

This place, where did I see it? I felt like I know this very well.

It's the garden I can see from my room!

I recognized it after looking once again, I saw a flower that bloomed this year in the same place as last year.

Jumping off Kioran, I lowered Alois-san who was sleeping, since Matthias-san was already laid down, too. His complexion seemed to not change that much from a little while ago.

"Thank you, Kioran."

I laid those two in the bed and let out a sigh.

How did I enter the locked room?

Of course, I smashed through the window.

Even though I kicked it down, the glass wasn't broken and only my foot became painful, the ice I used to stab it disappeared and I entered.

I'll surely be scol~~ded.

But, because of Matthias-san I wanted to enter quickly so it can't be helped.

I'm so sorry. I'll immediately call someone and tell them to come. I said this to Matthias-san who was lying down, and then I left.

This house, isn't the ceiling too high!?

Moreover, it's huge!

It's too spacious, and there are no people around.

As I thought about this, I ran. House? While I do so, there were torches in places, and they were quite bright.

It was when I turned at the hallway of my room, ran through a longer hallway recklessly, and tried to turn at a corner.

With that snarl, something cold was suddenly applied at the back of my neck.

The person who shouted just now was heard by others, and several men

gathered. The thing placed at the back of my neck wasn't removed yet.

“This fellow! He's bloody—!?”

Eh? I slowly lowered my head, and certainly my clothes and my body were surely bloody. Whose is it?

Ah, its from Matthias-san and the monsters.

How splendidly gory.

I wasn't able to notice it because I was frantic.

“It's different! I...”

For the sake of explaining the situation, I tried to look back. If I can't deny this properly...

“Are you opposing me!?”

Wait a minute! OI! Listen when a person is talking.

Something crashed to my nape with a thud, and I was deprived with my field of vision. I didn't understand what was happening as I was dragged somewhere.

## 2-8 Torture and Restraints

“...Oi! Wake up!”

In the darkness, I heard the voice of someone calling repeatedly.

The voice gradually came close. My consciousness abruptly cleared up when the voice shouted so loud as if it was near my ears.

“This place is...?”

Absentmindedly, I blinked my eyes several times to do something about my sight.

“So you’re awake, brat. You made me wait.”

Gradually, the man’s appearance emerged, and I noticed that I was sitting down on a chair placed across a desk where he sat opposite of me.

“What , what is this! Please untie me!”

I can’t move my feet or my arms in my current situation. Even if I made any efforts, it stays the same and the ropes merely cut into my skin.

Though I cannot understand the situation, I asked for help from the middle-aged man in front of me. However, the man never lend a hand and instead rattled the chair and laughed scornfully at me. It’s impossible to tear off such thick ropes. I, who understood that it was a futile effort, glared at the man.

“If you say it honestly, then I’ll untie the ropes.”

“Honestly... say what?”

Not understanding what he meant, I frowned.

To begin with, where is this place? The room only had a big door and there were no windows. There was only the narrow, dim space that makes me feel sick.

“That you injured West Vern House’s second son, Matthias-sama. You ran away after you did it, and then you cried out and ran around the hallway.”

“You’re wrong! There’s some sort of misunderstanding...”

A terrible misunderstanding somehow happened, and I raised my voice to

correct it. I tried to stand up with my disabled feet.

The man sat up from his seat, and at the next instant everything in my vision turned over.

Something bright red flowed into my view. From its coppery smell and lukewarm sensation, I understood that it was blood that dripped from my head.

I was hit by that man. Since I can't do anything because I wasn't able to move properly, I fell down from the chair and my head crashed into the hard ground.

The blood didn't stop, flowing to my cheek and to the cold floor, making a puddle in the ground.

"I didn't do anything, I was just looking for someone..."

"It's not as easy as that!! Aa? Give up, you failed your job!!"

The man who yelled suddenly at that moment, without letting me stand up, grabbed my hair while I was still lying down.

"If you just say it honestly, it'll be easier, y'know?"

"...You...re...wro..."

Those words of denial immediately changed into a groan.

The man lifted my head with sluggish movements and flung it against the floor several times.

My light body was lifted by the man's right hand.

A striking sound that made me feel like covering my ears resounded in the room.

From the part of my body that was struck first, I reflexively twisted, but my strength gradually disappeared.

When I was at loss for words at the pain, and my body was rigid, the man finally stopped.

This time I was elevated against my will, and I was brought close to his face.

"Usually, most people would have lose consciousness already. As one would expect from someone trained. Who's your client!?"

“Tha..t’s...why...you...misunder...stood...”

My mouth which I thought wouldn’t move anymore, quivered as I straightened out the misunderstanding.

It’s true that Matthias-san is injured. Because he protected me, I was the reason for that wound so that’s why it’s my responsibility. Still, this man thought I hurt him deliberately.

He called him Matthias-sama, I wonder if he has a high social standing. Because I hurt that kind of person, does this man think torture is appropriate?

I don’t know.

“Aa. if you received such training, is this really necessary? If you commit suicide, my achievement will come to nothing. Aa, if kids like you become assassins then there’s really no hope for this world. Is this so we’ll let our guard down, hmm...?”

A man didn’t listen to what I was saying, he lost interest and let me go from his hand.

My body that was deprived of support hit against the floor and sprang up twice.

“Listen, o...oi.”

“For now that we haven’t found out anything, you’re still safe. For now, just admit you’re guilty.”

The man inserted something in my mouth, and breathing became difficult.

I can’t say anything properly. When he stopped jolting my head, I wasn’t able to resist anymore.

After he finished fixing in the metal fittings, the man sat his fat body on the chair. It was the chair I was previously sitting on. The chair was wooden, so it made a creaking sound.

“You’re an assassin. You received an order, that is to kill Matthias-sama. But, you made a blunder. You were found bloodstained by the soldiers patrolling in the Green Water Palace. Isn’t that right?”

You're wrong!! I shook my head to say he was wrong. A lot of blood spilled, is it because my head was hit many times? My head that should have strongly moved merely swing left and right slightly.

"Damn! You brat!!"

The man's face flushed in anger one more time, and grab ahold of my head. Then, he swing it downwards.

It was as if my brain shook as it crashed down.

...if this goes on, I'll be killed.

With my current condition, I can't breath properly and I feel that my life in danger. Still, a small body like mine cannot possibly overpower this man.

I need to escape, in a place other than here.

This man must surely have other companions in the room. But if I don't run away from here, I'll surely be killed. This man who can hit a person's head on the floor without hesitating is scary.

I desperately thought in my hazy consciousness. What came into my view was the sword placed at the man's waist. Everytime he moves, it sways with a clatter.

When I heard that noise, I remembered. This is not Earth. That's why one can carry a sword, and there's magic.

On the floor, some of my silver hair scattered. I have no doubt that they fell when the man pulled on my hair. I didn't just noticed when my hair fell off because I was in so much pain.

Will my weak magic work?

I observed the man who can't seem to move very quickly. But his hair isn't snow white, either. Even if that wasn't considered, I have a feeling that my weak magic won't match up to him.

In addition, those arms of the man can reach me, who is collapsing weakly, anytime.

I have no energy to resist, but the man isn't vigilant at all.

If that's the case then I can probably do it. I'll use magic to get away from here,

and look for someone who will hear me out. When Matthias-san testifies, I'm sure I'll be saved.

(Freezing ability...)

I imagined the same magic I used against the monsters. Unsensible moans leaked out from me at the same time.

The large amount of red liquid on the floor and even my skinned arm, spread as if it was being collected at one point, and then it froze.

However, that was it.

The sensation that something is being sucked out from me rapidly spreads throughout my body. I can't move, and breathing became more agonizing.

What went wrong with my magic?

Though I tried it again, this time nothing happened.

"Someone guided you to sneak in the royal palace. Isn't that so?"

Suddenly, my face was hit. I heard something cracked under my body which was lying on ice, but the man seemed to not hear anything.

Then I finally realized the reason why I can't use magic.

This may seem like a bad dream but it's actually the reality.

I was attacked by disgusting monsters, I rode on Kioran with an unknown soldier to returned to my room. With the exception of practice, this is the first time I used magic.

This sensation is similar to the experience I had several times when all my magic power was used up.

I can't do anything anymore. The only thing I can use had disappeared.

Someone help me... I cried out in my mind desperately.

Who in the world will notice that I am suffering this kind of violence?

I don't have parents, neither do I have friends.

When I realized that there were no one present here will save me, tears gradually flowed out my eyes.

“How pitiful! You committed a blunder, and now you’ve been abandoned. No one will come save you.”

That man said such things even though his face showed no sympathy at all, and then he began to drag me.

My feet sagged weakly on the ground’s surface, and the path I headed to left a long line of red blood.

“Commander! There was a loud noise inside, what in the world was it...?”

As soon as we left the room, I heard the voice of a young male. I held my breath as I was lost for words.

I can only absentmindedly see a line of blood blurring gradually, and I had no more strength to look up so I didn’t know the man’s expression.

“What is it, what did you want to say?”

The man who used violence on me saw my state and felt more annoyed. His voice became more displeased.

“If that continues, wouldn’t he die? He’s still young, at least let him take a rest temporarily...”

“Shut up! Even if he looks like this, he tried to kill someone. We’ll continue. Prepare the basement.”

I can’t understand what the two of them were saying, my head can’t follow, and I can’t comprehend their topic.

“But that place is a room used for rebels and spies. So...!”

“Yeah, yeah, I know. I didn’t asked for your opinion. And, don’t tell others about this guy. Someone might snatch him from me.”

The hand of the man grasping me shook and my body stiffened as I thought that I might be dropped again.

Eventually, the man didn’t release his hold on me so I was sincerely relieved from the bottom of my heart.

In this excessively unbelievable circumstance, my body starts to fear the violence I can’t go against.

Since awhile ago, my head hadn't cleared up and started to suffer a white haze.

If something will be done to me anymore than this, I won't be able to take it.

"And, we've arrived."

We turned to a corner, descended on the stairs, and finally arrive at the room. We haven't met anybody on the way.

As the man said that, he forcibly made me look up.

Simultaneously, I understood what the young man awhile ago was talking about.

This was certainly a room for torture.

"...That's why I said, don't do anything further! He's really going to die. What in the world did this child do!?"

I woke up at the man's echoing voice.

It's cold. I got goosebumps, and brought my limbs somewhat closer to my body.

I wanted to confirm where I am now, but my eyelids were heavy and they fell when I lifted them.

"This guy, even if his like this, he's an excellent criminal, you know?"

"Do you have any evidence? It's doesn't seem like that at all. I'm sure there was just some misunderstanding. Even if this child committed a crime, it's still the guardian's responsibility."

Somebody were arguing in a loud voice. I realized my head hurt like it might break, I wanted them to be a little quieter.

A short time later, it became very silent.

In the silence, the sound of dripping water can be heard. It's not me, so it must be Ryou or Father who forget to turn off the faucet in the bathroom, there's no doubt about it.

It's annoying, but I should go turn off the water. The other day, Mother was worried about the water rates.

As I thought about that and opened my eyes, a man I can't see reached out his hand to me.

I spoke in surprise, a small voice leaked from my throat as a draft of cold air entered through it. My throat burned painfully.

Hearing my voice, the man from the other side of the iron bars drew back his hand.

I thought it was strange. My focus that wasn't very good a while ago, now cleared up so my eyes caught sight of the appearance of the man.

In the dark, Aaron-san looked at the iron bars with a discerning eye, and chewed his lips thoroughly.

"Aaro...n...-san? Wha..?"

When I said his name, Aaron-san's facial expression became solemn.

"That's right. I'm Aaron, and I'm detained here like you."

Certainly, Aaron-san was in the prison next to me, but he can freely move his arms and legs unlike me.

That's why even if he's imprisoned, I'm sure it was just a light crime. What could he have done to be imprisoned like this?

On the other hand, both my hands and feet are bound.

If I didn't have this and I wasn't hit, I can run away or take advantage of the situation, I thought unpleasantly.

The rope that was binding my feet tightly was nowhere to be seen.

Alarming, my clothes are dyed so dark that I can't remember their original color.

"Boy, are you alright!? The meal is here."

Noisy footsteps approached.

When I heard it, it wasn't the voice of the man who was hitting me until now.

My head hurts as a result so thinking was difficult. I have a feeling this is something alarming.

Aaron-san reacts to the voice at once, and began to ask a question to the soldier who came to the prison.

“How’s that guy?”

“A strong sleeping pill was added to his meal, I think it’ll buy time for awhile.”

The soldier responded in a rapid speech, and set up the meal on the ground.

Aaron-san who heard this breathed a sigh in relief.

“Aa, well done. But, this child is at his limit. I’m surprised he held on up to this point. Just now, his consciousness was cloudy and our conversation was incoherent. When he woke up, he didn’t understand me. What should I do? I should get in contact with the Principal...”

Aaron-san said my consciousness was cloudy when I woke up and I realized that I’ve been feeling uncomfortable since I woke up, so I agree with him.

My limbs cannot move since they got used being bound by the ropes. They had traces from when I struggled. I didn’t worry too much about it, but my back burned from the pain. And a lot of blood was stuck on me.

My memory from then on came up. I recall fragments of them, but I can’t control which ones I can recall.

I can’t seem to remember the time when I met Aaron-san. Also, I felt like I was sick for a while but it must have been just a misunderstanding since I’m back to normal.

Right now, as my mind wandered, I wasn’t able to stop my eyes from closing.

I desperately held on to my consciousness that was fading. I’m afraid I won’t be able to wake up again. Even if I would be able to wake up, I’m still uneasy, who knows what state I would be in the next time?

“For now, eat you should eat your meal and then sleep. Isn’t that right, sensei?”

“That’s right. That soup is good. Can you eat by yourself? We have time so you can do it slowly little by little.”

I slowly extended my trembling hands to the cup. I felt the warmth pass

through my frozen hands. Even so, I can't ignore the eyes of those two people full of expectation.

I placed it on my knees and brought the spoon to my mouth.

Though they indicated by their way of speaking before that I should eat it, I understood that it was really soup when I placed it on my tongue.

I can't really taste it, but when I swallowed it in my mouth, it warmed the inside of my body.

While I was gulping down the soup beside them, Aaron-san and the soldier started a conversation.

"This might be an unjustified investigation. Can't you do something about this?"

"Right now, the Leader and Sub-Leader aren't here. This is the first time... the Leader should have returned already if this was really true. Maybe they ran into some kind of trouble. I don't have any influence, most likely if this leaks out, the child would probably be killed to put an end to this. And my actions for now are restricted, too."

Even if I can't see it, Aaron-san's irritation can be felt from his atmosphere.

"Aa! What in the world is happening to this country's military?"

My body was warm all over and I felt my eyelids gradually grow heavy.

The two of them were still discussing something. However, it only just passed through my ears and the contents didn't go into my head.

Before I went to sleep, I leaned my back on the hard stone wall and then finally fell deeply asleep.

[Extra: How Aaron and Elmer met]

It's cold. I woke up with a start when I felt my body hurt all over.

In the silence, the sound of dripping water can be heard. It's not me, so it must be Ryou or Father who forget to turn off the faucet in the bathroom, there's no doubt about it.

It's annoying, but I should go turn off the water. The other day, Mother was worried about the water rates.

As I thought about that and opened my eyes, a man I can't see reached out his hand to me.

I spoke in surprise, a small voice leaked from my throat as a draft of cold air entered through it. My throat burned painfully.

Hearing my voice, the man from the other side of the iron bars drew back his hand.

I thought it was strange. My focus that wasn't very good a while ago, now cleared up so my eyes caught sight of the appearance of the man.

The man who heard that almost crying voice, met my face and told me not to worry.

"My name is Aaron. You should sleep a little more while you still have time."

Gently moving my body that was hurting for some reason, the cup slid down on my knees, it tumbled to the floor with a loud noise.

What was placed in the container? Was it water or something?

Not understanding no matter how much I thought about it, I inclined my head to the side.

## 2-9 Past and Change

This is a story from a long time ago.

I was told that day that Father had died.

Thrown into despair, right now that such a thing had happened, I cannot do anything.

My co-worker who delivered the news told me that it might be better if I take a leave and come back when I'm already fine.

He was my foster parent. I was abused by my real mother. I do not know why. But I thought she must have hated the appearance of her child from a man who came from a different tribe. So it was what I thought. I worked and worked. The people around me were quite kind. When I left and went away, my mother's life degenerated.

It was at that time. A man I don't know, who later became my respected stepfather, appeared and asked me.

—Is it hot?

What did I say at that time? I said that that was just my ordinary, everyday life, this livelihood had the same meaning as my life. It's the only way I can live.

He didn't understand. I couldn't say that I wanted him to help me. Because I didn't think so. No one was around the man at that time. Maybe he was just lonely on his own and the hot weather was getting to him. Not long after, I was able to work at his House, I was brought up as his daughter at the same time.

And then, right at this moment after he died, I'm continuing on living and just starting to work as a lady attendant in the Royal Palace.

I did not formally become an adopted child. However, he left me a lot of assets that are more than enough for me. Instead of rejecting the adopted child, Father prepared that knowingly. He loved me as a child and that was enough for me.

— Get a rest over the weekend and go home. Take the flowers.

“You, please come over here for awhile.”

My hand that was preparing the black tea stopped with a start. What did I do?

I recounted my work absentmindedly.

We're short of hands today so I need to place some moon flowers in the princess's private room, then bring in the tea to replace the one that had ran out. Something... is there something I made a mistake with? This is the work referral Father had put so much effort in!

I placed the tableware with my trembling hands in the cart with a clatter, then stood in front of the Princess.

I bowed my head, but the princess stood up from her chair and came over to me. Not knowing what will happen, I tightly shut my eyes in fear. What kind of lady was she? I also can't remember what I placed in the tea...! I reproached myself for being absentminded today.

My shoulder was gently pushed. I raised my head immediately to avoid being disrespectful.

I finally saw the face of the person standing in front of me.

Even though this is my first time seeing that face, I understood immediately.

"Diana-sama."

She is always the topic of the people in the Inner Palace. Other Princesses in the Inner Palace bad mouth her.

Among the Lady Attendants, I also heard various rumors. Her origins are unknown. She receives most of the King's affection, and that this Princess did several improper behavior.

"Why don't you sit down? I'll prepare a delicious tea right now."

For some reason, my back was pushed by Diana-sama to sit down on the opposite chair from the one she was sitting on.

When I stood up in order to stop Diana-sama who was holding a pod in her hand, Diana-sama turned her head and look at my way.

"It's fine! This is an order!"

Although I've never heard such order before, awhile later the tableware was

set in front of me with a clatter as she served black tea. ‘Drink,’ she said, so I timidly placed it in my mouth. Someone like me is not in a social standing where I can sit across and drink tea with her.

“Is it delicious~? It’s delicious, isn’t it~?”

As if Diana-sama’s appearance had a tail attached to her, wagging in attention, I unintentionally let out a laugh. Though I thought she was older than me, she’s a really adorable person.

“It’s delicious.”

When I said so, Diana-sama was so happy that I thought she might jump.

“Then, I’ll tell you an interesting story this time. You know —”

That was my encounter with Diana-sama.

I wonder which story was it? Maybe the one when she sew the King’s pocket stealthily at night then when he tried to place his hand, it went through. I was surprised to hear such stories and that she tried to cheer me up when she realized I was gloomy.

I must have made the tea with a depressed face.

This is a distant story when I, Edna, became Diana-sama’s lady attendant.

Elmer-sama isn’t here.

One week ago, it was suddenly announced that I’ll have a break. For the sake of collecting information, I used every method I know.

A day passed since that day, I learned Matthias-sama and Elmer-sama went on a journey but I still stopped by at the room for the morning cleaning as usual.

The figure of Matthias-sama who shouldn’t be here, was there. Moreover, he was in Elmer-sama’s bed.

I entered the room in panic, Matthias-sama was next to an unknown soldier. I shouted in surprise when I noticed Matthias-sama’s injury.

I quickly placed the cleaning tools on the floor and brought a first aid kit. I need to verify his condition first before I call the doctor.

Matthias-sama’s injury was treated properly. It would still be necessary to call

the doctor, but I need to hear Matthias-sama's story before I make the judgement.

At that moment, the soldier nearby woke up, when he asked and I told him this is the Green Water Palace, he only said "Please tell Matthias-sama my gratitude. Excuse me," and then he ran away.

It was after it that a problem occurred.

When the bandage which was covered in blood was changed, Matthias-sama woke up.

The first thing he asked was about Elmer-sama.

When I answered that I didn't see him, he tried to run somewhere and rejected my words while staggering.

Even though he's injured, I wasn't able to catch up, I lost sight of him on the way.

After a while, I discovered that he returned to the Green Water Palace while he trudgingly walked with the bandage. I came across Fernando-sama trying to help Matthias-sama get on a carriage.

Fernando-sama said so when he noticed me.

"Are you the Third Prince's lady attendant? I'm giving you one month of vacation. You will be contacted later on for your new assignment. I want you to not disclose anything about the Prince. Then, thank you for treating Matthias' injury."

I went back to my room, the same room I have with Elmer-sama, I was told that I'll be moving out as I receive my new assignment.

With the abrupt break, I thought about where I should go to.

That's right. It's common to change assignments for lady attendants. But I didn't have the heart to plan for my vacation.

"Elmer-sama disappeared."

Those were Matthias' words I heard when he ran from the private room. This turned round and round in my head and never left.

What in the world was that about?

## 2-10 Apprentice and Hostage

The next day, Edna started collecting information.

In these six years, there were only a few people who looked after Prince Elmer, and she was the person in-charge of the members.

Because it was also an isolated place, there were almost no opportunities to have proper conversations with other lady attendants.

...it's strange.

That's right, it was strange.

Certainly, Elmer-sama never went outside. But, why is everyone not aware of Elmer-sama?

It was if he doesn't exist at all. Everyone calls the next prince, Tim-sama, as the Third Prince.

She had an unpleasant hunch. Matthias-sama's injury, and the story of the two lady attendants that were transferred.

Could it be possible... that Elmer-sama disappeared just as it is?

Uneasiness floated across Edna's mind.

That's right. If we keep our mouths shut, with this the people who knows Elmer-sama will just disappear.

She was told not to disclose anything, it was an order she can't forget.

Edna gritted her teeth, and reflected on her sense of duty. She can't just do such thing.

Diana-sama sacrificed herself to give birth to a child she will never know, it's impossible for her to allow him to disappear just like that.

I can't just end it like this!

"I wonder what name should I call him!"

"Just now, this child kicked!" Rubbing her stomach, she laughed innocently.

Edna heard those words that will never come true, Diana-sama's happy voice

resounded in her head.

“I’ll watch over this child in your stead.” Saying that during Diana-sama’s last moments, she looked at Elmer-sama.

A child who doesn’t have feelings? She doesn’t think so.

For vegetables, he likes it cooked raw. He hates carrots. He specially loathes food with butter. He likes tomatoes. He eats little for breakfast, but eats a lot during lunch. He prefers calm colors than flashy colors.

She understood when she saw. Edna thinks he was just awkward at expressing anything.

How could they say that Elmer-sama has no feelings?

It’s wasn’t just because of what she said so to Diana-sama. She thinks of Elmer-sama as her own child.

Surely, there must be a reason. Elmer-sama seemed have been planning something. It may seem strange to think like that about such a small child but... even so, she secretly took care of him without interfering.

At that time when he sat down on his favorite chair and looked up at the sky, she saw Elmer-sama and understood.

This person is going to fulfill something.

If that’s the case, as far as you’ll permit, I’ll follow you wherever you go.

Where would Elmer-sama go to?

She has no doubt that Matthias-sama is searching for Elmer-sama. But, with that injury... surely he won’t be able to move in that condition. And he isn’t in the royal palace right now.

At the moment, the only person who can do something is her.

If he suffered any danger because of anyone... I won’t forgive them.

Fortunately, there isn’t anyone in this country who can see in the darkness better than her. The most advantageous time to move will be at night. The people working at the royal palace wouldn’t be able to match someone from a different race. Strong physical strength in a limit. Her physical strength is very

strong.

At that moment, it was the first time she was thankful to be born with that body.

After collapsing in Fer and Ric's room, I woke up to find that I'm at my home.

I tried to look for Elmer-sama several times, but I was stopped by the people near me. If it's the usual, I would be able to shake off from their hold easily. The fact that I wasn't able to do that only shows that my injury certainly weakened me.

As it is, until I can stand up, I won't be able to return to the royal palace.

Now that I think about it, I can ask for help from this guy beside me.

My foster brother, Leont. When spent our childhood thinking of each other as brothers, we even went to the same academy together.

As of now, he's an apprentice butler at our House.

I told Leo everything. I requested, please take me to the royal palace somehow.

Leo grinned when he heard that. He is a simple man who puts on his uniform in disarray. Still, he is surely reliable.

"What are you willing to give?"

"How about a lady attendant in the royal palace?"

Instead of answering me, Leo grinned and went out of the room. We'll leave in thirty minutes from now on, he left those words.

Exactly twenty minutes later. I heard a lot of screams and explosive sounds.

And then, [Run Away] Leo entered the room with a refreshed face. That smiling figure as he held out a hand was on the contrary, terrifying.

But, I don't have time to hesitate. I didn't waver and took his hand.

On the horse, during on the way to the royal capital.

"Leo... could it be that you..."

"No, you don't have to praise me~"

I can't bring myself to say anything anymore.

I was able to imagine what Leo did.

He scattered several fireworks all over the mansion. Leo doesn't have much firepower, but his control surpasses everyone. He is a guy who can handle magic accurately similar to threading a needle.

He must have prepared fireworks in several locations in the spacious mansion, and then ignited them simultaneously, I'm sure about it. Yes, that's absolutely the case.

When Leo laughs in that manner, I forgot that it won't result to anything good.

"Elder Brother..."

Today, Elder Brother should be at the House. Leo is no match for Elder Brother. Why in the world did he not come after me? Father specifically told him not to let me go to the royal palace.

"That's right. Since you're going back, while you're at it, return this, too."

Leo handed over something to me.

Isn't this one of Elder Brother's treasured tea cups!? I've seen this displayed in his room.

Leo... you took this as hostage...

Is this man really an apprentice butler?

Elder Brother is the first son, it goes without saying that he'll be the next head of the family.

This man is dangerous.

This man who's riding next to me in a horse in order to escape, traveled with a carefree look.

"Is this really okay?"

Leont anxiously asked me who was having difficulty in breathing.

Even if I'm running out of breath my stamina is still alright at this situation, I face this man next to me and waved my hand.

Even if my strength is at its limit, I can't afford to stop right now.

After entering the royal palace, I descended from the horse and went towards the office.

It was just exactly when I pass by near the Knight Order training school.

I heard a small muffled scream nearby.

I nodded at Leo's gaze. That is not part of the training. That is a scream filled of terror. I'm certain something happened.

I drew the sword in my hand, we went around the back of the warehouse slowly. It's here! My sharpened senses felt the presence clearly.

I held out a hand to tell Leo to wait, and then a face appeared at the darkness ahead.

I gave away my voice. It can't be helped. Because I saw something that is just unbelievable.

"What is it!?"

Leo who was standing at my back, pushed me aside and looked ahead. However, he immediately stopped moving.

"Matthias-sama, it's terrible!"

"It's terrible here as well..."

Elmer-sama's lady attendant, Edna was there. She is the most senior lady attendant who served Elmer-sama since he was born.

What was grasp by her one hand was the neck of a man, and then the man was dropped to the ground's surface with a thud.

Without even glancing at the man, she said.

"Matthias-sama! Elmer-sama is in a disaster...! For now, let's go to the Second Branch of the Knight Order!"

"What do you mean? Why the Knight Order?"

"I'll tell you while we run there!"

A very menacing look was shown by Edna, and then she started running.

For some reason, Leo followed with a desperate look, too. Even if I said in the beginning that I only wanted to be taken to the royal palace.

“Though I checked various places in the palace were for one week, there was no information on Elmer-sama at all.”

Is that so? What an amazing information regulation she accomplished.

“However, today I heard they caught a girl with silver hair for the crime of attempted assassination against Matthias-sama one week ago.”

It can't be...! A girl... perhaps...

Even if I don't know and I haven't seen it... it's not strange.

I know. There's no one other than Elmer-sama who has silver hair.

Leo muttered something seriously from our backs.

“Somebody forbid the Knight Order from speaking about it.”

“I understand. Let's hurry!”

Ric and the others haven't contacted me even once, and this is the only clue I have. I have to crush all the possibilities one by one, or I won't be able to move on.

I didn't mind my hurting wound and sharp breath.

Nevertheless, I ran towards the Second Branch.

“Matthias-sama, this way please.”

I forcibly kept away the soldier who tried to stop us. The soldier to next to Edna was strangled and then thrown away. Should a lady attendant's impression be like this?

Leo... Leo still haven't uttered anything. He pretty much assisted us, and he's not a hindrance but it's still weird. He usually won't shut up when he fights.

The strangled soldier gave out information, and then we went towards where the silver-haired girl is.

Gradually, the passage dimmed and narrowed.

Cold sweat appeared on my back.

Descending to the basement, we ran into a small door.

The moment it was opened, my body trembled with anger.

The unexpected sound of the door opening made the man release his hold on someone in surprise, and the person he was holding down stood. Although he was tied up, the figure struggled desperately when he felt a hand on him.

That was the beat-up Elmer-sama. He had so many wounds. What...

Elmer-sama who saw me widen his eyes, at once he smiled in visible relief.

“Matthias-sama, this brat is your...”

What happened was evident.

My magic viciously swelled.

This person, towards Elmer-sama...

“Right now, torture is just...”

Do not open you filthy mouth.

Behind me, I know Edna is clenching her fists. Aa, my bad, but I will take care of this.

My magic became uncontrollable. Even if I suppressed it, it's overflowing. This hasn't happened before. No, suppressing it, that's something unnecessary. At a corner of my mind, I thought it's as if it's similar to a magic [Explosion]. I, who kept waiting for Elmer-sama's explosion, experienced it myself.

Even so, that's fine. If that's the case, let me be reborn at this moment.

A large number of fire tornadoes surrounded me.

That very same day, the Second Branch building owned by the Knight Order was annihilated. The Headquarters and the Third Division were partially destroyed.

## 2-11 Relief and Fear

Green Water Palace. It isn't strange that the energy here is overflowing, although at the back of the palace in a deserted corner where Elmer's room is located, it was very quiet.

In the crushing silence, Matthias hasn't moved away from the bedside for several days already.

"Elmer-sama, I'm really very sorry! Because of me, such... such thing happened. I'm so sorry... Please wake up soon."

After he rescued his Master, he hasn't woke up even once.

After the Knight Order buildings blew up, through the help of Edna and Leont, they were able to bring him along without anyone taking notice.

Losing control of himself, he held Elmer in his arms and finally arrived at his private room. The despair Matthias felt as he placed Elmer on the bed was something he will never forget from this point on.

The innumerable wounds scattered in that little body were very painful to look at.

He has to treat those wound as soon as possible. As he felt his hands quivering in hopelessness, he rubbed the worn out clothes that were stained darkly in several places. When he noticed that the clothes he chose for Elmer was just a mere shadow of what it was the day they last saw each other, Matthias' body lost all its strength making him crumble down.

"Just as that woman said, it wouldn't be strange that you'll wake up soon..."

Matthias noticed the setting sun's rays shine inside, he got up and stood in front of the window. The garden, whose maintainer he still doesn't know, came into his sight.

As Matthias closed the curtains, he started to think about the first time the doctor came here.

Through Leont's message, the doctor entrusted to manage the royalty's physical condition was dispatched.

When the doctor arrived at the room, Matthias was very surprised. If one would think about it, something like that was natural. His biological son is dying. However, the King have only acted cold towards him so far.

The female doctor who examining Elmer next to the bed said nothing at all which made Matthias nervous.

Normally, it isn't strange to say that he's dying in this terrible condition.

At that moment, Matthias finally realized how foolish he was. In the end no matter what kind of preparation he does, he won't be able to do it.

Looking at Elmer who was on the verge of dying, Matthias thought so. He was sure this person endured that unforgivable violence silently. Because he wasn't able to save him, this was the result.

She must have read his thoughts or Matthias said it aloud without noticing, but the doctor shook her head while applying the bandage.

"I think you're wrong. Please look at his wrists and ankles."

Just as she said, Matthias took Elmer's wrist. The traces of the rope remained red, the skin was also worn out.

It looks painful, and Matthias' face twisted.

"I say he tried to run away desperately, he struggled so much that he became injured just to save himself. I think he shouted for who knows how long until his throat became swollen. You say he silently endured it? That is not the case. He was fighting the whole time."

As he listened to the doctor's speech, Matthias unconsciously clenched his hands tightly.

Were he crying the whole time? Were he struggling the whole time?

Matthias can't imagine that at all as he only ever saw the figure of his Master always sitting and motionlessly holding a book, as if he's similar to a doll.

"Usually, I'll say he can't be saved anymore at his current condition, but right now he's alive because of his abnormal resilience. If he just rest for awhile, I'm sure he'll wake up eventually. At that time, I expect that his wounds will already be healed. However, I think that this deep wound at his side will leave a scar."

The doctor announced this after she finished the medical examination and treatment.

And then she told Matthias how to change the bandages and how to nurse a patient.

“Well then, with this it’s over. After this I’ll drop by everyday to check his condition, if something happens please contact me immediately.”

As the doctor went out, he told her ‘Thank you very much’ with a voice that has lost all its strength.

He thinks it was very accurate and quick treatment. But Matthias had no more energy at that time to properly express his gratitude.

Maybe it was because of his mixed feelings that he became strange. It became hard to stay silent, and then he began to cry.

The doctor whom he thought had gone out, opened the door and returned. Matthias wondered why and raised his eyes from Elmer.

The woman hesitated for an instant, but she understood and opened her mouth.

“This is... this is an opinion not from a doctor, but a mother of two children. If I say something excessive, please forgive me.”

Just like she said, the doctor certainly had a daughter similar in age. That’s why, with Elmer’s complicated situation, she was trusted as a doctor and was asked to examine him.

Matthias nodded and waited for the woman’s next words.

“Even if you’re not related by blood with a child, he will trust the person who accepts his existence. Children are sensitive to the feelings turned to them... especially if the child is smart or even more than that.”

Saying that much, the woman bowed and left.

Several days had passed since that day. Elmer continued sleeping as if he was dead, beside him Matthias thought of those words’ meaning.

He doesn’t understand everything about Elmer-sama.

As per the King's order, he was one of the people who even planned how to kill him.

The truth is he wavered until the end. Taking out Elmer-sama, he was thinking that they could escape to some faraway place, as a matter of fact he even prepared funds and everything. Of course, he didn't tell anyone about it.

While he thought that he didn't want to kill him, on the other hand he thought that the prince was eerie. It was as if there was something different in his existence.

On the other hand, he didn't think that Elmer recognizes his existence.

Before meeting in Elmer, Matthias heard he was a "failure child". Because he was different from an ordinary child, they gave up on him and he was abandoned.

But, is that really the case?

The prince thought to be an empty husk can actually talk, he can also use magic.

Several days had already passed since the incident, from what Edna heard from Knight Alois' story, he learned that Elmer used magic to kill the remaining monsters.

"I made a terrible misunderstanding, is that it?"

Done changing the bandages, Matthias lowered his eyes as he talked to himself.

Elmer-sama also didn't wake up today. I half-rose to my feet in order to say the same message as usual to Edna, it was at that time...

The rustling of clothes almost covered up that low groan.

Matthias ran to the bed in a hurry.

"Elmer-sama!?"

Leaning down, he looked at Elmer's face.

Slowly, he opened his eyes.

"Elmer-sama, I'm glad. You finally woke up!"

He was happy that he came back to awareness. Nevertheless if he wake up at this time, he'll only suffer the pain caused by his wounds. Matthias became worried.

Elmer moved his eyes, which wouldn't focus, left and right then he slowly opened his mouth.

"...wound, you, okay?"

Elmer whispers in a hoarse voice. Matthias who brought his ears near, catches it somehow.

"Are you in pain? According to the doctor, you'll get well if you just rest. I'll bring over water and medicine immediately."

Elmer restrained Matthias who rise from the seat in a hurry.

"Wro...ng. Back..."

Was the wound in his back hurting? There should be rather much more bruises in his stomach, Matthias worried for a while, and finally realized.

"Could it be, you're talking about my wounds?"

Elmer nodded slowly when he heard Matthias' words.

"It became considerably better. I can already move around normally."

Elmer laughed weakly. No, there was almost no change in his expression, but Elmer's voice was soft, so Matthias thought he was relieved in some respects.

Even though his Master suffered serious injuries, Matthias was astonished that he was worried about his injury.

(Such kindness!)

Though he was like the doll until now, he can talk properly and understand words, the usual understanding about him was blown off somewhere far and he was just impressed by the gentleness of his Master.

Deeply moved, Matthias stiffened. Elmer tried to lean on the headboard. However, the moment he tried to sit up, he let out a muttered groan. Matthias came to his senses after hearing that voice full of pain.

"Please don't be force yourself! You still need to lie down."

Elmer shook his head in disagreement when Matthias tried to get him back to the bed. Finally, Matthias relented and assisted him after piling up several pillows on his back in compromise.

“This isn’t, a dream. Was I really saved... Matthias-san really came to my rescue? Thank you very much.”

Elmer took a long look at his hand, then breathed in relief. He turned to Matthias’ direction and bowed his head awkwardly.

Matthias frantically stops Elmer.

“Lowering your head is unnecessary. I was the one who hadn’t held on tightly, Elmer-sama shouldn’t show me those eyes, the truth is I’m the one who is very sorry.”

Bowing, Matthias shut his eyes tightly and waited for Elmer’s words. The words of his failure as a retainer.

This was his responsibility. While nursing Elmer, he kept blaming himself as he wasn’t able to protect his Master, he was the worst retainer.

He can no longer be by his side.

From now on, he’ll give them what ever reason in order for them to disclose Elmer’s existence both inside and outside the country. Even if succeeding the throne will be impossible, he was certain that he’ll be able to accomplish his responsibilities and become a proper royalty of this country.

Matthias’ hands sweated and he felt his heartbeat becoming faster.

Instead of tension, it was despair that overruled Matthias’ feelings.

Elmer-sama growing into adulthood, thinking that he won’t be by that figure’s side in the future, breathing became painful.

Matthias was about to completely lose the existence called Elmer, before it began and before he became aware of it, he was already an irreplaceable partner.

The silent room as if it was detached from the outside world. Sitting on the chair by the window, the motionless Master who is holding a book even if he shouldn’t be able to read it yet.

Because Elmer never expressed any emotion, he thought of that face that is well-proportioned as eerie. Matthias lets his mind wander on what could he possibly be thinking.

When he begins the work he brings in, he hears the sound of Elmer occasionally turning a page.

During spring, a pleasant wind blows into the room, in summer there were the sounds of insects, during autumn the flowering plant that can be slightly seen from the garden begins to wither up and firewood snaps in the fireplace during winter.

Even if a year goes around, the actions of Elmer and Matthias don't change. Simply, they just mutually behave as they please.

He did not think there was something interesting in that, Matthias' daily life is something ordinary.

It's scary, even if he can't understand what he was thinking, after spending several years with Elmer, Matthias already considered him as his primary concern.

When Elmer opened his mouth, Matthias clenched his hands.

Elmer had a much clearer voice than what Matthias had imagined.

"That is... I'm the same, too. You got hurt from protecting me, I'm sorry."

Matthias looked up in that unexpected response.

Elmer lowered his head deeper than awhile ago. Though he doesn't voice it, but when Matthias saw him hold his side, he knew his body hurt from moving.

"That's something natural to do. It isn't necessary to worry about it. Elmer-sama! Just one more time, once again can I have the chance to serve as your retainer once again? This time, I'll take care of Elmer-sama. I beg you. Also, please address me using just my name Matthias."

Seeing Elmer's form, the feeling of not wanting to be separated just like that, welled up in Matthias.

At loss for words, Elmer was stared blankly in puzzlement. Matthias had approached him with these requests.

“Then from now on, please take care of me...?”

Elmer who was embarrassed after saying that, backed away a little.

Report to the King. Confirmation whether the prince can keep living or not.

I am submitting this report because I want to quit. I am not the King’s retainer, I already pledged my allegiance to the person in front of my eyes.

Matthias, in the truest meaning, became the Third Prince’s First Retainer at that moment.

“Elmer-sama, please stop bowing your head.”

While passing to Elmer the meal that Edna brought, Matthias said so.

Even if it was a meal, what was prepared for Elmer was something gentle to the stomach since he haven’t eaten anything decent for a while. Edna was surprised she was called for water and meal, it must be because she believes the recovery will still be after while, but she prepared everything in case she was called anytime.

Matthias, who never got sick, saw the food for sick for the first time and was bewildered, but he settled down when Elmer swallowed them without any resistance in particular.

Elmer was completely confused and asked for an explanation.

“Someone of your social standing rarely ever display that sort of action. Especially since Elmer-sama is a prince, your position...”

While pouring water into the glass, Matthias noticed from the edge of his view that Elmer moved, he stopped and lifted his head.

“P-p...prince?”

“Yes. You’re a prince.”

“Uhm... it’s a... lie, right?”

Elmer’s eyes moved in uneasiness when heard Matthias announced that in a decisive tone.

“Elmer-sama is a prince and could never be mistaken as a normal citizen.”

The spoon fell over the bed, it made a noise when it crashed on the floor.

Matthias doesn't know why Elmer had such a reaction and was troubled.

Could it be possible that his body was hindered due to an injury? Or was it difficulty in remembering...?

Matthias, in order to make a fresh start in this new place, decided to talk about it since he intended to tell it sooner or later.

“The King ordered, ‘The incident this time was my fault. Rest slowly in this room until your body is fully healed.’ After that, Elmer-sama will have more freedom. If you have some requests, it's will be granted. So please rest slowly for now.”

Saying this, Matthias puts away the meal and urges Elmer to sleep.

Not changing rooms, Matthias thought of using this room for awhile.

It is small, but the point that nobody comes here is convenient. They cannot afford to introduce Elmer to the nation as a prince without explaining the current circumstances. It will take time, and it was necessary to think it over.

Afterwards, we'll surely be moved to a room in the center of this Palace. It will several times as wide as this room, the guards are strong, and that place is where the garden with flowers that bloom all over can be seen all the year round.

“That is the truth, is everything alright?”

“Umm, nothing in particular.”

When Matthias reported ‘Elmer-sama had a Prince's qualifications,’ the King didn't look up, just muttered ‘Is that so?’

After that, directions were given to introduce him to Matthias' father who is the Head of a family.

Though he didn't understand what to think of it this time, it was true that there is nothing wrong with Elmer. Matthias thought he will grant his wishes if it's to a certain level of selfishness.

To build another palace, or wanting a land somewhere.

It's expected that Elmer will say something he wishes for. When he thought

back on it, there wasn't even a time when Matthias brought toys to Elmer's room.

On the contrary, there is nothing in this room. Only the dusty books which looked so old that he didn't even know how long it had been there, and also the furniture. The word tasteless doesn't even fit this room. He regretted how he had been so inattentive until now.

With Leont's help, he made plans in his mind to prepare various toys.

"Then, I'll quit being a Prince. Starting this day. Is that all you want to tell me?"

"Yes, understoo... Wha-the P-P-Prince is...? Eh?"

Just as he was nodding in agreement, Matthias can't believe his own ears.

Elmer will quit being a Prince. It involves a big responsibility, but Matthias cannot comprehend the meaning of casting away this situation when he was just finally blessed with approval.

"And what are you going to from now on...?"

Matthias thought this was just a joke, and timidly ask that question to Elmer.

"For now, I'll leave the town, work as I look for a place to live, and then..."

"Please wait a minute!! Are you really serious?"

After stopping Elmer who began to think seriously, Matthias tried to calm himself down.

"Uh-uh, I'm serious."

Even if he was a Prince, he was just a small kid. He should explain it properly and get him to sleep.

Normally, that's what he would think of, but when he saw Elmer's eyes, he was lost on what to think. He felt that his will won't bend.

"Though I don't understand how you came into that outcome, but if that is certainly Elmer-sama's will, I'll go along with it. However, please stop thinking of living on the streets. Instead, if it's fine, won't you visit our West Vern House's main residence? Of course, Edna and I will accompany you. "

"But it will be bad if I intrude on you all of a sudden..."

Elmer showed a manner of refusal.

“Please do not worry. Because only Mother lives in the main residence right now, there are more than enough workers.”

“No, arranging a new room will also be troublesome and...”

“I’ll say this, but the West Vern House is a family of aristocrat who received the title Marquis from the royal family. I believe our estates to be worthy of its name. No matter how many vacant rooms you want, if it’s Elmer-sama’s wish then it will certainly be prepared.”

The main residence of West Vern House presides over the country of Almerti’s West region. The residence with the wide expanse of forests and the courtyard with a lake, seemed to be perfect in healing Elmer’s wounds.

“The-then, please take care of me...”

Elmer who was overwhelmed by Matthias’ vigor, arbitrarily nodded his head.

“Understood. Well then, I’ll send a message to the others. It’s already late so please rest now.”

Elmer will visit his residence. Though it was only that much, Matthias was in good spirits.

Matthias was leaving the room when Elmer called so he looked back.

“Is something the matter?”

“From now on, it’s not Elmer... just call me El.”

He wanted to abandon his name as a prince. He to wanted to throw away the family name holding immense influence, he was just merely ‘El’.

Basically, that was just the reason. Matthias knew he wanted to quit from the royal family.

However, he incidentally noticed a strange point there.

Usually, it is impossible for someone from the royal family’s lineage of a large country like this to be able to live outside for a long term. They spend their lives inside the royal palace until graduating from the academy, and depending to one’s way of thinking, living in poverty will be extremely inconvenient.

However Elmer-sama is different. He threw away the position in front of his eyes, without anyone knowing, he wanted to obtain a life of freedom.

In other words, he is going on the path which none of the conventional princes has traced.

Was he born under that kind of star? What a strange destiny.

Thinking until that extent, Matthias tried to put out the lamp which illuminates the room.

Just before that, he heard Elmer mumble something softly.

“...I can finally go out. For a long time, I’ve always...”

Matthias stole a glance on Elmer’s expression unintentionally.

He had seen it momentarily before it darkened, Elmer’s expression full of insanity. He caught a glimpse of that frightening passion, as if it can destroy everything in this world.

It only happened in an instant, but it was intensely etched on Matthias’ mind.

Matthias rushed out of Elmer’s private room to run away, and as he placed his hand on his chest, he thought.

Is that an expression that a young child can have?

It’s as if, those words had waited to be said for so long.

(By any chance, did Elmer-sama knew that this would happen...?)

Matthias tried to change his original impressions. Could it be, everything went just as planned by the ‘incompetent Doll Prince’ Elmer-sama? Did he make other people around him believe he can’t use magic?

That’s just not possible. That would mean he had been acting since he was a baby. With that perfect acting, no one would see through it, and then that incident happened.

Matthias started denying that possibility that had risen to surface, but he realized the frightening reality.

He noticed Ieden was watching him when not even one year had passed since he was born.

The milk with the deadly poison was left all day long but he never drank it, was it because he knows the maid's ulterior motive?

Not even talking to Matthias who was his retainer, was it because he understood that Matthias received a secret order from the King?

『...I can finally go out. For a long time, I've always...』

Elmer's words turned several times around his mind, and never left.

Matthias felt his spine froze.