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Third Prince Elmer

— *West Vern House Arc* —

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III. West Vern House Arc

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Table of Contents

[Third Prince Elmer](#)

[3-1 Main Residence and Aristocracy](#)

[3-2 Steward and Western-style Clothes](#)

[3-3 Lost Child and Cooking](#)

[3-4 Lessons and Misery](#)

[3-5 Lessons and Studying](#)

[3-6 Real Feelings and Family](#)

[3-7 Genius and Letter](#)

[3-8 Mother and Memento](#)

[3-9 Work and Interest](#)

[3-10 Cooking and Outing](#)

[3-11 Sand Box and Child](#)

[3-12 Name and Starry Sky](#)

[3-13 Sweets and Glance](#)

3-1 Main Residence and Aristocracy

When it reached the road not paved, the carriage suddenly began to shake. My butt didn't hurt as much as the last time.

The wounds from that incident except the one on my side had completely recovered, and my mood is good, too. Maybe I got used to the carriage or something...

The man beside me who Matthias' friend Leont, was fidgeting as he repeatedly attempted to open his mouth.

"U...uhm~ Ho-hobbies?"

"Eh? What about hobbies?"

Edna asked again in confusion.

"No, as I thought your hobbies are good. Anything is good. Leaving that aside, I li-li...like..."

"Edna, you may ignore this guy."

Edna nodded at Matthias' words. Leont seemed like he still wanted to say something was stopped by Matthias.

That's right. I'm not the only one on this carriage.

Leont, who was introduced after I was rescued, and Maid-san Edna, whose name I finally learned, also got into the carriage.

While I was only half conscious after I was rescued, Matthias invited me to their house in order to show his gratitude that can't just be expressed in words.

I was surprised to hear that I'm actually a prince, but I was also convinced at the same time.

As expected, the man who banged my head first then tortured me just misunderstood. Eventually, he gave up and took responsibility for his crime. I found out that I was placed under house arrest as country's ruined prince, that explains the reason why no one knows my face and why I was in the royal palace.

However, this might be a good thing.

Due to this event, it was established that I'm a guy who can hardly use magic, so my value as a hostage might disappear.

When the King said that I may do as I please, I didn't hesitate to leave this place. Though the outside world is dangerous, the royal palace is even more dangerous. Moreover, the next time I experience something like that, I might really be die.

I've abandoned my name and my status, I wanted to live a safe life from now on.

Leaning my body on the carriage, I sneaked a peak at Matthias who had his arms crossed.

When Matthias said he'll let me live in his house, I was actually really thankful. There are no guarantees that I can find a job and a house.

It will become considerably easier if I can borrow a place to live in.

From the curtains' gap, a lot of green landscapes moving behind us can be seen.

When I thought that I can finally get out from that place, I was really happy that I unintentionally let out a smile. Since Matthias left the room instantly, I thought that he didn't notice it.

It appeared that it would take approximately five days to reach Matthias' house. Today is the first day of this brief journey.

"Only Matthias' Mother lives in the estate, ne?"

My tone became a little childish, probably because it's been a long time since I spoke to another person, it reached the point where I can only remember how to talk like a child. How should I put it, that tone was forcibly pulled into this body.

Because I was engrossed with magic, there were things I haven't notice, especially my status as a prince. I have to collect information diligently this time.

"That is correct. Mother stays and manages the territory that has been ruled by our family for generations after generations. Father and Elder Brother who often need to go to the Royal Palace lives in the residence located in the Imperial Capital. My little sister who is currently preparing for the academy entrance

exam, started living in our residence in the Imperial Capital just sometime ago.”

“Right, an academy. We went there, too.”

“Ah...that’s right.”

“You can’t do anything unless you go to the academy?” I was surprised that this world have schools, too.

“No, that’s not the case. The one in the Imperial Capital only have the elementary department, if you want a better job then you need to go to high school. If you have excellent grades, you can easily have a scholarship but as expected, there are a lot of aristocrats. During El’s age, they start entering the school.”

Leont explained.

School... I thought I’d like to go just for awhile. Even if it isn’t compulsory education, I wonder if I can go? After all, I wanted to have friends of the same age even if we’re different mentally.

This time, I want to finish school until the end...

But, right now I am a kid with no parents, and this is a world with magic. Because of the incident before, I understood that I can oppose monsters but, how about human beings?

“Does Elmer-sama want to go to the academy?” Edna asked.

“No... not at all.” I said so and looked outside.

The three other people in the carriage exchanged glances secretly. He didn’t show any expression, but they understood El-sama wanted to attend the academy.

“Entering the academy by passing the entrance exam is difficult, but it’s possible to do so! After you study for several years, would you like to go there?”

“Is it okay?”

“Yes! Please teach me what to study!”

Leont suddenly began to be enthusiastic.

“Me! Let me have a try at being a teacher! It’s always only Matthias who gets

to teach...”

As if he was remembering something painful, his eyes became distant.

“Matthias-sama is very intelligent.”

Edna’s brief comment delivered the final blow to Leont. With hollow eyes, he seemed to mumble something.

While hearing those exchanges, I was watching the scenery that passed behind.

The carriage advances. Aim is the main residence of the West Vern House.

The sound similar to the rumbling of the earth was produced and before my eyes, the gigantic gates opened.

“Welcome home.”

Beyond the gates was... a stately mansion beyond one’s imagination. No, a palace? Behind it, there was something that can’t just be called backyard hill, it’s already a forest.

And then, the people who lined up in a row on both sides of the long lane from the gates to the mansion lowered their heads all at once. All the members are precisely in the same angles. Really... this is just too amazing.

This is when I realized, what Matthias said was not a lie just to persuade me.

These people are the servants who are working here. I can’t even count them.

I stiffened in surprise. I noticed Matthias, who was just starting to move forward earlier, turned his head to look back towards me. I ran after him in a hurry as to not be left behind. I knew that the people we passed behind raised their heads steadily.

Matthias walked in a dignified manner, Leont and Edna stayed behind. I’m the only one who’s surprised. Why didn’t I realize? Matthias is an aristocrat. Social status is decided since birth, it’s something normally accepted in this world. There’s no difference even in Japan, everyone wasn’t equal. A person of a high status has a lot of things to do so they need maids.

Still, I can feel it. This place is difference, it’s not the world I knew.

Why, you say? The language is different. The words are different. The faces' features are different. The animals, plants, clothes and food are different. I understood a long time ago that this was an alternate world.

Back in that world, we tried all sorts of medical treatment. In the beginning, my parents hesitated because of the strong side effects of the drugs. Gradually they reach the point where they relented to administer the drug, and the quantity was even increased in the end. My body had only few places left that were still fine, any more than that and I won't be able to live anymore.

I did my best. That's why, during my last moments, I thought I can accept my death. But it was no use.

Step by step, we advanced towards the mansion.

I see. Did anyone grant my plea that I wanted to live? My wish was fulfilled. I dreamed of a healthy body at that time. I wanted to be stronger more than the last time.

I can do anything if I want to.

But still, why? Why am I so sad?

I was reborn in different world.

I was revived with my past memories, of course there will be compensations for getting that life. I understand that the most.

In this world, I am alone. Someone who saw the same things as me their whole life, someone who knows the basis of the knowledge from the previous life, someone who has the same train of thought as I am, that kind of companion will never appear.

Even if can't say it in words, I knew it was something obvious.

I decided not to think whether the pain in my chest was imaginary or not.

3-2 Steward and Western-style Clothes

Even if I had little recollection on the way, it seems I walked on the straight path. Before I notice it, the gates became distant behind us, and I arrived in front of the mansion's door.

Ahead the double door, a man wearing a very stylish suit stood in the way with his back straight. Wasn't he not there just a while ago?

"Welcome, El-sama. Welcome home, Young Master Matthias."

Leont shrieked and let out a 'hiii!' sound.

Father? When I heard that, I discovered this person is Leont's father.

"I am pleased to meet you." I greeted and looked at the man once again.

Certainly, his face resembles Leont. In particular, the shape of their eyes are exactly the same. But their atmosphere are entirely different. Even though Leont is wearing a suit, it's a little sloppy somehow and gives off an impression of a flashy big brother.

His father... no matter how you look at him, he's a butler. Yes. It's only possible to express it that way.

"Such words are more than enough for me, El-sama. I am serving as the West Vern House's House Steward. I am called Richard. Well then, please come inside. Madam is anticipating you. Oh, and Leon't, why don't we talk for a while?"

<Note: Lessons on Period Servants' Hierarchy 101. The word he used was karei (家令) which has the katakana 'House Steward' (ハウス・スチュワード). In modern times, he should be the head of a household's affairs or a Majordomo. He is not considered a servant and holds the highest position among the people working in the household.> After speaking to me politely, Richard-san called out to Leont. When I looked back, Leont had shrunk back and shakily trembled.

I wonder what's wrong?

After calling for his name once again, that man caught Leont's arm firmly.

“Please do excuse me for awhile. You, come with me.”

Though it was said with a wide smile, Leont was moving his mouth saying ‘Help! Help!’ from behind, he was asking me to help him. But since I can’t do anything, I decided to abandon Leont.

Richard-san dragged him to the forest, shortly I had a feeling that I heard a scream, but I’m probably just imagining it.

The two people at the door seemed to take those words as a sign and then they proceeded to open it.

“El-sama, I’m so sorry.”

I heard Matthias standing alone next to me muttered that in a low voice. But I don’t know what he was apologizing for.

“Oh, oh, oh, oh!”

Those words were interrupted by the woman’s voice.

It’s not Edna, it’s a voice I don’t know. When I looked ahead, I caught sight of fluffy lace. Black cloth that was placed into folds several times, it was a dress. When I looked upward, my eyes met with a woman looking behind a fan.

She’s tall! Even if Matthias is taller, considering she was a woman, I thought she had a large build. Though she was slender, she was a beautiful lady equipped with strength. Because I’m small, it’s even more obvious.

While I feel like I was being examined from top to bottom, I stood stock still without being able to do anything.

I was surprised that I almost jumped up. this is because the beautiful ‘lady’ suddenly shouted. The dress was gorgeous, and the face was also amazingly beautiful. But holding that fan while laughing with a ‘fufufu’, my image was ruined.

However, it’s still too early to be surprised.

“What is it, Madam? Though I say this every time, I can hear you even if you do not shout.”

Teleportation!??

Richard-san surely went into the forest and disappeared, but he was talking with that woman without sweating. Even though he appeared in an instant when his name was called, that just isn't possible. Is it magic!? It's magic isn't it!?

"Is there something wrong?"

Abruptly, he smiled while saying that, and I shook my head in fluster.

"Richard, is it possible for you?"

While I was left alone shaking, she slowly looked up from the folding fan and then the two of them continued their conversation.

I didn't understand what they meant but this time it was Richard-san who looked at me.

"Black, otherwise navy blue as the basic tone for the coat and rather short trousers. Right now, the popular type of collar that is a bit larger will be good. The design should be a little soft. For the footwear, it should be black enamel boots. Right now, Western-style clothes will really match his size."

"That's right. My creative urge is thrilled! Of course..."

"Yes. Everyone's preparations are finished, they are waiting in the usual room. They had sufficient naps. The complete set of highest-grade fabrics from the North had also been prepared."

The conversation of those two continued to flow.

"As one would expect. Richard. Well then, let's go~"

My arm was pulled by the woman and dragged inside rapidly. It felt like it's similar to Leont's situation just now. I didn't really understand it, but I know they referred to my clothes as lame. I only wore what Matthias gave, y'know? Is it that weird...? This is just normal. But I don't have any confidence in anything related to fashion...

For the time being, my arm that is being gripped hurts. I can't match the pace so I already gave up moving my feet. I gazed at the beautiful ceiling while being dragged along.

As if similar to a luggage.

I advance unsteadily while falling over many times. After I struggled to arrive at the bed, I made a loud sound and fell down. It's so high. It's a soft bed that can sink.

Even so, I'm really worn out. That's because I was taken along to a room with a lot of women and was measured from head to foot, fabrics were placed against me, and I was changed into different clothes several times.

Everyone was excited and no one listened to my words. Designs that were drawn in papers were thrown out and fluttered in midair.

Though I expected it, that lady was really Matthias' mother Lucsher-san, but I just understood it now.

Since then, Edna also became excited, Matthias didn't come to rescue me, too... how heartless. Leont is err. I'm sorry I abandoned you.

My eyelids were heavy. I feel like I wouldn't be able to get up anymore even for a second. So tired. Can I sleep here?

For tomorrow... I wonder what things I... should... do...

"El-sama, the preparations for the evening meal are done."

I heard no sounds from within the room.

Inside the room that is nearest to the hallway, I saw the figure of the fallen El-sama. I felt all my blood drained. Was he attacked!?

Rushing over in panic, I somehow realized that it wasn't the case.

He's sleeping.

Why is he resting in a couch like this for visitors? There should be a proper bed inside. Besides, this seemed to be a result of the burden from fitting on clothes.

Anyhow, I stroked my chest out of relief that El-sama is safe. I was worried after that incident in the royal palace. My Master seems to be a person who does reckless things, I understood that very well.

It would be better to not wake him up forcibly. Without making a sound, I retrieved a blanket from inside the room and covered his small body.

I adjusted the temperature of the room, then went back to the dinner

gathering.

In the dining room that was transformed into a dancing hall, a party is being held where both domestic and foreign aristocrats enjoyed dancing, Mother was waiting for us in a table.

“Oh, what happened to El-chan?”

“He seemed tired, and took a rest.”

“I see, if that’s the same then it can’t be helped. I wanted to talk to El-chan, I was looking forward to it but...”

While looking at Mother cast down her eyes in sadness, I also sat down on my seat. She really seemed to be looking forward to it. I’m so sorry Mother, but I’ve never seen any man become safe when you bring them to that room so I think it can’t be help. I, Leo, and Elder Brother have seen hell in that place a lot of times. Oh, even if Mother looks at Father, her creative urge never really springs out so only Father is safe.

“From tomorrow on, you can talk as much as you like.”

I comforted Mother as I sent a look to the maid to start serving the food.

<Note: Lessons on Period Servants’ Hierarchy 101. The word used is Maid (メイド) which is actually said in English and refers to servants who work all around, similar to a modern maid. Elmer uses this to refer to Edna but Edna is actually a Lady Attendant (侍女) or Lady’s Maid, which is a bit higher in position compared to a maid since they are personal servants.> Nevertheless, this is unexpected. Mother is always overflowing with confidence, she’s someone who doesn’t really reveal this kind of expression. It’s seems she was very pleased with El-sama.

“Is there something wrong?”

Even though one of the dishes have arrived, Mother haven’t lifted her face yet.

“Richard!! Bring the liquor!!”

The instant Mother shouted, before my eyes, Richard was already standing there holding liquor in his hands.

“Madam. It’s fine even if you do not shout.”

“Give me the liquor...! While you’re at it, summon Leont!”

While Mother said so, across her, the wine and glass were arranged one after another. Leont also arrived.

Midnight, the day had completely ended.

I, who had become confused, was informed by Richard.

“Madam gave up drinking alcohol after the Young Masters were born, however she had become interested in it again these days.”

Because I went to the Imperial Capital after graduating from the academy, I didn’t know.

But I can’t believe it.

She had... become interested in it? Certainly, Mother was always changing the wineglass she was holding in her right hand and drinking it gracefully. That elegantly charming figure deserves to be called the Belle of high society.

In comparison, there were smashed maids and butlers that had fallen around us.

“Are you going to drink?”

“Let’s drink together. I wonder why is everyone sleeping? It seems Leon’t can’t drink anymore.”

“However, Madam. You have not summoned Matthias-sama, yet.”

With Richard’s words, Mother floated a smile, beckoning me.

“Oh, that’s right. I’m glad. Come here for a moment. I want to talk about choosing clothes that will match well with your little Master.”

“Matthias-sama, please take your time.”

Richard poured the wine.

Yes, there’s no doubt about it. Those words right now. This facial expression.

As expected, this guy is really Leont’s father.

3-3 Lost Child and Cooking

Where the heck is this place!?

I, who thought I would somehow manage if I just continued walking, am an idiot. This isn't just a house. But since it's no use if I just stay still, I just relied on my intuition and advanced ahead.

The time is still early but I can't really say it's early morning yet. Of course, the sun haven't risen, yet. Because I slept early yesterday, the result is I woke up at a time when nobody is up yet. I believe I'm the only one.

"I'm hungry..."

Even though I lamented in a low voice, there's no one who can tell me the way, and a response didn't come back.

Person, answer... now that I think about it, it's possible that hope was born.

The moisture from the surroundings froze, and a small dragon showed its appearance while sighing a little.

"Kioran, even if you do your best, can't you speak?"

I asked a question, but Kioran said nothing and just looked at my way.

Silence continued for a while. I was just looked at by those round and cute eyes.

"...wait a moment." I shut my eyes, and revived the sensation of using magic after a long time.

In the middle of that, a high-pitched voice resounded in my head. It's seems like someone is coming over. As usual, I made Kioran disappear hurriedly out of habit, then looked for the person whom I can ask for directions.

There was no one even if I looked around in my surroundings.

The Kioran I surely get rid of a while ago is still on the same spot.

“I used El’s magic power.”

“That’s why, I said! Your magic power!”

Kioran raised his voice.

<Note: Kioran’s gender wasn’t specified so I’m using the standard English rule that masculine pronouns should be used since using ‘they’ and related pronouns is just weird since my mind is set on believing that it’s a plural pronoun.> “Why!? You’re not an old man...”

I said so as I hang my head.

Kioran’s nose twitched in irritation. But, it can’t be help. I just can’t accept that this guy knew how to talk first before he can use magic.

“Speaking of dragons, it’s a dandy grandfather, I think? Somehow saying something like, ‘let me give you an advice’. Putting that aside... what’s the meaning of this?”

“I~diot! You idiot!!”

I breathed a sighed while he let out abusive remarks. I’ve had enough. I’m sure this was entirely because my magic is still immature. I still need to practice. Even though I’d like to believe that our character are not the same, the part where his vocabulary is poor seems similar to me.

Meanwhile, the sound of my stomach echoed in the silent hallway. I remembered that I arrived into this kind of situation because I felt hungry a while ago.

“That is, can you identify the smell of food?”

My words were ignored by Kioran.

“I’m begging you!”

I decided to conveniently forget the conversation from a while ago, put both my hands together and begged him.

“I’m not a dog!”

When I saw that, I understood. From the start, he’s just me in a dragon form.

“I’m saying I can’t do such thing as imitating a dog!”

I gathered that from this dragon that dog and a dragon are extremely different. Right now Kioran is small and only has the size of a chihuahua. Well then, what should I do?

“If you understand then it’s good. I’ll allow you to apologize...”

“I’ll turn you to a dog right now.”

Then I smiled at Kioran, meaning ‘there’s no problem’.

I started building up magic power as much as possible. Perhaps I should have made a dog from the start. Maybe because I fixed him as a dragon once or because it has little magic power, he wasn’t able to change shape. The magic power is a consideration. I used large magic power so it can use reasonable strength.

However, Kioran hurriedly flew lightly to escape, but he looked back towards me from the bend in the road when I cried out.

“Wait a moment! Come here, come here, come here, I said!!”

What’s the matter, you say? It’s because some of the large quantity of magic power I put out this time disappears every time he moves too much, so I was scared. That’s why I don’t want want him to move.

“Just a little more.”

“No! I don’t want to be a dog!!”

As I heard those words, the magic power that I gathered in my both hands decreased in a moment.

“Is that it, huh...”

That high-pitched voice is definitely a small dog’s, as I lamented in my mind, I ran after Kioran as if I’m being chased, so I won’t lose sight of him.

“Oi, are the preparations over there finished?”

“Who’s in charge here?”

Running after Kioran, I finally arrived the kitchen, where shouts always flew past each other similar to a battlefield.

“Uhm... someone...”

“This place isn’t where you wash plates, apprentice!”

That voice that I produced with all my might was intercepted by several voices and seemed to not reach anyone’s ears. In the first place, the Cooks’ backs are so large so it feels like nobody recognizes my existence.

To look for a person who is willing to listen to me talk, I went inside without interfering with the people walking about.

With Kioran guiding me, he left a message saying he’ll play for a moment and went somewhere. Somehow, he doesn’t just talk, it seems like he acquired even the ability to disappear and to appear without permission.

When I dodged a person walking, I simultaneously came into the edge with a few people. Everybody looks busy so I didn’t call them out. Should I just give up and return and just wait until it’s time for breakfast...? It happened at that time when I began to think about it. I found a young man who seems to be doing something in a place slightly apart from everyone. Talking to him looked easier compared to other people. As I thought so, I approach that person. That person might be an apprentice. His way of holding the kitchen knife was dangerous.

“You’re slow! Finish that quickly then wash the plates.”

The man was suddenly surprised from the shout, the vegetable that he was holding in his hand dropped. When the cook nearby discovered, he began to shout again.

“A guy who doesn’t work properly can only eat cooked rice!”

“I’m so sorry!”

The foot I was just about to step on ahead unintentionally stops.

So it was not me...?

I see. The ‘guy who doesn’t work’ was not referring to me. The apprentice to was scolded apologized desperately, and continued struggling with the kitchen knife again. I, who came to here to get food, become ashamed. If a man will not work, he shall not eat.

What can I do? I don’t know how to cook. At the end of the kitchen, there was a large mass of plates that needed washing if I just stretched my right hand.

I instinctively looked at my clothes. I'm sure that since they're clothes from a rich person's house, then they are expensive. So I won't become dirty, I wrapped myself in a huge pile of clean, white cloth.

Washing dishes. I did a lot of practice in Home Economics and helping in the house. Now that I think about it, the cafe should serve a bit food or something. I'll watch and learn the techniques of those skilled, after this I'll ask for that as salary. It's killing two birds in one stone.

My heart jump at that splendid idea that I thought by myself.

Eventually, as the sun shines from a window, I forgot that I was hungry just before and got engrossed in washing.

3-4 Lessons and Misery

Morning of the day El got lost, dining hall.

The morning sun that shines through several windows left open illuminates the room where yesterday's disastrous scene was completely hidden.

...it was really harsh to the eyes.

With dark circles under my eyes, the obviously haggard me breathed out a small sigh as I recalled the night before while setting the food on the table.

I wonder since when was it? Before I noticed it, everytime Lucsher-sama needs something, she calls for me instead of her own son Matthias. It's not that the West Vern House's parent and child relationships are particularly bad. Lucsher-sama is strangely close with my mother, that it seems as if both Matthias and I have two mothers together.

When I was a child, I heard it once. While I was being put on clothes like a dress-up doll, she said 'Why is it not you?' Then she hid her mouth behind her folding fan and while laughing, she told me this.

"I mean, Leont. Aren't you more interesting than Matthias?"

Is that it? Isn't it because Matthias is just a cold child that I got dragged into it as a result?

I can't forgive it! Damn Matt...!

It wasn't only that. Simply because I was always together with him, so many misfortunes happened to me, I grasp the knife in my hand unconsciously as I remembered that.

During that time, Lucsher-sama who finished eating her meal, placed down the spoon quietly and spoke about El-boy.

<Note: -bou (坊) is an honorific that denotes familiarity, and usually means boy. If I left it as it is, it will sound something like 'elbow' so I went with El-boy. XD>
"About El-chan, I think it's better for him to learn various etiquette, so I asked for a teacher."

Etiquette... teacher... it somehow awfully sounds familiar.

But, Matthias reacted to those words faster.

“Etiquette, you say...!?”

Even if I can't see his face, I know by his voice that he was panicking.

“Yes? Since Shuri taught you, too, I thought it would be better that way. Besides, I already asked her. I'm sorry. From today...”

Lucher-sama laughed delightfully, thinking there was nothing was wrong with this situation.

“First of all I promised him I'm going to be his teacher today for his studies.”

My mother's lesson on the first day is harsh.

When El-boy was asked for his consent, as if he was bewildered for being addressed so suddenly, he faced towards me and nodded his head. Because I didn't say anything about studying today, it's natural that he'll be surprised.

“Is that so? It can't be help, he'll just take the lessons tomorrow.”

It seems she hadn't even considered it at all.

Once she decided on something, it can't be overturned anymore. The only thing I can do now is give support.

After all, Matthias should make sure that no one knows about it.

— That the object of his first love is actually that person.

“Alright? Mother, El-boy just arrived here yesterday that's why, just finish it the morning.”

“Of course, I know. Why are you checking so much since a little while ago? Mother is hurt~”

“Mother is so hurt~”

“Aa, sorry, sorry.”

It's no use. I sat down next to Matthias who was already sitting since earlier.

“Is it alright?”

Immediately, Matthias leaned forward on the table and asked in a low voice so Mother can't hear it.

"Do you think it's alright?"

On the contrary, I asked to his direction.

"I don't think so."

That might be so. If I thought about it, this man in front of me doesn't seem like the usual Matthias von West Vern.

Mother's lesson started. This is the place from the other day that now became one of El-boy's rooms. We're looking over the situation from a corner in the room so as not to get in the way.

"Which reminds me..."

I began to talk to Matthias as I took my eyes off Mother and El-boy.

"What is it?"

"When I entered El-boy's room I thought, was that there before?"

I noticed this a while ago but most furniture were charred. I came here after Father requested me to check it, so everything should be normal.

But Matthias had the expression that he doesn't know what I was talking about.

"Even though it's from practicing magic?"

"Aa. I was surprised for a moment. My bad."

"I don't really mind..."

The new furniture will be paid by the West Vern family. I just order them. Especially since it's for El-boy, should I replace them with short furniture? I feel like that guy is not growing taller. Even now, he's still small.

At any rate, it's unusual that Matthias doesn't have a control over his magic. Whether you're good or bad at magic, it depends on how you can manipulate them perfectly. Naturally, if it's this guy, it's impossible that he can't do it. What in the world could have happened? Well, it's impossible to imagine that.

Speaking of which. Mother, it's lunch time, y'know?

It's Matthias' voice. What is it? This troublesome person...

"Leont! It's Edna!"

"What's wrong!?"

When I answered his words that can't be allowed to pass, Matthias looked at me with an astonished expression.

"You were sleeping!"

If I remember correctly, after talking to Matthias, I lost my consciousness a while later.

The sun had already set when I looked at the window. As I feared. Before my eyes, El-boy is being taught table manners.

"El-sama is doing his best, so do your best to!"

The reason that we're here though is that there's nothing to do in particular. That's it. My mother is very gentle. That's usually the same in lessons, too. But there's one weakpoint.

She forgets the time. Even though we've decided until only a certain time, she doesn't bring the lesson to an end. Moreover, the lessons unexpectedly uses up stamina. Matthias and I took them together. I got through it painfully with the thought that it's not just me. But this time, El-boy is alone. It's too painful... That's why we're giving moral support.

Rather, now that I think about it, I shouldn't need those manners. Surely, it was so I can keep Matthias company.

Speaking of lessons, I quarrelled with Matthias several times in the old days which to choose if we have to, either my mother's lessons or Lucsher-sama's fitting room...

"I suddenly remembered."

For some reason, Matthias begun to talk with a serious look.

"Why, you... why did you make the knives, forks and spoons this morning completely extinct?"

What was that? This time it was my turn to ponder on it.

Morning? I see! This morning!

“It’s all your fault!”

He began to remember the grudge he was starting to forget, and raised his voice.

As a result, Mother glared at us. Really, she ignores her own faults that she already extended for how many hours.

You noticed my voice, but do you not notice that your student is already half-dead in front of you?

El-boy, you’re not bad. Next time, you absolutely need to exert yourself in your study hours.

Alright! We have plenty of time. Today, the man with the cool-looking face sitting next to me seems to say that as he complained to his heart’s content.

3-5 Lessons and Studying

What is happening in this house?

With fuzzy feelings, I picked on the salad.

However, I stopped the fork in the middle of doing it. That's right. I should mind my manners.

It appears like living in this house isn't as easy as it seems. I haven't understood this since I arrived until this day, but the mysterious scorch marks I saw all over the house made me uneasy.

Can I really keep on living here...? Shuri-san's lessons this morning have to be continued the next day for me who doesn't know aristocratic manners.

I'm sure it must be disappointing to get stuck with some brat who doesn't know etiquette.

"El-chan, Shuri spoke of you greatly. Because you know, it's fun having pupils who are fast learners, today too—"

"Lucsher-sama! Today, today please let me teach him, too!"

Leont replied to Lucher-san's words surprisingly fast. Why was he so desperate?

"Now that you mentioned it, that's right, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is!"

With a disappointed expression, Lucsher-san stood up.

"Then, I'll tell Shuri so do your best in studying, alright?"

Saying that, she left the room while laughing 'ohohoho~'. Do all female aristocrats give off that sort of impression?

"Arithmetic or Social Studies, which is better?"

A study session with Leont. The tea and several books that Edna left were placed in the desk in front of me that wasn't there yesterday.

“No, wait. Don’t I need to learn reading and writing?”

I asked him a question and he seemed to suddenly remember. ‘Wait for a while’, he went somewhere after saying that.

I inevitably became alone in the room. Since I had spare time while waiting, I drew the book, which was separated a little from the others, to myself with a lot of effort and flipped through it. I thought I could go with arithmetic but as expected, it’s a little different... The way they write the numbers seems quite different.

“Sorry to keep you waiting~”

Leont came back while holding a large rolled-up paper in his right hand. The paper made a rustling sound when it was spread on the desk.

I wonder how many years since I’ve last seen something like this? It’s Alternate World Edition Alphabet Chart. The numeric characters I wanted to see were also written.

<Note: alphabet – aiueohyou (あいうえお表) literally means the A-I-U-E-O table, which is actually the Japanese syllable table equivalent to the list of English alphabet. See here. Since it’s written in Japanese, of course it will have Japanese context. But this is a different world so what Elmer meant was, it’s an alphabet chart for beginners.> Hmm... Was it like that?

I can understand it roughly.

Lifting my face from the alphabet list, Leon’t was writing something in front of me.

“Oh? Can you see it? I’ll leave this little thing here. If you can’t understand any part, just look at here. I saw a textbook about arithmetic a while ago, so there’s no problem on arithmetic.”

I was given one piece of paper. When I scanned it over, it certainly had a one digit + one digit addition written on it.

Nevertheless, it’s Leont’s messy penmanship... I thought, and Leont look at my way happily.

“You don’t understand it? I’ll teach you!”

I thought about it. Is a seven year old a first grader or second grader in primary school? They seem to enter school at the age of five in this world. So that means, a third grader. If that's the case, knowing arithmetic is fine.

I took the papers from Leont and began working on it.

When I raised my voice, Leont started checking the answers.

Yes, it took a long time, but I think they're indeed correct.

"All the answers are correct. Then, next is this one."

Alright! It's addition again!

The sound of paper rustling and gliding resounded in the quiet room, but stopped swiftly all of a sudden.

"This... is this truly your level?"

"Yes! Even so, was it difficult? Maybe it was difficult... but I solved it."

"It's excellent!"

Is this really a question that grade schoolers solve?

Studying in this world seems to be very difficult, and I was just solving an equation.

Addition, subtraction... even as far as division was good.

After solving a lot of problems, Leont took out a difficult problem. It wasn't grade school level. But, I intended to say 'I don't know' when I heard a brief comment 'You can't solve this?' from Leont, and drew back.

'Can't solve' was it?

The pen on my hand worked tirelessly around like an engine on full throttle being released. I am getting used to these numbers, it's a good feeling.

How's that!?! Even though I didn't have the expression which says that, I thrust the solution to Leont.

He returned a stupid answer and began taking a look through my paper.

I didn't know his expression due to the paper. Could it be possible that I made a mistake? A short time later, Leont's hand began shaking with a clatter.

What is it? I thought, looking blankly at him. Suddenly, he threw the answer at me then stood up and shouted towards me.

“El is an idiot! Idiot!”

3-6 Real Feelings and Family

Idiot, idiot!

“Idiot, was it...?”

A while had passed since Leont ran out and left, but word ‘idiot’ was still going round and round in my mind.

Although the problem he took out was easy, I solved it at a considerably serious speed compared to Leont.

“...I need to study.”

My voice without energy leaked out together with a sigh.

What should I do to become intelligent? It’s studying. I have confidence in arithmetic. No, if math is no good then what about other subjects? For the time being, let’s go with history. I read a book once, but I wonder if it’s fine just that much?

While thinking about those things, I searched for the math book in the room. I looked for something suitable and began to solve it.

It’s surprisingly difficult. If I failed here, I’ll be laughed at by Leont.

“That’s right!”

After I began to write the proper solution, I noticed it. All the names of the theorem I remembered so far were different. Perhaps, they were named after the person who discovered them?

Because there’s nothing I can do about it, I’ll prove it from the beginning and carried on writing the numbers vigorously.

When I finished solving several questions, a lot of papers were scattered on the floor and around the desk.

“I can’t do it anymore.”

It’s natural because I haven’t studied for several years.

Getting off the chair without moving its feet, I extended my hand to pick up the papers which fell into the floor, but somebody quickly snatched them away.

“Oh, my! You’re an expert!”

Uwaaaa! It was Lucsher-san who was in the room. I didn’t hear footsteps, so I didn’t notice at all and fell on my butt in surprise.

“May I have these?”

She says so, but Lucsher-san was already holding several papers in her hands.

Anyway, I’m finished solving. I’ll be thankful if she throws it away, even if she preserves my scribbles... I think there’s no helping it.

Since there was no particular reason to decline, I nodded in agreement and Lucsher-san laughed in delight.

“If you’re finished studying, I want you to wear these Western-style clothes.”

“Western-style Clothes?”

“Please excuse me.”

When they saw Lucsher-san pulled out those clothes from somewhere, a maid received them politely, and the two other maids took charge in taking off my clothes.

Though I was used to being assisted on changing clothes after being reincarnated, I don’t like stripping in front of this many number of people, but the demon maid-san held my hand when I tried to run away.

“Please do not move.”

I did not know whether I was weak or she was just too strong, but in a blink of an eye, they finished putting the new clothes on me.

“It’s well-matched!”

Lucsher-san and the maids looked at me who have finished changing my clothes, and then unanimously praised me.

Eh? I felt like I’ve just heard a lot of voices.

When I looked over my shoulder to my back, standing there were a large

amount of clothes secured on a hanger lined in a row and some maids holding them. The maids are members of the people who I saw in that room.

Still, it's a terrifying number of clothes. All of these are mine...?

I looked at my clothes once again properly. The cuff also fits the cloth which seems to be expensive, it's the so-called custom-tailored. Even I understand this is expensive.

No matter how they're rich people, if I receive this do often, I feel guilty.

"By any chance, did you not like it? If so, this one—"

"I...I can't accept it!"

I have to say it now. It's slightly strange, but I'm certain that Matthias and Lucsher-san looks after me because they're good people. The only thing I can seem to do to return the favor is by washing dishes.

"Why is it? Don't you like Western-style clothes?"

I stared at the pattern of the closed fan without looking up so I can't see Lucsher-san's face, and said.

"That's not it..."

That's right. I remembered it while speaking. The loneliness I felt when I saw the outside world. These people don't know that I'm someone who came from a different world.

"That's not it, I'm not really a child... these much clothes... someone like me..."

I often thought I had no parents, so if I can have food and a place to live then it's enough. And I must not forget it. The fact that 'I' am different from this person who is supposed to be 'me'.

Lucsher-san's right hand which was holding the trembled, and the huge sound of wood breaking resounded.

"Who would, dare say that? Who would dare?"

For every word Lucsher-san said, the temperature of the room rapidly rose.

"Someone like me..."

I wanted to raise my voice in denial but I only let out a small muttered grumble, and she didn't seem to hear me.

"El-chan? As for me, I trully think that you are a child, so that sort of thing, you can't say it!"

The folding fan completely burst into flames at the same time Lucher-san said those words.

The flame gradually spreads all over the room while winding similar to a snake. My body felt hot at the same time, too.

"That's because, you are my child, got it?"

Agitated, I merely heard those words in fragments.

My real feelings. I wonder if they leaked out because I met a 'mother' for the first time.

I answered in earnest. It's a litte hot so it seemed slightly forced.

Is this supposed to be the place where I can belong?

3-7 Genius and Letter

“Matthias! Listen to this! Matthias!”

While I was writing a letter in my room, Leont abruptly came running and started to make a commotion.

“First of all, you should calm down. What in the world happened?”

He was never a calm person, but he’s really strange this time.

I gave up on writing the letter and faced Leont.

“El-boy made me suffer a cruel experience!”

“That’s obviously a lie.”

Leont said something impossible the moment he opened his mouth, so I quickly cut him off.

“It’s true!! Come look, here!”

He said that in a forceful tone, so I stuck out my right hand in front of me so I can take a look at it.

I don’t know if it’s because of the air which leaked when he let out those words, but a small quantity of ash got on my hand and fluttered lightly in midair.

“They’re falling.”

The ash scattered further as Leont moved, dirtying the floor. He raised his eyebrows when he saw that. The person himself who made a mess was amazed when he saw my hand.

“Ah! You burned it! El-boy’s...”

“El-sama’s what?”

I was about to sit back on the desk thinking I’m fed up with him, when my body stilled upon hearing those inexcusable words. Which reminds me, wasn’t Leo supposed to be overseeing El-sama’s studies?

“It’s as I said! El, to me... Remember that test I failed in middle school? It was

caught in the book and I thought I'll play a prank at him. Then, he easily solved it!!"

Now that he mentioned it, I think he did something like asking me to tutor him in Mathematics.

Coincidentally, I remembered Leont was discovered by Richard-san at that time, so he concealed that failed test in a bookshelf out of fear.

"Are you listening to me!? That was solved by El!!"

"Unbelievable."

While I understood that this was what he meant by those words he said from the start, I also denied that something like that was just impossible.

Though I read aloud picture books to El, I've never taught him anything and I didn't arrange for a private tutor.

"Was I really that dim-witted!?"

"If your're asking me whether you're an idiot or not, I'll say you're not bad. Therefore, it's complicated."

"I'm extremely hurt right now."

Why is this guy making a racket when he says, "I'll risk it on the morning of the appointed day," one week before the test? The truth is, I've never had a failing mark during my academy life even when I don't listen to the lessons but that doesn't mean anything amazing, does it? The subject is my strong point so I get sufficiently good results.

"Right, right."

"Listen to my story properly!! In the beginning, when I showed him the chart where the letters and numbers were written, El-boy stared at it with a serious look. That's why, I thought it would be nice to make him solve addition problems. When he saw it, he looked at me momentarily and he had something that seemed like a disagreeing expression. Why do you think so?"

"Maybe he hates Leo."

That's the only thing I can guess from the current story.

“Hey! That’s totally wrong! I noticed after that, I think that he had that expression when someone solves a problem. He memorized those numbers and easily solved it, he’s a genius! Moreover, it’s unheard of!”

“Ah, Mother. Did something happen?”

“Oi! Are you listening, Matthias!?”

Leont left the door opened when he entered so I saw Mother walking down the corridor. Though others might not notice, but she appeared to be pleased so I unconsciously called out to her.

“A...aah! What is it, Matthias?”

As I thought, there’s something strange. She began to talk in an instant, and her left hand moved unnaturally so I was curious.

“Mother... Is there something you’re hiding?”

“There’s nothing!”

If it’s the usual Mother, she’ll never show that behavior as if she’s concealing something. She lives in the women’s society as the top, that’s why secrets are her specialty.

“Just please be good and show it to me.”

This room’s door is always closed so she might have relaxed her guard. Mother gave up and held it out and I accepted those several papers.

I was at a loss for words as I ran my eyes over the written characters.

What are these!?

“Lucsher-sama, These are from El-boy, aren’t they?”

I can’t believe it. But this handwriting that I haven’t seen before certainly supports Leont’s words a while ago.

“This theorem is...”

Because it’s a problem for middle school, of course I can solve it. However, when I looked at the answer carefully, it was written in a solution I haven’t been taught before.

“It’s amazing!”

As expected, El-sama isn’t just an ordinary person. Even I would surely say ‘it’s amazing’ even if I do not know whose work this was. However, I was even more pleased that it was written by my master.

“Nevertheless... why would Mother hide this?”

I suddenly wondered and asked that question to Mother.

“I thought I’ll place it in a frame and display it because it was made skillfully.”

“What are you talking about!?”

This is a newly discovered theorem. Mother should understand since she finished senior high in the academy. Moreover, if this gets announced, it will give rise to considerably new discussions. Did she intend to display it before I found out because she didn’t want to have this stolen?

“I’ll submit it to the learning research department in the royal palace, and return the original to you.”

This way, we’ll easily get over her selfishness.

“Return it immediately, alright?”

Then, Leont who was quiet since a while ago began to talk.

“But changing the topic, wouldn’t El-boy pass the entrance exam of the academy easily? In the first place, his comprehension is frighteningly fast so I don’t feel like he needs to attend there just to study.”

What Leont said was mostly correct.

“But there’s a meaning to graduating in the academy.”

“Then, just middle school?”

“No. It would be better if he stayed here for a while since coming here is supposed to serve as his recuperation, I think he’ll just enter midway grade school.

“If it’s El-boy, he’ll surely pass.”

Entering midway grade school is very unusual. You need to take the exam, and

you need to pass.

“That’s not the case.”

While I was in a serious talk with Leont, Mother abruptly joined in.

“There’s a foremost reason for entering the academy. That is, to learn human relations since it’s a miniature society by itself. Then find friends you can get along with. That’s why I wanted you boys to go to the academy.”

Certainly, that is correct. But when I heard Mother’s words, one thing occurred to me. Leont seemed like he thought the same thing. We stared at each other.

“El-boy’s friends...”

“...there’s no one.”

Why is that? Certainly, children of aristocrats enter society early on but since the circumstances of their Houses are complexly entangled, they only have few friends generally.

How about El-sama?

There’s no one. Even the number of times he exchange words with someone is very few in number.

“I’m going to take El-chan to the next town for inspection. Meanwhile, please look after the house for me.”

Mother might want to improve El-sama’s relationship with others. Surely he’ll see people with different occupations, but there’s no one superior enough who can be his friend in the academy.

“Going to the town is good, however... I’ll go, too.”

“That’s no-good!”

It was a clear rejection.

“Why is it? Isn’t Richard at home?”

To put it bluntly, if Richard is at home then it can somehow survive even an army’s attack. Even when I was a baby, there were too much mysteries around Richard. By the way, if were talking about the subject’s son Leont, then I really don’t know.

“I’m going on a date with El-chan so you’re no-good~”

As expected, Mother is really Mother.

“Matthias, you’re writing a letter?”

When the discussion with Leont and Mother about El-sama’s future was finished, Leont noticed the letter on the desk.

“Can I look?”

I’m really not troubled even if he saw it so I handed it over to Leont.

“Ah! So it’s from senpai? What’s this, what’s this! ‘Matthias, is your injury alright?’”

No matter how you look at it, he skipped too much. More formal things were written, you know?

“So this is your reply? Uwaaa... This is not good!”

“There’s no such thing.”

I’m still in the middle of it but, I wrote a normal reply.

“It gives off this feeling. I thought this before but, your letter is too stiff.”

I was told it should give back a lighter impression. It’s impolite to be stiff. Because it’s a letter, that thing should be natural.

“I think so, too. Matthias, you should write a letter that is a little friendlier. That person worried so much so it has a good impression. The contents should be changed, so you don’t need to worry since I’ll do it myself.”

Mother... she absolutely bears a grudge about El-sama’s answers.

“That’s a good idea.”

Leont nodded, and left the room with sympathy.

“Leont, good night.”

“Then, excuse me.”

What was that!? They came in like a storm, and then just left.

Because I lived in peace in the Green Water Palace, I forgot about this noisy life.

I was born and raised in this environment. I got used to it. I'm used to it, but...

“Hey... at least close the door...”

3-8 Mother and Memento

“El-sama, why don’t you go rest on the bed?”

Edna-san quietly tapped my shoulder.

Even though I’m supposed to be studying, it seemed that I somehow doze off in the dim room. The room had already become dark.

“Uh uh, I’ll go sleep.”

I rubbed my sleepy eyes while answering.

It’s been a little less than a month since I’ve come to the West Vern House. I wake up early in the morning to go to the kitchen, eat breakfast, play with Leont and Matthias and sometimes with Richard-san, everyday passes by with my time full of everything. But, I was told by Leon’t that I don’t need to study anymore. There’s no way I’ll give up so right now, I’m studying alone steadily to make an effort to honestly improve my knowledge.

“Please remember that you need to be early tomorrow.”

That’s right. I also have to wash the dishes tomorrow...

Although I’m doing that because I also wanted to do something, I came to think that I should help that apprentice everytime he gets scolded, since he does his utmost effort even if his skills are bad.

I’ve gotten used to washing, so I’m quite happy. Of course, I secretly observe how they cook.

“I missed it. When I come visit El-sama’s mother at night, she also often sleep face down on the desk.”

When I raised my face from rustling the bed, Edna was smiling.

It’s the first time I heard someone talk about my mother in this world. I was surprised of those words that came from Edna’s mouth.

“I worked as the lady attendant of El-sama’s mother.”

I didn’t know that. So that’s why she took care of me.

“What kind of person was she?”

“Let’s see. Her overflowing smiles always made the surroundings brighter. She loved surprising and pleasing others. His Majesty loved your mother very much. To the extent that when I looked at their way, I became very embarrassed. But, her body was a little weak to bear El-sama.”

“Is... that so...”

I thought my mother got defeated in a war and was executed. Did my father thought she died because she gave birth to me? In other words, if she didn’t gave birth to me...

“She understood that. Even so, she still gave birth and never surrendered. She loved El-sama even if you weren’t born yet.”

“Yes. Thank you...”

Did all my thoughts showed on my face?

“Which reminds me, I think there’s something she always wanted to hand down to El.”

Edna took out something important from her pocket and placed the box in my hand.

I opened the white box, and inside it was a necklace.

“El-sama’s mother passed it over in her last moments. She said she doesn’t need it anymore.”

“Doesn’t need it anymore?”

I thought she would say something like ‘Please take care of this for me’ when she passed it over.

“She had others. This necklace, she slipped out of the castle just to buy this from the town, she also bought it with her own money.”

“She wanted this that much?”

While I asked that, I lifted the necklace and it made a small sound while I examined it. It’s a normal necklace. At least, that’s how I see it.

“Sh got a lot of presents from His Majesty that she can’t even count the

accessories she owned. When she bought that, she said it was a present. In the end, she didn't get the chance to hand it over so I had to unwrap it myself."

"It's not a present for my father?"

It's a men's necklace from what I see so I asked. To whom did she wanted to hand this down?

"That's right. There's supposed to be a letter she wrote with all her effort. I don't know who had it, but no one came to pass the message. Right now, I don't know anything. But I think she'll be pleased if El-sama keeps it."

"I'll treasure it! Good night, Edna..."

"Please have a good night."

"Ah, please wait."

I stooped Edna who was on the way out of the room.

"What is it?"

"Thanks you for loving my mother and staying with her."

She's the person who died just to give birth to me. Even if I want to apologize or say thank you, I can't meet her anymore. But when I saw Edna's expression when she talked about 'Mother', it saved me a little. Even now, there's still someone who loves her dearly.

After Edna left, I got up one again held up the necklace near the lamp.

A very tiny letter was engraved on it. I noticed it when I touched it a while ago. Perhaps, Edna didn't notice it because the light's condition made her unable to see it.

Was it her name or the initial of someone's name? Or could it be that it's supposed to mean something? Don't tell me it's for someone she had an affair with.

"Even if I think of it, I can't really comprehend it."

I'll just sleep.

Thank you for giving birth to me, I mumbled to the necklace.

3-9 Work and Interest

[Unnamed Young Boy]

“Get up, there’s a meeting.”

The voice of the Old Geezer woke me up early in the morning. Even though I’m currently in a bad mood, why do I have to look for a missing kid?

“His appearance?”

I only asked shortly for the necessary things.

“He has a small stature and silver hair. You go search inside the residence.”

“The other members already went. Go move.”

“Yeah, yeah.”

I gave a short response while yawning, and then disappeared.

Matthias made use of everyone to search for that lost brat just because it’s his master, isn’t he a bit strange in the head? Still, the Old Geezer trained me.

While thinking about those things, I went around the residence by quickly moving through the air.

The Prince seems like he had silver hair. No, it’s not Prince but El-sama, was it?

It’s that quiet Prince . Ah, was it because he was almost killed by his father? I remember being told that when I returned from my mission. I didn’t know that His Majesty’s secret son was supposed to be disposed by the Old Geezer. I wasn’t told that much.

Because I knew about it, I stealthily examined him. I was bothered about it, why would a guy who had a blessed circumstance purposely refuse it?

“Not here, too?”

I’ve search all the rooms inside the residence but I didn’t see him. However, there’s also the possibility that he left the estate. I can’t find him no matter how much I searched for him in my assigned area.

Let's quickly end this.

Stifling a yawn, I turned towards the room where many of the servants worked.

"Even so, no matter how much I look at it, it's a ridiculously large estate."

Hell, how much servants do they have?

Because of my work, I've seen lots of residences in lots of countries, but this is still the largest when it comes to size.

"Keh, just because it's big, doesn't mean it's good."

I cursed without nobody hearing it while slipping out smoothly from the fourth laundry room.

And then I stood in front of the last room, which is the kitchen. I didn't just chose this place to end by chance. I personally turned to the last place.

Rotating my shoulders around, I who became fired up, relaxed myself and entered after erasing my presence.

The interior of the kitchen was still as hot as usual. It's not hot because they use fire for cooking. It's because the people inside are energetic. Unlike me who's been irritated since this morning.

I went around the room from along the wall. The variety of dishes being prepared were placed in a high dish stand.

Seeing that made me hold my empty stomach, and then I looked inside when I felt as if something was moving quickly.

The pots piled up blocked my view from this place. Was that a cook? Even if there's a suspicious guy here, this is the West Vern House's kitchen. There's nothing here particularly so it's fine.

Should I confirm it?

Honestly, it's a pain. But I feel like I should check it out somehow.

— Your perception is quite reliable.

The words that Old Geezer at that time during my training came into my mind.

Let's confirm it for the time being, and then leave.

I decided as I turned around greatly and then searched for the thing that was moving quickly once again.

There! Something is certainly squirming.

“It’s hard to see, eh?”

I clicked my tongue in irritation for being unable to catch the target.

It might be perhaps because of the distance. I palmed the knife from my waist as I approached.

As I approached, what I saw was a kid with a silver hair.

“A kid... it’s him!”

I relaxed and lowered my hand with the knife. He had a small back and it was as if he was assimilating in the white wall that no one noticed him.

But, why is he in such a place?

If he got lost, just raising his voice is fine. If it’s because he’s playing... choosing this place is weird.

For a brief period, I thought about it.

Either way, let’s return after I see what you are doing.

I moved forward step by step and stood behind him so he won’t notice.

When I saw the spectacle, I immediately pinched my cheek as hard as possible just like that.

I must wake up immediately from this dream and answer the summon of the Old Geezer! No, in the first place the summon was clearly a dream. No doubt about it.

It’s understandable that the I would think it was like that. The kid didn’t get lost, but it’s not like he’s playing either. He was washing the dishes.

If it was only that, then I can accept it with my open-mindedness.

But, why was that so?

Why were there be many transparent small birds near the child who had fluffy bubbles in his both hands?

Were those little birds standing in a line to support the dishes with white bubbles and then alternately washing them?

And lastly, why do I recognize those little birds?

I continued watching the dishes being cleaned one by one in utter amazement. And at last, I noticed that the last one was finished being drained.

At that moment, the big plate made a sound while being placed, the little birds disappeared and I came back to my senses.

I'll be noticed if he turned back around!

I hurriedly left the kitchen and ran to report that I found the lost child.

The young boy who finished reporting ran to the kitchen where he came from, faster than everyone.

He greeted the cook holding a knife in front of a big piece of meat. While there are a lot of fat cooks, he had a remarkably good physique.

But the cook kept swinging the knife innocently. Although he was cooking, he idly made big movements and the kitchen almost hit the young boy several times. The young boy avoids it with agility and finally successfully suppressed the cook's hand.

"Wait, there's something I want to talk about!"

He pulled him outside the room while saying only that. The meat which did not become known of the true shape was left on the kitchen table and the 'weapon' made a loud sound after falling into the floor. But the two figures already disappeared at that time.

<Note: The word buki – 武器 (weapon) was used in the succeeding paragraph instead of hamono – 刃物 (edged tool, cutlery) which was used in the preceding paragraph> "What is it!? Just now, all my efforts... Madam and the others' breakfast..."

"Haven't you noticed!?"

"Notice what?"

When the cook returned an answer that says he knew nothing about it, the

young boy gave up telling it to him.

There's no way this guy didn't notice.

The cook stayed silent for a while and then he raised his voice.

"Ah! I noticed, I noticed!"

"Why did you stay silent!?"

As expected, he noticed. If this guy reported it to the Old Geezer, I could have slept more.

"It's interesting! Every morning is fun!"

"Every morning? It's not just today?"

If his whereabouts was unknown every morning, how come there wasn't a search before?

"Usually, always!"

He laughed a 'gahaha' while violently patting the young boy's back. He twisted his body to escape, but a dull pain remained.

"He's an apprentice in an exchange for helping out, youknow? I save some trouble and he did seem to enjoy it. What about it? Were you worried about that child? Weren't you looking just a while ago?"

"That's not it!"

The young boy understood when he entered there, this guy is had bad tastes.

Piett. One of Matthias's shadow, a guy with a large build who resembles a woman. He usually works as a cook. He didn't know whether he was a cook before he became a shadow or he became a cook after he became a shadow, but he's one of the members who always meddles with the young boy.

That's why the young boy didn't want to enter the kitchen.

"It's disappointing that that child is a boy, isn't it?"

He laughed aloud again, and strike the young boy's back with his idiotic strength again.

He thought while rubbing his aching back.

He is certainly interested about him. However, it was because he wants to know about that.

The bird figurine which melted when he arrived home.

To check that, just a little...

I'll go see him.

3-10 Cooking and Outing

That's right... I completely forgot about it.

"What in the world does this mean!?"

Matthias' loud voice that I rarely hear resounded in my ears.

I was supposed to get up early because I was invited by Luchser-san to go to the town today.

"When I came in to your room this morning, El-sama wasn't there, how much do you think I've worried...!"

I thought of going back to my room soon after I've finished washing when Matthias jumped into the kitchen. While I watched that dazely, Matthias stood in front of me in an imposing stance and started to scold me.

"El-sama, are you listening!?"

I seemed to have troubled Matthias. It's impossible not to be surprised if you found out in the morning that a child went missing. In the first place, didn't I not tell Matthias I was washing the dishes? I curiously considered it after all this time.

He wouldn't have to worry if I told him from the beginning.

"I'm so sorry."

I believe that I was really at fault so I quickly lowered my head in apology. And then I continued talking.

"Tomorrow on..."

"You musn't! El-sama, what are you saying...?"

"Ah~ that's no good~"

He seemed to get even more angry when I said tomorrow. It was then when I shrank back, thinking 'what should I do?' that Lucsher-san came. Richard-san who was perfectly dressed up in the morning stood behind her. Well, I've never seen Richard-san in OFF-MODE since I came here.

“Mother, please shut up for a while!”

“The one who should shut up is you. Before you scold him, you should hear the reason! His reason!”

As soon as I heard a snapping sound, Matthias was hurled several meters away from the spot he was previously standing on. My eyes went back and forth between Matthias and Lucsher-san instinctively.

From what I can see, Matthias is grasping his forehead and Lucsher-san is striking the folding fan on her palm repeatedly, it was likely that he was hurled by that fan. I pretended not to see the white smoke coming from the fan.

“This is why a greenhorn who doesn’t have any experience in raising a child is useless.”

Lucsher-san spat out those words. Her manner of speaking towards her own biological son is extreme but no one minded the situation.

“I heard about it just now. El-chan, were you helping here? Though our cooks are excellent, they’re lacking in numbers as you can see.”

Those excellent cooks are working like zombies behind Lucsher-san. It’s the usual spectacle during this time in the morning.

“Madam, that isn’t required. If they’re short in hands, they only need to do three times the amount of work.”

When they heard the words Richard-san gave, all the hands of the cooks stopped at once.

“That’s right! Isn’t that so, everyone?”

And then, a large cook-san appeared before anyone noticed and worsened the situation by saying that while laughing heartily.

It’s a dazzling person with dark skin and white teeth paired with white clothes for a cook. From his manner of speaking, is he someone in a high position?

Other cooks unanimously returned an answer with extremely sorrowful faces. It doesn’t seem to be alright at all. To make them do three times the amount of work, what kind of devil’s act is that!? If it goes on like this everyone will die! I must absolutely say a denial here, that is my conclusion.

“You’re wrong. I want to cook.”

Therefore, I can only say that I want to do it and looked up to Lucsher-san. This isn’t everything, it’s just one of the reasons.

However, it wasn’t Lucsher-san who reacted first, it was the large cook-san.

“Gahahaha! That was it, afterall!?”

Were my words amusing? Why are you laughing happily? There was nothing amusing about it, and the only answer I was able to say was ‘Huh?’

“I’ll teach you how to cook!”

This time it wasn’t just the cooks, everyone in the room except me stopped moving. Why was it?

While I thought about the reason behind it, I was taken in front of the cooking table. It seems like he’ll immediately teach me now. He placed a raw meat on the table. Cook-san crouched down to take out the cooking wares. Nonetheless, what kind of meat is this?

“At any rate, cooking is wonderful! The secret is to be well-versed in a battle! Don’t you think so?”

Cook-san said that while nodding his head by himself and turned back his gaze. He didn’t seem to want me to answer at all.

I think he’s a little strange, but that idea was instantly denied. I can’t say for certain that he’s strange. Right now, I’m mostly accustomed to them. Everyone in the West Vern House are unique.

“Which want do you want to use?”

Is he making me choose a kitchen knife? I’m not yet familiar with them but the big one seems like it can cut off anything so it’s scary.

“A small one...”

“Small, isn’t it! Then if that’s the case, it has to be this!”

He said that in a high-spirited voice while handing it over. I let out a soundless scream when I saw it.

It was obviously something closer to a saw rather than a kitchen knife. It

slipped off, and I grabbed on the sharp edge in panic. Together with a dull pain, a small quantity of blood flowed. That vivid red liquid of mine wet the blade.

I quickly turned pale and asked for Cook-san's help.

"That's fine! Although you may shed a little blood while cooking, you'll eventually become good at it."

Cook-san laughed, showing his dazzling teeth.

You're wrong, that's not the method of cooking I want to do. I can't tell that to the cook-san who began handling the meat.

"El-sama, please don't die!"

Matthias exclaimed once again.

"I'm fine... just that... my body hurts."

It's a little more painful than what I uttered. My whole body hurts. Piett-san's first 'fun cooking class' came to an end.

It knew from their voices that the surrounding cooks are also worried. They're good people. With this, I wonder if they had been rescued from doing three times the workload?

Naturally, I was taken to the doctor after getting an injury from brandishing that weapon. The trip to the town that day was postponed until later.

Matthias, who will be house-sitting, waved his hand as I embarked on the carriage together with Lucsher-san.

I am exhilarated with my first proper outing. I think it would be better if Matthias came, too.

"We'll return immediately at once, alright~"

I remembered Matthias' words from some time ago just as we were departing, and tilted my head. 'Though I always say this often, but make sure to enjoy yourself in the outing,' is that it? The surrounding maids looked at Matthias with a suspicious look when he said that. Though the person himself didn't pay attention to them at all.

Well, never mind.

They left the West Vern House's estate.

It is a high-ranking aristocrat's estate that holds the West Fortress as its other name. Invading it is easy. However, you can never leave once you enter it. You'll taste three levels of hell. You'll regret being alive when you happen to meet those eyes.

There were stories that no one ever returned or escape from there there, so no one really meddles with that place.

Those rumors are famous in the towns near the estate even if they do not know whether those are just lies or really the truth.

With this, Elmer has met every person necessary for the defending the fortress. It was that kind of day.

3-11 Sand Box and Child

“El-chan, please feel free to look around.”

Lucsher-san left with a woman after leaving the reminder that she'll find me when it's time to go.

She said I can look around, huh...

After surveying my vicinity, I started walking to a random direction.

It was written in the entrance of this building that this is an orphanage. Although I was told to look around the town today, it's likely that this is where we'll meet up so just waiting here will be fine.

I was walking towards the center of the building when I heard someone's voice. I got closer to the direction where the voice came from and sneaked at look at them.

There are kids playing. In Earth, those kids might be in kindergarten or early years of primary school. There are four kids gathered around, playing in the sand.

Should I talk to them? I considered what I should do while hiding.

Originally, I love playing with kids.

That's why I want to talk to them. However, I need to confirm first that I do not look like a suspicious person.

I'm wearing Lucsher-san's favorite choice of clothes and shoes. My hair isn't disheveled, too. Alright. However, the bandage wound up around my body might be a little unusual, but it's not a problem. They're the wounds I got from standing frozen near Pielt-san.

While I thought about that, someone from behind tapped me lightly on my shoulder

“Do you want to play?”

I looked behind me and saw a middle school kid.

What should I reply? I only want to kill time though.

“Okay, let’s go!”

I was thinking what to reply when the kid grabbed my hand and walked towards the sandbox. I nearly tripped when we finally reached the sandbox.

“Ah~! It’s Big brothe~r!”

“Are you going to play with us?”

When they saw the boy approach, the children gathered while saying those words.

“Yup! I’ll play with you!”

When the boy said that, all of them were simultaeniously delighted.

“Big brother, who is this kid?”

The kid that noticed me pointed his finger at me while asking that.

“This kid wants to play with you. That’s why everyone, let’s play with him, ‘kay?”

The boy who was referred to as ‘big brother’ pushed me in front of the four kids.

“Great! Come here so you can be our comrade!”

I wonder why is it?

My current mental age isn’t the same as my age right now (here, ‘big brother’ is older) but I, who is older than the four kids, got caught up in playing.

“Speaking of which, why are you here El? You aren’t from this neighborhood, are you?”

Castor asked while we were digging through the pile of sand. Castor was the big brother who tapped my shoulder from behind a while ago.

“I came with Lucsher-san.”

I answered while digging at the opposite side. Even though we’ve been digging for about two hours, it seems like it won’t come to an end if don’t make a tunnel on all four sides so we continued on doing the same thing. Castor judged that the four kids don’t have the motivation and sense to dig up the hole so I ended up

doing it with him. The other children are busy moving around to compensate, so conversation naturally flowed among the two of us.

“With Lucsher? So you work for the Marquis?”

<Note: The actual term is [ryoushu-sama] or feudal lord since Marquis West Vern oversees the whole west part of the country. A Feudal Lord is actually another rank in nobility so I just went with Marquis.> I think I’m not a servant since I do not work for them. However I myself do not know so the answer came out as a question.

“They look after me... I suppose?”

“Are you an aristocrat?”

I’m more of a former Prince rather than an aristocrat, but I feel like I can’t say that so I stayed silent. Castor’s hand stopped from digging the hole.

Castor’s gaze is painful. It’s uncomfortable. It may just be my imagination but I feel like he’s looking at my bandages and I tried to unconsciously pull on my sleeve to hide my wounds. I hate the thought that I’m no-good at magic and yet, it doesn’t seem like I’m good at cooking either.

“You... you’re incredible.”

“That’s not true.”

I don’t know what he meant by incredible. Speaking of incredible, it may be the fact that I don’t get discouraged from studying even if I’m considered stupid. If I’m a normal kid, I might be a failure.

“Now that you mentioned it El, you live in the West Vern House?”

I took away the shovel from the mountain that was destroyed three times, and I saw Castor poke the hole with a wooden stick.

“Matthias-sama is there?”

“He’s there.”

It’s Matthias’ house and it’s obvious that he lives there so I nodded.

“Is it true that Matthias-sama’s condition isn’t good?”

“I heard this from a rumor, but it seems like his state is strange these days.”

His state is strange? I don't even know what the heck is strange or what is normal. But I think Matthias is fairly normal.

"For example?"

"I don't know much of it. I thought if it's El then you'll know, but... He played with us before so we're worried about him."

I recalled the recent impression Matthias left recently.

"He collapsed."

That's right. In the kitchen, smoke even came out of Lucsher-san's fan...

"Is he alright!?"

It seems like it's terribly painful. It looks to me like his forehead cracked.

With a strained expression, Castor stabbed at the sand hill desperately.

"Please ask Matthias-sama if he's alright!"

"Yeah. Got it."

[He asked "Is Matthias' head alright?"] Castor's message was engraved into my head firmly.

When Castor gave the order that entering one meter radius from the sand hill is prohibited, Lucsher-san's attendant came to announce that it was time to go.

"If it becomes difficult, you can come to us anytime!"

Castor hugged me tightly as he said that.

I'm glad that I was able to make friends today. Do people say goodbye in this world with watery eyes even though this isn't the last time we'll meet?

"Come again, okay?"

Saying goodbye to that warm person Castor and the children, we then left the orphanage.

"El-chan, did you have fun?"

What should I talk about today? I spontaneously showed a rare smile while I think about that.

“Big brother, big brother!”

In the courtyard where the sun is about to set, a girl holding a shovel in one hand pulled on the boy’s hem.

“Big brother, what’s wrong?”

“It’s nothing. I just thought that although I’m being cared of right now, if a small child like that isn’t discouraged even though he’s being mistreated, then I should also need to give it my all. Well, shall we go?”

He muttered while brushing off the sand in the girl’s clothes and then holding hands with her.

The distant shadow of two people stretched over the sand hill.

3-12 Name and Starry Sky

It happened in a certain night.

“I have a request to ask of you.”

After I said good night to Matthias like the usual, a trespasser suddenly entered my room when I became alone.

Where was it? Where did he enter? I looked around the room while my mind is in chaos. The window that should have been certainly closed, was opened before I knew it.

I prepared to scream loudly anytime as I inched backwards slowly. I do not know the other person's location since the light is turned off. That made my fear even more greater.

My heart hammered fast. Yet, I didn't realized that I was shaken until I heard my voice, and I breathed deeply.

The intruder stopped talking for some reason. I gulped in the silence as I waited for the interrupted words of the other person.

He must have wondered why I said nothing. He started to asked me a question.

“Aren't you surprised?”

I am very much surprised. Maybe he can't see my surprised expression because it's dark.

Is this the alternate world version of an 'it's me scammer'?

<Note: It's me scammer (oreoresagi – オレオレ詐欺), specifically happens on phone calls. Scammers dial numbers of elderly and say 'it's me' and wait for them to mention the actual relative's name, then scam money from them.> And yet, it's not just that. The scam works because it's a phone call, so personally coming to say that is useless. Doesn't this guy know it?

My eyes gradually got used to the darkness and finally saw the other person's face faintly. I've confirmed his appearance. It's a face I haven't seen before. The

man is younger than I thought, is he a delinquent child?

“For the time being, sit down.”

Since I realized that he isn't going to attack me, I rolled up the blanket and urged him to sit down on the bed.

“Won't you make me your Shadow?”

It's a word I do not know.

I said while being puzzled. I became uneasy as soon as I asked that question since he might think I'm weird if it's something like common sense in this world.

“Ah? When I say Shadow, that is... Let's see, his job is to support you on your job... I think?”

I understood from the situation that it seems like there's no problem even if I do not know about that word. I was bothered how he ended his statement with a question. However, I comprehended what he meant so I knew what this kid came for. It became clear that this young boy isn't someone who went on the wrong path of life so I was relieved.

“I want to hear your reason.”

I want to know the reason why he purposely set me out. He's young so there should be a lot of alternatives for him.

“That is... I thought you seem interesting! That's it! Also, the little bird...”

He muttered while being embarrassed something about how cute the little bird was. He seems to know about the little bird I created. So it's not Kioran but the ones made with expertise, huh?

“I have also asked for Matthias' approval.”

He appears to be the extremely prepared type. That's greatly appreciated. But...

“Why!? Am I inadequate to you!?”

I shook my head sideways to show my denial. That's not it.

“I still don't have the qualifications to decide that. That's why, when I become someone great and acquire those qualifications, is it still alright for me to ask you

to become my Shadow at that time?”

Though I wish for him to become mine, it's still too early right now. It might take time. Even so, will he wait for me?

“Qualifications...?”

He repeated my words with wonder.

“I do not have anything yet. But, I'll absolutely obtain them with my own hands.”

I fully realized how powerless I am as I stared at my palms.

“As expected, I am glad I chose you. My intuition says so. If I am with you, I can encounter interesting things.”

He appeared happy when he said that. I do not see what's so interesting about it but I laughed vaguely for the time being. I do not want to put a damper on his happy expression.

After that, the both of us talked for a while.

He will continue doing his current work until the time comes when I can declare that he can be my Shadow.

“Please treat me well from now on...”

I extended my hand for a handshake but I do not know his name so I faltered.

“Calling me Shadow is fine.”

He said such thing curtly while looking at me.

“No. I won't call you Shadow. You are not just a shadow as far as I'm concerned.”

In the darkness, his eyes full of seriousness stood out as he watched me intently.

“What's your name?”

He stayed silent so it looks like he won't answer. Even if I can't see him clearly, his eyes were just like crystals but it's as if it didn't reflect anything.

“Yes... This bothers me.”

I wonder what I should call him? I wandered around the room randomly while thinking 'What to do?'

At that moment, the wind blew the curtains high up, and the night sky filled with beautiful stars caught my eyes.

"That's right! Sky... I'll call you Sky."

I do not know whether he doesn't want to introduce himself or he just doesn't have a name, but I can't call him Shadow. If that's the case, then I'll just name him myself.

"You don't like it?"

"Y-you're wrong! Anything is fine. It's not like I care whether I have a name or not..."

Sky was looking down so I can't see his expression. But I'm relieved that he doesn't dislike it.

"Is that so? Now then, I'm pleased to meet you Sky."

He timidly stretched out his hand that's bigger than mine and firmly shook my hand.

"Then, I'm going. Call me if you're in trouble, El!"

Sora looked back with his foot on the window.

"Yeah. Don't play around when it's time for work, okay?"

As I said those words that's similar to what a girl says to her boyfriend, he threw out his body from the window. Sky disappeared as sudden as the time he came.

"Really, what are you...? Moreover, there are no phones here so how would I contact you?"

Well, that's fine. I'm a step closer to my dream so I felt great and unbothered with it. I shut the windows and drew the curtains.

The moon that was previously covered by the clouds came out so I felt slightly spirited. But of course, I didn't see Sky anywhere. In fact, I'm worried that he got crushed when he jumped out the window.

I dived under the bed just like before.

Even so, I was so surprised.

I tried to think back on what took place a while ago while lifting the comfortable blanket to my head.

I'm glad that I found a motivated staff. Let's aim for the world's best cafe together.

But the fact that he doesn't have common sense is a bottleneck. I must absolutely teach him that there's what we call as doorway in the house and the room. Let's start with that.

Note: About Sky's name. It's actually Sora (ソラ) but I used Sky since most characters have foreign names, so using Japanese is a bit... Let me know what you think. :)

3-13 Sweets and Glance

I thanked the cook-san who assisted me on the last minute.

I fiddled with the bundle on my hand while I walked in the hallway.

When I went out of the room, I was secretly given cookies. The apprentice made me take them stealthily. Since the beginning, that person always got shouted at. Well, there's no difference even now since the higher-ranked cook-san still shout at him.

Piett-san's cooking method, which was swinging a knife around, was deemed too dangerous so I was thought by the Vice Head Chef instead with uncomplicated dishes. But unfortunately, the lessons will end today.

The time is nearing. I spent more time than I thought so I walked quicker towards the entrance hall.

The long hallway is really a problem at this time. I can't arrive at my destination immediately.

"Sorry for making you wait."

I found Matthias giving instructions to people around him while being surrounded by several luggage. I ran down the stairway.

Matthias noticed me appeared.

"Is it already fine?"

I was going to say 'yup' but a crushed voice came out from my throat instead. Suddenly, my body was squashed.

"El-chan, do you really have to go?"

"That's right."

Matthias answered in my stead since I can't talk from being forcefully embraced by Lucsher-san.

"Maybe I should go, too...?"

"You musn't, Madam. There's still work to do so please accomplish it properly."

Richard-san took the opportunity to peel me off Lucsher-san when her strength weakened.

“When will Cashbar man up? Matthias, since you’re going that way, please ask that of him.”

“I already said this but, that is Elder Brother’s responsibility.”

I see. Matthias is going to live away from his mother again. I thought I shouldn’t get in the way of this parent and child’s private time so I left Matthias’ side.

That reminds me, will Leont come with us? It’s likely that he’ll stay since Richard-san and Shuri-san are here. If that’s the case, I’m slightly sad.

Half the time I spent here is calm and the other is lively. I think I also got accustomed to Leont since we got along well.

It’s Leont’s voice.

“What is it?”

I looked at Edna-san who’s busy doing the arrangements in the entrance hall and I saw the annoyance that was Leont approaching her.

“Edna-san! Let’s build a happy family together! I love you! Please stay here and marry me!”

The servants nearby who were startled with that sudden proposal dropped the luggage they’re carrying.

“Denied. I’ll follow El-sama throughout my lifetime.”

While saying so, Edna-san picked up the luggage which fell nearby with one hand.

“If that’s the case, then I’ll also go to the Imperial Capital. I’ll follow El-boy throughout his life, too!”

When he finished declaring that in a loud voice that everyone can hear, Edna-san wasn’t there any longer. She went to pile up the luggage. Except for the person who just saw that scene, everyone continued working indifferently.

“And so then~ El-boy, please take care of me!”

Leont grasp my hands and the feelings I had from a while ago disappeared somewhere.

As expected, just having Matthias is fine. He's more than enough.

"Shall we go?"

The preparations have finished and I nodded to Matthias' words. At the same time, the large doors opened.

"Have a good trip."

What was waiting for us are the faces I've seen before. They stood in a row until the gate.

I took a deep breath and stepped my feet forward outside of the mansion.

Though it is the same scene as the time I came here, it's entirely different. The one who changed, it was me.

A carriage is parked at the end of the long, straight road. Attached on it is a cloth where the West Vern House's crest is drawn, a deep red bird spreading its wings.

I heard a rustling sound in my pocket before I embarked on the carriage. They're the cookies from a while ago.

I'll eat them inside the carriage.

"I'll enjoy them thoroughly~"

I may seem like a child who is going on an excursion, but it's because the West Vern House's deluxe cookies are really delicious.

I imagined them and I let out a smile unintentionally, but stiffened my face immediately when I suspected that someone might notice.

However, I think Matthias who's sitting next to me, definitely noticed. The evidence is that I can feel him intently looking at me.

"... I won't show you."

Even if you show me those eyes full of want, I have no intention of giving you even a piece. It would be bad if it gets stolen, so I'll check it first. Matthias doesn't appear like he's into sweets, but could it be that he actually has a sweet

tooth?

It's amusing so I'll play around with him for a bit.

"I'll show it to you, then."

I'll show it to him but I won't let him eat! I don't have much so I must eat it carefully. This is a reward for the person who did their best. I soaked in the sense of superiority a little and unintentionally let out a chuckle.

Yet, Matthias just gazed at me so I gradually became uneasy.

Are you angry?

Or could it be that he discovered me when I sneakily ate a piece a while ago?

It may be too late, but I licked my lips in an attempt to destroy the evidence.

Still, Matthias continued looking at me.

Maybe he's angry.

This guy, just how much does he like cookies?