# 112 - Strange Feeling (2)

1. A Strange Feeling (2)

The faint but distinct noises that had been coming from the other training rooms had vanished without a trace.

Only Emil's pounding heartbeat filled the space.

'I need to calm down.'

Emil was afraid that Liam would hear his heart beating.

If this pounding chest,

This frantically racing heart,

Were to be heard by Liam,

He would realize that Emil was hiding something from him.

His face flushed.

His face, hot as if he had a fever, flushed Emil's fair skin red, and Liam was silently watching him.

He must be hiding something.

And—in fact, Liam had a rough idea of what it was.

Bears are naturally quick-witted, cunning, and intelligent creatures, and Liam, who resembled a bear so closely, was as quick-witted and intelligent as one.

Aren't you a cross-dressing woman?

Isn't that your secret?

Cornering him like this was nothing.

It was so easy to corner him like this.

But if he did, he would lose Emil.

Liam couldn't imagine losing Emil in order to satisfy his curiosity.

"...L, Liam."

The very moment Emil's lips parted.

"It's okay, Emil. Whatever you're hiding, I don't want you to tell me if you don't want to. Tell me when you really want to tell me. That's all."

Liam took a step back.

Emil closed his parted lips again as he looked at Liam.

He wanted to tell him, even now.

His pounding heart was screaming at him to tell Liam everything and be relieved.

But then, his father's angry face flashed in his mind.

The hundred-year plan of Aufstieg depends on you.

Everything of Aufstieg depends on you.

I don't expect anything from you, being just a girl, but you have to do at least this much.

Thinking that, his lips closed.

But, his father was far away.

Liam was right in front of him.

Liam's face, that expression.

That...

Emil couldn't ignore it.

He finally parted his lips carefully.

"...Liam."

Emil spoke slowly but clearly.

Liam looked back at him.

"...As you said, I have a secret that I can't tell you and am hiding from you."

"Right? I knew it!"

"Yeah."

Emil's fists were clenched tightly.

His fair and soft hands were flushed red with blood, and now they were bleached white and trembling.

"I will, in the near future. I will...definitely tell you. I can tell you. Yes, really."

Was he talking to Liam?

Or was he talking to himself?

"Really? Then I just have to wait?"

"...Yeah."

Emil nodded.

Yes, just wait.

"Wait for me. Like now, by my side."

"I'm good at waiting, Emil. Don't worry about that."

Liam thumped his chest confidently and laughed.

Emil smiled awkwardly as he looked at Liam.

If only I had someone like this.

If only there had been someone to tell me this in that hellish mansion.

What would I have been like—

'...What should I have done?'

Carla lay in bed, unable to fall asleep.

It was quite late, and she should be sleeping so she could attend class tomorrow, but she couldn't fall asleep at all, which was also a problem.

In fact, she felt like she could burst with frustration.

Knowing that the biggest problem was the love triangle, why hadn't she prepared for it?

Couldn't she have said something to refute it on the spot?

And after the trial, the gazes of the nobles watching her.

The eldest daughter of a great noble consorting with a commoner was not something to be proud of.

In the end, the hatred, contempt, disregard, and belittlement mixed in those gazes.

She couldn't help but be bothered by those gazes, even though she knew she couldn't do anything about them.

"Haa..."

She didn't even know how many times she had sighed already.

Carla sighed like that, but she still couldn't fall asleep.

"Can't sleep?"

A shadow fell over her.

The moonlight streaming in through the open window made the shadow even darker.

"Did I keep you up?"

"It's not that. I just stayed awake because you didn't seem to be able to sleep."

"...That's the same thing, you idiot."

"I guess so."

Hehe, Ivan chuckled softly and raised his hand over her head.

In the past, Carla would have sharply told him to take his hand down and not touch her head, but this time she didn't.

There was no particular reason, but Ivan's touch was so gentle, and it felt somehow comforting, or something like that.

"It's not your fault, Carla. You didn't do anything wrong."

"...People won't think that way."

"Who cares about people."

"Nobles care so much about their reputation..."

"Just bear with it a little longer."

Ivan's fingers, which had been stroking Carla's hair, began to playfully twirl it.

The twirled hair quickly returned to its place when he took his fingers away.

Carla's hair, as black as if a large piece of the night had been cut out and placed on her head, sparkled even more beautifully as the moonlight streamed down on it.

"Does anything change by bearing with it?"

Carla grumbled.

Ivan smiled.

While Carla was worrying, Ivan had also been worrying.

And at the end of that worry, Carla couldn't come up with an answer, but at least Ivan had made up his mind.

"Because I'll restore your reputation."

"You?"

In fact, Carla knew that it was easier said than done.

Ivan had power, and the empire revered strength.

"So that your reputation won't be damaged at all when your name is placed next to mine. I'll become that kind of person, so just bear with it a little longer. I'll restore your reputation."

Carla turned to face Ivan.

Her violet eyes were looking at Ivan.

"...Do you even know how dangerous that statement is? There are only four great nobles now. Are you saying you're going to push out Bricone or Aufstieg?"

"No. I can't restore your reputation to that extent."

"What?"

Carla's eyes widened.

Right, come to think of it...this guy.

"I'm going to be the emperor, Carla. And you're going to be the empress. Then my word will be law, and your word will be my word. Then who would dare to ignore your reputation?"

Carla was speechless for a moment.

They say you lose your words when you're too flustered and embarrassed, and that was exactly the case.

"...Do you even know what you're saying?"

"There's no successor in the empire right now. I've been telling you all along. I'm going to take back my empire."

At Ivan's words, Carla jumped up and sat up.

She was so flustered that the blanket slipped down, revealing her nakedness, but she didn't even think about covering it as she looked at Ivan.

"You, you're..."

"It's not an unreasonable story. I've always said that, Carla. Maybe you just didn't take my words seriously?"

She couldn't say no.

Ivan had actually been saying that.

"...That was serious?"

"Of course it's serious. I'm going to do it, and I'm going to make you the empress. I can do it, and I will do it."

Ivan was smiling with a confident face.

And Carla was looking at Ivan.

But what was even more embarrassing was that Carla herself was thinking that Ivan might be able to do it.

'......'

Carla and Ivan, visible through the window, looked so happy.

As if to prove that there had been intense lovemaking, Carla and Ivan were both naked, and she could see them talking about something and then hugging each other, even though she couldn't hear them.

'That place should have been mine.'

Regina clenched the vial in her hand even tighter.

She could feel the texture of the liquid sloshing around in the vial.

The voice in her head was screaming at her to give this medicine to Ivan, but for some reason, Regina didn't want to do that, so she came out for a night walk.

And so, the scene visible through the window.

They were talking about something.

Carla slapped Ivan on the back.

Ivan pinned Carla down.

They wrapped themselves in a blanket.

And then they started moving—

Regina's eyes were dimming as she watched this series of events.

'I...I want Ivan back, Carla. I want to get Ivan back, no matter what.'

A dark shadow fell over Regina's eyes.

The soft and warm sparkling water-colored eyes were already dulled and the light could not be found.

The night was getting late.

Author's Note

As I said yesterday... I will be taking a break from Wednesday to Sunday!

# 113 - Strange Feeling (3)

1. A Strange Feeling (3)

The night was deep, and the stillness was as thick as the darkness itself.

The moment of pleasure was long, but not as long as the time spent in that darkness, and when Carla opened her eyes groggily, it was still before dawn.

‘...That beastly guy.’

Carla thought that her own body being too attractive was a problem.

If one has eyes, they would know—there's no way to be unaware of how attractive one's own body is.

So, while she could understand why Ivan was acting this way, and although that pleasure was undoubtedly addictive, making it hard for her to push him away, she ultimately accepted it.

‘It can't be helped. He's a man, after all.’

It was unavoidable, that was the way of things.

Now that it had come to this, it was also right for her to act like a woman of the Empire.

Carla blinked and looked up at the ceiling.

She felt a sigh escaping her, so she closed her mouth and let the sigh out through her nose.

In the darkness illuminated by the moonlight, the room was still deeply submerged.

The moonlight quietly shone as if it knew it was time to exit soon, and the stars had vanished, indicating that dawn was not far off.

She should sleep a little more, but Carla found that she could not fall asleep now.

Perhaps it was for the best—if she slept now, she might oversleep in the morning.

‘The Academy...’

Would it be better to drop out?

That thought suddenly crossed Carla's mind.

The trial had ended safely, and it had been declared that Carla was ultimately innocent, but that result did not end up being entirely pleasing.

What good was being found not guilty?

Her honor had plummeted to the ground.

No matter how much Ivan comforted her, her standing in noble society was something she could not change on her own.

Moreover, Contred, Contred von Schyskeil had clearly attacked her with a definite intention.

Under the guise of a petition for his son, a facade that no one dared to judge, he crushed Carla with his purpose.

The uneasy feeling that this would not end here also weighed heavily on Carla.

‘What should I do from now on?’

But she could not simply cover it up.

Dropping out was easy—but she couldn't let Ivan drop out as well.

If Carla dropped out, all the scrutiny from the Academy would be directed at Ivan.

That had to be prevented.

Ivan could not bear all of that.

Suddenly, Carla turned her head to look at Ivan.

That beastly guy,

Sometimes clumsy,

And sometimes a strange guy would pop out—

‘...But isn't he a bit different these days?’

She felt that the boundaries had become quite blurred.

Upon reflection, it seemed that there were not many instances where Ivan and the dark Ivan alternated appearances.

At times, she even felt as if they were the same person.

Moreover, just before the affair began, when Ivan declared that he would become Emperor, that Ivan did not even seem like the dark Ivan.

Carla quietly gazed at Ivan.

Even in the darkness, his face was clearly visible.

Usually playful and lighthearted, but when he was asleep, he had a different aura.

A serene stillness surrounded him, giving off a soft yet strong impression.

‘...If this guy becomes Emperor, then I...’

Would that even happen?

But somehow, Ivan made her think that it might really be possible.

— I will make you my Empress.

Carla cautiously turned to face Ivan.

As she quietly gazed at the sleeping Ivan's face, she impulsively reached out and caressed his face.

Tracing the gentle curve along his brow, and then down his smooth cheek.

His nose was so prominent that her fingers rose high.

And his lips were so soft.

“Ugh…”

When Ivan stirred, Carla quickly withdrew her hand.

She thought he might wake up, but Ivan scratched his cheek a few times and fell back asleep without a care.

“…You fool.”

Carla whispered to herself quietly and lay back down, closing her eyes.

She could afford to sleep a little longer.

There was still time before the sun would rise.

Thinking this, Carla closed her eyes.

“Are you awake?”

When Carla opened her eyes, the first thing she saw was Ivan's face.

He was looking at her with a smile that seemed a bit annoying.

As she quietly gazed at him, Carla couldn't help but smile back.

Instead of being surprised, she thought he looked quite handsome.

“Get up, let's go have breakfast.”

Ivan pulled her up into his arms.

Carla did not resist Ivan's touch and sat up obediently, while Ivan took her uniform from the wardrobe and hung it up neatly.

“If we don’t hurry, breakfast might end. I think it would be better to get ready quickly.”

“Okay…”

Carla let out a long yawn once more and got out of bed.

Breakfast was important, so she couldn't skip it.

However, the rumors spread faster than she expected.

As soon as Carla stepped into the dining area, she felt the piercing gazes directed at her.

The trial had taken place yesterday, and among the nobles who attended as spectators, there were surely quite a few parents of students attending the Academy.

She had suspected as much, but it seemed there were even more than she had thought, as the gazes pouring onto her were anything but ordinary.

Sharp stares followed her every step, observing her as if they were licking her.

— That rumor about Cascata yesterday...

— With a commoner...

— The honor of the nobility...

In truth, there were probably not many bold enough to openly gossip like this in front of the high nobility.

So they thought they wouldn’t be heard, but that was just their assumption; Carla could hear them clearly.

‘This is a bit troublesome.’

Tsk.

Clicking her tongue, Carla tried hard to ignore those gazes.

There was no need to pay attention to them; after all, there was no one who could openly speak to her—she tried to think this way, but perhaps it was just her own thought, as she found herself getting anxious.

“Ah, I wonder what’s for breakfast today.”

“…Ah.”

Ivan casually wrapped his arms around Carla's waist and pulled her close.

“It would be nice if they would just come out and tell us what breakfast is instead of chattering around like this. Don’t you think, Carla?”

Ivan said while looking around.

By openly displaying such affection, Ivan probably chose to reveal rather than hide it.

That might be better.

Still, Ivan was not a noble yet; how bold of him.

Whatever will be, will be.

The problem is that a problem must be addressed.

Carla relaxed her stiffened body and followed Ivan's lead.

She straightened her back, and her wavering gaze focused straight ahead.

For now, she could not ignore the whispers and gazes.

‘Well, what can I do? The rumors have already spread.’

There was nothing she could do now.

Cowering and shrinking would only result in more talk behind her back; nothing would change.

Perhaps this was better—

Carla walked closely beside Ivan.

Let them chatter away,

For there was nothing they could do—

She tried to think this way.

Even as they entered the dining hall, the gazes and whispers did not cease, but Carla tried to ignore them.

She sat across from Ivan, placed her tray down, and they greeted each other to begin their meal.

“Hello.”

Carla suddenly felt a strange sensation and looked up.

She put down the spoon that was headed for her mouth, and where her gaze landed was on Regina.

Regina was approaching Ivan directly.

Her beaming smile seemed to exude warmth, but as Carla watched Regina, she was seized by a foreboding feeling.

It was too clear to be just a hunch.

Carla, who was more sensitive to ripples than ordinary people, felt that something was off about Regina, and her mind was ringing alarm bells.

‘Something is strange…!’

No.

It was definitely strange.

That gaze, Regina's gaze was too deep.

Just the day before, it had sparkled with a fierce intensity as if it would kill Carla, but now it was gone, replaced by the usual tranquil blue of Regina's eyes.

If one were to say there was nothing strange about it, that could be true, but that was precisely what made it strange. Thus, Carla stared at Regina, even putting down her spoon.

And—

She found it.

“Re—”

Regina stood next to Ivan.

In her hand was a tray, and in that hand—

“Regina!”

Carla jumped up and grabbed Regina's hand.

As a result, the tray she was holding clattered loudly to the floor, and all eyes in the dining hall turned toward Regina and Carla.

“Carla, what are you doing right now?”

Regina said in a voice filled with irritation.

“Carla, what’s wrong?”

Ivan looked flustered.

“…Regina.”

The chill swept over Carla, and the students' gazes turned toward her.

Amidst those gazes, Carla reached out with her other hand to forcibly open Regina's palm.

“It hurts, Carla.”

Regina's voice dropped low.

At first glance, it seemed as if Carla was oppressing Regina, but Carla didn’t care at all. Instead, she exerted more force, forcing Regina's palm open.

“…Regina. What is this?”

In Regina's palm was a transparent vial.

Inside the open vial, a similarly transparent liquid sloshed around.

# 114 - Regina (1)

1. Regina (1)

The mornings at the academy were not so much quiet as they were usually somewhat noisy.

As if waking from sleep and stretching, a sound of groaning would escape unknowingly, the bustling commotion of those preparing for the newly brightened morning simmered in the air.

Such a place was typically the academy dining hall, where both big and small disturbances always occurred.

Thus, the confrontation between Regina and Carla occupied just a small corner amidst the noise, not needing to draw any particular attention.

It shouldn’t have been necessary.

That would have been the case for Regina, but wasn’t Carla somewhat different—

After all, she was the subject of the rumors circulating around the academy, and just by appearing confidently in the dining hall alongside Ivan, she drew attention.

As she was now confronting Regina, and oddly enough, seemed to be pressuring her, the commotion in the dining hall immediately quieted, and all eyes turned toward her.

“Regina. What is this?”

Carla’s low voice flowed out.

Something about it felt as if it were filled with suppressed emotions, a low voice that seemed to be stifled.

The intensity with which Carla glared at Regina was anything but warm.

A hint of violet Magical Power began to rise from her, as if she were harboring a chill.

“What have I done to deserve this?”

In contrast, Regina’s voice was calm.

If one were to strip away the softness and warmth from her previous self, this would be the voice that remained.

With that cold yet composed voice, Regina responded nonchalantly, facing Carla.

“This vial, tell me what it is.”

Regina held a small vial tightly in her hand.

Inside the transparent vial, a similarly transparent liquid sloshed around.

And it was with this that Regina had intended to sit next to Ivan.

It was an unfounded intuition.

If asked to provide a reason, she couldn’t.

But Carla was certain.

This was definitely something that could not be thought of as positive, something that would not bring about good effects.

Clearly, it was something that could harm Ivan—

Carla sensed that unfounded certainty.

Thus, Carla asked Regina.

What is this, she asked directly.

Regina quietly met Carla’s gaze.

Was the faint hint of a smile on her face merely Carla’s delusion?

“It’s none of your business.”

Carla bit her lip tightly.

She knew Regina wouldn’t answer willingly, but she had anticipated it.

“…Then tell me what you were planning to do.”

“That’s what I want to say to you, Carla.”

“What?”

Carla frowned at Regina’s response.

What on earth was she trying to say?

There seemed to be no context to Regina’s words.

“I just wanted to give Ivan a small gift. To my Ivan, whom I love dearly, whom you have taken away from me.”

At that moment, the murmurs around them began to spread gradually.

Among them were words like daggers aimed at Carla.

Did she not only eat with a commoner but also steal someone else’s lover?

It wasn’t like that, it wasn’t—

If Regina and Ivan were actually dating, she would gladly accept such insults.

She would acknowledge it and endure such humiliation.

But that wasn’t the case.

Regina hadn’t even confessed her feelings to Ivan, let alone dated him.

Whether she couldn’t or didn’t, Carla didn’t know, but in any case, it wasn’t something Carla had stolen!

“…Regina, I want to know what this is too.”

It was Ivan.

Due to the verbal daggers aimed at Carla, Ivan couldn’t remain silent.

Why was he angry? Why did the whispers directed at Carla annoy him and not sit well with him? That was secondary; he had to sort out the cause of this situation since it involved him.

“What is this? Tell me.”

Ivan stood up and looked directly at Regina.

Regina also looked up at him, and as Ivan gazed into her eyes, he realized.

—Regina was not in her right mind.

“Ivan. This is a potion that can help you return to me.”

“What?”

For a moment, Ivan thought he had misheard, frowning as he repeated the question.

“Back to the way it was. Just like before, so that you can love me again. This is a potion that will make you, whom I love so much, look at me again.”

Regina answered while looking directly at Ivan.

It was her confidence that momentarily left Ivan speechless.

The silence that fell was not only between the two of them.

Carla, who was listening, and everyone else in the student dining hall were left speechless.

What Regina was saying was clearly strange, and something was definitely wrong.

Regina wore a calm expression, yet a gentle smile lingered on her face.

But her fingers were trembling slightly, and seeing that, Carla instinctively felt.

This was not just a simple love triangle.

This was not some sordid spectacle arising from Regina’s obsession with Ivan.

“…Regina.”

While Carla was thinking, Ivan took a deep breath and spoke.

“What on earth is the problem? What has made you like this?”

At Ivan’s words, Regina tilted her head slightly, still wearing a faint smile.

“I don’t understand what you’re saying, Ivan.”

In that moment, Carla seized the potion from Regina’s hand.

The transparent vial, and the sloshing transparent liquid.

“Regina. You were trying to give this to Ivan, right? What on earth is this potion?”

Regina turned to Carla, her expression unnaturally stiff as if she might snap.

The smile still on her face was so absurdly chilling that Carla almost instinctively took a step back.

“This is a love potion, Carla.”

“What?”

“Ivan was supposed to love me from the start. But you interfered. You ruined everything, didn’t you?”

The blue eyes stared unwaveringly at Carla.

Her voice was very gentle.

But that was all it was—clearly, something within her was broken.

Something that had gone wrong and cracked had finally grown larger, and that something was felt emanating from her.

Ivan frowned and spoke to Regina.

“Regina. Get a grip. You’re acting strange.”

At Ivan’s words, Regina looked back at him and smiled.

“Am I strange? Ivan, do you think I’m strange?”

For a moment, Ivan felt as if his body had stiffened.

Regina was clearly off in some way—but at least at this moment, he felt that something was absurdly wrong.

“Why are you trying to push me away so much, Ivan? Do you hate me that much?”

Regina’s emotions had already become absurdly tangled.

Things that hadn’t happened yet, things that couldn’t happen, things that wouldn’t happen, all seemed to gather and twist, shaking her inner self to pieces.

Right now, they had to sort out this situation.

The one fact that came to mind for both Ivan and Carla.

Carla tightly grasped Regina’s wrist.

The reason was simple.

If Ivan touched Regina’s body, another strange rumor would surely spread from there, and it was better for Carla to act before Ivan did.

“Stop it. Enough, Regina.”

With her wrist held by Carla, Regina reached out toward Ivan.

As she tried to reach out to Ivan, who was still looking at Regina, Carla pulled her back to stop her.

“...Regina, I can’t accept your feelings. I can’t.”

Ivan hesitated for a moment, then finally, with a determined expression, said.

“I…love Carla.”

Thud.

Regina’s hand, which had been reaching out toward Ivan, stopped.

The sparkle in Regina’s eyes seemed to chill, and she slowly lowered her head, bringing her outstretched hand back to her chest.

“…I see, Ivan. You’re still…bound by your sense of responsibility.”

Regina said this as she looked back at Ivan.

Tears glistened brightly, filling her eyes.

“Just wait a little, Ivan. I’ll relieve you of your sense of responsibility.”

Regina shook off Carla’s hand that was gripping her wrist.

So forcefully that Carla, caught off guard, lost her grip on Regina’s wrist.

Then, with a swift turn, Regina dashed straight out of the dining hall.

As she watched Regina disappear, Carla picked up the vial that had been left on the table.

“…This is no ordinary problem. It seems like Regina is possessed by something.”

“It does seem that way. So, what should we do now…”

At Ivan’s words, Carla let out a small sigh.

This was beyond what she and Ivan could sort out alone.

Then, there was only one way.

“We need to inform Instructor Albina and Instructor Lorenzo. We need to identify the nature of this potion. This has gone beyond what we can handle.”

“That’s true. …It doesn’t seem like this will end here.”

Carla nodded at Ivan’s words.

Regina would surely move again, and someone had given her this potion after making her like this.

They would need to find out who that was.

If they didn’t, it was clear that the problem wouldn’t be resolved—

And the feeling that this problem was only just beginning was overwhelmingly strong.

A word from the author (Author’s note)

I’m back after a good rest!

Don’t worry, I’m not sick!

# 115 - Regina (2)

1. Regina (2)

"A love potion? This?"

Albina lifted the transparent, tiny bottle and peered at it.

Her pupils appeared greatly magnified through the liquid in the bottle.

Doubt, disbelief, suspicion.

The emotions reflected in her eyes were quite simple, and Carla, gazing steadily at them, slowly nodded.

"She said it's a potion that will bring Ivan back to her. A love potion that will return him to the Ivan who loves her."

"I heard it too," Ivan said.

Albina sighed softly and placed the bottle on the desk.

Before class even started, Ivan and Carla had come first thing in the morning, and now they were bringing her something so incomprehensible.

"I haven't heard of any such potion. Human emotions aren't so easily manipulated."

"I suppose not."

"If she really believed in something like that and tried to use it, it's safe to say Regina has a problem."

Carla didn't respond to this.

It was true that Regina was acting strangely, but it wasn't Carla's place to comment on it.

"Regina doesn't have any real knowledge of pharmacology. So it's unlikely she made this herself."

Either way, both possibilities are problematic.

The possibility that Regina made this potion herself.

It's a problem that she, with no knowledge or expertise in pharmacology, would make something based on dubious references—which were probably just made up by a con artist—and try to feed it to Ivan.

The other possibility is that someone else gave Regina this potion, claiming it was a love potion.

This was the biggest problem. Someone approached Regina, who was hardly in a healthy mental state due to her heartbreak, and handed her this potion—that would be a very big problem.

'Either way, it's a problem. Could it be related to the people who attacked the academy at the beginning of the semester?'

Albina took the potion and said,

"I'll take this potion and have its ingredients analyzed. I probably can't do it myself, so I'll have to commission it."

"Yes, Instructor."

Ivan nodded.

Albina stared at Ivan.

Her gaze quickly scanned near Ivan's neck, and she realized that the suppression necklace was no longer visible. Moreover, she couldn't even feel the unique sensation that the suppression necklace emitted.

'Did he lose the necklace?'

Albina wanted to ask Ivan about it right away.

But Carla was there, and it wasn't a good idea to reveal the existence of the necklace to Carla as well.

"For now, I'll investigate both possibilities: that Regina made this herself and that someone instigated her. If it's the former, it'll end with disciplinary action against Regina, but if it's the latter, the problem could become quite serious."

Carla had nothing more to say.

The investigation into these matters was beyond what Carla and Ivan could do, and it was right to leave matters that occurred within the academy to the instructor.

"Leave it to me, and go prepare for class."

All they could do was bow their heads and head to the lecture hall, following her instructions.

\*

At that time, in a secluded, abandoned building in the academy.

The less people visited, the faster the abandoned building aged, and now it was so dilapidated that no one would ever come near it.

Regina entered the building alone.

In a corner of the hallway, untouched by human hands for a long time, Regina gasped for breath, trying to keep the sound to a minimum.

'Failure, I failed.'

That was the only thought in Regina's head.

The love potion she was supposed to give to Ivan had been taken away by Carla.

Was it her fault for not realizing how quick-witted Carla was?

In any case, the truth was that she had failed, and now it was time to find another way.

Regina slowly calmed her breathing and waited for her helper.

"You took longer than I expected."

A woman walked out of the shadows.

White hair and red eyes.

She still wore a gentle smile, but her eyes were deeply sunken, hiding her true intentions deep within.

"It seems you failed. Regina, I'm very disappointed."

At her words, Regina's head drooped.

"I'm sorry. Carla…"

"There's no need for such excuses. Regina, the important thing is that you failed."

Regina looked like she was about to cry at her rebuke.

Her distorted face created wrinkles on her brow, and with an uncharacteristic frown, Regina looked embarrassed and on the verge of tears.

"...Regina, I'll give you one more chance."

Regina's head snapped up at the voice.

The love potion had already failed.

But not only that, she was being given another chance—

Then there was a chance to get Ivan back, wasn't there?

"Take this."

Another vial appeared before Regina's eyes.

It was the same transparent liquid as before, but this time there was quite a bit more.

"I put in a little more effort. You don't have to make him drink this potion. It's enough to just let it touch his skin."

"If I use this… will Ivan come back to me?"

The woman smiled at Regina's question.

With a confident smile, the woman replied,

"Of course, Regina. I would never lie to you. Aren't you Ivan's true partner? Not like Carla, that vulgar girl. You, who grew up feminine and proper, are the right match for Ivan."

"Y-yes, that's right."

Regina swallowed hard and took the vial.

Now she didn't even have to make him drink it.

It was enough to just get it on his skin, how convenient.

"You can't fail this time. There won't be a next time."

"Yes, yes… I will definitely, absolutely succeed."

"Good. Then I'll trust you."

The woman turned away from Regina, who was nodding.

The smile that had been plastered on her face quickly disappeared as soon as she turned away from Regina.

'...Lord Cascata.'

Her interest wasn't really in Ivan.

To her—Venere—Ivan was just a tool.

Venere had no loyalty to the empire.

For her, who had lived for many years by switching Artificial bodies, the leash that Lord Cascata had put on her was nothing more than an obstacle.

For her, revenge was against Lord Cascata.

And to destroy the empire that Lord Cascata was so obsessed with with her own hands—that was the future that Venere dreamed of.

'Ivan, Ivan Contadino. It's fortunate that you appeared so timely.'

Become a sacrifice for me.

Since you've appeared.

Venere smiled.

She was simply happy and delighted with this plan that would now proceed in secret.

\*

"Liam."

Leaving the chaotic cafeteria and heading to the lecture hall, Emil finally managed to open his mouth after much deliberation.

Liam was yawning widely, but he looked down at Emil when he heard him call.

How could he look at him so directly?

How was it possible to be so trusting, without a hint of doubt?

Even knowing that he had a secret, to be like this with him.

Emil was grateful to Liam.

He was always hesitant and unable to speak, but Liam was always by his side.

Always with the same expression,

Always with the same voice.

Liam, who always said he would be by his side.

Emil, who had worried all night, finally made up his mind.

He couldn't hide it any longer, and he didn't know why his father had given him such instructions, but—

It would be okay to tell Liam.

Having decided that, Emil finally opened his mouth.

"...You know."

"Yeah."

Liam stopped walking and stood there.

Judging by the atmosphere, it was clear that Emil was about to say something, and he didn't know what it was—but he had some idea, and Emil seemed to finally be about to say it.

"That secret I couldn't tell you."

"Yeah."

"That, actually… Ah."

But Emil couldn't finish his sentence.

Emil staggered because someone pushed him from behind, and Liam quickly supported him.

"...Isn't that Regina?"

It was Regina.

Even though Emil staggered when she passed by and bumped into him, Regina didn't look back.

As if she had something very urgent to do, she just looked ahead and ran, almost sprinting.

"Regina…?"

Emil, still in Liam's arms, watched her back.

An unknown sense of foreboding emanated from Regina's back.

"Liam. Something's wrong."

"Huh? What is?"

"Regina. Something's wrong with her."

Liam pointed—

Emil pointed to Regina's back, which was now moving away.

Liam felt a little disappointed, but he also felt that something was wrong with Regina.

"We should get to the lecture hall quickly."

"Y-yeah. Let's hurry."

Leaving their disappointment behind, Liam and Emil quickly headed to the lecture hall.

Author's Note

It's April Fool's Day and I couldn't do anything...

It's sad, I should have prepared something.

# 116 - Regina (3)

1. Regina (3)

The imperial palace, particularly its depths.

In a place permitted only to the Emperor, two men sat facing each other.

A hand pressed firmly against the temple.

And the fingers of the opposite hand tapped rhythmically on the armrest of the sofa, creating a discordant melody.

In a place so quiet that even the sound of muted breathing could be heard, the Emperor sat with his eyes closed, flicking his fingers in deep thought.

“It’s a threat.”

And the man sitting opposite the Emperor—Lord Cascata.

He too spoke to the Emperor with a face set in stone.

“It must be considered certain now. There is no longer any room for doubt.”

“…Is it certain?”

“Yes, it is.”

The Emperor stroked his beard, contemplating Lord Cascata's words.

In truth, it might not even be worth the Emperor's concern.

Yet, the reason he was troubled was simple.

“The resonance level has already risen sufficiently. It has been confirmed in both Mercurio's report and Venere's report. If we delay any longer and it becomes fully aware… or if it consumes that personality, we won't be able to handle the aftermath. Now is the time to act.”

At Lord Cascata's words, the Emperor let out a deep sigh.

His mind felt tangled and chaotic.

A royal family without an heir.

If it came to this, perhaps adopting a promising noble would be a solution…

There might be better methods if he searched further, but nothing specific came to mind.

“…After all, the royal line may end here. Without an heir, adopting that child might be an option.”

“Please do not say such things, Your Majesty.”

Lord Cascata's face hardened.

One of the current royal family's problems is the lack of an heir.

There is not even a princess, let alone a crown prince.

It was not that he had no descendants.

Two sons and one daughter.

Now, all three had passed away due to an accident, the cause of which was unknown. The problem is that if the Emperor were to die now, there would be no one to succeed him.

The aging Emperor felt his heart weaken.

The suggestion to adopt Ivan as his heir and pass the throne to him made Lord Cascata frown.

“You have no reason to oppose this, Lord Cascata. If Ivan Contadino becomes Emperor, of course, there will be tremendous backlash from the nobles, but it can be suppressed by force. If he becomes Emperor, your niece will become Empress. Wouldn't that be a good story for the Cascata family?”

At the Emperor's words, Lord Cascata fell silent.

The Emperor had grown old.

And weakened.

Even if he were to abdicate, he must pass the throne to someone of sound mind.

“It was a long time ago, but Your Majesty knows well. He is not of sound mind. He has become obsessed with magical engineering and has not even seen his descendants, nor has he properly managed the state affairs. How could you pass the throne to such a person?”

“Either way, when I die, a chaotic struggle for the throne will ensue. Or will you inherit the throne yourself?”

“Do not say such things. Your Majesty, you must make the right choice. Ivan is not the one. He cannot be the one. This empire must endure for a thousand years. I will make it so.”

Lord Cascata glared at the Emperor.

From the conquest wars to supporting him and reaching the current empire, Lord Cascata had worked tirelessly.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that his entire life was dedicated to the empire.

Thus, he could not understand why the throne would be so easily handed over to that man, despite the royal family having no descendants.

“Then, do as you wish. Whenever the topic of heirs comes up, I always become weak… this is indeed a bad habit. And regarding Ivan Contadino… Lord Cascata, do as you see fit. If he becomes a threat to the empire, that would also be undesirable.”

“Understood. Your Majesty, I will prepare as I reported before. I will inform you again once the execution date is set.”

“I trust you.”

Lord Cascata stood up and bowed his head.

The empire must shine for a thousand years on a solid foundation.

In such a place, the specters of the past cannot be allowed to act out.

As Lord Cascata left the office, his gaze sank deeply.

‘It was said that just touching the skin would have an effect…’

Regina hurriedly walked while tightly clutching a transparent vial.

The first medicine had failed, but that was due to the need to ingest it, and this time was different.

At the very least, she could pretend to bump into Ivan and spray it on his hand, and the difficulty had significantly decreased.

So this time, she would surely succeed.

‘If this succeeds, Ivan… Ivan, you will come back to me…’

He had only turned his gaze to Carla for a moment, but with this, everything would be alright.

Regina's pace quickened.

It sped up, and soon it was almost a run.

Breathless and panting, Regina did not stop running.

In the distance, she could see the lecture building.

It was already time when breakfast would have been finished, and soon classes would begin.

So Ivan would be there.

Thinking this, Regina headed straight for the lecture building.

She heard whispers among those who recognized her due to the commotion in the morning, but Regina paid them no mind.

Entering the lecture building, Regina headed directly to the classroom.

There was no way she could be mistaken about the location, so she went straight there without hesitation.

“Regina?”

And she encountered them.

Carla, who was just about to enter the classroom with Ivan, and Ivan himself.

“…Carla.”

A spark ignited in Regina's chest once again.

Why, despite what had happened that morning, were they so calmly walking to school together?

Was she not even in their thoughts?

‘No. Ivan is kind. It’s Carla… Carla is the one at fault.’

Carla soon noticed that Regina's gaze was strange.

“Regina. Wait, let’s talk for a moment.”

Albina had said she would investigate separately, but now that she had run into Regina, wasn’t this the perfect opportunity?

So Carla stepped closer to Regina.

In that moment, Carla saw it.

The small glass vial Regina was clutching to her chest—the transparent liquid sloshing inside.

“Regina, you again…!”

Flames sparked in Carla's eyes.

It was only a short time since the events of that morning.

Regina either had several of those unidentified medicines or someone within the academy had given them to her. Either way, Carla was filled with the thought that she had to seize that medicine.

“Carla, wait…”

Ivan, sensing that Carla's demeanor was unusual, tried to stop her.

As that scene entered Regina's view, in that moment, without a hint of hesitation—

“Ivan!”

She threw the vial she had been tightly holding in her arms with all her might.

Filled with her wish,

A wish for Ivan to return to her,

The transparent glass vial, carrying her unspoken desire, flew straight—

“Ivan!”

It collided with the left shoulder of Carla, who stood in front of Ivan.

With a dull thud, the vial shattered, and the transparent liquid began to trickle down her shoulder, arm, and body.

“…Ah.”

The noise that had been ringing in her ears seemed to fade into the distance.

In an instant, it felt as if her consciousness was slipping away, and Carla shook her head vigorously, trying to regain her senses.

Her face felt hot, and it seemed as if heat was spreading throughout her body, making it hard for her to maintain her balance.

“Carla, Carla!”

As Ivan supported the swaying Carla, he glared at Regina.

Regina, who had thrown the vial in a moment of panic, seemed taken aback, not expecting it to hit Carla.

Her face was pale—perhaps it was because Ivan's expression was one she had never seen directed at her before.

“I-Ivan. Your expression… it’s scary…”

Ivan glared at Regina while holding Carla, who could not steady herself.

“Regina. I tried to think positively about what you did because of our past, but…”

Purple magical power erupted from Ivan with a deafening roar.

Magical power is a kind of energy, so even if it is released, it is merely about igniting that energy.

But the magical power Ivan was emitting now seemed to have substance.

—Chaechaechaeng!

—Jjeojjeojjeok…

The windows shook violently before finally shattering in succession.

The floor of the lecture building where Ivan stood cracked like a spider web, as if something heavy had been repeatedly slammed down.

“You should have been more moderate.”

Suddenly, chaos erupted among the other students in the lecture building.

Shouts urging everyone to evacuate to the first floor and outside could be heard from all directions, but only Ivan, glaring at Regina, stood there gritting his teeth.

“Speak, Regina. The potion you were about to throw at me, and the one Carla has now. What is this?”

“It's… a love potion…”

“Shut your mouth!”

As Ivan shouted, the purple magical power surged even more violently.

Now, the intense waves spread enough to shake the entire lecture building, and the purple magical power bursting from Ivan had mixed with black energy, becoming a dark purple—one with more black than purple.

“Speak calmly, Regina. What is that potion?”

In the corridor of the lecture building, where fragments seemed ready to fall apart at any moment, Regina remained frozen, merely gazing at Ivan.

“Carla is mine, Regina. No one can harm Carla. Tell me what that potion is that did this to her, and who you received it from.”

“I-Ivan…!”

“Speak!”

“Eek!”

Regina crouched down, covering her ears.

As she glared at Regina with a fierce gaze, Ivan approached her while holding Carla close.

# 117 - Regina (4)

1. Regina (4)

With each step, large cracks appeared on the floor.

The stone floor cracked loudly, as if about to split open, and Ivan approached Regina without concealing the Magical Power erupting from him.

Ivan looked down at Carla, who had her eyes tightly shut and was breathing heavily, then turned his gaze back to Regina.

"I told you to speak, Regina."

"I, I don't know...! I, I can't say!"

Regina screamed, shaking her head while covering her ears.

She didn't know why, but she felt like she shouldn't reveal who gave her the potion.

So Regina didn't speak—no, she wouldn't speak.

"Speak, Regina. Now! What kind of potion is it that's making Carla like this!"

"I, I don't know! I didn't know she'd, she'd end up like this! If I had known...!"

Regina was just as flustered.

The woman who told her that if she smeared the potion on Ivan, even on his skin, he would come back to Regina.

Had she lied to Regina?

If she had poured that on Ivan...!

"I, I didn't know it would turn out like this...! I didn't know...!"

"Saying you didn't know doesn't make it all right..."

Ivan's words were cut short.

Someone grabbed the wrist of Ivan, who was pressing Regina, from behind.

"Calm down, Ivan. Are you planning to collapse the lecture hall?"

Lorenzo, smoking a Magic Herb, frowned as he restrained Ivan.

"Instructor. Let go of my hand."

"If I let go, you'll kill someone, Ivan. How can I let go when I see that? Hmm?"

Lorenzo exhaled deeply and looked around.

A corridor on the verge of collapse.

Glass shards covering the floor.

And Ivan, supporting the fallen Carla, exuding an oppressive aura with swirling purplish-black Magical Power.

"First, get a grip on yourself, Ivan."

Lorenzo made a Hand seal and waved his arm.

A Magic Engineering matrix with intense cold energy bloomed on the back of his hand, and instantly, cold air enveloped the corridor.

The raging Magical Power field rapidly froze, and Ivan's Magical Power seemed to falter for a moment, but it was only for a moment, as the purplish-black Magical Power surged again, as if unaffected by the cold.

'This guy is beyond a student's level.'

Ivan's Magical Power, threatening to overwhelm even Lorenzo's.

Not Magic Engineering, not Magic, but a simple emission of Magical Power that overwhelmed Lorenzo.

"Ivan! What, what's going on... Oh my god, Carla!"

Ivan's aura subsided little by little only after Albina's voice was heard.

As the Magical Power that had been shaking the surroundings died down, Albina finally rushed over and hurriedly caught Carla.

Ivan handed Carla over to Albina, then let out a deep sigh as if he couldn't help it, and withdrew the Magical Power he had been emitting.

"Now I can breathe a little. I know you're angry, but calm down."

Lorenzo patted Ivan's shoulder.

Then, he looked around and whistled before saying,

"I don't know what happened here. Ivan, I've received the report. Regina threw something at you, and Carla took it for you, right?"

"...Yes. From what I saw, it seemed to be the same kind of potion that Instructor Albina was entrusted with this morning."

"Ugh..."

Lorenzo groaned and scratched his head.

He had already heard the story from Albina.

Carla had a fight with Regina, and Carla brought a liquid with a bizarre name like a love potion—and seeing it appear here again, Regina...

"Anyway, Ivan. Suppress your Magical Power. Instructor Albina, I'll clean up here... I will clean up here. Please help me move Carla and Ivan to the infirmary."

"I didn't get an answer from Regina."

At Ivan's words, Lorenzo exhaled a long puff of Magic Herb smoke and smiled.

"This is a job for adults, Ivan. I know you're angry that your lover is hurt, but this isn't the place to be angry. Go to the infirmary. That's what you should do first."

"Yeah, calm down. Ivan, you're too excited right now."

Albina's gaze turned to Ivan.

Then to his neck, and then to his chest.

'It's gone.'

The necklace was gone.

Albina realized that Ivan's Magical Power had already broken free from the shackles of suppression.

The black color mixed in with the purplish Magical Power was probably the proof.

"It would be best to go to the infirmary for now, Ivan."

Albina, carrying Carla, took the lead.

Ivan glanced back at Regina, who was still squatting and trembling, then glanced back at Lorenzo, and only then did he head to the infirmary, following Albina.

Albina, who had been watching Ivan's back for a moment, approached Regina.

"Regina, Regina Parla. You are under arrest as of this moment."

At those words, Regina, who had been squatting, suddenly raised her head.

"Wh, what did you say?! Wh, why me!"

"There's no room for excuses anymore, Regina. I heard from Carla and Ivan that you did something. And this time, there are so many witnesses who say you threw something with the intention of harming Ivan and Carla. You shouldn't be doing this to your classmates, should you?"

Regina's lips trembled at Albina's cold voice.

"N, no...! I didn't mean to, if I had known, I would have given it to Ivan... No, in the first place, I didn't even know it was that kind of potion...!"

"Stop it."

Albina's cold voice cut off Regina's excuses.

"Do you even know how irresponsible your excuses are right now?"

Terrified, Regina stood up and looked around.

In the lecture hall corridor, which was all broken and ruined, even students from other grades had gathered and were glaring at her.

In those gazes, which were filled with coldness, she couldn't find any friendly looks, but rather, they were like sharp awls stabbing at her.

"If, if Carla hadn't... if Carla hadn't taken Ivan away from me..."

"Get a grip, Regina. Ivan wasn't dating anyone. You know that too. You said you never confessed to Ivan either. So Carla didn't take Ivan away from you."

"B, but... Ivan was definitely..."

"Regina. Get a grip."

Not just her gaze.

Even Albina's tone was cold.

"Ivan has never dated you. In the first place, Ivan was never yours."

"......"

Regina lowered her head powerlessly.

The cold truth pressed down on her painfully.

No matter how much she tried to deny it, that was the truth.

"The resonance is already at its peak, Lord Cascata."

Venere was sitting on the rarely visited rooftop of the academy.

Lord Cascata was standing behind her, and Venere was speaking with her back to him.

"As you've seen, there's already turbidity mixed in with the Magical Power. Whether it's a reincarnation or whatever, the resonance has already risen as high as it can go and will soon reach its limit. There's not much time left until then."

"I should take that as certain."

"You can think of it that way."

When Venere affirmed, Lord Cascata also nodded.

"I've obtained permission from His Majesty to use all the equipment. There's not much time left, so Venere, monitor him thoroughly. Mercurio will be there as well."

"Well, I will."

"I'll contact you again later. Keep reporting, even if I don't ask."

Lord Cascata was about to turn around after saying that.

But Venere's voice stopped him.

"Lord Cascata."

"Speak."

"Once this is over, you'll return my heart, right?"

Venere, the alchemic Mage.

A witch who had lived for a long time by switching Artificial bodies.

But her actual combat power wasn't high, so she was eventually a witch whose heart was taken by Lord Cascata.

"Heart, heart, you say..."

"That was the promise."

"I'll think about it."

That was the end of the conversation.

Venere's gaze followed Lord Cascata's long shadow as he descended the stairs.

'Think about it... huh.'

Venere smiled slyly.

'If you say you'll think about it, then I have something to think about too.'

Thinking is different depending on who does what and how.

And that thinking can be completely opposite to the other person's expectations.

'I wonder if you'll be so relaxed if I steal your heart in return. I wonder what it will be like.'

A strange hum flowed out.

Carla, who had been changed into a patient gown, couldn't open her eyes at all.

She was groaning here and there, and she seemed to be in quite a bit of pain, as she occasionally frowned, and each time, Ivan tightly gripped Carla's hand. It seemed to make her feel a little better.

'...I feel a strange toxicity in her left arm.'

It wasn't Magical Power or demonic energy.

If he had to classify it, it was toxicity.

And since it had soaked her left shoulder, that part was also bothering him.

'What was it? What was that...'

Ivan couldn't figure it out at all.

Even as he worried, when Carla groaned, he would unknowingly stop thinking and tightly grip her hand.

Only then would Carla's breathing become even, so Ivan held Carla's hand tightly and didn't let go.

—Actually, that wasn't the case.

He said it was for Carla's sake, but more than that, Ivan was afraid.

'...Carla wouldn't, wouldn't die, would she?'

Every time that thought came to him.

Each time, Ivan held Carla's hand tightly.

Only when he felt that warmth did Ivan feel better.

Only when Carla's warmth was there did Ivan finally feel better.

Author's Note

She seemed listless and deep in thought, and I was wondering what to do, but I just quietly set up a table with alcohol and gave her time to be alone. It seemed like she sorted out her thoughts on her own, and she looked quite relieved.

I saw on the internet that in times like these, saying "Want me to touch your breasts?" would cheer her up, but that's only for women with big breasts...

Sigh.

# 118 - Regina (5)

1. Regina (5)

The crimson death throes of the setting sun scattered in all directions, engulfing the world.

Ivan stood by the window, watching indifferently as the long, long day finally came to an end.

The sky was entirely red, and the light cast long shadows across the floor.

Ivan stared blankly at the crimson redness, then turned to look at Carla.

Lying in bed, eyes closed, Carla was lost in a light sleep, accompanied by faint moans.

Her face was pale, and as another groan escaped her lips, Ivan rushed to her side and grasped her hand.

Only then did Carla's moans subside.

'It'll be alright, it'll be alright...'

No matter how hard he tried to recall, he had no experience with anything like this.

Memories were just that, memories, and all the memories of that experience were separate from knowledge.

The accumulated knowledge was only Ivan's, and he couldn't tell what kind of poison this was from experience and memory.

Albina, who had been watching Ivan and Carla, closed her eyes and let out a long sigh.

She wanted to ask Ivan about the necklace, but this situation wasn't ideal, so she was frustrated.

But Carla's condition was more important right now, so Albina hesitated for a moment before speaking.

"Ivan."

"Yes."

Albina looked at Ivan, who had raised his head, and continued with difficulty.

"I can't be sure yet. But it's likely that this isn't just a simple alteration of Magical Power, as you said. Maybe it's poison... yes, as you said. It's likely poison."

"...Poison? Then Schyskeil must have brought it..."

Ivan jumped up.

If it was poison, it was Schyskeil.

It must be a cursed potion born from that dark and despicable family.

"Wait, Ivan. Schyskeil does deal with poison, but that's not proof. You know that."

At Albina's words, Ivan, who had been about to storm Schyskeil's house, stopped.

On second thought, Albina was right.

Even if they were good at handling poison, that didn't prove that Schyskeil was behind the potion that had made Carla like this.

"First of all, it's not a trace of Magical Power or other Magic. I suspect it's a type of poison that slowly erodes the body."

At that, Ivan bit his lip.

What would have happened if Ivan, not Carla, had been poisoned?

The one lying in that bed would have been Ivan, not Carla.

Ivan's hand trembled slightly at the thought.

Wouldn't that have been better?

Why was he just standing there like an idiot?

He was being protected by Carla, who had been going on about bi, bi, bi...

Wasn't that ridiculous!

"Ivan. You don't need to blame yourself so much. Carla wouldn't want you to be like this either."

"Whose fault would it be if not mine? Carla is like this because of me. If I had been a little faster and stronger, this wouldn't have happened."

Albina closed her mouth at that.

A moment of silence, an almost oppressive silence.

In that silence, Ivan spoke.

"...So what do we do now?"

"We need an antidote. As you know, if it's poison, we need an antidote. Lorenzo is interrogating Regina right now, so we'll have to hope to get information from there. If that doesn't work, we'll have to consult Schyskeil."

Ivan nodded at that.

Then he looked at Carla again.

Perhaps because Ivan was holding her hand, her breathing was more even.

A faint warmth was transmitted from her fingertips, and absurdly, it made him feel a little better.

'Carla...'

Ivan gritted his teeth in the helplessness that weighed him down.

\*

"Regina."

Regina, who was sitting across the table, didn't answer, her head bowed.

In the interrogation room, where purification Magic had been cast, Lorenzo was smoking a Magic Herb and looking at Regina.

Her head was bowed, but her complexion, which was slightly visible, was pale blue, and her hands were clenched tightly, trembling.

"Regina. There are too many witnesses. You tried to harm Carla—actually, Ivan—but unintentionally harmed Carla. Isn't that right?"

Regina didn't answer.

"It's time to answer. I already know you couldn't have gotten that drug alone. Who gave you the drug, and what was the intention of using it on Ivan? If you don't answer that, your family will have a big problem."

Regina's family was a fairly large merchant group and a lower-class noble.

If they were students in the academy, they would all get along well, saying that everyone was equal, but the situation was a little different now.

If Regina, a lower-class noble, harmed Carla, a great noble, it would be considered an act of insubordination.

It could develop into a huge problem.

"Tell me now. If you tell the truth, I'll mediate between Carla and you in my name."

"I, I..."

Regina trembled and barely raised her head.

Rationally, she knew that she had to speak now.

It was right to confess everything and ask for forgiveness.

But there was a voice that had been swirling in her head since earlier.

* Don't say it, you mustn't say it. No one must know about me. I'm a stranger. You mustn't say it.

She was confused.

Confused and dizzy, everything seemed to be spinning.

"I, I can't say it. He told me not to say it... that person... that person..."

"That person?"

"He said it was a hard-to-get drug, and I must never say it..."

Lorenzo stubbed out the Magic Herb and leaned forward.

Regina's pupils were shaking in all directions, and her eyes were flickering erratically.

'Brainwashing.'

Lorenzo, who had sensed it instinctively, hurriedly cast a barrier.

"Regina, pull yourself together. Regina!"

Even though he called out urgently, Regina couldn't answer properly.

Her lips were moving, but she couldn't give any answer.

Something was holding her back.

\*

Ivan, who had been looking at the campus where night had finally fallen, turned his head and looked down at Carla.

Carla's breathing was gradually stabilizing, but that was all, and she still hadn't woken up.

With a faint warmth, Carla closed her eyes as if she were asleep.

If that arrogant gaze would turn to him again, if she would speak to him again in that irritable tone.

How nice would that be.

Thinking that, Ivan stroked Carla's hand.

"Ivan."

Ivan, who had been looking at Carla, raised his head sharply.

Albina and the medic had returned to the staff room, and the only people in this room now were Ivan and Carla.

But it wasn't Carla who had called his name just now.

"...Who is it?"

Ivan said that and cast a Magical Power field.

But there was nothing there.

"Ivan."

"I asked who it was."

Ivan let go of Carla's hand and jumped up, looking around.

And then—the figure of a man standing near the entrance of the infirmary.

"Who is it."

The man began to approach slowly and silently.

With each step, as the distance narrowed, the man's figure was revealed in the moonlight streaming through the infirmary window.

"I am you."

Ivan was standing there.

A person who looked exactly like Ivan Contadino was standing there, facing Ivan.

"Have you ever heard that memories create existence?"

"What are you...!"

The moment Ivan raised his arm to form a Hand seal—

Another Ivan spread his arms.

Without any incantation, he simply spread his arms, and the scenery of the infirmary changed.

The scene unfolding before his eyes was horrific.

The palace, which would have originally reached the end of the world with its splendor, was engulfed in crimson flames.

The mainstays that had supported the thousand-year empire collapsed in the flames, unable to even support the shape of the palace, and the throne that stood firm even in the midst of it—the golden throne—did not lose its authority even now, engulfed in flames.

Another Ivan was sitting on that throne.

Ivan, wrapped in a blood-soaked robe, had a pale complexion and dark bloodstains all over his mouth.

* To be killed by the dogs I raised.
* If the master is a madman, the dogs have the freedom to rebel.

The look of death was evident on Ivan's face.

I will return... I will return and take revenge on you with blood.

Gladly.

That was it.

The head of Ivan, who had been sitting on the throne, flew into the air.

Ivan closed his eyes tightly there.

In his memory, the last moments of his previous life were not there.

He only knew that he had died in a rebellion, but it wasn't this specific.

"...What's the reason for showing me this? More than that, how were you born?"

In the scene that had returned to the infirmary, Ivan glared at the other Ivan and said.

"It's pathetic that you're bound by a single woman."

Another Ivan smiled, curling up the corners of his mouth.

"It's pathetic that you're immersed in emotional games like love. It's pathetic that you're crazy about petty games. I'm tired of your stupidity in trying to go around in circles in the name of planning, leaving the path of the Overlord. How can you not know that power belongs to those who have it, so it's right to devour everything?"

"...Don't talk nonsense. I don't know how you were born, but don't talk about Carla so easily."

Carla was a precious existence.

He couldn't explain it in detail yet, but—anyway, she was a precious existence.

Just her lying here was enough to keep Ivan from going anywhere, to bind him, that much.

But another Ivan said as if even such a protest from Ivan was ridiculous.

"You're stupid, really. You'll have to choose soon. Whether to become an Overlord, or just live as a commoner."

At the same time as he heard those mocking words, Ivan tried to jump up.

Don't talk about Carla like that, don't talk recklessly about something that doesn't even have a form—

"Huh...!"

But when he opened his eyes, Ivan realized that there was no one around him.

Had he fallen asleep by the bed where Carla was lying, and had a dream?

His breath was heavy,

His hands were wet with sweat.

"...Was it a dream?"

And then—

"Ivan..."

Carla's voice was heard.

"Carla! Are you awake?!"

Carla blinked her eyes weakly.

Carla barely turned her eyes to Ivan, who was rushing to her.

And then slowly, weakly—

"My left arm... I can't move it..."

Author's words (Author's afterword)

The contest starts next Monday... hmm

Actually, I wanted to try yuri or gender reversal, but it didn't work out

I think amta is the best for me

And just in case, I'm writing this down

If there is an author of "This Grand Duchess Will Die in 3 Years", please contact me. I want to steal the material. I liked the burnt taste of pure love, heung heung

# 119 - Emil (1)

1. Emil (1)

Thud.

A boulder fell onto Ivan's chest.

Carla's gaze was directed at Ivan, but he did not notice it.

In such a state of shock, Ivan fumbled with Carla's left arm.

Carla's skin had always been pale, but it still had a healthy color.

However, now her left arm was so pale that it seemed devoid of life, lacking even the slightest hint of color.

Moreover, it was strangely cold.

The more he touched it, the more it felt like he was caressing something other than human skin, like a tree stump.

It was indeed a peculiar sensation, prompting Ivan to hurriedly channel his magical power into Carla's left arm.

But— the magic did not flow in.

If it could not accept it, there should at least be a feeling of collision.

If the wavelengths did not match, there should be some sensation.

Even as he tried to channel his magic, it was utterly useless, flowing away without effect.

It was neither accepted nor repelled; it simply flowed away, like pouring water into a bottomless pit, with no response whatsoever.

‘Strange…’

“…Ivan.”

Only then did Ivan lift his head to look at Carla.

Her vacant gaze met his, and her lips moved weakly.

“Is there a problem with my arm…?”

Ivan felt a tightness in his chest at the expression on Carla's face.

Her sorrowful eyes seemed to anticipate the despair that was about to come upon her.

“…No. It’s just temporary. I’ll fix it. It’s my arm that I gave you. I can solve this.”

It was a reassurance to Carla.

And it was also a reassurance to himself.

“My arm… my arm…”

Carla's gaze wandered aimlessly.

She looked at Ivan, then up at the ceiling.

Eventually, as she looked down at her immobile arm—

A transparent tear rolled down the corner of Carla's eye.

“I’ll fix it. Carla, don’t cry. I will, I will… I’ll take care of everything.”

Her left arm, rejecting his magic.

Her left arm, not moving.

Ivan’s words grew more frantic.

“I heard that the daughter of the Parla merchant house caused a commotion. Was this part of your calculations?”

Contred von Schyskeil.

As the current head of Schyskeil, he twirled his wine glass and spoke.

“She did cause a commotion. It was a bit different from what I had calculated, but it falls within the expected range, so it’s fine. No need to worry.”

Stroking his rat-like mustache, Dremalo von Aufstieg wore a relaxed smile.

“Even if it was different from the calculations, the result remains the same, Lord Schyskeil. In terms of provoking Ivan’s frenzy, it aligns perfectly with our intentions, doesn’t it?”

“Ivan’s frenzy…”

Contred recalled the frenzy of Ivan that Kiara had reported.

Whether to call it a frenzy or a rampage, it certainly left a deep impression.

Despite his young age, his magical power output was vast enough to have physical effects.

And that physical force nearly destroyed the academy's lecture hall.

If that magical power had been unleashed through magical engineering and magic, it wouldn’t be surprising if the lecture hall had been completely obliterated instead of just damaged.

“Moreover, that brat didn’t even fully unleash that power.”

“…He certainly won’t have any good feelings towards us, Lord Dremalo. You know, we were the ones who beheaded his creator. There’s no way he would harbor any fondness for those who killed him.”

“I don’t care about that. You know that.”

His eyes sparkled.

Not in a good way, but with a sinister glint that made Contred involuntarily frown.

No matter how one looked at it, teaming up with this individual didn’t seem like a wise choice.

But now that things had come to this, there was no option to retreat; they had to see it through to the end.

“A being once called the magic of humanity… it is indeed frightening. However, no matter how strong that being is, in the end, it is still human. And if it’s a human, it cannot reject our Aufstieg magic. Moreover, we already have a vessel that has been cultivated for over twenty years. If we can strip away that power, it will be fine.”

“…Even if it’s your own daughter, saying that is quite cold-hearted.”

“A vessel is a vessel; what else would you call it? Isn’t that right?”

Contred fell silent.

In truth, it was ridiculous to meddle in someone else’s family matters, and he didn’t need to care too much about it.

“Anyway, very well, Lord Dremalo. Since Ivan caused such a frenzy, we could question Carla’s negligence in management. Moreover, since it happened right in the middle of the academy, we could report it to His Majesty. In various ways, it seems that bad things are piling up for Cascata.”

“And there’s one more good thing.”

“What is it?”

“According to our information, Carla’s left arm will disappear again.”

“Disappear?”

Contred’s eyebrows twitched.

There was no clear information on how Carla’s arm had returned.

The person involved, Carla, had kept her mouth shut, saying it happened due to some incident during the Inter-house Competition, so no one had bothered to ask.

Moreover, there was also the incident where Lucas had died, and the fact that Carla’s left arm had returned didn’t particularly interest the nobles—though it might be good news for the veterans, they were outside of their concern.

“The daughter of the Parla merchant house played an unexpectedly significant role. For both Carla and in provoking Ivan’s frenzy, it might not be a failure after all.”

“…You speak in riddles. In any case, our Schyskeil has fulfilled its role. Let’s stop providing poison any further. If we go any further, our tails will be stepped on.”

“Let’s do that. You’ve already done enough.”

With those words, Dremalo stood up.

It would be troublesome if it became known that the heads of two families were meeting.

There was no need to care about others’ gazes, but it wouldn’t be good for two families that were no longer considered to be of the great nobility, like Cascata, to be seen gathering like this.

“Then I will contact you separately from now on. It seems that it is about time for Lord Cascata to move, and we must also prepare to move. We need to get ready.”

Dremalo smiled slyly and, leaving those words behind, turned sharply.

Contred, watching Dremalo’s retreating figure as he moved away from the side entrance, clicked his tongue and picked up his wine glass again.

‘…There’s no choice but to see it through to the end. There’s no option to retreat now.’

The wine tasted bitter and harsh.

So, now I need to readjust your magical circuits again. It’s urgent, so come home this weekend.

Emil folded the letter neatly.

Then, he frowned and tore it to shreds.

‘What does my father think of my existence?’

Emil pondered this question, but no matter how much he thought and worried, he could only conclude that he was merely a disposable tool.

He still remembered the adjustments made to his magical circuits when he was young.

The beautifully branching magical circuits were cut away by his father without leaving a trace.

So now, instead of mastering Descent Magic, the Family Magic, he couldn’t even begin to learn it.

With circuits that didn’t function properly or connect, all he could do was fire mana bullets.

To call himself a mage with this was laughable.

—What does it matter? Even with just that, you don’t know how reassuring it is that you’re behind me.

Liam’s carefree voice seemed to echo in his ears.

But it wasn’t just that; it wasn’t just the mana bullet firing. If he could wield a bit more diverse… such magic and sorcery, it would surely be of even greater help to Liam.

‘Perhaps my father is trying to properly adjust my circuits?’

He held onto a vague hope.

Though it was likely a futile hope, Emil wanted to believe that.

—I don’t care what secrets you have. I will be by your side, Emil. I am on your side.

Not even his father was on his side.

And neither were the retainers nor the practitioners; they were not on Emil’s side either.

Thus, her already narrow world became even narrower, and she became a being living according to her father’s orders.

“…Liam, I need to tell Liam. I have to tell him.”

There was no longer anything to hide from Liam.

He could hide no more.

Emil sprang to her feet.

As she reached for her chest cloth, she threw it down as if discarding it.

She had instinctively tried to pick it up—

Habits could be so terrifying.

This was unnecessary.

She wanted to be honest with Liam.

Emil opened the door with a pounding heart.

Liam’s room was close from here.

A word from the author (Author's Note)

The contest has begun...

# 120 - Emil (2)

1. Emil (2)

A true man never ceases to train.

A strong spirit resides in a strong body, and a true man should be able to overwhelm enemies with his physique alone, without relying on Magical Engineering.

With such a creed deeply ingrained in him, Liam Fuco never neglected his training.

Even now, with his upper body exposed, Liam was engrossed in physical training such as push-ups and handstand push-ups when he suddenly heard a knock at the door.

"Hmm, I'm not expecting anyone."

His social circle was quite small due to being in a foreign country.

There was no reason for anyone to visit, so with a hint of doubt, Liam approached the door, supporting his entire body with his arms in a handstand.

Only after reaching the door did Liam stop his handstand and open it, his eyebrows twitching at the unexpected figure.

"Emil? What brings you here?"

It was Emil, indeed.

But Emil's aura was completely different from what he had felt until now.

Liam stood there, upper body exposed, steam rising from his sweat-soaked skin.

And in front of Liam stood Emil, his face flushed.

"...A-Are you working out? Should I come back later...?"

"No, Emil. Come in."

"T-Then, excuse me."

Emil cautiously entered Liam's room, hands clasped together.

Everywhere he looked, there was exercise equipment... From dumbbells to various machines for lying down exercises, Emil had never seen anything like it before.

"You really work out hard."

"Hmm, indeed. A true man must train his body first. Anyway..."

Liam closed the door and turned around, his gaze sweeping over Emil.

From top to bottom, and bottom to top.

Even without feeling it, Emil's face flushed even redder at the gaze that Liam's eyes conveyed.

"...I guess you've decided to tell me your secret. Would you like a glass of water?"

"Y-Yes. Please."

Liam left Emil, who sat cautiously on the sofa, and turned to pour water into a glass.

He placed the brimming glass in front of Emil, then sat down opposite him.

"So, what's the matter? You look very different now."

Liam was right.

In Liam's eyes, he wondered how Emil had hidden it until now, and why no one had noticed.

Despite wearing loose-fitting casual clothes, the curves of his chest were visible, and the gentle curves that could not be hidden were still apparent.

Seeing these things, Liam could infer that Emil would no longer hide anything from him and would reveal everything.

"...Yes. Liam, you can guess why I came to see you like this, right?"

Emil still couldn't look Liam in the eye properly.

Although it was a little better than before, the steam rising from his drying sweat, his broad shoulders, and the muscles of his upper body that were completely exposed without any attempt to hide them—it was all too stimulating to look at with a clear mind.

"Hmm, indeed. But guessing is different from hearing it from your own mouth, Emil. You know that."

"Yes, yes... So, Liam, could you put on some clothes?"

At Emil's words, Liam finally looked down at himself.

He had pants on, but his upper body was still exposed.

Chuckling, Liam leaned back on the sofa and shrugged.

"We're both men, it doesn't matter, Emil."

"Yes it does! ...Yes, it matters, so please put on some clothes. I can't look at you properly."

"Is that so? Then I will."

Liam chuckled and reached for some clothes.

It would be refreshing to shower and then put on clothes, but that wasn't important right now.

"There, I'm dressed. Emil, now tell me what you came here for."

"...Okay."

He's subtly mischievous... Emil muttered to himself, and then finally looked directly at Liam.

"...So, I've tried to tell you so many times, Liam. But it never worked out. I even tried not to tell you... But you said you would be on my side."

"I did. As a friend, that is."

"Yes, so... so. I, I..."

Emil hesitated, wiping the sweat from his hands on his pants.

He had already decided to tell the truth, to be honest.

Besides, he had come here without a chest binder or anything, so Liam would have noticed unless he was a fool, but it was still not easy to say it himself.

"I, I... Actually. I, I'm not a man..."

This was so difficult.

It was so hard to utter this one sentence.

Emil barely managed to say the words and then immediately lowered his head.

No answer came.

Liam was silent.

What kind of look was Liam giving Emil...?

That he had lied,

That he had been deceiving him,

That he had been deceiving him,

And that was why he was looking at him with such contempt.

In such anxiety and doubt, Emil couldn't bring himself to look Liam in the eye.

Liam had said that he would be his friend, that he would stand by his side no matter what, but that was before hearing this fact.

Would Liam still think that way after learning that everything Emil had shown him so far was a lie?

Emil couldn't be sure of that, so he couldn't bring himself to look at Liam.

"...Hmm? Is that all?"

At Liam's unexpected voice, Emil involuntarily raised his head to look at Liam.

Liam was looking at Emil as if it were nothing, as if nothing had happened.

"I already knew you were a woman, but I'm saying, is that all you wanted to say?"

"H-How...?"

He thought he had deceived him perfectly.

Emil thought Liam had no idea.

Since he couldn't receive Illusion Magic, and since he had a circuit that couldn't accept it, he had thoroughly prepared for cross-dressing. He always wore a chest binder, and he had done his best to imitate the behavior of a man.

But Liam said that he already knew Emil was a woman.

"I'm not a fool, Emil. I told you, I'm famous as a heartthrob in my hometown."

"That's a lie."

Emil flatly denied it.

There's no way.

"...It's true, but anyway. Your cross-dressing wasn't very good... Maybe there are quite a few people who noticed you were a woman?"

"T-That can't be."

"Well, that's not important. Anyway, the fact that you haven't said it until now means that you don't think I'm a trustworthy person, right?"

"That's... not true."

Emil mumbled, trailing off.

In a way, Liam was a very precious person to her.

In a way, even more than her parents.

Because Liam had told her stories that even her parents hadn't told her.

"Anyway, that doesn't matter, Emil. You told me now. Besides, the fact that you're a woman is a problem if it gets out, right?"

"...Yes."

"The fact that you told me that now means that you think I'm someone you can trust now. So it's okay."

"......"

Emil lowered her head.

If she had known it would be like this, she would have told him sooner—she had been worrying and agonizing for nothing.

"So, is there anything that made you decide to tell me that fact?"

"...Yes."

It couldn't have been a sudden feeling.

Liam thought there must be a reason.

"This weekend... I have to go back home. By my father's order."

"Going back home isn't a big deal. Carla and Ivan also go back to the Cascata mansion every weekend, as far as I know."

"It's not that kind of problem..."

Emil said that she would have her Magical Circuit adjusted.

Hearing those words, Liam thought of Emil's Magical Circuit.

It was a truly bizarre-looking circuit.

A circuit with both wings completely cut off, as if someone had forcibly cut them off.

"Re-adjusting the circuit..."

Liam stroked his chin and thought.

In fact, Liam didn't know what that meant.

But considering the nature of Dremalo von Aufstieg that he had seen, he didn't think it was a good thing.

Besides, considering how afraid Emil was, there must be something she was clearly reluctant to do.

Liam stared at Emil.

Emil's hands were clasped together, resting on her knees, trembling delicately.

Now that he saw it, it was obvious that she was very feminine.

So, maybe it was impulsive.

Liam thought so and said without realizing it.

"Won't you come with me to my homeland, Emil?"

"...Huh?"

"Let's go to my homeland together. It would be a form of asylum for you. If you want to stand on your own two feet and live as Emil, not Emil von Aufstieg, I will help you. If necessary, I can even attach my family name to your name."

"T-That's..."

That's a proposal, Liam...

The words almost came out.

"Magical Circuit re-adjustment or whatever. You're not a tool, Emil. You have to live your life yourself. If you say you will, I will gladly drop out of this academy. Actually, there's nothing much to learn—I'm tired of the gigolos of the Empire. So let's go back to my homeland together. At least I will protect you."

Emil closed her mouth at Liam's words.

Otherwise, she felt like she would immediately say yes.

But...

That was impossible.

Her father, Dremalo, was the kind of person who would chase her down even if she fled to Liam's country.

The kind of person who would do anything.

If that happened, it would end up harming Liam—that was impossible.

"...Thank you, Liam. I really appreciate your words. But... not yet, I can't."

"Is that so? But my offer is valid, Emil. The expiration date is a million years. Just say the word anytime."

Okay—

Emil answered with a smile.

If she didn't smile, she felt like she would cry.

Author's Note

Arcane Academy Stockpile: Up to Chapter 128

Maiden Skirt Stockpile: Up to Chapter 18

Hat Hair Proximity Stockpile: None (This is a live serialization)

I tried it yesterday and I can write three chapters a day

Is it doable?

# 121 - Emil (3)

1. Emil (3)

"Ivan."

Late at night.

Albina opened the door to the infirmary, which was almost buried in silence.

Her face was stiff, as if holding some tension.

Her eyes were on Ivan, but perhaps because of her hardened expression, Ivan couldn't bring himself to smile as he looked at her.

"I'd appreciate it if you could be honest. There's only you, me, and Carla here."

"...Yes."

Ivan got up from the bed where Carla was lying and moved to the sofa. Albina followed Ivan and sat opposite him on the sofa.

"Carla's left arm, it's clearly becoming strange. You know that too, right?"

Ivan nodded at Albina's question.

He couldn't deny it now.

Carla's arm was clearly in a strange state.

Originally, Carla's skin was so white it could be described as milky, and it was certainly healthy. But now, her left arm had lost even that healthy color and was completely white—so bleached that it could be called pale.

And more seriously, the discolored area was gradually widening, completely encroaching on her shoulder beyond the severed part of Carla's left arm.

Because of this, Albina had asked those in the infirmary to refrain from entering, and Ivan had been guarding Carla's side without leaving her for a moment, finally leading to the present.

"Carla's left arm. It's time to tell me what it really is. I need to know so I can respond, don't I?"

At Albina's question, Ivan sighed deeply and ran a hand over his face. If he were to tell her what it was, where should he start? How should he say it? If he did, he would also have to tell Albina that the necklace was broken, but how could he explain that Ivan was moving so normally even after it broke?

'I was too naive.'

That was the only way to explain it. Ivan wanted to slap his past self, who had been ignorant and arrogant, if he could.

"...It's an arm taken from an Artificial body made by a Mage."

"What do you mean? A Mage...?"

"You've met him too, Instructor. The Mage I killed when Carla's left arm was cut off."

"...That Mage was alive?"

Albina's eyes widened. Then, she quickly closed her mouth with a small groan, "Ah."

"I see. If what you killed back then wasn't the main body but an Artificial body..."

"That's right. He was alive. He's still alive... Anyway, more importantly than that, during the Exploration Game, we happened to find a cave where that Mage's Artificial body was stored."

"And?"

"All the Artificial bodies were in bad condition, but we took an arm from one of the Artificial bodies that was in relatively good condition and attached it to Carla."

"Who did?"

"...I did."

"You?"

Albina was silent for a moment after those words.

Without saying anything, she just quietly stared at Ivan, and finally opened her mouth with difficulty.

"...Then, that necklace is broken after all, isn't it?"

"Yes. It's broken."

"Hmm..."

Albina stroked her chin and pondered.

In fact, she had given the necklace to Ivan because she thought there was a hidden dual personality in Ivan—something very evil and powerful was dwelling within him.

If he were in his right mind, it would be impossible to tear his father to pieces, and even if that father was the worst of the worst, it would be difficult for a child to do.

So it was natural to think that Ivan had something like that, and that's why she ended up giving him the necklace of suppression.

"I see. Well, there are things I want to ask you about that, but let's put that aside for now. Then, the drug that Carla took instead of you must have had some effect on that Artificial body. Circumstantially."

"Oh..."

"Then the Mage must have a solution."

"Uh..."

"You seemed to know from what you said earlier that the Mage is alive. Can you meet him?"

Albina's words were reasonable.

Rather, it was strange that Ivan hadn't thought of it until now.

It must have been because he was flustered with Carla lying here, but as soon as he heard those words, Ivan stared at Albina in silence, at a loss for words.

"Looking at it this way, that drug isn't easy to obtain. It's not easy to prepare either. Ivan, do you know where to go to meet that Mage?"

"I know."

Of course, he knew.

"Where?"

"Aufstieg. That Mage is affiliated with Aufstieg."

Of course, he knew.

He had been invited to a banquet in Aufstieg and met Venere.

"That Mage is affiliated with Aufstieg..."

Albina's mind seemed to be in a complicated tangle.

A Mage suddenly appears, and that Mage is affiliated with Aufstieg. Moreover, if that drug caused a reaction in the Artificial body, then that Mage must be involved, and then Schyskeil is involved in the preparation of the drug...

Perhaps Aufstieg and Schyskeil are plotting something strange.

"Ivan. Then you wait here for a moment. I'll send someone to Aufstieg..."

"No, Instructor. I have to go."

"What are you talking about? Why would you..."

It was a natural course of events.

Albina wouldn't know, but Ivan knew.

Aufstieg wanted Ivan.

They said he would regret it if he didn't take their hand.

But this was crossing the line.

"Aufstieg wants me."

Everyone wants talent.

Aufstieg is no different.

"They said I would regret it if I didn't take the hand they offered."

"So, Aufstieg somehow prepared that drug and tried to pour it on you, but Carla accidentally..."

"That's right. They probably think that even if it turned out like this, it's going according to plan. Whether I took the drug directly or Carla took it, it's still a conclusion where I'll regret it."

But Ivan doesn't have an Artificial body—but it's easy to guess that something terrible would have happened even if Ivan had taken that potion.

"So I have to go, Instructor. That's the only way they'll be sincere."

"But it's dangerous."

"They're the ones who made Carla like this, and they've done something to Regina too. They won't show themselves if I don't go."

Ivan's words were the right thing to say.

Reporting it to a national agency and requesting a formal investigation would be a method, but that was difficult, and even if Albina went, Albina wasn't that strong. After all, she wasn't the type to engage in all-out war.

At that moment, the door burst open.

A man standing against the moonlight, casting a long shadow.

"I'll go with you. Wouldn't that be safer?"

"Why are you here, Instructor Lorenzo...?"

"Why else?"

Lorenzo shrugged and said.

"A student was hurt. Isn't that reason enough?"

"Going in head-on is something you do alone, Ivan."

"What about you, Instructor?"

"A crow doesn't enter through the front door."

"I don't quite understand what you mean..."

"Don't try to understand. Anyway, I'll take care of things on my own, so don't worry."

"Could this pattern be what you mean by taking care of things on your own, Instructor?"

Ivan pointed to the pattern drawn on his palm.

Inside the carriage heading to Aufstieg, Lorenzo had drawn a pattern on Ivan's palm and told him not to let anyone in Aufstieg see it.

"That's about right. Anyway, Ivan, be a man. Don't forget your promise to save Carla."

"Of course. I'll never forget it."

Before leaving, Ivan held Carla's hand tightly and promised her.

He would definitely come back, and he wouldn't come back empty-handed.

He would bring back the medicine to heal her, and if he couldn't, he would bring back Venere's head.

'Venere.'

You crossed the line.

You crossed it way too much.

Ivan gritted his teeth.

"Don't worry about Carla. Albina will be guarding her directly. Whether it's with buckets or whatever, no one can break through Albina's defense once she starts it. So you don't have to worry about Carla."

"Is Instructor Albina that good?"

"She's a soldier who's been used to defense from the start. Summoning magic is originally strong in that area, but Albina is particularly specialized in it. So you don't have to worry."

Ivan decided to believe Lorenzo's words.

In fact, he couldn't help it even if he didn't believe it—unless Ivan had two bodies.

Carrying Ivan's firm determination, the carriage sped off.

The Aufstieg mansion, the second visit was beginning.

Author's Note

I think you were surprised that I wrote three chapters a day, but it's not that great

Akasujae and Girl's Skirt take an hour and an hour and a half each, so two or three hours, and Seed Bearer writes what's in my head without filtering, so about 30 minutes? It's faster than you think